New immigrant destinations and the American colour line

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Abstract

I analyse how Hispanic newcomers are becoming incorporated into the rural southern racial hierarchy during an early stage of immigration. I examine patterns in newcomers' (1) racial/ethnic identifications and (2) social interactions with whites and blacks, showing how and why they lend preliminary support to a black/nonblack colour line model, in which the central distinction separates the positions of people with African ancestry from all others. Hispanic newcomers, including many who are dark-skinned, poor, and undocumented, have come to perceive the social distance separating themselves from whites as more permeable than that separating themselves from blacks, and are engaging in distancing strategies that may reinforce this distinction.

Scholars are engaged in a dynamic debate about how contemporary immigrants are becoming incorporated into the American racial hierarchy. Most studies have been quantitative analyses at the national level or qualitative analyses in major immigrant gateways. Yet the phenomenal geographic dispersion of immigrants since the 1980s, led primarily by Mexicans, raises critical questions about how newcomers will be incorporated into the racial fabric of 'new destinations'.

Such questions take on special significance in the 'traditional' American south. Not only have natives of this region, especially ones living in rural areas, been most isolated from historical and contemporary immigration, but African Americans are also present in larger numbers and the American racial 'binary' remains strongest here (McClain et al. 2006, 2007). These features magnify the boundaries separating the region's two dominant groups from each other and from immigrants. Thus, I ask: how will Hispanic newcomers'[1] identities

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affect their incorporation into this largely binary region; will racial discrimination prevent their incorporation; and how might southern notions of race be ultimately reformulated by their incorporation?

I take strategic advantage of the recent increase in immigration into the rural American south to examine these questions during an early stage of immigration. I examine patterns in newcomers' (1) racial/ ethnic identifications and (2) social interactions with whites and blacks, showing how and why they lend preliminary support to a black/nonblack colour line model, in which the central distinction separates the positions of people with African ancestry from all others. Hispanic newcomers, including many who are dark-skinned, poor, and undocumented, have come to perceive the social distance separating themselves from whites as more permeable than that separating themselves from blacks, and are engaging in distancing strategies that may reinforce this distinction.

Models of the American colour line

The historic black/white binary is being challenged by rising immigration, and three models describe new configurations that may replace it. The first predicts a white/nonwhite colour line in which the central distinction divides the positions of whites from all others. Here Asians and Hispanics/Latinos are 'nonwhites' due to common experiences of colonialism, oppression, exploitation, and racialization – something that has arguably been furthered by their inclusion in civil rights policies as 'racial minorities' and common language as 'people of color' (Skrentny 2002; Lee and Bean 2007, pp. 5–6). Scholars and activists who see a white/nonwhite divide point to persisting material gaps between whites and all other groups, and to persisting feelings of racialization among all nonwhites. Here we expect Hispanic newcomers in the south to exhibit greater material, subjective, and behavioural distance from whites than blacks, and such distance to stay stable or increase over time. While we may observe distinctions between Hispanics and blacks, we expect them to be less salient overall.

The second model also predicts a binary colour line, yet one in which the central distinction divides the positions of blacks (defined as people with African ancestry in the American context) from all others. Lee and Bean (2007) summarize how in the 1990s scholars began noticing the uniquely enduring separation of blacks while simultaneously documenting how several formerly 'nonwhite' European and Asian immigrant groups had distanced themselves from blackness and achieved upward socioeconomic mobility over time (Perlmann and Waldinger 1997; Yancey 2003). Here Asians and Hispanics are

'nonblacks' who have achieved 'whiteness' or 'honorary whiteness' with upward mobility, while African Americans remain the 'exception' who have not (Gans 1999).

Scholars who see a black/nonblack divide point to growing material and behavioural gaps between blacks and all other groups, and to more quickly loosening feelings of racialization among Asians and Hispanics than blacks. For example, segregation in residential (Wilkes and Iceland 2004) and adolescent friendship (Quillian and Campbell 2003) patterns is higher among blacks and black Hispanics than among Asians and other Hispanics. Not only are white-Hispanic and white-Asian intermarriage rates rising more rapidly than white–black ones (Lee and Bean 2007; Qian and Lichter 2007), but identity among multiracials with Hispanic and Asian heritage is more fluid and symbolic than that among multiracials with black heritage (Lee and Bean 2007). And it is specifically *blackness* that influences how nonwhite children of immigrants in New York City experience racial discrimination (Kasinitz et al. 2008).

While some scholars argue that Asians and Hispanics may become 'whites' (Warren and Twine 1997), eventually reconstituting the white/black divide, the black/nonblack model only requires that they be located meaningfully closer to whites than blacks. Here we expect Hispanic newcomers in the south to exhibit greater material, subjective, and behavioural distance from blacks than from whites, and such distance to stay stable or increase over time. While we may observe distinctions between Hispanics and whites, we expect them to be less salient than those between either Hispanics and blacks or whites and blacks. We also expect Hispanic newcomers to engage in distancing strategies from blacks, and whites to express preferences for Hispanics over blacks. Finally, we expect to see central differences between the experiences of Hispanic newcomers with versus without African ancestry.

