

‘ZONES OF DISCOMFORT’ IN US LATINO POLITICS: When Sharing a Sea Does Not Suffice

Ethnic, national, and racial classifications all involve assertions of difference, but they also all involve fundamental assertions of sameness (within the categories thereby created), so it is, therefore, not surprising to see mention of Latinos in the US today implying unity and sameness (or at least great similarity).¹ Some readers, like some minority rights activists in the US, might prefer it that way, hoping that a perception of sameness will lead to collective action and that collective action based on a shared social identity has a better chance of subverting discrimination, exclusion, and prejudice in the society where Latinos are a numerical, social, cultural, economic, and political minority. And yet to perpetuate

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1 Over the years many people—both scholars and non-scholars—have come to anticipate certain things as characteristic of the Latino presence in the US (either from media coverage or political analysis). Many concentrate on the large population of at least partial Mexican family origin, sometimes called Chicanos, Mexican Americans, La Raza, or even *mexicanos*. But US Latino life and politics is far more complex in terms of citizenship, residence status, looks, ancestry, region of origin, geographic location, attitude toward the US, and overall political participation in the US. My point here is not that there are minorities within a minority in the United States, though there are, and we should not concentrate on a demographic majority within the official Latino minority and assume that we understand US Latino life and challenges. My point is that we experience discomfort—intellectual, emotional, and even conceptual—when different questions are asked about US Latinos *in* the United States *and* US Latinos and the United States. This especially happens when locations beyond our conceptual comfort zones are privileged.

that view of sameness is to underwrite a conception of the United States that ignores important, consequential, and experienced differences that may have more to say about the host country, the sending countries, political citizenship, cultural citizenship, histories of race and racialization, and alternative (perhaps competing) modes of engagement and belonging.² To stress sameness, then, is to enable the possibility of a certain kind of collective action but also to partake of a hegemonic view that treats all 'Latinos' as a 'race' that is neither 'white' nor 'black' and neither 'Asian' nor 'Native American'. The fact that 'racial' position in the US is key to their categorization is central to this phenomenon, and this may be widely understood both among lay people and scholars of the US. However, this matter of 'race' is more complex and not just a matter of external imposition.

The fact that the 'racial' position of Latinos in the US is a key to their engagement with the United States is less understood, yet equally central. In earlier stages of this work, I expected to stress changes in residential and voting patterns in Florida that make the 'Latino' population of the State of Florida not necessarily Republican Party members or supporters nor necessarily socially and fiscally conservative.³ Yet I found myself instead studying large-scale statistical surveys comparing Cuban

2 The official US White House website, accessed on December 1, 2013, says the following regarding the 1977 Directive No. 15, which standardized US racial and ethnic classifications: 'In 1977, OMB issued the Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting that are set forth in Statistical Policy Directive No. 15. The standards in this Directive have been used for almost two decades throughout the Federal government for recordkeeping, collection, and presentation of data on race and Hispanic origin. The standards have been used in two decennial censuses and in surveys of the population, data collections necessary for meeting statutory requirements associated with civil rights monitoring and enforcement, and in other administrative program reporting'.

3 Florida has long been known as home to a large Cuban American population, which sees itself as in exile, as opposed to the Castro regime in Cuba and, by extension, to any and all Communist and Marxist regimes. In the context of US politics, this has meant that the Cuban American population in Florida has long preferred the US Republican Party (which they see as more reliably anti-Communist) over the US Democratic Party. Since the great majority of Latin American-origin residents of the US, including Puerto Ricans, side with the US Democratic Party, I obviously ex-

Americans with Puerto Ricans and other Latin American people in the US and asking increasingly how they relate to (or engage with) the United States. During the process I came to realize that the most striking discovery of all is that more Cubans than Puerto Ricans in the US consider the United States home, even though Puerto Ricans have been US citizens since 1917, when the US Congress granted US citizenship to all Puerto Ricans on the island as well as the US mainland (the Jones-Shafroth Act, commonly known as The Jones Act, enacted March 2, 1917).⁴ The fact that Cubans moved to the US as exiles or refugees (and some, but not many, as legal immigrants) may mean that there is some measure of gratitude to the US playing a role here; however, it can also easily mean that they still want to see Cuba as their real homeland. Most of all, it means that they did not enter the US as US citizens, unlike Puerto Ricans moving from the island of Puerto Rico to the US mainland. This is an astonishing difference that warrants, indeed commands, our attention and demands an explanation. How could a population that has legally been *American* for nearly a century not see the US as its home or homeland, whereas a population that entered the US much more recently and without US citizenship is coming to see the US as its home and homeland to a far greater degree? Both are Latino, but that clearly does not entail the same engagement with the US, the same sense of belonging to the US, or the same form of incorporation into the United States.

