Latina/o Whitening: Which Latinas/os Self-Classify as White and Report Being Perceived as White by Other Americans?

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Abstract

Some scholars argue that Latinas/os in the United States may soon become White, much like the supposed Whitening of Eastern European immigrant groups in the early 20th century. High rates of White racial identification on surveys among Latinas/os is one explanation provided for this assertion. However, personal identification is but one element of racial boundary maintenance. It is when personal identification is externally validated that it is most closely associated with group based experiences. This article maps components of the White-Latino racial boundary that may be permeable to White expansion by examining conditions under which Latinas/os self-identify as White and report that they are externally classified as White by other Americans. Employing novel data from the 2006 Portraits of American Life Study, this article shows that nearly forty percent of Latinas/os sometimes self-identify as White, yet a much smaller proportion—only six percent—report being externally classified as White by others. Moreover, logistic regression analyses suggest that light phenotypical features and having high levels of socioeconomic status increase the odds of reported external Whitening. Interestingly, phenotypically light Latina/os with low levels of socioeconomic status have low probabilities of reporting external classification as White when compared to their phenotypically light and high socioeconomic status counterparts, suggesting that the combination of both skin color and class may be central to the Latina/o-White racial boundary. Results also indicate that many who report external Whitening do not prefer to self-identify as White. In sum, multi-dimensional measures of racial classification indicate that only a very small minority of Latinas/os may be "becoming White" in ways that some previous researchers have predicted.

Keywords: Whitening, Racial Identification, Racial Classification, Latinas/os, Racial Boundaries

Introduction

Race is a categorical and hierarchical system of classification delineating groups of people from one another. However, the bounds of racial categorization are generally recognized as permeable and capable of change such that some groups may be able to move up or down the White-imposed racial hierarchy (Omi and Winant 1994). White racial classification has always been situated at the top of the U.S. racial order, yet its boundaries reportedly opened and expanded to include new immigrant groups in the early 20th century (e.g., Italians, Irish, Polish, and other Southern and Eastern Europeans). Upon arrival to the United States, these groups were effectively racialized as inferior to the dominant White group at that time and received limited access to schools, jobs, and neighborhoods (Brodkin 1998; Ignatiev 1995; Jacobson 1998; Restifo, Roscigno, and Qian 2013; Roediger 2005). The salience of these distinctions decreased as these groups distanced themselves from other marginalized non-Whites and accordingly gained greater access to social institutions. State sponsored social programs like The New Deal provided additional opportunities for structural assimilation into dominant forms of Whiteness (Fox 2012; Roediger 2005). Today, Italians, Irish, Polish, and other Southern and Eastern Europeans are regularly afforded White racial status and such ethnic distinctions remain mostly optional and symbolic for daily life (Gans 1979; Waters 1990). [1]

In this vein, recent scholarship has considered how the arrival of more recent waves of immigrant groups may once again alter the U.S. racial order (Bonilla-Silva 2004; Hochschild, Weaver, and Burch 2012; Horton, Branch, Hixson, and Reynoso 2008; Lee and Bean 2004; Michael and Timberlake 2008; Murguia and Forman 2003; Roth 2012; Stokes-Brown 2012). On one hand, some suggest that the increasing number of immigrants from Latin America and Asia could challenge the majority White dominated society. Demographers and the popular press have noted that within the next couple of decades, the racial landscape will change such that Whites will no longer make up a majority of those living in the U.S. If true, this could mark the first time in recorded history that the United States would be majority non-White. However, some researchers argue that Whiteness may once again open up and

welcome new immigrants as members of the majority race (Gans 1999; Lee and Bean 2007; Warren and Twine 1997; Yancey 2003). In Who is White, a key monograph extending this line of argument, Yancey writes, "The current predictions about whites becoming a numerical minority are wrong not because of incorrect assessments of the growth of racial minorities, but because the definition of who is white is not static" (P. 3; 2003). Yancey predicts that immigrants from Latin America and Asia will undergo a process of Whitening whereby boundaries of Whiteness will expand to include them. Concurrently, he argues that members of these once minority groups will welcome a new dominant racialized position. If this argument holds true, popular racial demographic projections will prove grossly inaccurate and the Whitening of new immigrant groups may help to sustain White racial dominance, especially over Blacks in the U.S.

Latinas/os are particularly important for understanding potential transformations to the racial order as they are the largest non-White ethno-racial group in the country. Latinas/os also exhibit a great deal of social class and phenotypic diversity that can help to elucidate distinct forms of racial boundary change. With the transformation of racial boundaries in mind, recent research has analyzed where and how Latinas/os currently "fit" in the U.S. racial order (Frank, Akresh and Lu 2010; O'Brien 2008; Roth 2012). Some researchers have pointed to the importance of traditional indicators of assimilation as evidence that Latina/os may be integrating into Whiteness (Yancey 2003). Others have closely considered how Latinas/os view themselves in relation to the existing racial order by asking about their levels of social distance with Whites, Blacks, and Asian-Americans (Marrow 2011; Murguia and Forman 2003; Yancey 2003). Still others have focused primarily on how Latinas/os self-identify on social surveys and the U.S. Census (Golash-Boza and Darity 2008; Stokes-Brown 2012).

