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## **¡Tú No Eres Fácil!: Styling Black Hair and Language in a Dominican Beauty Salon**

Amber Teresa Domingue

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¡TÚ NO ERES FÁCIL!: STYLING BLACK HAIR AND LANGUAGE IN A DOMINICAN BEAUTY  
SALON

by

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Bachelor of Arts  
Xavier University of Louisiana, 2017

Bachelor of Science  
Xavier University of Louisiana, 2017

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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2019

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## DEDICATION

To my mother, sisters, aunts, and grandmothers who taught me how to style my curly hair despite many disagreements and stubbornness on my part. To my father, Paw-Paw, and Gary for their patience during these trying times. And finally, to the city of New Orleans and all dat entails.

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## ABSTRACT

Women of the African diaspora living in the United States undergo a process of racialization that is informed by both their physical attributes and linguistic decisions. Fieldwork conducted in a Dominican beauty salon in Atlanta, GA during the summer of 2018 provided the data that is analyzed to explore the relationship between Dominican and Black women through the lens of hair care. Dominican stylists who spoke predominantly Spanish were able to provide services to Black women who spoke predominantly English using a combination of verbal and non-verbal communication. While previous scholarship on Dominicans in the United States has been overwhelmingly conducted in the Northeast (Bailey 2000; Marte 2011; Torres-Saillant 1998) and demonstrated tension between Dominicans and other ethnic groups (Duany 1998), this thesis addresses how U.S. Black and Dominican women in the South find commonality through hair care despite cultural and linguistic differences. By adhering to the multiple scales of migration relevant to the subjects of this project, I argue that questions of identity are inherently linked to not only space and place but that these factors are inextricably informed by language, race, and ethnicity. Beauty salons have been studied as safe spaces for women to learn about womanhood (Candelario 2000). In the multicultural atmosphere created at this particular beauty salon, it is clear that in conjunction with womanness, racialized hair care behavior is also being learned in the salon. Ideologies surrounding race and language were often in tension with each other as U.S. Black and Dominican women both drew upon phenotypic attributes and linguistic

competence when constructing arguments for racial group inclusion or exclusion. This work aims to contribute to scholarship on Dominicans living in the United States and their relationship with U.S. Blacks when intentionally opening a business in a historically Black ethnic enclave by examining aspects of identity used to form alignment or distance between the two groups.

## PREFACE

During my time in the Dominican hair salon, women who came for the *Dominican Blowout*<sup>1</sup> commonly organized their lives around their hair schedule. While this may seem like an extreme statement, this pattern emerged in several ways. Women came in for special occasions such as funerals and weddings. They stopped in during their lunch breaks to start the process and returned after they got off work to finish it. Some women intentionally came on weekdays to avoid the weekend rush and receive faster service. The most clients by far came on Fridays and Saturdays. Even though the salon only took walk-ins<sup>2</sup>, women still called days in advance to ask their stylist what time she'd be getting in to try to secure the first spot. Other clients called and asked for their stylist's schedule to decide when they should come in. Clients were usually unsurprised by the wait and did so patiently. Other women, who were not prepared to wait, asked to be taken ahead in line or to skip steps of the blowout process (particularly waiting under the dryer). Some women came in saying they had already washed their hair and just needed to be styled to avoid the dreaded dryer, but usually still had to go through

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<sup>1</sup> Before and after images of various clients receiving the *Dominican Blowout* can be found in Appendix A figures A.1-A.6.

<sup>2</sup> The walk-ins only policy is commonly found in salons in the Dominican Republic, though salons in the U.S. usually require appointments. In Dominican salons where appointments are required, there is often still a substantial wait because of the amount of care required for each head and the variability in clients' hair texture (Kimberly Simmons, personal communication, 2019).



this step because it is crucial in the blowout process<sup>3</sup>. On several occasions, partners came into the salon with food or children. People waiting for clients to finish with their hair sometimes fell asleep on the couch in the lobby. Most women who sat under the dryer wore headphones and swiped through their cell phones. When the noisy blow-dryers were on, not much talking could be done; the room filled with smoke and coughing ensued. The stylists propped open the door with a traffic cone to let some of the smoke out, but the smoke and the smell were pretty unavoidable.

The first question asked when a client arrives to the salon is what kind of service she wants. The salon offers services ranging from washing to relaxing to cutting to coloring, but the most popular was the *Dominican Blowout*. Women came in asking for a silk press, a blowout, or simply to have their hair straightened, but all of these phrases refer to the same service and technique of straightening emblematic of Dominican hair salons. The following includes details of this process necessary to understand the analyses in the subsequent chapters.

During busy times in the salon, Raquela was most likely the one to wash the hair at the sink station, though stylists also washed hair to meet the demands of the business. She wet the hair and applied Suave shampoo, which typically costs less than \$10 a bottle at local grocery stores<sup>4</sup>, moving her hands through the hair creating suds from the scrubbing. She used a palm-sized brush with short, plastic spikes that is held by placing

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<sup>3</sup> Though this salon emphasized the importance of sitting under the dryer, not all Dominican salons require this when performing the blowout (Kimberly Simmons, personal communication, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> This is significant because some women go to salons to have access to high quality products not usually accessible by people who are not professional stylists. It also illustrates that the priority of stylists was not to sell products as other salons might but to sell quality service in the form of the *Dominican Blowout*.

one hand through a strap on the back to really get in there. Raquela asked if the client wanted a deep condition, which would be \$5 more, and they usually agreed. Clients occasionally brought in their own hair products, but these were usually recurrent clients who had already consulted with their stylist about which products to purchase to improve hair health. The deep conditioning process involved applying Suave conditioner to the hair and then placing a plastic cap over the hair, a towel around their neck and then sitting under the dryer for approximately 15-20 minutes. Raquela then rinsed out the conditioner and they moved to the roller station.

At the roller station, Raquela separated hair into sections for rollers. She starts this process at the bottom and centermost part of the scalp, using a larger clip to hold the rest of the hair out of the way. She selected a section at a time to focus on and elongated this section of hair by pulling it out to make it as straight and smooth as possible, then placed an appropriately sized roller matching the hair length on top of the stretched hair. The very end of the hair was held against the roller as both were brought closer to the scalp thus wrapping the rest of the hair around the roller. A clip held the roller (with the hair wrapped around it) in place on the scalp by attaching to the hair closest to the scalp. Once all of the hair was set in rollers, a hair net was placed over all of the rollers to help the clips keep the rollers in place as the hair dried.

Before placing clients under the dryer, Raquela replaced the wet neck towel originally placed after washing with a new dry one and added an additional towel under the net and around the client's ears to protect them from the heat of the hooded dryer. The second towel was held in place by the hair net that was placed over the top of the rollers and then tied in the back of the head, again in the bottom and centermost point of the

scalp. Clients sat under the dryer for approximately one hour, depending on their hair length and texture which would impact the amount of time needed for the hair to dry. Depending on the volume of clientele for the day, the client might go immediately to their stylist or, more commonly, they sat in a chair near their stylist's station waiting for their turn to be seen. This could take another hour depending on who was seen before them and the attention given by stylists to their clients.

Once in the chair, stylists would begin the blowdrying process. Even though the shaft of the hair was usually dry at this point, the blowdryer was used to make sure the roots were dry, which can take another 30 minutes to one hour, again depending on thickness, length, and malleability of hair. Stylists used several different kinds of round brushes (brushes shaped in a cylinder with the bristles on the outside) while blowing and successively sectioned off hair with a large clip and, again, the stylist started at the bottom centermost part of the scalp and moved out to work through the sections of hair. The stylist next pressed the hair straight section by section with a hair straightening iron until all of the hair was smooth and straight from the root down the entire shaft of hair. Before the final step, stylists typically recommended a trim (as necessary) to the client which was an additional \$5 and most clients agreed.

The final step required stylists to ask clients how they wanted their hair styled; the options included straight, curly, or bumped on the ends. The hair was sectioned a final time when the hair was styled. Toward the end of the styling process the stylists paused to ask on which side the client wanted their hair parted. Sometimes the clients defaulted to the stylist's preference, but other times they looked in the mirror and decided themselves. When the process was over stylists, sometimes used hair spray or shine on

the hair, then combed it out and primped until the hair laid exactly right.

The blowout process was oftentimes painful for stylists and clients. On my first day of fieldwork, Lily showed me callouses on her hands from holding the previously mentioned instruments for long periods of time. The stylists spent all day on their feet except for brief lunch breaks. Their workday started around 10:00 am and ended around 7:00 pm. Young girls new to the kind of heat required for straightening hair by a *Dominican Blowout* cried and flinched in the chair during the process but celebrated their beauty at the end. Women cringed away from the heat occasionally, but rarely spoke up to say they were experiencing pain. They gradually got tenser in the chair until the process was over and paid as usual oftentimes thanking and praising the stylist on their way out. On the rare occasions someone spoke up about the pain, they usually tried to make a light comment or joke with the stylist, and both would laugh softly at the stylist's apology.

When receiving my first *Dominican Blowout*<sup>5</sup>, I was nervous. I had been mentally preparing for months. I have an intimate relationship with my hair stylist in New Orleans, who happens to be my younger sister, so I felt as if I was betraying her by letting another stylist in my hair. Lily offered to do my hair a few times already during my fieldwork. On this particular day, she inquired about my curls being much looser than the previous days she had seen me, and I explained that my curls got looser the dirtier my hair was – thus leading her to offer to clean my dirty hair. After approximately a week in the salon, I engaged in the *Dominican Blowout* process. As someone who considers themselves to be a part of the natural hair movement, I was nervous to have so much heat applied to my

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<sup>5</sup> Figures A.7-A.12 in Appendix A.

curls because excessive heat can damage my curl pattern making my hair dryer and frizzier as well as the curls less defined and voluminous. The whole time Lily did my hair I worried about what this would mean for my hair health in a few days when I washed it but, for a moment, I enjoyed being pampered and taking a break from working.

I felt Lily's hands in my hair and relaxed. I let my mind wander to other moments I'd been in a salon chair – dances, parties, and other special occasions. I remembered the undue attention, and the feeling that my personality was being suppressed with my hair as my curls were straightened. I thought about how I couldn't be as wild or free for fear that my straightened hair would sweat out to reveal my curls, thus wasting my mom's \$60+. I remembered the compliments that overshadowed my opinions of myself, of my hair, telling me that I didn't have sense or wasn't appreciative for thinking my curly, wild hair was prettier than my newly straightened hair. I thought about my long hair and felt long gazes that aged me prematurely. I considered how going to a new salon to straighten my hair could be an act of reclamation or of empowerment, but it only felt forced. I tried to keep an open mind, but only missed my curls and felt like a younger version of myself with all of the hair and no voice again. I washed my hair as soon as politely possible. I oohed and ahed with the other women in the salon over the result of my *Dominican Blowout*, but they knew as well as I did that I missed my wild curls. They accused me of not wrapping my hair or properly caring for it to protect the straight hair, and while I did do those things, it wasn't to protect my hair, but to protect my project.

Wash day finally came, and I felt eager to rejuvenate the suppressed curls. Instead, what I found was damaged curls with a damaged ego. The beauty everyone encouraged cost me my pride. By the time my hair dried the next morning, I found

myself grieving and bargaining for my curl pattern back. I started researching hair protein treatments; I altered my hair care routine to deep conditioning twice a week; I changed products; I spent more money. I was willing to do almost anything to bring my curls back in a desperate attempt to reverse the irreversible. I knew my efforts were frivolous, but I couldn't do anything else. I ultimately had to cut the damaged hair to allow what was left of the healthy hair to flourish. I had made a sacrifice for my research, and that action seemed to take me back in time. I remembered the stages of being that I had gone through, the traumas that I had recovered from, and the person I had finally grown into all being washed away with the water and shampoo. I realized that my well-being meant more to me than my research and knew that I couldn't do another blowout, despite pressures from the stylists, the same way many women couldn't stop getting blowouts because my identity and my hairstyle were so inextricably interwoven.

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## LIST OF SYMBOLS

[ / ]	Overlapping speech
-	Speech interrupted
=	latching
?	rising intonation
<b>bold</b>	speaker's emphasis
<u>Underline</u>	author's emphasis
<i>Italics</i>	translation
( <i>Italics</i> )	non-verbal action
(time)	pause length
(laughter)	laughter
...	data not captured

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

D.R.	..... Dominican Republic
U.S.	..... United States of America
P.R.	..... Puerto Rico
U.K.	..... United Kingdom
HBCU	..... Historically Black college or university
PWI	..... Predominantly White institution

## INTRODUCTION

The broad scope of my project looks at the cultural and linguistic connections between Dominican and Black women. I approached this project with questions about Spanglish that evolved into more general questions about bilingualism in Spanish and English. Through my own experiences with racialization, I've always had questions about identity formation and the broader African diaspora. I've had difficult experiences with gatekeeping practices in the Black community in the U.S. When I learned how great of an influence the trans-Atlantic slave trade had on other parts of the Americas I began to seek community in other places before I even knew what I was really doing. My interest in Afro-Latinidad is somewhat self-serving, but I consider it important work because so often the U.S. is entrenched in ethnocentrism that gets attributed to the dominant White culture, but I would argue that this is relevant to the Black community as well. How we conceptualize Blackness is often exclusive and discriminatory to those who do not fit into the stereotypical ideas about what Black can and should look like. I challenge these notions by taking a critical approach to historical constructions of racial ideology in the U.S. and D.R.. The study of bilingualism in the U.S. brought up questions of citizenship and belonging through immigration and migration. Through this project I was able to explore this interest from a linguistic anthropological perspective by engaging with questions about the relationship between race and language.

Research on Black immigration to the United States is particularly salient considering the xenophobic/racist/intolerant era the U.S. is currently in under the guise of

patriotism led by President Trump. While certain immigrant groups may have the privilege of living unmarked in the U.S., Spanish use is stigmatized and can lead to violent consequences. Though Spanish speakers experienced racial discrimination linked to language use before Trump's presidency, there is now a platform for those enacting the racial discrimination to feel empowered. The intersection of violence and racism leads to a unique experience for those who are Afro-Latinx living in the United States. Though my participants did not report incidences as such, their business was also situated in a predominantly Black neighborhood and the neighborhood where they lived had high concentrated levels of Dominicans.

### **My Racial Identity**

I identify as Black – not African American, not a Black American, but just Black. I like the abrasiveness of the word Black; that it makes people who are not comfortable with Blackness to hear or say it. I like the confrontational way the [k] hits people in the face as they flinch away from my unapologetic response to *What are you?*. The word Black makes an explicit connection to the Black Power movement which made strides towards empowerment for my community. Blackness is a global experience meaning that the word Black is not exclusive to one place and has no national affiliation which is important because being Black often means feeling like a second-class citizen. Many of us have been told how to identify in the move from *nigger* to *negro* to *Black* to *Afro American* to *African American* (Rahman 2012; Yelvington 2006a). The ethnic identity of Black challenges the scholarly expectation that I placate semantics debates.

I purposefully identify as Black over other racial terminology indicating the same group, such as African American. One of the foremost reasons is because I don't know

where my ancestry is connected to in Africa. My roots feel as Black as the color. I can't see or make sense of my past beyond Louisiana. When asked, "Where are you from?", I always say New Orleans even if I know that's not what people want to hear because that's where I know my people come from and as such is an intimate part of my identity. I don't know what it means to be from Africa, but I know what it means to me to be a Black woman from New Orleans which I argue is unlike being a Black woman from elsewhere in the United States (Dessens 2007). Knowing the politics of identifying as Black or Creole or African American and the classism and elitism involved with each category, I choose to identify as Black. For these reasons and others, I identify as Black and use Black as the default term used to describe those connected to the African diaspora unless otherwise stated by the subjects of my research.

While I choose to use Black to describe those from the global Black diaspora in the U.S. who speak English and do not specify a lineage outside of the U.S., there are other forms of Blackness present in the U.S. and globally because of the legacy of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Though I discuss U.S. Black women as juxtaposed to Dominican women in my project, many Dominicans are considered a part of the Black diaspora as well. Previous scholarship has investigated the role of Blackness in a Dominican national identity in terms of an erasure or ashamedness of Black ancestry (Candelario 2007), however other scholarship has considered the ways in which Blackness has been denied to Dominicans (Simmons 2009). Though I do not enter this debate, I do consider the ways that Blackness unifies Dominican and Black women in this beauty salon as both groups engage in ways of manipulating indices Blackness through hair.