One way of addressing this is to focus on comfort zones, what they enable, and what they disable. This is just as true of scholars as it is of everyday people. Consider, for example, asking what it is

pected the entry of large numbers of Puerto Ricans into the mix in Florida to result in changes in voting.

⁴ Here is how the legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com explains it: 'In 1917 Congress passed the Jones Act, which gave US citizenship to all Puerto Rican residents. 39 Stat. 951, 48 U.S.C.A. section 731. Also known as the 'Organic Act', the Jones Act sought to distinguish Puerto Rico from the Philippines and Hawaii. The Philippines was already being groomed for independence, while Hawaii was being groomed for statehood. Through the Jones Act, Congress chose a third, less well-defined status for Puerto Rico as an 'unincorporated territory' of the United States, which means that the benefits and protections offered by the US Constitution are not fully applicable to Puerto Rico. No current US territories, including Puerto Rico, were deemed incorporated as of mid-2003'.

that we are comfortable *seeing*, and, specifically, what it is that we are so comfortable seeing and thinking that it is hard for any of us to step outside our 'comfort zones' and contemplate a phenomenon differently. One answer is that many people (both scholars and non-scholars) are comfortable seeing the US as made up of people who are not of Latin American background. Of course, this 'comfortable' perception (or conception) ignores the fact that about one-sixth of the population of the US is of Latin American background (both recent and not at all recent) and that very large numbers of them are US citizens and have been from birth. An alternative perception (and conception) that is also common is that the US includes large numbers of people of Latin American background but that they reside primarily in Texas, California, or the southwestern part of the US and are recent migrants (many of them undocumented workers). While it is true that Texas, California, New Mexico, and Arizona have millions of residents whose ancestors hail from various parts of Mexico, Mesoamerica, or, as my former colleague (at the University of California at Santa Cruz) Olga Nájera-Ramírez likes to put it, 'the Greater Mexico', that perception of the US overlooks the large Latino presence on the east coast of the country and the very different makeup and politics they represent.

I call these the *mistaken expectations* that very commonly exist (even among students and experts on the US and Latin America) regarding US Latino groups, relations, and expectations. And I want to call attention to differences that exist, differences that are not minor, and differences that tend to have serious consequences for how US Latino groups do and do not incorporate themselves into US society. As I hope this article makes clear, it is not just useful but also imperative to contemplate expectations of closeness and the mistakes that result when closeness is expected but distance is experienced.

LOCATION AND ITS PERCEPTION

In this work, then, I look at the southeast coast of the United States and not the central, western, or southwestern parts of the country. I examine expectations of who lives in Florida, what their relationship to the US is, and what their sense of diaspora

and nation-ness are.⁵ Typical and long-standing perceptions place Cubans in southern Florida and Puerto Ricans in the New York metropolitan area. Likewise, typical and long-standing expectations are that the two populations differ significantly in their US voting patterns, general political perspectives, and overall US political party membership. Puerto Ricans are thought to vote overwhelmingly for Democratic Party candidates in the US and to be liberal or progressive (if not outright leftist), whereas Cubans (whether naturalized as US citizens or just articulating their public support) are thought to endorse Republican Party candidates in the US, espouse socially and politically conservative views on both domestic and foreign policy, and to stand out among the Latino populations in the US which, like most recent immigrant groups, tend to vote for US Democratic Party candidates. Both of these expectations are partly grounded in demonstrable facts, but they also greatly oversimplify the contemporary residential and political life of Puerto Ricans and Cubans in the United States.