Notably though, where and how Latinas/os fit in the racial order is informed by both individual choices about racial identification as well as how Latinas/os are commonly racially classified by other Americans (Roth 2012). While traditional indicators of assimilation, self-reports of social distance, and racial identification help to inform future projections of Latina/o Whitening, they do not fully consider the

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dynamic and mutually defined nature of racial categorization. As Jenkins (1994) argues, racial group membership is a product of both internal definitions and external definitions. Internal definitions (or self-categorization) can provide information about how individuals perceive themselves vis-à-vis others. Yet racialized experiences like interpersonal discrimination or interactional elements of White privilege are most likely influenced by external categorization (i.e, how one is racially perceived) and the concomitant social status appraisals associated with that categorization. In other words, the experience of Whiteness and its associated privileges may be at least as influenced by external definitions of race as they are internal definitions.

Therefore, in order to examine if and how Latina/os may eventually "become White," it is worthwhile to consider not only the conditions by which Latinas/os self-identify as White, as previous research has already considered (Frank, Akresh, and Lu 2010; Golash-Boza and Darity. 2008; Michael and Timberlake 2008; Stokes Brown 2012), but also the conditions under which Latina/os report being regularly perceived as White by other Americans (Gans 2012). An empirical analysis of how Latina/os are racially classified by a wide variety of other U.S. adults has yet to be conducted with a nationally representative survey because such data does not yet exist.[2] However, this article examines an important and related notion: how many Latinas/os report being perceived as White by other Americans and also analyzes the physical, socioeconomic, and cultural characteristics of individuals who report experiencing this aspect of Whitening.

Notably, many researchers have attempted to predict the conditions under which some (or all) Latina/os might eventually be perceived and treated as White in the United States (Bonilla-Silva 2004; Gans 1999; Haney López 2006; Lee and Bean 2007; Warren and Twine 1997; Yancey 2003). However, none of these predictions have been corroborated by data on how Latina/os are racially classified by others. This article serves as the first known empirical study with nationally representative data to examine variation in Latina/os' reports of White racial categorization by other Americans. These analyses

will be informative for contemporary research on racial boundary transformations, Latina/o racial classification, and for literature on the changing racial order in the U.S.

It is plausible that a substantial portion of Latinas/os already report that they are commonly perceived as White by other Americans. If true, we might surmise that the White-Latino boundary is already very porous. Similar to phenotypically ambivalent Eastern Europeans before them, this could indicate that Latinas/os' varied phenotypical characteristics are beginning to be ignored by other Americans when making racial attributions (Wimmer 2008). If a majority of Latina/os report that they are perceived (and presumably treated) as White by other Americans, independent of skin-tone, hair color, or eye color, this would be a strong signal that widespread Latina/o Whitening is already occurring (Gans 2012). On the other hand, it might be that only Latinas/os with high levels of socio-economic status are perceived as White, indicating that Whiteness is in large part defined by social class. If true, this would support previous research on how class and social status may be central to processes of racial categorization (Bonilla-Silva 2004; Saperstein and Penner 2010). It could also be that Latinas/os commonly self-identify as White, but they are not perceived as White by others, illustrating an asymmetrical consensus over how Whiteness is defined (Frank, Akresh, and Lu 2010; Wimmer 2008).

Boundary Transformations?

In contemporary scholarship there are two primary approaches to examining where Latina/os currently fit in the U.S. racial order. The first approach relies on traditional measures of assimilation like inter-racial marriage and residential segregation among Latina/os. These measures generally indicate less social separation between Latina/os and Whites than between Blacks and Whites (Qian and Lichter 2007). Recognizing differences in these assimilation rates, some scholars argue that Latina/os are on a trajectory of assimilation very similar to Southern and Eastern European immigrants of the early 20th century (Yancey 2003). Yancey (2003), for example, predicts that with time the "whiteness" of Latinas/os will

seem as natural as the "whiteness" of Italians or Irish Americans. Other scholars are more cautious. Alba and Nee (2005), for example argue that while Latina/os are assimilating, redefinition of the entire group as White is unlikely. Likewise, Jiminéz (2008) argues that persistent immigration from Latin American countries may serve to reinforce the boundary between Whites and Latina/os. Most recent research on Latina/o assimilation indicators illustrate stalled residential integration with Whites and decelerated rates of Latina/o-White inter-marriage, particularly among second generation Latina/os (Lichter et al. 2011, Lichter 2013). Third generation Latina/o marital assimilation rates are substantially lower than they were for Eastern Europeans who came to be recognized as White (Feliciano 2001). If one recognizes these traditional notions of assimilation as indicators of Latina/o Whitening,[3] there is inconclusive evidence that such processes are unfolding.

The second major approach to examining where Latina/os fit in the racial order has been to analyze how Latinas/os identify racially on the U.S. Census and other social surveys that exclude a Hispanic/Latino racial option (Frank, Akresh and Lu 2010; Golash-Boza and Darity 2008; Darity, Dietrich, and Hamilton 2001; Stokes-Brown 2012; Waterston 2006). Since 1969, the U.S. Census classification system has separated questions about Hispanic/Latina/o origin and racial identification.[4] After asking if respondents are of "Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin," those who answer in the affirmative are asked to choose the race that best describes them (White, Black, specific Asian nationalities, specific Pacific Island nationalities, or American Indian /Alaska Native). There is, however, an opportunity to opt out of this racial classification system by choosing "other." Self-categorization as "other" is common among Hispanic/Latino identifying respondents, presumably because there is no Hispanic/Latino racial box to check.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, nearly 40 percent of Latinas/os identified racially as "other," in the face of explicit instructions stating, "For this Census, Hispanic origins are not races." Thus, self-classification indicators suggest that many Latinas/os do not perceive of themselves as "becoming White", but in stark contrast, as favoring a racial order that recognizes them as a distinct racial group

