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# New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development

*A Theoretical and Practical Anthology*

EDITED BY

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## Racial Identity Development and Latinos in the United States

*Bernardo M. Ferdman and Plácida I. Gallegos*

As their numbers have grown, Latinos<sup>1</sup> in the United States have been the focus of increasing attention by the media (Larmer 1999) and by scholars. Latino identity and its many manifestations constitute a key theme for social scientists and others interested in better understanding this population. Given the intense spotlight on race in the United States, an understanding of Latino identity development must necessarily address the relationship of members of this group to a racial system of categorization.

A focus on racial identity and its development should essentially consider how individuals and groups deal with the surrounding racial order and its constructs (Helms 1996). Both individually and collectively, people can accept and internalize the racial order, resist it, or transform it. These reactions should be viewed in the context of the relationship of individuals and groups to intergroup structures of dominance and oppression. In this chapter, we consider these issues specifically with regard to Latinos and Latinas in the United States. Because Latinos do not fit easily into the prevailing system of racial categories in the United States, understanding Latino racial identity presents special challenges and challenges the prevailing racial order itself. This lack of fit often creates dilemmas for individuals, organizations, or institutions that must figure out what to do with us. As a recent *Newsweek* cover (Larmer 1999) attested, "Young Hispanics Are Changing America." The accompanying magazine articles, implying that most people have not yet paid sufficient attention to these changes and their implications, call attention to the growth of the

Latino population in the United States, its internal diversity, and its impact on the country.

Our goal in this chapter is both to clarify and to amplify the dilemmas inherent in understanding Latinos and Latinas as a group, focusing in particular on how our identities relate (or do not relate) to racial constructs. In our own personal experience as a Latino and Latina, we find that many non-Latinos often prefer simple answers to questions about our group. We frequently encounter questions about our racial identity, countries of origin, or native language, as well as requests to provide simple "rules" for dealing with Latinos in general. Our answers are not always satisfactory because they may not fit an expected form. We have found this challenging, because our experience of Latinos as a group is of a multifaceted, dynamic, complex, and very heterogeneous people for whom simple answers are never sufficient. The difficulty we often face is that to facilitate comprehension we must gloss over the more complex aspects of our understanding or describe the Latino experience in the context of constructs and frameworks that do not necessarily fit and that were generated by the experience and perspective of other groups.

In preparing this chapter, we had a similar experience, because so much of the thinking on race in the United States stems from the history of Blacks and Whites and their relationship. We found ourselves required to be somewhat reactive to models that were constructed without Latinos in mind.<sup>2</sup> Our task became more than simply to attempt to make a cogent statement about Latino identity; we were faced with the need to explain it to others who are relatively unfamiliar not only with what it is about, but also with the appropriate constructs or reference points with which we would prefer to talk about it. One of the challenges Latinos have faced in the United States has often been the need to manage the comfort level of others. Thus we were caught in something of a bind in explaining Latino identity, especially from a racial perspective. If we uncritically focused on predominant constructs of race in the United States, this would not fully reflect or capture the Latino experience. On the other hand, if we simply used Latino-based constructs, we would risk not being understood, and so would continue to reframe our experience in terms other than our own. When we think about Latino identity, a first step for us is usually to see race as secondary at best. It is one of many factors constituting identity for Latinos, but certainly not the most

prominent. Writing about Latino “racial” identity has therefore been a challenge for us.

Individual identity is developed in the context of group and inter-group realities. Given the complexity and heterogeneity of Latino experience, it is important to frame theoretical statements about individual identity in the context of group experiences and patterns. Thus, in this chapter we discuss Latinos and Latinas as a group before presenting our perspectives on racial identity development at the individual level. First, we describe the diversity and unity among Latinos, and then we consider the applicability of racial constructs to Latinos, including a brief review of Latino experiences of and perspectives on race. We conclude the chapter with our own model of Latino orientations to racial identity in the context of Latino diversity.<sup>3</sup>

*Latinos and Latinas in the United States:  
One Group or Many?*

Latinos (often also referred to as “Hispanics” or “Hispanic-Americans”)<sup>4</sup> are the fastest growing “minority group” in the United States, and will soon exceed African Americans in number. In August 1999, there were 31.5 million persons of Hispanic<sup>5</sup> origin in the United States, or 11.5 percent of the total population (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1999). This represented an increase of 41 percent since 1990, when there were 22.4 million Hispanics (9 percent of the U.S. population) counted by the Census. This estimate did not include the 3.8 million residents of Puerto Rico, the vast majority of whom are citizens of the United States and would be categorized as Hispanics on the mainland. By 2040, according to U.S. Census estimates, Hispanics will comprise over 18 percent (or almost 1 in 5) of the U.S. population.

Latinos are quite diverse. A range of factors—including cultural, historical, sociological, political, and others—both contribute to this diversity and point to the development and existence in the United States of an overarching Latino identity. Thus, in many contexts, it can make sense to study Latinos/as as one group. Some (such as Quiñones-Rosado 1998) argue, for example, that it is the experience of colonialism that unites Latinos. Moreover, Latinos and Latinas can be strongly identified as such, especially in relation to non-Latinos. However, Latino/a as a category is best seen as panethnic and cer-

tainly very heterogeneous, in the sense that it encompasses a range of cultures, racial backgrounds, national origins, and other important dimensions of diversity (Delgado and Stefancic 1998).

### Latino Diversity

Latino and Latina heterogeneity is often ignored in much of the social science literature, which often does not distinguish between the many national-origin groups included under the broad "Latino/a" umbrella. Glossing over identifications based on national origin can be problematic, both because Latino experiences and social processes differ systematically across subgroups and because Latinos themselves have not adopted the Latino label as a primary identity without also making reference to their specific national origin or subgroup. As Romero (1997) points out:

The reduction of Mexicans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, Salvadorans, Nicaraguans, Costa Ricans, and other groups to the single category of "Hispanic" has met with resistance. There are two main objections: one is the depoliticization of each group's distinct history with the U.S. (colonized, conquered, exploited, etc.); the other is the emphasis upon Hispanic (European) culture and ancestry, rather than African and indigenous cultures. (1997: xv).

The larger category of Latinos and Latinas is actually comprised of many subgroups, typically identified in terms of national origin. The largest of these subgroups—those explicitly mentioned on the Hispanic question on the 1980 and 1990 U.S. Census forms—are of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban origin. Table 2.1 shows the number and proportion of each group in 1997. The largest subgroup, comprising over two-thirds of all Latinos, is of Mexican origin. Mexican Americans can include those whose families have resided in the United States for two or more generations and often identify as Chicanos, as well as recent immigrants or their children, who tend to identify as Mexican or Mexican American (Gurin, Hurtado, and Peng, 1994; Flores Niemann et al. 1999). Mexican Americans are concentrated in California, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, with sizable populations in Illinois and New York.

