

Latino Rehearsals: Racialization and the Politics of Citizenship between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago

resumen

Este ensayo explora las posibilidades y los obstáculos para que surja un sentido mutuo de identidad “latina”, o *latinidad*, entre dos de los grupos latinoamericanos de mayor presencia numérica e histórica en los Estados Unidos. Basado en investigaciones etnográficas en Chicago, una de las pocas ciudades donde los mexicanos y puertorriqueños han residido por décadas, este estudio analiza las relaciones socio-políticas entre puertorriqueños y migrantes mexicanos y entre cada grupo y el estado-nación estadounidense. La investigación cuestiona la función de la ciudadanía estadounidense como institución que produce desigualdad social y subordinación racial dentro del marco del nacionalismo como formación racial en los Estados Unidos.

This essay explores the possibilities for and, more importantly, the obstacles to the emergence of a shared sense of “Latino” identity, or *Latinidad*, between two of the largest and most historically significant Latin American groups in the United States. Based upon ethnographic research in Chicago—one of very few major sites where Mexicans and Puerto Ricans have both settled over several decades—this study is concerned with the sociopolitical relations between Mexican migrants and Puerto Ricans within the space of the U.S. nation-state. Through the critical analytic lens enabled by these two experiences and their intersections, this research is focused primarily on the politics of race and citizenship in the United States. “Racialization” and “the politics of citizenship” are posited as the central categories of our analysis.

The analytic framework of racialization, which we develop ethnographically in this study, emphasizes the ways that “race,” or “racial difference,” cannot be presumed to be based upon the “natural” characteristics of identifiable groups or the “biological” effects of ancestry, but rather comes to be actively produced as such, and continually reproduced and transformed as well. To the extent that “racial differences” appear to be self-evident, our point of departure is to inquire into the social struggles over the ways that those

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apparently stable distinctions between groups have come to be naturalized and fixed. Thus, “race” is always entangled in social relations and conflicts, and retains an enduring (seemingly intractable) significance precisely because its forms and substantive meanings are always eminently historical and mutable. The analytic framework of racialization, furthermore, attends to the extension and elaboration of racial meanings to social relations, practices, or groups that have previously been unclassified racially, or differently racially classified (Winant 1994:58–68; cf. Omi and Winant 1986:64–66). Theodore Allen argues that what is substantive and systemic about racial oppression is precisely oppression, rather than “race” itself (as a phenotypical or phylogenic category of distinction). “By examining racial oppression as a particular system of oppression—like gender oppression or class oppression or national oppression,” he explains, it becomes possible to consistently theorize the organic interconnection of these systems of oppression (Allen 1994:28). Allen’s critical intervention is instructive, in that it makes it possible to sustain an analytic distinction between racialization, on the one hand, and racism (or more precisely, racial oppression), on the other. This distinction is critical for our purposes here where two racially oppressed groups each find themselves ensnared by a larger racist hegemony that is sustained, in part, by the extent to which they come to position themselves socially in racialized opposition to one another.

For Mexican migrants and Puerto Ricans, a crucial difference that each group often produced as a racialized distinction concerned their respective positions in relation to U.S. citizenship. Insofar as the institution of U.S. citizenship is commonly presumed to differentiate subjects in relation to the power of the nation-state, differences, divisions, and inequalities are elaborated in terms of “citizenship” and “immigration”—Who is a U.S. citizen? Who is a “foreigner,” or an “alien”? Who is eligible for citizenship? Who is deportable? And moreover, who is a “real American”? Furthermore, how do apparently

formal or legalistic distinctions of citizenship translate into substantive differences of “rights” and entitlements? This is the spectrum of concerns that comprises what we are calling “the politics of citizenship.”

Our ethnographic account of the differences produced between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago is, therefore, concentrated on the centrality of politics in the most everyday senses of the word. Specifically, this study reveals the constitutive way that the unequal politics of citizenship produced by the U.S. nation-state for these two Latino groups, respectively, has entailed radically different relations to the U.S. state on the part of each, and thus, has engendered significant divisions between their two experiences. Likewise, we emphasize the ways that these divergent relations to U.S. citizenship have come to be racialized in distinct and historically specific ways—including in the ways that the two groups are positioned, and position themselves, in relation to one another.

Both racialization and the politics of citizenship are historical processes, in a double sense: they are grounded in prior histories, but they are also thoroughly implicated in the making of history in the present. Thus, the first sections of this essay address some of the crucial features of the histories of the relations between the U.S. nation-state and Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, respectively. Our discussions of Mexican and Puerto Rican migrations, and their distinct relations to U.S. citizenship, are followed by more specific histories of each group’s community formation processes and how these migrations have intersected in Chicago, the site of our collaborative ethnography. The possibility of documenting the ways that history is always being made in the present—the ways that we are all implicated in the production, reproduction, and transformation of our social world in everyday life—is one of the defining and enduring potential strengths of ethnographic modes of research. The historical sections, then, are followed by a brief methodological consideration of the particular features of our study. It is here that we frame the ethnographic material that comprises the main body of this essay. Specifically, we first analyze our ethnographic material to demonstrate how citizenship and migrant “illegality” come to be refracted through ideologies of work, in order to examine how the politics of citizenship are reframed in terms of a moral economy that lends itself to racialization. Thereafter, we examine a variety of ethnographic episodes in which Mexicans and Puerto Ricans formulate ideas of *Latinidad*, particularly in ways that are fractured in class-specific terms and racialized in overt juxtaposition to Blackness, whiteness, as well as institutional contexts, notably those related to the U.S. state. Ultimately, then, this ethnographic research enables an interrogation of the institution of U.S. citizenship itself as a modality for producing social inequality and racialized subordination within the larger framework of U.S. nationalism as a racial formation.

Mexican Migration and “Illegality”

Mexican migrants are very commonly the implied if not overt focus of mass-mediated, journalistic, as well as scholarly discussions of “illegal aliens,” but the genesis of their condition of “illegality” is seldom examined. The figure of the “illegal alien” itself has emerged as a mass-mediated sociopolitical category that is always-already saturated with racialized difference, and likewise serves as a constitutive feature of the specific way that “Mexicans” in general came to be racialized in the United States, regardless of their immigration status or even U.S. citizenship (De Genova 1999, in press; Ngai in press). Although the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) itself estimates that Mexicans comprise only 54 percent of the total number of undocumented migrants in the United States, the vigilance and enforcement by the INS (and, especially, the Border Patrol) against so-called illegal aliens is consistently directed overwhelmingly against Mexicans in particular.

There has long been a commonplace recognition of the fact that significant numbers of Mexican migrants came to work without documents in the United States (Calavita 1992; García 1980; Samora 1971). The fact of undocumented Mexican migration, of course, arose as a consequence of a shared, albeit unequal, history between Mexico and the United States. At the outset, it is instructive to recall that, in the first instance, it was white U.S. citizens who were the “illegal aliens” whose undocumented incursions into Mexican national territory provided the prelude to the invasion and war in 1848 by which the U.S. nation-state conquered roughly half of Mexico’s territory and colonized approximately 80 thousand Mexicans (see Acuña 1981:3–5; Mirandé 1985:24; Vélez-Ibáñez 1996:57–62).¹ In the following decades, a steadily increasing and effectively permanent importation of Mexican labor by U.S. employers cultivated and sustained a largely unregulated and numerically unrestricted migration between the two countries.

Due to the critical function of deportation in the maintenance of a “revolving door” policy, the tenuous distinction between “legal” and “illegal” migration has been deployed to stigmatize and regulate Mexican–migrant workers for much of the 20th century. This reflects something of the special character of Mexican migration to the United States: it has provided U.S. capitalism with the only “foreign” migrant labor reserve, so sufficiently flexible and tractable that it can neither be fully replaced nor completely excluded under any circumstances (see Cockcroft 1986). Since 1965, however, the ongoing history of U.S. immigration law has been central in structuring the inequalities that have shaped Mexican–migrant experiences. The historical specificity of the migrant status of Mexicans is inextricable from the fact that all of the prominent changes in U.S. immigration law since 1965 have been

restrictive in unprecedented ways, weighing disproportionately upon migrants from Mexico in particular through a legal production of Mexican/migrant “illegality” (De Genova 1999, in press). During the contemporary era of migration, Mexico has furnished at least 7.5 million (so-called legal as well as undocumented) long-term migrants who currently live in the United States—no other country has supplied even comparable numbers. The INS projects that 2.7 million of these are undocumented. Mexicans have continued to migrate, but an increasingly restrictive immigration regime has ensured that ever greater numbers have been relegated to an indefinite condition of “illegality.” The total number of Mexicans in the United States (including migrants from Mexico and U.S.-born Mexicans) is at least 21 million and comprises 65 percent of all U.S. Latinos.² While the overall majority are, in fact, U.S. citizens, at least 13 percent of the combined migrant and U.S.-born Mexican population may be currently undocumented, and a considerably greater number will have been previously undocumented. Likewise, among those who are U.S. citizens, a significant proportion of these are the U.S.-born children of Mexican migrants. Thus, it is impossible to underestimate the extent to which the disproportionate legal production of migrant “illegality” for Mexicans in particular has directly or indirectly affected all Mexicans in the United States, regardless of place of birth or citizenship, and supplies a defining feature in their racialization as “Mexicans.”

Puerto Rican Migration and U.S. Citizenship

Puerto Ricans, along with African Americans, are most often implicated in journalistic and popular discussions of welfare “abuse” and figured as prominent “exceptions” to hegemonic narratives of social mobility in the United States. Pervasive representations of Puerto Rican “welfare dependency,” belonging to the ideological spectrum that culminates with the perverse stereotype of the usually African American “welfare queen,” contribute to a persistent racialization of Puerto Ricans as uniquely stigmatized among U.S. Latinos. Unlike other migrants to the United States, Puerto Ricans are distinguished by the juridical status of birthright U.S. citizenship as an inheritance of their country’s colonial condition. The apparent privilege of Puerto Ricans’ U.S. citizenship, in contrast to the “immigrant” status of other Latino migrants, further accentuates the insinuation that welfare “dependency” and enduring poverty are Puerto Ricans’ own doing. In this sense, the image of welfare dependency marks Puerto Ricans as U.S. “non-citizen” citizens, as a culturally-deficient group who lack good “immigrant values,” are a public liability, and stand for un-Americanness (see Ong 1996).