(Frank, Akresh, and Lu 2010; Logan 2003; Michael and Timberlake 2008; Roth 2012). However, it is also the case that 53 percent of Latinas/os racially classified as White (United States Census Bureau 2011). According to some researchers, high rates of White classification could be an indication that Latina/o Whitening is occurring for significant subsets of the Latina/o population (Waterston 2006). Still, other scholars researching Latinas/os' racial identification choices have found that skin-tone is significantly associated with identity selections. Latina/os with lighter skin-tones are more likely to self-identify as White, while those with darker skin-tones are more likely to self-identify as "other" or Black (Golash-Boza and Darity 2008). These results suggest that a more complex Whitening process may be occurring, and that it is largely influenced by phenotypic characteristics.

Clearly, measuring racial boundary change is a methodological challenge (Kim 2007; Loveman and Muniz 2007). Rather than focus on rates of traditional assimilation indicators or rely solely on measures of self-identification to analyze previous predictions about Latina/o Whitening, this article examines the conditions under which Latina/os self-classify as White and report being perceived as White by others. By analyzing the physical, social, and cultural characteristics of Latinas/os who report that they are commonly perceived as White today, it may be possible to distinguish multiple pathways through which Latina/os could potentially be recognized as White in the future.

Who is Perceived as White? Phenotypical, Cultural, and Socio-Economic Considerations

As previous research illustrates, many Latinas/os recognize that whether or not they are perceived as White can influence important elements of daily life (Haney López 2006; Roth 2012; Vasquez 2010). So under what conditions to Latina/os report these experiences? Are they based primarily on how one appears phenotypically?

Notably, skin-tone is often the only physical feature analyzed in studies of how Latina/os racially classify themselves (Frank et al. 2010; Golash-Boza and Darity 2008). Is the White-

Latino boundary then permeable only for individuals with a light skin-tone, or do other physical features also play a role for Whitening? When making racial attributions, people tend to key in on skin-tone, but also hair color, eye color, and to a slightly lesser extent hair texture (Brown Jr., Dane, and Durham, 1998). Given the wide variety of phenotypic characteristics within and between different Latina/o groups, it will be worthwhile to consider whether alternative phenotypical characteristics are associated with White classification. If it is only individuals with definitively "light" phenotypic characteristics who report being perceived as White, we might gather that in terms of phenotype, the White-Latino boundary remains mostly rigid, and that Whiteness is not currently expanding to include large numbers of Latina/os.

On the other hand, it is also paramount to examine non-physical features. Perhaps it is not phenotype, but cultural factors that primarily inform which Latina/os report external Whitening. Along these lines, generational status and language proficiency may yield influence for internal and/or perceived external racial categorization as White. Frank, Akresh, and Lu (2010) found that among new Latina/o immigrants, those who had spent more time in the U.S., and those who were English proficient were more likely to eschew federally mandated racial categories by neglecting to answer a racial classification question that did not include a Hispanic or Latina/o option in the 2003 New Immigrant Survey. Frank et al. (2010) argue that Latinas/os with greater exposure to U.S. society are challenging traditional racial lines. Golash-Boza and Darity (2008) report similar findings: bilingual and non-Spanish speaking respondents to the 1989 Latino National Political survey were more likely to self-identify as "other" over "White." Interestingly, the Whitening hypothesis suggests that the opposite should be occurring: over time, immigrant groups should be more likely to claim Whiteness. In order to further examine potential Whitening processes it will be worthwhile to consider if these cultural indicators (i.e. language proficiency and ancestral ties to the U.S.) relate to reports of external Whitening in the same ways that they relate to self-classification as White.

Additionally, a growing strand of research suggests that the relationship between race and social status may be reciprocal. While race has clear implications for shaping social status, social status concurrently plays a role in shaping the race that individuals are perceived as (Saperstein and Penner 2010, 2012). Though illuminating, this strand of research has focused almost exclusively on the traditional Black/White dichotomy and has not considered racial boundary change among Latinas/os or other immigrant groups. Rather, research on Latina/o Whitening has focused primarily on contexts outside of the U.S (Golash-Boza 2010; Schwartzman 2007). For example, Telles (2004) finds that in Brazil socio-economic status influences Whitening, but primarily for those people who are phenotypically ambiguous. Absent clear visual cues on how to racially categorize a person, Telles found that survey interviewers take socio-economic status into consideration when racially classifying respondents. Interviewers classified highly educated respondents as "Whiter" than the same respondents classified themselves (Telles 2004).

Gans (2012) predicts that as phenotypic variation increases in the U.S., a similar process may unfold whereby people will look to class and other non-phenotypical indicators in order to make racial attributions. This may be currently true of Latinas/os who have a very diverse array of phenotypic characteristics. However, because most surveys have only measures of self-identified race, U.S. based scholarship has considered only whether or not socio-economic status influences racial self-identification for Latinas/os and has produced mixed findings (Golash-Boza and Darity 2008). In order to further examine Latina/o Whitening, this study will examine if education and household income are associated with reports of external Whitening. Testing Gans' (2012) hypothesis about the relationship between class and phenotypic ambiguity, this study will also investigate this relationship across different sets of phenotypic characteristics. Specifically, analyses examine how socio-economic status is associated with perceived Whiteness for Latina/os with consistently "light" phenotypical features, and those with consistently "dark" phenotypical features. This will provide an additional test of whether or not socio-

economic status is associated with Latina/o Whitening in the U.S., and whether or not this process may be expedited for particular groups of Latinas/os.