Consider the following headline from late January of 2012: 'Florida Latino Vote Pits Cuban-American Republicans Against Puerto Rican Democrats'. The headline comes from blogger/journalist Carlos Harrison, writing for the 'Latino Politics' section of *The Huffington Post*. Part of the headline seems familiar, even expected—e.g., that Cuban Americans would be identified as Republicans and that Puerto Ricans would be identified as Democrats. I also think that the sense of contrast or opposition implied by the word 'pitting' further corresponds to common expectations of Cuban Americans and Puerto Ricans in the US (if they have knowledge of the East Coast of the US), namely that Cuban Americans and Puerto Ricans are very different.

But it is worth noticing that the headline is about *Florida's* Latino vote and is not just about Cubans or Cuban Americans

5 As I mentioned earlier, Florida has long been known as home to a large Cuban American population, and any study of the Cuban American presence in the US needs to include Florida. The east coast of the US is also where the large group of Puerto Ricans lives (outside the island of Puerto Rico). Many people in the US and observers outside of the US tend to concentrate on the US population of Mexican background, but that is not the population of Latin American origin that lives on the heavily populated East Coast of the US.

in Florida. In fact, it is specifically about Puerto Ricans—indeed about Puerto Rican Democrats—as *part of* the Florida Latino vote. At first I wondered who the author was, thinking it might be a younger or academically based Cuban American in southern Florida interested in the latinization of Dade County (the county that includes Miami) and the fact that, over the past couple of decades, many Latin Americans living in Dade County are neither Cuban-born nor of Cuban parentage. The fact that I assumed this, or wondered about it, is telling. I continue to sense a kind of widespread collective self-absorption on the part of many Cuban Americans in southern Florida; to notice an article relating Cuban Americans in Florida to any other Latin American-origin group (Puerto Ricans included) seemed surprising. Hence, I initially thought that a younger or not-quite-hegemonic Cuban American in southern Florida had written the article.

I was partly right, and this reflects important aspects of the phenomenon. Carlos Harrison, the author of this long article for ‘Latino Politics’ in *The Huffington Post*, is Panamanian-born but also a long-time resident of Miami. His online profile identifies him as ‘having covered local, national and international events from Miami for more than 20 years, and in New York as the deputy managing editor of *People en Espanol*’. It adds that ‘he also worked in television most recently as a national and international correspondent for the Fox News Channel’. My translation is that he can have some distance from hegemonic discourse in the Dade County Spanish-language world but must remain attentive to it.

Some of the facts he offers, nonetheless, are useful and revealing here. They are certainly worth our attention.

1. Harrison begins with a simple fact that we need to note, and not simply have the US Republican Party, the US Democratic Party, and the Cuban-origin population of southern Florida. He writes, ‘For Republicans, it used to be a sure thing: Come to Florida. Collect the Hispanic vote. Move on. That’s because the Hispanic vote used to mean, for the most part, the Cuban-American vote. Not anymore’.

2. The evidence is there, too, and it is not really disputable. Harrison adds, 'The area in the state with the highest concentration of Hispanic voters clearly demonstrates the challenges facing the Republican Party. Over the last four years (2008–2012) in Miami-Dade County, home to most of the state's Cuban-Americans and most of its Republican Hispanics, the GOP's registration numbers actually decreased by 5,880. The number of registered Democrats, meanwhile, increased by 9,260'.

3. According to Susan McManus, political analyst at the University of South Florida, 'The South Florida vote is still solidly Cuban Republicans, but there is the emergence now of other Latin and South American groups who are a little bit more democratic [...] And younger Cubans, depending on the issue, can also vote Democratic'.

4. McManus adds, 'It's just as complicated in Central Florida, across what used to be a solidly conservative section of the state, right under Mickey Mouse's ears: half of the state's Puerto Ricans live between Orlando and Tampa, numbering almost 400,000 in 2008'.

5. Both McManus and Harrison add, correctly in my view, something that typically surprises observers and students of the US, even of Latino politics and life in the United States and yet in retrospect probably should not, namely that: '[...] even they [a reference to the state's Puerto Rican population] don't all fall neatly into the Democratic line. "They tend to lean Democratic, depending on how long they've been in the country, and where they've come from', McManus said. "If they come straight from the island', she is quoted as saying, 'they tend to be more of a swing vote. If they come via New York or the Northeast, and come down to Florida that way, they tend to be heavily Democratic'".