Puerto Ricans, comprising over a tenth of Latinos (not including those residing in Puerto Rico), are concentrated in New York and Florida, with sizable numbers in New Jersey, Illinois, and New



TABLE 2.1  
*U.S. Latinos by National Origin or Ancestry, 1997*

Group	Number (in thousands)	Proportion
Mexican Americans	18,795	63.3%
Puerto Ricans	3,152	10.6%
Cubans	1,258	4.2%
Central and South Americans	4,292	14.4%
Other Hispanics	2,206	7.4%
Total	29,703	100.0%

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census 1998.

England. The largest numbers of Cuban Americans are in Florida and New Jersey. Central and South Americans comprise about 1 in 7 Latinos and are concentrated in California (especially Los Angeles), Florida, and New York. The largest groups in this subcategory are Dominican, Salvadorian, and Colombian. Finally, other Hispanics include those who trace their ancestry to the original Spanish settlers of what is now the southwestern United States, as well as others who come from mixed families or did not otherwise identify a specific national origin. Many in this group live in New Mexico.

These national origin subgroups are diverse in a variety of ways, including geographic distribution, political affiliation, socioeconomic status, language use, and many cultural features. They also vary in terms of their relationship to U.S. racial constructs. Therefore, some groups are more likely to identify as White, while others more typically see themselves as neither White nor Black, but as comprising a distinct racial category. Both between and within these subgroups, there are variations in gender, nativity, immigration status, generation in the United States, acculturation status, social class, education, sexual orientation, and other variables that have an impact on intergroup relations, both among Latinos/as and between Latinos/as and other groups.

For example, for Latinas, *both* gender and ethnicity/race are significant and salient elements of their identity (see, for example, Ferdman and Gallegos 1996; Holvino 1996; Hurtado 1997; Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983). Within the family structure and in society at large, Latinas are seen as representing both women and Latinos rather than one or the other. When Latinas have negative experiences or encounter systemic barriers, it is often difficult or impossible for them to identify which part of their identity is being targeted or the extent to which their individual performance or personality is responsible for the situation. The result-

ing disorientation and uncertainty create fertile ground for Latinas to define themselves situationally and become astute at attending to the perceptions and expectations of others. This example illustrates how important it is to view identity as comprised of the interaction and combination of many elements, each of which gives meaning to the others (Ferdman 1995, 1999a, 1999b; Holvino 1997).

### Latino "Groupness"

Given the great heterogeneity among Latinos and Latinas, what constitutes the group? Social science, literature, popular culture, and politics all support the idea of Latino unity in the context of Latino diversity. The unique historical and sociological context of the United States creates the backdrop for Latino identity.

Quiñones-Rosado (1998) argues that what unites and distinguishes the broad diversity of groups that constitute Latinos is a combination of geographical, cultural, and racial factors, together with the collective and overarching experience of colonialism. Both newcomers to the United States and those born here are defined and see themselves as different. At the same time, the racial thinking in the United States—which involves fairly rigid categories and views Latinos as distinct from Whites—has led to an inability to distinguish between Latinos of varying national origins. Thus, a new immigrant from Peru soon finds herself grouped together with a fourth-generation Chicano and the New York-born son of a Puertorriqueño.

Moore and Pachon (1985) argue that what makes Latinos a group is a combination of converging life situations, such as urban residency, disproportional poverty, and the experience of prejudice and discrimination, together with their treatment by the larger society and the large increase in their total number. Additionally, as Latinos have dispersed outside traditional geographic areas such as New York, Miami, and the southwestern United States, the similarities across subgroups become more salient than the differences. For example, in Vermont, where there are few Latinos, fewer distinctions are made on the basis of national origin, even within the group, than in Los Angeles, where communities are distinguished not only by nation but also by towns of origin. Overall, Latino identity has become defined as such in interactions with others. As Alejandro Portes (1990) puts it:

The emergence of a Hispanic "minority" has depended more on the actions of government and the collective perceptions of Anglo-American society than on the initiative of the individuals so designated. (1990:160)

We do not see it as an either/or question. In our view, Latino groupness emerges both from external factors, as Portes suggests, and from within-group factors, including common experiences and features among Latinos. For many Latinos these commonalities include Spanish language use, the valuing of cultural maintenance, a cultural focus on family, and religious traditions.<sup>6</sup> Yet, even by these criteria it is impossible to make sweeping generalizations that apply to all or even most Latinos.

A third element leading to Latino groupness, perhaps combining the external and internal factors, has been sociopolitical. A unified Latino identity has brought increased visibility, potency, and even political power to a large proportion of those so identified. Thus, both individual and group interests pull people together. Once that happens, Latinos feel connected and are effectively connected across subgroups. In sum, this sense of identification as a group is based on commonalities, treatment by others, and utilitarian reasons.<sup>7</sup>

### *Latinos and Racial Constructs*

Latinos have had an uneasy relationship with prevailing racial constructs in the United States. These "either/or" notions, typically Black/White or White/not White, have not easily incorporated or allowed for the polychromatic (that is, multicolored) reality of Latinos. Latinos generally trace their heritage to the indigenous peoples of the Americas, to Africa, and to Europe, in varying combinations, and there are some with Asian roots as well. This means that, in terms of color and other markers used to categorize race in the United States, Latinos can span the complete range.

For example, Clara Rodríguez (1991) uses the term "rainbow people" to describe how confusing Puerto Ricans were to North Americans, because they were both White and Black, but they were also neither White nor Black. This was problematic on the mainland where race, rather than ethnicity or culture, was viewed as the primary marker. Based on her research, Rodríguez argues that for Puerto Ricans cultural identification comes first, before racial identification;

this is the opposite pattern to that common in the United States. Thus, even though Puerto Ricans can be quite sensitive to color (for example, Betances 1992; Rivera 1982), they identify culturally and ethnically across lines that seem, to Anglo eyes, to be uncrossable. Indeed, Puerto Ricans vary in their racial identification depending on context, including class, education, language, and birthplace (Rodríguez 1992; Rodríguez and Cordero-Guzman 1992).

Puerto Ricans and other Latinos who trace their origins to the Caribbean do not follow the binary system of racial classification that is common in the United States. For them, "race is perceived as a spectrum running from White to Black, with many people falling in between" (Denton and Massey 1989:791; see also Duany 1998; Rodríguez and Cordero-Guzman 1992). Similarly, for Mexicans and Mexican Americans the racial spectrum ranges from White to Indian; those who identify as representing a combination of Indian and European ancestries are typically referred to as "mestizo."<sup>8</sup> The continuous systems of color classification used by Latinos do not fit well with the dichotomous system predominant in the United States. Non-Hispanic Americans are much more accustomed to assuming that being of different racial categories implies a different ethnicity, while Latinos do not necessarily make this assumption. Thus, for example, when a dark-skinned Puerto Rican—who may be classified as Black on the U.S. mainland—looks at a person with light skin—classified as White—he does not necessarily assume a different ethnicity solely on that basis.