The third model predicts a triracial colour line similar to those in Latin American countries which emphasize national unity and organize social hierarchies more in terms of class and skin colour than racial ancestry (Bonilla-Silva 2002; Massey 2007). Here two central distinctions divide the positions of three groups, as whites allow some newcomers to become 'whites', create an intermediate racial group of 'honorary whites' to buffer racial conflict, and incorporate most immigrants into a 'collective black' stratum. While some Hispanics may become 'whites' or 'honorary whites', most Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Central Americans are 'collective blacks' due to their racialized incorporation as colonial subjects, refugees from wars, or illegal migrant workers (Bonilla-Silva 2002, pp. 8–9).

Scholars who see a triracial divide point to growing material, subjective, and behavioural gaps both *between* and *within* contemporary racial groups, driven primarily by class and skin colour. For instance, skin colour influences: rates of intermarriage with whites among Asians and Latinos (Qian 2002), attitudes toward blacks among Puerto Ricans and Cubans (Forman, Goar, and Lewis 2002), and indicators of integration among Mexicans (Murguia and Saenz 2002). Class and skin colour influence identity choices among black–white multiracials, with a few middle-class and light-skinned ones constructing themselves as 'culturally white' despite their African ancestry (Rockquemore and Arend 2002). Still, some evidence points to a black/nonblack divide. Regardless of skin colour Latinos (especially Mexicans) are closer to non-Hispanic whites than blacks in their attitudes toward blacks (Forman, Goar, and Lewis 2002), suggesting that many do not see themselves as 'collective blacks' (Lee and Bean 2007, p. 9). 'Cultural whiteness' among black–white biracials is still an exception; most identify as biracial or black, underscoring enduring constraints on people with African ancestry (Rockquemore and Arend 2002, p. 59). While steeper socioeconomic gaps in intermarriage rates with whites have emerged between more- and less-educated Asians and Hispanics, intermarriage remains persistently low even among better-educated blacks (Qian and Lichter 2007). And Murguia and Saenz (2002) point out that a three-tier racial system has always existed in the United States, yet many middle-tier groups have moved up into the top tier over time instead of remaining 'secondary' and unequal to whites, as the triracial model predicts (Bonilla-Silva 2002, p. 13).

Nonetheless, here we expect Hispanic newcomers in the south to exhibit varying degrees of material, subjective, and behavioural distance from whites and blacks depending on class and skin colour. We expect those who are lightest-skinned and highest-class to exhibit greater distance from blacks than from whites, yet still meaningful distance from whites. Vice versa, we expect those who are darkest-skinned and lowest-class to exhibit greater distance from whites than from blacks. Finally, we expect variation in both anti-black distancing behaviour among Hispanics (ranging from strongest among 'whites' to weakest among 'collective blacks') and whites' preferences for Hispanics (ranging from strongest toward 'whites' to weakest toward 'collective blacks').

Site selection and methods

Data come from 129 individual semi-structured interviews and additional ethnographic research that I conducted between June 2003 and June 2004 in Bedford and Wilcox counties, pseudonyms

for two nonmetropolitan 'new immigrant destination' counties in eastern North Carolina. North Carolina was the premier new destination state in the 1990s, posting the highest growth rates in its Hispanic/Latino (394 per cent) and immigrant (274 per cent) populations among all states. Bedford and Wilcox are located in the rural eastern part of the state, where poverty is acute and the black–white binary extremely sharp.

Slightly over half of the 129 interviews (N = 70, 54 per cent) were conducted with Latin American immigrants of varying nationalities, in either Spanish or English. These foreign-born respondents hail primarily from Mexico (N = 39), but also from South America (N = 16), Central America (N = 14), and Cuba (N = 1). Approximately one-seventh of the interviews (N = 18, 14 per cent) were conducted with US-born Hispanics, mostly Mexican and Puerto Rican Americans, in either Spanish or English. Finally, approximately one-third of the interviews (N = 41, 32 per cent) were conducted with white (N = 27) and black (N = 14) 'key native informants', in English, and serve to triangulate my findings among Hispanic respondents. The high proportions of Mexican- followed by Central and South American-origin respondents reflect their dominance among North Carolina's Hispanic population, which was 65.1 per cent Mexican, 8.2 per cent Puerto Rican, 1.9 per cent Cuban, and 24.8 per cent 'other' Hispanic in the 2000 Census.

