We are all Americans!: the Latin Americanization of racial stratification in the USA

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1. Introduction

Racial stratification in the United States has operated along bi-racial lines (White–non-White) for centuries.[1] For demographic (the relative large size of the Black population) and historical reasons (the centrality of Blacks to the national economic development from the 17th to the middle part of the 20th century), the bi-racial order has been anchored on the Black–White experience (Feagin, 2000). Historically, those on the non-White side of the divide have shared similar experiences of colonialism, oppression, exploitation, and racialization (Amott & Matthaei, 1991). Hence, being non-White has meant having a restricted access to the multiple benefits or "wages of whiteness" (Roediger, 1991) such as good housing, decent jobs, and a good education.

Nevertheless, the post-civil rights era has brought changes in how racial stratification seems to operate. For example, significant gaps in status have emerged between groups that previously shared a common denizen position in the racial order. Asian Americans in particular have almost matched the socioeconomic standing of Whites and, in some areas (e.g., educational attainment), have surpassed them.[2] For example, in selective colleges across the nation, Asian Americans are represented at 3–10 times their national proportion (U.S. News and World Report, 2003). Another example of the changes is the high rate of interracial dating and marriage between Latinos and Whites and Asians and Whites (Moran, 2001; Qian & Lichter, 2000). These interracial unions, coupled with the collapse of formal segregation, have created the political space for "multiracial activists" to force the Census Bureau in 2000 to allow respondents to pick all the races they felt apply to them (Daniels, 2002; Parker & Song, 2001). Yet another instance of the changes in contemporary America is that few Whites endorse in surveys segregationist views. This has been heralded by some as reality as "the end of racism"

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(D'Souza, 1995) or pointing to "the declining significance of race" (Wilson, 1978). Lastly, Blacks have been surpassed by Latinos as the largest minority group (by 2001, the Census noted that "Hispanics" were 13 percent of the population and Blacks 12 percent).

I propose that all this reshuffling denotes that the bi-racial order typical of the United States, which was the exception in the world-racial system,[3] is evolving into a complex tri-racial stratification system similar to that of many Latin American and Caribbean nations (Degler, 1986; Russell, 1994; Wade, 1997). Specifically, I suggest that the emerging tri-racial system will be comprised of "Whites" at the top, and intermediary group of "honorary Whites"— similar to the coloreds in South Africa during formal apartheid (Fredrickson, 1981), and a non-White group or the "collective Black" at the bottom. In Fig. 1 I sketch how these three groups may look like. I hypothesize that the White group will include "traditional" Whites, new "White" immigrants and, in the near future, assimilated Latinos, some multiracials, and other

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                              "Whites"
Whites
New Whites (Russians, Albanians, etc.)
Assimilated white Latinos
Some multiracials
Assimilated (urban) Native Americans
A few Asian-origin people




                          "Honorary Whites"
Light-skinned Latinos
Japanese Americans
Korean Americans
Asian Indians
Chinese Americans
Middle Eastern Americans
Most multiracials




                          "Collective Black"
Filipinos
Vietnamese
Hmong
Laotians
Dark-skinned Latinos
Blacks
New West Indian and African immigrants
Reservation-bound Native Americans