The bipolar system of racial categorization that predominates in the United States has a great impact on Latinos, however. Denton and Massey (1989) have shown, for example, that Caribbean Hispanics who identified racially as Black in the 1980 Census are highly segregated from non-Hispanic Whites, but only somewhat segregated from U.S. Blacks. Those Hispanics who classified themselves racially as White, in contrast, were highly segregated from U.S. Blacks, but only somewhat segregated from Anglos. The two groups of Hispanics were also somewhat segregated from each other. Finally, those Hispanics who identified as neither White nor Black were also highly segregated from both Black Hispanics and U.S. Blacks but quite integrated with White Hispanics.

In his memoirs of growing up in Manhattan, Edward Rivera (1982), a light-skinned Puerto Rican, gives an example of internalizing anti-Black prejudice and the divisions this sometimes caused with his darker-skinned friends. In his autobiography, *Down These Mean Streets*, Piri

Thomas (1967), who migrated from Puerto Rico to the mainland with his family, provides a particularly poignant and well-known account of the experience of being confronted with the dichotomous notions of Black and White that operated in the New York of the 1950s. As Haney López (1998) puts it, Thomas “describes his transformation, which is both willed and yet not willed, from a Puerto Rican into someone Black” (1998:161). Interestingly, dark-skinned Piri had a very different experience in the Long Island schools than his light-skinned siblings. Piri’s classmates refused to see him as anything but Black. This impacted his family, who wanted to choose to be White as the key to social mobility and the American dream. Also, the family’s experience and treatment, as well as the way they were viewed racially, were very different in Puerto Rico, where the range of skin color in the family was typical, and in New York, where they were forced to choose between Black and White. This contrast eventually split the family (Haney López 1998). Haney López further explains that Thomas’s “dislocations suggest a spatial component to racial identities, an implication confirmed in Thomas’s travel from Spanish Harlem, where he was Puerto Rican, to Long Island, where he was accused of trying to pass, to the South, where he was black” (1998:165). Duany (1998) cites the case of a “mulatto Dominican colleague . . . [who] ‘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” (1998:147).

A common response to this situation has been the tendency to treat Latino identity as one more racial category and to attempt to force it to fit into the U.S. racial system.<sup>9</sup> Many surveys or forms inquiring about race, for example, include Latino or Hispanic as one of the categories from which to choose. The U.S. government, however, including the Bureau of the Census, classifies Hispanic identity as an ethnic—not a racial—classification. Hispanic or Latino is not an option on the Census race question, and the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (1998) in its official definition describes “Hispanic” as a “person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.”<sup>10</sup> This directive goes on to make the following suggestion:

To provide flexibility, it is preferable to collect data on race and ethnicity separately. If separate race and ethnic categories are used, the mini-

mum designations are: a. Race: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, White; b. Ethnicity: Hispanic origin, Not of Hispanic origin. When race and ethnicity are collected separately, the number of white and black persons who are Hispanic must be identified, and capable of being reported in that category. (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1998:158)

Within this system, Latinos are asked to identify themselves (or are identified by others) in terms of one of the four racial categories listed. In practice, this would mean classifying Latinos as either Black or White. Nevertheless, in 1990 a large proportion of Latinos (43 percent) classified themselves as being of "Other" race on the U.S. Census race question. Fifty-two percent of Latinos identified themselves as White on the 1990 Census, and 3 percent identified racially as Black. These percentages varied depending on the state, indicating both subgroup and regional differences in the degree to which being Hispanic was viewed as a racial construct. For example, in California, 50 percent of those responding "yes" to the Hispanic question said they were of "other" race, suggesting that they viewed Latino identity as a racial category. In contrast, in Florida only 15 percent of Hispanics said that they were of "other" race, while 80 percent said they were White. These percentages also vary as a function of the Hispanic subgroup. In the 1980 U.S. Census, for example, 37.5 percent of those of Mexican origin and 43.1 percent of Puerto Ricans said they were neither White nor Black, while only 10.5 percent of Cubans did so (Denton and Massey 1989). The proportion claiming White race in each of these groups was 55.4 percent, 48.3 percent, and 83.8 percent, respectively.<sup>11</sup> Massey and Denton (1992) have shown that people of Mexican origin with higher socioeconomic status—both native- and foreign-born—were much more likely to self-identify as White than as mestizo (that is, of mixed European and Indian background). Also, Mexican immigrants who had greater English language ability and were older (and thus had more experience in the United States) were also more likely to identify as White. Mestizos, in contrast to White Mexicans, were also less likely to live in suburban areas and thus were less likely to come into contact with non-Hispanic Whites.

Rodríguez (1992; Rodríguez and Cordero-Guzman 1992) interprets the high number of Latinos who identify as "other" as indicating a rejection of U.S. concepts of race as well as the fluidity of Latino racial

constructs. Indeed, in her research she found that among Puerto Ricans who were asked about their race in an open-ended format ("How would you describe yourself racially?"), only 11.1 percent said they were "White" and 1.6 percent said they were "Black," (compared to 44.2 percent and 3.9 percent, respectively, on the 1980 Census). Instead, they used a variety of terms, mostly referring to sociocultural characteristics rather than physical attributes. Interestingly, a substantial number of individuals labeled themselves as "other" in response to a closed question, but were seen as White by the interviewers (16.2 percent), or labeled themselves as White but were considered to be "Other" by the interviewers (23.3 percent). Finally, while 5.1 percent of the sample labeled themselves as "Black," 11.9 percent thought that North Americans would see them as Black. Rodríguez and Cordero-Guzman conclude:

The findings indicate that we cannot automatically assume that because Puerto Ricans choose to identify as "Other" they are placing themselves in a racially intermediate situation. For some Puerto Ricans, a cultural response also carries a racial implication, that is, they see race and culture as being fused. They emphasize the greater validity of ethnic or cultural identity. Culture is race, regardless of the physical types within the culture. Others see their culture as representing a "mixed" people. Still others view these concepts as independent, and a cultural response does not imply a racial designation for them. In this latter case, a respondent may identify as "Other-Puerto Rican" because he or she is not culturally or politically like white Americans or black Americans, regardless of his or her particular race. In essence, the United States of America may choose to divide its culture into White and Black races, but a Puerto Rican will not. (1992:539)

Thus, the variation in their relationship to predominant racial constructs in the United States makes it difficult to try to describe the racial identity of Latinos in conventional ways. Latinos both transcend and challenge the predominant categories. At the same time, Latinos have been molded and impacted by those very categories.

Luis Angel Toro (1998), reacting to the implications of OMB Directive No. 15 for Latinos, writes that "for most Chicanos, Directive No. 15 presents no right answer. Instead, Chicanos must choose some formula that misstates their identity or be forced into the statistical limbo of the 'Other' classification" (1998:211). He then goes on to give examples of the difficulties that some individuals may encounter when they try to answer questions based on the Directive. This in-

cludes a Chicano family in which the parents classify themselves differently from their children, and a fourth-generation Chicano who identifies with the American Indian category, based on his mestizo identity, rather than with the term Hispanic.