In the decades following the U.S. occupation in 1898, Puerto Ricans became pawns of the official labor recruitment campaigns established in the

territories under U.S. military control. As colonial subjects, and racialized as not-white, Puerto Ricans (along with African Americans from the U.S. South) became an important source of “cheap” labor imported to northeastern U.S. cities. After 1917, with the U.S. Congress’s passage of the Jones Act, Puerto Ricans became U.S. citizens, and so, unlike other “foreign” migrant contract laborers, Puerto Ricans could not be deported once their contracts expired.

Puerto Rico’s colonial status was revised in 1952. Whereas Puerto Rico had previously been officially designated an “unincorporated territory” of the United States, the island’s colonial condition would now be represented euphemistically as a “commonwealth” of the United States, with the official title of “Associated Free State” (Estado Libre Asociado [ELA]). The provisions of this new constitution, while initially purporting to move Puerto Rico closer to sovereignty and autonomy, actually boiled down to establishing a program of tax incentives to lure U.S. capital investment to the island—notably, including the environmentally hazardous operations of pharmaceutical corporations. The ELA also consolidated U.S. territorial prerogatives to establish military training facilities on the island, as well as federal transfers of funds in the form of welfare and public assistance.

By the late 1950s, Puerto Rico was being showcased as the United States’s model of “industrialization by invitation,” otherwise known as Operation Bootstrap (History Task Force 1979; Wagenheim and Jimenez de Wagenheim 1994). This rapid industrialization, which moved Puerto Rico from an agrarian to an industrial society, was soon presented to the world as an alternative to the “Soviet model” adopted by the neighboring island nation of Cuba (Grosfoguel 1999). Operation Bootstrap’s success relied on “cleaning up” the island of its “surplus” (i.e., poor) population, so that the appearance of a virtually instantaneous improvement in the standard of living of the Puerto Rican middle class on the island could be achieved. While the Puerto Rican government claimed to “neither encourage nor discourage” migration, the displacement of Puerto Ricans from Puerto Rico to the U.S. mainland was increasingly perceived as an alternative to “unemployment” and “overpopulation” on the island. It had also become a favored means for supplying labor to mainland industries, particularly during World War II. In fact, the Puerto Rican government became increasingly eager to coordinate efforts with mainland employers by creating organizations such as the Office of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in order to “ease the transition of Puerto Rican workers into the new environment,” in the words of a pamphlet published in the 1950s (Dávila 1997:37). However, the model of “industrialization by invitation” offered no provision for the livelihood of the mass exodus of more than one million Puerto Ricans who eventually migrated and created barrios in the United States.

Puerto Rican migration has few contemporary or historical precedents since few other countries have exported such a large proportion of their population abroad—more than a quarter of its total population between 1945 and 1965 (Duany 2000:2). According to Jorge Duany's calculations (2000), by 1997 an estimated 3.1 million Puerto Ricans resided on the U.S. mainland, compared to 3.7 million on the island—that is, nearly 46 percent of all Puerto Ricans were living in the United States.

Taken together, these brief sketches of Mexicans' and Puerto Ricans' respective relations to the institution of U.S. citizenship provide an instructive contrast in the history of relations between the United States and Latin America. One Latin American people—Mexicans—are distinguished by a legacy of colonization by the U.S. nation-state that produced a new distinction between (Chicano) U.S. subjects (with an official but largely implausible eligibility for citizenship) and unauthorized (Mexican) outsiders whose movements across a formerly continuous space were now recast as “illegal” border crossings. Formerly Mexican lands were directly incorporated as territories that later became the states of the U.S. “Southwest.” On the other hand, another Latin American people—Puerto Ricans—are distinguished by a legacy of colonization by the U.S. nation-state that reduced their land to an officially “unincorporated territory” in a condition of indefinitely (permanently?) deferred exception, and that reduced them to subordinate U.S. citizens. Ironically, then, the colonial incorporation of half of Mexico created the preconditions for Mexican migration to be stigmatized by “illegality,” whereas the possession but nonincorporation of Puerto Rico bestowed upon Puerto Rican migration the contradictory inheritance of colonial citizenship.

Mexican Migration and Community Formation in Chicago

As the United States's quintessential railroad metropolis during the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century (Cronon 1991:83), Chicago quickly became an important (one might say, inevitable) destination for Mexican/migrant labor, the early patterns of which corresponded so thoroughly to the expansion of railroads (Año Nuevo Kerr 1976; Cardoso 1980; Reisler 1976; Rosales 1978; cf. Clark 1974; A. Jones 1971; Taylor 1932). The Mexican population in Chicago first achieved a notable size during World War I. As early as the 1920s the largest single employer of Mexican migrants anywhere in the United States was a steel mill in an industrial suburb of Chicago, and by 1925 Mexican migrants already comprised more than 20 percent of metropolitan Chicago's total railroad workforce (Rosales 1978:139, 145). From only 1,000 Mexicans in Chicago in 1910, the community had grown to more than 25,000 in 1930. Due to the forced repatriations of both migrant and

U.S. citizen Mexicans during the 1930s (Año Nuevo Kerr 1976:69–77; Weber 1982:213–69), Chicago’s Mexican community was reduced to 16,000 by the end of the decade, only then to begin growing anew, especially with the added influx of some 15 thousand braceros contracted to work on the railroads following the advent of World War II. Between 1930 and 1960, the Mexican population in Chicago more than doubled to 55,600. By this time there were well established Mexican communities in such neighborhoods as the Near West Side (near railroad yards), and due to “urban renewal” and displacement, increasingly in the adjacent Near Southwest Side (or “Lower West Side”) area known as Pilsen, in Back of the Yards (near the stockyards, slaughterhouses, and meat-packing plants), and South Chicago (near the steel mills). Still, the most dramatic acceleration of Mexican migration to Chicago began only in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Between 1960 and 2000, the Mexican population within the Chicago city limits increased by nearly ten times—from 55,600 to 530,462. In the greater Chicago metropolitan area, however, the increase was even more dramatic.

Today, according to the U.S. Census for the year 2000, Chicago is the second largest urban concentration of Mexican settlement in the country, with numbers greater than 1.1 million in the metropolitan area, and comprising more than 18 percent of the population within the city limits. The absolute majority (55 percent) is composed of those who have themselves migrated from Mexico, and the overwhelming majority consists of migrants and their children. Mexicans in Chicago (including those raised in the U.S.) continue to be concentrated in so-called low-skill occupations, with roughly half holding jobs as industrial operatives, fabricators, and other types of manual laborers. Mexicans in Chicago are more than twice as likely to be factory workers as whites or African Americans. The great majority of the rest work in low-paid service jobs, such as restaurants. (As of 1990, only 6.4 percent of the Mexican workforce in Chicago held managerial or professional positions of any kind).

Puerto Rican Migration and Community Formation in Chicago

The Puerto Rican community of Chicago, as well as smaller Puerto Rican settlements throughout the Midwest, partially resulted from government and private efforts to meet regional labor needs, while also seeking to restrict and manage the concentration of Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland. It was not until the late 1940s that Puerto Rican contract laborers started arriving en masse in Chicago, first recruited by Castle, Barton, and Associates to serve as foundry and domestic workers.³ In agreement with Puerto Rico’s Department of Labor, this private employment agency recruited Puerto Rican women to be domestics in general household service and enlisted Puerto Rican men for

foundry work at the Chicago Hardware Foundry Company. Thereafter, workers were brought to work on Midwestern farms as well (Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago 1946, 1957:16).

The careless recruitment and deplorable working conditions of contracted workers in Chicago became a source of widely publicized controversy. As stipulated in a study by Elena Padilla, Muna Muñoz, and their research associates (1946), the Department of Labor did not require any proof of age or medical certificates from any of the workers, thus hiring extremely young and oftentimes physically ill Puerto Ricans to perform strenuous work. Charges of mistreatment of Chicago's Puerto Rican workers—including 15-hour workdays, substantially lower wages than other Chicago workers, unannounced transferring of domestic workers between work sites, et cetera—triggered a storm of controversy, which occupied the front pages of island newspapers (*El Mundo* [San Juan], December 19, 27, and 31, 1946, and January 4, 15, 18, 23–25, 28, and February 9, 1947; cited in Maldonado 1979:114).

The seasonal farm labor system both augmented already existing Puerto Rican communities and prompted the emergence of new ones (I. Jones 1955; Maldonado 1979; Senior and Watkins 1966). As was also true for Mexicans, some Puerto Rican agricultural workers stayed beyond the determined employment season and sought work in better-paid industrial jobs. This was the case for many early Puerto Rican agricultural workers in Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois who first had been contracted to harvest field crops and later found employment in foundries (Maldonado 1979:117). Thus, labor shortages in steel mills after World War II provided fertile terrain for new Puerto Rican communities to emerge and for already existing Puerto Rican areas to grow during the early stages of migration to Chicago. About two thousand Puerto Ricans were recruited through private employment agencies in the 1946–47 period, and approximately 15 thousand more were hired as seasonal farm workers. The bulk of Puerto Rican migration to Chicago did not come from these contract laborers; they did, however, serve as an early catalyst and an important resource for relatives and friends migrating to the region (Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago 1957:17). From only 240 Puerto Ricans in Chicago in 1940, their numbers had escalated to more than 32,000 by 1960, and then increased by another 147 percent to nearly 79,000 by 1970 (Betancur et al. 1993:121).