Interview respondents were located by combining theoretical and snowball sampling designs across four institutional arenas in both counties: workplaces, elementary school systems, courts and law enforcement systems, and politics. Interviews ranged from thirty minutes to three hours, and respondents were asked a battery of questions regarding their migration history; family background; racial/ethnic identification; employment history; views on race, immigration, and life in the rural south; and political participation. Employers, school and legal personnel, and political leaders were asked additional questions about their experiences with the local Hispanic community. I supplemented these interviews with various forms of participant-observation research over the course of the year (see Marrow 2008). To ensure anonymity, all names and identifying characteristics of respondents and places have been changed.

There is variation among Hispanic respondents' skin colours, class statuses, and legal statuses. Their skin colours range from very light to very dark, although most dark-skinned respondents come from countries with relatively weak histories of African presence and thus have mixed indigenous ancestry (Forman, Goar, and Lewis 2002). Their educational levels range from primary school to professional

degrees, and while most work in low-wage jobs at the bottom of the regional labour market, others work in skilled blue- and white-collar occupations. Their citizenship and immigration statuses range from US citizens by birth (N = 18) or naturalization (n = 12) to legal permanent residents (N = 12) to temporary nonimmigrant visa or work permit holders (N = 7) to undocumented immigrants (N = 33).[2] The latter group comprises 47 per cent of foreign-born Hispanics in the sample, originating from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Chile.

The strong binary context is evident in Bedford and Wilcox counties in several ways. First, minority groups other than African Americans have little historical presence in either county, with Hispanics arriving since the 1980s. Second, the population of African Americans is large in both counties (58 per cent in Bedford and 29 per cent in Wilcox in the 2000 Census). Third, the separation of blacks from whites runs deep in both counties. Whites are internally divided along several lines, especially class status, belonging either to the middle or to the poor and working classes. In contrast, blacks' socioeconomic position is weaker; most belong to the poor and working classes, while only a few belong to the middle class. In this way, Hispanic newcomers enter local contexts heavily influenced by the racial binary and its resulting inequalities. They encounter a native population starkly divided by both race and class, including a black population that is almost entirely poor and working-class.

Yet they also enter rural contexts where population sizes are small enough that 'everybody knows everybody' and complete racial isolation is not possible (Jiménez 2005, p. 31). That is, tensions between groups exist, blacks are socioeconomically disadvantaged compared to whites, and there is visible residential and social segregation in both counties (which Hispanic respondents saw and remarked on). Still, unlike the situation in many highly segregated gateway cities, rural areas' 'limits of space, resources, and opportunities for segregation' (Erwin 2003, p. 67) force residents to interact in workplaces, neighbourhoods, public spaces, and public schools. Consequently, almost all respondents reported having come into contact with someone outside their own group, usually in these spaces. Plus, even if they did not know many out-group members personally, the nonmetropolitan character of these places meant that they at least knew something about one another (Jiménez 2005, p. 165). The one exception could be contracted seasonal farmworkers, who were often isolated on farms with little interaction with other residents. However, even agricultural worker respondents had some contact with whites and blacks within their workplaces.

Hispanic newcomers' racial/ethnic identifications

Hispanic respondents both self-identified and reported external identification by southern natives most strongly as something other than whites or blacks – particularly as Hispanics, Latinos, or people of some 'other race'. This includes respondents who self-identified as Hispanic, *hispano*, or Latino (37.5 per cent), respondents who were not asked how they self-identified but who nonetheless employed these terms (25.0 per cent), and respondents who self-identified secondarily as such even when their primary identifications were by national origin (9.1 per cent).

As illustrated by Ricardo and Noélia, a working-class immigrant couple from Veracruz, Mexico, foreign-born respondents in this group have picked these terms up after migration as available language with which to make sense of their new place as minorities in the rural south's racial hierarchy. Ricardo and Noélia explained how Latin American-origin newcomers from a variety of countries get aggregated into a larger 'Hispanic' or 'Spanish' (and sometimes reduced simply to 'Mexican') grouping – one portrayed as racially distinct from whites, blacks, and Asians (i.e., 'Chinese') alike:

Interviewer:	How do you define yourself in terms of race or ethnicity?
Ricardo:	Well, in Mexico, we are Mexicans. And here, for everyone we are Hispanics. That's what they call people from Colombia, Paraguay, Uruguay, wherever . . . every one of them same.
Noélia:	It's the only thing that they have on forms for race or ethnicity.
Ricardo:	'Hispanic.'
Noélia:	Hispanic, black, white, and sometimes they say 'Chinese'.
Ricardo:	Or sometimes to play with us, and they say 'Spanish' instead.