Similarly, Weinstein (1998) found in her study of ethnic identity among the children of one Mexican or Mexican American and one European American parent that self-assessed phenotype was not related to strength of ethnic identity. However, there was a negative correlation between respondents' assessment of how much they looked like a "typical Mexican" and how much they looked like a typical "White." This suggested a racialized<sup>12</sup> concept of Mexicanness among this group of individuals, in the sense that looking Mexican was generally seen as distinct from and incompatible with looking White. This is consistent with common usage in California, where newspapers and other media typically use "Latino" as a racial label, similar to the use of "Caucasian," "Black," or "Asian."

In her assessment of the operation of race and racial constructs among Puerto Ricans, Clara Rodríguez (1991) noted five key trends. First, she described Puerto Ricans as tending to see "White" and "Black" as cultural terms. While (at least initially) both Black and White Americans tend to assign these categories on the basis of phenotypes, and so would put Puerto Ricans in one or the other group depending on their physical appearance, Puerto Ricans themselves assign these categories on the basis of ethnic affiliation. Thus, Puerto Ricans generally do not see themselves as White or Black or as belonging to either group. Second, Puerto Ricans tend to use non-White as the default category for themselves. In other words, if forced to think in racial terms, they will not classify themselves as White. Third, Puerto Ricans use contextual racial definitions, often using different terms to self-identify racially at different times or in different situations, depending on the context. Fourth, Puerto Ricans apply a concept of deflected race, in the sense that the racial categorization of those in an individual's social surroundings can "rub off" on that person. When someone is accepted into a Whiter environment, for example through marriage or occupation, she can in a sense blend in and be considered White, regardless of phenotype or prior racial categorization. Fifth and finally, Puerto Ricans can appear to others as racial chameleons, switching racial identities from one situation and from one time period to another.

These dynamics are not limited to Puerto Ricans. Certainly, they



are present in varying degrees in all the Latino subgroups. More recent immigrants from Mexico, for example, sometimes refer to Whites on the basis of national origin as "Americanos" (Americans). In this context, Whiteness and U.S. citizenship are considered synonymous. This label may also be a reflection of the dominance of the United States in the Mexican psyche without reference to race or color as distinguishing factors. Also, this nomenclature suggests implicitly that while there are "Americans" throughout the continent, those who count most are citizens of the United States.

In sum, the racial constructs that have predominated in the United States do not easily apply to Latinos, and when they are forced to fit, they truncate and distort Latino realities. We shall now briefly discuss a few themes key to understanding Latino experiences of and reactions to race and racism.

#### Race and Color Are Important, but Secondary to Culture

As discussed earlier, Latinos identify with each other across lines that would be seen as racial in the United States (and therefore indicative of different groups). This is because "Latino" is experienced and treated as an ethnic and cultural category more than a racial one. This also means that someone claiming Latino identity solely on the basis of ancestry, with no ethnic or cultural markers attached, is less likely to be accepted as a genuine member of the group.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, color is a large issue in the Latino community, and racism, in the sense of a preference for and valuing of Whiteness and denial of African and indigenous heritage, remains common. A reaction to this can be seen in much Latino poetry (for example, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Tato Laviera, Aurora Levins Morales) and music (for example, Rubén Blades; see also Flores and Yúdice 1990; Padilla 1989) as well as in the Chicano rights movement that sought in part to instill pride in the mestizo heritage (see Klor de Alva 1999).

#### "Rainbow" Identities: Racial Fluidity and Mestizaje

Because they span the color spectrum, Latinos cannot be racially categorized in a simple manner. One result of this is that the categories used constantly shift from one individual to another and from one situation to another. In Mexico, "Indians" are considered to be

those living in their villages and maintaining Indian cultural traditions. Once the same individuals move to the city and assimilate into the dominant Mexican culture, they are no longer classified as "Indians" but become "Mexicans."

Historically Latinos have been the product of the blending of many cultures and ancestors. When Spain's dominance was at its peak, Spanish explorers covered the globe, gaining resources and territories for their native country. In the process, they conquered, colonized, and intermarried with native, indigenous people in most of the regions in which they established themselves. The intermingling process often included native "indios," Africans, Asians, and many other subgroups. The generations resulting from this blending of groups cannot be considered to belong to any one race but rather to many races. Thus the terms "mestizaje" or "mestizo" are meant to represent the current group—including many elements but none to the exclusion of others. Furthermore, it goes beyond a concept of biological blending to include cultural unity as well.<sup>14</sup>

#### Diverse Reactions to the U.S. Racial Order

Reactions to the imposed and self-imposed racial categories in the United States range from denial and shame to pride and acceptance. As described earlier, many Latinos choose to see themselves as White, while others place themselves in a distinct Latino racial category. Choosing to self-label as White could simply be a way of coping with the Census and describing one's perceived skin color. Or it could indicate a preference for one's European ancestry over one's African and/or Native American background. While some Latinos reject the label "person of color," because they see it as lumping them together with other groups that they would rather not compare themselves to, others are very proud of this denomination, and use it for precisely the same reason that others reject it. This theme is developed in later sections.

#### *Variables in Individual Identity Development*

Certainly, life experiences have a strong impact on the way individuals view themselves ethnically and racially. The familial and cultural context one is born into sets the initial parameters for one's identity.

Parents and extended family members instruct and inform children about the boundaries of "groupness," defining "our people" and distinguishing them from the "others" to be avoided, feared, respected, or emulated. The messages and attitudes about one's group conveyed by significant caregivers set the stage for understanding who one is in relation to other groups. Many Latinos are raised in relatively homogeneous environments where most significant contacts are primarily with other Latinos. Only upon entry into educational institutions do they begin to encounter people unlike themselves and get messages from others about how their group is seen. What they learned at home about themselves (for example, "we are better than others," "we are less than others," "we are no different than others," and so on) begins the process of orientation to the group. Later, in school, new messages about the group impact them and further shape their identity (see, for example, Zanger 1994). Again, these messages can be positive or negative depending on the environment and demographics of the region and teachers' attitudes to Latinos.

While the messages individual Latinos receive about the group may be positive, negative, or neutral, they have choices about how to respond to those messages. For example, if, as is all too common, teachers send the message that speaking Spanish is a barrier to the child's success, the child and the family can respond by accepting the teacher's viewpoint and work to eliminate Spanish from the child's communication, or they can resist the teacher's influence and strive to retain the child's bilingualism, or they can go underground and teach the child to speak Spanish only at home and avoid speaking it at school. They can accept the systemic push toward assimilation into the mainstream or they can find other ways of managing the tension of bilingualism. In this and other situations, individuals and families constantly make choices about how they see their difference and how they accommodate societal messages about themselves.

