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The Language of Multiple Identities among Dominican Americans

As a group whose members are Hispanic, American, and largely of African descent, Dominican Americans must negotiate distinctive issues of identity in the United States. Language is central to these negotiations, both as a symbol of identity and as a medium through which to construct and display local social meanings. Dominican Americans use linguistic forms from multiple varieties of two codes, Spanish and English, to situationally activate various facets of their multiple identities. This multivariety linguistic and interactional construction of identities undermines implicit assumptions of uniformity and essentialism in U.S. linguistic and ethnic/racial categories, particularly in the construction of the category "African American."

The language and identities of Dominican second-generation high school students in Providence, Rhode Island, reflect a social reality of growing up in Dominican families with Dominican social networks, but residing and going to school in a low-income, multiethnic U.S. inner city. As a group whose members are both Hispanic *and* largely of African descent, Dominican Americans must negotiate distinctive issues of identity in the United States.¹ Up to 90 percent of Dominicans have sub-Saharan African ancestry (Haggerty 1991) that would make them African American by historical U.S. "one-drop" rules of racial classification (Davis 1991). Dominican Americans, however, do not think of themselves as "black," but rather as "Dominican," "Spanish," or "Hispanic," and their Spanish language makes this ethnolinguistic identity situationally salient to outsiders. Everyday enactment of a Dominican American identity thus involves negotiating multiple and conflicting ascriptions of identity and resisting U.S. black-white racial categorization, a fundamental form of

social organization in the United States (Omi and Winant 1994; cf. Rodríguez 1994; Smedley 1993).

Second generation language alternates among linguistic forms drawn from varieties of Dominican Spanish, African American English, local English sociolects, and hybrid forms resulting from contact among these varieties. Members of the second generation use these diverse linguistic resources to situationally align themselves with, and differentiate themselves from, European Americans, African Americans, and even other Dominicans. This situational, linguistic enactment of identity challenges received social categories such as "black," "white," and "Hispanic," and undermines the essentialized assumptions on which they are based. Dominican American enactment of ethnolinguistic identity highlights contradictions in the category "African American" particularly clearly because African American *race* and African American *ethnicity* have historically and popularly been treated as one-and-the-same (Waters 1991).

Many members of the second generation in Providence identify strongly with African American peers, with whom they share a structural position characterized by low-income,² segregated neighborhoods, substandard schools, and nonwhite/African-descent phenotype ascription. This affiliation is reflected and reconstituted in part through extensive adoption of lexical and syntactic forms from African American English, which serves many young Dominican Americans as a language of resistance to dominant disparaging discourses, just as it does for many African American youth (e.g., Morgan 1994a). At the same time, however, the Dominican second generation emphasize that they are "not black." In contrast to non-Hispanic second-generation immigrants of African descent (Bryce-Laporte 1972; Waters 1994; Woldemikael 1989), members of the Dominican second generation do not identify themselves in terms of phenotype—as African American or black—but, rather, in terms of language—as "Spanish." The many second-generation Dominicans who are phenotypically indistinguishable from African Americans, for example, "speak Spanish" in order to counter others' assumptions that they are African American. Dominican ethnic/racial identity in the second generation is simultaneously a "reactive ethnicity"—in which significant aspects of identity are a reaction to being defined as a minority in a hierarchical U.S. society—and "linear ethnicity"—in which identity is based on continuation of linguistic and cultural practices from the Dominican Republic (cf. Portes 1995).

In this article I explore how Dominican Americans use language to construct and make sense of their social identities, focusing on boundaries that are situationally activated between in-group and out-group. The term *identity* comes from Latin, *idem*, meaning "the same." Identities are constituted by socially counting as "the same" as others or counting as "different" from others. All individuals have multiple characteristics and allegiances, so it is the situational and selective highlighting of commonalities and differences—rather than the existence of underlying, essential natures—that is characteristic of identity groupings (Barth 1969; Evans-Pritchard 1940; Moerman 1965).

Cohen (1978:387) emphasizes that there are multiple levels at which commonality or difference can be constructed or activated. He defines *ethnicity* as "a series of nesting dichotomizations of inclusiveness and exclusiveness" that are activated at different levels at different times:

Group A can be labeled A in relation to B, C, and D. But among themselves, A people are keenly aware of subgroup differences in which groups X, Y, and Z all understand the ethnic distinctions among themselves and the possibility of greater or lesser differences in the future, depending on a large range of factors. [1978:388]

Analysis of identity thus revolves around the questions of how, when, and why individuals count as members of particular groups. Analysis of language and naturally occurring discourse is a means to understanding how individuals, as social actors, highlight social boundaries and activate facets of identity.

In this article I focus on the boundaries that are activated between in-group and out-group at three nested levels of specificity. First, I show how Dominican Americans use language to enact a specifically nonwhite identity, that includes extensive adoption of African American Vernacular English forms and mocking use of white English forms. Many Dominican Americans experience significant solidarity with other low-income, nonwhite youth, particularly African Americans and other Hispanic immigrants. Both second generation Dominicans and other Americans see Dominicans as *nonwhite*, and Dominican American language both reflects and reconstitutes this white/nonwhite boundary.

Second, I illustrate how Dominicans linguistically claim a distinct "non-black" Spanish/Dominican identity—made evident through Spanish use and represented by the ethnolinguistic label "Spanish"—that differentiates them from other African-descent Americans. Although Dominican Americans situationally align themselves with African Americans—as nonwhites—they also see themselves as distinct from African Americans, and they situationally highlight this distinction.

Finally, I illustrate a way that Dominican immigrants situationally highlight boundaries among themselves. Dominican teenagers raised in the United States see themselves as different from more recently immigrated Dominican teenagers (cf. Zentella 1990 among New York and island Puerto Ricans), and differences in language practices between U.S. and Dominican-raised individuals can serve to highlight these differences. Language can function as an emblem of identity—for example, as in the common Dominican usage of the term *Spanish* as an ascription of ethnic/racial identity—but it is also a tool used to instantiate multiple, shifting alignments and oppositions that are situationally activated or backgrounded *vis-à-vis* other individuals or groups. Individuals use multiple Spanish and English resources to activate aspects of identities in ways that belie reified dichotomies, monolithic identities, and the one-to-one correspondences between linguistic code and social affiliation that have been emphasized in some research on language and ethnicity (e.g., Fishman 1989).

Methods

Fieldwork for this study took place in Providence, Rhode Island, and the Dominican Republic between July 1996 and July 1997. Data collection methods included ethnographic observation, audio-recorded interviews, and video-recording of naturally occurring interaction in school, home, and community contexts.

Transcripts of naturally occurring interaction in this article come from videorecordings made of students from Central High School, a Providence city school of 1,350 students that is over twenty percent Dominican. Roughly 60 percent of the student body is Hispanic, with Puerto Ricans and Guatemalans comprising the second- and third-largest Hispanic groups. About 16 percent of the students are non-Hispanic African descent, 16 percent are Southeast Asian, primarily first- and second-generation Cambodian and Laotian refugees, and about 5 percent are white American. Central is one of four major high schools in the city of Providence system that tracks its high-achieving students into one academic-magnet school. Central has the problems typical of many inner-city public schools. Almost 90 percent of the students are categorized as poor based on federal guidelines, and more than half of the students officially enrolled in the ninth grade drop out by the 11th grade.

Six principle subjects, aged 16 to 18, were repeatedly observed and interviewed, and were videorecorded throughout a school day and in one non-school context. Selected segments were transcribed in detail following conversation analytic conventions (Heritage and Atkinson 1984; see Appendix A). Bilingual Dominican American consultants, including the six principal subjects, aided in the transcription and translation of talk and offered interpretations and explanations of interactions.

Multiple Dominican Identities and Heteroglossic Language

Social and linguistic categories, for example, "African American," "white," "Spanish," and "English" suggest uniformity, masking internal variation and the diachronic change that is characteristic of both available social categories (e.g., Lee 1993) and language (e.g., Thomason and Kaufman 1988). Although the label "Dominican American" similarly suggests a degree of uniformity, the range of identities enacted by Dominican Americans, and the explicit heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981) of their language, embody and recreate a social world that undermines assumptions of unitary categories particularly clearly.