In sum, this article extends research on supposed Latina/o Whitening by examining the frequency and conditions under which Latina/os in the U.S. self-identify and report being perceived as White. Though central to scholarship and previous predictions regarding Latina/o Whitening (Warren and Twine 1997; Yancey 2003), data limitations of national surveys have precluded such analyses. However, a recent national survey, the 2006 Portraits of American Life Study, includes all of the aforementioned information regarding physical racialized cues, indicators of socio-economic status, and also asks respondents directly about personal racial identity and external racial ascription.

Data and Methods

For this study, I use data from the initial and only currently available wave of the (2006) Portraits of American Life Study (PALS), a nationally representative survey of 2,610 non-institutionalized, English or Spanish speaking civilian households in the contiguous United States. Interviews were primarily conducted face-to-face but also included audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI) for more sensitive questions about deviant and private behaviors. The survey yielded an 83 percent contact rate, an 86 percent screening rate, and an 82 percent cooperation rate, for an overall response rate of 58 percent (.83 x .86 x .82). Specific details about the study design can be found in Emerson et al. (2010). One of the key advantages of this study is the oversample of Latina/os (N=520). The PALS dataset is particularly suited for these analyses because it is the only nationally representative study that asks respondents if other Americans agree with their personal racial identity. According to Campbell and Troyer (2011) this type of measure is a significant improvement over traditionally used measures of survey interviewer-respondent incongruence that likely underestimate experiences of racial contestation due to background information bias on behalf of the interviewers (Saperstein 2006). I utilize multiple imputation procedures

to manage missing data for these analyses (see Allison 2001).[5] Respondents who self-classified as "mixed race" are not included in these analyses.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables in this study derive from multiple questions in the PALS survey that ask about racial self-classification and perceived external racial ascription. Early in the survey interview, respondents were asked, "What race or ethnic group do you consider yourself? That is, are you White, Black, Hispanic, Asian American, Pacific Islander, American Indian, or of mixed race?" Similar to the federally defined racial categories in the U.S. Census, self-identified Hispanics were then asked if they consider themselves to be "White, Black, Asian, American-Indian, or something else." Much later in the interview self-identified Hispanic/Latina/o respondents were asked, "Earlier you told us that you are Hispanic. Do you think other Americans would say that you are Hispanic or something else?" Response categories included "Hispanic," "something else," "varies," and "doesn't matter." This measure was recoded into a dichotomous variable to represent a contested Latina/o identity when 1= "something else." Contested Latina/os were then asked an open-ended follow up question inquiring which race they are perceived as. This measure was coded so that any self-identified Latina/o respondent who is perceived as "White," "Anglo," "European-American," or other labels referring to the same is scored as a 1, while all other self-identified Latina/os are scored as a 0. A key strength of this measure is that it does not rely solely on one person's classification of the respondent, but rather, on respondent's perceptions of how they are generally perceived by a wide swath of other Americans.

Independent Variables

According to previous research, skin color, hair, and eyes are among the most important features for making racial attributions (Brown, Dane, and Durham 1998). An additional advantage of the PALS data is that it includes a battery of questions on racial classification as well as racialized cues such as hair

texture (scored 1-5, from "fine" to "thick"), and eye color (1=black/brown; 0 = all other colors). Moreover, upon the completion of the surveys, interviewers were asked to identify the skin-tone, hair color, and hair curl of respondents. In these analyses, skin-tone is scored from 1-4 ranging from light to medium brown/dark. Hair color is scored from 1-6 with higher scores representing darker shades. Hair-curl is scored from 1-4 covering a wide range of hair types including "straight," "slightly curly," "very curly," and "tight and curly" respectively. The PALS data also include measures of height and weight. Height is measured in inches and weight in pounds. In order to assess how cultural factors may be associated with self-identified and perceived Whiteness, this study examines the potential influences of generational status and familial language use. The generational status measure derives from a question asking whether or not both the respondent's parents were born in the United States (1=yes, 0 = no). Language use was measured by whether or not either of the respondent's parents are bilingual (1= yes; 0=no).

This study also examines the potential influence of socio-economic status. In particular, respondents were asked about their household income as well as the highest level of education they had obtained. Household income is a 19 category response variable, ranging from less than $5,000 annually to over $200,000 annually. Education is a 5-category ordinal variable and ranges from less than high school to graduate degree or more.

Additionally, I control for a number of other respondent characteristics including gender (1 = male; 0 = female), age (18 to 80 and above), national origin (Mexican descent = 1; all other Latina/o descent = 0) and political orientation (1-7) ranging from strong liberal to strong conservative. Given that Whites tend to lean conservative (Kohut 2012), it is plausible that Latina/os who are politically conservative may be more likely to self-identify as White.