Yet some respondents either self-identified or reported external identification by southern natives as whites. A few (approximately 3 per cent) self-identified as whites, adamantly resisting both the Hispanic/Latino and black labels even when natives see them as such. Others (approximately 8 per cent) either self-identified ethnically as Hispanics/Latinos yet racially as whites (as did Davíd, a lower-middle-class immigrant from Medellín, Colombia), or thought that natives perceive them to be whites because of their individual light skin or hair colours (as did Isabel García, a lower-middle-class immigrant from Buenos Aires, Argentina). Consistent with the triracial model, white racial identification emerged more strongly among light-skinned and

middle-class respondents from South America and the Caribbean, while 'other' or 'Hispanic' racial identification emerged more strongly among dark-skinned and lower-class respondents from Mexico and Central America.[3]

In contrast, very few respondents identified or reported external identification by southern natives as blacks.[4] Consistent with the black/nonblack model, only one self-identified as black (Carmen, a dark-skinned, lower-middle-class woman who has African ancestry), and only two others reported ever being identified as black, with both changing over time. One – Lidia, a dark-skinned, upper-working-class immigrant from Oaxaca, Mexico – even reported being discriminated against by whites and called 'black' when she first migrated to North Carolina in 1980, but said this has changed as immigration into the area has increased and natives have become more familiar with and willing to acknowledge 'Hispanics' as a distinct group.

Therefore, consistent with the triracial model, respondents' strongest internal and external identifications as Hispanics, Latinos, or people of some 'other race' denote an early pattern of incorporation that exhibits some collective social distance from both whiteness and blackness. Yet consistent with the black/nonblack model, respondents' stronger internal and external identifications as 'others' and 'whites' than as 'blacks' denote an early pattern of incorporation that also exhibits greater collective social distance from blackness than from whiteness. While class and skin colour do influence respondents' racial identifications, they generally do so within a 'nonblack' zone. Even dark-skinned, poor, and undocumented Mexican and Central Americans tend neither to self-identify nor perceive external identification as 'collective blacks'.

Social interactions with whites and blacks

What factors lie behind these patterns of 'nonblack' identification? Undoubtedly, they are at least partially based on the way race is organized in Latin America, where distancing from blackness is frequently encouraged. In contrast to how the legacy of the 'one-drop rule' encourages many Americans to identify as 'blacker' than their phenotypes might suggest, legacies of white superiority encourage many Latin Americans to identify as 'whiter'. Upon migrating to the United States, many Latin Americans find that they are viewed as 'darker' here, yet continue to maintain their previous identifications (Rodríguez 2000, pp. 106–25).

My data also show that anti-black stereotypes play a role (Mindiola, Niemann, and Rodríguez 2002; Kim 2004; McClain et al. 2006). While it is unclear whether these stereotypes originated abroad or after migration or both, many (though certainly not all) Hispanic

respondents expressed them toward blacks. Antonia, a medium-skinned, college-educated, legal permanent resident from Veracruz, Mexico, and Nadia, a poor, dark-skinned, undocumented immigrant from Mexico City, illustrated stereotypical views of blacks as loud, violent, lazy, uneducated, dependent, or lacking in family values:

Antonia: In my work I have seen that the blacks are louder, feistier. Whites are like, quieter. I think it's a question of education, or culture.

Nadia: The blacks are sometimes pretty dirty. They don't do things right, or they don't want to work. They don't want to be responsible or work. They don't do what people tell them to. They drink a lot. Their worst traits are that they are very rude. They say ugly words.

As Nina, a dark-skinned, lower-middle-class, naturalized citizen from Cali, Colombia, explained, many Hispanics, including those likely to become 'collective blacks', learn to devalue blackness and make efforts to dissociate from it, since whiteness is privileged over blackness in both their home countries and here (Dzidzienyo and Oboler 2005):

Nina: Some Hispanics come here to this country and they want nothing to do with blacks. Even in our own countries we learn this. We learn we don't want to be a part of their community.

Yet these patterns are also based on Hispanics' social interactions with whites and blacks, through which they develop a sense of how they are viewed and of where the strongest intergroup boundaries lie. Within the complex range of intergroup relations that I documented, intriguing patterns emerge. Overall Hispanic respondents perceived better interpersonal relations with whites than blacks; they perceived that whites treat Hispanics better than whites treat blacks, and many also perceived that Hispanics are 'discriminated' against more by blacks than whites. Thus, many Hispanic newcomers have come to perceive that the boundaries separating themselves from whites, although existent, are more permeable than those separating themselves from blacks or whites from blacks.

Whites' preferences for Hispanics over African Americans

Hispanic respondents' perception that whites treat them better than whites treat blacks is consistent with the literature on past European

and Asian immigrants who, while not initially viewed as 'whites', were also not viewed equally to 'blacks' but rather more like 'almost blacks' or 'in-betweens' who were preferred as cheap and docile labour and eventually afforded greater opportunity to 'move up' into full or honorary whiteness (Loewen 1988; Roediger 2005). Importantly, while light-skinned and higher-class Hispanic respondents perceived preferences for Hispanics over blacks, so did dark-skinned and lower-class ones. Paco, a poor, dark-skinned farmworker from Jalisco, Mexico, who is now a legal permanent resident but used to be undocumented, saw whites in both Florida and North Carolina erecting a stronger residential boundary against blacks than against Hispanics. Likewise, Armando, a medium-skinned, upper-working-class, naturalized citizen from Monterrey, Mexico, saw them erecting a stronger interpersonal boundary:

Paco: With the white people that I know, they like Hispanics here more than blacks. You see, over where I live [in Lake Placid, Florida] there are lots of [white] American people and only about four Hispanics there living with them. Like, it's not an issue – everything is fine and there aren't any problems between us. But if a black person moves in there, the whites will start to sell their houses. Because they will become cheaper. So whites don't like the blacks. Why? I don't know.