As manufacturing jobs in New York City were quickly disappearing by the late 1950s, the “problem” of a high concentration of Puerto Ricans in New York became a main motivation for redirecting Puerto Rican migration to Chicago. The so-called Puerto Rican problem in New York City became a cautionary tale for agencies responsible for “integrating” the newcomers into Chicago neighborhoods (Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, 1954).

The Director of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Office in Chicago, in collaboration with the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, focused on “urging Puerto Ricans not to settle down with any Spanish-speaking people, but to distribute themselves all over the city in Polish, Italian, Czechoslovak and other areas . . . [and] stressing Puerto Ricans’ scattering all over the city and warning against the formation of colonies or residence with the Mexicans.”⁴ Indeed, already in 1947, Elena Padilla noted a significant inclination among Puerto Ricans to resettle in Mexican neighborhoods (E. Padilla 1947: 87). Nevertheless, prior to 1970, the defining feature of Puerto Rican residential patterns was precisely the dispersion of Puerto Ricans into minoritized concentrations located in a variety of predominantly white neighborhoods on the city’s north side, as well as a few similarly small concentrations in neighborhoods on the city’s south and west sides (F. Padilla 1985:40–42, 1987:117–123).

Despite government efforts to prevent Puerto Ricans from “forming colonies” with the Mexicans, however, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans did indeed share social and physical spaces from the very early stages of Puerto Rican arrival in Chicago. The Chicago Catholic archdiocese inadvertently played a critical role in bringing together two traditionally Catholic Spanish-speaking populations in the religious and social activities of the parishes. In the early years of Puerto Rican settlement, Latino newcomers were identified as a foundation on which to renew and expand the power and influence of the Catholic Church, which in turn served as a space of social interaction and networking between Puerto Ricans and Mexicans. Likewise, predominantly Mexican nightclubs, like the North Side’s Rancho Grande, identified by Elena Padilla, provided a congenial space where Puerto Rican domestic workers “would meet to chat, to eat Mexican food, and to dance to Latin American music” and inevitably served as a social mixer where these Puerto Rican women made their first contacts with the Mexican community, and sometimes became involved romantically with Mexican men (E. Padilla 1947:86–88). Furthermore, Mexican organizations sometimes extended their services and fraternity to Puerto Ricans. The Club Azteca sponsored a dance to raise disaster-relief funds for hurricane victims in Puerto Rico, for instance, and the Mexican Civic Committee, assisted dissatisfied Puerto Rican foundry workers by directing them to alternative employment options and locating housing opportunities in Mexican homes (E. Padilla 1947:54–88). Following their recruitment into contract labor in the 1940s, Puerto Ricans employed in Chicago, as a group, were overwhelmingly working in industrial jobs and related manual labor throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Puerto Ricans had a labor force participation profile that very strikingly resembled that of Mexicans—predominated by “low-skill” industrial labor with very little mobility whatsoever.

By the late 1960s, most Puerto Ricans had either been displaced or deliberately relocated to Chicago's Near Northwest Side. Only a few train stops away from the city's Central Business District, the intersection of three adjacent neighborhoods—West Town, Humboldt Park, and Logan Square—had come to serve as the principal “port of entry” for recent Puerto Rican migrants. Already by 1965, police brutality against Puerto Ricans in this growing barrio served as a flash point for community organizing, and then again in 1966 touched off what has been called “the first Puerto Rican riot in the history of the United States” (F. Padilla 1985:46–50, 1987:123–25, 144–55). Soon thereafter, the Division Street barrio extending from West Town to Humboldt Park had come to be marked as the distinctively “Puerto Rican” section of Chicago and boasted the largest Puerto Rican community in the Midwest. The proliferation of Puerto Rican *colmados* (grocery stores), barber-shops, restaurants, and ambulatory *fritoleros* (fritter cooks) pointed to the entrepreneurial possibilities fostered by the demand for culturally specific goods and services on the part of the rapidly expanding Puerto Rican population.

The unprecedented degree of Puerto Rican concentration in the neighborhoods of Chicago's Near Northwest Side by the late 1960s, furthermore, became a site for advancing a variety of community-based initiatives concerned with the politics of culture and the consolidation of a distinctively Puerto Rican-identified urban space (Ramos-Zayas in press). Puerto Rican community politics in Chicago came to be primarily organized around civil rights concerns and social service provision for neighborhoods that were beleaguered by persistent poverty. Despite the history of Puerto Rican employment in industry over the preceding decades, by the early 1970s Puerto Ricans' tenuous place in the Chicago labor market was being profoundly undermined by aggressive capital disinvestment that took the form of either relocations or restructurings of mass production manufacturing (Betancur et al. 1993). Today, Puerto Ricans, as a group, remain among the poorest U.S. citizens by most socioeconomic indicators. Similar to national trends, Puerto Ricans in Chicago during the 1990s had the highest poverty rate (33.8 percent) of all Latino groups—40 percent higher than the poverty rate for Latinos as a whole (24.2 percent) and even higher than that of African Americans (30 percent).

By the early 1970s, however, migration to Chicago from Puerto Rico had reached its peak, with a Puerto Rican population of 79,000 in 1970; by 2000, the Puerto Rican population within the Chicago city limits had only grown to 113,000 (with 164,509 for the metropolitan region as a whole). Indeed, in 1970, when Puerto Rican migration had already peaked, Mexican migration was at the threshold of a new period of accelerated growth. At that particular historical moment, nonetheless, the size of the two communities was nearly

comparable: 79,000 Puerto Ricans (comprising 32 percent of Chicago's Latino population), and an estimated (but very probably undercounted) 83,000 Mexicans, accounting for 43 percent or more of Chicago's Latinos (see F. Padilla 1985:56). Thus, during the 1970s, even as Puerto Rican organizational efforts toward community consolidation began to enjoy unprecedented success, there were new motivations for coalition-building and an increasing pressure to move toward a new "Latino" politics (González 1980).⁵

An important (and widely celebrated) precursor for our study is Felix Padilla's work (1985) on the emergence of Latino "ethnic consciousness" and political mobilization among Mexican American and Puerto Rican community organizers in Chicago in the 1970s. Padilla sought to problematize the naturalization of the "Latino" or "Hispanic" labels within conventional social science research and emphasized the situational character of Latinismo as it emerged as a new "ethnic group identity," distinct from specific Spanish-speaking national origin group ethnicities, in shared political contexts. Much of the merit of Padilla's study derives from the relative uniqueness of the historically specific situation of Latinos in Chicago—that is, the roughly comparable size of the Mexican and Puerto Rican communities in the early 1970s. Padilla's narrow focus on a very small selection of specifically Latino-identified political organizations, however, is a major limitation to its relevance for considerations of the possibilities for Latinidad in everyday life, which is a major concern of our study.

Research and Methodological Comparisons

Chicago has been, historically, one of the very few major concentrations of Latinos in the United States where significant numbers of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans have coincided over a span of several decades. Despite the roughly comparable numbers of the two groups in Chicago in 1970, which supplied the particular historical horizon for Padilla's work (1985), both the earlier history as well as the subsequent period are distinguished, in fact, by the numerical preponderance of Mexicans. Today, Mexicans constitute 70 percent of the Latino population within the city of Chicago, and Puerto Ricans compose another 15 percent. As of 2000, these two groups together still accounted for nearly 85 percent of all Latinos in Chicago; trailing far behind, the third largest Latino group (Guatemalans) represented only 3 percent of the total. Between 1970 and 1980, the Mexican population in the most significant neighborhoods of Puerto Rican concentration on Chicago's Near Northwest Side (Humboldt Park, West Town, and Logan Square) nearly quadrupled—escalating from 12,000 to more than 47,000. By 1990, within these three contiguous communities (which together concentrate more than half of the total Puerto Rican population in the city) there were virtually as many Mexicans

(61,429) as Puerto Ricans (63,707). Indeed, in the West Town neighborhood, Mexicans had already bypassed Puerto Ricans in 1990. As of 1990, roughly three-fourths of all the Puerto Ricans in Chicago continued to be concentrated in six contiguous North Side neighborhoods, but Puerto Ricans are now quite routinely exposed to Mexicans living in the same neighborhoods. Meanwhile, the “Latino” communities on the South Side of the city, which historically had always been overwhelmingly Mexican, have indeed remained so: Pilsen (92.4 percent Mexican; 2.7 percent Puerto Rican); Little Village (92.7 percent Mexican; 3.2 percent Puerto Rican); Back of the Yards (88.2 percent Mexican; 5.6 percent Puerto Rican); South Chicago (85.8 percent Mexican; 7.2 percent Puerto Rican).⁶ Thus, much of the material in this study contributed from Nicholas De Genova’s research tends to have emerged precisely from those contexts where his Mexican interlocutors had had much more contact with Puerto Ricans. Discourses about Puerto Ricans were rather uncommon among Mexican migrants who lived and worked in places where they had very little exposure to Puerto Ricans. By contrast, it has become ever increasingly improbable for Puerto Ricans in Chicago to formulate perspectives about their own Puerto Ricanness without accounting for that identity, to some degree, in relation to Mexicans as well as other Latinos.

This article combines ethnographic data from two research projects, conducted independently of one another, during the same time period (1993–95), by each of the coauthors (De Genova 1999; Ramos-Zayas 1997). These two studies did not share exactly the same research questions, nor were the ethnographic materials produced by these distinct projects, in any rigorous sense, precisely comparable.⁷ What we attempt here is nonetheless to bridge some of the inevitable discontinuities between our respective data. Certainly, this selective conjoining of rather particular aspects of our two studies is informed by a set of shared concerns, both theoretical and political.⁸ It is indisputable, however, that the dialogue which we stage here is enabled in a very practical sense by the empirical intersection of our distinct ethnographies. This study, which emerges from the conjuncture of these two projects, genuinely serves to shed new light on each of its component parts, substantiating a comparativist inquiry that we contend to be not merely validated by the ethnographic material, but indeed demanded by it (see De Genova and Ramos-Zayas in press).