It should be noted that this hair manipulation is done for different reasons. While Black women globally have many options for hair care styles including naturally curly, chemically relaxed, straightened with heat, locks, and various types of braids, wigs, and extensions, the stakes of hair care may be ideologically different and grounded in different historical discourses and sociocultural practices for Black and Dominican women. While both may face discrimination for embracing natural styles (styles that are not straightened) (“Bill To End Hair Discrimination In The Workplaces Passes State Senate” 2019; FOX n.d.; Stowe 2019), for U.S. Black women hair straightening will not normally result in being perceived as a member of a different racial category while for Dominican women it might. For U.S. Black women, hair styling decisions may point to different kinds of privilege or allow for access to social privilege, for Dominican women hair styling decisions may lead to a different racial categorization which in turn bring racial privilege. In the Dominican Republic race aligns with color categories indicated by various physical characteristics including hair texture. Since Blackness is a part of their national identity as a mixed people (Simmons 2009), the diversity of Blackness seen in the D.R. leads to something different than the colorism in the U.S. Colorism happens in the D.R. on a national scale as opposed to in the U.S. how colorism is mostly a Black in-group phenomenon. This is not to say that colorism doesn’t happen on a national scale in the U.S., but the discussion of it is more internal to the Black community whereas in the D.R. racialization happens in terms of color. Colorism, like racism in the U.S., involves the evaluation of much more than simply skin color but various other phenotypic characteristics. Chapter 2 will focus on the importance of hair as a phenotypic characteristic in racialization and in colorism.

## Racial Ideologies Connected to Curls

My curly hair journey was not a big epiphany. I did not go through a big chop. I never had a relaxer and I never wanted to have straight hair – not for a day, not for a lifetime. I received a lot of messages growing up about my hair from friends, family, and strangers. The moments I remember most were being told by older Black women that I had *good hair*. I would always get embarrassed by those moments. I received a lot of attention for my looks in a way that I didn't ask for or want. No matter how hard I worked in school, I was still the ambiguous-looking girl with wild, unapologetic curls in the room of White children. I experienced plenty of privilege for my looks while watching my peers who were more quickly racialized as Black experience discrimination through colorism.

Even when I had Black girls as peers, I felt different. They weren't asked, "What are you?", "But, no, what are you really?", "Where are you from?", or "But where are your parents from?". They didn't have White girls trying to play in their hair in the hallway after repeatedly telling them your mama didn't play that<sup>6</sup>. Everyone around me had straight hair, including the other Black girls. With the hair texture I have, the oilier my hair is the heavier the curls become, and so the straighter my hair appears. As a child, I went from washing my hair once a month to make it straighter like the other Black girls to washing my hair every day so the White girls wouldn't make fun of me. My best friend in middle school, a White girl, would find me at recess to pull out "the perfect curl" from my hair. When I started high school people eagerly asked if I was going to straighten my hair so everyone could see how long it "really" was on special occasions like school

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<sup>6</sup>Mama didn't play that is Black English for something my mother disapproved of.

dances. I've always been hyperaware of the privilege my hair has afforded me and worked to negate this privilege, though I often criticize myself for not doing more. While I've worked to negate my hair privilege, I've also worked to highlight aspects of my Blackness to make clear my positionality within the Black community, though others within and outside of the Black community often try to place me outside of this boundary as anything but Black for various reasons. One way in which I've felt control over my racialization process is through styling my hair in its naturally curly state. With all of the unwanted attention I've received for my hair, I have put excessive time into cultivating my curl pattern, constantly looking for products to enhance or tighten my curls with the empty hope that it will lessen my ambiguity.

I would look at the other Black girls and analyze what made them Blacker than me. I learned to envy their skin, hair, and dialect while simultaneously hating my own. I knew I had privilege through characteristics others considered pretty like my supposedly *good hair*, but I also knew I would never be Black enough. I tried everything to make myself less ambiguous. I spent hours in the sun tanning. I went weeks without washing my hair, thinking maybe that was the key to getting it as straight as the Black girls (who oftentimes had hair straighter than the White girls). I remember we were never in the same classes, me and the other Black girls. Occasionally, I'd have another person of color in my classes, but it was usually a boy and Catholic school kept us pretty segregated according to sex. It wasn't until the middle of high school that I realized how colorism was keeping my Black counterparts back and inadvertently keeping my social groups White. I looked out at the lunch tables where the Black girls sat together and I endlessly questioned why I wasn't good enough to sit with them not realizing at the time that it was

unofficial institutional segregation in my classes that kept me as the token light-skinned, “good haired”, ambiguous-looking Black girl on the Honors track and them as the unseen, unheard, and underrepresented Black girls on the Academic track.

When I tell people I’m Black, they try to make sense of how that could be. They ask about each parent and my grandparents. They insist that I’m mixed, or someone’s lying, or the only reason I look the way I look is because I’m Creole<sup>7</sup>, which they understand to mean I’m not technically Black or my Blackness is somehow less legitimate or pure regardless of my cultural experiences. This type of racialization placed an emphasis on my biological makeup in a way that focused on racial mixing experiences that happened long before anyone in my immediate family could remember. Ideas about mixedness usually invoke ideas about recent and voluntary interracial sexual interactions resulting in offspring that would be considered biracially Black and White. The mixedness that myself and, I argue, most other Black people with physical features less stereotypical of Blackness are familiar with, is a result of the miscegenation practices that occurred in plantation society as a result of White men raping Black women. Efforts to maintain features attributed to mixedness can be linked to *blanqueamiento* practices in the historic sense that those who were culturally Black but appeared less so because of a lack of Afrocentric physical features were afforded more privilege in society (Hernandez 2001). In the U.S. and abroad this legacy can now be understood in terms of colorism. While ideas of colorism in terms of privilege and discrimination did not arise during my

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<sup>7</sup> Racial category with historical significance in New Orleans as an intermediate category between Blackness and Whiteness that was uncommon in other parts of the U.S. post colonization through the present. Currently has connotation of racial privilege, color privilege, and generally notions of being better than or at least distinct from other Black people.

time in the salon, racial ideology surrounding mixedness as connected to ideas of colorism did.

### **Stylists in the Salon.**

There were 6 people working in the salon throughout my time there. My research focuses on the 4 who were the most constant and central to my data: Jessica, Lily, Ewind, and Raquela. Jessica owned the salon, worked as a stylist, and trained the other stylists. Lily is Jessica's younger sister who was also a stylist and served as second in command when Jessica was not present. Lily and Jessica were almost exactly ten years apart in age with Lily being 40 and Jessica being 50 during my fieldwork. Ewind was the third central stylist with no familial connection to the other workers but was their friend and I would consider her to be their extended kin. Even though I refer to everyone working in the salon as stylists I should note that Raquela's job was not a stylist but rather she washed and set hair exclusively. Since this act was fairly standard across clients, it did not involve much negotiation with the clients and therefore less communication. I argue this is related to how her language skills in English are less proficient than the other stylists. Though I heard her have brief interactions in English, she did not consider herself to speak English, unlike the other stylists who did.

Though this work focuses primarily on the experiences of women in the salon, perspectives from one Dominican-American man will also be considered when contextualizing and complicating broader Dominican experiences within the United States. Rubén was Jessica's 22-year-old son who had recently graduated from college<sup>8</sup> when I interviewed him in the salon. The stylists all spoke of their children frequently,

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<sup>8</sup> The trip to Europe that becomes central to Jessica's positionality in chapter 1 was taken in celebration of Rubén's graduation.

though Jessica's description of racial ideologies in tension with her son's interested me in particular. I was able to meet Jessica's daughter and Lily's two daughters (who will be discussed in further detail in chapter 3) on numerous occasions since my time in the salon overlapped with their elementary and middle school summer vacations. Rubén, however, was only in Atlanta for a brief visit since he still lived in New York where he had previously attended college. I was able to quickly build rapport with Rubén for several reasons: he came towards the end of my fieldwork and I'd already built rapport with others in the salon, we were only a year apart in age and academic trajectories, and we both considered ourselves a part of the African diaspora. For these reasons, I believe I was able to collect data from Rubén that was rich enough to include in my analysis though I only spent one day with him and he was not my target demographic for this study. During his interview, I was sure to inquire further about the differing racial ideologies that he and his mother shared and through this conversation I learned more about his identity formation as the "son-of-an-immigrant" who had spent his educational life between Atlanta and New York and his home life between the United States and the Dominican Republic. His perspectives serve to enhance the discussions of place and belonging in chapter 1, racialization in chapter 2, and raciolinguistic ideologies in chapter 4. Rubén's experiences are exemplary of the hybrid nature of belonging second-generation (im)migrants to the U.S. face through linguistic and racial performativity.

After spending time with Rubén, it was clear that he saw himself as both Hispanic and Black and thus had unique linguistic repertoires available to him. He communicated in predominantly Black English with me and Dominican Spanish with his mother. While I wouldn't characterize his English use the same way as the stylists, I

would consider his English to have aspects of Dominican Spanish as well. Though a thorough analysis of his linguistic ability could be analyzed in depth in another study, I will say he demonstrated high competence in both Spanish and English<sup>9</sup>.

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

Irvine and Gal's use of the theoretical framework of semiotics to develop their conceptualization of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure is integral to my analysis of racialization and languaging race (2000). When exploring racial ideologies in chapter 2 and raciolinguistic ideologies in chapter 4, I consider the ways in which Whiteness and English-speaking have become iconic of humanity in the U.S. Furthermore, I consider the ways in which iconization of Whiteness and English-speaking get taken up in the Black community through notions of colorism and othering. Finally, I consider the ways in which members of the Black, Latinx, and Afro-Latinx diasporas<sup>10</sup> are erased from U.S. raciolinguistic ideologies through complex hierarchical systems of phenotypic and linguistic valorization enacted by members of these same groups.

Elinor Ochs's application of indexicality (Ochs 1992) to gender can be applied to questions of ethnicity and race in the salon. Ochs (1992) outlines the importance of non-exclusive, constitutive, and temporally transcendent relationships between language and gender. Questions of non-exclusive language and ethnicity are addressed in the final chapter as I engage with questions concerning identity and language use in the salon. The

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<sup>9</sup> The role of intergenerational cognitive issues such as language acquisition and language socialization could influence how/why Rubén's English and Spanish are marked differently than the Dominican stylists in the salon (Jennifer Reynolds, personal communication 2019). The relationship between biological constraints and raciolinguistic biases will need to be unpacked in future work.

<sup>10</sup> There may be overlap in who falls into each of these categories which is addressed throughout the thesis mostly through an analysis of Jessica's son, Rubén.

non-exclusive relationship between language and ethnicity highlights the ways English and Spanish language index social information pertaining to ethnicity. Her theory of constitutive relations can be seen in chapter two when considering the way language and discourse by stylists and clients directly indexed stances about quality of hair and social activities like the hair straightening process via the *Dominican Blowout* which in turn indirectly indexes the social meaning of Blackness. Dualistically, the role of constitutive relations can also be seen as an index of gender when considering the *Dominican Blowout* as a genre which indirectly indexes gender via the act of straightening the hair being an unmarked activity for women in this culture. Finally, hair can be seen as the temporally transcendent relation which is recontextualized (Ochs 1992) time and again as a ritualistic act for both stylists as actors and clients as recipients in chapter one.

I analyze race using a combination of perspectives from Critical Race Theory and Racial Formation Theory. I consider race a sociocultural and political process in which phenotypes are used to construct cultural categories of race that are ever evolving, especially for immigrants to the U.S. who often must negotiate the racial ideologies of the countries they migrate from with those in the U.S. The formation of race necessitates a shared understanding of ideology and the criteria by which people are racialized (Gravlee 2005; Omi and Winant 1994). I examine what happens when ideologies in contact lead to negotiations of the criteria by which people are racialized in the context of the salon. In order for processes of racialization to be fully understood in terms of the consequences and stakes at which people are racialized, those who are marked and marginalized in society must be the ones doing the work. Therefore, work on racialization cannot and should not be neutral but instead take a critical perspective to racialization processes in a



way which challenges the naturalization and essentialization of minoritized bodies (Delgado and Stefancic 2000; Epperson 2004; Vaught and Castagno 2008). While skin color has been studied as central to the racialization process in the United States (Bailey 2000; Gravlee 2005) and the broader Americas (Simmons 2008, 2009), I argue that skin is only part of the way in which bodies become racialized and that those with marked identities are aware of the nuanced and subtle ways in which our entire bodies have historically been objectified beyond only skin color. In this thesis, I consider hair as an everyday experience that genders and racializes Black women in the U.S. My work aims to consider the ways in which Blackness acts as the *authority of center* (Blommaert 2007) in the Dominican salon where diverse Black women engage in the *Dominican Blowout*.

Raciolinguistic ideologies are concerned with the co-constitution of identity through racial and linguistic evaluations. This theory is concerned with the inextricable relationship between race and language to mediate how marked individuals are able to navigate cultural spaces in which they have stigmatized identities recognizable by their phenotypic traits and linguistic practices. I draw on work by Rosa (2019) and Alim and Smitherman (2012). Though Rosa (2019) considers the impact of the White listening subject as integral to his theorization, White identities were not salient to my analysis. Instead I place the experiences of the Dominican stylists and the Black clients at the center of my analysis and consider the ways in which Whiteness inadvertently impacted the women in the salon through fractal recursivity. This is explored further in the second and fourth chapters of the thesis once ideas about place and belonging can be understood in terms of Black hair care and normal linguistic patterns found within the salon.

Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia guides my analysis of language use in

the polycontextual space of the salon. I consider the multiple identities, languages, and linguistic negotiations present in the salon to understand the relevance of heteroglossia in the salon. Bakhtin states, “languages do not exclude each other, but rather intersect with each other in many different ways (1981, 291).” I explore how English and Spanish intersect with each other when the Dominican stylists negotiate interactions between themselves and their English-speaking clients. He continues saying, “...all languages of heteroglossia, whatever the principle underlying them and making each unique, are specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values” (1981, 291). Jane Hill (1995) was the first linguistic anthropologist to use a Bakhtinian framework in her analysis of the indexical relationship between morality and social identity as they relate to various codes used by a single speaker, Don Gabriel. Similarly, I analyze how Spanish and English each served unique and specific purposes for stylists when communicating, and how by communicating in each language they were understood differently by their clients.

### **Data Collection**

I spent the equivalent of one month spanning the end of June to the beginning of August of 2018 collecting data in a Dominican salon situated in the historically Black neighborhood of North Edge near downtown Atlanta. During my time in the salon, I conducted both formal and informal interviews with clients and stylists. When I first got into the salon, I planned on having the recorder run throughout the day, but I realized the stylists didn’t feel comfortable with this and learned to make clear when I was recording. The stylists had questions about how it worked so I showed everyone how to tell when it

was on and we had several conversations about the kinds of naturally occurring speech I wanted to capture and the kinds of naturally occurring speech they felt comfortable with me capturing. As we became more comfortable with each other, Lily would tell me when to stop recording and Raquela would tell me who to interview. I recorded approximately 39 hours of naturally occurring speech, informal interviews, and formal interviews.

The data I captured included recordings and observations of stylists and clients. I had prepared questions before I came into the field that I tried to use whenever I spoke to anyone in the salon but quickly learned that having free hands meant mobility for me to move around the salon between phone calls, informal interviews, and grabbing bobby pins for the stylists. I tried to replicate the kinds of questions I had prepared in talking to each client. My interactions with clients were usually brief. I would begin with an introduction of myself and an explanation of why I was staring, consequently the focus of my project. There were repeat clients that I saw on multiple occasions and built rapport with them. The business in the salon, meaning the volume of clientele and the stylist ability to see them, determined how I was able to communicate with clients. The more business there was, the more there was sound interference. Clients often asked the stylists what I was doing in the salon and the stylists would call me over to explain my project which initiated a lot of the informal interviews I conducted. Ideologies became most apparent during conversations with multiple people when stylists and clients worked together to communicate an idea to me.

I conducted three formal interviews with the stylists: Lily (60:10), Raquela (39:55), and Jessica (53:55). Much of the information I gathered was already known through conversations I had with them during slow days. The formal interviews with

stylists were most helpful in having them clearly articulate their migratory trajectories. When we spoke informally in the salon, they would speak about living in different places, but they did not do this in a linear way. I conducted the formal interviews with stylists at the end of my fieldwork and this also served as a way for me to have individual moments with each of them to make myself vulnerable as a researcher as well. There were many times during my fieldwork when the stylists would speak and I couldn't keep up with the conversations in Spanish and subsequently relied on the recorder to capture the data to be analyzed at a later time. The formal interviews were a time when the stylists could ask me questions and we could have conversations with fewer miscommunications because I was less overwhelmed. The formal interviews with stylists were also a time for me to thank them for allowing me into the salon and in their lives.

The interviews with Jessica and Lily lasted longer than with Raquela. Jessica had a lot of questions about what I'd found out from my time and still seemed confused about why I was in the salon. This was a difficult interview for me as I wanted to be clear, but felt my limited language skills inhibiting my communication in a way that I was concerned effected my ethical duty as an anthropologist. I did what I could to be transparent and explained myself as many times as she asked.