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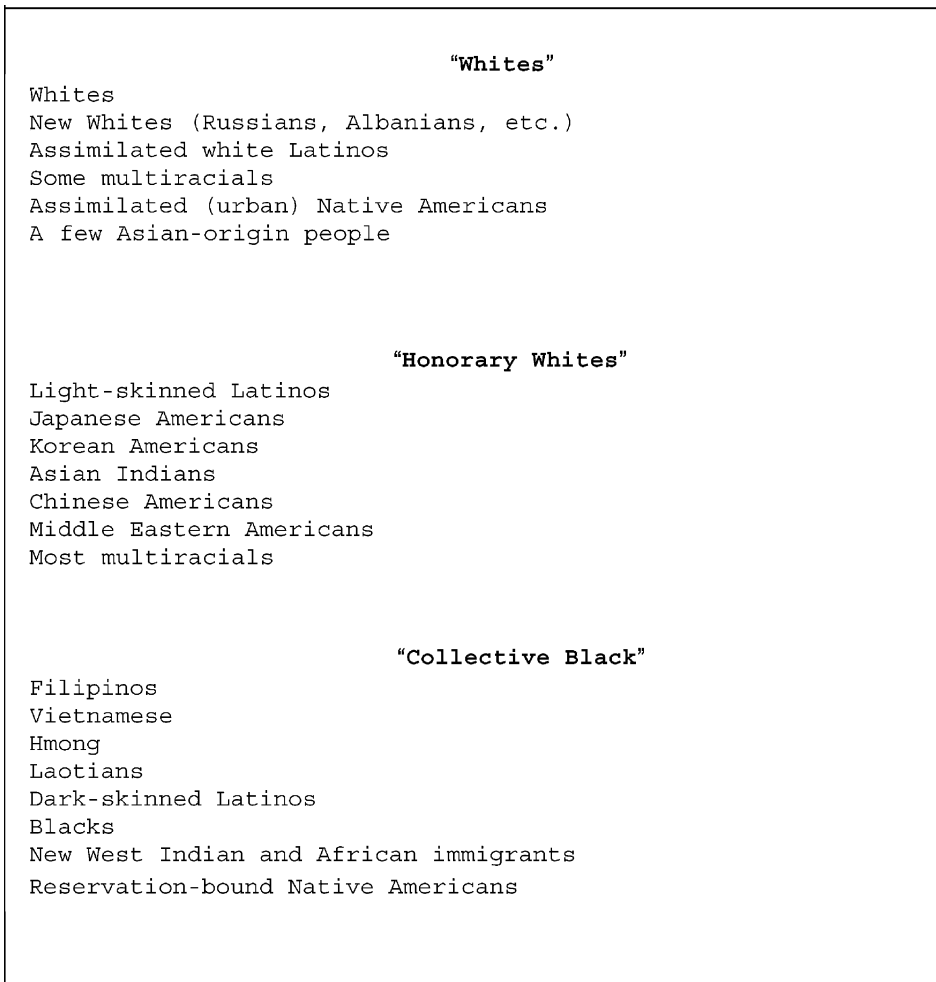
Fig. 1. Preliminary map of tri-racial system in the USA.

sub-groups; the intermediate racial group or honorary Whites will comprise most light-skinned Latinos (e.g., most Cubans and segments of the Mexican and Puerto Rican communities), Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, Asian Indians, Chinese Americans, and most Middle Eastern Americans Americans; and, finally, that the collective Black will include Blacks, dark-skinned Latinos, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, and maybe Filipinos.

As a tri-racial system (or Latin- or Caribbean-like racial order), race conflict will be buffered by the intermediate group, much like class conflict is when the class structure includes a large middle class (Bottomore, 1968). Furthermore, color gradations, which have always been important matters of within-group differentiation, will become more salient factors of stratification. Lastly, Americans, like people in complex racial stratification orders, will begin making nationalists appeals ("We are all Americans"), decry their racial past, and claim they are "beyond race" (Martínez-Echazabal, 1998).

I recognize that my thesis is broad (attempting to classify where everyone will fit in the racial order), bold (making a prediction about the future of race relations), and hard to verify empirically with the available data (there is no data set that includes systematic data on the skin tone of all Americans). Hence, my goals in this paper are somewhat more modest. First, I explain why I contend a tri-racial system is emerging. Second, I examine if the available objective (e.g., data on income and education), subjective (e.g., racial attitudes and racial self-classification), and social interactional indicators (intermarriage and residential choices) point in the direction of a tri-racial order. Lastly, I discuss what may be the political implications of this new order for the racial politics of the future.

2. Why would a tri-racial system be emerging in the USA now?

Why would race relations in the United States be moving toward a tri-racial regime at this point in history? The reasons are multiple. First, the demography of the nation is changing. Racial minorities are up to 30 percent of the population and, as population projections suggest, may become a numeric majority in the year 2050 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996). And these projections may be slightly off downward as early releases from the 2000 Census suggest that the Latino population was about 12.5 percent of the population, almost 1 percentage points higher than the highest projection and the proportion White (77.1 percent White or in combination) was slightly lower than originally expected (Grieco & Cassidy, 2001).