Citizenship and “Illegality”

Mexican migrants tended to have little or no historical knowledge about the colonial condition of Puerto Rico. Most commonly, they knew only that here was another Latino group, but one who enjoyed what appeared to them to be a privileged relationship to the U.S. state. Although Mexican

migrants did not tend to comment explicitly upon Puerto Ricans' U.S. citizenship, they commonly identified some of the substantive features of that citizenship, which they could conceive of only as a tremendous advantage. By contrast, Puerto Ricans often problematized their U.S. citizenship—deploying it as the distinguishing feature between themselves and other Latinos, but also recognizing it as an inheritance of the Puerto Rican colonial condition. By rejecting the premises and questioning the promises of their U.S. citizenship, Puerto Rican activists grounded successful community-building projects and generated critical discourses as a colonized people; on the other hand, Puerto Rican residents of Humboldt Park oftentimes deployed a “citizenship identity” to enforce boundaries vis-à-vis other Latino groups, whom they typically perceived as even more marginalized “illegal” Others (Ramos-Zayas in press).

The emphasis on a citizenship identity is illustrated by Alma Juncos, a Puerto Rican parent-volunteer at a Humboldt Park high school.⁹ When asked to describe the area where she was living, Alma replied:

Where I live, some Puerto Ricans and some Mexicans moved in. There's a building that is mostly Mexican, Guatemalan. Puerto Ricans don't live there. Where I live, I feel fine. As Puerto Ricans, we help each other, we motivate each other. And I've also helped Mexican people, a guy who is mute, who lives on the ground floor of my building. I took him here to the West Town clinic and they gave him good attention, they recommended a school to him. I think that many of them are jealous of Puerto Ricans. My [Puerto Rican] neighbor told me: “The thing with Mexicans is that they know they are wetbacks.” And, since we [Puerto Ricans] are [U.S.] citizens, they hate us because of that.

At a time when racialization discourses around Latinidad tended to locate groups of Latin American ancestry outside the juridical and ideological borders of the United States, Puerto Ricans straddled the tensions between the categories of “Latino” and “Puerto Rican”-ness by affirming a citizenship identity. This citizenship identity discourse automatically assumes that Mexicans and other Latinos are not U.S. citizens. Puerto Ricans deployed this citizenship identity by emphasizing service to the “American nation,” particularly, their service in the U.S. military and knowledge of English. Nevertheless, Puerto Ricans made the distinction between servicing the U.S. nation as colonial subjects and being “real Americans,” an identity which most Puerto Ricans associated with racial whiteness. Thus, while a citizenship identity was invoked to emphasize a Puerto Rican nationality in contradistinction to pan-Latino identification, this citizenship identity still recognized its nonwhiteness and subordinate (“second-class”) character.

In general, there is a bifurcation among Puerto Ricans in the U.S. labor market: at one end are those Puerto Ricans who are not only in the labor force but also doing relatively well, with a proportion in managerial or professional positions that is twice as high as that for Mexicans, and at the other pole are Puerto Ricans who are either unemployed or among the working poor, with a higher poverty rate than any other Latino group. As unionized industrial jobs have eroded and been increasingly supplanted by low-wage, no-benefits, and widely ridiculed service sector employment, Puerto Ricans have been compelled into the growing ranks of the U.S. citizen poor for whom welfare becomes an insufficient complement to other odd jobs for subsistence. As of 1990, Puerto Ricans had a labor force participation rate (56.1 percent) that was significantly lower than that for the total U.S. population, a poverty rate that was roughly three times higher, and a comparably high proportion who were welfare recipients.

In contrast, Mexican migrants who had arrived in the United States between 1980 and 1990, and were not U.S. citizens, had a labor force participation rate (87.5 percent) that was 17.6 percent higher than that of the total U.S. population (74.4 percent). A preeminent exemplar of the working poor, however, their poverty rate (36.6 percent) was almost three times that of the total U.S. population (13.1 percent). Nevertheless, this Mexican/migrant population in poverty received 82.1 percent less in public assistance payments per capita than the U.S. total poverty population. These dramatic disparities reflected several decisive determinants: the exclusion of undocumented migrants from welfare programs (Social Security Insurance [SSI], Aid to Families with Dependent Children [AFDC], and General Assistance), the five-year prohibition on receipt of welfare for most migrants whose immigration statuses were adjusted (or “legalized”) through the “Amnesty” of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, as well as standard immigration and naturalization restrictions against applicants or their relatives becoming “a public charge.” Since the “Immigration Reform” and “Welfare Reform” legislations of 1996, such restrictions, for both undocumented as well as “legal” migrants, have become even more draconian.

In contradistinction to many Mexican migrants and other Latinos, Puerto Ricans who enjoy the over-glorified status of U.S. citizenship, but still live in poverty, come to be blamed for their own poverty as culturally “deficient” and socially “deviant.” Echoing the comments of other barrio residents, Adriana, an 18-year-old high school student, remarked, “Mexicans see Puerto Ricans as U.S. citizens who come to this country with a lot of privileges and we don’t take advantage of those privileges. That we are lazy. That we like living off welfare, that we have this welfare mentality.”

Ideologies of Work

Mexican migrants were virtually unanimous in their sense that Mexicans as a group are extraordinarily distinguished for “wanting to work,” for “knowing how to work,” for “not being afraid to work,” and for “being ready to work hard” (De Genova 1999:261–265). It was hardly surprising, then, when one of the countless industrial day-labor services in Chicago, which specialize in extracting a profit from the recruitment and placement of undocumented workers for local factories, circulated flyers in Pilsen in the summer of 2000 that read: “Seeking people who truly want to work and are not afraid of work!” (*¿Se busca gente que en verdad quiera trabajar y no le tenga miedo al trabajo!*). These specific qualifications, of course, are the ubiquitous conditions of possibility for undocumented workers in particular to serve as an exceptionally vulnerable workforce, presumed by employers to be “cheap” and tractable, and thus, honored as a labor pool of choice. In other words, the intersection between Mexican/migrant “illegality” and a moral economy of “hard work” marked a profound conjuncture between the politics of citizenship and the politics of labor subordination, through which the commodity that was their labor-power was rendered to be competitive (see De Genova 2002). Likewise, Mexican migrants could celebrate these same qualities, in effect, as moral virtues that distinguished them as a group and which could be prized in opposition to those of their most proximate competitors in the labor market, who could be denigrated as “lazy.” It is in this manner that these distinctions commonly come to be racialized.

The topic of welfare tended to be inseparable, among Mexican/migrant workers, from allegations of “laziness.” At a factory called Czarnina and Sons¹⁰, in March 1994 a worker named Evangelina put it concisely: “Mexicans don’t go on welfare; welfare is for Blacks, Americans, and Puerto Ricans because they’re lazy; a Mexican might have ten kids, but the kids go to work; ten years, 12 years old, the kids help pay, no problem . . .” she chuckled, but then after a moment’s pause, added somewhat more seriously, “Well, it depends on the father, because the mother doesn’t want to make the kids work.” Evangelina’s endorsement of this severe and laborious ideal of “Mexican”-ness was first enthusiastic and then more ambivalent, and overtly gendered. There was certainly an element of hyperbole in this defense of the pronouncedly working-class status honor of Mexicans against “Blacks, Americans, and Puerto Ricans,” and Evangelina’s mirth acknowledged her own exaggeration. But then, perhaps because she was embarrassed to have depicted her community to a white “American” man in terms that could make Mexicans seem extreme and even heartless, she abruptly began to qualify her own claim and convey her own reservations about the harsh image she had just portrayed. What is clearly

significant is that Evangelina did so in gendered terms that suggested a critique of men's patriarchal authority within the family, thereby also implying a direct link between male power and this quite masculinist construction of "Mexican"-ness in terms of "hard work."¹¹

It is illuminating here to extend this analysis with recourse to a joke that was circulating among Mexican migrants in Chicago in the spring of 1997. Reduced to its basic elements, the joke can be summarized as follows: It is the time of the Mexican Revolution, and Pancho Villa's army has just captured an invading U.S. regiment; addressing his lieutenants, Pancho Villa gives the order: "Take all the Americans (*americanos*)—shoot them, kill them; the Blacks (*morenos*) and Puerto Ricans—just let them go." The lieutenants are confused and dismayed: "What?! What are you saying?!? But why??" Coolly, Pancho Villa replies, "Don't waste the bullets—they'll all just die of hunger—because here, there's no welfare."¹²

Jokes, of course, operate within a certain moral economy of pervasive assumptions, at the same time as they must be understood to be interventions in their own right that contribute to the reproduction (and proliferation) of those same assumptions. Clearly, a punch line such as this—which imputes that Black people and Puerto Ricans would be literally incapable of sustaining themselves without welfare, indeed that their laziness is so intractable that they would starve to death—must operate within a discursive field where this allegation holds a certain currency. This is necessary in order that the joke be apprehended as "funny" and thus, that it elicit the intended double effect of any joke—that people laugh and then go on to circulate it. The expected reception of the joke's irony resides in a collective sentiment that counterpoises the industriousness (and here, also thrift—"don't waste the bullets") of Mexican workers to the "laziness" of their most proximate competitors in the U.S./Chicago labor market—so that what at first appears to be startlingly counterintuitive, even nonsensical, in Pancho Villa's order, is revealed as shrewd wisdom that flatters the commonsense. This joke forcefully reiterates the hegemonic racial script that has already been seen in Evangelina's discursive production of Mexican migrants' difference from white U.S. citizens, on the one hand, and from nonwhite U.S. citizens—both African Americans and Puerto Ricans—on the other. Furthermore, the joke is also similarly gendered inasmuch as the figure of Pancho Villa is a premier symbol, not merely of a romanticized nationalist "Mexican"-ness, but more accurately, of a heroic, popular nationalist, Mexican masculinity (see Alonso 1995; Paredes 1993:234).¹³

The joke produces a reductive representation of the U.S. racial economy—one that is specifically resonant for Mexicans in Chicago—but reterritorialized onto Mexican terrain. Within the joke's refracted space, Mexican migrants contend with the U.S. racial economy as Pancho Villa's soldiers (which is to

say, as “Mexicans”) battling the arrayed forces of the United States, which in no simple sense comprise only “Americans,” but rather, are composed of “Americans” and “Blacks” and “Puerto Ricans.” Notably, Evangelina had used precisely the same categories, and the opposition in both instances implicitly posited “Mexicans” (as migrants) against an array of U.S. citizens. Explicitly, three of these four operative categories could be mistaken for “nationality,” but what is decisive is precisely the remaining term—*Blacks*—which reveals that it would be erroneous to simply read the other categories according to their “national” surface. That these categories all stand alongside one another as formal equivalences in the structure of the joke requires that the apparently “national” skins of three of these terms (*Mexican*, *American*, and *Puerto Rican*) be brought into alignment with the purely and plainly racialized identity of the fourth (*Black*). The lines of adversity are drawn around the axis of citizenship, but this division becomes apprehensible only when it is further fractured by racialized distinctions.