Early experiences with other ethnic and racial groups also have a strong influence on one's identity. Whether the exposure is to highly segregated or integrated environments influences how a particular Latino sees him/herself in relation to others. For example, being one of only a few Latinos in a predominantly White school would have very different consequences for the individual than being exposed to a highly diverse, multiethnic environment or a primarily Latino environment. This exposure, especially to Whites and other ethnic

groups, influences whether these groups are seen as allies or potential enemies, as competitors or colleagues.

While early experiences lay the foundation for group identification, adult life experiences also influence the way people identify their group and other groups. For example, individuals raised in fairly homogeneous, primarily Latino environments can be significantly affected by later exposure to more heterogeneous situations. Whether adult experiences with other groups are positive or negative can profoundly impact and modify early messages about one's identity in relation to other groups. Limited exposure to other ethnic and racial groups during their formative years of development may not adequately prepare people to deal with the diverse reality they encounter in adult life. If their messages about other groups were fairly positive, it may be unsettling and confusing to encounter racism and intergroup conflict. On the other hand, if there was a lack of exposure to other groups, or early messages about them were primarily negative, the reality of individual variation and group differences can challenge preexisting paradigms about others and the "racial order" they learned in their youth.

How one navigates one's way through various life experiences and the meanings attributed to these experiences shapes the ongoing sense of self in relation to other Latinos and other groups. Thus identity development needs to be seen as an ongoing, dynamic process rather than a static event, fluid rather than immutable once established. Additional factors that influence identity have been mentioned in prior sections of this chapter. National origin, generational status, early socialization, socioeconomic status, language patterns, levels of acculturation, physical appearance, color, gender, and geographical location are some of the major determinants of how an individual comes to see her- or himself in the racial order of U.S. society. In the next section, we present an initial framework for conceptualizing varying orientations to racial identity among Latinos and Latinas.

*Reflections on Latino Diversity and Identity Development:  
Toward a Model?*

Latino realities and perceptions, as described in prior sections, are complex and multifaceted. Ilan Stavans (1995), describing Latino

identity, refers to it as a "labyrinth" and discusses its mazelike qualities. Those just entering the maze and trying to make their way through it can find it quite confusing and exasperating, especially if they are accustomed to simple and linear paths. However, even mazes have some logic and certainly beauty to them, especially when examined from above. Stavans describes the labyrinth as follows:

Linear and circuitous, inextricable and impenetrable, the maze—complex, curved, distorted, wandering, winding, with constant double tracks—is a map of the Latino psyche. The apparent confusion it projects is only an illusion, a mask that is designed to entrap the mind, a concealment ready to catch you, to fool your senses in spite of your most purified awareness. A metaphor of metaphysical ambiguity, a figure that changes according to perspective, it confuses, infuriates, and disorganizes, but in its lack of organization, in its chaos, it is an example of perfected craftiness. . . . We simultaneously incorporate clarity and confusion, unity and multiplicity. (1995:93)

The reality of Latino identity, then, is precisely its labyrinthine nature. The difficulty in understanding Latinos is caused primarily by attempts to impose models from other racial groups onto Latinos, who defy easy categorization.<sup>15</sup> Here, we try to provide a guide through this meandering path with some thoughts about the types of identities Latinos may display, with particular reference to race and the racial order. We do not, however, intend this to be a model based on stages of development, but rather as a description of patterns we have observed. Stage models often imply that people move in a fairly sequential way through the various stages and build from one developmental step to the next (for example, Cross 1995; Helms 1995; Thompson and Carter 1997). Although some of the models acknowledge that racial identity development can be cyclical and is not necessarily linear, the stages are usually presented in the order that most people are thought to progress through them. Our thinking about Latino development at this point certainly suggests more patterns and orientations than clear-cut, predictable steps. In the context of our initial model, there may be movement from one orientation to another depending on a number of factors. It is also possible and feasible for some individuals to maintain one orientation throughout their lives with little or no movement or change.

## A Model of Latino Identity Development

As we have stressed throughout this chapter, many factors influence the way individual Latinos identify with their group. We present the following model as a way of describing various possible orientations. Each of the patterns identified can be a valid response to the myriad pressures Latinos face in coming to define themselves in a society that often disparages their identity and seeks to impose definitions rather than allow self-identification.

The most important dimensions in defining one's orientation toward one's identity as Latino/a, according to this model, include one's "lens" toward identity, how individuals prefer to identify themselves, how Latinos as a group are seen, how Whites are seen, and how "race" fits into the equation (see Table 2.2; it is important to stress again that the graphic representation of the orientations in the table is not meant to imply a linear stage model of development.)

TABLE 2.2  
*Latino and Latina Racial Identity Orientations*

Orientation	Lens	Identify as/ prefer	Latinos are seen	Whites are seen	Framing of Race
Latino-integrated	Wide	Individuals in a group context	Positively	Complex	Dynamic, contextual, socially constructed
Latino-identified (Racial/Raza)	Broad	Latinos	Very positively	Distinct; could be barriers or allies	Latino/not Latino
Subgroup- identified	Narrow	Own subgroup	My group OK, others maybe	Not central (could be barriers or blockers)	Not clear or central; secondary to nationality, ethnicity, culture
Latino as Other	External	Not White	Generically, fuzzily	Negatively	White/not White
Undifferentiated/ Denial	Closed	People	"Who are Latinos?"	Supposed color-blind (accept dominant norms)	Denial, irrelevant invisible
White-identified	Tinted	Whites	Negatively	Very positively	White/Black, either/or, one- drop or "mejorar la raza" (i.e., improve the race)

The metaphor of a "lens" fits well into our model, as it summarizes the way individuals view their ethnicity, how they "see" the wider issues and context of racial groups in the United States, and how much they take in versus how much they keep out. Our lenses for race limit the data we take in and support our frameworks for making sense of the environment.

### Orientations toward Latino Identity

In this section we present the types of orientations that we see among Latinos and Latinas. These do not exhaust the possibilities, nor do they address the complex issues involved in ethnic and cultural identity (see, for example, Ferdman 1990; Ferdman and Cortes 1992; Ferdman 2000; Ferdman and Horenczyk, in press).

#### ORIENTATION: LATINO-INTEGRATED

Latino-integrated individuals understand and are able to deal with the full complexity of Latino identity. They are aware of their own subgroup background and culture as well as how these relate to those of other Latino subgroups. Their Latino identity is fully integrated with their other social identities—for example, those based on gender, class, professional, and other dimensions. They are able to understand, explain, and use the interconnections, and understand and identify with many parts of themselves. Latinos with this type of racial identity orientation have a sense of themselves based on a philosophy of "both/and" rather than "either/or." Their identification with Latinos as a group encompasses both positive and negative attributions; they are able to appreciate the beauty and resilience of Latinos together with negative aspects of the group. They take into account the importance of their group membership without making this the only part of themselves they are aware of. For example, Latinas with an integrated orientation can identify fully with their culture and appreciate many of its aspects, while still being able to criticize other features and advocate for equality as women within the group. Identifying with their gender identity as women does not preclude their identification with Latinos as a group.