The rapid darkening of America is creating a situation similar to that of many Latin American and Caribbean nations where the White elites realized their countries were becoming "Black" or "Indian" and devised a number of strategies to whiten their population and maintaining White power (Helg, 1990). Although whitening the population through immigration or by classifying many newcomers as White (Gans, 1999; Warren & Twine, 1997) is a possible solution to the new American demography, a more plausible accommodation to the new racial reality, and one that would still help maintain "White supremacy" (Mills, 1997), is to (1) create an intermediate racial group to buffer racial conflict, (2) allow some newcomers into the White racial strata, and (3) incorporate most immigrants into the collective Black strata.

Second, as part of the tremendous reorganization that transpired in America in the post-civil rights era, a new kinder and gentler White supremacy emerged which Bonilla-Silva has labeled

elsewhere as the "new racism" (Bonilla-Silva, 2001, see also Smith, 1995). In post-civil rights America the maintenance of systemic White privilege is accomplished socially, economically, and politically through institutional, covert, and apparently non-racial practices. Whether in banks or Universities, in stores or housing markets, "smiling discrimination" tends to be the order of the day. This kinder and gentler form of White supremacy has produced an accompanying ideology: the ideology of color-blind racism. This ideology denies the salience of race, scorns those who talk about race, and increasingly proclaims that "We are all Americans" (for a detailed analysis of color-blind racism, see Bonilla-Silva, 2003).

Third, race relations have become globalized (Lusane, 1997). The once almost all-White Western nations have now "interiorized the other" (Miles, 1993). The new world-systemic need for capital accumulation has led to the incorporation of "dark" foreigners as "guest workers" and even as permanent workers (Schoenbaum & Pond, 1996). Thus, today European nations have racial minorities in their midst who are progressively becoming an underclass (Castles & Miller, 1993; Cohen, 1997), have developed an internal "racial structure" (Bonilla-Silva, 1997) to maintain White power, and have a curious racial ideology that combines ethnonationalism with a race-blind ideology similar to the color-blind racism of the United States today (for more on this, see Bonilla-Silva, 2000).

This new global racial reality will reinforce the trend towards tri-racialism in the United States as versions of color-blind racism will become prevalent in most Western nations (Winant, 2001). Furthermore, as many formerly almost-all White Western countries (e.g., Germany, France, England, etc.) become more and more racially diverse, tri-racial divisions may surface in these societies, too.

Fourth, the convergence of the political and ideological actions of the Republican Party, conservative commentators and activists, and the so-called "multi-racial" movement (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002), has created the space for the radical transformation of the way we gather racial data in America. One possible outcome of the Census Bureau categorical back-and-forth on racial and ethnic classifications is either the dilution of racial data or the elimination of race as an official category (Nobles, 2000).

Lastly, the attack on affirmative action, which is part of what Steinberg (1995) has labeled as the "racial retreat," is the clarion call signaling the end of race-based social policy in the United States. Although it is still possible to save a watered-down version of this program, at this point, this seems doubtful. Again, this trend reinforces my thesis because the elimination of race-based social policy is, among other things, predicated on the notion that race no longer affects minorities' status. Hence, as in many countries of the world, the United States may eliminate race by decree and maintain—or even increase—the level of racial inequality (for recent data on Brazil, see Lovell & Wood, 1998).

3. A look at the data

3.1. Objective indicators of standing of the three racial strata

If the racial order in the United States is becoming tri-racial, significant gaps in socioeconomic status between Whites, honorary Whites, and the collective Black should be developing.

Table 1
Mean per capita income[a] ($) of different ethnic groups, 1990

Latinos	Mean income	Asian Americans	Mean income
Mexican			
Americans Mexican	6470.05	Chinese	12695.05
Americans			
Puerto Ricans	7250.20	Japanese	15801.93
Cubans	11727.21	Koreans	10177.38
Guatemalans	7103.94	Asian Indians	15857.61
Salvadorans	6745.21	Filipinos	12313.99
Costa Ricans	10615.79	Taiwanese	13310.58
Panamanians	10701.25	Hmong	1191.89
Argentines	15506.40	Vietnamese	7930.65
Chileans	12727.60	Cambodians	3759.82
Bolivians	10661.95	Laotians	4520.04
Whites	12159.18	Whites	12159.18
Blacks	7210.56	Blacks	7210.56

Source: 1990 PUMS 5 percent sample.