Carlos Harrison added:

The differences stood out starkly in the last presidential election [that is, the US presidential election of 2008]. President Barack Obama won 57 percent of Florida's Hispanic vote, while 42 percent went to Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.). The margin was even greater among non-Cuban-Ameri-

can Latinos. Obama won their support by a nearly 2-to-1 margin, finishing with 65 percent to McCain's 33 percent. He couldn't win the Cuban-American vote, though. McCain won 53 percent to Obama's 47 percent.

REVISITING LOCATION

Let me then revisit the question of location and the nature of the difference between Cubans and Puerto Ricans in the United States. Some people may think of differences in population size, class background, or timing of the entry of these groupings into the US. Some might even wonder if the notion of diaspora applies to one of those Caribbean-origin groups or even to both. These thoughts are useful, but the facts no longer match the expectations people had for so long, and this includes the matter of location.

Many observers, students, and scholars of the US (including many students of immigration and minority populations) have come to associate Cuban Americans with Florida and Puerto Ricans with the island of Puerto Rico or the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area. These associations are not simply imagined. They have long been aided by media coverage and political analysis. Many expect Cubans in the US (and certainly in Florida) tend to be Cuba-oriented, anti-Castro, and more supportive of US Republicans than US Democrats, believing that US Republicans have been more unambiguously anti-Communist than US Democrats. And many expect US Cubans to want to have allies in the US but not to see the United States as home. Likewise, many who know that Puerto Ricans have been in the New York metropolitan area for decades see Puerto Ricans as a kind of minority population in the United States. This is especially so if they also know that the US Congress granted all Puerto Ricans US citizenship nearly a century ago and that this means that they do not need visas to enter the US mainland. To them, Puerto Ricans are part of US society just as much as African Americans are part of US society; to not see them as part of the fabric of US society is to partake of an unacceptable and totally Eurocentric view of 'American' society. In sum, it is apparently easier to view the Cuban population in the US (and certainly in Florida) as temporary sojourners uninterested

in seeing the US as home and to see the Puerto Rican population on the US mainland as a racial minority immigrant group living and working in the United States.

Much, however, is elided in those perceptions and occluded in unfortunate ways. I noted as early as the mid-1970s (and into the 1980s and beyond) that the Cuban-origin population in the US is really quite split, geographically and not just ideologically (cf. Dominguez, 1975; Dominguez and Dominguez, 1981). For quite some years—indeed, decades—several hundred thousand people of Cuban birth or parentage have lived outside southern Florida or even outside Florida altogether. This is not news, but it does not seem to make it often to the highly visible and influential media or even outside immigration and ethnic studies circles. Statistics included by Harrison are that the US is ‘home to approximately 1,786,000 Cuban immigrants’ but that only 784,000 live in Miami (Harrison, 2012). In other words, more than one million Cuban immigrants live outside Miami. Even if one were to include all those in Florida (the August 2006 Pew Hispanic Center Report claimed it was 990,000), one would still have to notice that several hundred thousand Cuban-origin people live elsewhere in the United States (somewhere between 500,000 and 800,000 depending on whom you count). That number exceeds the total number of Hondurans, Ecuadorians, and Peruvians living in the United States (and resembles the number of Dominicans who live in New York).

Perhaps more shockingly, the total number of Cuban-origin people living outside of Florida approximates the total number of Puerto Ricans living in the New York/New Jersey area, again in part depending on whom one counts (especially given the growing numbers of US-born people of Cuban or Puerto Rican origin living within the fifty states). Reportedly there are 1,192,000 ‘Puerto Ricans’ in the New York/New Jersey area and only 130,000 ‘Cubans’ in the same overall area. What if one thought of this differently and much more in terms of how immigrant/migrant communities have tended to be at the voting booth and in their public and private political acts? The fact is that the farther away those Cuban Americans are from southern Florida the more they tend to vote Democratic. US Senator