While I had good rapport with everyone in the salon, my relationship with Lily was the strongest. As I'll show in further chapters, Lily often relied on me as a language broker (García-Sánchez 2014; Reynolds and Orellana 2009). We joked a lot and she compared me to her daughters several times. I think because she perceived my language skills to be akin to her daughters' language skills, she had more patience to communicate with me in Spanish. She became comfortable with me at the fastest rate and by far asked

me for the most favors and the most extensive ones. Even though we were not close in age, she was the youngest stylist and I think this also added to our relationship. I tried to evenly represent all of the stylists in my research, but due to these reasons the richest data came from naturally occurring speech that I recorded between Lily and her clients.

The only formal interview I was able to conduct with a client came about from repeated exposure to one client who had gone through higher education and was curious about my degree and research and eager to be a part of it. Minnie is Jessica's client and while we couldn't match schedules for an in-person interview, she did agree to a phone interview when I was able to ask her questions about the services she received in the salon without worry of the stylists overhearing. Since she was a repeat client, she was very loyal to Jessica and spoke mostly of how her experience at this salon was better than other salons. We shared similar experiences of racialization and though transcript data is not used from her interviews because they did not reflect the broader patterns across the data, hearing her story lent validation to my own and for that I am thankful. The interview with Minnie ended up being 34 minutes. Informal interviews were more helpful to my analysis than formal interviews in general.

I attended two festivals over the summer in order to understand the broader implications of studying the *Dominican Blowout* in the context of Atlanta, Georgia. The first festival was Essence Festival held annually by the Black cultural magazine, Essence, over Independence Day weekend in New Orleans, Louisiana. The second festival I attended was the annual curly hair festival, Curlfest, held in Brooklyn, New York. Essence Fest celebrates the U.S. Black experience with vendors of all kinds of products, celebrity motivation speakers, and concerts. I spent the majority of my time in the Beauty

Bungalow where they had raffles and giveaways for beauty products mostly centered around Black women's naturally curly hair, though some booths catered to makeup, skin care, and men's beards. Curlfest was more of an international festival and did not focus on any one cultural experience in the U.S. or abroad and instead aimed to celebrate curly diversity. They also had an array of vendors giving away naturally curly hair products for a variety of curly hair types. Curlfest was an outdoor festival whereas Essence's Beauty Bungalow was held in the Convention Center. For the first time in their 5 years, Curlfest will be held in New York during mid-summer and again in Atlanta during September of 2019.

Upon hearing of my imminent travel plans to these festivals, Lily exclaimed, "Amber, tú no eres fácil!" which literally translates to "Amber, you're not easy!". With my limited knowledge of Spanish, I asked what she meant by this which led to an eruption of laughter from the other stylists who worked collaboratively to explain to me the significance of this phrase in Dominican Spanish to mean that I wasn't easy to please. I thought this was exemplary of the interactions I observed and took part in at the salon. In this one instance, there were misunderstandings, collaborative communicative work, and cross-cultural communication. Though the stakes that I explore in the rest of the thesis point to heavy topics concerning racialization and discrimination, my time in the salon was characterized by light-hearted banter among friends who shared a workspace and cultural experiences.

### **Time & White Public Space.**

When I first started my fieldwork, I ambitiously imagined being in the salon from the moment the salon opened at 9AM until it closed at 6PM. I quickly learned, however,

that the advertised hours were not necessarily the hours the stylists worked. The salon would often open around 10:30AM and close around 8PM despite the advertised times. Previous scholarship has explored the concept of time in terms of national origin like Simmons's work with Dominicans (2009) and Das's work with Indians (2016) in which they argue each of these respective groups has their own cultural understanding of time in which lateness, to differing extents, is considered culturally acceptable to the point that punctuality is associated with U.S. Americanness. In my own culture, the perpetual lateness normalized in the Black community is referred to as CPT or colored people time. While the term colored originated in a time before terms like Black or African American were made popular and is now generally recognized as derogatory, I propose that CPT is a concept that can be used to describe various groups of people considered of color. This inclusive terminology matters in the context of my fieldwork because of the various ethnic identities present in the salon.

During my fieldwork, I found both Dominican and Black women in the salon adhering to CPT. While occasionally, a Black client would become frustrated if the salon opened later than advertised, it was generally understood that the salon would open an hour or more later than the business stated. Furthermore, misunderstandings surrounding time were usually experienced because the client was concerned about adhering to time expectations beyond the salon in White public space (J. H. Hill 1998). While in White public space this might impact a business's success, I argue that the shared cultural understanding of time as being fluid created positive affect between stylists and clients. For people of color living as minorities in the U.S., part of assimilating to cultural expectations in the U.S. means adhering to time expectations in White public spaces

regardless of cultural norms (Hill, 1998). The salon serves as a safe space not only for women, but more importantly for women of color.

I mentioned earlier that the salon wouldn't always open when they stated, but they did usually stay open much later than their closing time of 6 in the evening. Jessica said they would take their last client at 6, not that they would finish their last client at 6. This meant clients often came right before closing and stayed hours after to get their hair done. Sometimes clients would insist on being seen though the stylists were already pushing a ten-hour work day and Jessica would stay to take them. She always insisted on doing a thorough job even when the clients would try to get her to cut corners to shorten the process.

### **Data Analysis**

My modes of analysis will draw on discourse and media analysis looking at naturally occurring speech from interactions within the salon, formal interviews, informal interviews, and photos taken of the neighborhood of North Edge. I draw on media analysis primarily to look at photos that situate the neighborhood of North Edge and highlight the aspects of Afrocentricity present around the salon. When engaging in discourse analysis I used line-by-line analyses looking for instances of positionality, alignment, indexicality, and ideologies within a polycontextual framework (Bakhtin 1981; Blommaert 2007; Goffman 1981; Keane 2011). I consider the ways in which positionality is “local, inconsistent, changing, and complex” as well as how subjects’ positionality is responding to others in the interaction (Feliciano-Santos 2019). The patterns that came out of my data and organized my chapters concerned place, race, and communication. I indexed my data according to themes like race, ethnicity, hair care,



language use, and non-verbal communication. All transcripts were made using allegro-speech spellings to capture the oral qualities of colloquial speech as they happened in the salon. Summaries of each of the corresponding chapters are given below.

### **Chapter Summaries**

Chapter 1: Spatial Hybridity in North Edge situates the salon in the broader context of place and belonging for the U.S. Black clients and Dominican stylists. I discuss the hybridity of the salon as a space which complicates notions of safety and risk for the women engaging in the *Dominican Blowout*. I also examine the salon in the context of the historically Black neighborhood of North Edge. I analyze identity from the perspectives of race and language as a consequence of place in the two following chapters.

Chapter 2: *Suave* and *Nappy* as Racial Indexes addresses the various racial ideologies expressed by clients and stylists. While I engage in autoethnographic methods throughout my thesis, this is the chapter when it becomes most salient as the data I gathered often included conversations centered around racializing me. I challenge the boundaries of what is considered Black in a globalized world through the salon. I engage in criticism surrounding the continued application of the one drop rule. I use the distinctions between ethnic and racial Blackness distinguished at the beginning of the introduction while considering the shared legacy of the African diaspora. This chapter largely concerns the role of hair as a semiotic tool for the racialization process. The next chapter builds on ideas of place and race by considering how language complicates conceptualization of identity for stylists and clients in the salon.

Chapter 3: Daily Salon Interactions lays the foundational descriptive data on the

various types of interactions in the salon focusing on each group of participants engaged in interactions throughout my time in the salon. While Black clients spoke predominantly English in the salon, Dominican stylists spoke in English and Spanish and as such had options concerning how they communicated with each other and the clients. I also consider the ways non-verbal communication was used to aid in hair styling communication between stylists and clients to supplement verbal communication. The types of interactions I observed included stylists to stylists, clients to clients, stylists to clients, and stylists to their children. My presence as neither a stylist nor a client and my impact on communication as observer, translator, and interpreter is discussed further in this chapter as well. I provide examples of each type of interaction and analyze the ways in which dynamic linguistic decisions are negotiated in everyday interactions, particularly between stylists and their children and stylists and their favorite clients.

Chapter 4: Raciolinguistic Negotiations of Identity and Belonging is a culmination of themes from the previous chapters. Notions of identity and belonging are questioned based on varying raciolinguistic ideologies of clients and stylists. The polycontextual nature of these differing ideologies is considered by examining the relevance of space and place. While in chapter 2 semiotic theory was applied to notions of racialization through direct and indirect indexicality, in this chapter that conceptualization is expanded to include the semiotic relationship between hair, race, and language.

## CHAPTER 1

### SPATIAL HYBRIDITY IN NORTH EDGE

When starting my fieldwork, there were several Dominican salons to choose from in the Atlanta metropolitan area, but this one was of particular interest for several reasons. The title contained Dominican and referenced a New York borough which is known for having a large Dominican population. Therefore, the title alone indexed important migration trajectories at differing scales. The salon was near several Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCUs) which led me to believe students from those institutions might be clients at the salon. I only met a few college students who attended the HBCUs in the area, but the stylists assured me that they had more clientele in the Winter when school was in session.

According to the salon owner, Jessica, the location of the salon in North Edge was intentional and preferable when she opened her business. She sought out Black clientele because these were the women most interested in receiving the services offered at the salon, most notably the *Dominican Blowout*.

*En Nueva York es diferente aquí. Por el – Lo' clientes son los diferentes. Yo (no?) creo que realmente son los salones. Yo creo que son los clientes que hacen la diferencia. En Nueva York, los clientes prefieren mantener el pelo con químicos o analizado, menos natural. Entonces yo prefiero en otro tipo de servicio. Aquí, la gente tiene pelo más natural. Tiene menos químico. Quiere- Entonces El-es diferente. Eso es lo que hace la diferencia: El cliente.*

In New York, it's different from here. Because-The clients are different. I don't think that it's actually that the salons are different. I think that it's the clients that make the difference. In New York, the clients prefer to have their hair straightened with chemicals or relaxers, less naturally. So I prefer a different kind

of service. Here, the people have more natural hair. They have less chemicals. They want-so they-it's different. That's what makes the difference: the cliente.

While Atlanta does have a large population of Dominican and Dominican Americans in the larger metropolitan area, Jessica and the other stylists chose to drive thirty plus minutes from their suburban homes to the salon in order to tap into a more niche market of Blackness. The stylists were not interested in catering towards their Dominican neighborhood which already had many Dominican salons, but instead focused their attention on Black neighborhoods. This was done in order to minimize the competition as there were more Dominican salons where they lived and to increase the likelihood of getting clients. Since the salon did not make appointments and only worked with walk-ins, being in a neighborhood where clients were likely to walk in was important. This is in striking contrast to the findings of Jorge Duany's work in Washington Heights where Dominicans preferred to make themselves distinct from other ethnic groups in the area by only patronizing businesses explicitly catering to Dominicans (1998). While Dominicans in North Edge were as proud of their cultural heritage as the Dominicans in Washington Height were (as evidenced through the name of the salon and their excitement to discuss the Dominican Republic to clients who had been) they sought out intercultural business with the Black community in an area of considerable distance from their homes.

There are two main arguments that I support with ethnographic data through media and discourse analysis throughout this chapter. The first argument (1) pertains to the salon as a hybrid space which complicates Urciuoli's (1996) theory of the inner and outer sphere. I conceptualize the salon as both public and intimate. The salon is public in that it is a business open to anyone who comes in, depending of course on the discretion of Jessica. The services offered in the salon are intimate involving a private part of the

body, especially for the women of the global Black diaspora who came into the salon. Because the salon is characterized as this hybrid space, it complicates the ways salons have previously been understood as traditionally safe spaces for women to learn aspects of womanhood. While my first argument focuses on the importance of the salon as a hybrid space of analysis, my second argument (2) situates the salon in the broader context of place within the United States, Atlanta, and the historically Black neighborhood of North Edge. The placement of the salon and the people in it within these broader contexts addresses questions of belonging for immigrants and members of the global African diaspora in relation to each other.

This chapter examines the importance of place on various scales by considering the role of North Edge as a location for the salon situated inside of Atlanta with stylists from the Dominican Republic and New York. I continue to characterize the salon through the use of technology in maintaining globalized connections. While considering the globalized connections maintained in the salon, I add an analysis of the interactions between Dominican stylists and others inside the salon with connections to Puerto Rico and Haiti, both of which have unique relationships to the Dominican Republic. I conduct this analysis in order to better understand the ways place impacts a sense of belonging for the women in the salon. Finally, I consider the ways in which the privilege of mobility reflected through class differences indexes ideas of cosmopolitanism.

### **Hybridity and Safety.**

Within a broader theory of structuralism, Bonnie Urciuoli's (1996) conceptual framework of the inner and outer spheres determined by private and public spaces allows for the conceptualization of the salon as a hybrid space for the stylists and clients in the

salon. Instead of considering the salon a space that exists in dichotomous spheres, I consider the salon a hybrid space that has aspects of openness and intimacy. The salon is a public business meaning anyone can enter and the clients in the space often do not have relationships outside of a shared hair salon. The salon is intimate because of the stylist-client relationships in which clients entrust stylists with a part of their body that is normally not accessible by others, especially for Black women considering the ways in which Black hair has been used to discriminate against Black women. Previous research has studied beauty salons as safe spaces in which women engage in gendered hair care practices (Candelario 2000; Jacobs-Huey 2006). I too argue that the Dominican beauty salon is a safe space for Black women to engage in hair care practices that are not only gendered but also racialized.

Hair salons serve as a safe space for learning the boundaries of gender and race for stylists and clients because of their intimacy. The term salon as related to hair in U.S. usage is gendered toward women, even though services are not inherently gendered. The work of Alexander (2003) explores what happens when what can be understood as a safe space for women is violated and shared with men. I also examine how notions of safety in the salon are in tension with class, linguistic, ethnic, and racial differences. Racial differences between women in salons have been previously researched (Alexander 2003; Candelario 2000; Harvey 2005; Jacobs-Huey 2006; Scanlon 2007; Williams 1999). I expand upon this work by considering stylists and clients relationships to hair as well as by accounting for language differences between Black and Dominican women in the subsequent chapters.

### **Dominican (Im)migration.**

When thinking about the experiences of Dominicans and Dominican Americans now living in the United States, it is important to consider their migratory experiences and how that experience has impacted their sense of belonging in the broader U.S. None of the stylists immigrated directly to Atlanta from the Dominican Republic. Most of them spent substantial time in the Northeast before moving to Atlanta. Previous research on Dominicans in the U.S. has focused largely on the Northeast (Bailey 2000; Duany 1998; Marte 2011; Torres-Saillant 1998). According to PEW research Center, “about eight-in-ten Dominicans (79%) live in the Northeast, and nearly half (47%) live in New York (López 2015).” In 2014, the states with the highest populations of Dominicans included: New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Florida, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Georgia, and Connecticut (“Hispanic Population and Origin in Select U.S. Metropolitan Areas, 2014” 2016).

While the largest populations of Dominicans live in the Northeast, there has been substantial growth of the Dominican population in the South. Nearly half of the Hispanic population growth rate has occurred in the South in the past ten years with regions in Georgia among the top ten fastest growing counties in the country (Stepler and Lopez 2016). The majority of the people who self-identify as Hispanic in Georgia choose not to exclusively speak English at home; and of those who speak languages other than English at home, nearly equal amounts reported being able to speak English very well compared to those who reported being able to speak English less than very well (Pew, 2014). In chapter 3, I examine the complex relationship Dominican stylists have with English, especially in terms of stylist and client interactions in which stylists have a domain-

specific knowledge of English.

Atlanta is the ninth most populous location for Dominicans and Dominican Americans in the U.S. with a population of 16,000 in 2014 (“Hispanic Population and Origin in Select U.S. Metropolitan Areas, 2014” 2016). The location of Atlanta, Georgia was selected for this research because it has a considerable population of Blacks as well as a growing number of people of Dominican heritage living there (Lipski 2008); therefore, not only were there interesting cultural interactions between the groups but various linguistic decisions were necessary for both groups to interact.

***Ethnic Enclaves.*** The salon was in an interesting location not just because of the previously discussed statistics, but because it was situated within the ethnic enclave of North Edge. Previous scholarship has considered the relevance of space and place when considering Latinx immigration within the United States and the various ethnic group connections that are apparent. While there are several pockets of Dominicans present in large cities, these pockets are often situated among other ethnic groups, like Blacks (Candelario 2000; Duany 1998; Marte 2011). There are ways that pockets of Dominicans connect to each other such as through foodways as Marte has studied in the context of New York (2011), but there are also ways pockets of Dominicans connect to the surrounding ethnic groups as is seen in Candelario’s work when the Dominicans in Washington, D.C. grapple with notions of Blackness among African Americans in the city (Candelario 2007). Ramos-Zayas has found similar results when looking at the relationship between Latinx migrants and Blacks. Her work shows that how Blackness is enacted, utilized, and up-taken can look different depending on the actor and the audience. The performance of Blackness is also perceived differently by Latinx people



living in the United States versus in Latin America based on differing societal valuations of Blackness (Ramos-Zayas 2007, 2011).