[a] I use per capita income as family income distort the status of some groups (particularly Asians and Whites) as some groups have more people than others contributing toward the family income.

The available data suggests this is the case. In terms of income, as Table 1 shows, Latino groups that are mostly White (Argentines, Chileans, Costa Ricans, and Cubans) have per capita incomes that are 40–100 percent higher that those of Latino groups that are predominantly comprised of dark-skinned people (Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans). The exceptions in Table 1 (Bolivians and Panamanians) are examples of self-selected immigrants. For example, 4 of the largest 10 concentrations of Bolivians are in the state of Virginia, a state with just 7.2 percent Latinos (Census Bureau, 2000).[4] Table 1 also reveals a similar pattern for Asians: a severe income gap is emerging among honorary White Asians (Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, and Chinese) and those I classify as belonging to the collective Black (Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotians). (Data on educational standing and poverty rates analyzed elsewhere (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2003) exhibit the same pattern.)

Substantial group differences are also evident in the occupational status of the groups (based on data from 1990 PUMS not shown in table form). White Latinos, although far from Whites, are between 50 and 100 percent more likely to be represented in the "Managerial and Professional" and "Technical" categories than dark-skinned Latinos (for example, whereas 32 percent of Costa Ricans are in such categories, only 17 percent of Mexicans are). Along the same lines, elite Asians are even more likely to be well-represented in the higher prestige occupational categories than underclass Asians for example, 45 percent of Asian Indians are in "Professional" and "Technical" jobs, but only 5 percent of Hmong, 9 percent of Laotians, 10 percent of Cambodians, and 23 percent of Vietnamese (see footnote 2).

3.2. Subjective indicators of "consciousness" of three racial strata

Social psychologists have amply demonstrated that it takes very little for groups to form, develop a common view, and adjudicate status positions to nominal characteristics (Ridgeway,

1991; Tajfel, 1970). Thus, it should not be surprising if objective gaps in income, occupational status, and education between these various groups is contributing to group formation. That is, honorary Whites may be classifying themselves as "White" or believing they are better than the "collective Black." If this is happening, this group should also be in the process of developing White-like racial attitudes befitting of their new social position and differentiating (distancing) themselves from the "collective Black." In line with my thesis, I also expect Whites to be making distinctions between honorary Whites and the collective Black, specifically, exhibiting a more positive outlook toward the former than toward the latter. Finally, if a tri-racial order is emerging, I speculate the "collective Black" will begin to exhibit a diffused and contradictory racial consciousness as Blacks and Indians tend to do throughout Latin America and the Caribbean (Hanchard, 1994; Wade, 1997). I examine data for the first corollary and will mention general findings on the latter two in the final section.

3.2.1. Latinos' self-reports on race

Historically, most Latinos have classified themselves as "White," but the proportion who do so varies tremendously by group. Hence, as Table 2 shows, whereas 60 percent or more of the members of the Latino groups I regard as honorary White classify themselves as White, 50 percent or less of the members of the groups I regard as belonging to the collective Black do so. As a case in point, whereas Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Central Americans are very likely to report "Other" as their preferred "racial" classification, most Costa Ricans, Cubans, Chileans, and Argentines choose the "White" descriptor. This Census 1990 data mirrors the results of the 1988 Latino National Political Survey (De la Garza, DeSipio, Chris Garcia, Garcia, & Falcon, 1992).