Bob Menendez is an excellent example, with parents who emigrated from Cuba in the early 1950s during the Batista regime and lived in the New York metro area, not southern Florida. The Puerto Rican population in the New York-New Jersey area tends to vote heavily Democratic when it votes, but there are outliers (and not just on the island of Puerto Rico). Consider, for example, 45-year-old US Congressman Raúl Labrador, born in Carolina, Puerto Rico, who moved to Las Vegas, Nevada, early in his teenage years, converted to the Church of Latter Day Saints (that is, joined the Mormon community) while living in Las Vegas, and went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree at Brigham Young University before studying law at the University of Washington. Congressman Labrador represents Idaho in the US House of Representatives and is a member not of the Democratic Party but, rather, of the Republican Party.

To say that there are no differences at all between Cuban Americans and Puerto Ricans (on the US mainland) would be quite misleading, of course, but it is important to note that perceptions that lie in our 'comfort zones' leave much to be desired. As a whole, it remains true that the Cuban-origin population is older, has more years of formal schooling, has a higher rate of home ownership, and has a higher average household income than all other Hispanic/Latino groups in the United States, including Puerto Ricans. There is a specific history here worth remembering. It is well-known that the earlier waves of exile out of Castro's Cuba overrepresented Cuba's upper and upper-middle classes, precisely those sectors of the Cuban population with the greatest access to formal schooling, the professions, capital, and white privilege. It is also, however, well known that later waves of Cuban entry into the US during these decades under Fidel or Raúl Castro represented a broader range of Cuba's socioeconomic classes and came to include working class Cubans as well. So, some of these Pew Report statistics are not totally surprising. One can easily anticipate professional Cubans pushing their children and grandchildren to acquire higher education in the US and enter the professional ranks themselves, and one can imagine those Cubans who arrived in the US in the early 1960s having more years to achieve home ownership and pull

themselves and their immediate families out of blue collar jobs and occupations than more recent immigrants. But not everything found in the large Pew Report can be so simply explained.

According to this Pew Report (2006), the median age of Cubans in the United States is 41 whereas the median age of all the other Hispanic/Latino groups in the US is 27. If this is an indicator of health, then it is an indicator of middle-class and upper-middle-class conditions affecting many more US Cubans than the Cubans who entered the US in the early 1960s, bringing with them high socioeconomic standards of living. The higher median age might also reflect a lower birth rate than in other Hispanic/Latino groups in the US, itself arguably a marker of higher socioeconomic class participation than other Hispanic/Latino groups in the US.

According to the Pew Report, all of the following are also true:

1. The median household income for Cubans is \$38,000, higher than for other Hispanics (\$36,000) but lower than for non-Hispanic whites (\$48,000).
2. About 61% of Cubans own their home, compared to fewer than half of all other Hispanics (47%).
3. One out of four (25%) Cubans aged 25 and older has graduated from a four-year college or university, more than double the rate among other Hispanics (12%) but lower than among non-Hispanic whites in the same age group (30%).
4. Poverty rates among Cubans are generally lower than among other Hispanics, with some notable exceptions. About 13% of Cubans under 18 are classified as living below the officially determined poverty line, less than half the rate for other Hispanics (27%).

The Pew Hispanic Center's 2006 National Survey of Latinos asked respondents whether they consider the United States or their country of origin to be their real homeland. More than half (52%) of Cubans said they considered the US their real homeland. This was significantly higher than the percentage of US Latinos who self-identified as Mexicans (36%), the percentage of US

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Latinos who self-identified as Central and South Americans (35%), and the percentage of US Latinos who self-identified as Puerto Ricans (33%)—the latter US citizens by birth.