Dominican American social allegiances and ascriptions vary both by individual and situationally. In the following utterances, for example, U.S. born María identifies herself explicitly in many different ways: as American (1), Hispanic (8), black (2), Spanish (2, 3), a New York girl (4), from the Southside of Providence (5), 100 percent Dominican (6), Dominican-Puerto Rican (7), descended primarily from ancestors from Spain (8), and "very white" in color (9). The variation in these self-ascriptions illustrates the way

that seemingly contradictory facets of identity coexist within individuals and can be situationally invoked or highlighted:

1. People who come from DR think it's gonna be easy here, but it's gonna be more difficult. And us Americans, we know what you have to go through. [Regarding overblown expectations of life and wealth in the United States among new immigrants and would-be migrants.]
2. I always say that Spanish people are black. [In terms of the U.S. black/white dichotomy, Hispanics do not count as white, so they are grouped with Blacks.]
3. You have anything to tell me, you tell me here. I'm Spanish, but that don't mean you're perfect than me. [María is recounting the words she used in a confrontation with a discriminatory white student at a Catholic school she attended.]
4. I'm from New York, and New York girls, New York people . . . if you say anything, they're going to come up to you and they're going to hit you. They're too rough, that's the way I am. My mom says, "You're too rough." I say, "Lady, I come from New York, how do you expect me to be?" [Discussing her confrontational style for dealing with white Americans she suspects of discrimination.]
5. I'm from Southside. [Saying she's from the Southside of Providence at a Providence church youth group meeting.]
6. I'm still Dominican, no matter what. I could have a green passport. "Are you Dominican?" "Yes." "Are you 100 percent?" "Yeah, I'm 100 percent." [In discussing the fact that she has a blue U.S. passport rather than a red Dominican one]
7. Sometimes I say I'm like "Mud." *Mud* means Dominican-Puerto Rican. [Her estranged biological father has one parent who was originally from Puerto Rico.]
8. When we go to restaurants to eat, we Hispanics, everybody look at us like weird. I just look at them right back. [Describing discrimination by white Americans that she and her family face.]
9. 'Cause like my family, most of them from Spain . . . and my mom she's *dark*, but my mother's not *dark*, she's light. Like this [indicating her arm], this is only a tan, but I'm very white, very white, I'm almost as white, I think I'm almost whiter than you [the white researcher]. I don't know. I was a white baby. My sister, the little one, she's very white. My brother, he's whiter than me. [Describing to the researcher the range of phenotypes characteristic of Dominicans.]

These multiple self-ascriptions reflect just some facets of identity—those related to ethnic/racial identity and sociogeographical allegiances—that one individual Dominican American can invoke over a short period of time. Their range suggests the complexity and sometimes contradictory nature of forces influencing the way Dominican Americans define themselves. Although María calls herself "American" in differentiating herself from newly arriving Dominican immigrants with naive expectations of America, she considers herself "100 percent Dominican." At the same time that she defines Hispanics—and herself by extension—as "black" in terms of U.S. racial hierarchy, she draws attention to her light skin and claims predominantly Spanish ancestry, both of which are prestigious in traditional Dominican circles (Davis 1994).

The multiple and multifaceted identities of Dominican Americans are reflected and reconstituted through their broad linguistic repertoire (Gumperz 1964). The linguistic resources comprising Dominican American language are not monolithic codes of English and Spanish, but include forms drawn

from multiple varieties of each, e.g., Standard Providence English, Non-Standard Providence English (e.g., "yous guys"), African American Vernacular English (e.g., "He be working"), Standard Dominican Spanish, and Regional Non-Standard Dominican Spanish (e.g., /*puelta*/ for *puerta* "door" and /*poike*/ for *porque* "why") (cf. Zentella 1993, 1997 among New York Puerto Ricans). Dominican American language includes both the alternation of forms associated with diverse varieties and also the use of distinct, convergent forms resulting from language contact, for example, word and phrasal calques (Otheguy et al. 1989) and syntactic transference and convergence (Clyne 1967, 1987). These categories of forms are discrete from an etic, analytical perspective, but in the communicative practices of Dominican Americans, these features form part of a seamless whole.

The variety of linguistic forms used by Dominican Americans in Providence, and their unmarked juxtaposition in everyday interaction, provide a window into Dominican American social reality. All language, including that of monolinguals, is heteroglot, shot through with multiple and competing sociohistorical voices and ideologies (Bakhtin 1981). However, this heteroglossia is particularly salient in the language of Dominican Americans. There are two main reasons for this: 1) Dominican Americans draw forms from grammatical codes that count as distinct languages and from varieties with implications of stark social difference, for example, African American Vernacular English (hereafter AAVE) and American English; and 2) use of these forms is not tied to domains in one-to-one fashion (Fishman et al. 1971). Explicitly heteroglossic Dominican American language practices both reflect and help reconstitute the Dominican American *repertoire of identities* (Kroskrity 1993). Single utterances or short exchanges that include forms with diverse provenances index the multiple social forces and processes, for example, immigration, regional Dominican origins, economic class, and U.S. racial/ethnic formation processes, that inform aspects of the identities of Dominican Americans in Providence.

The following transcript documents some of the juxtaposition of linguistic features of the language used by Dominican American high school students in everyday intragroup interaction:

10. [(JS #2 12:26:40) Isabella and Janelle are sitting on steps outside of the main school building at the end of their lunch period. Isabella has returned from eating lunch at a diner near the school, and she has been describing the generous size of the turkey club sandwich she has just eaten.]

J: Only with that turkey thingee // *ya yo (es)toy llena*.
"I'm already full"

I: //Two dollars and fifty cent.

J: That's good. That's like a meal at //Burger King.

I: //That's better than going to Burger King, you know what I'm saying? And you got a Whopper, french fries, //and a drink. And =

J: //Yeah

I: = the french fries cost a dollar over there.

J: For real?

- I: *Sí, sí ¿Cómo no?*
 "Yes, really."
- J: *Mirale el ombligo. Miralo. Se le ve, ya se lo tapó.* ((looking at a passerby))
 "Look at her belly button. Look. You can see it, she already covered it."
 (.5)
- I: *Seguro porque se lo enseñó.* ((laughing))
 "She must have showed it."
 (1.5)
- J: // ()
- I: // But it's slamming, though, oh my God, mad ["a lot of"] turkey she puts in there.
- J: That's one thing I l-, I love the way *como l-* =
- I: 'how th-'
- J: = the American ["white Americans"] be doing sandwich, they be rocking ["are excellent"], them things, yo, they put everything up in there, yo.

This segment of transcript illustrates several aspects of the multivariety language of Dominican Americans. The exchange is primarily in English, which is typical of the interactions among English-dominant Dominican Americans that I observed and recorded, but it includes distinctive alternation of forms indexing a Dominican American identity. Most salient of these, perhaps, is the alternation between English and Spanish in code switching. Isabella and Janelle use Spanish phrases (*ya yo estoy llena* and *como l-*) in turns that are otherwise in English, and some of their turns are entirely in Spanish (e.g., *Sí, sí ¿Cómo no?*).

Janelle and Isabella are also using a third grammatical variety in this exchange, African American Vernacular English (AAVE). In the stretch of speech *the American be doing sandwich, they be rocking them things, yo* Janelle uses grammatical structures unique to AAVE. She uses the AAVE habitual "be" to capture the recurring way white Americans make sandwiches (*the American be making sandwich*) and the ongoing, excellent character of those sandwiches (*they be rocking*). This habitual "be" is one of the most researched features of AAVE (Labov 1972, Morgan 1994b), and it is a component of the tense/aspect system of AAVE that sociolinguists use to define AAVE (Labov 1980). A second form characteristic of AAVE that both Janelle and Isabella use is plural nouns without overt plural marking (Baugh 1983:95). Janelle elides the /s/ and /'s/ in *American* and *sandwich*, respectively, while Isabella elides the /s/ in *cents*. (Further AAVE forms used by Dominican Americans will be discussed in a separate section below.)

In addition to using syntax associated with Spanish, standard American English, and AAVE, Janelle and Isabella use lexical items and expressions that some scholars have defined as AAVE (e.g., Smitherman 1994) and that are popularly associated with the speech of urban, African American youth. Isabella uses the adjectives *slamming* ("great") and *mad* ("a lot of") and the expression *you know what I'm saying* (described by Smitherman [1994:151] as a "call for a response from the listener"), while Janelle uses the verb *rocking* ("to be great") and the interjection *yo*, which has crossed over from its AAVE origins to the wider population.

Constellations of linguistic features that are officially authorized as codes or languages, e.g., “English” or “Spanish,” are often implicitly treated as if they were of monolithic, uniform character in the context of bilingualism. This veils the diversity of linguistic resources available to speakers within codes. The English that Isabella and Janelle use in the exchange above, for example, includes prescriptivist standard American English forms, nonstandard vernacular forms, lexical forms associated with AAVE, and grammatical forms that occur only in AAVE, indexing a particular urban U.S. background. Their Spanish similarly indexes particular linguistic histories. Their pronunciation of word-initial *y* as an affricate /dZ/ (e.g., in *ya yo*), and their elision of syllable final /s/ (e.g., in *e[slto]*), for example, are characteristic of Caribbean Spanish, particularly Dominican and lower class varieties (Alba 1995; Lipski 1994). Variation among forms within officially authorized codes has social implications—as does code switching—both as a reflection of social identity and as an expanded set of linguistic resources that members can use to enact their identities.