<u>Results</u>

The first set of results illustrates rates at which self-identified Latinas/os self-classify as White when there is not a Hispanic/Latino option. Mirroring the race question on the U.S. Census, the Portraits

of American Life Study asks Latina/o identifying respondents if they consider themselves to be "White, Black, Asian, American-Indian, or something else." Approximately 42 percent of respondents self-classified as White, and over 50 percent identified as "something else." These results are similar to the results of the 2010 U.S. Census. Interestingly, however, rates of self-identification as White contrast considerably with how commonly respondents report being perceived as White by other Americans. Though over 40 percent self-classify as White when there was no Hispanic/Latina/o option, only six percent report being regularly perceived as White by other Americans. Moreover, not all who report being perceived as White actually self-classify as White. Approximately 1/3 of respondents who report being regularly perceived as White chose to self-classify as 'other' over White when precluded a Hispanic/Latino option. These descriptive results indicate two key insights: 1) Very few Latinas/os say that they are generally perceived as White (only 6 percent), and 2) Many Latinas/os who report that they are perceived as White do not claim a White identity.

Though illuminating, descriptive statistics do not illustrate the social factors that are associated with self-classified and perceived Whiteness. Thus, Table 1 shows which physical, cultural, and social characteristics are most closely associated with self-classification as White when a Hispanic/Latino option is not available. Model 1 includes only phenotypic characteristics. Results suggest that among a multitude of commonly racialized phenotypic cues including eye color, hair color, hair texture, weight, height, and others, only skin-tone is significantly associated with self-categorization as White.

"Insert Table 1 about Here"

Model 2 includes all measures, including cultural characteristics, socio-economic indicators, and controls. Results suggest that skin-tone remains significantly associated with self-categorization as White even when controlling for a host of other racialized characteristics. Model 2 also illustrates that age, and political party are significantly associated with self-classification as White. Respondents with a lighter skin tone, older respondents, and those who are more politically conservative are significantly more likely to self-classify as White. Notably, income and education are unassociated with White self-classification.

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Table 2 examines whether these same factors (skin-tone, age, and political party) are significantly associated with respondents' reports of whether or not they are generally perceived as White by other Americans. In Model 1 we see that skin-tone, eye color, and to a lesser extent, hair color (p<.10) are all significantly associated with reports of perceived Whiteness. Individuals with lighter skin tones, non-black and non-brown eyes, and lighter shades of hair are most likely to report being perceived as White by other Americans. Model 2 includes all measures, including cultural characteristics, socio-economic characteristics and controls. Again, results suggest that lighter shades of skin tone, eye color, and hair color are significantly associated with perceived Whiteness. Model 2 also shows that Latina/os with established ancestral ties to the U.S. are more likely to report being perceived as White. Latina/os of the third generation and beyond have significantly higher odds of reporting that they are perceived as White than their first and second generation counterparts (OR: 3.274). Yet, additional descriptive analyses indicate that nearly 90 percent of third generation Latina/os do not report that they are perceived as White. Age is the only characteristic that remains statistically significant in both sets of analyses (Table 1 and Table 2). Interestingly, the results are in the opposite direction. Older respondents are more likely to self-classify as White when not given a Hispanic/Latino option (Table 1), but it is the younger respondents who are more likely to report being perceived as White (Table 2).

"Insert Table 2 about Here"

Lastly, Model 2 also shows that socio-economic indicators are significantly associated with whether or not Latina/os report being perceived as White after controlling for all other measures in the model. Those with higher levels of education and higher levels of income are more likely to report external categorization as White than are those with lower levels of education or income. Thus, similar to Saperstein and Penner's (2012) finding that college education can whiten respondents who were previously identified as Black, these results suggest that socio-economic status may have the potential to whiten Latina/os.

"Insert Figure 1 About Here"

In order to test Gans' (2012) hypothesis of whether or not the influence of income might vary by phenotype, I also analyze the probability of reporting that one is perceived as White for distinct ideal types of individuals across the income spectrum. First, I regressed the dependent variable from Table 2 on three multiplicative terms which correspond to the interaction between socioeconomic status and each statistically significant phenotypic characteristic (i.e., household income x skin tone; household income x eye color; household income x hair color), in addition to all other variables included in Model 2. Second, I set the conditions for a consistently "light" respondent (a respondent with the lightest score on skin-tone, blonde, red, or strawberry hair, and non-black or non-brown eyes). Next, I considered a substantially "darker" counterpart based on the same list of variables (a respondent with the darkest score on skin-tone [which corresponds to medium brown or darker], black hair, and brown eyes). The probability graph presented above is based on models that include statistical interactions between household income and each of the phenotypic characteristics listed above. Modeling the effects this way allows for heterogeneity in phenotype effects across household income (see Long and Freese 2006).

Figure 1 illustrates that the probability of reporting external classification as White is low (under .3) for respondents from households that earn an annual income of $25,000 or less. According to recent estimates, approximately 30 percent of all Latina/o households earn less than $25,000 per year (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). Thus, it appears that low income Latinas/os may be unlikely to traverse the White-Latina/o racial boundary, even if they have very light phenotypical features. Notably, though, the relationship varies as income increases. For the ideal type "light" respondent, the predicted probability of reporting that one is perceived as White increases as income increases even at very low levels of the income distribution. Yet the probability of reporting external categorization as White does not start to increase for our "dark" respondent until approximately $100,000 in annual income. Notably, it takes approximately $175,000 in household income for our ideal-type "dark" respondent to have a predicted probability of being perceived as White above .2. From these results, we can surmise that money may

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have the potential to Whiten Latina/os, but it would likely take drastic and unrealistic changes in income distributions for the vast majority of Latina/os, who do not consistently exhibit "light" phenotypical features to start being perceived and treated as White in the foreseeable future.