A Latino-integrated individual is quite comfortable with and inclusive of all types of Latinos. He or she is able to educate other Latinos about race and racial identity, and is quite likely to challenge prevailing

constructions of race. Of all the orientations in this model, this one utilizes the widest lens possible in viewing Latinos and the social context of the United States. Latino-integrated individuals see themselves and other Latinos as one of many groups coexisting in the multicultural fabric of the United States. Whites and members of other groups are seen broadly as well, and the complexity of their cultural and individual orientations is recognized and accepted. Individuals are seen as distinct from one another and as members of various groups.

ORIENTATION: LATINO-IDENTIFIED

Latinos with what we call a "Latino-identified" orientation maintain a pan-Latino identity but in a relatively nonrigid fashion that places culture, history, and other ethnic markers in a relatively prominent place. Compared to the orientations described later, they also have a less rigid view of other groups, which increases the possibilities and skills for networking and coalition building. Their notion of race is a uniquely Latino one, which means they do not accept the either/or nature of U.S. racial constructs. Theirs is a much more fluid, inclusive, and dynamic orientation than the others.

Many Latinos of this orientation define themselves as *La Raza*, a complex term that defies easy translation. As Oquendo describes it:

[T]he word "race"—or rather the Spanish equivalent *raza*—has special significance for Latino/as in the United States, particularly for Chicanos. *Raza* evokes a primeval and mythical union with the indigenous people that populated the North American expanse of Aztlan. The natives of Aztlan spread south and eventually formed the Nahuatl tribes living in Mexico as the European conquest began. The concept of race also has political connotations. "Raza" is the name taken by the organizations that initiated and have continued the struggle for political, social, and economic empowerment of the Chicano community. (1998:69)

Latino-identified persons view Latinos as a whole as constituting a distinct racial category across all Latino subgroups, and they identify with the entire group broadly defined, which they see very positively. They view Whites as constituting a distinctly different racial group, whose members can be potential barriers or allies, depending on their behavior. They see systemic factors and institutional racism as quite real and therefore actively value the fight against discrimination. For Latino-identified persons, culture is typically secondary to *raza*,



which they see as transcending cultural markers. They may see Whites, Blacks, and other groups in categorical and relatively rigid, unshifting terms.

#### ORIENTATION: SUBGROUP IDENTIFIED

Subgroup identified Latinos think of themselves primarily in terms of their own ethnic or national-origin subgroup, which is the focus of their identification. They view themselves as distinct from Whites but do not necessarily identify with other Latinos or people of color. Although aware of discrimination against themselves and other Latinos, they do not easily connect or identify with other Latino groups. They may join coalitions across subgroups, not so much from a sense of shared history or culture but more from necessity and the practical reality of greater numbers leading to increased societal power. Also, such individuals may vary in the degree to which their subgroup is a source of positive versus negative social identity, but in general they will prefer strategies for collective social change over the strategies for individual social mobility preferred by those who are White-identified.

At the same time, subgroup identified Latinos do not have the broad pan-Latino perspective of Latino-identified or Latino-integrated persons. In terms of our model, individuals with this orientation employ a more narrow and exclusive view of their groupness. They prefer to identify almost exclusively with their own particular subgroup, which they view positively, and they may view other groups, including other Latino subgroups, as deficient or inferior. Whites are not central to their thinking though they are conscious that Whites can be barriers to their full inclusion. Subgroup-identified Latinos do not view race as a central or clear organizing concept; instead nationality, ethnicity, and culture are seen as primary.

#### ORIENTATION: LATINO AS "OTHER"

Individuals with the orientation of Latino as "Other" are not very aware of their specific Latino background, history, and culture, but because of mixed background, phenotype, prevailing racial constructions, and other factors simply see themselves in a generic fashion as "persons of color" without distinguishing themselves from other subgroups. Thus, an individual with this orientation may describe him- or herself in some situations as a "minority." He or she may also resist such categorization and unite with others to eliminate such terminology.

In terms of our model, the lens primarily utilized by people with this orientation is an external one focused on the way the group is viewed by those outside the group. Such individuals see themselves as "not White" and do not have a clear view or much knowledge of their own group. They do not adhere to Latino cultural values or norms but do not identify with White cultural values or norms either. They see Whites as distinct and frame race as White or not White. The difference between a "White-identified" orientation (below) and Latino as "other" is that those with the latter orientation identify themselves as being on the other end of the continuum and see their color as a major unifying factor that connects them to other people of color rather than to the dominant group.

ORIENTATION: UNDIFFERENTIATED

Latinos with an undifferentiated orientation use a lens that is relatively closed in comparison to the other patterns. They prefer to identify themselves and others as "just people," often claiming to be color-blind and promoting this orientation to others of all groups. "Why can't we all just get along?" might be the motto for this group. They do not share the focus on racial categorization that many people have in the United States and they live their lives relatively oblivious to differences in general. They accept the dominant norms of our society without question and when they encounter barriers to their inclusion, they attribute these setbacks to individual behavior rather than intergroup dynamics. They do not seek any particular association with other Latinos, since they prefer to view each person as distinct from his or her racial or ethnic identity.

ORIENTATION: WHITE-IDENTIFIED

White-identified Latinos are those who are likely to see themselves racially as White, and as distinct from, and generally superior to, people of color. This orientation includes individuals who value and prefer "Whiteness" and all that it connotes. Such persons can be assimilated to White culture and society and quite disconnected from other Latinos, or alternately can be connected to a particular Latino subgroup (for example, Cuban refugees) while denying or not seeing any connection to other subgroups. This orientation is also reflected in people who recognize, either consciously or unconsciously, that they are different in some way from Whites as defined in the U.S., but they

continue to prefer all that is connected to Whiteness, and to emphasize that for themselves and/or their children. Essentially, this means that they are generally accepting and unquestioning of the U.S. racial order. Although people in this orientation may be bicultural, they value Whiteness as an essential and primary element of their identity.

Latinos who are White-identified see the world through a White-tinted lens, preferring Whites and White culture over Latinos and Latino culture. They generally view Latinos as less than Whites, whom they view very positively when making cross-group comparisons. White-identified Latinos view race in bifurcated terms—White or Black—with clear-cut distinctions. Such individuals may ascribe to the “one-drop rule,” seeing people clearly on one side or the other of the racial divide. They view intermarriage with Whites positively while viewing marriage to darker groups negatively. A term often heard among Latinos with this orientation is *mejorar la raza*, which indicates that they see marrying Whites as a way of improving Latinos, while marrying Blacks or Browns diminishes the group.