It is clear from the works mentioned above and in my own autoethnographic account in the preface that while there is a level of autonomy present in how one identifies, the racial identification process can be further influenced by location within the United States, in terms of historical differences between the North and South, and even more specifically within the populations of these cities. This information becomes salient when thinking about the importance of Atlanta being a historically Black city and analyzing the relationship Dominicans feel between their location and racial identity. Ethnic enclaves matter when thinking about immigration and migration because, like beauty salons, they represent safe spaces for the people in them. They are a place where connections to heritage can be found and culture shock and othering processing may be minimalized.

*Expectations tied to the salon as a type of space.* Another way in which the hybridity of the salon as a space became apparent was through an analysis of the socialization and habituation in the salon. Though the salon was a business, clients spent several hours with one-on-one attention from the stylists. This time was often broken up over the several steps of the *Dominican Blowout* (discussed in preface). Nevertheless, during the hours that clients and stylists spent together, certain patterns emerged surrounding cultural hair care practice similarities and differences.

The time and money that we spend on ourselves in our favorite stylist's chair is not a selfish act, but instead a result of societal pressure that we have learned to enjoy.

Marcel Mauss's (1979) theory of the techniques of the body<sup>11</sup> are directly applicable to the hair socialization process that clients and stylists learn. When thinking about hair as a part of the racialized and gendered body, it is clear that what individuals learn to do with hair is not naturalized but instead socialized. Mauss states, "In every society, everyone knows and has to know and learn what [they have] to do in all conditions (1979, 120)." Since individuals learn different things based on differing cultural experiences, hair socialization varies based on gender and raciocultural experiences and according to Mauss, "These 'habits' do not vary just with individuals and their imitations; they vary especially between societies, educations, proprieties and fashions, prestiges (1979, 101)." While Dominican stylists are socialized into doing hair, Black clients are socialized into caring for hair at a salon. Both groups are socialized into straightening hair in some way, and according to Mauss, "these actions are more or less habitual and more or less ancient in the life of the individual and the history of the society (1979, 120)."

Many of the stylists were socialized into doing hair though it was not everyone's desired or first career choice. According to the stylists, growing up in a Dominican household meant learning to wash, set, and style various hair textures. This process meant that the stylists did not expect Dominican women to need their services as often as Black women might. In the Black community, going to the salon to get your hair done or fixed is the process we learn in addition to the process of doing our own hair. The hair care we learn to do at home may involve the occasional touch-up or roller set at houses privileged enough to have hooded dryers and straightening irons, but most Black women expect to go to the salon at least once if not more on a monthly basis. It's not that Black women

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<sup>11</sup> Originally published in 1934.

don't know how to do their hair, but instead prefer to pay someone to do it for them and usually trust that the stylist who is trained to do hair will be able to do the hair better.

At the salon, the haircare straightening ritualization started as young as five years old, but the socialization process started from infancy for Black and Dominican children in the salon. The presence of children in the salon is integral to the continuation of the tradition of the hair socialization process. Children of all ages came into the salon with their mothers either to get their own hair done or observe someone else getting their hair done. Usually little interaction occurred between clients in the salon except when children were present. Women occasionally helped each other in caring for children in the salon while the mother had her hair done. Parents often dropped children off and returned later to pick them up after the hair ritualization was complete. This practice was especially common in late July when school resumed in Georgia public schools. The stylists also brought their own children into the salon, either to have their hair done or simply to keep them busy during long summer days. The children of the stylists helped out where they could, but mostly played at the front of the shop.

### **Ethnic Enclave of North Edge.**

When asked about the difference between her experiences in salons in New York compared to Atlanta, Jessica highlighted the cultural differences between the clients which situates the salon as a part of my overall analysis for this chapter and the following chapters by considering the importance of place.

*Yo creo que ya las personas le gusta mas tener pelo lacio o natural [en Atlanta]. No con tanto rizo. No tener un natural como afro. Allá la gente prefiere tener el pelo lacio. La mayoría personas quieren el pelo lacio. Porque es más fácil. Es frio se ve se arregla más. En aquí las personas usan mucho el pelo natural. Se rolaban y sigan caminado. Vienen un día al salón, se pongan derecho. Pero hay mucha gente con el pelo natural. Yo creo que la diversidad de las personas*

*allá...Multicu- diferente culturas. Eso hacen que también sea diferente la personas aquí las personas. Hay menos. Hay más Afroamericanos o mericanos. Y los hispanos islanos somos menos. Yo creo que también se hace la diferencia.*

I think that people like having straight hair o natural hair more [in Atlanta]. Not so curly. Not natural like an afro. There the people prefer to have straight hair. The majority of people want straight hair because it's easier. When it's cold, you go more to get it done. Here the people use natural hair a lot. They were rolling and continue walking. They come one day to the salon, get it straight. But they are a lot of people with natural hair. I think that the diversity of people there...multi-different cultures. That makes it different from the people here too. There's less. There are more African Americans. And the Hispanics, islanders, we're fewer. I think that makes a difference too.

Therefore, Jessica is not only aware of the cultural differences between populations in New York and Atlanta but capitalizes on these differences by considering the ways in which her business can benefit from these differences. Furthermore, Jessica positions herself as distinct from *afro-americanos* and instead reiterates her position as *hispano y islano*. However, even though she views Atlanta as having a population that is different from the group she identifies with, she prefers that Atlanta is majority Black because she perceives Black people in Atlanta to have natural hair that wants to be straightened using the *Dominican Blowout* because the majority of people for Jessica want straight hair, there is a majority Black population in Atlanta, and Black people do not have straight hair but instead need it straightened which is where she comes in.

While Atlanta is a well-known hub of Black culture in the United States, the specific area of North Edge is an even more central location for Blacks in Atlanta. This became evident not only based on the clientele of the salon, but also through an analysis of the neighborhood which revealed street art depicting Blackness in various forms. Famous Black civil rights activists Martin Luther King Jr. (Figure 1.1) and former NFL quarterback turned civil rights activist Colin Kaepernick (Figure 1.2) were two prominent



Figure 1.1 Civil rights activist Martin Luther King, Jr. painted on building directly across from Figure 1.2.



Figure 1.2 Leader of police brutality protests in NFL and former 49ers quarterback, Collin Kaepernick, painted on building directly across from Figure 1.1 with caption reading: “Not all heroes wear capes!!!” with the artist’s social media handle and an advertisement for *Braids & Beauty* next to painting.

paintings in North Edge near the salon. While Martin Luther King Jr. is recognized as a national hero in the United States for his methods of peaceful protesting early in his career, Colin Kaepernick’s role in civil rights activism is more hotly contested.

The two paintings were directly across the street from each other and as I took pictures of both, the similarities and differences of the two leaders struck me. Both identify as Black men who were unpopular in their own time for acts of civil disobedience in the name of racial equality. Martin Luther King Jr. might be described as someone who stood for the rights of Blacks in the United States without much contestation in the broad context of the United States. Colin Kaepernick is known as an NFL player who habitually kneeled during the national anthem to raise awareness about police brutality against Black men and was eventually blacklisted by the NFL in unofficial response to complaints about what some have deemed an unpatriotic protest with no place in football, despite the overwhelming amount of Black men's bodies used for profit in the sport. The kneeling Kaepernick first introduced in 2016 spread at several levels including professional, collegiate, and high school in a variety of sports to show solidarity in raising awareness concerning the disproportionate amount of Black men killed due to police brutality. While the Black community acknowledges efforts made by both men, I doubt similar artwork characterizing Kaepernick as a hero would be displayed so prominently in a neighborhood less saturated in Blackness due to the controversy surrounding ideas about patriotism connected to protests led by him in the U.S.

The painting of Kaepernick was not the only image of him present in the area. A storefront window displayed a photo of the former NFL quarterback after a press conference (figure 1.3<sup>12</sup>). What's striking about these images of Kaepernick, in addition

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<sup>12</sup> Since the image was behind a glass window, it was hard to capture. I distorted the color contrast to make it clearer.

to their presence in the neighborhood being emblematic of Blackness, are how his hair is styled in both images. While the afro was a largely popular hairstyle in the U.S. during the 1960s, during the same time Martin Luther King Jr. became popular, it is not seen as often now. Since the height of the afro's popularity in the 1960s alongside the Black Power movement, it has been associated with Afrocentric ideals. This artwork is emblematic of the neighborhood as essentially Black and representative of the ideals present in the area<sup>13</sup>.



Figure 1.3 Photo of Collin Kaepernick in storefront window.

Though this was a U.S. Black neighborhood and the Dominican salon was situated inside of it, these were not the only ethnic minorities represented. The corner store, Beauty Supply, and African hair braiding locations in the area were all owned by members of ethnic groups that were neither U.S. Black nor Dominican but catered to the

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<sup>13</sup> The images also evoke a similar sense of martyrdom that will be explored in a later work.

U.S. Black neighborhood. Additionally, when thinking about the global market, products designed for Blacks in the diaspora are readily available in a way that they would not normally be outside of predominantly U.S. Black areas. Since my time in the field was primarily in North Edge, I can only speak for the availability of products and services for the Black community and not for the Dominican stylists, but the Dominican salon did contribute to the availability of culture specific services for Black women in the area.

While some may argue that the U.S. Black community is not an immigrant community and therefore cannot empathize with the immigrant experience, I would argue that the U.S. Black community shares an experience of marginalization created through their diasporic experience and niche communities, like this one in North Edge, have formed in response to this phenomenon that create safe spaces similar to those safe spaces created by immigrant groups. These images of civil rights leaders in North Edge represent the tension in safety felt within the community, but danger felt outside of the community. Members of North Edge felt strongly enough about what these images, and consequently the leaders in them, represented to have them depicted in their neighborhood and not to alter them even though they are in areas accessible by the broader public. The message these leaders represent, however, are indexical of the broader U.S. discourse surrounding racial inequalities faced by Black people, more specifically Black men. Though the presence of these images speaks to the safety of the neighborhood, they also speak to the danger outside of the neighborhood within the broader United States for Blacks. The tension between safety and danger within the United States for Blacks is explored further in Chapters 2 and 3 which address how racialization and linguistic decisions impact Dominicans as a part of the broader African



diaspora.

### **Hybridity and Belonging.**

The previous section considered the tension in safety felt within the context of North Edge. This section will explore how safety is created by stylists and clients within the business of the salon as a hybrid space for cultural and linguistic diversity. When business was slow in the salon it was common for stylists to use multiple forms of technology to connect them with others and their Dominican heritage. This was often done through music, phones, and television. Sometimes music and the television would play simultaneously as individual stylists felt the urge to play songs. There was no stereo system as I've seen in other salons I've been to, but instead individual stylists would use their phones to play music that could be heard throughout the salon as it suited them without much regard for those around them, though no one seemed to care either way. The music was usually bachata or merengue, which are staples of Dominican heritage. The stylists softly sang along while doing hair and moved to the rhythm of the music.

Stylists primarily used the Whatsapp and Facebook applications, which are both owned by Facebook, to communicate with others. This could reflect an invested interest in Facebook to enhance globalized communication through the internet since both of these applications are used to connect people often on a global scale, as is the case for the women in the salon. Whatsapp has increased in usage worldwide in the few years it has been around. The appeal of Whatsapp includes the ability to communicate across platforms and groups free of charge for SMS texting, group messages, voice recordings, pictures, and videos. It has become a way to enact closeness at a distance (Kumar and Sharma 2016). These phone apps are important to note because they reflected differing

efforts the stylists went through to stay connected to their community. This included communicating with people in Atlanta, the Northeastern U.S., and the Dominican Republic.

Lenihan (2011) argues that the translation of Facebook from English to other languages allows for the creation of both online and national communities and that the inclusion of minority and minoritized languages is of even more importance. Though Lenihan makes this argument for the importance of Irish and Welsh in the U.K., I believe there is room to apply this theory to Spanish in a U.S. context. While Spanish is by no means equally minoritized as a world language the way Irish and Welsh are, in the U.S. the use of Spanish is associated with a racially stigmatized identity. Therefore, having access to Facebook in Spanish allowed the stylists to enjoy the app in a globalized world by connecting them to people in various places using English and Spanish. The ability to easily connect with others was important for the stylists to maintain their social relationships beyond Atlanta in a globalized world.

Aside from using their phones for music and applications, the stylists also used the call feature of their phones on a regular basis both during breaks and while working with clients. The business phone would ring all day with professional and personal inquiries. When I first got to the salon, Jessica asked that I answer the phones in exchange for my time observing the salon. People would call looking for specific stylists and with more general questions about the salon services. Stylists were occasionally able to do hair with one hand while talking on the phone with the other. Ewind would tuck her phone into her bra strap to have her hands free to do hair and still hold a conversation with the phone on speaker phone. They mentioned to me that not all salons allowed them

the freedom to communicate during the day the way Jessica did. This freedom was important for morale in the workplace and building a sense of belonging within the salon as they shared the value of communication with those outside of the salon.

The TV was almost always on and programmed to Spanish channels. When I first got to the salon the World Cup was playing daily. The Dominican Republic did not make it into the World Cup, but the stylists cheered for the other teams as if they were their own often times making claims to one team over another sometimes, but not always, based on shared linguistic abilities or Latinx identity. Most often, the most skilled teams and players were the ones being rooted for whether that aligned with a shared identity or not. The stylists would explode into cheers or cursing in response to the game. The clients, however, hardly ever interacted with the TV regardless of what was playing. On two occasions I came into the salon and the *Real*, a U.S. morning show hosted by a racially diverse panel of women aired in English and geared towards Black women, was on TV. I was surprised and watched as the daytime television programming evolved. When the English channels were playing, I hardly saw the stylists interact with or watch the television even though the content was similar regardless of language – telenovelas, soap operas, staged reality TV shows that usually led to physical altercations, and morning talk shows. While watching Spanish programming allowed stylists to maintain a sense of connectedness with their global linguistic community, their willingness to show English programming showed an interest in maintaining connectedness to the community and culture shared in the salon. On the two occasions that I saw the English programming play, it was not clear what had motivated the channel and linguistic switch. Regardless of why *the Real* was on, I thought it interesting that out of all of the morning daytime

television shows available, the one with a notably racially diverse cast played which included two Black hosts and one Latina host, reflective of the culture in the salon which often had twice as many Black women in it as Dominican stylists.

The motivation for showing one channel over another was rarely made explicit unless the stylists wanted to catch up on certain world events. An event of particular interest when I first began fieldwork was the brutal killing of Dominican teen, Lesandro (Junior) Guzman-Feliz, in the Bronx, New York (Novini and Siegal 2018). Even though none of the stylists had lived in the Bronx, they showed solidarity with the community there through their shared diaspora in New York and the Dominican Republic. The salon seemed to collectively pause as news reports came through investigating the tragedy, and then an uproar of immediate commentary from the stylists would follow. Clients would look up inquisitively but did not engage as the stylists processed in Spanish the effects of the violent crimes on their community in New York and globally. Their interest in this news event and their use of technology at large reflected an investment by the stylists to maintain a connection to their Dominican heritage by making use of their globalized resources.

***D.R. & P.R.*** The use of technology as a medium of connection highlighted the ways in which the hybridization of the salon was positive for stylists and clients, but this was not always the case. For La Bori, I argue that her sense of belonging in the salon was negatively impacted by perceptions of her identity as being connected to Puerto Rico because of the relationship between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. Though my work focuses on the stylists introduced previously, there was one other stylist who worked in the salon during the beginning of the summer but quit in the middle of my

fieldwork. She was referred to as La Bori because of the time she spent living in Puerto Rico despite her proclaimed Dominican identity. While the other women in the salon were connected through years of friendship or family, La Bori was not missed upon her departure and was seldomly mentioned by anyone after she left except for the occasional client asking for her services, which is how I found out she ended her employment claiming to be tired of doing hair according to other stylists. Though this may be true and I never got La Bori's account of why she quit, I believe that the marginalization she experienced in the salon impacted her decision to leave.

The relationship between La Bori and the other stylists was particularly interesting to me because La Bori had expressed a dislike of her nickname as indicative of a Puerto Rican identity that she did not claim. The misalignment between her identity and the way the stylists viewed her as other is important when thinking about the historic relationship between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico in terms of immigration between the two Caribbean countries and their differing racial ideologies connected to classism. Previous research by Duany (1998) has explored this relationship in terms of Puerto Rico and prejudices experienced by Dominican migrants there. While La Bori is a Dominican woman who previously lived in the Dominican Republic and later Puerto Rico, in the Dominican salon in Atlanta her migratory experience in Puerto Rico became more salient for her relationships with other stylists than her national identity as Dominican. Although Ewind also spent time in Puerto Rico, her previous relationship with the other stylists prevented her from experiencing similar marginalization. The clients did not seem to make a distinction between stylists based on migratory experience and instead saw them as homogenous based on a prioritization of a similar linguistic

identity over any other identifying trait.