3.2.2. "Racial" distinctions among Asians

Although for political matters, Asians tend to vote panethnically (Espiritu, 1992), distinctions between native-born and foreign-born (e.g., American-born Chinese and foreign-born Chinese) and between economically successful and unsuccessful Asians are developing. In fact, according to various analysts, given the tremendous diversity of experiences among Asian

Table 2
Racial self-classification by selected Hispanic-origin groups, 1990

	White	Black	Other	Native	Asian
Dominicans	29.34	24.61	44.79	0.78	0.49
Salvadorans	38.96	0.89	59.19	0.33	0.63
Guatemalans	41.55	1.41	54.97	0.54	1.54
Hondurans	47.80	8.17	43.48	0.36	0.19
Puerto Ricans	46.42	4.90	47.46	0.25	0.98
Mexicans	50.63	0.72	47.37	0.79	0.49
Costa Ricans	59.38	6.51	32.99	0.54	0.58
Colombians	64.07	0.25	33.55	0.32	0.49
Bolivians	68.08	0.35	30.99	0.06	0.53
Venezuelans	73.45	3.42	22.16	0.49	0.49
Chileans	74.61	0.25	24.17	0.44	0.54
Cubans	84.76	3.13	11.75	0.08	0.29
Argentines	85.06	0.23	14.33	0.02	0.36

Source: 1990 PUMS 5 percent sample.

Americans "all talk of Asian panethnicity should now be abandoned as useless speculation" (San Juan, 2000, p. 10). Saito (1998), in his *Race and Politics*, points out that many Asians have reacted to the "Asian flack" they are experiencing with the rise in Asian immigration by fleeing the cities of immigration, disidentifying from new Asians, and invoking the image of the "good immigrant." In some communities, this has led to older, assimilated segments of a community to dissociate from recent migrants. For example, a Nisei returning to his community after years or overseas military service, told his dad the following about the city's new demography: "Goddamn dad, where the hell did all these Chinese came from? Shit, this isn't even our town anymore (ibid., p. 59)."

To be clear, my point is not that Asian Americans have not engaged in coalition politics and, in various locations, engaged in concerted efforts to elect Asian American candidates (Saito, 1998). My point is that the group labeled "Asian Americans" is profoundly divided along many axes and to forecast that many of those already existing divisions will be racialized by Whites (e.g., sexploitation of Asian women by lonely White men in the "Oriental bride" market) (Kitano & Rogers, 1995) as well as by Asian American themselves (e.g., intra-Asian preferences seem to follow a racialized hierarchy of desire) (see data on this in Moran, 2001 and Tuan, 1998).

3.2.3. Latinos' and Asians' racial attitudes

The incorporation of the *majority* of Latinos as "colonial subjects" (Puerto Ricans), refugees from wars (Central Americans), or illegal migrant workers (Mexicans) has foreshadowed subsequent patterns of integration into the American racial order. Nevertheless, the incorporation of a minority of Latinos as "political refugees" (Cubans, Chileans, and Argentineans) or as "neutral" immigrants trying to better their economic situation (Costa Rica, Colombia) has allowed them a more comfortable ride in America's racial boat (Pedraza, 1985). Therefore, whereas the incorporation of most Latinos has meant becoming "non-White," for a few it has meant becoming almost White.

The identification of most Latinos as "racial others" has led them to be more likely to be pro-Black than pro-White. For example, the proportion of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans who indicates feeling very warm toward Blacks is much higher (about 12 percentage points for Mexicans and 14 percentage points for Puerto Ricans) that toward Asians (the readings in the "thermometer" range from 0 to 100 and the higher the "temperature" is, the more positive are the feelings toward the group in question). In contrast, the proportion of Cubans who feel very warm toward Blacks is 10–14 percentage points *lower* than Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Cubans are also more likely to feel very warm toward Asians than toward Blacks. More fitting of my thesis, as Table 3 shows, is that although Latinos who identify as "White" express similar empathy toward Blacks and Asians, those who identify as "Black" express the most positive affect toward Blacks (about 20 degrees warmer toward Black than toward Asians).

Various studies have documented that Asians tend to hold anti-Black and anti-Latino attitudes. For instance, Bobo, Zubrinsky, Johnson, and Oliver (1995) found that Chinese residents of Los Angeles expressed negative racial attitudes toward Blacks. One Chinese resident stated, "Blacks in general seem to be overly lazy" and another asserted, "Blacks have a definite attitude problem" (Bobo et al., 1995, p. 78; for a more thorough analysis, see Bobo & Johnson, 2000). Studies on Korean shopkeepers in various locales have found that over 70 percent of them hold anti-Black attitudes (Min, 1996; Weitzer, 1997; Yoon, 1997).