African Americans are perceived by most Mexican migrants to be separate, distinct, and indeed, excluded from the category “Americans”—exposing the fact that “American” comes to specifically connote racial whiteness.¹⁴ As such, “Americanness” is unavailable to Blacks *or* Latinos (whether they be Mexican migrants or Puerto Ricans who are born into U.S. citizenship).¹⁵ Neither for African Americans nor for Puerto Ricans does birthright U.S. citizenship secure the status of “American”-ness, which constitutes a national identity that is understood in itself to be intrinsically racialized—as white. The nationally-inflected “cultural” differences between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, furthermore, do not suffice to elucidate the racialized distinctions introduced by the joke, since Puerto Ricans are coupled here with Blacks. Their mutual fate, moreover, is formulated in relation to “welfare,” an institution of the U.S. state to which both groups have access as a substantive entitlement of their shared citizenship status. Both Mexicans and Puerto Ricans—together as Latinos—occupy racialized locations in an intermediate space between white and Black, but the more palpable form of their respective differences here is that Mexicans quite often tend to be racialized not simply as “Latinos” or “Hispanics,” but rather simply as “Mexicans” (see Barrera 1979; Gutiérrez 1995:24; Mirandé 1985:76 1987:3–9; Montejano 1987:5,82–85; Paredes 1993:38; Vélez-Ibáñez 1996:19,70–87), and Puerto Ricans, likewise, tend to be racialized simply as “Puerto Ricans” (Flores 2000:141–165; Grosfoguel and Geroas 1996; Oboler 1995:80–100; Urciuoli 1996:41–72).

Within the confines of the joke itself, of course, “Mexican”-ness is doubly constituted. First, there is a frank recognition of “American” power as a distinctly white power. Against the invasive (colonizing) power of “Americans”—that is, whites—the joke constitutes a heroic “Mexican”-ness as a physical and moreover

intellectual force to be reckoned with, truly capable of vanquishing the genuine threat of this opponent which is so thoroughly fearsome and resilient that it must be completely obliterated (“shoot them, kill them”). Simultaneously, “Mexican”-ness—as a muscular, masculinist, indeed militaristic kind of diligence and self-sufficiency—is constituted not only against African Americans but also Puerto Ricans, both of whom are constructed, as groups, to be so lazy as to be helpless, and ultimately negligible. With regard to Puerto Ricans, the allegations of laziness and welfare dependency (otherwise most commonly equated with Blacks among Mexican migrants in Chicago) disclose an invidious process of intra-Latino racialized distinctions and discriminations. Within the terms of the Pancho Villa joke, Mexicans relegate Puerto Ricans to a racialized status that approximates (or at least approaches) Blackness. Such acts of demotion serve the purposes of a kind of racialized self-promotion among those who are corralled in that agonistic and contradictory space between white and Black and must vie with one another for position. What is revealed about that space, moreover, is that these intermediate racialized conditions—neither white nor Black—seem nonetheless to be always already beholden to the hegemonic denigration of Blackness.

Among Puerto Ricans, despite stereotypes of pervasive welfare “dependency,” there was a widespread endorsement of the moral value of “hard work” and conventional narratives of individual achievement and “success.” Nevertheless, the meaning of “starting at the bottom,” which is built on the assumption that the occupational structure of the United States is an ascending ladder of “opportunity” that everyone climbs in order to “make it,” was deployed in divergent ways based on class differences. Puerto Rican middle-class professionals, and even the working-class employees of nonprofit organizations, pointed to the “lack of drive” (*el desgano*) of Puerto Rican barrio residents. To various degrees, many middle-class Puerto Ricans subscribed to dominant “underclass” arguments when referring to their compatriots in *el barrio*. Oftentimes, middle-class Puerto Ricans deployed this dominant U.S. discourse to valorize their own social mobility as individual achievement.

Puerto Ricans across class lines tended to perceive being on welfare, and particularly “bad” welfare (i.e., welfare not counterbalanced by one’s mitigating life circumstances), as degrading. However, for Puerto Rican barrio residents, “working for nothing” or being exploited in a dead-end job (which were perceived as the only other options for the poor) also concerned issues of dignity. Alma and Elda, two Puerto Rican women who attended parenting workshops at the local high school, demonstrated indignation as they explained that Teresa, a Mexican participant in the program, would have to miss that day’s workshop. In this instance, as on previous occasions, Teresa’s Cuban boss

did not permit her to leave work a half-hour early, even though the program coordinator had informed employers that the City was sponsoring these workshops and had requested that they adjust work schedules to allow their employees to attend twice a month. When Alma and Elda commented that Teresa should have given her boss hell so that he would let her come to the workshop, another Puerto Rican parent explained: “There’s not much [Teresa] can do. And they [Mexicans, other migrants] accept it because they don’t have any choice. They can’t go complain to anybody. No, no. You have to bow down [*eñangotao*] and accept that you are less than your boss. You just have to accept it.” Similarly, Carmen, a working-class resident of Logan Square, commented, “The *mexicanitos* are very humble. If you talk to them, they right away tell you ‘¿Mande...?’ Very obliging [*serviciales*].¹⁶ We Puerto Ricans are arrogant and we don’t help each other. Mexicans do.” In Carmen’s view, the very “humility” and “obligingness” exhibited by Mexicans derived from the migrants’ perceived existence in tightly-knit groups with a predominantly “communitarian” orientation, a quality juxtaposed to the implicitly more “modern” and “individualistic” character that Carmen ambivalently projected onto Puerto Ricans in Chicago. Many Puerto Rican barrio residents attributed the job patterns exhibited by Mexicans and Central Americans not only to the vulnerability caused by their “illegality,” but also to a lack of knowledge about “how this country works” and “being used to exploitation” (originating in their “backward” countries of origin). On the one hand, then, Puerto Ricans identified how substantive rights and entitlements to which they could avail themselves—as U.S. citizens—seemed to be simply foreclosed for many Mexican migrants. On the other hand, Puerto Ricans also often celebrated their citizenship as a distinctive group identity that could be counterpoised to Mexican and other Latino migrants (especially the undocumented) whose legal status and consequent social conditions could furthermore be presumed to derive from defining traits, such as humility and obligingness, alleged to characterize them as a group.¹⁷ Thus, the difference of citizenship provided Puerto Ricans with the means to demote Mexicans to an effectively premodern condition of passivity and subservience.

Latinidad in Opposition to African Americans

Blackness was the degraded racialized extreme toward which Mexican migrants in Chicago were frequently inclined to demote Puerto Ricans as the two groups vied for position within the larger U.S. social order of white supremacy. Nonetheless, there were various occasions and contexts in which Mexican migrants and Puerto Ricans aspired toward a mutual recognition through their shared sense of Latino identity, or *Latinidad*. One noteworthy way

in which Latinidad came to be invoked, however, was precisely in opposition to African Americans. During an interview in the home of a Mexican/migrant factory worker named Alfredo Reynosa, the theme of Latinidad emerged in the form of a discourse about the unfair advantages of the Black workers as opposed to the Latinos:

Okay, look: sometimes there are problems . . . A problem happens to you on a machine—you get cut, you get bruised—and yes, yes, they attend to you. I'm not saying they don't. Yes they attend to you but—— But there's one thing that one (who's, who's, um, a worker, a factory worker) notices that—very, very much on top of many things—that being Latino, being Latino, you're a little . . . neglected in many things [*se te hace un poco . . . caso omiso de muchas cosas*]. Nevertheless—I hope it's not bad what I'm saying, but there is one thing: That should a Black, a white, get bruised or get cut, get injured—a Puerto Rican, the Puerto Rican is still almost, almost, almost the same as us—but should he be Black, it's as if it were God [*Que se machuca o se corta, se lastima un moreno, un güero, un potorrriqueño—todavía el potorrriqueño es casi, casi casi igual que nosotros—pero que sea moreno es como si fuera Dios*]. Okay, but you also have to take into account that, that the Blacks [*los morenos*] . . . had . . . a long spell of slavery [*un dejo de esclavitud*], but because of that we're not going to repeat it—may they give me a punch in the mouth if I'm saying that, if I'm sneering at that; no-o-o, me, my respect is for all people. But yes, there is one thing that, that one notices: That whatever may happen to the Latino, what may happen to him is, um, is very different than . . . than other people—I'm referring to Blacks or whites, right [*se nota que al latino le pase lo que le pase es, uh, es muy diferente que . . . que otras persona—me refiero a morenos o güeros, edá*]. There is where, um, there begins the—such a kind of impotence/powerlessness [*impotencia*] in the sense that . . . in that, why, why those things occur, but they occur. Who can explain them?