Discussion

Cognizant of the racial changes occurring as a result of recent waves of immigration, Gans (1999) once predicted an emerging Black-non-Black racial divide (rather than the traditional White/non-White divide), to explain the emerging U.S. racial order. Similar projections suggest that Latinas/os (and Asian-Americans) are Whitening or aligning with Whites and are therefore expediting the creation of a new Black/non-Black divide (Yancey 2003; Lee and Bean 2007; Warren and Twine 1997; Marrow 2009; Sears et al. 2003). However, post SB-1070 and other immigrant targeted policies, Gans (2012) has reconsidered his perspective: "…we should have realized that most Whites would strenuously reject being described as non-Blacks. For this reason, and because of the likelihood of continued White domination of the hierarchy, its description should have placed Whites at the top" (272). Gans (2012) writes that he has now come to agree with a more complex tripartite system of White-imposed racial hierarchy akin to the one forecasted by Bonilla-Silva (2004), and extended by Roth (2012). According to Bonilla-Silva, a middle designation is beginning to emerge, effectively splitting the traditional Black/White poles. This middle designation is made up of medium and lighter skin-toned Latinas/os, Asian-Americans, and multi-racials who he argues are being afforded "honorary White" status, and are distinguished from Blacks and their darker skinned counterparts. Roth (2012) goes on to explain that the boundary between the middle "honorary white" designation, and the dominant White designation is relatively "porous" such that some individuals and groups can effectively cross racialized boundaries.

This study leads to some important conclusions about how "porous" the White-Latino boundary is by examining which Latinas/os report that they can commonly cross it. Notably, I find that current perceptions of Whiteness are not entirely shaped by physical characteristics like skin-tone and hair color,

nor are they solely influenced by cultural traits like language. The White-Latino boundary is also influenced by socioeconomic characteristics like education and household income. Attributing socio-economic status to Whiteness is likely informed by a present day context of stark racial socio-economic disparities in the U.S. As Hayward et al. (2008) argues, "Whites and by definition whiteness is the de facto standard for wealth, status and power in America" (p. 710). For example, recent federal data indicates that White households have 18 times the wealth of average Latina/o households, and this disparity has been increasing over time (Kochar, Fry, and Taylor 2011). Given such stark racial and ethnic inequalities, perhaps it is unsurprising that higher levels of socio-economic status are positively associated with Whiteness.

Of course, with only cross-sectional data one cannot make conclusive assertions about causality. It could be that the relationship between socio-economic status and reports of perceived Whiteness runs only in the opposite direction such that those who are initially perceived as White have greater opportunities to obtain higher incomes. The probabilities illustrated in Figure 1, however, help to temper these concerns. In accordance with this alternative interpretation, findings from the predicted probability graph would suggest that phenotypically dark respondents who report being perceived as White earn much higher incomes than their phenotypically light counterparts who report the same. This reading of the results does not correspond with the vast literature on skin-tone stratification. Rather, many studies demonstrate just the opposite; that phenotypically lighter respondents earn higher incomes than those who are darker (Keith and Herring 1991; Hunter 2007). This is particularly true of Latinas/os (Allen, Telles and Hunter 2000; Arce, Murguia, and Frisbie 1987; Frank, Akresh, and Lu 2010; Telles and Murguia 1990; Mason 2004; Murguia and Saenz 2002). Therefore, a more plausible reading of Figure 1 suggests that money can Whiten Latinas/os in the eyes of many Americans, but it takes much higher incomes for Latinas/os with darker phenotypical features to report that other Americans generally perceive of them as White. In this way, this study lends support to Saperstein and Penner's (2012) research on how social status can shape experiences of race, and extends this line of thought to the case of Latina/os in the U.S.

Still, longitudinal data with multi-dimensional measures of racial classification, phenotype, and socio-economic characteristics will go a long way towards examining if and how these processes that reinforce racial stratification may be operating simultaneously. I suspect that this is a dynamic mutually reinforcing relationship whereby being perceived as White may provide for more opportunities to obtain income, while greater income simultaneously increases the odds of being recognized and treated as White. Future research on Latina/o Whitening would do well to consider these possibilities as paneled longitudinal data become available.

This research also illustrates that racial and ethnic boundary changes are two sided processes that may require both personal identification with a new group as well as external validation by others. As Kim (2007) notes, the assumption is often made that non-Whites may have a desire to become White. Haney López, for instance, predicts that "an increasing number of Latinos—those who have fairer physical features, material wealth, and high social status…will both claim and be accorded a position in U.S. society as fully white" (2006; 153) [emphasis added]. Similarly, Yancey (2003) proposes that discussions of whether or not Latina/os want to become White are mostly irrelevant because "…racial minority groups will usually attempt to assimilate when the majority group accepts them to a sufficient extent" (2003; 135). Bonilla-Silva (2004) argues that middling members of his tri-racial model will embrace honorary White status, and come to classify themselves as White (2004). Based on their study of multi-racials, Lee and Bean (2007) argue that Latinos are "more actively pursuing entry into the majority group" when compared to Blacks (580).