***D.R. & Haiti.*** Just as the relationship between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic is brought to the United States through the salon, so is the relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The relationship between the two countries who share the island of Hispaniola has been tense since colonization first created that border. Linguistic and cultural differences have even transformed into racism at times with Haitians being the stigmatized group. While the ideologies about Puerto Rico have carried over to the salon and revealed lingering resentments, my research does not reveal this to be the case between Haitians and Dominicans in the context of the salon. Instead, it appears that differences are minimalized between the two in favor of finding alignment in cosmopolitanism through travel. The shared travel experiences by Jessica and her client reveal the ways in which the hybrid nature of the salon lends it to be a space of belonging through the intimacy created in it.

The Dominican Republic and Haiti share a complicated relationship. When Spaniards first colonized the island and the indigenous groups were all but decimated, they were recognized as one country. Then the French came, and the island was divided into thirds with the Spaniards having two of those thirds and the French having one. This led to linguistic and cultural differences on the island. When Haiti gained independence from France, they subsequently attempted to colonize the Dominican Republic which led to deep resentment from those claiming Spanish ancestry on the island until the Dominican Republic claimed independence from Haiti in 1855 (Torres-Saillant 1998). The dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo further complicated this relationship by enforcing racist policies against Haitians and consequently Dominicans with physical

characteristics stereotypically associated with Haitians like darker skin. Under his dictatorship, the island also experienced the Perejil Massacre which was an ethnic genocide of Haitians, and those resembling Haitians, in the Dominican Republic (Gates n.d.).

Similar to the tensions seen between La Bori and the other stylists, I expected to find remnants of the prejudice by Dominicans against Haitians during my fieldwork, but instead witnessed great comradery between Jessica and her clients with connections to Haiti. The relationship I analyze in this section is between Jessica and her client, Jasmine, who was a flight attendant of Haitian heritage that used to fly to the Dominican Republic often for her work. I was able to observe the relationship between Jessica and Jasmine grow from their first meeting when Jasmine came in the salon with her friend and asked Jessica for a consultation while her friend was getting her hair done. During this first meeting, Jasmine bonded with Jessica over their experiences abroad.

Table 1.1 Business of travel

1	Jessica	You ever go to my country?
2	Jasmine	I used to go a lot
3		Like every other month
4		for work
5	Jessica	Oh?
6	Jasmine	Yeah I used to go all the time
7	Jessica	Oh wow
8	Jasmine	I used to be a flight attendant =
9	Jessica	= Oh =
10	Jasmine	= So I used to ha-
11		Always used to get Dominican flights
12	Both	(laughter)
13	Jessica	Um
14		Santo Domingo
15	Jasmine	Yeah
16		(laughter)
17	Jessica	Santiago
18		No

19	Jasmine	Yeah I went-
20		I went to there
21		I went to Santiago
22		Somewhere else
23	Jessica	Puerta plata
24	Jasmine	Yeah

During the above interaction, Jessica was excited to talk about the country she claimed to be her own in line 1. Jasmine explained in lines 2-11 how often and why she went to the Dominican Republic. Jessica in the following lines, almost quizzes Jasmine on her knowledge of the country by naming several popular regions to gauge how familiar Jasmine was with them. The shared experiences in the Dominican Republic discussed in the above table exemplify how intimacy was created in the salon through business interactions. The hybridity of the salon allowed Jessica to not only connect with someone who shared an interest in her culture, but it also led to Jessica earning a new client and consequently more business in her salon as a result. While I argue globalized experiences led to the marginalization of La Bori as a co-worker in the salon, for Jessica and Jasmine globalized experiences connected them through a client-stylist relationship. The difference here is the area of emphasis: Jessica and Jasmine are able to build their relationship by talking about regions with which Jessica is familiar and comfortable. Though Jasmine's friend is the client, the conversation is catered towards Jessica's areas of expertise to which Jasmine can relate. Since Jasmine's friend is already a client of Jessica, there is less of a need to cater to her because her business has already been established. Through the shared conversation between Jessica and Jasmine, they are able to find common ground on which to build their relationship. This conversation was also shortly after Jessica had returned from her trip to Europe which offered an easy transition



into sharing stories about various countries like Spain and Italy.

Table 1.2 Cosmopolitanism of travel

25	Friend	Oh
26		that's right
27		you were on vacation
28	Jasmine	mhmm
29	Jessica	I take a fi:ve
30		flight
31		And I -
32		Yeah
33		Cause I-
34		Fly
35		from New York to Paris
36		Again I go to Paris to:
37		Spaña
38		Espana to::
39		Italia
40		Italia back to Paris
41		Paris to New York again
42	Friend	You went to all those places?
43		O::h
44		Excuse me

Though Jasmine described her travel as work related in Table 1.1, Jessica described hers as cosmopolitan in Table 1.2. In another part of the interaction, Jasmine talks about her experiences in Europe as well and the two bond over their cosmopolitanism together, while the friend who brought Jasmine to the salon plays a minor role of being impressed and asking questions like in the above table during lines 42-44. The friend's lack of engagement during these parts of the group conversation led me to believe that she did not have similar travel experiences.

The privilege of mobility as a form of cosmopolitanism that Jessica and Jasmine discussed were in contrast to the immigration narratives I collected from the stylists. Decisions to move were often dependent upon access to jobs and family. While the

ability to move spoke to a certain level of socioeconomic privilege, the decision to move was not related to notions of cosmopolitanism that Jasmine and Jessica experienced in the Dominican Republic for Jasmine and Europe for the both of them. Furthermore, the privilege of mobility that Jessica experienced as the owner of the salon, was not reflected in the experiences of the other stylists, particularly Ewind and Lily, who discussed fiscal responsibilities with me on multiple occasions.

***Stylists & Mobility.*** Topics of travel became increasingly important when creating and building relationships between clients and stylists. Jessica had just returned from her 19-day trip to Europe with her children and nieces when I began my fieldwork and she often spoke of this experience with clients. Sometimes the topic was brought up by Jessica and sometimes clients asked her. Lily took a few trips during my time in the salon as well, but in contrast to Jessica's leisurely tourist driven experiences, Lily's were more centered around familial obligation. One of her favorite clients, Loni (discussed in detail in chapter 3), joked with her about how often she traveled and how that meant Lily was less available to do Loni's hair which led to them trying to coordinate schedules for unofficial appointments at the walk-ins only salon<sup>14</sup>. Lily went to New York and Washington D.C. during my time in the salon. Her trip to D.C. was to pick up her 12-year old daughter from a summer leadership program. The program her daughter attended was expensive according to Lily, and she struggled to afford even the transportation for her daughter to D.C. Lily ultimately decided to drive herself instead of flying or paying for her daughter to fly. She asked me to look up buses as an alternative and we bonded over

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<sup>14</sup> Clients planning to walk-in when they knew their stylist would be there was common and Loni was not the only client to lightly complain when her stylist was out of town for long periods.

long bus rides we had taken to New York.

While Jessica was able to afford the trip to Europe for herself and the children, Lily spoke of financial hardships often, like when looking for an apartment. She and Ewind asked about my sister's job and the neighborhood where we lived. They also asked on multiple occasions about the size of the apartment and always said she paid too much for rent. I tried to shrug it off saying it wasn't my money or my decision to make and that I was lucky she let me stay with her. These conversations often made me uncomfortable as I struggled with confronting the privilege associated with the socioeconomic status I grew up with and the opportunities I was afforded that led me to be able to do my fieldwork in the salon without pay in the first place.

Jessica and Lily were able to afford these trips because of their success in the salon. Lily spoke with me about how the fluctuation in clientele volume meant they had to budget for their downtime in the summer even though their children were home and had more to pay for than when their children were in school. Therefore, the stylists were intentional with the money they had and prioritized travel as a pathway to social mobility through opportunity and experience for their children. The trip to Europe that Jessica took was in celebration of her son's graduation from college. The trip included Lily's two children and Jessica's two children, all of whom Jessica bore the financial burden of because of their high valuation of globalized experiences. The stylists conceptualized the U.S. as a place of opportunity in terms of jobs and money for themselves, but also for the education of their children. Though the stylists were proud of their Dominican heritage, they were also proud to have moved to the United States because of the opportunities listed above and because of the privilege they had in being able to move in the first place

considering the financial and emotional toll moving transnationally can incur.

International and domestic travel can be linked to cosmopolitanism but, it's important to make an explicit link between the privilege of physical mobility and migration as attached to an ideology surrounding opportunity in the United States as opposed to the Dominican Republic for social mobility cross-generationally.

Although I tried to downplay my socioeconomic privilege in order to build rapport with Lily when discussing bus options, the privilege associated with my socioeconomic status became salient in creating affect with Diana<sup>15</sup>, an undergraduate client from Boston who happened to be planning a semester-long stay in my home state of Louisiana, though that shared pathway did not bond us as much as our discomfort with North Edge as a seemingly underprivileged area. Diana chose the salon because it was close to where she and her friend were visiting in Atlanta and because she specifically wanted a Dominican salon. I'm not sure she would have chosen the salon if she were familiar with the area, though seeing the area did not deter her from coming in. Our similar socioeconomic status was more salient than my place of origin and Diana's future home in guiding our conversation. Both of us spoke of the neighborhood poorly citing safety concerns without saying anything explicitly in an effort not to offend the clients or stylists, though the conversation was had in English on a slow day and as such was easily accessible by others. Diana repeatedly asked me questions concerning comparisons of North Edge to Baton Rouge, where she planned to study in the upcoming semester, and the rest of Atlanta. While the stylists showed clear agitation with loitering by older men who were often intoxicated throughout the day directly outside the business and

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<sup>15</sup>Diana is central to an analysis in chapter 3.

attempted to enter the salon frequently, they did not take the local police's offer to intervene. Jessica allowed soliciting in the salon from vendors selling anything from clothes to toilet paper. Although Diana and I were uncomfortable in the neighborhood, stylists found the area desirable because of the clientele. Jessica even cited the amount of people in the street as good for business because they would see the salon and walk-in for hair services. Jessica and the other stylists did not, however, view it as desirable enough to live in themselves. The salon was a safe space for cultural expression but posed a risk to physical safety.

### **Conclusion.**

The hybridity of the salon demonstrated aspects of intimacy and business. I consider the tensions between safety and risk within the hybrid spaces of North Edge and the salon. Through my analysis of the place of North Edge and the space of the salon, it's clear that the stylists and clients actively work at the process of hybridization in order to create a successful business. Ideas about globalization were addressed to position interactions within the salon. The chapter ends by considering the ways in which ideologies of privilege and opportunity impact mobility. Creating safe spaces as cultural and linguistic minorities in the United States are essential for success and prosperity. In the next chapter, I'll focus on how racialization of clients by stylists is impacted by notions of place and belonging within the context of the salon and the broader United States based on ideologies surrounding hair.

## CHAPTER 2

### *SUAVE AND NAPPY AS RACIAL INDEXES*

When I first started studying abroad in Spanish-speaking countries, I remembered feeling a type of relief realizing that other people in the world looked like me outside of my family. I couldn't speak the language, but I felt a sense of belonging. I learned about the diversity of Blackness from other parts of the diaspora and realized the small chapters of slavery that we discussed at the predominantly White institutions (PWIs) I attended in my early education glossed over the fact that Blackness was created in other parts of the world besides the U.S., and the British North American colonies which later became the first U.S. colonies, in fact, had the smallest proportions of enslaved people brought from various places in Africa to the Americas compared to other prominent colonial powers during the same period (Yelvington 2006b). How then, did the U.S. come to understand Blackness as an exclusive experience to our country and the many African countries? I learned about the erasure of Blackness that happened in other countries in the Americas, and I saw a way that I could finally be considered Black. I realized that by expanding our ideas/definition of Blackness we could better understand the common thread of the Blackness seen globally. We could expose the ideas of hypodescent used in the U.S. to oppress Blacks during colonization and unlearn the harmful effects of the legacy of this ideology in current discourses surrounding Blackness by confronting our own privilege that is to unapologetically claim a Black identity in the U.S. Even though Blacks in the U.S. experience systemic racism, the fact that we are able to claim a Black identity is a

privilege and this is a privilege that has been used to ethnocentrically define what Blackness should mean in other places (Thomas and Clarke 2006). The significance of this ethnocentric approach to defining Blackness becomes salient when conflicting racial ideologies come in contact. This can be seen during my fieldwork studying the cultural interactions between Dominican and Black women.

This chapter takes an historical approach to the impact of the transatlantic slave trade on conceptions of Blackness in the United States and the Dominican Republic, and how racial boundaries are created and enforced. I examine how conflicting racial ideologies are in tension throughout my time in the Dominican salon. The previous chapter examined the importance of place in forming a sense of identity and belonging. This chapter builds off of these ideas by considering the unique cultural encounter happening in this Dominican salon relative to the location of North Edge. My own racial identity becomes central to the analysis as stylists and clients engage in racialized gatekeeping practices in response to my presence. I highlight the social meaning of hair as an indexical domain to constitute the social reality of race (Ochs 1992). I use Ochs's conceptualization of indexicality (1992) by engaging with the ways that hair is used as a domain to constitute racial ideologies. Language complicates the relationship between hair and racialization. The role of language as another form of indexicality will be explored in further in chapter four.

### **The Semiotics of Hair**

Within the theoretical framework of semiotics, Irvine and Gal's conceptualization of the semiotic processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure (2000) is a useful tool in analyzing various ideologies including those surrounding racialization and

linguaging race. For the purposes of my work, iconization processes surrounding hair associate straighter hair with Whiteness and curlier hair with Blackness. In a sociocultural system that values Whiteness above Blackness, this impacts how different types of Black hair are valued as well. Coupling Blommaert's orders of indexicality (2007, 117) where different semiotic emblems may be ordered in hierarchies of value with fractal recursivity, where oppositions that may be used to differentiate groups at one level or domain are projected so that they might also operate within groups at another level/domain. In this way, standards of beauty most closely resembling Whiteness are valued more within Blackness, those most closely resembling Blackness are given less value, and the actual role of Whiteness and its opposition to Blackness in creating such hierarchies becomes an unmarked category that is not taken into account at all. This means that those systems of valuation become applied to specific Black experiences including the value given to different skin tones, hair textures, and other phenotypic characteristics. In the specific case of Black hair, a spectrum of valuation emerges in which straighter hair, or the hair most related to Whiteness or 'honorary whiteness' (Bonilla-Silva 2004), is understood as most valuable and curlier hair, or the hair understood as most related to Blackness, is less value. In the Dominican Republic, this indexical relationship is marked through the terms of *pelo malo* and *pelo bueno*, where the former becomes associated with Blackness and the latter with Whiteness. In the U.S. Black community, the terms that are used and happen to be a direct translation are *bad hair* and *good hair* (Jacobs-Huey 2006). These terms reflect both the evaluation and hierarchical valuation of straighter and curlier hair textures as they are mapped onto Whiteness and Blackness respectively. While physical characteristics iconic of Whiteness



are often idealized and celebrated in the broader U.S. and Dominican cultures, within the global Black experience actual Whiteness is often, though not always, unattainable but physical characteristics, like curly hair, that index Blackness can be manipulated so that they resemble Whiteness more closely, like through the straightening of hair vis-à-vis the *Dominican Blowout*. This proximity to Whiteness has been termed ‘honorary Whiteness’ by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2004). Lastly, the erasure happens within the Black community and the larger U.S. understanding of racialization when someone has phenotypic characteristics that do not align with the essentialization of Blackness. In these cases, the ideological opposition between Whiteness and Blackness and the iconization of characteristics associated with each category erases individuals whose physical characteristics do not neatly map onto these dichotomized distinctions. This erasure will be demonstrated in an autoethnographic analysis of my own subjection to racialization in the salon in chapter 2.

These complex semiotic processes surrounding the relationship between hair and race also impacts how a person’s hair is evaluated in terms of their place along the spectrum of Blackness, as well as the degree of closeness of that person’s hair to beauty standards surrounding Whiteness or Blackness. These evaluations are done in intricate ways by members of the Black community. I argue that the frequency and level of detail of these are specific to the Black community due to the way that Black people in the global, and specifically American diaspora, have been historically objectified (in the context of enslavement, segregation, and ongoing sociocultural prejudices) by our physical characteristics including skin color, hair texture, nose size and shape, muscle and fat distribution in ways that recursively hierarchize Whiteness, which in turn has

been used to determine Black person' level of citizenship and belonging to certain groups associated with more privileged statuses (Quiros and Dawson 2013). Therefore, within such a system, Black people are habituated to evaluate the self and others under these objectifying terms while, in the same context, Whites outside of the global Black diasporic community have the privilege of being unmarked and therefore unaware of the level of scrutiny under which Black people still hierarchize physical traits to negotiate belonging in broader contexts outside of just Blackness.