It is striking here that Alfredo explicitly invokes a Latino identity, premised on the sense that “the Puerto Rican is still almost, almost, almost the same” as “us” (Mexicans). Alfredo's excessive qualifying of “the Puerto Rican” as similar but not quite the same as the “we” to which he most definitively identified (Mexicans) clearly underscored a distinct ambivalence about the Latinidad he invoked. The ambivalence is more manifest in the original Spanish, where Alfredo initially links “a Puerto Rican” as the third term in a sequence of plausible subjects which *follow* the predication; literally, his words would be translated as “should [he] get bruised or get cut, [should he] get injured, a Black, a white, a Puerto Rican,” only then to break that chain of association

and interrupt his own commentary with a revision that makes an exception of “the Puerto Rican.” Nonetheless, at that crucial juncture in his own discourse, Alfredo most certainly did invoke a common *Latinidad* that conjoined Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. It is significant to emphasize that he did so in juxtaposition to both whites and Blacks, but did so most forcefully in opposition to Blacks. This was true even while Alfredo admirably tried to distance his own sense of Latino disadvantage from any conclusively negative judgment of Blacks as a group (even acknowledging the history of African American slavery).

In spite of Alfredo’s more delicate observations, however, the Mexican–migrant and Puerto Rican workers at Imperial Enterprises (the factory where Alfredo worked) had seemed singularly united in their allegation that Blacks were “lazy.” On one occasion, De Genova had introduced enlarged photographs taken on the factory floor as a pedagogical device intended to evoke classroom conversation about the labor process in the plant. There were a variety of rather benign jokes about the coworkers visible in the photos—this one works too hard, that one works too slow, another talks too much, et cetera. But then, one of the Puerto Rican workers, Ramón López, declared, “Oh, and there’s Jimmy [one of the African American workers]—he’s sleeping just behind [machine number] 709!” The claim that Jimmy was inclined to be sleeping on the job had been intended to be sufficient in and of itself, but De Genova gullibly examined the photo more closely, and demanded “Where is Jimmy?” As if to make the racialized content of the joke more blatant, López replied, “Here he is! . . . Oh, no—it’s just a black oil drum!” The group broke into loud laughter. This inspired Héctor Pérez (another Puerto Rican worker) to relate, “You know what was the first word I learned in English? The first word I learned in English is *nigger*. You know why? Because I was working with a Black guy.” Tentatively, De Genova asked, “Did you learn it from him?” Pérez responded emphatically, “No, but that’s the first word I learned—because I was *working* with him.” It was abundantly evident in these comments that the equation of African Americans with laziness (and the implicit valorization of “hard work”) became conjoined with the denigration of racialized Blackness, and that this conjuncture became one kind of condition of possibility for the sense of a shared (racialized) identity—as “Latinos”—to be mutually invoked by Mexican migrants and Puerto Ricans.

Latinidad as Class Solidarity

If *Latinidad* sometimes emerged as a basis of racialized solidarity among Mexican migrants and Puerto Ricans, specifically against Blacks, it nevertheless tended to be fractured by class divisions generated through contentious relations of labor subordination. In the interview with Alfredo Reynosa (quoted above), such themes emerged, simultaneously foregrounding a

Latinidad grounded in the shared plight of Latino workers and lamenting the tenuousness of such Latino solidarity due to the fractures of class:

Many times the bosses [*los mayordomos*] . . . if it's a Latino, if it's a Latino, well—you don't feel the support very fully, a good support, no-o-o; on the contrary, there are—not all, obviously, I have to be honest—but yes, there are, there are, there are Latino supervisors who . . . who keep you down [*que te pisotean*] . . . Many times, I think, it's because of how they feel, how they feel that “No, if I let him rise higher, most likely, he passes me up—and he's going to replace me” [*como que sienten que “no, si lo deajo que suba a la mejoorrr me pasa— y me va reemplazar”*]. But I don't think so, because—maybe that sort of thing happens, logically, right, but . . . As I say: There are, there are and we are people—the majority—[people] of good sentiments to the effect that with work . . . you complete your job—and then some!—“Ahh, there's that over there, ahh!” [Here, Alfredo was imitating someone eager to find more things to do on the job].

But what's also missing is unity [*unión*]*—*that is what I say, because of that, there's no strength, because . . . if we were more united, like how we struggle as for something personal . . . No, I just don't understand that there—like how we struggle for something personal, but— But why, I wonder, don't we, um, have a compatriot ideal [*un ideal compatriota*], so to speak, here in this country, here in this county, because if we were, oh, more united, with more, oh, more patriotic feeling to the effect that, that one should say, “No, so-and-so, this happened to him, let's go help him, yes, if we help them, yes, we help ourselves.” But in any case, there's a lack of that—and with the persons, so to speak, those who, uh, give us orders in our jobs, that's how it is automatically (not all of them, as I say), it's like nothing . . . Because you cut yourself, you get injured, “Nah, nah, nah, you work, get going, and if not . . .”—it's happened many times—“and if you don't like your job, there's the door” . . . Nevertheless, to a white, to a Black, they don't do that. Why? Because it's a white, because it's a Black [*Sin embargo a un güero, un moreno no le hacen eso. ¿Por qué? Porque es güero, porque es moreno*].

And as I say, the Puerto Rican and the Central American is the same as us—overworked to death, mistreated [*y como digo el potorriqueño y el centroamericano es igual que nosotros—matao, maltratao*] . . . We arrive and we do jobs like, I'll say again, that the white [*el güero*] doesn't do, Blacks [*morenos*] don't do it . . . and nevertheless, how one feels in the flesh as if he were a type of beast . . . as if he's screwed over so that he can be screwed

over some more [*como que uno siente en carne propia que, como si uno fuera un tipo de bestia . . . como si se jode que se joda más*]. Aah, Nico, how lacking is a little humanity [*humanismo*] . . . Maybe I'm wrong, eh? But no, because— Because the things you see, they're felt, they touch you at every moment . . .

In any event, it's— It's like, like a long aftertaste of impotence/powerlessness [*un dejo de impotencia*]. [Alfredo clicked his tongue in disgust] that [Alfredo let out a deep sigh] doesn't let us express that feeling because they bridle you, they silence you [*lo frenan a uno, lo callan a uno*] . . . Oh, so many things, so difficult sometimes to explain, in the system of one who is an immigrant [*oo . . . muchas cosas que tan difícil a veces de explicar en el sistema de uno de inmigrante*].

Alfredo here again invoked a *Latinidad*, but he now asserted an unequivocal sameness or equivalence between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans (and also Central Americans)—finally, as (im)migrants (regardless of citizenship), produced in racialized opposition to whiteness and Blackness—but also as workers, in a class-inflected opposition, above all, to specifically “Latino” bosses. Notably, while this shared *Latinidad* was invoked among coworkers who all continued to be identifiable according to their national or regional particularities, in this instance, the more generic label “Latino” was applied only to those whose class difference was seen to subvert the possibility of a specifically working-class Latino community.¹⁸ The lack of “unity,” “patriotic feeling,” and “a compatriot ideal” that served to undermine a genuine Latino solidarity in Alfredo's account were particularly symptomatic of a perceived betrayal, on the part of those Latinos who had achieved some measure of greater power in the United States (specifically in relation to the white owners and upper management of the factories where they were employed), against those other Latinos who were their subordinates in the workplace. Indeed, Latino bosses seemed to Alfredo to be committed above all else to demonstrating their greater loyalty and devotion to whites and Blacks.

Fractured *Latinidad*: Whiteness, Power, and Institutional Contexts

Within the hegemonic bipolarity of whiteness and Blackness that characterizes white supremacy within the space of the U.S. nation-state, groups that come to be racialized as neither white nor Black must inevitably be constituted in relation to both. A racialized *Latinidad* that could be invoked to include Mexican migrants and Puerto Ricans in Chicago tended to arise in concert with either explicitly racist denigrations of Blackness or at least deliberate

disavowals of African Americans. If this was so, however, such pan-Latino identifications tended to be rather more tenuous and selective in relation to a dominant whiteness.

The fact that social interaction between Latinos and whites occurred for the most part in institutional contexts is indicative of how, for many Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, whiteness tends to be localized in sites of power. Those Mexicans and Puerto Ricans who had access—however unequal and subordinate—to such institutional contexts, were those who tended to deploy various expressions of *Latinidad* in relation to whites.

Carlos Flores, a young Puerto Rican who was teaching at an elementary school in the West Town neighborhood, believed that the relationship between Latinos of different nationalities flourished and was transformed in contexts that are related to institutional mobility and proximity to whiteness, such as higher education. In an interview with Ramos-Zayas in 1995, Flores described his experience of going from a mostly Mexican suburban neighborhood to becoming a student in a predominantly white rural college in Illinois:

The Latinos where I lived were mostly Mexican. The Mexicans, you see, they identified themselves as being culturally different from us . . . The dialect . . . They didn't like our dialect. They *detested* it. We knew that indirectly they would say slurs at you and try to push you down . . . In college, I hung out with all the Latino groups on campus. Immediately, the first semester, I became part of the Latin American Student Association. It was a good experience. There we didn't have friction at all because we knew we were a very small percentage. Therefore, even more, we created a bond.¹⁹

Carlos also recalled that white college students at the rural school were afraid of Latinos, whom they perceived as menacing and “ghetto.” As Carlos explained, the white college students “were stereotyping that everybody that was from Chicago came from a very hardcore environment. They thought that Latinos coming from Chicago were dangerous. You don't mess with them because they can pull a knife on you.” Like Carlos, other young, upwardly mobile Puerto Ricans referred to their college experience as a turning point that not only made them more aware of their own “Puerto Rican”-ness, but also facilitated common bonds with other Latinos—and, to a lesser extent, African Americans and other minority students in general.