As a result of language contact, Dominican American language also includes novel forms, the result of, e.g., syntactic transference (Clyne 1967) or convergence (Clyne 1987; Gumperz and Wilson 1971), and forms used in novel ways, for example, calques. Forms used above by Isabella suggest the influence of Spanish discourse patterns on her English. She proposes the direct object of the verb in this segment in what has been called fronting, focal object construction (Silva-Corvalán 1983:135), or focus-movement (Prince 1981). (DO = Direct Object; S = Subject; V = Verb):

11. mad turkey she puts in there
DO S V

In Spanish such preverbal objects can serve various discourse functions, depending in part on intonation contour (Silva-Corvalán 1983). Use of this preverbal-object structure in English allows Isabella to highlight her point—the large amount of turkey put on her sandwich—in a linguistically creative way.

The variety and juxtaposition of linguistic resources by Janelle and Isabella in the above exchange reflect their specific life experiences and aspects of their social world. The alternation of English and Spanish reflects their dual socialization as does Isabella’s use of a characteristically Spanish discourse pattern. Their use of forms associated with urban African American youth—particularly Janelle’s use of AAVE syntax—suggests longer-term contact with African Americans and identification with African American experiences. Janelle’s use of the term *American* to mean “white people” indicates that she identifies herself with reference to another nation-state and in terms of racial/ethnic categories in which she doesn’t count as “American.”³ The juxtaposition of these diverse linguistic elements in single utterances (e.g., I love the way *como l-* the American be doing sandwich) reflects and instantiates a social reality in which both linguistic practices and social identities fit poorly into received, unitary categories of language and identity.

Dichotomization #1: Linguistic Enactment of Nonwhite Identity

In societies such as the United States that are stratified by class and race/ethnicity, language is a means to understanding how hierarchies are imposed, resisted, and reproduced. Over the last decades, numerous theorists (e.g., Bourdieu 1977; Williams 1977) have argued that it is not just physical control over the means of production (*pace* Marx) and direct coercion that gives dominant groups their power, but also control over culturally constructed representations of social reality. Language, as the central medium through which social reality is represented and the social order (re)constituted, becomes a logical locus for the study of the exercise of dominance and resistance. By controlling ways of thinking about the social world, including language, dominant groups can co-opt, and in a sense, gain a degree of consent from the dominated. Bourdieu coined the term "symbolic domination" while Williams borrowed Gramsci's term of "cultural hegemony," to describe how subordinate groups, to a degree, implicitly accept as legitimate the power of dominant groups.

Although dominant groups rule partially with the consent of subordinated groups, such groups also *resist* this domination. They thus contest dominant, naturalized versions of reality and definitions that are applied to them, at least in some contexts. Through such resistance, oppressed groups gain some control over local representations of reality.

The notion of resistance is useful for understanding the language practices of both dominant and subordinated groups, and linking language use to social hierarchy. Despite the prestige implicitly and explicitly accorded dominant varieties of language, for example, linguistic ethnographic work in nondominant ethnic/racial/class communities invariably reveals that members use forms that are disparaged by dominant groups, and that members ridicule or censure members who use forms associated with dominant groups (e.g., Basso 1979; Gal 1979; Labov 1972; Milroy 1987). The prestige accorded sociopolitically dominant varieties of language is not the only social force affecting selection of linguistic forms. Although the varieties favored by the dominant groups are popularly seen as "standard" or "correct" (Milroy and Milroy 1985) and have high status in institutional contexts, the differing varieties used by disparaged groups mark and reproduce local *solidarity* in the face of disparagement (e.g., Ferguson and Gumperz 1960; Gal 1989:354; Woolard 1985). The linguistic implications of opposing forces of 1) *solidarity* and 2) *status* were summarized succinctly by Ferguson and Gumperz:

First: any group of speakers of language X that regards itself as a close social unit will tend to express its group solidarity by favoring those linguistic innovations that set it apart from other speakers who are not part of the group . . .

On the other hand: other things being equal, if two speakers A and B of a language X communicate in language X and if A regards B as having more prestige than himself and aspires to equal B's status, then the variety of X spoken by A will tend towards identity with that spoken by B. [1960:9, underlining removed]

The notion of resistance/solidarity can explain significant aspects of Dominican American language, linking multiple aspects of their language to the identity issues they face as low-income, African-descent, Hispanic immigrants raised in an urban U.S. context. Many Dominican Americans see themselves as ethnic/racial minorities in a hierarchical, white-dominated society, and they experience significant solidarity with African Americans and other nonwhites with whom they share a structural position in the United States.

Dominican Americans' understandings of themselves as nonwhite is regularly reinforced in everyday interactions with both white and nonwhite Americans. Many in the second generation, for example, find themselves explicitly categorized by others in the same social categories as African Americans, regardless of individual differences in phenotype. María and Nanette, for example, had attended predominantly African American and Hispanic schools before briefly attending Catholic schools that were primarily white, and they gave similar accounts of their treatment by white students at those schools. Although neither reported being mistaken for African American—Nanette describes her skin color as *india clara* 'light indian-colored',⁴ and María describes hers to the researcher as "very white"—both found themselves grouped with African Americans—and deprecated—by white students and teachers:

12. ["BB" is Benjamin Bailey, the researcher]

Nanette: I didn't want to have problems, I lasted the whole year and I didn't have problems because I refrained myself . . . there was just a bunch of comments. If you were in the lunch line or something, they would start talking in the back saying, "Oh, why is that black girl in front of me?" stupid comments but they still get to you. The minorities in that school were all limited [in number]. . . . I knew every black girl and every Spanish girl there.

BB: They called you black?

Nanette: Black or Spanish, to them it's all the same thing, I think. 'Cause that's the way they refer.

13. BB: When you think of white Americans, what comes to your mind?

María: I went to Catholic school, I didn't really mix with white people, it was like they look at me like weird, like I'm Dominican, Spanish. "Oh, we have a Spanish girl, she's black." I always say that Spanish people are black. These white girls, they're like, "Look at these Dominican girls, those Spanish black girls" this and that . . . in America, there's only white and black, that's the only colors we have. Spanish people are considered black, that's the way they consider us, black. I think Asians is white. I just know Spanish is considered black. 'Cause I asked my social studies teacher, she said, "Yeah, Spanish are considered black."

Language is a primary means of marking and reproducing these social boundaries between white and nonwhite Americans, and many Dominican Americans explicitly link styles of language to social identities. Richard, who had extensive contact with white Americans at his predominantly white academic magnet school, highlights language as an identity marker:

14. BB: What are your associations with white Americans?

Richard: They talk different. They're just like different, they talk different.

Like maybe the Spanish and black, they use like the street language, they use a lot of slang. Some whites, not all, most of them they don't do that . . . I don't know how to explain it. Like if you listen to two white kids talking, it'll be different than a black kid and a black kid or two Spanish. Like they'll be using, they'll say like "Aw, that homework assignment is wack, I don't wanna do that." The white kid will be like, "I didn't like that homework assignment." You see that a lot.

Language associated with white identities nearly always carries marked, metaphorical meanings when used in interaction among Dominicans and nonwhite peers. Dominican American teenagers report, for example, that they are censured for "talking white":

15. BB: What would happen if you talked that way [like white Americans]? What would your friends say?

Carlos: They would laugh at me. . . . They'd be like, why, do you think you're white, and they'll be like that, or just call me a sell-out.

Rosa, who also attended the predominantly white college-preparatory high school, and reported feeling relatively at ease with white Americans, noted that she had to be careful to switch communicative styles as she interacted with members of different ethnic/racial groups because of the threat of censure:

16. BB: Do white kids see you as white when you hang out with them?

Rosa: That's definitely something that you're scared to do, scared to get too close to white people, because then your culture is going to say that you want to be white. "No, no, I don't want to be white, they're just my friends." "You too friendly with white people, you talk all nice." If you [don't switch styles] when you go back to your group, they'll notice it right away and back away from you. That's kind of what makes you feel uncomfortable if you want to associate with other cultures.

Even when individuals are able to use language to cross social boundaries, in-group sanctions can deter them from doing so, thus recreating the boundaries and reinforcing internal solidarity (Gal 1989:354).

Marked white English is used in intragroup interactions in a mocking, metaphorical sense to reconstitute white/nonwhite boundaries. In the following segment of transcript, Isabella uses white English for direct quotation, one of the functions commonly attributed to code switching (e.g., Gumperz 1982; Zentella 1997), to enact the words spoken to her by a white female on the telephone. Isabella thus produces words that are, in a sense, not her own, in a voice that is not her own. This form of female white English and the characteristics that it indexes are a source of amusement for Isabella and her classmates.

17. [(IN #2 12:09:05) Students are looking at fashion magazines during class when Isabella comes upon an advertisement for a clothing catalogue called *Girlfriends LA*. Vilei ("V") is a Laotian American friend.]

I: ((reading from magazine)) *Girlfriends LA*.

I: uu! Vilei! I called *Girlfriends LA* stuff.