### Extending the Model

What we have presented so far is an initial framework that can and should be extended and further developed. Areas that we believe it would be most fruitful to pursue include the following:

- To what extent does each orientation capture the range of an individual's experience? Can someone incorporate elements of more than one orientation at once? Under what conditions will this be the case?
- What factors lead to each orientation? How are the specific socialization contexts or life experiences related to individual orientations? What is the role of variables such as external stressors, perceived threats from others to oneself or to one's group, relationships with other people, language use and ability, phenotype, and family composition? How do life circumstances and their meanings relate to individual orientations, both as antecedents and as consequences?
- How fluid are individuals' orientations? When and how do people transition between different orientations? What life events or other factors trigger or facilitate such transitions? Are there

typical transition sequences that can be observed or are transitions relatively idiosyncratic? What is the experience of such movement like for the person?

- What are the unique strengths associated with each orientation? How do individuals with the various orientations fit into varying roles in organizations or other societal institutions?
- What are the consequences of individuals' orientations for life choices and other outcomes? Are there systematic differences between people with different orientations?
- What is the best way to assess where an individual is in terms of the model? What are the types of manifestations or indicators best suited to measuring racial identity orientations?

The question of transitions between orientations is a particularly important one. As individuals change their social circumstances or their ecological conditions—for example, by moving from one neighborhood or city to another, going to college or the military, encountering discrimination, or living through social change processes such as the civil rights movement of the 1960s—their racial identity orientation is likely to be challenged and in many cases modified. An example of this process is provided by Joseph Tovares (1998), a college-educated Chicano from Texas reporting on farm workers for a television news program, who in the process of engaging with the subjects of his story reconnected with other Latinos across class lines. In summarizing his experience, he stated that it “made me confront ugly realities about how this society treats a hidden underclass. Most important, it made me realize how easy it is for many of us who have escaped to simply forget” (98).

### *Implications of the Model for Research and Practice*

The model we have presented is not intended to pigeonhole individuals, but to be a descriptive approach to capturing some of the richness and variety inherent in the Latino experience in the United States. By acknowledging the diversity among Latinos in orientations toward race and racial identity, we hope to help foster a societal environment in which Latinos and Latinas are more fully included and understood. Thus we must caution against overgeneralizations about

individuals on the basis of this model. Nevertheless, it can provide a basis for research and practice with Latinos that is especially cognizant of the range of orientations toward race in this population.

This model represents an initial attempt to describe the various orientations that Latinos and Latinas may have regarding their own racial identity. We believe that it can be useful to someone seeking to understand or work with Latinos and Latinas in a way that more broadly recognizes and accepts the breadth of their experience. By cutting across traditional demographic markers such as national origin, the model provides a way of describing many of the psychological commonalities among Latinos without force-fitting them into one mold. In this sense, the model is useful not only as an account of Latino and Latina identity, but also as a reminder of broader lessons regarding the complexity of identity among all groups.

The model may have specific applications in research, education, the workplace, or other contexts. For example, researchers interested in Latinos can use it to consider more carefully the characteristics of the specific subgroups on which they focus. It may be insufficient to describe the demographic composition of a research sample when variations in results may be related to the different racial identity orientations represented. Those interested in more fully including Latinos in educational or work contexts will need to consider how an initiative may be interpreted by those holding different orientations. For example, individuals who are White-identified may react quite differently to opportunities targeted specifically to Latinos than those who are Latino-identified. Dynamics that may be puzzling to non-Latinos—for example, apparent in-group conflicts—may become more comprehensible when seen through the prism of the model we have presented.

As the Latino population in the United States grows, it will be incumbent on everyone to learn more about this group. As Latinos play an increasing role in the future of the United States, perspectives and information that deepen our knowledge about how best to include this group will be especially important. The model we have presented may be useful in increasing our collective capacity to deal with the complexity of Latino diversity specifically and racial constructs more generally. Rather than force-fitting Latinos into categories that do not fit, we may need to create larger or different categories. This will involve shifting frameworks for individuals and groups, and can pro-

vide valuable insight not only into Latinos but into other groups as well. For example, the U.S. Census is now dealing with the growth of "Multiracial" as a category. From all indications, this will be the wave of the future. Latinos have a long history of dealing with mixture, from which much can be learned.

The broadening of racial thinking in the United States to include groups other than Blacks and Whites will expand our collective understanding, and will help us address the complexities and realities of race relations in this country.

#### NOTES

We are grateful to Evangelina Holvino and the editors of this volume for their thoughtful and very helpful comments on earlier drafts of the chapter.

1. When we refer to Latinos, we mean the term to include both men and women. We have chosen this usage to avoid the cumbersome "Latino/a" or "Latinos and Latinas" in every case, although we often do use the longer terms to highlight our discomfort with using the male-gendered noun or adjective "Latino" exclusively.

2. For elaborated accounts of similar experiences and discussion of the implications for Latinos of the bipolar Black/White paradigm for racial classification prevalent in the United States, see Delgado 1998; E. Martínez 1998; Perea 1998. In a related vein, Evangelina Holvino (personal communication, November 20, 1999) reminded us that while identity is complex for anyone, Latinos are unique in the United States in that we have tried to maintain this complexity in the foreground.

3. It is important to point out that we do not address Latino ethnic identity in this chapter. This has been the subject of much theoretical and empirical work (e.g., Bernal and Knight 1993; Padilla 1995) which focuses on the cultural aspects of Latino identity (see also Ferdman 1992 for a discussion of the components of ethnicity). Helms (1996) distinguishes racial and ethnic identity models, suggesting that those primarily related to intergroup relations of domination and oppression should be considered "racial," while those focused on the acquisition and maintenance of cultural characteristics should be considered "ethnic." This chapter addresses primarily the former and not the latter.

4. We believe that there is a shift going on at present toward a growing usage and preference for the term "Latino" as the denominator for the group. However, a significant segment of the population, including many members of the group, prefers and continues to use the term "Hispanic." Thus, while

our own preference is for "Latino" and "Latina," we also use "Hispanic," particular when this is how the authors or sources that we cite used it. (See note 5 for further discussion of this issue.)