To date, this is the first known nationally representative study to corroborate some of these predictions about who can transcend the White-Latino boundary. In particular, this study provides support for Bonilla-Silva's (2004) and Haney López's (2006) predictions that it will only be select Latinos (those with light skin-tones and higher levels of socio-economic status) who are generally recognized as White by other Americans. However this study also shows that some Latinas/os who report having access to interactional elements of Whiteness (by being perceived as White) may not be particularly eager to self-

classify as White. All respondents in this study self-classify as Hispanic/Latino over White when given a Hispanic/Latino racial option, and approximately 1/3 of those who report being perceived as White would rather self-categorize as "other" when a Hispanic/Latino option is unavailable. Thus, the results herein temper claims that Latinas/os, in general, would welcome Whitening. Rather, these results lend support to assertions that the racial structure in the United States is changing whereby 'Hispanic/Latino' is emerging as a salient racial category (Golash-Boza and Darity 2008; Frank et al. 2010; Roth 2012).

Conclusion

This article sought to examine if Latinas/os commonly self-classify and report external categorization as White—a potential indication that Whiteness is expanding to include a large and varied Latina/o population. At least three key findings illustrate how both personal racial classification and external validation of these classifications should be central to future investigations of Latina/o Whitening.

First, results suggest that over 40 percent of self-identified Latinas/os demarcate their race as "White" when precluded a Hispanic/Latina/o option. Older respondents, those with lighter skin-tones, and those who are politically conservative are more likely to self-classify as White. It is plausible that if afforded the opportunity, some of these Latina/os might opt to "become White" in the ways that previous researchers have predicted. Yet, it is also plausible that restricted racial options leave many Latina/os scrambling for a racial box to check on many social surveys. Over 90 percent of Latina/os who self-classify as White in the PALS data recognize that they are not actually perceived as White by others. With restricted options, many Latina/os appear to recognize that they may be arbitrarily choosing to identify with one inaccurate racial label over another by appealing to phenotypic or political similarities with other racial groups. In this way, social researchers who believe that White identification on social surveys is a useful indicator of societal Whitening may be giving undue credence to such choices. The vast majority of Latina/os who self-classify as White recognize that these identification choices do not

match up with how they actually experience race in daily life. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which creates Census categories appears to have acknowledged some of these discrepancies and is likely to recognize Latina/os as an independent racial group in the 2020 Census.

Second, this study suggests that Latinas/os generally report being perceived as White only if they match common indicators of Whiteness: very light phenotypic characteristics, well-established ancestral ties to the U.S., and high levels of socio-economic status. In this way, it does not appear as though the boundaries of Whiteness have expanded to include many new immigrants. Rather, it is likely that Latinas/os are so diverse phenotypically, culturally, and socio-economically that a small subset may have always exhibited traditional characteristics comparable to the dominant White group. Of course without longitudinal data, one cannot be sure. Still, the only indication that boundaries may be expanding is that some phenotypically dark Latinas/os with exceptionally high levels of income report being perceived as White. In this way, the White-Latino boundary may be permeable for those Latinas/os whose socio-economic status dwarfs that of privileged Whites.

Third, results show that many Latinas/os who report being perceived as White do not actually self-classify as White. While the White-Latino boundary may be permeable for a select few, this boundary is not always deliberately being crossed by those who have access. Contrary to popular projections, many Latinas/os do not appear to be actively seeking Whiteness. Latino identity has codified politically and socially in ways that Irish, Italian, and early Eastern European identities likely did not. Thus, we might expect different routes to American incorporation among Latinas/os than those taken by European immigrants at the turn of the 20th century. It is plausible that Latinas/os may simultaneously engage in moderate amounts of marital and residential assimilation, experience elements of racial marginalization (Telles 2008), and still seek to maintain a distinct racial/ethnic identity. Moreover, the recent and impending contentious debates over immigration and legality across the country may solidify even more the racial boundary between Whites and Latina/os.

In sum, when analyzing two central indicators of racialization—self-classification and reports of external classification—it appears that only a very small subset of Latina/os today may be "becoming White" in the ways that some previous researchers have forecasted. This leaves little evidence that the boundaries of Whiteness are steadily expanding to include the vast majority of Latina/os in the U.S. Of course, future studies will be necessary to consider whether or not a more diverse array of Latina/os may come to be recognized as White over time.

Table 1: Binary Logistic Regression of White Self-Classification When Precluded a Hispanic/Latino Option

	Model 1 OR	Model 2 OR
Phenotypical Characteristics (Dark to Light)		
Skin Tone	1.31*	1.27**
Eye Color	1.92	2.27
Hair Color	1.12	1.07
Hair Texture (Thin to Thick)	1.09	1.11
Hair Curl (Straight to Tight Curls)	1.23	1.31
Height (Inches)	.96	.98
Weight (Pounds)	1.00	1.00
Cultural Characteristics		
Third Generation +		.92
Parent Bilingual		.54
Socio-economic Characteristics		
Education		.99
Household Income		1.00
Control Variables		
Gender (1=Female)		.81
Age		1.02*
Mexican Descent		.69
Political Orientation (Leaning Conservative)		1.36***
South		1.61
N	504	504
F	2.77**	6.69***

OR = Odds-Ratio; *** $p<.001$, ** $p<.01$, *$p<.05$

Table 2: Binary Logistic Regression of Reporting External Classification as White

	Model 1 OR	Model 2 OR
Phenotypical Characteristics (Dark to Light)		
Skin Tone	1.78*	1.96*
Eye Color	4.13**	4.98*
Hair Color	1.25+	1.58*
Hair Texture (Thick to Thin)	.97	1.03
Hair Curl (Tight Curls to Straight)	.77	.88
Height (Inches)	1.05	1.03
Weight (Pounds)	1.00	1.01
Cultural Characteristics		
Third Generation +		3.15**
Parent Bilingual		1.23
Socio-economic Characteristics		
Education		1.62**
Household Income (in 1000s)		1.02***
Control Variables		
Gender (1=Female)		.78
Age		.96*
Mexican Descent		1.03
Political Orientation (Leaning Conservative)		1.13
South		.49
N	515	515
F	5.44***	5.54***