V: And what'd they say?

I: //I just ordered-

- ?: //() girlfriend ()
 I: ((perky smile voice)) *_Hi!_ nuhnuhnuh.* Some girl talking there. I'm like
 ((bored, impatient)) "*yeah, yeah.*" Then I said I want to subscribe-

In this segment Isabella and classmates construct differences between themselves and a stereotype of a white female in Los Angeles. Although it is Isabella who contrasts the voice of this female with her own voice, it is an unidentified, nonwhite female classmate who prompts this use of a white voice. Isabella is initially responding to Vilei's first pair part with *I just ordered*—when this classmate says something (inaudible on the tape) that leads Isabella to give an account of the conversation. Isabella uses a relatively high-pitched, breathy voice to enact the voice of the *Girlfriends LA* representative. Several female consultants who had little contact with white Americans characterized female white English as the kind of talk one hears in television, citing the program *Beverly Hills 90210* in particular. After enacting the representative's delivery, Isabella further distances herself from the representative, characterizing her as an anonymous, distant individual, *some girl there*. Isabella's direct quotation of her own speech is in a locally unmarked variety of English, and emphasizes her impatience with the speaker on the other end of the telephone. Isabella is using language to mark a linguistic and social boundary between herself and a stereotype of a young, white Los Angeles female. This mocking use of white English, that was triggered by a classmate's turn, thus serves to mark solidarity between Isabella and her low-income, nonwhite classmates and index a nonwhite identity.

Enacting a Nonwhite Identity: Forms Associated with AAVE in the Speech of Dominican Americans

Dominican Americans in Providence regularly employ vocabulary, expressions, and grammar that are popularly associated with the speech of African Americans and that analysts have characterized as AAVE. These forms, in contrast to white English forms, are generally treated by Dominican American as unmarked in their speech. Even newly arriving Dominican teenagers with limited proficiency in English quickly adopt stock phrases with grammatical forms and vocabulary that are associated with AAVE, (e.g., *You wack* 'You are not cool/with it'), and the speech of many is replete with such terms. Alejandro's description to African American and Dominican American classmates of his cousin's lucrative work, for example, is filled with distinctive lexical items:

18. (LD #2 1:11:30) My cousin was clocking ["selling drugs"], yo. He left, yo. He got mad loot ["a lot of money"], though. Yo, my cousin sent mad money to DR ["the Dominican Republic"], yo, because he was clocking ["dealing drugs"]. And then like five-oh ["the police"], some guy snitched on all of them, that whole group.

Although hip-hop vocabulary has crossed over to teens of many social categories, distinctively AAVE syntax crosses over much less (Labov 1980). The use of AAVE syntactic forms in Dominican American English syntax reflects the extent of Dominican American contact with African Americans

and the prestige of these ways of speaking among low-income, urban, non-white youth. This local prestige can even lead to the adoption of AAVE out of proportion to the contact that Dominican Americans have with African American speakers of it (cf. Poplack 1988 on AAVE among Philadelphia Puerto Rican youth). At Central High School, only 16 percent of the students are of non-Hispanic African descent, and this figure includes first-generation African and Caribbean immigrants.

Perhaps the most frequent and salient syntactic feature of AAVE in the speech of Dominican Americans is the use of the habitual *be*. This uniquely AAVE form, that expresses a habitual or recurring activity or state, contrasts with simple present tense, for example:

19. [(JS #DP 14:25)]

BB: Is that a special outfit for dance practice?

J: I just wear something comfortable, because it's—cause it be hot in there.

In AAVE, the use of *it's* would suggest that it was only hot that evening, when in fact the asphalt backyard where they practiced dancing was recurrently hot. Dominican Americans use the habitual *be* both for activities (20) and for states (21):

20. [(WR #3 2:31) Discussing the local YMCA]

W: Go down there, man. I'm telling you, yo. I just be benching every day.

21. [(IN #1 9:16) Discussing a phone dating service.]

I: They leave messages on me, they be like "you received a message." I don't have to accept it, there be nasty ones too.

Many use habitual *be* across social contexts, e.g., both in peer interactions and in more formal settings that include white American adults such as teachers.

Dominican Americans use other distinctive tense/aspect features of AAVE, including deletion of the copula. Although copula deletion occurs less frequently and obtrusively than the habitual *be*, it occurs in a variety of grammatical environments, for example, as an auxiliary (22) and before predicate adjectives (23):

22. [(LD #2 11:10)]

L: Oh you slipping on me. ["Oh, you're engaging in sly behavior designed to mask your real intentions." (Smrutherford 1994:209)]

23. [(WR #1 10:25)]

W: Thirty dollars, she crazy, she gets more, yo.

The third person singular subject-verb agreement marker "-s", that can be elided in AAVE, is sometimes elided by Dominican Americans:

24. [(WR #1 15:00)]

W: She look like a witch.

A final salient syntactic feature of Dominican American speech that is incontrovertibly African American in origin is the stressed *bin*. The stressed

bin emphasizes the validity of an assertion or the irrefutable nature of a stated fact (Smitherman 1977:23):

25. [(JS #3 1:35:15) During class, a teacher had repeatedly asked an African American student next to Janelle to remove his walkman headphones. The student, with whom Janelle had been flirting, put them on again for the last part of class without the teacher's seeing him. He was wearing the headphones as he and Janelle walked past the teacher to leave class. The teacher asked if he had had the walkman on during class, which the student denied.]
26. Kai: I took it off.
 Teacher: You did?
 Kai: I just now put it on
 Janelle: No, he's lying! He *bin* had it on.

Janelle is arguing that it is an established fact, beyond doubt, that her classmate had been wearing the headphones for a period of time before getting up to leave the class.

These forms—habitual *be*, deletion of copula, elision of subject-verb agreement “-(e)s,” and use of stressed *bin* are defining characteristics of AAVE from a sociolinguistic point of view (Labov 1980), and they occur, some regularly, in the speech of Dominican Americans in Providence. Dominican Americans treat vocabulary and syntax that analysts can assign to the category AAVE as unmarked in their own speech, and when they use such words and structures, they do not see themselves as using any language other than their own. In this regard, the use of AAVE features by Dominican Americans is very different from the “crossing” described by Rampton (1995a, 1995b). Rampton describes language crossing as members of a group “code switching into varieties that are not generally thought to belong to them” (1995b:485). Most Dominican American teenagers in low-income neighborhoods in Providence do not speak a variety of English that is entirely discrete from the varieties spoken by local African American youth, so there is little sense of discrete ownership of many forms.

Dominican Americans thus highlight the boundary between themselves and white Americans through mocking use of white English and through use of AAVE forms. Use of AAVE has historically contributed to African American resistance to the hegemony of linguistic forms used by dominant groups in society, and these forms serve similar functions for young Dominican Americans.

Dichotomization #2: Spanish as Resistance to Phenotype-Based Racialization: “We All Speak Spanish, So We’re Spanish”

Dominican Americans’ use of AAVE has a paradoxical effect on their efforts to resist dominant discourses that misrepresent or disparage them. Although AAVE serves as a form of resistance to white denigration of non-whites, it makes many Dominican Americans increasingly subject to another U.S. form of symbolic domination: the black-white racial dichotomy.⁵ In the Dominican Republic, Dominicans consider their nationality, ethnicity, and race (*raza*) to be Dominican, and they do not generally think of themselves

as "black" or of significant African descent (Davis 1994:119; Del Castillo and Murphy 1987; Hoetink 1967; Moya Pons 1996). Dominican American teenagers in Providence, Rhode Island, also self-ascribe racial identities that are outside the historical U.S. black-white dichotomy. I surveyed Dominican Americans in Providence, and when asked "What is your *race*?", they answered "Dominican," "Hispanic," and "Latino," but never "black" or "white" (Bailey 2000b, in press).

In the United States, use of AAVE contributes to the force and frequency with which individuals are perceived as African American, not only by outsiders, but even by those Dominican Americans such as Janelle and Maritza who are themselves regularly taken to be African American:

27. BB: Some Dominicans look like they could be black Americans.

Janelle: They do, yo. Some kid in our school, that kid Kristin? He is so dark, I thought he was black. Then he talked to someone in Spanish, I was like—

28. BB: Who thinks you're black? White Americans, Dominicans . . . ?

Maritza: Black Americans. It's kind of, it's kind of different, because they should know their own people. I would know who's Dominican. Actually, no, there was this guy, he's Dominican, and I thought he was black. And then when I heard him speak Spanish, I was like, "He's Spanish! He's a Dominican."