RACIALIZATION AND ITS LIKELY EFFECTS

Here I contemplate one of those ‘zones of discomfort’ to which I alluded earlier: racialization, as perceived by and attributed in both Puerto Rico and Cuba and in the contemporary United States as their current home base. Racialization plays a big role and deserves a closer look. By now, about 60% of Cubans in the United States are US citizens, a figure that is more than double the rate for other US Latino/Hispanic-identified groups (other than Puerto Ricans) and that is even higher than the percentage of non-Hispanic foreign-born whites (56%), according to the 2006 Pew Report. Yet longevity in the country matters. According to the report, ‘About nine out of every 10 Cubans who arrived before 1990 are U.S. citizens. Among those who arrived between 1980 and 1990, 60% are citizens and among those who arrived after 1990 18% are citizens’

It is well known that US government policies early during the Castro years favored the acceptance of Cubans fleeing Castro’s Cuba. The ensuing Cuban Refugee Act of 1966 made it far easier for those leaving Cuba and wanting to enter the United States to do so legally than for so many other people from elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere (except for Puerto Ricans). It is also quite true that the US government has for many years (although not without its ‘hiccups’) made it easier for Cubans to live legally in the United States than for many other Latin Americans (see also Perez, 2003, and Perez-Stable, 2010).⁶ –*Yet it is clear that citizen-*

6 See a February 12, 2013, article by journalist Juan O. Tamayo in The Miami Herald/El Nuevo Herald titled ‘Politicians call for revision of Cuban Adjustment Act: Reforms in Cuba’s migration law plus a review of US immigration policy are prompting calls for a new look at how Cubans are admitted to the United States’. The continued concern with a Communist Cuba is evident in what Tamayo reports. It also summarizes important ways that Cubans seeking entry into the US after Castro’s takeover of Cuba on January 1, 1959, benefited from special US government treatment. ‘The CAA’, Tamayo writes, ‘which was approved in 1966, was designed to normalize the status of about 123,000 Cubans who had

ship alone does not lead to a sense of homeland or attachment to the US as homeland, as scholars recently writing about 'cultural citizenship' (such as Aihwa Ong) and 'transnationalism' (such as Nina Glick Schiller and Thomas Faist) know or would readily understand, even when they did not already have the statistics I just included. Well worth long reflection is the fact that only 33% of Puerto Rican respondents in the 2006 National Survey of Latinos replied that they consider the United States their real homeland (versus 52% of Cubans surveyed).

One might say that Puerto Ricans have a viable alternative (that is, the island of Puerto Rico) and that Cuban-origin people in the United States do not have such an alternative under the current political regime, but that, too, oversimplifies important matters. Puerto Rico, after all, is not an independent country, and its pro-independence supporters rarely get more than a few percentage points in Puerto Rico-wide referendums about the status of Puerto Rico relative to the United States. Moreover, all Puerto Ricans on the island have had US citizenship since 1917, so it is unclear what it means to think of Puerto Rico as an alternative when it does not entail an alternative legal citizenship. And then there are emotional attachments that provide alternatives, and these apply both to Cubans and to Puerto Ricans.

Allow me to illustrate this with a very personal example. I have a grandmother who died at the age of 97 in 1996. She had been born the first month after the Spanish colonial administration left Cuba in 1899, and she was quite proud of that. She might have loved Spanish zarzuelas but she was also (and normally) rather suspicious of everything that reminded her of the Spanish empire. She adored an uncle I never came to know myself but to whom she affectionately referred as 'Tio Pedro'—Pedro Betancourt—a man who fought for Cuba's independence in the 1890s, was a member of the Cuban Constitutional Assembly, became

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fled Fidel Castro's revolution and been "paroled" into the United States but were in immigration limbo. Well over 1 million Cubans have now obtained US residency under the law, officially named the Cuban Refugee Adjustment Act'. <http://www.miamiherald.com/2013/02/12/3230733/politicians-call-for-revision.html#storylink=cpy>

a Senator early in the twentieth century, and was governor of the Cuban province of Matanzas before he became disillusioned with Cuban politics by the 1920s. All of this mattered greatly to her and, even though she eventually left Cuba in 1961, she could never agree to renouncing her Cuban citizenship and acquiring any other citizenship. She ended up living in the US as a legal resident from 1961 till her death in 1996 (a total of 35 years) without acquiring US citizenship. This was not because the US government prevented her from doing so but because she refused to relinquish her Cuban citizenship (even if the Cuban government did nothing to recognize her Cuban citizenship or extend her any benefits of citizenship).