Armando: I've heard it from several friends who are white that they would rather see their children go out with a Hispanic than with a black.
Interviewer: Do you know of a lot of interracial dating around here?
Armando: Oh yes. [It's] mostly between whites and Hispanics. It's very rare to see a black person married to Hispanics.

Indeed, I confirm that whites express strong preferences for Hispanics. In workplaces, employers viewed them as having a better work ethic and being more pliant and loyal workers than 'lazy' and 'entitled' blacks (Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991; Johnson-Webb 2003, pp. 114–15; Waldinger and Lichter 2003; Griffith 2005, p. 66). In daily life, neighbourhoods, and interpersonal relationships, whites exhibited greater ambivalence toward Hispanics (including undocumented immigrants) than blacks, frequently juxtaposing negative stereotypes of Hispanics with positive evaluations of their 'desire to work hard', 'better themselves', and 'support their families'. One upper-working-class white native remarked that she would prefer to have Hispanics' 'pretty' brown hair than blacks' 'ugly' black hair. Another upper-class one remarked that the Burger King 'is just nicer now' with Hispanic

employees, whereas blacks did not care enough to 'keep it up'. Even the few notable examples I documented of whites separating themselves from Hispanics in neighbourhoods and schools could not rival the strong distaste they exhibited toward living among blacks.

John Doherty, a bilingual white attorney in Bedford county, nicely summarized this crucial difference between how whites view blacks – their true 'other' in the rural south – versus Hispanics. He distinguished between the strong and hostile *racial hatred* many whites feel toward African Americans, versus the more ambivalent *cultural xenophobia* they feel toward Hispanics, whom they know less well:

John Doherty: And there is that [white] bias against the Mexicans here, too, but it's not the hostile 'You oughta send all the niggers back to Africa.' But it is a cultural, sort of xenophobic reaction.

This distinction frames white–Hispanic relations as comparatively more positive than white–black ones. It also signals to Hispanics that the privileges of whiteness are ultimately closer within their reach than that of blacks, providing them with enormous incentives to distance themselves away from blackness to gain upward mobility, which can exacerbate any anti-black stereotypes among them.

Hispanic newcomers' responses to perceived discrimination by blacks

Many (though certainly not all[5]) Hispanic respondents also perceived that Hispanics are more 'discriminated' against by blacks than whites (Griffith 2005, p. 66; Rich and Miranda 2005, p. 204). Delmira, a medium-skinned, lower-working-class immigrant from Mexico City, who is now a legal permanent resident but used to be undocumented, and Ricky, a medium-skinned, college-educated Mexican American from McAllen, Texas, illustrated this:

Delmira: Blacks still have that 'For years we've been discriminated and discriminated' [mentality]. And sometimes it's the opposite sometimes. They discriminate against others [Hispanics].

Ricky: Blacks feel threatened, they think that Hispanics going to take something away from them ... and they have tendency to treat Hispanics a little bit wrong.

To be sure, Hispanic respondents acknowledged some discrimination from rural southern whites. Yet in many cases what they had expected

to encounter from whites, based on their knowledge of American immigration policy or their interpersonal relations with whites elsewhere in the United States, was worse than what actually transpired in eastern North Carolina. Furthermore, Hispanic respondents tended to report a balance in their interactions with whites – noting that while some display prejudice and discrimination, others do not, and still others display friendliness, acceptance, and a surprising degree of cultural cosmopolitanism that helps to counter other negative white voices. Álvaro, a medium-skinned, college-educated immigrant from Coahuila, Mexico, who is now a legal permanent resident but used to be undocumented, described this common perception of a bifurcated '50–50' response from whites, compared to more negative '25–75' treatment by blacks:

Álvaro: I see more white people, Caucasians, doing positive things to the Hispanic community versus the African American people. With a better attitude and approach. They are being more kind. I can't say [the relationship between Hispanics and blacks] is good. Because my opinion is that a big part of the African American population, they really don't accept the Hispanic community. We are intruders. Just a small part, one probably quarter, are the ones who can see us as allies.