5. The Census uses the term "Hispanic" and includes people from Spain in this category. Most social scientists using the term Latino, however, focus on people from the Americas. Quiñones-Rosado provides a useful discussion of the debate on the use of these terms and the reasons why he prefers "Latino" to "Hispanic." As he puts it:

In contrast with the term "Hispanic," the primary point of reference of the term "Latino" is not Spain, but rather Spain's former colonies in Latin America. Therefore, "Latinos/as" are people of Latin-American origin, with ties to the region that encompasses virtually all of South America, much of the Caribbean, and Central America, and Mexico, *including* those parts of the national territory of the United States which were appropriated from Mexico not all that long ago: Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada, California, Arizona. (1998:21, italics in original)

He goes on to argue:

So it is the combined forces of geography, culture, race, nationality and colonialism that define the Latin-American experience. And it is this gestalt, this dynamic interaction of elements, that provides the basic framework for a definition of U.S. "Latinos,"—not merely the Spanish language or other cultural ties to Spain. (1998:22)

6. In 1990, over three-fourths of Latinos over the age of five spoke at least some Spanish at home (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993). The growth of the Latino population has allowed and fostered the maintenance of cultural values and traditions. In contrast to the one-way assimilation predicted by sociologists in the past (Frederickson 1999), Latinos as a group value cultural preservation a great deal. Even though assimilation continues to take place for many individuals, the dominant patterns are often absorbed and converted to Latino realities, and bicultural patterns are quite prevalent (Bernal and Knight 1993; Birman 1998; Cuellar et al. 1997; Phinney and Devich-Navarro 1997). Latinos who leave ethnic enclaves for more mixed neighborhoods, rather than assimilating, often show increases in ethnic pride (Safa 1988). Further, a focus and valuing of family continues to be a common denominator in Latino communities. Finally, the vast majority of Latinos are Roman Catholic in practice or background (although this is rapidly changing with the influx of many Latinos into fundamentalist Protestant denominations and other religions).

7. For additional discussion of these issues, see Jones-Correa and Leal (1996). These authors review and critique the competing positions regarding the degree to which Latino identity reflects shared cultural features across the various national- origin groups versus simply an instrumental way to facili-

tate collective action. Using data from the Latino National Political Survey, they find that neither the cultural nor the instrumental model is sufficient to explain Latino identification with panethnic categories. Distinguishing between *constructed* and *instrumental* identities, these researchers conclude:

What the data suggest is that Latino identity is (as many have suggested) largely constructed in the United States, rather than being brought wholesale to the United States by immigrants from Latin America. However, the data also suggest that this identity, once constructed, is not being used simply instrumentally. People who choose a panethnic identifier seem to do so in general, regardless of the specific circumstances and apart from any strategic consideration . . . . The fact that people's identities may be constructed does not argue against the suggestion that they may have real attachments to these constructed identities. (1996:239-240)

8. Klor de Alva analyzes the development and use of the construct of "mestizo" over the centuries, as well as the associated "ideology of *mestizaje*" (1999:175), which he describes as being—in its Mexican form in the early part of the twentieth century—"the powerful nation-building myth that was to help link dark-skinned castas, Euro-Americans, and Indians into one nation-state" (1999:175). Klor de Alva refers to *mestizaje* as "cipher-like." According to him, a "cipher is a place holder denoting neither quantity nor magnitude" and also "stands both for a coded method of inscription and for the key that unlocks the coded meaning" (1999:175). Thus, he chooses the metaphor of "'cipherspace'—a space that can hide the secrets of identity while simultaneously providing the clues to its discovery" to describe "the conceptual and social space of *mestizaje*" (1999:175).

9. George Martinez (1998) discusses the contrasts and tensions between the frequent legal constructions of Mexican Americans as White and their construction as a racial "Other" by Anglo writers, opinion makers, and the general public.

10. In October 1997, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published revised standards for collecting data on race and ethnicity as Appendix A in U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1999. In this new document, Hispanic or Latino continues to be defined the same way as before. However, the standards provide that, with respect to the available categories on data-gathering forms, "respondents shall be offered the option of selecting one or more racial designations" (1999:75). Moreover, in a section of the implementation guide, the OMB writes: "Under the new standards, 'Hispanic or Latino' is clearly designated as an ethnicity and not as a race. Whether or not an individual is Hispanic, every effort should be made to ascertain the race or races with which an individual identifies" (1999:10). This could be interpreted in at least two ways. On the one hand, the OMB may be



acknowledging that Latinos conceptualize race differently from others in the United States. On the other hand, and more likely, this may be interpreted as reinforcing the racial categorization system that has predominated over the course of U.S. history (the only change being the recognition of the increasing Multiracial component of the population).

11. In 1996, the U.S. Census conducted studies to assess the impact of various potential changes for the 2000 Census, including (a) adding a Multiracial category to the race question, (b) permitting respondents to pick more than one category on the race question, and (c) placing the question about Hispanic origin before the race question, rather than after it as in the 1990 Census (see U.S. Bureau of the Census 1996, 1997). Some of the results of these studies were quite interesting from the perspective of understanding the racial identity of Latinos. First, over 25 percent of Hispanics did not respond at all to the question asking about race (which did not include a choice of *Hispanic*). Second, and most interesting in terms of the present chapter, when respondents were asked whether or not they were of "Hispanic/Spanish origin" before they were asked their racial category, those responding "Yes" to the Hispanic question were much less likely to indicate their race as "other." Only 24.9 percent of Hispanics in the sample said they were of "other race," compared to 42.9 percent in the group responding to the Hispanic question after the race question. Moreover, asking the Hispanic question first increased the self-identification of Hispanics on the race question as White from 52.5 percent to 72.1 percent. This and other related studies show that when Hispanics were given the opportunity to self-identify as Hispanic *before* being asked about their racial identification, a larger proportion was likely to see themselves as White, and a smaller proportion as of "other race" or of multiple races.

12. By "racialized," we mean a view that divides people into mutually exclusive categories that are primarily based on physical features (phenotype) and the meaning ascribed to those features. In this regard, see Torres, Mirón, and Inda (1999). These authors, citing Robert Miles, discuss racialization as a process by which biological features are given social meaning so as to construct social groups and structure their social relations. See also Small (1999), who explores the implications of racialization processes for individual and group experience.

13. See Corlett (1999) for a related philosophical discussion of the criteria of Latino identity. He outlines what he calls a "moderate conception of Latino identity" in which genealogical ties to a Latino group are a necessary and sufficient condition for Latino identity, yet the degree of Latino identity is established through a combination of other criteria, including knowledge of and interest in the Spanish language, a Latino name, engagement in Latino culture, self-perception and perception by others—both Latino and non-Latino—as Latino.

14. Klor de Alva describes the shifts over time in the conceptualization of *mestizaje*. In contrast to an earlier focus on "the collapse of distinct cultures into a Mexican way of being Spanish" (1999:176), later constructions reemphasized indigenous roots:

Creative Chicanos, searching for common roots to unite the disparate communities, identified Aztlán, the mythical homeland of the Aztecs, with the US Southwest and consequently—in the imagination of many—symbolically transformed all Chicanos (despite their differences) into the most authentic of Mexicans: the direct descendants of the Aztecs! By leaping over the Europeanizing version of *mestizaje* all Mexican-Americans were thus linked to the *colonized* descendants of the pre-contact Aztecs. (1999:176, italics in original)

15. One example is Helms's (1995) People of Color racial identity development model (see also Thompson and Carter 1997), which takes a framework developed initially with reference to Blacks (Helms 1990), and essentially extends it to all people of color without much modification or consideration of the specific experience of the various groups.

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