This is, of course, just one example, but it is an example that reminds me (and urges me to remind all readers) that there are plenty of alternatives for Cubans living in the US, both in terms of legal status and in terms of attitude toward the US (cf. Dominguez, 2001). The rest of my family made a different choice, but hers was just as important and just as viable. Puerto Ricans, of course, also have choices, especially with regard to feelings or proclamations regarding home and homeland (cf. Davila, 2008; Duany, 2001; Godreau, 2006; Grosfoguel, 2003; Santiago-Valles, 1994). Rarely does someone try to relinquish his or her US citizenship in a public way aimed to challenge that 1917 unilateral granting of US citizenship, but there have been cases. Of course, Puerto Ricans who move to a different country and obtain the citizenship of that country may be doing a less public version of renunciation.

What I argue is significant and different between the two populations is racial ascription, self-perception, and experience with and within the United States. As I already noted, there was a noticeable class difference in who came to the US in the early-mid-sixties, and it greatly overrepresented the upper and middle classes in Cuba with greatly privileged whiteness and European-ness (or its close approximation) (cf. Garcia, 1997; Perez, 2003; Prieto, 2009). But later arrivals have come from more representative sectors of Cuban society, and these resemble more sectors of Puerto Rican society on the island (cf. de la Fuente, 2000; Ferrer, 1999; Scott, 2008). 'Race', as we all no doubt

know by now (from multiple scholarly and scientific sources), is not a biological or genealogical fact in itself but, instead, something experienced within societal systems of classification with privileges and disabilities that may or may not travel across societal borders. *I want to suggest here that there is continued evidence of Cubans in the United States believing that they fit better into US society than most other people of Latin American origin (except possibly Argentineans and Uruguayans), in part because they see themselves as white, believe they have a better chance than other Latinos of being accepted as white, and fight for that ascription on many fronts.*

There are many signs of that, but it is interesting also to see how this shows up in the 2006 Pew survey of US Hispanics/Latinos and in other large-scale surveys of US Cubans. Consider the following:

1. Cubans are far more likely than other Latinos/Hispanics to identify themselves as white when asked about their 'race'. In the 2004 Census data, about 86% of Cubans said they were white, compared with 60% of Mexicans, 53% of other Central and South Americans and 50% of Puerto Ricans.

2. In the Census data, one-third or more of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and other Latinos/Hispanics chose 'some other race' when answering this question. But among Cubans, only 8% chose 'some other race'.

3. Hispanics who identify themselves as white have higher levels of education and income than those who choose 'some other race'.

The Pew Hispanic Center 2006 report said the findings suggest that Hispanics/Latinos see race as a measure of belonging and 'whiteness' as a measure of inclusion, or perceived inclusion. This points to a certain perception of US society that seems widespread among US Cubans. It is one that privileges 'whiteness', not unlike the Cuba they left behind, but it is also one that equates 'white' with American or at least with the sector of US society they want to join. There is little doubt that the European/African orientation of the kind of export-oriented African slave

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labor plantation economy that Cuba was for so long (and certainly from the late eighteenth century until abolition of slavery in 1886) plays a role here. But it is important to note that this orientation fits in well with US racialism, which has also long seen the US as European with a minority African-origin population or as European and African populations making up the fundamentally American sectors of US society.

It is also important to note that some element of this phenomenon has shown itself in evidence in many of the US censuses of Puerto Rico in the twentieth century. Increasingly over the past century, US censuses and surveys showed a steady increase in the reported 'white' population of Puerto Rico, from 61.8% in 1899 to 65.5% in 1910, 73% in 1920, 74.3% in 1930, 76.5% in 1940, 79.7% in 1950, and 80.5% in 2000.⁷ And yet the mainland Puerto Rican respondents were far less willing to self-identify as 'white', presumably a product of the color hierarchy that remains in place in Puerto Rico itself and that has led to a differential exodus of working class Puerto Ricans to the US mainland.

The only ill-fitting demographic concerning US Cubans shows up in queries about language use and, if my argument about the conflation of 'whiteness' and 'Americanization' among US Cubans is correct, it may be the one thing keeping Cuban Americans largely and actively within the 'Latino'/'Hispanic' realm by choice. If we stop to think about it, without widespread use of Spanish in public and private, why would so many Cubans be (or allow themselves to be or be seen as) Latinos or Hispanics, given the combination of 'white' self-identification and growing identification of the US as home? But there is that matter of language and of continued use of Spanish in public and private in southern Florida.