Although intergroup adoption of linguistic forms often suggests sociopolitical solidarity, it seldom has the effects on racial group membership assumptions that it has among Dominican Americans. In Rampton's (1995a) "crossing," for example, South Asian, Afro-Caribbean, and white English youth in England use South Asian and Caribbean speech patterns that are devalued by the dominant society to display solidarity with each other. Rampton (1995b:508) suggests that individuals may be able to temporarily "inhabit" someone else's ethnicity through such use of linguistic forms believed to belong to the other person's social group and not one's own. For many Dominican Americans, in contrast, AAVE linguistic forms not only display a sociopolitical position or stance to others, but rather also suggest membership in an essentialized racial group. Many African-descent Dominican Americans who use AAVE are not seen as "temporarily inhabiting" African American identities, but rather as being African American.

Dominican Spanish language serves as a resource for resisting black-white dichotomization and ascription on several levels. In terms of identity ascription in everyday encounters, it is the primary means by which Dominican Americans display an ethnolinguistic identity that can counter phenotype-based ascriptions. In a broader sense, it encompasses an alternate model of the social world in which African/European phenotype is relatively less important in terms of social differentiation, and it links individual Dominican Americans to a wider Dominican community who share and recreate this world. Spanish language is so central to identity for Dominican Americans in Providence that many use the term *Spanish* as a label for their race, culture, and ethnicity, even when active fluency in Spanish has been lost.

The significance of Spanish language for countering phenotype-racial identity ascriptions and communicating an ethnolinguistic identity in everyday encounters is evident in both 1) Dominican Americans' explanations of how outsiders know that they are Dominican/Hispanic rather than, for example, "black" or "white," and 2) the common proof procedure that Dominicans use to counter others' assumptions that they are black or white American: they show that they can speak Spanish. Dominican Americans from the ten to 15 percent segment of the Dominican population who are of overwhelmingly European ancestry are sometimes perceived as white Americans, for example:

29. Martin: I don't really look Spanish. . . . People don't think that I'm Spanish until I tell them I speak Spanish, or whatever. If they just look at me, "Oh, it doesn't look like he's Spanish."

BB: Do Dominicans tease you and say, "Oh you're white"?

M: No—sometimes that'll happen. Sometimes they don't know I'm Spanish, and they'll say something or whatever and I'll say something back in Spanish but not directly to them, but just so they can hear it, though. . . . And then I have like my friends, after they've known me for a couple of years, and we'll just reminisce and talk about things from before, they be like "I always knew you were Spanish." I tell 'em, "No you didn't. I remember telling you I was Spanish." They're like, "For real?" After a while you get used to it, I guess. And they're like "You look Spanish" and I'm like "No I don't. You never thought that before."

A much larger percentage of Dominican Americans are regularly perceived to be African American. Even at Central High School, where Caribbean Hispanics outnumber non-Hispanic African-descent students by more than two to one, many Dominican Americans are assumed to be African American until they are heard speaking Spanish:

30. BB: If somebody asks you "What are you?", what do you say?

Janelle: I usually say Spanish, Dominican. I'll usually say Dominican first, cause most people—most people think I'm black though. A lot of people think I'm black. A lot of people!

BB: Can you think of a specific time when someone thought you were black?

J: I was in the gym, and usually in school I don't really talk in Spanish, and I was talking to some kid in English, and some girl, I guess she was listening, and I said a word in Spanish, and she goes "Oh my god, you're Spanish." No she goes, "You know Spanish." She thought I was just a black who knew Spanish. I was like "I am Spanish." She's like, "Oh my god, I thought you was Cape Verdean or black." I was like "No." A lot of people think I'm black. I don't know, it's usually just little things like that, just people be like "What are you, black?" I'm like "No, I'm Spanish."

In this exchange between Dominican American Janelle and an African American classmate, *Spanish* is treated not just as a language, but as an ethnic/racial identity. Being "Spanish," in local terms, does not mean that one is from Spain, but rather that one is Spanish-speaking and ethnically/culturally/racially Hispanic:

31. BB: When people ask you what you are, what do you say?

Nanette: I say I'm Spanish. I've had disputes over that one, "What do you call Spanish, you're not from Spain." When you're not Spanish, you don't really understand it, and I don't know if I really understand it myself. When people ask me, I'm Spanish. They're like, "What's Spanish? Where are you from then if you're just Spanish?" Well, there's tons of different Spanish people, but we just come from all different places. But we all speak Spanish, so we're Spanish. And they're like, "But no we speak English, and we're not all English." But it's just so different. There's something different. We all say we're Spanish.

Spanish language in the United States is a defining symbol of common origins in former Spanish colonies, and the label for the language becomes a label for the social identity indexed by speaking it (cf. Urciuoli 1991 among New York Puerto Ricans).

In Janelle's reported exchange about being perceived as black, Janelle and her interlocutor treat the social category "Spanish" as parallel in type to the folk-racial category "black", but mutually exclusive from it. In local terms, if one is Dominican or Spanish speaking, one does not count as "black," regardless of phenotype. An individual only counts as black *and* Spanish if he or she has a Spanish parent and a non-Hispanic African-descent parent. This local system of classification does not necessarily privilege identities based on phenotype—specifically, perceived degrees of European and African ancestry—over those based on other social criteria such as language or national origins. This African American classmate of Janelle treats Janelle's Spanish language (and subsequent self-ascription as Spanish) as valid evidence that Janelle is *not* black or Cape Verdean, even though she had initially perceived Janelle to be black or Cape Verdean. Race is thus treated not as a static attribute of individuals, but rather as a locally and linguistically achieved identity.

This primacy of Spanish ethnolinguistic identity over African-descent phenotype-racial identity can be seen in the discursive, interactional negotiation of identity. In the segment of interaction transcribed below, a student of Southeast Asian descent, Pam, tells an African-descent Dominican American, Wilson, that she did not think he was Spanish when she first saw him—she assumed he was African American—but she then came to realize that he was Spanish when she heard him speak Spanish. As a joke, Wilson and a Dominican confederate, JB, pretend that Wilson is black or African American, and not Spanish.⁶ Although Wilson never identifies himself as black or African American, he and JB know that Wilson is regularly perceived to be African American. This enables them to try to fool Pam by getting her to believe that Wilson is black, a social category attribution that is implausible from a Dominican perspective. The humor of this put-on depends on tensions and disparities between Dominican and U.S. sociocultural frameworks for understanding race and social categories.

When Pam cites Wilson's speaking of Spanish as evidence that he is Spanish rather than black, JB and Wilson initially deny that he can speak Spanish and then devise scenarios that could explain his apparent Spanish use. They falsely claim, for example, that Wilson's father is black and that his mother

is black *and* Spanish and was born in America. (Wilson was born of Dominican parents in the Dominican Republic and came to live in Providence with his father as a seven year old.) Wilson and JB are engaged in an adolescent “put-on” about Wilson’s race, ethnicity, and language, but analysis of their talk reveals much about local criteria, and ordering of criteria, for defining a person as “black” or “Spanish.”

32. [(WR #2 1:34:57) Wilson, Pam, and JB are sitting in class. The teacher is absent and students are treating the period as an opportunity to socialize, ignoring the substitute teacher’s written assignment.]

Pam: Yo, the first time I saw you, I never thought you were Spanish.

(.5)

Wilson: //Who?

JB: //(He’s) Black.

Pam: I never—

Wilson: ‘Cause I’m black.

JB: ()

Wilson: ‘Cause I’m black.

Pam: No

JB: His father //is black, her mother is-, his mother is uh-

Wilson: //I’m black

Pam: (Can he) speak Spanish?

JB: No

Wilson: ‘Cause I was— //I was

Pam: //Yeah!

JB: So why (d- ?)

Wilson: No, no seriously, I’m black and I was raised in the Dominican Republic.

(.5)

Wilson: For real.

Pam: Your mother’s black?

Wilson: My mom? No, my father.

Pam: Your father’s Black, your //mother’s Spanish?

Wilson: //My mom’s Spanish

JB: His mom is black—and she’s Spanish

Wilson: Is mix(ed)

JB: His mom was born over here.

(2.0) ((Wilson smiles at Pam and throws a piece of paper at her))

JB: Wilson, don’t t(h)row anything to her.

Wilson: *Excusa me, se me olvidó, que es la heva tuya*

‘Sorry, I forgot that she is your girlfriend.’

JB: *Cállate, todavía no.*

‘Be quiet, not yet!’

Pam: English!

JB: English, yeah!

Wilson: I said I’m sorry.

JB: He can’t speak Spanish.

Pam: I saw you were talking to him ()

Wilson: I understand, but I don’t speak everything.

(2.2) ((Wilson smiles broadly at Pam))

JB: I’m teaching him.

(5.5)

Wilson: (*Qué tú vas (a) hacer en tu casa hoy, loco?*) ((slaps JB on the back))
 "What are you going to do at your house today, man?"

Spanish language is being treated in this segment as the key to racial/ethnic identity, preceding phenotype. When JB and Wilson claim that Wilson is not Spanish, but black, Pam asks if he can speak Spanish. The implication is that if Wilson can *speak* Spanish, then he *is* Spanish, rather than black. Wilson and JB also treat Spanish language as the key to determining social identity, both for ratification as Spanish and for disqualification from the category "black." JB initially denies that Wilson can speak Spanish, despite immediately available counterevidence. Admitting that Wilson can speak Spanish would invalidate JB and Wilson's story that Wilson is not Spanish but black.