The modes of appraisal that are habituated through these evaluation processes for hair involve both direct and indirect forms of indexicality (Ochs 1992). The direct indexicality involves evaluating the hair texture for various characteristics including degree of curliness/straightness, softness/coarseness, and smoothness/roughness. The texture then indirectly indexes whether the hair is considered bueno/good or malo/bad. The next layer to this semiotic process is the indirect indexical relationship between hair quality (bueno/good or malo/bad) and racialization. While previous scholarship has considered the relationship between skin color and racialization (Gravlee 2005; Simmons 2008), I argue that there is room to explore the relationship between hair texture and racialization from a semiotic framework in linguistic anthropology.

### **Defining Cross-Cultural Blackness**

Before examining how processes of racialization are enacted in the salon, it is crucial to define race, specifically Blackness, in Dominican and U.S. American terms. Previous scholarship has considered race as a culturally constructed phenomenon (Alim, Rickford, and Ball 2016; Bailey 2000; Candelario 2007; Delgado and Stefancic 2000; Duany 1998; Epperson 2004; J. H. Hill 1998; Gravlee 2005; Omi and Winant 1994; Rosa

2019; Simmons 2009; Urciuoli 1996; Vaught and Castagno 2008), I draw on these works in my theory of race in the U.S. as a culturally determined category influenced by differing racial ideologies in contact from around the globe as impacting the lives of the White majority and various minority groups in unique ways. Though past research has been interested in differences between Black and White, or White and any other racialized minority group, I aim to study Blackness as its own entity. I look at the diversity within the group while acknowledging the presence of Whiteness through broader hegemonic structures. I put Blackness at the center of this analysis and relegate Whiteness to the periphery as an ideological construct. By focusing on Blackness, I hope to make evident the ways in which Blackness is complex, heterogeneous, and diverse within the broader scale of the U.S hegemonic discourses which often simplify, homogenize, and make static the racial category of Blackness in the U.S.

Race is not a biological construct but is informed by biological variation in skin color and hair texture. This work will focus on the use of hair texture as a factor in the racialization process for Dominican and U.S. Black women in a Dominican beauty salon. Gravlee (2005) supports claims that hair is a part of racialization (specifically for those in Puerto Rico) but, for the purpose of his analysis, focuses more on skin color. While skin color as a significant sign system in the semiotics of racialization is taken into consideration here, my focus is on how hair is a sign system in the semiotics of racialization especially for women of the Black diaspora in the Dominican Republic and the United States. I argue that hair is an evaluative factor Black women in the U.S. use to categorize the self and others in racial terms and even subcategories within the Black race in terms of colorism. Those who have unmarked hair in the U.S., particularly White

people, are not attuned to hair differences the same way Black women are because the stakes of hair care for Black and White women are so different. While Black women across the U.S. are fighting to end hair discrimination, many White women have never had, and I argue will never have, their hair styling decisions impact their professional lives in institutionalized discriminatory ways (FOX n.d.; Stowe 2019). Additionally, Black women are able to negotiate to their social capital through hair manipulation that adheres to Eurocentric beauty standards and therefore have the potential to move their position in life within this hierarchical organization. Therefore, hair can be understood as an objectified part of the Black woman's body to judge/evaluate/racialize/classify/treat Black women of the global diaspora.

***Dominican Racial System.*** While these ideologies have been changing recently, scholarship on the D.R. has remarked how many Dominicans do not see themselves as just Black or posit Blackness as being central to their identities the way Black people in the U.S. do. Instead they consider Blackness as a part of their broader mixed identities as Dominicans which includes Spanish, indigenous, and Black ancestry under an ideology of mestizaje. The degree of each category within one person is decided through an evaluation of physical traits. The racial category assigned to a person is then considered in terms of color classification. Therefore, Dominicans acknowledge the influence of Blackness on their national identity, but not all Dominicans would consider themselves to be Black because of the ways Blackness is associated with certain physical characteristics similar to those of Blacks in the U.S. like darker skin, curlier hair, and more. Therefore, while the U.S. has historically understood Blackness under the One Drop Rule which includes a variety of phenotypic expressions where anyone who has any Black heritage is

considered Black, the Dominican conceptualization of Black as a racial category is much narrower due to its understanding that having Black ancestry does not necessarily mean that a person will identify or be identified as Black.

The racial term most commonly used to classify Dominicans in the Dominican Republic is *indio*. The literal translation of this word into English is Indian which may seem to imply indigenous heritage but has come to be known as a phenotypic descriptor seeking to claim a national identity as a mixed race. Even within this racial category further classification ranging from *india clara* to *india oscura* based on various physical characteristics such as skin color, eye color, and hair texture exist. Some other racial categories include *blanca* (White), *negra* (Black), *trigueña* (Wheat Colored), *mulata* (Mixed), and *amarilla* (Asian). These categories are seen considerably less frequently, however. They tend to vary in fluidity, which is reflective of the social capital attached to each of them (Duany 1998; Simmons 2009; Torres-Saillant 1998; Quiros and Dawson 2013). The ways in which Dominicans use various, often interchangeable, terminology when describing racial category in terms of phenotypic traits is similar to what Godreau (2008) terms *slippery semantics* in describing the process of racialization in Puerto Rico. Her emphasis is on how the interchangeability of terms used to describe race is not based solely on physical attributes, but on how the decision to use certain terms instead of others serves as a way to discriminate social capital based on the term's interpreted proximity to racial whiteness (Godreau, 2008).

Though in the D.R. racial categories are as malleable as the traits attached to them, these categories are often much more static than in the U.S. Unless someone, like myself, is ambiguous to begin with, there isn't much space to shift between categories

and even when there is, this imagined space is limited by raciolinguistic ideologies. However, in the D.R., racial categories are more fluid because of the subjective and nuanced nature of racial evaluations under *mestizaje*. The movement between categories often involves physical and symbolic *blanqueamiento* with the goal of achieving ‘honorary Whiteness’ (Bonilla-Silva 2004). One way in which social mobility through racialization via *blanqueamiento* happens is by hair straightening. In both the U.S. and D.R., straight hair lends to privilege. In the U.S., this will not impact racialization while in the D.R. it will. This means that the stakes of straight hair in the salon might be different for Dominican and Black women which may explain why stylists felt so much pride in being able to straighten hair as good as a relaxer without using chemicals. This also speaks to why women in the salon did not perceive heat damage that results in more permanently straight hair as a negative thing the same way I did.

While the historical impact of *mestizaje* discourse in the Dominican Republic has been important and the discourse of mixing has been hegemonic in the D.R. and across many Latin American countries, it is important to note how it is also being challenged. The category and terminology of Afro-Latinx is emergent in public discourse, but the people included under this umbrella have been around since African and European cultures have been in contact in the Americas. The movement to acknowledge those within the Latin American diaspora with Black ancestry has been controversial as this group has been largely ignored and erased in favor of claiming *mestizaje* or a mixed heritage. Proudly claiming African ancestry means that nations who claim racial democracies are being challenged to acknowledge not only racial differences but the resulting racial discrimination and marginalization that Black people within the countries

face. *Blanqueamiento* practices are also being challenged as those with African ancestry in Latin America and the broader Latinx diasporic population embrace Afrocentric features and reject Eurocentric beauty standards. This can be seen in the Dominican Republic through hair stylists like Carolina Contreras, also known as Miss Rizos (Miss Curls), who owns natural hair salons in Santo Domingo and has gained fame for her embrasure of all curly hair as proudly linked to Blackness.

***Colonization and Race in New Orleans.*** In the following section, I provide a brief history of slavery in New Orleans compared to the broader U.S. and the Dominican Republic in order to setup an analysis of my racial positionality as a Black woman from New Orleans which becomes central to my data in a later part of the chapter. While the entire U.S. only received 5% of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade in comparison to the 8.2% received on the island of St. Domingue (Eltis 2001), the U.S. city of New Orleans shares a unique history of slavery that resembles more of the French Caribbean experience than the majority of the U.S. South under British colonial rule (Yelvington 2006a). Like the island of Hispaniola where St. Domingue was located, New Orleans was formerly a colony of both the French and the Spanish. Although New Orleans was later acquired as a portion of the U.S., the formation of racial ideology present in the city was founded in the Black Codes<sup>16</sup> established by the French and the Spanish moreso than the U.S. who obtained New Orleans long after the culture of racial mixing was established. Enslaved Africans were brought to the port of New Orleans when it was under rule by the French and Spanish. While the abolishment of slavery did not mean an abolishment of racism, it did lead to a racial ideology different from other parts of the U.S. South and broader U.S.

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<sup>16</sup> Rules created to regulate the behavior and treatment of enslaved and freed Africans and African Americans in the Americas during the colonial period.

which only knew a system of slavery run by the British and later the United States of America (Gould 2009). Additionally, the influx of Haitians to New Orleans during the Haitian revolution had a unique impact on the racial terrain in New Orleans (Dessens 2007).

It is due to the unique history of slavery and the cultural implementation of hypodescent in the U.S. that people who look like me are still considered Black in the U.S. compared to places in Latin America and the Caribbean where processes of racial mixture led to different understandings of racial boundaries and categorizations (Hernandez 2001). I began this project hoping to expand upon work already done on the African diasporic experience in the United States to include those of Dominican heritage (Candelario 2007; Duany 1998; Lipski 2008; Simmons 2009; Urciuoli 1996). While racial ideologies in the United States promote an either/or philosophy of racial identity often framed in terms of Black and White (Stokes-Brown 2012; Torres-Saillant 1998), for many of us in the African diasporic community, our identity is much more complex. In places outside of the U.S. like the Dominican Republic, Blackness is not seen as a characteristic of a diverse identity but rather is normalized given that the majority of Dominicans have some African ancestry (Duany 1998; Lipski 2008) which can be attributed to the large proportion of enslaved Africans brought to the region during colonization, gatekeeping practices around race, and different organizations of racialized labor in the region (Eltis 2001; Gates 2011). Those of us whose physical characteristics do not align with stereotypical U.S. ideals of Blackness are often confronted with questions challenging our racial identity (Simmons 2009). These questions often concern not only skin color, but hair type as well as many other physical characteristics (Gravlee



2005).

*Racial Ideologies in Contact.* It is my hope that through this work, the diversity of what it means to be Black may become more salient than the gatekeeping practices myself and others have encountered, and that it may work toward the demolition of the colonial mindset still perpetuated through the adherence to the rules of hypodescent in the United States. By complicating the definition of Blackness, we create a more inclusive community that can work toward the betterment of all of those in the African diaspora, including those with a history of forced migration through the transatlantic slave trade, those of voluntary immigration, and those considered to be return migrants.

While Blackness is categorized differently in the U.S. and the D.R., those racialized as Black in both nations experience racism and discrimination. In the D.R., this can be understood through a historical lens when considering the relationship between the D.R. and Haiti. Due to different sociopolitical and historical tensions between the two nations, the D.R. has come to associate Blackness with Haitianess and because of different D.R. political policies that have discriminated against Haitians and their place within the D.R., Black Dominicans have often been stigmatized and had their Dominicanidad questioned. Thus, both in the U.S. and the D.R., those considered Black through historical sociocultural processes of racialization are marginalized and often treated as second-class citizens. That being said, when in the U.S. many Dominicans who did identify as Black may become racialized as Black within their new immigrant context, leading to tensions between their ideological understanding of race and their new country's racialization processes. The distinction between U.S. Black and Dominican is important when considering the positionality of stylists and clients in the salon while

understanding the broader contexts of North Edge, Atlanta, the South, and the U.S.

Though all of the stylists had lived in the U.S. for several years, there were still moments in which I observed how these racial ideologies were in tension.

While there are differences in how Blackness is understood between the U.S and D.R., there are also many similarities because of the shared connections to various parts of West Africa through the Transatlantic Slave Trade. This can be seen in similarities in music, food, and physical evaluations of hair and color. I argue that though the stylists and clients do not share linguistic repertoires, they do share an understanding of Black hair that makes cross-cultural communication work and therefore aids in the success of the salon as a business.

### **Ideologies of Racialization.**

Racialization is the process of classifying individuals into racial categories based the ideologies of those being racialized, those performing the racialization, and most importantly the culturally agreed upon criteria for racialization in the specific place in which racialization occurs. Racialization as a process means that race is never a static category and depends on the actors and subjects in the context of the process. In the U.S., we're often given the choice of how we racialize ourselves on documentation in this process and we often categorize ourselves based on our own racial ideologies (which involve language practices – discussed in detail in chapter 4) though these ideologies are often shaped by broader sociocultural notions of race and identity. Experiences with racialization in the U.S. context depends on self-identity, phenotypic variation, language use, and other variables though this analysis will focus on the those three listed. When considering self-identity, the view of the self can only be understood in the context of

place. That is national origin and region of upbringing determine the racial norms/categories into which we are socialized. Therefore, the women in the salon are not only engaging in processes of racialization according to North Edge/ATL/U.S. standards but also Santiago/Romana/D.R. standards and depending on who the stylists interact with, these ideologies shift and therefore racial categorization shifts. Though race is not a biological construct, how we classify ourselves and others is informed by biological variation in skin color and hair texture<sup>17</sup>.

*Racialization from the D.R. to the U.S.* By considering how Blackness is understood outside of the U.S., the diversity of Blackness within the U.S. can be understood in relation to the globalized Black diaspora which in many ways is reflected in the culture of Blackness in the U.S. Since the D.R. is coming from their own race/color categories into U.S., it is important to consider how they make sense of differing systems in contact in which they may be understood and understand themselves.

While previous research has looked at the ways people from the U.S. are racialized by Dominican standards (Simmons, 2009), I explore how the reverse happens to Dominicans in the U.S. South. Traditionally, the United States not only classifies race literally into Black or White (Stokes-Brown, 2012; Torres-Saillant, 1998), but this process of racialization in the United States also conflates race with ethnic identity and does not take the racialization process of other nations into account (Duany, 1998; Quiros and Dawson, 2013). This results in murky racial categorizations that do not accurately represent the groups they attempt classify. In Latin America and the Caribbean, for instance, racial labeling denotes more than ethnic or cultural belonging, it also is

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<sup>17</sup> These are paid particular attention to for the purposes of this study, but other factors like class and education certainly impact racialization in big ways.

understood to reveal class stratification. When immigrating to the United States from Latin America or the Caribbean, choices must be made concerning racial identification. The choices may not, and often do not, align with racial ideologies found in previously inhabited countries, since nationality is often prioritized over class in the U.S. by those engaging in the racialization process. In other countries, class is prioritized over nationality (Duany 1998; Quiros and Dawson 2013; Simmons 2009; Stokes-Brown 2012; Torres-Saillant 1998; Urciuoli 1996). Dominican women in the New South make choices through hair care and language that mark their racial belonging and acknowledge cultural differences between themselves and the U.S. Black women receiving services in the salon. While Dominican and U.S. Black women engage in the same hair care practices, in the context of the *Dominican Blowout* and the salon in Atlanta, the process of self-racialization leads to these ethnic categories which can be largely linked to differing racial ideologies. Later in this chapter I address how hair evaluations are a part of the racialization process for Dominican and U.S. Black women in the salon.

### **The Social Meaning of Black Hair Care.**

When thinking about bad hair or *pelo malo*, cultural differences inform who is classified into each of these categories according to Black or Dominican standards. However, both categories, which are clearly negatively valued according to their adjectival modifiers, are categories that signify Afrocentric features across racial boundaries (Candelario 2000; Jacobs-Huey 2006). This terminology is just one example of how Black hair is devalued. In observing hair care styling and preferences in the salon, semiotic processes between hair and language became apparent during specific behaviors such as hair straightening practices and what that means when indexing racial identity for

Dominican/Dominican American women. While stylists and clients alike sought straight hair styling in the salon, cultural differences were marked in regard to language use and hair texture (Hernandez 2001).

Hair analysis is particularly important when thinking about Dominicans in the U.S. because of how hair becomes a domain in racializing the self and other (Hernandez 2001). Hair as a material for semiotic signification is an important part of identity for many (Bucholtz and Hall 2005), but especially for the Black woman given that hair historically has been a way to racialize and subsequently discriminate against the Black woman (Jacobs-Huey 2006). Though Dominican and U.S. Black women both engage in hair-straightening practices, there are differing historical implications for hair care in each group. While U.S. Black women have been known to give extreme monetary and temporal value to the hair-care process by going to salons, like the women in my study did<sup>18</sup>, the Dominican stylists claimed that hair socialization in the D.R. was to do hair in the home instead of a salon. Hair socialization is discussed in more detail below.