Table 3
Latinos' affect toward Blacks and Asians by Latino ethnicity and racial self-classification

	Blacks	Asians
Latino ethnicity		
Mexicans	60.07	52.88
Puerto Ricans	60.24	50.81
Cubans	56.36	56.99
Racial self-classification		
White	57.71	53.49
Black	69.62	48.83
Latino self-referent	61.01	53.10

Source: Forman, Martinez, and Bonilla-Silva "Latinos": perceptions of Blacks and Asians: testing the immigrant hypothesis" (unpublished manuscript).

3.3. Social interaction among members of the three racial strata

If a tri-racial system is emerging, one would expect more social (e.g., friendship, associations as neighbors, etc.) and intimate (e.g., marriage) contact between Whites and honorary Whites than between Whites and members of the collective Black. A cursory analysis of the interracial marriage and segregation data suggests this seems to be the case.

3.3.1. Interracial marriage

Although most marriages in America are still intra-racial, the rates vary substantially by group. Whereas 93 percent of Whites and Blacks marry within-group, 70 percent of Latinos and Asians do so and only 33 percent Native Americans marry Native Americans (Moran, 2001, p. 103). More significantly, when one disentangles the generic terms "Asians" and "Latinos," the data fits even more closely my thesis. For example, among "Latinos," Cubans, Mexicans, Central Americans, and South Americans have higher rates of outmarriage than Puerto Ricans and Dominicans (Gilbertson, Fitzpatrick, & Yang, 1996). Although interpreting the Asian American outmarriage patterns is very complex (groups such as Filipinos and Vietnamese have higher than expected rates in part due to the Vietnam War and the military bases in the Philippines), it is worth to point out that the highest rate belongs to Japanese Americans and Chinese (the Asian overclass) (Kitano & Daniels, 1995) and the lowest to Southeast Asians.

Furthermore, racial assimilation through marriage ("whitening") is significantly more likely for the children of Asian-White and Latino-White unions than for those of Black–White unions. Hence, whereas only 22 percent of the children of Black fathers and White mothers are classified as White, the children of similar unions among Asians are twice as likely to be classified as White (Waters, 1999). For Latinos, the data fits even closer our thesis as Latinos of Cuban, Mexican, and South American origin have high rates of exogamy compared to Puerto Ricans and Dominicans (Gilbertson et al., 1996). I concur with Moran's (2001) speculation that this may reflect the fact that because Puerto Ricans and Dominicans have far more dark-skinned members, they have restricted chances for outmarriage to Whites in a highly racialized marriage market.

3.3.2. Residential segregation of Latinos and Asians

An imperfect measure of interracial interaction is the level of neighborhood "integration." Researchers have shown that Latinos are less segregated from and are more exposed to Whites than Blacks (Massey & Denton, 1987). Yet, they have also documented that dark-skinned Latinos (Dominicans and Puerto Ricans) experience Black-life rates of residential segregation from Whites. Thus, not surprisingly, in cities with a significant (10 percent or higher) Latino presence, such as San Antonio, Chicago, New York, Long Beach, the index of residential dissimilarity[5] in 2000 is 60, 62, 67, and 63 percent, respectively (Lewis Mumford Center, 2001).

Asians are generally less segregated from Whites than Blacks and Latinos. However, they have experienced an increase in residential segregation in recent years (Frey & Farley, 1996; White, Biddlecom, & Guo, 1993). Part of the increase may be the result of the arrival of newer immigrants from Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos) over the last two decades (Frey & Farley, 1996). The relatively large Asian population in the San Francisco area, which accounts for about 21 percent of the area's total population, has a dissimilarity index of 0.501, near the Latino index of 0.500, but less than the index for Blacks at 0.640 (Logan, 2001). Most metropolitan areas in the United States, however, do not have as large a population of Asians, and thus may not have reached the racial "tipping point" that brings on residential segregation.