This distinction may seem surprising, given the legacy of white-on-nonwhite discrimination in the rural south, the larger gap separating the current material positions of Hispanic newcomers from whites than from blacks, and the lack of resources with which rural black southerners can truly 'discriminate' against other groups. Yet Hispanic newcomers were interpreting 'discrimination' from blacks in two key ways. First, Hispanic newcomers perceived that education and class strongly structure natives' responses, with better-educated and higher-class natives responding most positively (Mindiola, Niemann, and Rodríguez 2002; Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2005; Vallas and Zimmerman 2007; Fennelly 2008; Marrow 2008). Since blacks in eastern North Carolina are poorer than whites, at both the group and individual levels, Hispanics likewise perceived that blacks' reactions to newcomers are more negative, as they respond to greater fears of being displaced or 'leapfrogged' by Hispanics, not only economically in low-wage workplaces but also socially in lower-class neighbourhoods and public schools. As expressed by Alicia, a medium-skinned, lower-middle-class immigrant from Chile who is currently in the process of naturalization through her white American husband, discrimination comes mostly from black Americans 'and the white people that here you call "rednecks". It's social class that accounts for it.'

In this way, the structural conditions affecting Hispanic newcomers and blacks in the rural south create a context in which Hispanics' interpersonal relations with blacks are more heavily shaped by symbolic – even if not actual – economic competition (Dunn, Aragonés, and Shivers 2005; Rich and Miranda 2005; McClain et al. 2007; Marrow 2008). Hispanic and white respondents signalled this as a main reason why blacks are responding poorly to Hispanics:

Nina: There is a lot of black–Hispanic tension, and I've heard a lot about it. There's some bad feelings on the part of African American students when Hispanic students start doing very well, which a lot of them already are …
Interviewer: Jealousy, you mean?
Nina: Yes. Like I know one little [Hispanic] girl who was doing really well in school, and she was beaten up by a black student in school. I really do think there is some jealousy. Of African American students feeling that these people are not even from here, they are only recently arrived, they don't even speak the language. And here they are, and doing better only after a little bit of time. They are doing well. And that's hard on African Americans. And I kind of see the same tension with the adults. The feeling of jealousy of having these people be new, being undocumented, not being from this country, and having their jobs.

In such competitive situations, negative tensions between minority groups carry great potential for misinterpretation as group rejection (Rockquemore 2002), or even discrimination (Kasinitz et al. 2008), such as when a light-skinned, college-educated, undocumented Colombian respondent working in a textile mill in Bedford county said, 'I feel the blacks don't like us. And that it is worse than with the whites', or when a poor, dark-skinned, undocumented Guatemalan respondent working in a food processing plant in Wilcox county said that 'the black race does not like Hispanics very much because they think that we are taking away their jobs', reporting that this thing 'you could even call racism, right?' made him feel 'humiliated' and 'made fun of' by some blacks. In turn, these perceptions of competition-induced 'discrimination' can foster resentment, stereotyping, and distancing against blacks.

Second, Hispanic newcomers perceived 'discrimination' most strongly in terms of what Kim (1999) calls a *horizontal (non)citizen-ship axis*, along which *both white and black natives* can mark and ostracize them as undeserving civic and cultural 'outsiders', and secondarily in terms of a *vertical skin colour axis*, along which *white*

natives can mark them as racially inferior. That is, when Hispanic respondents spoke of prejudice and discrimination, they did so mostly in terms of nonracial exclusion (along lines such as English language ability, class status, personal appearance, nativity, real or presumed legal status, and so forth), and secondarily in terms of racial exclusion. Often respondents even identified their physical features or skin colours as significant insofar as they serve to denote civic and cultural outsiderness. For example, many reported being stopped by law enforcement officials for 'driving while Mexican'; they understood that these officials identify them as 'Hispanic' according to their physical appearance, yet this is because their 'Hispanic' features have been racialized *in association with* probable undocumented status, which ostracizes them as undeserving 'foreigners'. As Jiménez (2008) argues, in an era of unprecedented Latin American immigration, race is significant in Hispanic newcomers' lives partially due to the direct (for immigrants) and indirect (for later generations) effects of nativism.

Furthermore, Hispanic respondents often perceived blacks to be worse perpetrators of this horizontal exclusion. Merced and Octavio, a medium-skinned, working-class, undocumented immigrant couple from Sinaloa, Mexico, expressed frustration with blacks who 'ignore' them when they attempt to speak English, relative to whites who 'help' more:

Merced: Even though some blacks do understand you, they say they don't. Sometimes I go up to our English teacher, and I'll ask him, 'How do you say X thing?' And he says, 'You say it like this.' And then I say it back to him like he said it to me, and he tells me, 'Yes, you've got it!' So I ask him, 'How come some black people tell me they don't understand what I am saying to them?'

Octavio: Almost the majority of *gringos* ask me to talk, and they will try to understand me. And they help me. However, there are other people who make fun of you. There is some difference [between whites and blacks] there.