Whereas a variety of institutional contexts served to enable the emergence of a racialized *Latinidad*, it has frequently also been the larger-scale institutional frameworks of the U.S. state apparatus that have simultaneously homogenized Latinos as “Hispanics” while also differentiating and hierarchically sorting and ranking them as well. One quite glaring illustration of this may be found in the divergent histories of conquest and colonization that laid the foundations

for Mexican–migrant “illegality” and Puerto Rican citizenship. This kind of production of difference between Mexican migrants and Puerto Ricans in Chicago through the mediation of state institutions, however, also transpired through much more localized and everyday forms. One quite revealing instance of such emerged in an ESL-classroom discussion at a Pilsen community organization in October 1995. “One time,” Claudio (who lived on the South Side) recounted, “the police stopped me on the North Side, and they asked me, ‘Where are you from?’” and then, when Claudio responded that he was from Mexico, the cop went on to explain, “If you were Puerto Rican, you’d be in trouble, but since you’re Mexican, I’ll let you go.” Claudio concluded with the remark, “He was a white.” It is especially salient that this episode of police racism transpired on the North Side of Chicago where Puerto Ricans have been historically predominant. This can be understood to be significant in either of two distinct but complementary ways. In one plausible interpretation, the racialization of that space as a Puerto Rican one—where this young Mexican migrant was effectively considered by the white cop to be “out of place”—provided the white cop an occasion to exercise his racist discretion in a manner that appeared as a magnanimous favor, a gesture of (not-quite) “benign” neglect, with regard to a Mexican migrant. In another conceivable scenario, Claudio may have been presumed to be one of the growing number of Mexicans living in those same historically Puerto Rican neighborhoods. In either case, the white cop’s overall message seemed to communicate to the teenaged Mexican migrant that Puerto Ricans were presumed criminals toward whom he would show no mercy, whereas Mexicans were deserving of his leniency, and therefore, since Claudio was judged more favorably as a Mexican, he had better not get mixed up with any Puerto Ricans because next time he might not be so lucky. Indeed, in this episode, Claudio’s undocumented status as a Mexican migrant mattered less to a local representative of the U.S. state than the prospect of “criminal” citizenship, had he been a Puerto Rican. This encounter offers a premier example of police racism as expressly pedagogical and, likewise, productive of racialized divisions both among social groups and the spaces that they inhabit and move through. There was a racialized ambiguity that required the white police officer to inquire about Claudio’s origins. For the cop, Claudio’s generically “Hispanic” racialized character demanded further sorting among distinct national-origin Latino identities. Precisely this racial ambiguity in the face of power might otherwise have been productive for Claudio of a certain *Latinidad* were it not so bluntly interrupted and subverted by the policeman’s very materially efficacious privileging of a difference between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans.²⁰

The white policeman’s initial question (“Where are you from?”) reveals the way that a “Latino” identity becomes possible in a racialized space of

indeterminacy and ambiguity; likewise, his forceful interruption of an incipient occasion for *Latinidad* exposes the extent to which the institutions of the U.S. nation-state often serve to impede those Latino possibilities as well. It seems fitting that this article should have explored a variety of disparate expressions of pan-Latino identification between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, only then to confront anew a stark demonstration of the unequal politics of citizenship and racialization between Mexican migrants and Puerto Ricans. Indeed, the conditions of possibility for the emergence of a shared sense of *Latinidad* between these two groups have been framed at each juncture by these two defining axes of inequality in the United States. To the varying degrees that a shared sense of Latino identity became possible, this tended to be necessarily posited in relation to whiteness and Blackness, as well as inevitably fractured by class and haunted by the politics of citizenship.

Conclusion

In a concluding attempt to account for the political stakes of this essay, it is useful to recall the clear correlation between the passage of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (signed September 30, 1996) and the extensive anti-immigrant stipulations that were likewise included in the so-called Welfare Reform passed five weeks earlier with an equally self-righteous and still more hypocritical name: the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (signed August 22, 1996). These pronouncedly punitive legislations together represented a major material and practical culmination of the protracted onslaught against the poor that had been defining of the broader ideological climate of hostility against both “welfare” and “immigrants,” especially the undocumented, in which each of us realized our respective research projects. This recent conjuncture of “nativism” was clearly distinguished by anti-immigrant racism and was disproportionately directed against Mexicans in particular, due to the hegemonic conflation of Mexicans with “illegal aliens,” and especially against Mexican/migrant women who come to be equated with Mexican/migrant long-term settlement (Chock 1996; Coutin and Chock 1995; Lowe 1996:159–160; Roberts 1997). This exacerbated anti-immigrant racism has operated in tandem with what is, in effect, the inherent racism and sexism of the assault against welfare—inasmuch as it is disproportionately identified with African American and Puerto Rican U.S. citizens, and likewise, especially targets women.

The anti-immigrant politics of the 1990s was coupled, both discursively and in its implementation, with the dismantling and, to a significant degree, the liquidation of the social welfare safety net. Both can be seen as disciplinary

measures intended to intensify the subordination of labor in general in the United States by rendering more vulnerable, and thus, more tractable and flexible, precisely the poorest of working-class people (whether they be more or less permanently unemployed and underemployed U.S. citizens, or the consistently overemployed migrant working poor). That both of these social categories are disproportionately represented by those not racialized as white is hardly necessary to point out. In this context, however, these hegemonic projects have relied, in part, on the extent to which the desperation of impoverished U.S. citizens could be effectively articulated as resentment for the “cheap labor” of migrants who are purportedly displacing “American” workers from “American” jobs. On the other hand, migrant (and especially undocumented) workers’ tenuous hold on their own employment sustains a climate of insecurity that can be quite readily enlisted into the denigration (as unproductive or “lazy”) of the labor-power which is the commodity for sale on the part of their most proximate competitors in the labor market—impoverished U.S. citizens, especially other racialized “minorities,” such as African Americans and Puerto Ricans (as well as U.S.-born Mexicans), who often can marshal various other advantages, such as U.S. citizenship, English-language fluency, and higher levels of formal schooling. This serves as a kind of double-disciplining, of course, in that both the U.S.-born poor and the migrant working poor are used by employers as disciplinary mechanisms, one against the other, and furthermore, inasmuch as migrant workers are compelled to participate in their own intensified exploitation, always at pains to demonstrate to their overseers that they are hardworking and not “lazy.”²¹

Thus, while we have examined some characteristic occasions where a shared sense of Latino identity, or *Latinidad*, became possible between Mexican migrants and Puerto Ricans in Chicago, what is crucial is that these moments of possibility tended to be fractured and fraught. The obstacles to such a sense of Latino commonalities of identity or interest, moreover, have to be situated in the context of U.S. nationalism itself as a racial formation and U.S. citizenship as a racializing institution.

Notes

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prodded us with their concerns and questions. A particular note of appreciation is due to Micaela di Leonardo and Josiah Heyman for their careful and insightful readings of this article in their capacity as reviewers for the *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*.

1. Article 11 of Mexico's Decree of April 6, 1830, stated: "It is prohibited that emigrants from nations bordering on this Republic shall settle in the states or territory adjacent to their own nation" (Moquin and Van Doren 1971:193).

2. When the category "migrant" is deployed here, it should not be confused with the more precise term *migratory*; rather, the term *migrant* is intended to do a certain epistemological work—that is, to serve as a category of analysis that disrupts the implicit teleology of the more conventional term *immigrant*, which is posited from the standpoint of the U.S. nation-state (see De Genova 1999 in press). Among those designated here as "Mexican–migrant," there is a remarkable heterogeneity of experiences ranging from seasonal migration to long-term settlement, and from undocumented legal status to U.S. citizenship.

Regardless of their various legal statuses and heterogeneous migration histories, Mexican migrants in Chicago virtually never use the terms "*Mexican American*" or "*Chicanola*" for self-identification; the pervasive categories are "*mexicanola*" in Spanish or "Mexican" in English. Similarly, among those designated here as "Mexicans raised in the United States," the pervasive category of self-identification is likewise "Mexican," rather than either "Chicano/a" or "Mexican American." Thus, due to the ways that both migrants from Mexico and U.S.-born or raised Mexicans would be equally inclined to self-identify as simply "Mexican," we use the term *Mexican* to refer to both, whereas we use "*Mexican–migrant*" to refer to people who have migrated from Mexico to the United States (to Chicago, in the specific ethnographic research reported here), in contradistinction to "Mexicans raised in the United States."

3. This Chicago-based private employment agency had opened offices in various cities throughout the United States and Puerto Rico (M. Martínez 1989:93; Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago [Office of the Department of Labor] 1957). Government and private agencies recruited contract or seasonal workers directly from Puerto Rico and placed them in steel mills and factories in Lorraine, Ohio, and Gary, Indiana, agricultural fields around Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in addition to domestic service and foundry jobs in Chicago.

4. Official letter from Mr. Waitstill H. Sharp, director of the Chicago Council Against Racial and Religious Discrimination, to Miss Hagel Holm of Maryville College, TN, in reference to Anthony Vega's policy to integrate Puerto Ricans; dated January 25, 1951 (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society).

5. Ironically, by 1995 some Mexican and Puerto Rican organizations had begun to demand the dismantling of the congressional district that comprised parts of both of their communities, for which their predecessors had struggled to create. Both sides concurred that these two “Latino” groups were “racially different and had little in common beyond their language” (Oclander 1995:22–23).