OR = Odds-Ratio; *** $p<.001$, ** $p<.01$, *$p<.05$, +$p<.10$

Figure 1. Probability of Perceived External Classification as White by Phenotype and Household

Income
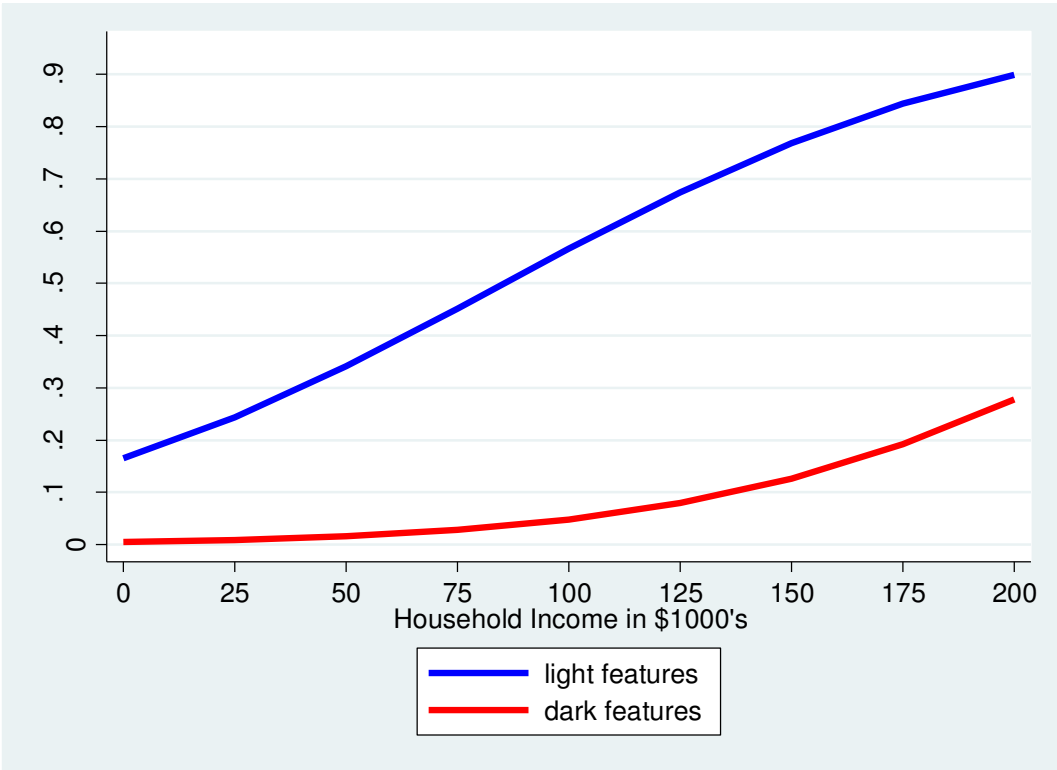
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Notes

1. But see Torkelson and Hartmann (2009) on the persistence of White ethnic identity for a small segment of Whites. Approximately 7 percent of Whites hold a salient ethnic identity.

2. Ideally, a nationally representative survey that asks strangers, acquaintances, friends, and family, all of different racialized groups, to racially classify each respondent would be best suited for the task. Unfortunately, such a survey does not exist. Notably, some researchers have compared interviewer coded race to respondent self-classified race to study racial contestation, yet this approach has known flaws. First, interviewers likely serve as non-representative proxies for an external review of the respondent (Hitlin, Brown, and Elder 2007). Interviewers are often attentive, trained to conduct social scientific research, and privy to extensive background information about the respondent. This background knowledge significantly influences how they racially classify respondents (Saperstein and Penner 2010). Moreover, in most social surveys, interviewers only code the respondent's race after they hear how the respondents self-identify (Campbell and Troyer 2007). As Campbell and Troyer explain, interviewers may be "biased towards agreement with the self-identification of the respondent" and "without the observer hearing the self-identifications of the respondents, we would expect higher levels of misclassification" (754). Campbell and Troyer (2011) argue that respondents' reports of misclassification may be the best attainable indicator of these experiences, but they were unaware of a nationally representative data set that included such a measure.

3. It is also plausible that traditional indicators of assimilation such as intermarriage, are not necessarily reliable indicators of Whitening. Just as some non-Whites may drop cultural elements of their racial/ethnic identity in such unions, Whites too may drop elements of Whiteness. Recent research suggests that intermarriage can be as racially and culturally transformative for Whites as it is Latinas/os (see Vasquez, forthcoming).

4. See Rodríguez (2000) and Rumbaut (2009) for detailed history on Hispanic and Latina/o categories in official U.S. statistics.

5. Using the "Ice" program in Stata 11.0, I created five data imputations, each with a random error component for missing values derived from all independent variables in the full statistical model. Developing five unique datasets with all original observed values, this procedure inputs imputed values for each instance of missing data. In accord with von Hippel (2007) all cases with imputed dependent variables are deleted prior to statistical analyses. Additionally, I do not impute values for cases that are systematically missing.