4. Concluding remarks: tri-racial order, racial politics, and the future of White supremacy in America

I have presented a broad thesis about the future of race relations in the United States.[6] However, at this early stage of the analysis and given the serious limitations of the data on "Latinos" and "Asians" (most of the data is not parceled out by subgroups and there is limited information by skin-tone), it is hard to make a conclusive case. Nevertheless, almost all the objective, subjective, and social interaction indicators I reviewed tend to point in the direction one would expect if a tri-racial system is emerging. For example, objective indicators on income and education show substantive gaps between the groups I labeled "White," "honorary White," and the "collective Black."[7] Not surprisingly, a variety of subjective indicators signal the emergence of *internal* stratification among racial minorities. This has led some minority groups to develop racial attitudes similar to those of Whites, and others to develop attitudes closer to those of Blacks. Finally, the findings on the objective and subjective indicators have an interactional correlate. Data on interracial marriage and residential segregation shows that Whites are significantly more likely to live nearby honorary Whites and intermarry with them than live and intermarry with members of the collective Black.

If my prediction is right, what may the consequences for race relations in the United States? First, racial politics will change dramatically. The "us" versus "them" racial dynamic will lessen as "honorary Whites" grow in size and social importance. This group is likely to buffer racial conflict—or derail it—as intermediate groups do in many Latin American countries. Two incidents reported by Norman Matloff in an Op-Ed piece in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (1997) are examples of things to come:

> In the newsletter of the Oakland chapter of the Organization of Chinese Americans, editor Peter Eng opined: "Chinese-Americans will need to separate and distance ourselves from other ethnic immigrant groups" and suggested that Latino immigration was a burden to society.

> Elaine Kim, a Korean-American UC Berkeley professor, has written that a major Latino organization suggested to her [actually to Korean community activist Bong Huan Kim—NM] that Asians and Latinos work together against Blacks in an Oakland redistricting proposal. And an Asian/Latino coalition is suing Oakland, claiming it awards too many city contracts to Black-owned firms.

Second, the ideology of color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2001, 2003) will become even more salient among Whites and honorary Whites and will also impact members of the collective Black. This ideology will help glue the new social system and further buffer racial conflict.

Third, if the state decides to stop gathering racial statistics, the struggle to document the impact of race in a variety of social venues will become monumental. More significantly, because state actions always impact civil society, if the state decides to erase race from above, the *social* recognition of "races" in the polity may become harder. Americans may develop a Latin American- or Caribbean-like "disgust" for even mentioning anything that is race-related.

Fourth, the deep history of Black–White divisions in the United States has been such that the centrality of the Black identity will not dissipate. Research on the "Black elite," for I instance, shows they exhibit racial attitudes in line with their racial rather than class group (Dawson, 1994). That identity may be taken up by dark-skinned Latinos as it is being rapidly taken up by most West Indians (Kasinitz, Battle, & Miyares, 2001) and some Latinos (Rodríguez, 2000). For example, Ali, a 53-year-old Jamaican engineer interviewed by Vickerman (1999), stated:

> I have nothing against Haitians; I have nothing against Black Americans . . . . If you're a nigger, you're a nigger, regardless of whether your are from Timbuktu . . . . There isn't the unity that one would like to see . . . . Blacks have to appreciate Blacks, no matter where they are from. Just look at it the way I look at it: That you're the same.

However, even among Blacks, I predict some important changes. Their racial consciousness will become more diffused. For example, Blacks will be more likely to accept many stereotypes about themselves (e.g., "We are more lazy than Whites") and develop a "blunted oppositional consciousness" (see Chapter 6 in Bonilla-Silva, 2001). Furthermore, the external pressure of "multiracials" in White contexts (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002) and the internal pressure of "ethnic" Blacks may change the notion of "Blackness" and even the position of some "Blacks" in the system. Colorism may become an even more important factor as a way of making social distinctions among "Blacks" (Keith & Herring, 1991).