Black women in the global diaspora have several different ways of styling hair, including wearing it naturally curly, picking the natural curls into an afro, adding extensions, wearing locks, wearing braids, or wearing it straightened. According to my research and personal experience with Black hair, Black women in the U.S. go to different salons for each of these styles. The women at the salon where I conducted my fieldwork typically chose a Dominican salon because they wore their hair naturally and wanted their hair straightened on a regular basis. The term natural can mean different things to different people. In the technical sense used among stylists, it refers to the

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<sup>18</sup> Information concerning time and money spent on the Blowout are discussed in the preface.

absence of relaxer, perm, or color treatment in the hair, and thus the absence of any chemical process that can alter the hair texture. This definition of natural is different from wearing the hair naturally curly, which usually necessitates the use of several hair products to maintain and enhance the curls. Those with naturally curly hair may have color in their hair and still refer to it as natural, offering a different colloquial definition for the term. The women in this salon typically had natural hair, meaning the absence of relaxers, but chose to have their hair straightened specifically using the *Dominican Blowout* method<sup>19</sup>.

***Hair and Colorism.*** While racism is typically experienced through prejudice against a racial group, colorism is the discrimination experienced by people of color based on phenotypic traits; those with phenotypic traits most distinct from Eurocentric beauty standards experience the most prejudice, while those with phenotypic traits most similar to Eurocentric beauty standards experience certain levels of privilege. The discrimination or privilege people experience based on their phenotypic traits can be implemented by those of the same racial category or of another racial category. The differential treatment of people based on their skin tone within the Black community in the United States has been fostered for years, but little recognition has been given to this topic in the Latinx community (Quiros and Dawson, 2013). Colorism becomes particularly important when thinking about the long history between the Dominican Republic and Haiti (Duany, 1998; Simmons, 2009; Torres-Sailant, 1998). The privileges that become associated with belonging to a certain racial group in the Dominican Republic do not necessarily translate to the U.S. conception of race and color. In the

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<sup>19</sup> The steps to the *Dominican Blowout* are detailed in the preface.

Dominican Republic, like the United States, people with darker skin are racialized in ways that lead to discriminatory practices (Stokes-Brown, 2012; Quiros and Dawson, 2013). Based upon phenotypic traits of Dominicans/Dominican Americans, many are racialized as Black in a U.S. context (Bailey, 2000; Quiros and Dawson, 2013) and studies show that the younger a person is and the longer they stay in the U.S., the more likely they are to identify with this racialization as Black (Torres-Saillant, 1998).

Colorism is a form of discrimination distinct from but also informed by racist ideologies (Quiros and Dawson, 2013). The connection between colorism and racism can be understood in terms of the fractal recursivity introduced by Irvine and Gal in the sense that it is a semiotic process which reifies the system in which it creates subsystems (2000). Both processes involve the discrimination of people based on types of classification. Racism involves discrimination along socially constructed racial lines whereas colorism involves discrimination based on the combination of several phenotypic characteristics. While skin color is often the most salient trait referenced in conversations about colorism, hair in combination with skin color and other physical features also influence not only the racialization process, but also notions of colorism through an analysis and interpretation of these features as direct indexes of Afro- or Eurocentric markers and indirect indexes of negative (afrocentric) or positive (eurocentric) features. While ideas about race have previously shown how Dominicans and U.S. Blacks are different, notions of colorism in both communities reveal similarities between their experiences (Quiros and Dawson, 2013).

### **Loyalty to stylist.**

As previously mentioned, my sister is my stylist. I trust her with my hair for a

variety of reasons. The first reason is because she is my sister she has intimate knowledge about my struggles with my hair. She bore witness to my socialization process into haircare as a child and knows the rituals with which I'm comfortable. Additionally, she's a licensed cosmetologist. She earned her certification from an accredited institution and I witnessed her growth in the field from a shampoo girl in high school to a stylist now. Lastly, since I know the hair care process will be long and involved, I enjoy spending that time with my sister instead of forcing the interaction with a stranger. While some women enjoy the small talk common in these situations, I feel uncomfortable and pressured to perform in these instances. The relationship between stylists and clients is an intimate bond when considering how few people have access to one's hair/head on a given day. Clients are selective about which salons they visit for services, and not surprisingly, the stylist choice is just as selective.

In this salon clients typically wanted their natural hair straightened, but Black women embrace a variety of hairstyles. If they want braiding, they'll go to an African salon. It is interesting to note that among Black women in this salon, distinctions were not made about whether a specific African heritage is connected to a salon: the salons were simply referred to as African braiding salons. Often times, when making comparisons to Black salons, which are distinct from Dominican and African salons, clients were explaining why they no longer went to them. They complained of exorbitant prices and about the pressure to add chemicals (relaxer) to their hair. As a member of the Black community I've often heard conflicting adages about the importance of supporting Black business, but how this becomes difficult because Black businesses usually have poor customer service. I was struck by the relevance of this tension in my research when



considering the variety of salons.

### The Racial Ideology of Mixedness

The following table is from an interaction between the salon owner (Jessica), a Nigerian client, and myself. Jessica was styling the client's hair as we had this conversation. This client came into the salon several times during my research, but this is a snippet of our first interaction. She begins the interaction by asking about my family's origins after learning I identify as Black and not believing me. I spend the duration of the interaction defending my racial identity while Jessica and the client worked together to investigate my ancestry. During this process racial ideologies and positionality are revealed.

Table 2.1 Racial ideologies of mixedness

1	Client	Where is your mom from?	
2	Amber	New Orleans	
3		Both of my parents are from New Orleans	
4	Client	White or Black	
5	Amber	Black	
6		Both my parents are Black	
7	Client	Oh it looks like you're Mixed	
8		Something is mixed	
9	Amber	Why	
10	Client	Your hair	
11		You Mixed	
12	Amber	My hair	
13	Client	Yeah	
14	Amber	Okay	
15	Client	You Mixed	
16		Some-somebody Mixed	
17	Jessica	Son de nueva Orleans	<i>They're from new Orleans</i>
18		De donde viene	<i>Where are they from</i>
19		Lo vienen de	<i>They're from there</i>
20	Client	They have	
21		No:	
22		Let me see your mom picture	

Though the client asked in line 1 where my mother is from and I responded with a

location, she was dissatisfied with this response because it did not in fact provide sufficient information to her question. Through her second question the intention of her original question was revealed to be that she actually wanted to know where my mom is from in order to indirectly index my racial categorization through her geopolitical ideologies of racialization. In line 4, the client presented the racial dichotomy of Black and White previously discussed in this chapter as a common conception of racial ideology in the U.S. I tried to skip the line of questioning I've learned to anticipate from familiar conversations in my life by letting her know both of my parents identify as Black in line 6. She repeatedly claimed I looked mixed in lines 7, 8, 11, 15, and 16 according to my hair which triggered a deeper analysis of my body in terms of phenotypic characteristics. The differing ideologies we held concerning mixture became salient in this interaction as I relied on U.S. notions of recent mixture that made me sensitive to ideas of mixedness being a separate racial category that would potentially dilute my Blackness (Hernandez 2001). Jessica followed the conversation and switched between English and Spanish, which will be analyzed in a later chapter. However, in her utterance she also asked where my parents were from, confirming what had already been said in English and she understood, but now had verified in Spanish.

I argue that the client and Jessica are pulling from ideologies of mixedness from outside of the U.S. context to consider recent and historical racial mixture as indicative of racial categorizations that would have also placed me outside the confines of Blackness but in a much more complex system of racialization, which is part of the reason why I only offer New Orleans and Black as identifying terms for myself. The difference between the U.S. ideas of mixedness versus elsewhere relate to the legacy of

hypodescent. In the U.S., while any drop of Black blood via the One Drop Rule made someone legally Black, in other parts of the African diaspora, any drop of blood non-Black was a way to social mobility through very specific kinds of mixtures based on Blackness being the lowest point of the racial hierarchy. This is not to say that there was not privilege associated with mixedness in the U.S. but that the social, political, and legal policies were different from the U.S. in different parts of the diaspora, like the Dominican Republic, where there were more racial classifications than simply Mixed for someone with Black and White ancestry (Hernandez 2001; Simmons 2009). Regardless of the ideologies of mixedness, I was sensitive to any dilution of my Blackness because of the delicate relationship I have with self-racialization, especially because of my hair for reasons discussed in the introduction. At the end of this table, I reluctantly began pulling up pictures of my family on my cell phone which instigated further scrutiny. I won't analyze the photos myself, but instead offer the following table of Jessica and her client analyzing them.

Table 2.2 Hair and skin as racial indexes

23	Client	No they look	
24		Look at the mom is Black	
25	Jessica	No no no not mom	
26		The side daddy	
27	Client	Daddy yeah	
28	Amber	On my dad's side	
29		What-what do you mean	
30	Client	They are light -skinned	
31	Jessica	Look at	
32		Mira a tu tía	<i>Look at your aunt</i>
33		Is light-skinned	
34		And pelo así suave	<i>And soft hair like that</i>
35		Todos son así	<i>All are like this</i>

For several more turns, the client and Jessica negated my Blackness claiming I

was Mixed. While in the U.S., we typically conceptualize racial mixedness as a recent mixture between Black and White, again invoking the racial dichotomy previously discussed, the mixture they referred to negated the ideas of hypodescent commonly used to define Blackness in the U.S. (Hernandez 2001). They considered my mixedness to extend beyond my parents, as can be seen in line 26, to my father's entire familial line based on assumptions made due to his and his sister's phenotypic characteristics such as their light skin and soft hair<sup>20</sup> discussed in lines 30, 33, and 34 by Jessica. Thus, hair quality and skin tone were used as domains to indexically constitute racial exclusion from Blackness and, in this case, to instead be classified as "Mixed" (Ochs 1992).

It is clear from this analysis that not only am I positioned by the two other speakers as not Black but this is in opposition to Mixed, which even though my mother is considered Black by these same two women in lines 23-25, her race is not enough to position me as truly Black. Though I repeatedly told Jessica and the client that my father is Black, they insisted that he had some other ancestry, which according to them, negated his Blackness. The race of my mother is unquestionably Black to them, but because my father appears to have other ancestry and I have certain features resembling his, I was not seen as Black, like my mother, but rather Mixed, like my father. Therefore in this interaction, my mother's Blackness was not enough to warrant the One Drop Rule and grant me Blackness. Instead, their understanding of Blackness seemed to flip the One Drop Rule to mean that any drop of Whiteness, negated Blackness. This can be credited to the encounter of various racial ideologies. Though in the U.S., any drop of Blackness usually constitutes a Black racial identity, in places where Blackness is the norm, like the

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<sup>20</sup> It is interesting to note that hair evaluations considering softness could be made without actually feeling the hair in question.

Dominican Republic, any drop of Whiteness lightens the racial categorization leading to social capital. By positioning me as Mixed, Jessica and her client also position themselves as authorities on Blackness, indirectly constituting their social meaning of racial ideologies onto me, their racialized subject (Ochs 1992).

### **Grappling with Colorblindness**

The privileges that become associated with belonging to a certain racial group in the Dominican Republic do not necessarily translate to the U.S. conception of race and color. In the Dominican Republic, like the United States, people with darker skin are racialized in ways that lead to discriminatory practices linked to colorism (Quiros and Dawson 2013; Stokes-Brown 2012). Based upon phenotypic traits of Dominicans/Dominican Americans, many are racialized as Black in a U.S. context (Bailey 2000; Quiros and Dawson 2013) and studies show that the younger a person is and the longer they stay in the U.S., the more likely they are to identify with this racialization as Black (Torres-Saillant 1998). These findings were reflected in my fieldwork when Jessica discussed race with her son, Rubén.

*“Being Dominican has always been like this interesting like middle ground between people tell me I’m Black and me telling them I’m Dominican. It’s like yeah I can speak Spanish. I’m just more than what you see.”*

While the 50-year old Dominican mother on numerous occasions emphasized her belief in the need for a colorblind society in which all are treated equal, her 22-year old son revealed a more complicated experience with racialization. Rubén discusses how others perceived him racially, his self-perception in terms of nationality, and his linguistic ability in Spanish as important aspects impacting his identity (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). When it came to his racial identity, Rubén used several terms to define himself.

*“How would I identify racially? Off the back I have to say like human race and then Hispanic. I just like with that label (?)...Um yeah, just Hispanic. I could go Black. I could, what is it? Afro-Latino, I think that’s the label. It’s interesting cause we talk about it more and more nowadays. And like I constantly learning. Latinx I’m still kind of like grasping cause the queer community is having their own revolution. Like the intersectionality of like race gender and class...”*

Though Rubén began by discussing his own racial identity, this quickly evolved into a statement on the broader community in which he sees himself as a member. Though he saw himself to an extent as Hispanic, Black, and Afro-Latino, he primarily identified as Hispanic and acknowledged differences in affect with each term indicating that his identification was neither static nor naturalized. Although he was able to place himself in each category he listed to an extent, the categories with which he identified each indexed something different and important for him about his identity.

Through sequential analysis of his identity, Rubén unpacked several layers to his own process of self-racialization revealing a hierarchy nest in preference of terminology regarding his race. He started by broadly recognizing the human race as an equalizer among people and in doing so chose to recognize similarity before difference in his positionality among others as well as forcing others to recognize his humanity. He then identified as Hispanic but struggled with the significance of this sociocultural category referring to it as a label implying that he recognized Hispanic as a term imposed upon him by others, though the exact source of this pressure was unclear whether it be sociopolitical, institutional, or through socialization. He explored other options of identity like Black or Afro-Latino, but clearly did not identify as strongly with these categories as evidenced by their being listed later and his use of words like could and think when negotiating his position among these groups. Rubén acknowledged the existence of Latinx as a category, but through his use of their chose not to position himself as a part of

the queer community and instead just recognized it as one of the various categories available to him as someone who was marked through phenotypic and linguistic characteristics in the United States. By introducing terms like Black, Afro-Latino, and Latinx after having already identified as Hispanic, Rubén demonstrated an awareness of differences between each label as indexing different aspects of identity be that Blackness, Latinness, Queerness, or a combination of these.

The fluidity with which he used Hispanic and (Afro-)Latino to position himself, however, revealed an element of slippery semantics introduced by Godreau (2008) where, in the context of the U.S., Rubén considered himself as both Hispanic and Latino to an extent and did not make clear whether he perceived a difference in identifying as one of these over the other in the same way he did for Black, Afro-Latino, and Latinx. Though Afro-Latino and Latinx are emergent racial categories that appear in both the U.S. and D.R., Hispanic as a racial category appears more often in the U.S. than in the D.R. where Spanish identity is not indexed by use of the Spanish language but instead by skin fairness, and thus a person perceived to be of Spanish ancestry would be referred to racially as *blanca*. Through Rubén's use of Hispanic, he is aligning himself with U.S. racial ideologies, albeit begrudgingly. He is also touching on the real-world complexities that pan-ethnic categories like Hispanic and Latino reflect for people of color in the U.S. who are often forced to simplify their identities on paperwork in ways that are not always reflective of their experiences in the U.S., i.e. on the census where Afro-Latinx individuals must choose between Black, Hispanic, White, or Indigenous when most people from the Latinx diaspora would not simplify their identities in such terms (López 2015; Pujols 2018).

Rubén demonstrated a sense of belonging to the Black community through these responses and in so far as using *nigga* in conversation with me. His identity as Dominican was unmistakable through his obvious pride and language use. Throughout our interview, he demonstrated a both/and identity in regard to his race. Rubén grew up in New York and Atlanta, where he was often racialized as Black, which impacted his racial identity. Though Jessica told me on multiple occasions that she did not teach her children to see race, Rubén saw himself as several races simultaneously. Regardless of how his mother raised him to think, his experiences outside of the home influenced how he identified. While Jessica and Rubén believed their differing ideologies to be due to the educational system, it can be understood that the educational system plays an integral but limited role in how children are socialized into society. It may not have been a lesson formally taught in the classrooms, but an informal lesson learned through years of public-school multicultural interactions that informed Rubén's racial ideology.

### **The Politics of Hair Quality Terminology**

As Jacobs-Huey (2006) observes, Black women use their hair as a political tool to maneuver social spaces. Dominican women share the experience of balancing intra-group ideologies with pressures to assimilate to the dominant culture's beauty standards depending on the context in which they find themselves. Whereas Jacobs-Huey (2006) explores the connection between word choice and intra/outer group dynamics between Black and White women, I look at how Dominican women align or other themselves with other ethnic groups and how hair evaluations impact these decisions. Hair evaluations in the Black community carry a taboo with notions of privilege and social capital connected to hegemonic Eurocentric beauty standards and as such explicit hair evaluations can often



be understood as offensive within the community. While my presence in the salon brought hair ideologies to the surface through informal interviews, stylists and clients were aware of the delicacy needed to describe hair. Stylists were in a unique position in that part of their job required them to make hair evaluations in order to determine proper treatment and the cost of services. As stylists negotiated their work duties with in-group knowledge, they worked to convey their knowledge of hair to me while negotiating power dynamics between clients and themselves in the hybridity of the salon. In this process, stylists still managed to use hair texture as a tool to racialize clients in the salon.