Like Merced and Octavio, other Hispanic respondents perceived that whites are more 'open-minded' toward them and their 'foreign' cultures than blacks, whom they perceived as 'staying more separate' and excluding Hispanics more strongly. Raquel, a poor, medium-skinned, 1.5-generation undocumented immigrant from Tegucigalpa, Honduras, who dropped out of her high school in Tennessee after the tenth grade, recalled severe rejection by black schoolmates who ostracized her for her 'foreign' dress and personal appearance, compared to whites, who came to form her close circle of friends. Laura, a medium-skinned, lower-working-class immigrant

from Chihuahua, Mexico, thought that there is 'more communication and common interests' between Hispanics and whites than blacks, because 'whites try to strike up more conversation with Hispanics' in order to get to know more about them and their backgrounds, while 'blacks, well, not as much'. Even when Hispanics did not perceive whites as 'open-minded', they did not necessarily see blacks as more so. Eugenio, a poor, dark-skinned, 1.5-generation undocumented immigrant from Oaxaca, Mexico, thought that while whites ostracize Hispanics as 'dirty' and undeserving foreigners, blacks do so even more strongly. Here Eugenio tapped not only into the acute threat of socioeconomic disenfranchisement that lower-class African Americans feel in the face of rising immigration, but also into their sense that they, like whites, are the kind of real 'Americans' that Hispanics are not:

Eugenio: They always look at you and say, 'He doesn't speak English.' Because I've been in restaurants and had black people sitting next to me, or white people. And they just keep on yapping ... 'Look at that. He's dirty. And all these Hispanics come and steal our jobs.' They'll sit there and keep on talking trash about you.

Interviewer: This talking trash – do you think Hispanics get it mostly from white or black Americans?

Eugenio: They get it mostly from blacks. Honestly, I don't know why. Like one time, during Hurricane Floyd, all the lights went out. And the Salvation Army, or the soldiers would come over here to Bedford Mobile Home Park with dump trucks. And they would drop clothes off here, or water, or canned foods. And I overheard a conversation that a black lady had. She said, 'You know, look at 'em. They come over here to our country, to our land, steal our jobs, steal our money. And now they even want to steal our needs [i.e. donated relief items]. Those needs are for us, the Americans.' They were saying this and that about us.

Why these Hispanic respondents perceived greater horizontal exclusion, sometimes interpreted as 'discrimination', from blacks than from whites is still unclear. Opinion data show lifelong southern blacks supporting *less* restrictive immigration policies and *less* exclusionary policies toward undocumented immigrants than lifelong southern whites; however, they also show lifelong southern blacks espousing more particularistic ideas about what it takes to be American than lifelong southern whites (Griffin and McFarland 2007, p. 13), and blacks exhibiting greater concern about undocumented immigrants

than whites in Virginia (Vallas and Zimmerman 2007). Opinion data from Durham, North Carolina also show that blacks exhibit *fewer* negative stereotypes of Hispanic immigrants than vice versa (McClain et al. 2006), which may be consistent with my observation that blacks in eastern North Carolina were not aware of how exclusively Hispanics perceived them to be acting. Perhaps blacks are unaware of how they are treating Hispanics poorly along nonracial lines – particularly if the characteristics associated with noncitizenship, rather than aligning Hispanics and blacks together as 'collective blacks' at the bottom of the regional racial hierarchy, exacerbate feelings of competition instead? Or perhaps Hispanics' anti-black stereotypes or observations of whites' stigmatization of blacks are flavouring their interpretations of whites and blacks' behaviours, leading them to judge those of blacks as more harsh?

Regardless, Hispanic newcomers perceived negative treatment from blacks in 2003–4 and described it as 'unexpected', in contrast to perceiving more 'surprisingly' pleasant relations with whites, especially when they were prepared to encounter significant discrimination from them. Something that surprised Inés, a light-skinned, middle-class, undocumented immigrant from Medellín, Colombia, was discrimination by blacks against Hispanics, not by whites against either blacks or Hispanics. And despite having heard about the KKK and anti-immigrant vigilante activity on the US–Mexico border before migrating, Mauro, a poor, dark-skinned undocumented immigrant from Guatemala City, reported being most surprised by a black coworker who refused to return his smiles and greetings each morning at work. In contrast, 'From what I have gotten to know of white Americans, they have always been very friendly. I have never felt any discrimination from them.' These perceptions of horizontal exclusion by African Americans can, like those arising from economically induced competition, foster resentment, stereotyping, and distancing in return.