Fifth, the new order will force a reshuffling of *all* racial identities. Certain "racial" claims may dissipate (or, in some cases, decline in significance) as mobility will increasingly be seen as based on (1) whiteness or near-whiteness and (2) intermarriage with Whites (this seems to be the case among many Japanese Americans, particularly those who have intermarried). This dissipation of ethnicity will not be limited to "honorary Whites" as members of the "collective Black" strata strive to position themselves higher in the new racial totem pole based on degrees of proximity or closeness to whiteness. Will Vietnamese, Filipinos, and other members of the Asian underclass coalesce with Blacks and dark-skinned Latinos or will they try to distance themselves from them and struggle to emphasize their "Americanness"?

Lastly, the new racial stratification system will be more effective in maintaining "White supremacy" (Mills, 1997). Whites will still be at the top of the social structure but will face fewer race-based challenges and racial inequality will remain and may even widen as is the case throughout Latin America and the Caribbean (do Nascimento & Nascimento, 2001). And, to avoid confusion about my claim regarding "honorary Whites," let me clarify that their standing and status will be dependent upon Whites' wishes and practices. "Honorary" means they will remain secondary, will still face discrimination, and will not receive equal treatment in society. For example, although Arab Americans will be regarded as "honorary Whites," their treatment in the post-September 11 era suggests their status as "White" and "American" is tenuous at best. Likewise, albeit substantial segments of the Asian American community may become "honorary White," they will also continue suffering from discrimination and be regarded in many quarters as "perpetual foreigners."

Therein lies the weaknesses of the emerging tri-racial order and the possibilities for challenging it. Members of the "collective Black" must be the backbone of the movement challenging the new order as they are the ones who will remain literally "at the bottom of the well." However, if they want to be successful, they must wage, in coalition with progressive Asian and Latino organizations, a concerted effort to politicize the segments I label "honorary Whites" and make them aware of the *honorary* character of their status. This is the way out of the impending new racial quandary. We need to short-circuit the belief in near-whiteness as the solution to status differences and create a coalition of all "people of color" and their White allies. If the tri-racial, Latin American- or Caribbean-like model of race prevails and "pigmentocracy" crystallizes, most Americans will scramble for the meager wages that near-whiteness will provide to those willing to play the "We are all American" game.

Notes

1. Albeit regions such as the Southwest, states such as California, and sub-areas in some states (the case of "tri-racial isolates," see Daniels, 2002) have had more complex racial dynamics, the larger bi-racial system has always posed the outer limits.

2. It is important to point out that occupational representation in a category does not mean equality. Chan (1991) shows that many Asians are pushed into self-employment after suffering occupational sedimentation in professional jobs. See also Takaki (1993), *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1993)

3. For a discussion on the racialization of the world-system, see Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, and Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991).

4. An important matter to disentangle empirically in the future is if the immigrant groups we label "honorary Whites" come with the racial, class, or race/class capital before they achieve honorary White status, that is, are they allowed to fit this intermediate position because of their class or because of their racial or because of a combination of race and class status? The case of West Indians—who come to the Unites States with class advantages (e.g., educational and otherwise) and yet "fade to Black" in a few generations (that is, become "Black") suggest that the "racial" status of the group has an independent effect in this process (Kasinitz et al., 2001). Similarly, Filipinos come to the

United States highly educated and acculturated yet, because they experience severe racial discrimination, second and third-generation Filipinos self-identity as Filipino-American (Le Espiritu & Wolf, 2001. For a similar finding on Vietnamese, see Zhou, 2001).

5. The index of residential dissimilarity expresses the percentage of a minority population that would have to move to result in a perfectly even distribution of the population across census tracts. This index runs from 0 (no segregation) to 100 (total segregation) and its symmetrical (not affected by population size).

6. I am not alone in making this kind of prediction. Spears (1999), Oboler (2000), Okihiro (1994), and Matsueda (1996) have made similar claims recently.

7. I recognize there are alternative interpretations to these findings. One could claim that what is happening is that class is becoming more salient than race (but see footnote 3), or that education and nativity are becoming better predictors of mobility. Unfortunately, no data set includes all these elements as well as the ones I suggest are becoming central to control for all these variables. In the mean time, the fact that indicators in three different areas line up in the expected direction gives me confidence that my thesis is likely.

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