Success in enacting Dominican American ethnolinguistic identities is heavily dependent on opportunities to display Spanish speaking. In the Providence public schools and neighborhoods with concentrations of Dominicans, the ethnolinguistic/national category Dominican is widely recognized and there are many opportunities to speak Spanish, for example, in the unmarked code switching that is typical of Dominican American bilingual teenagers in intragroup interaction (Bailey 2000a). In contexts with few co-ethnics and few opportunities to speak Spanish, some individuals are categorically perceived in U.S. phenotype-based racial terms. Nancy, for example, had been bussed to elementary and middle schools that had few Hispanic students:

33. Nancy: When I went to [middle] school on the East Side, it was all, basically, African American, not many Dominicans, now it was just that I was going to school with mainly white students. I never went to school with Spanish students. When I went to elementary school, I was just mixed in with African Americans students, at Asa Messer. And Asians. It was a few Asians, some white students, and African Americans . . .

BB: How did people identify you there if they weren't used to Spanish people?

Nancy: I was probably just one of them, they probably just thought I was, now that I think about it, to them I was just probably black. And it wasn't an issue, because no one ever asked me.

Francisca had a similar experience when she left Providence to attend the predominantly white University of Rhode Island, where Spanish speakers and Caribbean Hispanics were a small minority:

34. BB: Do people ask you what you are?

Francisca: They mostly assume I'm black, they never really ask, but when they hear me speaking Spanish, "Oh, what are you, Dominican? I didn't know that." They get all shocked and surprised because they didn't think that I was Dominican . . .

BB: Can you think of a particular time that someone thought you were African American?

Francisca: Well, that's all the time.

For Francisca, recognition of her Dominican/Hispanic identity—tied to instances of public Spanish speaking—is the exception, rather than the rule.⁷

Individuals of African descent in the United States have historically been categorized based on phenotype and treated as ethnically undifferentiated.

Dominican Americans in Providence successfully resist this form of classification by defining themselves in terms of national and/or ethnolinguistic origins rather than phenotype. Their use of Spanish language is a salient, everyday way of constituting communicative contexts in which they do not count as black. This linguistic enactment of race highlights the processual and contingent nature of race, thereby undermining the dominant U.S. black/white dichotomy, that rests on assumptions of inherent and unchanging difference. Individual Dominican American's freedom to define themselves as something other than black, despite African-descent features, thus represents a transformation of U.S. racial categories, if only at the local level.

Dichotomization #3: Intragroup Boundaries: "He's Like a Hick, He Talks So Much Spanish"

I have thus far argued that Dominican Americans 1) use varieties of language associated with black and white Americans to mark boundaries between themselves and white Americans, and 2) use Spanish to mark boundaries between themselves and African Americans. In the first instance, use of AAVE and mocking use of white English serve to align Dominican Americans with African Americans and other nonwhites. In the second instance, use of Spanish serves to align individuals with other Spanish speakers and differentiate them from non-Spanish speakers. These nested "we"/"they" dichotomizations operate at different levels of specificity, that is, the white/nonwhite is more general, while the Spanish/not Spanish is a subgroup boundary among members of the non-White group. Within the group *Spanish*, there are many additional subgroupings, for example, between Caribbean Hispanics and other Latin Americans, and between Puerto Ricans and Dominicans.

Salient among these intra-Hispanic boundaries are divisions between Dominican Americans who were raised primarily in the United States, and more recent Dominican immigrants, who are more *Dominican* and less urban *American* in their language, dress, and cultural framework (cf. Zentella 1990 among island and New York Puerto Ricans). Although Spanish language is a *unifying* diacritic (Barth 1969) of Spanish or Dominican identity in contexts involving non-Hispanics, it can be a key index of *difference* in local, intra-Hispanic contexts. Some Dominican Spanish forms used by recent immigrants, for example, are seen by Dominican American teenagers as indexing a lack of urban U.S. sophistication.

The ways in which such intragroup boundaries are situationally highlighted belie static one-to-one correspondences between code and social affiliation. Language and social identities in the context of bilingualism or code switching in the United States have often been treated as dichotomous, focusing on two languages and the ways in which alternation between these languages corresponds to expression or enactment of one of two identities (e.g., Fishman et al. 1971; Gumperz 1982:73–75).⁸ As described above, however, the linguistic resources of Dominican Americans and the identities variously available to them do not fall into two categories, and innumerable "we"/"they" dichotomies can be situationally activated through discourse.

In the following segments Isabella and Janelle use language to display shifting stances toward various Spanish language forms and various Dominican/Dominican American identities. In the first segment Isabella gives an account of how she came to be dating a recently arrived Dominican immigrant, Sammy, and why she is going to break up with him. Her explanations of why she eventually found him to be undesirable—including a code switched direct quote of his Spanish—reveal the local and interactional negotiation of code meanings in the construction of Dominican American identities.

35. [(JS #2 11:56) Isabella and Janelle are sitting outside, skipping class, discussing their weekend plans. Isabella has been dating Sammy for about ten days.]

Isabella: . . . and then I started going out with him. And I couldn't believe that he would like me because he was so cute.

Janelle: Uh huh.

I: And then I got to know him? And I'm like—((wrinkles face))

J: ((of disgust)) /u:...../! ((both laugh))

I: He's like—I don't know. He's- he's so jealous.

J: Oh

I: This kid is sickening! He- he tells me to call him before I go to the club. He- I'm like, I don't have time to call you, pick up the phone, call you while my friends are outside beeping the horn at me so I can jet with them to the club. And he's like- I don't know, he talks- he's like a hick, he talks so much Spanish!

And he // ()

J: ((looks away)) //O::h!

I: No, but he speaks Spanish, but- I- the reason- I talk to him- when he talks on the phone he speaks English a lot because I speak English. More. I tell him, speak English, speak English. (I go *loco* ["honey"]), ((wrinkled face)) *lo::ca*, *lo::ca* ['honey, honey']. He goes, you know, *ni::ña* ["girl"], and you know, and I don't want to hear it.

J: You should have found that out before you went out with him.

I: I know, he's rushing into it.

Sammy is initially described as very attractive (*he was so cute*) and desirable, but then subsequently construed as very unappealing. This lack of appeal is constructed in terms of a constellation of associated traits that are sequentially revealed and interactionally assessed. This construction of negative traits begins with a very general characterization of his personality, proceeds through a specific trait (jealousy), and ends with highly specific examples of his linguistic behavior (*lo::ca*, *ni::ña*) that index negative social attributes.

Sammy's biophysical cuteness—a desirable trait—contrasts with aspects of his person that were revealed to Isabella as she got to know him. Isabella specifies a particular personality deficiency from which Sammy suffers—*he's so jealous*—and gives an example of the effects of this jealousy, his displeasure that she went to a club without first calling him. In this same turn, Isabella specifies two further, negative characteristics of Sammy: *he's like a hick*, and *he talks so much Spanish*.

Janelle responds to these two assessments (Goodwin and Goodwin 1992) with an emphatic *O::h!* and vertical head nods, suggesting a shared understanding of the undesirable nature of a male who is like a hick and speaks so much Spanish. Isabella, however, treats some aspect of Janelle's second assessment (*O::h!*)—perhaps her turning away—as problematic (*No, but . . .*). The fact that Sammy is like a hick and speaks so much Spanish is not the last word on him and why Isabella is breaking up with him. Isabella then describes specifics of Sammy's language use—that he speaks a lot of English on the telephone at Isabella's insistence. She then enacts, through direct quotation, particular Spanish forms—*lo:ca*, *lo:ca* "honey, honey" and *ni:ña* "girl"—that Sammy uses. Isabella wrinkles her face and uses a slightly nasal voice quality, drawing out the /o/ of *loca* and the /i/ of *niña*. In viewing this tape, Isabella translated *loca* as "honey" and *niña* as "girl," in other words, address forms of endearment. She said that she did not like being addressed with these terms in Spanish, although there was "nothing wrong with them," and that she wanted boyfriends to use their English equivalents.

The use of code switching to set off quotations from surrounding talk has often been noted as a function of code switching, and many have noted that the code used for the quotation is not necessarily the same one that the speaker originally used. In this case, the code match between the quoted speech and Sammy's original speech is of significance. Code switching here is not just a means of marking off the directly quoted speech, but a means of displaying a stance toward a particular use of a code and constructing such use as an index of negative social attributes.