Conclusion

This analysis lends preliminary support to a black/nonblack colour line model in the region where African American populations are the largest and the racial binary has reigned supreme. To be clear, my data do not show that Hispanic newcomers' interactions with blacks in the rural south are always conflict-ridden, nor those with whites always smooth. My data also do not show that Hispanics have yet become 'whites'. Strong linguistic, cultural, and racial boundaries continue to separate the two groups, and discrimination by whites is indeed harming Hispanics' wellbeing in fundamental ways. What my data do show, however, is how and why a subjective black/nonblack colour line might emerge *despite* persisting gaps between the material positions of

whites and Hispanics. Despite them, Hispanics, including many poor, dark-skinned, and undocumented Mexican and Central American labour migrants, are neither self-identifying as nor perceiving that they are treated equally to 'collective blacks' in everyday lived experience. Moreover, through a combination of factors – their own anti-black stereotypes, observations of whites' unique stigmatization of blacks, and (mis)perceptions of 'discrimination' by blacks – many Hispanics have come to perceive the social distance separating themselves from whites as more permeable than that separating themselves from blacks, and are engaging in distancing strategies that may reinforce this distinction.

Thus, my findings offer weakest support, at least during this early stage, for a white/nonwhite colour line model in which distinctions among nonwhites appear less salient than those between whites and all nonwhites. They also offer tentatively weak support for a triracial colour line model in which dark-skinned, poor, and undocumented Hispanic newcomers all become 'collective blacks', perceiving greater distance from whites than blacks irrespective of African ancestry. Clearly skin colour, class, and noncitizenship do matter to Hispanic newcomers' racial incorporation in the rural south. Nonetheless, their influences still operate within a 'nonblack' zone that exhibits greater overall distance from blackness than from whiteness, suggesting that African ancestry may continue to play the dominant role in determining where the most salient boundary in rural southern society lies, as the black/nonblack model predicts.

Of course, I have painted a picture of racial incorporation during an early stage of immigration, and appropriate caution is needed when moving the research agenda forward. Racialization processes depend on a multitude of factors, and intergroup relations stemming from them have been shown to vary across both place and time (Montejano 1987). Thus, more research is needed to determine how stable the patterns that I have uncovered in eastern North Carolina are and how applicable they may be to places elsewhere in the south. This will be especially important in places which have larger middle-class African American and Hispanic communities, since poverty and lower-class status are central in fueling black–Hispanic tensions, and in places which have smaller black populations, since the boundary separating whites from all other groups may appear more salient in places with smaller minority populations.

More research is also needed to understand how the patterns that I have uncovered in eastern North Carolina might develop over time, particularly as immigration continues and anti-immigrant sentiments sharpen. Perhaps these trends will lead first-generation Hispanic immigrants (especially ones who are dark-skinned, poor, or undocumented) to perceive greater discrimination from whites – particularly if

they perceive blacks to begin exhibiting more solidarity and empathy rather than exclusion in the context of everyday interactions (and not just in elite coalition-building projects) than they did in 2003–4. But perhaps these trends may also exacerbate tensions between first-generation Hispanic immigrants and blacks, by increasing perceptions of economic and symbolic threat and the salience of noncitizenship more generally.

Future research can also examine how US-born Hispanics in the region identify and perceive their relations with whites and blacks. Evidence suggests that 'second-generation' children of Latin American immigrants come to view 'race' and race relations differently than their first-generation parents, generally exhibiting greater perceptions of discrimination by whites and more favourable attitudes toward blacks. In my research, all of the eighteen US-born Hispanic respondents (with the exception of one who has African ancestry) identified as something 'nonblack', and few reported significantly better relations with blacks than did foreign-born respondents. Furthermore, the 1.5-generation Hispanic youth I interviewed expressed acute perceptions of discrimination from blacks, often in the context of negative experiences attending American middle and high schools. Therefore, 1.5- and second-generation status did not appear to significantly blur the boundary separating blacks and Hispanics, at least in 2003–4. However, further research on the experiences of Hispanic youth coming of age in a context of greater anti-immigrant sentiment will help contextualize these findings. And further research comparing the experiences of US-born Hispanics *with* versus *without African ancestry* will help clarify the specific role that African ancestry, relative to skin colour, class, and legal status, may come to play in the long-term racial incorporation of Hispanics in the rural south.

Notes

1.   The US Census defines Hispanics/Latinos as all 'persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race' or where they were born.

2.   Legal status for N =6 foreign-born respondents was unspecified.

3.   The former also identified more strongly as whites in 2000 Census data than the latter, at the national and state levels (weighted IPUMS data, author's analysis).

4.   In the 2000 Census members of *all* Latin American immigrant groups in North Carolina identified more strongly as whites and 'other race' than blacks. The only two groups with high rates of black identification (Panamanians at 19.0 per cent and Dominicans at 10.5 per cent) make up a small portion of North Carolina's Hispanic population (weighted IPUMS data, author's analysis).

5.   Some Hispanic respondents reported that blacks do *not* discriminate against Hispanics as strongly as whites do, saying that blacks empathize with discrimination and harbour their resentment toward whites, not Hispanics. Here I focus on Hispanic respondents who did

report discrimination by blacks due to its importance in structuring their intergroup boundary.

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