The statistics from the 2006 Pew survey are telling:

7 US Bureau of the Census reports are the primary source here (with reports in 1913, 1921, 1932, 1943, and 1953). Another source is a very interesting paper by Mara Loveman and Jeronimo Muniz available online titled 'How Puerto Rico Became White: An Analysis of Racial Statistics in the 1910 and 1920 Censuses'. It was prepared for presentation at the Center for Demography and Ecology of the University of Wisconsin-Madison on February 7, 2006. It notes that the 2000 percentage makes Puerto Rico at least officially more 'white' than mainland USA.

A. Among those 18 and older, about 89% of Cubans speak a language other than English at home, a higher rate than among Hispanics/Latinos in general (80%).

B. Among native-born Cubans, almost two-thirds (64%) speak a language other than English at home.

C. About 12% of Cubans under 18 (i.e. about one in eight) speak English less than very well, compared with 20% among other Hispanics/Latinos.

D. Among Cubans 18 and older, 49% speak English less than very well, slightly higher than among other Hispanics/Latinos (46%).

E. About 40% of foreign-born Cubans under 18 speak English less than very well, a higher rate than among other Hispanics/Latinos (20%).

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Clearly speaking Spanish in whole or in part differentiates many Cuban Americans from other people in the US, even when most see themselves as part of the 'white' population of the United States.

ZONE OF DISCOMFORT

Especially noteworthy, based on research results I have examined in this article, are the following observations: (a) that a significant difference still exists between Puerto Rican and Cuban American engagement with the US but that it is not really explained by length of legal belonging to the United States, (b) that much of the difference between Puerto Rican and Cuban American engagement with the US concerns racialization (both in the Caribbean and in these populations' engagement with the US), and (c) that it may be most productive now and in the future to concentrate on the surprises, what I have elsewhere (Dominguez, 2012) recently called the 'zones of discomfort', rather than our 'comfort zones' as students, scholars, and academics. The most provocative point that results from this exploration is the idea that the Cuban experience of exile (with Cubans long perceiving themselves to be an exile

community waiting to return to Cuba after the end of the Castro regime) has led to more Cubans becoming Americans than expected (or perhaps more than desired by the older and most anti-Castro segment of the population in south Florida). And, at the other end, the Puerto Rican experience of colonial, neocolonial, and mainland US life seems almost diametrically opposed, with the 1917 Act turning all Puerto Ricans into US citizens (whether on the island or the US mainland) but not leading most Puerto Ricans to identify the US as home.

Consider, then, some possible 'conclusions' to the findings and analysis presented here:

- The Cuban diaspora has made more Cubans into Americans (i.e. into part of US society) than the 1917 Jones Act made Puerto Ricans into Americans, even when a large portion of the Cuban diaspora has long seen itself as exiled and at least purports to want to return to Cuba once the Castro regime is no longer in place, and even though Puerto Ricans have been US citizens since 1917 and Cubans have not.
- Cuban Americans have turned the United States into their home, despite the continued blatant and still expected anti-Castro rhetoric of southern Florida that suggests that they are temporary sojourners in the US more than 50 years after Castro's Revolution toppled the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista.
- Perceived racial status has mattered at least as much as, or perhaps even more than, legal status at entry in the process of Cuban American 'Americanization'.
- Cuban American success in the US is at best *ambiguously* related to their 'Latinidad', to their being grouped or classified as 'Latinos' or 'Hispanics' in the US, and all signs are that they know it.

'Americanization' then looks interestingly different here, and the factors at play more highlighted than if we were really focusing on the large Mexican-origin population that constitutes the numerical majority of the US Latino population. While some scholars may prefer to adopt the concept of 'cultural citizenship' to address non-legal notions of citizenship that differ from legal

statutes and disabilities, 'cultural citizenship' does not suffice here either. 'Cultural citizenship' does not take sufficient account of what it means for some to have legal citizenship but racialized minority status and for others to distance themselves by affiliating themselves with a racially dominant sector of the population.

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