This code switch—and the prosodic and visual features of the quoted speech (cf. Mitchell-Kernan 1972 on "marking" among African American)—serves to index a stereotyped island Dominican style that is being constructed as inappropriate for a U.S. urban youth context. These expressions may index traditional Dominican gender roles associated with island Dominican male identities. Isabella identifies Sammy as jealous, like a hick, and speaking so much Spanish all in the same turn at talk. Consultants as well as literature on Dominican gender roles (e.g., Grasmuck and Pessar 1991, 1996; Pessar 1984, 1987) indicate that Dominican males have traditionally exercised a great degree of control over their girlfriends' and wives' interactions and social contacts outside of the home. For Isabella, Sammy's addressing her as *loca* and *niña* may invoke a traditional Dominican social framework for their relationship, a framework that she wishes to avoid. In this case, Isabella code switches to display a particular stance toward particular Dominican male ways of talking to her, a stance that is at least partly shared by Janelle. This stance, in turn, serves to index aspects of a particular Dominican American teenage female identity.

Much of the literature on code switching has emphasized the in-group connotations of the code used by the nondominant/minority group in informal and family situations. In this case, in contrast, Spanish is being used to mock a fellow Spanish speaker and differentiate between a positive self and a disparaged other, even though the other is a fellow Dominican immigrant and Spanish speaker. Although Isabella lived in the Dominican Republic until age six, speaks fluent Spanish, and has a monolingual mother,

Spanish language forms are treated as indexing *negative* attributes in this interaction.

The social indexicality of language is locally negotiated, and indexical meanings are locally brought about (Silverstein 1976). In the above segment, for example, Isabella and Janelle use negative social associations of particular Spanish forms to align themselves in opposition to characteristics of a recent male immigrant. In the segment below, in contrast, Spanish and English forms are used by Isabella to differentiate herself from Janelle. In this case, Isabella's relatively greater familiarity with the language (and institutions) of the island are treated as favorable characteristics of a positive social identity that includes greater Dominican authenticity.

36. [(JS #2 12:39:33) Isabella and Janelle are outside skipping class and have been talking about a couple that just walked by. Isabella tries to ascertain the relationships between Daniel and Sammy, the boyfriend she described as a "thick" in the prior segment of transcript, by asking Dominican American female Basil, who is standing nearby.]

Isabella: And I go out with his—

(.5)

I: (->B) Sammy and Daniel are cousins? ((Janelle looks away))

B: They're friends

I: They're friends

B: They know each other //(_____)

I: // (de/from) Santo <Domi:ngo>, "the Dominican Republic"

J: Are they really- // they're brothers, (_____)?

I: // <del ca:mpo> "from the countryside"

J: *Son hermanos?* "Are they brothers?"

I: (->B) *Son hermanos?* "Are they brothers?"

B: They used to go to school together.

I: They used to go to school together in *Santo Domi:ngo. En el-(.) asilo.* "... the Dominican Republic. At a (.) boarding school"

(2.2)

I: *el-* (.8) ((Isabella frowns)) *colegio.* >Yeah, that.< (.8) private high school."

(.2)

J: I know, I hate that with *colegio.* It sounds like- (.2) some Catholic- or I don't know ((Isabella quietly mouths *colegio* during Janelle's turn))

I: I used to- (you know-) Oh, //(now) I understand]

J: //(_____),hmm.

(.2)

I: You're a bootleg, //I forgot.

J: //(yeah, man)

J: But what?

I: I used to- I used to- when I // used to go over there?

B: //(_____ going inside)

(.5)

I: (->B) Get out of here!

J: What time is it?

As in the prior segment, Isabella adopts a markedly slow and slightly nasal pronunciation as she switches into Spanish (*Santo Domingo, del campo*). This register—her version of a rural Dominican/recent immigrant variety—is distinct from the variety that she uses in code switching with friends (e.g., in her subsequent *Son hermanos?*) or speaking Spanish to her mother.⁹ Although she is not using Spanish for direct quotation here, she is still assuming the voice of a recent Dominican immigrant from the countryside, inspired by her perceptions of Sammy, to talk about Sammy. This distinctive register serves as a contextualization cue (Gumperz 1982, 1992), suggesting that Isabella's "alignment, or set, or stance, or posture, or projected self is somehow at issue" (Goffman 1981:128). Isabella uses this code switch with marked prosodic features to distance herself from particular recent immigrant identities.

Isabella hesitates in specifying the institution where Sammy and Daniel met, with a cut-off and a beat of silence before saying *asilo*, which, she later told me, she thought was a kind of school. (It can mean "boarding school" or "old-age home.") After a gap of 2.2 seconds, she self-corrects with *El*-(8) *colegio*, again with a cut off and a pause after *el*-. Before saying *colegio* she displays a dramatic frown as if trying to come up with a word or concept with which she was unfamiliar, even though *colegio* is the everyday word for (nonpublic) high school in the Dominican Republic. Her subsequent accelerated pronunciation and code switch (*Yeah, that*), helps instantiate a separate speech activity, a comment on *colegio* that displays her stance toward it, one of distance and unfamiliarity.

Janelle treats Isabella's utterance as displaying this outsider stance toward *colegio*, by addressing that aspect of Isabella's utterance in her own subsequent turn. Janelle's *I know* is not oriented toward the propositional content of Isabella's turn, but the social stance (e.g., "These are strange words and institutions") that she displays in it. Janelle is aligning herself with Isabella in this outsider perspective on island Dominican institutions, and she gives an example of her own unfamiliarity and confusion regarding the term *colegio*.

In her next turn, Isabella begins to give an account of when she used to go *over there* (the Dominican Republic), but then cuts herself off to address Janelle's associations of the word *colegio* with "Catholic" (*Oh, () I understand*). Rather than displaying alignment with the stance displayed by Janelle, she chooses to socially differentiate herself, identifying Janelle as belonging to a separate social category based on Janelle's displayed stance toward *colegio* and Catholic: *You're a bootleg, I forgot*.

Dominican Americans in Providence who speak little Spanish and are unfamiliar with institutions and geography on the island are sometimes accused of being "bootleg" Dominicans. The term *bootleg*, commonly used to identify products such as cassette tapes or CDs that are illegally produced or distributed, suggests a lack of authenticity. Thus, "bootleg Dominicans" are those individuals who are Dominican by parentage but who lack the traits of true, authentic Dominicans. Paradoxically, Isabella publicly displays her own unfamiliarity with the Dominican secondary school system through hesitation in saying *colegio* and metadiscursive comment (*Yeah, that*), but

then differentiates herself from Janelle in terms of linguistic-cultural knowledge and authenticity. Isabella had spent her first six years on the island and visited several times. Janelle, in contrast, was U.S. born and had been to the Dominican Republic only once, as a baby.

Isabella's identification of Janelle as a "bootleg" is preceded by Isabella's incipient reference to trips to the Dominican Republic. After calling Janelle a bootleg, Janelle other-initiates repair (*But what?*) (Schegloff 1979; Schegloff et al. 1977), leading to Isabella's self-repair of her uncompleted utterance: (*When I used to go over there?*). Isabella's reference to trips to the Dominican Republic is consistent with her ascription of Janelle to the category bootleg, as both serve to differentiate between authentic Dominicans with knowledge and experience of the island and inauthentic ones. Even within a single sequence of talk, Dominican Americans display shifting stances toward the island and Spanish language that can be both a source of stigma and a source of positive esteem and identity.

In these two segments, Isabella and Janelle use language both referentially and indexically to situationally invoke commonalities and differences between themselves and others, and between each other. Enactment of these varying "dichotomizations of inclusiveness and exclusiveness" (Cohen 1978:387) is the basic realization of identity, marking who counts as the same and who counts as different. As is evident in these segments, social categories, their linguistic indexes, and the ways individuals fit into categories are not static and predetermined but are negotiated and constructed at the local level.

Conclusions

In this article I have analyzed the discursive construction of identity through three of the "in-group/out-group" dichotomies that Dominicans situationally activate through language. Linguistic means for highlighting a specifically nonwhite identity include avoidance of marked white English forms, mocking use of white English, and extensive adoption of AAVE. Paradoxically, use of AAVE—a form of resistance to white cultural and linguistic hegemony—makes many Dominican Americans of African descent increasingly subject to another form of hegemony: the dichotomous black-white racial classification system in the United States. Dominican Americans use Spanish language to resist such classification and highlight their ethnolinguistic identity, differentiating themselves from African Americans, and many use the term *Spanish* as a label for ethnic and racial self-ascription. Finally, Spanish language, which is commonly a unifying emblem of identity among Dominican immigrants, can also be used situationally to mark intra-group boundaries among Dominicans. U.S. raised Dominican Americans situationally mock aspects of the Spanish speaking of more recent immigrants, using linguistic means to socially differentiate between themselves and such relative newcomers.