6. These figures are based on U.S. Census data for Chicago Community Areas, compiled by the Latino Institute, June 1991.

7. Nicholas De Genova’s materials were primarily produced over the course of two and a half years of ethnographic field research in Chicago (May 1993 to December 1995). During the entirety of the research period, De Genova was employed in a workplace literacy program as an instructor of English as a Second Language (ESL), as well as basic mathematics (in Spanish) for workers (of whom the great majority were Mexican migrants) in ten industrial workplaces (principally, metal-fabricating factories) located throughout the metropolitan area. He also worked, to a lesser extent, as an ESL teacher in a voluntary job-placement vocational training program and in community organizations. Likewise, during the same period, he was living in the Mexican neighborhood known as Pilsen (or *La Dieciocho*), on Chicago’s Near Southwest Side (a.k.a., Lower West Side). The research involved extensive participant-observation in daily life activities there as well as several other predominantly Mexican-migrant areas of the city, especially that known as Little Village (or *La Villita*, a.k.a. South Lawndale). The project also entailed conducting ethnographic interviews in people’s homes throughout the metropolitan area. This primary research was augmented, furthermore, by ongoing communication and frequent visits during the subsequent period (April 1996 to August 1997), and then by another year of research when De Genova was again living in the Pilsen neighborhood more recently (August 1999 to August 2000).

Ana Ramos-Zayas’s materials were produced over 17 months of field research (April 1994 to September 1995) and several week-long follow-up visits (March 1996, August 1997, May 1998, November 1999, March 2000) among activists and residents of the Humboldt Park barrio, traditionally marked as the symbolic center of Puerto Rican Chicago. When Ramos-Zayas arrived in Chicago in the spring of 1994, she became a volunteer teacher at four main organizations: a local chapter of a national not-for-profit Latino organization, a grassroots adult education program, a parent institute at the local public high school, and an alternative high school program for “high-risk” youth (Ramos-Zayas 1998). The organizations where Ramos-Zayas volunteered reflect a variety of political perspectives—from mainstream social service in the liberal tradition to nationalist militant activism and Puerto Rican separatism.

The staff and clients of these various organizations were mostly second-generation U.S.-born or raised Puerto Ricans, though there were also Mexicans, Central Americans, Cubans, and whites. Ramos-Zayas also participated in neighborhood-wide activities, such as parades, street festivals, political marches, religious services, local museum exhibits, and trips outside the city with young people, local teachers, and activists. Since Ramos-Zayas was interested in examining the intersection of nationalism and class identities, she also conducted interviews with U.S.- and island-born Puerto Ricans living in the Chicago suburbs, many of whom were “middle class” and had little connection with the poor and working-class barrio residents. Overall, her collaboration with barrio residents, youth, and grassroots activists was more intensive and consistent than her interaction with middle-class professionals living outside the barrio, most of whom Ramos-Zayas knew in predominantly institutional contexts and organized social events. Nevertheless, structured life history interviews yielded significant insights into the professionals’ lives.

8. The “anthropological” aspirations of these two research projects were inextricable from the politics of our respective social locations. As a U.S. citizen by birth and as a Chicago native, De Genova was conducting research on citizenship, immigration law, and the politics of nativism among people who had migrated to the United States—not only as noncitizens—but very commonly as undocumented migrants, and in a sociopolitical context of heightened hostility and restriction against them as such. As someone racialized as white, he was investigating processes of racialization in the experience of people who come to be racialized as not-white. As a credentialed intellectual affiliated with an elite university, and thus, as a relatively privileged and effectively middle-class professional, he was studying class formation and labor subordination among factory workers. As someone employed through the initiative of the factory managements to teach courses in which the workers’ participation was often mandatory, his position within the organizational hierarchy of these workplaces was always an intermediate and somewhat ambiguous one between the workers and their bosses. As a native speaker of English, he was teaching English as a Second Language to migrant workers who very seldom had completed much more than primary school in their own native Spanish.

In the case of so-called native anthropologists, the politics of an anthropologist’s social location becomes even more profoundly conditioned by personal and political commitments, constantly shifting self-positionings, and, in the case of anthropologists belonging to groups characterized by high levels of material scarcity and marginality, even by something akin to “survivor’s guilt.” As a Puerto Rican born and raised on the island but who, at the time of the research, had already spent much of her adult life in the United States

(principally, in East Coast cities), Ramos-Zayas was interested in the lives of youth who were second-generation, Chicago-born and raised. As a native Spanish speaker, she was interested in the roles of Spanish, Spanglish, and English in definitions of “cultural authenticity.” An upwardly mobile, light-skinned, and Ivy League educated professional, she was examining class formations, racialization processes, and educational marginality among residents of some of the most impoverished and neglected Census-tract blocks in the United States. As a young woman who grew up in an ethnically-mixed area of Puerto Rico (with a large Dominican population), she was also concerned with issues of gender subordination and inter-Latino relations in organizational contexts and among Chicago-based Puerto Rican political activists who considered themselves “*muy nacionalistas*,” and thus, who at times sustained rigid norms about gender roles as well as often essentialist understandings of “Puerto Rican”-ness.

These socially and politically significant inequalities comprise some of the defining contours of the material and practical conditions of possibility of our respective ethnographies. Thus, these conditions can be seen to inflect the actual dialogics of the research presented here, and also can be understood to provide a wider frame through which to conceive of the possible limits of the ethnographic claims so produced. Due to the comparativist ambitions of this study, however, a critical attention to some of these questions will remain relatively understated, and except where necessary, considered beyond the scope of this work (see De Genova and Ramos-Zayas in press).

9. All personal names that appear here are fictive. Some of the people who have been interlocutors in De Genova’s research are vulnerable to the punitive legal recriminations that could be brought to bear upon their undocumented immigration status. Similarly, some of the people who have been interlocutors in Ramos-Zayas’s research might be vulnerable to the repressive political recriminations that could be directed against their community activism. Thus, in the interests of protecting the anonymity of the people depicted here, we have deliberately obfuscated or altered various descriptive details deemed to be inconsequential for the analysis, but that nonetheless could potentially serve to identify particular persons.

10. This company name and all others that appear in the ensuing text, as with all personal names, are fictive. In the interests of protecting himself legally against any possible charges of breach of contract or confidentiality on the part of the companies where he was employed, De Genova has opted to exclude or alter any extraneous details that could serve to identify particular companies or workplaces.

11. For a more extended treatment of the gendered dimensions of Mexican migrants’ racialized constructions of “laziness,” see De Genova 1999:287–356; in press.

12. There are several racialized (but ostensibly neutral) categories that are variously deployed in Mexican Spanish in Chicago to refer to African Americans—such as *negros*, *morenos*, *prietos* (among others, including several that are decidedly derogatory, such as *changos* [monkeys] or *xicotes* or *mayates* [dung beetles]). Nonetheless, the term that is by far the most pervasive is *los morenos*. For a more extended discussion of these racialized terms, see De Genova 1999:287–356, in press.

13. For a discussion of Pancho Villa jokes as a distinct genre, see Reyna 1984. For a more extended discussion of this joke, especially in relation to Blackness, see De Genova 1999: 287–356, in press.

14. It is possible to identify the same distinctions, deployed fairly consistently, in the transcripts of interviews conducted mainly in Mexico, compiled by Jorge Durand and his collaborators, and published in Spanish (1996). One encounters the phrase “americanos o negros” (Durand 1996:217), as well as an operative mutually exclusive juxtaposition of “*gringos*” and “negros” (Durand 1996:92–93,106), or “*gabachos*” and “negros” (Durand 1996:57).

15. This sense that “American”-ness was a more or less transparent name for racial whiteness, and thus excluded African Americans and Puerto Ricans, was likewise understood to exclude Mexicans who had been born in the United States. For further discussion, see De Genova 1999:287–356, in press; De Genova and Ramos-Zayas in press.

16. In Mexican Spanish, the term ¿*Mande . . . ?* supplies a polite but ubiquitous way of asking the question “What?”—especially when requesting that someone repeat what he or she has already said. Literally, the word is the polite form of address for the imperative of the verb *mandar*, hence glossed here by a Puerto Rican observer to mean “Order me . . .” or something akin to “At your service . . .”

17. For further discussion of Puerto Ricans’ “citizenship identity,” see Ramos-Zayas in press.

18. We are grateful to Carlos Vargas-Ramos for calling our attention to this discrepancy in Alfredo’s usage.

19. It is important to note here that Mexican migrants’ discourses pathologizing Puerto Ricans as culturally deficient are mirrored by still more contradictory discourses that frequently disavow their own connection to Mexicans raised in the United States, whom they often characterized as deracinated in various ways that approximated their negative assessments of Puerto Ricans. Likewise, Mexicans raised in the United States sometimes produced the differences between themselves and Mexican migrants in ways that resonated with many Puerto Rican discourses about Mexicans as “rural,” “backward,” and generally gullible. Ultimately, the relations between Mexican migrants

and Mexicans raised in the United States are almost always—of course—intimate (intergenerational) ones. Thus, any attempt to produce a stable or coherent opposition between the two inevitably founders in spite of very palpable sociocultural differences. Significantly, these thoroughly ambivalent Mexican/migrant discourses in Chicago can be seen to figure Mexicans raised in the United States (in some instances, explicitly disavowed as “Chicanos”)—in effect, Mexican migrants’ own children—as a pivotal link in the fraught nexus between Mexicans and the Puerto Ricans. Notably, some mainland-born Puerto Ricans likewise perceived meaningful continuities between themselves and Mexicans raised in the United States, as U.S.-oriented, “urban,” and generally “modern.” For further discussion, see De Genova and Ramos-Zayas in press; for discussions of the tensions between U.S.-born Mexicans—as U.S. citizens—and Mexican migrants, see De Genova in press; Gutiérrez 1995; Heyman 2002; Martínez 1994; and Vila 2000.

20. This episode ought not to be misunderstood to suggest that police in Chicago were otherwise lenient toward Mexican migrants. Indeed, what followed was an extended discussion of how undocumented Mexican migrants routinely found themselves harassed by police who extracted bribes from them whenever the vulnerability that defined their generally undocumented condition became exposed—for example, not having a driver’s license. For further discussion of the “illegalities of everyday life,” see De Genova 1999:471–476; 2002.

21. Michael Kearney has characterized this kind of double disciplining as “jujitsu politics,” whereby the momentum of migrant workers’ and impoverished U.S. citizens’ respective efforts at self-defense is used to subvert their own resistance (1996:156; 1998:29).

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