Heteroglossia and multiplicity of identities are particularly salient in the language and lives of the contemporary Dominican second generation. Dominican American language juxtaposes forms from grammatical codes,

Spanish and English, that count as distinct languages and from language varieties with implications of stark social difference, for example, AAVE and American English. In terms of social identities, individual Dominicans match popular stereotypes of black and white phenotypes, but Dominicans also claim the widely and officially recognized identity "Hispanic" (or "Spanish" or "Latino"). The bilingual, multivariety repertoire of many Dominican Americans challenges unitary notions of what it means to speak a language, and Dominican American enactment of Hispanic identities serves to undermine U.S. assumptions of a primordial unity among language, phenotype, and identity, particularly in constructions of the category African American.¹⁰

The particular issues of identity faced by contemporary second generation Dominicans and the particular linguistic resources with which they confront these issues are a function of the sociohistorical moment and this group's generational position in immigration. The bilingualism of second-generation immigrants is overwhelmingly a transitional second-generation phenomenon. The third and fourth generations will likely find it more difficult to differentiate themselves from non-Hispanics, both black and white, as they lose even passive knowledge of Spanish. The new second generations, in turn, will grow up in a social landscape that has been partly transformed through the activities and agency of their predecessors, who have made "Spanish" a locally available ethnic/racial category (within a larger national context that is increasingly Latino). Dominican language and identities in the United States will thus increasingly vary by generation, with the first generations confronting different issues of identity, with different linguistic resources, than the third and fourth generations.

In this article I have attempted to illustrate a few of the ways in which analysis of talk and interaction can serve as a window onto the workings of sociocultural worlds. The details of everyday talk—whether descriptions of turkey club sandwiches, jokes played on a classmate, or gossip about a date—can be linked to larger questions of power, intergroup relations, and social identity formation processes. Analysis of language can tell us how individuals both experience and negotiate their sociohistorical circumstances. Language reflects particular circumstances, such as positions in economic and ethnic/racial hierarchies, but it is also a tool used by individuals to respond to or resist such hierarchies. Through their talk, individuals display and negotiate social meanings and construct social worlds. Analysis of such talk-as-social-action can thus shed light on the processes by which larger-scale constellations such as ethnic/racial identity groupings are reproduced, resisted, and/or transformed.

Notes

1. I use the term *second generation* to refer both to the U.S.-born children of Dominican immigrants, as well as to Dominican-born children who came to the United States by age eight. By their mid- to late-teens, such Dominican-born individuals are very similar to their U.S.-born peers in terms of being English-dominant, seeing themselves as U.S. minorities, and planning to spend their lives in the United States.

I use the term *Dominican American* to refer to the same group, that is, the second generation, rather than third- and fourth-generation Dominican Americans who experience a much more American than Dominican socialization.

2. According to 1990 census data, the Dominican unemployment rate in Providence was 17.4 percent, 38.5 percent of households were below the federal poverty line, and the median household income was \$17,533.

3. In everyday Dominican American usage, the term *American* (or *americano*) refers to "white American" (cf. Urciuoli 1996 among New York Puerto Ricans). U.S.-born Dominican Americans such as Janelle identify themselves as "American" in some contexts, e.g., in referring to citizenship or the passport they have, but they identify "what they are" as Dominican/Spanish/Hispanic. These categories are mutually exclusive from the category white/American in local terms. Dominican Americans refer to other nonwhite groups in similarly marked terms: African Americans are not "Americans" (or *americanos*) but "blacks" (or *negros/prietos/morenos*), and Asian Americans are not Americans but rather "Asians" (or *chinos*).

4. The term *indio/a* in the Dominican Republic differs both in denotation and connotation from the term *indio/a* in the many Latin American countries where it refers to indigenous peoples and is pejorative. In the Dominican Republic it does not refer to an ethnic/social group but to a range of skin colors/phenotypes, and it is unmarked both as a phenotype and a term. The term *indio* commonly refers to the skin color/phenotype associated with individuals who are of African and European descent, i.e., who don't count as *blanco* ["white"—i.e., of overwhelmingly European descent] or *negro/prieto/moreno* ["black/dark"—i.e., of overwhelmingly African descent] (e.g., Davis 1994; Fennema and Loewenthal 1987).

5. In the Dominican Republic there is no binary division among Dominicans into social categories based on the perceived presence/absence of sub-Saharan African ancestry and no notion of race that differentiates among Dominicans in the same way the U.S. folk-notion of black/white differentiates among Americans. Individual differences in phenotype, i.e., relative degrees of African/European phenotype, do not covary with language, culture, religion, or other markers of social identity. When I surveyed Dominican teen-agers in Santiago, Dominican Republic, *Cuál es tu raza?* "What race are you?", they answered *dominicano/a* "Dominican" without regard to individual phenotype, and many treated it as a statement of the obvious (Bailey in press).

6. I use the terms *Spanish*, *black*, and *African American* in their local, emic senses, following the usage of participants in this interaction. The terms *black* and *African American* refer only to non-Hispanic African-descent individuals. *Spanish* refers to individuals of Latin American descent. Although *Spanish* individuals may be phenotypically indistinguishable from *blacks*, they do not belong to the same social category in this local context.

7. The available social categories are not just a function of geographical or communicative context, but also of historical time period. The social categories available to Dominican Americans in Providence today are very different from those that were available just two decades earlier. A Dominican American consultant who had attended Central High School in the mid-1970s, for example, found herself identifying, as she grew up, at times as Puerto Rican, at times as black, and, often, as something for which there was no available category:

But high school was like, oh my God, it was so different. I went through the identity crisis of either "You're not black, you're not white, so I guess you got to be Puerto Rican." And I was resentful, so I had to say that I was Puerto Rican, I

couldn't even say that I was Dominican. And it was weird. They used to do the Puerto Rican's parade, I used to go and act like I was Puerto Rican. . . .

When I was younger, every time I used to fill out an application, I didn't know what to fill out, so I used to have to put black, because I couldn't say white, because I'm not white, so I always used to put black.

The black girls used to fight with me, "Well you can't be black, because look at your hair, and you can't be white, because look at your skin color. So what are you?" "I'm Spanish, Dominican, you know, from another country." They couldn't understand. "What are you?" That's what I used to get. "What are you?"

8. Kroskrity's (1993) repertoire of identity among trilingual Arizona Tewa and Zentella's (1993, 1997) emphasis on the multi-variety linguistic repertoire of New York Puerto Ricans represent prominent exceptions to this tendency.

9. Dominican Americans' characterizations of individuals as "hicks" or references to the *campo* do not mean an individual is actually from the countryside in the Dominican Republic, but rather serve as a metaphor for a perceived lack of urban-American sophistication.

10. Assumptions of a unity among African-descent language, phenotype, and identity underlie even contemporary descriptions of AAVE. Morgan for example, defines African American English as: "the language varieties used by people in the United States whose major socialization has been with U.S. residents of African descent" (1994a:327; see also 1996:428). This definition is clearly problematic given the hundreds of thousands of African-descent residents of the United States who socialize their children in Spanish, Haitian creole, African languages, etc. With the large numbers of African-descent immigrants to the United States since 1965, African descent clearly does not imply homogeneity of language, culture, or identity.

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Appendix: Transcription Conventions

- Wilson:** The speaker is indicated with a name or abbreviation on the left of the page.
- como* Italics indicate words spoken in Spanish. I have used standard Spanish orthography to represent Dominican Spanish even though pronunciation of Dominican Spanish, for example, in elision of syllable- and word-final /s/, systematically differs from the Castilian varieties (e.g., Henríquez Ureña 1940) that written Spanish more closely reflects. I choose not to represent these divergences, for example, *e'toy* or *e(s)toy* for *estoy*, because, as Duranti notes, "speakers of other [nondominant] varieties are implicitly characterized as deviant, proportionally to the number of modifications necessary to represent their speech." (Duranti 1997:139)
- ["Jerk."]** Text surrounded by quotation marks and brackets indicates a translation of the immediately preceding language.
- ()** Empty parentheses indicate material that couldn't be heard clearly enough to transcribe.
- (I can)** Words in parentheses indicate uncertainty about accuracy of transcribed words.
- ((smiling))** Double parentheses indicate nonverbal, visual, or background information.
- //I don't-** Text after double slashes that is directly above or below other
//He said text, also after double slashes, indicates words spoken in overlap.
- (1.5)** Numerals in parentheses indicate periods of time, in seconds, during which there is no speech.
- Da::mn** A colon indicates that the preceding sound was elongated in a marked pronunciation

- rocking** Text that is underlined is pronounced with emphasis, in other words, some combination of higher volume, pitch, and greater vowel length.
- como l—* A hyphen or dash indicates that speech was suddenly cut-off during or after the word preceding the hyphen or dash.
- (->Wilson) An arrow to a person's name indicates to whom a speaker's gaze and upper body are oriented during that turn, in other words, the ostensible primary recipient of the utterance.
- ?
- .
- !
- ,
- Hi text between underscore is spoken at a markedly high pitch.
- yeah** Boldface is used to mark temporary register shift, for example, for direct quotation.
- <.....> Speech between outward brackets is elongated.
- >.....< Speech between inward brackets is rushed.