I recognize that the specific hair texture qualities stylists and clients were attentive to may not be clear to those who are unfamiliar with the Black hair socialization process. In the following section, I also struggle in negotiating my role as both a researcher and member of the Black community to discuss hair evaluations explicitly. Therefore, I include in Figure 2.1 some of the terms used by the women in the salon to describe hair texture and quality to provide an idea of the detail with which hair evaluations were made by Black women in the global diaspora. I'd again like to emphasize that these were terms I observed being used in the salon. Though this list contains terms in English and Spanish that may overlap, it is not meant to be dichotomous translations but instead represent the variety of terms used across codes when describing hair. The terms listed here are often mapped onto beauty standards understood hierarchically as either Afrocentric or Eurocentric which, for the women in the salon, indexed hair quality with Afrocentric being *pelo malo*/bad hair and Eurocentric being *pelo bueno*/good hair. *Nappy* and *kinky* were not terms I heard clients use to describe hair (Jacobs-Huey 2006), though Lily did explicitly use *nappy* to generally describe hair related to the African diaspora which will

be analyzed below<sup>21</sup>. While in Jacobs-Huey's work *nappy* was a taboo term, Lily and the client used it in an almost normalizing, matter-of-fact manner in the following example in which the hair texture of Black people is generalized to be *nappy* in comparison to *suave*.

<b>Afrocentric</b> <b>(Pelo malo/bad hair)</b>	<b>Eurocentric</b> <b>(Pelo bueno/good hair)</b>
Fuerte	Lacio
Difícil	Soft
Nappy	Suave
Con greña	Con onda
Con nudo	Fragile
Bad	Loose curls
Coarse	Long
	Una seda
	Straight
	Silky
	Fino

Figure 2.1 Dichotomy of hair terminology

As Lily was doing my hair, I asked her to describe it and she did so by comparing it to clients who came into the salon. Through this analysis I will demonstrate how semiotics processes are informed by direct and indirect indexical relationships between hair and race. Evaluations of the value of hair contribute to the process of racialization in unique ways for women of the African diaspora (citations). The semiotic meaning of hair as a sign of race is revealed in this interaction between Lily, Client 1, and me. Through this interaction it is clear how processes of iconization are at play in racialization within the context of the salon. The iconic association (discussed in the introduction) is the dichotomy of Black and White as racial categories in the U.S. which centers Whiteness

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<sup>21</sup> She was not directing this comment to anyone in particular in the salon and gave this description during a Spanish conversation between the two of us while I was getting my *Dominican Blowout*.

and marginalizes Blackness in a value system of racial hierarchy. This iconic sign undergoes fractal recursivity as it is taken up within the Black community to mean that those with features, in this case hair, most akin to Whiteness (an unmarked category that does not receive a value marker) is most valuable while those with features most akin to Blackness are least valuable (Blommaert 2007).

Tables 2.3-2.5 provide a clear example of how hair evaluations are made through direct indexicality where the hair most akin to Whiteness, and therefore most valuable, indexed *pelo bueno* and the hair most akin to Blackness, and therefore least valuable, indexed *pelo malo*. In the following table, Lily is washing my hair for my *Dominican Blowout* (discussed in the preface) while Raquela is washing a client's hair in the washbowl next to us. The client in this table came to the salon on multiple occasions. She spoke Spanish with the stylists and English on the phone. I didn't interact with her because she usually had headphones in and kept to herself. She did come in regularly and asked for the *Dominican Blowout* for the hair growing out of her scalp and the extensions she brought with her. Since the stylists did not offer extension placement as a service (though Jessica wore extensions during my entirety in the salon), she usually put the extensions in herself by setting up at an empty stylist station in front of a full-length mirror. Furthermore, I saw this client go to both Ewind and Lily during her visits indicating that she did not have a specific stylist, which was rare for recurrent clients, and perhaps pointed to her overall trust in the salon as an establishment because of her long-term experience there. I argue that the client felt this comfortable in the salon because of its hybrid nature discussed in Chapter 1.

Table 2.3 Hair texture

1	Self	Como describe mi cabello	<i>How would you describe my hair?</i>
2	Lily	Hay niña	<i>Oh girl</i>
3		<u>Una seda</u>	<u><i>Silky</i></u>
4	Self	Aceda	<i>(mispronounced repetition)</i>
5	Lily	(laughter)	
6		<u>Una seda</u>	<u><i>Silky</i></u>
7		<u>Suave</u>	<u><i>Soft</i></u>
8		<u>Lacio</u>	<u><i>Straight</i></u>
9		Um...	<i>Um...</i>
10		<u>Bueno</u>	<u><i>Good</i></u>
11		En mi país le dicen a tu pelo <u>bueno</u> y la de los otros <u>malo</u>	<i>In my country they call your hair <u>good</u> and other people's hair <u>bad</u></i>

During my interaction with Lily in Table 2.3, I attempt to position and voice myself as a researcher through my opening question in line 1. Lily, however, in line 2 does not align with my positioning and instead uses *niña* to position me as childlike in the interaction. This positioning is further emphasized by my mispronunciation of *una seda* in line 4 followed by Lily's laughter. The end of the laughter and subsequent analysis in lines 6-8 marks a shift in Lily's positionality from big-sister-figure to hair expert. Lily gave a narrow description of my hair as she observed each characteristic from her positionality as a stylist in the moment listing the tactile qualities as *una seda* (silky) and *suave* (soft or smooth) in lines 3, 6, and 7 then the visual quality of *lacio* (straight) in line 8, and finally the overall evaluation of *bueno* (good) in line 10. There was a chronotopic shift in line 9 as she paused to mark her final evaluative conclusion that *una seda*, *suave*, and *lacio* all directly indexed (*pelo*) *bueno*. I argue that in this temporal shift, there is also a stance shift as she positions herself no longer as a stylist as she did in lines 6-8, but as a representative of the Dominican Republic through her introduction of Dominican hair

terminology in lines 9-11. Her use of this terminology also indexes her alignment to Dominican racial ideologies during the interaction.

While Lily worked from narrow to broad in her characterization of my hair as *bueno*, when characterizing hair considered *pelo malo* she started from a broad evaluative stance as a Dominican representative in line 12 and became narrower in identifying the characteristics that directly indexed hair as *malo* shifting positions throughout as Client 1 joined the conversation. Lily goes from the broad *malo* in line 12 to the more specific *fuerte* and *difícil* in lines 13-14 which refer to the perceived ease, or lack thereof, in doing the hair. This characterization points to two different positionings of Lily: (1) as an experienced stylist who did Black hair and was familiar with the work it entailed to straighten thus leading to the characterization as *pelo malo* in comparison to *pelo bueno*, and (2) as a Dominican woman socialized into describing and viewing Black as *fuerte* and *difícil*. In both cases, Lily's positionality relies on experience with members of the global Black diaspora and an evaluation of their hair as *pelo malo* through indirect indexicality. The indirect indexical relationship between hair evaluation and race were made explicit in lines 16-20 when Lily and Client 1 engaged in *collaborative communicative work* (Blommaert) to further explain *pelo malo* to me. When Lily asked Client 1 for the translation of *malo* into English in lines 18-19, they were both working under the understanding of *malo* as referring to a quality of hair indirectly indexing Blackness from Lily's question in lines 16-17. Therefore, as Lily continued to characterize *pelo malo* as *nappy*, *con mucho nudo*, *fuerte*, and *con greña* in lines 21, 23, 25, 30-33 she directly indexed *pelo malo* while *pelo malo* indirectly indexed Blackness.

During this process of indexicality, Lily positions herself as non-Black and as not having *pelo malo*. When she shifts the conversation to include Client 1 in lines 16-20, she also repositions herself as a peer of Client 1 by asking for her help in translating linguistically from Spanish to English and also culturally from an emic to a perceived etic perspective. Lily shifts the conversation back to being between she and I in line 21 by continuing her list. In line 24, she also reveals that not only do the hair qualities she listed directly index *pelo malo* and that *pelo malo* indirectly indexed Blackness but that she believes the clients have *pelo malo* and are therefore Black. Though she consults Client 1 for help in this analysis, it's clear from this interaction that she does not consider Client 1 to be a part of this hierarchical classification system rooted in fractal recursivity and in Chapter 4 I argue this has to do with the unique positionality Spanish-speaking clients held in the salon. Not only are Lily and Client 1 excluded from this analysis, but Lily excludes me as well adding to her original evaluation of my hair as *pelo bueno* to say again that it is *suave*, as opposed to *nappy*<sup>22</sup>. When I ask in line 28 for Lily to translate *nappy* back into Spanish, she repeats several of the terms already listed adding *con grena* but unlike before goes from the most narrow terms that would be discovered tactilely to more broad as she again shifts stance from a Dominican representative to a stylist indicated by her shift to English (significance of English use and positionality as stylists are discussed in detail in chapter 3) and exasperation in line 35.

Finally, Lily shifts back into Spanish and the position of big-sister-figure bringing the analysis full circle with a summarizing description of the key characteristics indexing

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<sup>22</sup> Though I use this word in my analysis as I voice my informants, this is not a word I normally use and as such this is not how I would describe my hair or the hair of others, reasons for which are explored in other parts of the thesis.

hair quality. This time she revisits the narrow terms for *pelo bueno* including *suave* twice – once in line 36 to begin the analysis and again in line 38 to close the analysis, adding *fino* to the list of words associated with *pelo bueno*. Line 38 is the only instance in which she references a shape beyond straight for *pelo bueno* referring to *una onda suave* which would be a loose curl or wavy hair. Hair shape was not discussed for *pelo malo* but because of the indexical relationship between hair and race, the hair shape of *pelo malo* can be understood as various types of curly more intense than loose or wavy and associated with the terms listed above. Lily shifted from describing what my hair is, to what it is not by saying narrowly in lines 40-41 that *no es un pelo con nudo* (it's not hair with knots) which would make it *difícil*. When I prompted Lily to explain her rationale for the hair evaluation she provided, she revealed familiar characterizations of hair quality as those in the Black community when discussing good and bad hair (Jacobs-Huey 2006).

Table 2.4 Translation of *pelo malo*

12	Lily	Porque son <u>malo</u>	<i>Because it's <u>bad</u></i>
13		Porque son <u>fuerte</u>	<i>Because it's <u>tough</u></i>
14		Son <u>difícil</u>	<i>It's <u>difficult</u></i>
15	Self	Entonces mío no es <u>difícil</u>	<i>So my hair isn't <u>difficult</u></i>
16	Lily	Como se dice (¿)	<i>How do you say</i>
17		A los <u>africanos</u>	<i>About the <u>Africans</u></i>
18	Client 1	<u>Malo</u>	<i><u>Bad</u></i>
19	Lily	En ingles	<i>In English</i>
20	Client 1	Oh oh <u>nappy</u>	<i>Oh oh <u>Nappy</u></i>
21	Lily	<u>Nappy</u>	<i><u>Nappy</u></i>
22		Con mucha	<i>With lots of</i>
23		Con mucho <u>nudo</u>	<i>With lots of <u>knots</u></i>
24		Lo de los clientes	<i>The client's hair</i>
25		<u>Fuerte</u>	<i><u>Strong/tough</u></i>
26		Pero tuyo no es	<i>Yours isn't</i>
27		Es <u>suave</u>	<i>It's <u>soft</u></i>
28	Self	Y como se dice en español <u>nappy</u>	<i>And how do you say <u>nappy</u> in Spanish</i>

29	Lily	Ella dice	<i>She says</i>
30		<u>Con nudo</u>	<i>With knots</i>
31		<u>Con greña</u>	<i>With tangles/matting</i>
32		<u>Como fuerte</u>	<i>Like strong/tough</i>
33		<u>Como malo</u>	<i>Like bad</i>
34		Como	<i>Like</i>
35		I don't know	<i>I don't know</i>

With the help of the bilingual client at the next washbowl, Lily provided an exhaustive list of terms she saw as synonymous to *nappy* and antonymous to *suave* in line 27 including *malo*, *fuerte*, *difícil*, *africanos*, *con nudo*, and *con greña* in lines 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 27, 32, 33, 34, and 35. Neither Lily nor the client seemed to consider the taboo nature of using this term. Lily's use of the term was particularly interesting as someone who did not identify as Black and who, according to other stylists' comparison of our hair textures, also had what they would describe as *pelo suave*. I sat cringing throughout the conversation trying to collect my data without over-inserting myself as a Black person who does not feel comfortable with this word considering the political weight it holds (Jacobs-Huey 2006). The nature in which they used *nappy* reflected an ideology that normalized the association between bad and Black hair as separate from the cultural implications faced by Black women marginalized by this ideology. Throughout my time in the salon, the stylists made an effort to explain that though they did not consider Black hair to be bad, the way they were accustomed to describe it was still *pelo malo* because of the texture and Dominican cultural understandings of hair. After clarifying the definition of *nappy*, Lily returned to her description of my hair in contrast to Blacks/clients.

Table 2.5 Hair texture description

36	Lily	Tu pelo es un pelo <u>suave</u>	<i>Your hair is soft hair</i>
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37	<u>Fino</u>	<u>Fine/thin</u>
38	Puede tener onda pero es <u>una onda</u> <u>suave</u>	<i>It can have waves/curls but they're <u>soft</u> <u>waves/curls</u></i>
39	Tú sabes	<i>You know</i>
40	No es un pelo	<i>It's not hair</i>
41	<u>Con nudo</u>	<u>With knots</u>
42	<u>Como difícil</u>	<u>Like difficult</u>

The interaction analyzed in the previous three tables with Lily occurred within my first week in the salon before the stylists realized I was a Black woman myself. Their assumption that I was not Black was clear as Lily categorized my hair as *suave* and essentially non-Black according to her analysis in Table 2.4. Minutes after line 42 in Table 2.5, Lily inquired about my race and that of my family thus learning my alignment with the other clients. Therefore, hair quality descriptors were used as the direct index of the social understanding of *pelo malo* and *nappy* hair to be the domain indirectly indexing race, specifically Blackness leaving *pelo bueno* to be the compliment of non-Black other (Ochs 1992). Lily and others throughout my time in the salon continued to try to place me as both non-Black and Hispanic due to their own racial and linguistic ideologies which are addressed in more detail in Chapter 3.

The indirect indexical relationship between these hair qualities and race causes Lily to racialize me as non-Black because of the direct indexical relationship between hair qualities and the categorizations of hair as *bueno* or *malo*. This process of indexicality reflects the fractal recursivity discussed earlier in which qualities of Blackness are evaluated and valorized, or not, within the global Black diaspora in relation to Whiteness based on the icon of racial categorization which racializes those in the U.S. according to the racial dichotomy of Black and White. The last step of this semiotic process involves erasure. In the context of hair as an indexical sign in which *pelo malo*

indirectly aligns the subject with Blackness and *pelo bueno* indirectly aligns the subject with near Whiteness or Other, those with phenotypic characteristics that fall into either category but do not fit the indirect indexical racial category associated with it are erased. In this instance, because I have what Lily describes as *pelo bueno* my racial category is assumed to be Other and non-Black. As was seen in the previous interaction and continues to be analyzed throughout my work, my alignment as Black was often questioned and challenged by stylists and clients alike. The context of the salon often led to my hair being cited as one of the reasons I was not assumed to be Black, meaning that my hair did not have the indexical properties necessary to place me indirectly as Black but instead indirectly indexed Other.

In the analysis of Tables 2.1-2.2 and 2.3-2.5, it is clear that Black women of the global diaspora are attentive to multiple phenotypic indexes when engaging in racialization. While the first analysis addressed ways in which practices of racialization revealed differing racial ideologies in the D.R. and U.S. concerning racial mixture, the second analysis illustrated the ways in which phenotypic characteristics are understood across the diaspora which can impact racialization. I've looked mostly at the ways in which skin color and hair texture impact forms of belonging through an autoethnographic analysis, but I argue that Black women are attentive to not only skin and hair but countless other physical features including eye color, nose shape, fat and muscle distribution throughout the body, and many others. Black women are more susceptible to this kind of analysis because of the ways in which our bodies have been historically objectified. Therefore, while a simple and ignorant conclusion to this analysis could be that Dominican women don't value Afrocentric beauty, instead I offer this data as an

example of the ways in which Black women are scrutinized within the global diaspora and though this analysis does not consider Whiteness as central I posit that Black women engage in these practices because of historical experiences in White Public Space which have necessitated the careful analysis of the self in terms of how racialization could impact access to the broader society in which many of us must function. Though the salon as a hybrid space offers some safety from the scrutiny of White Public Space, the effects of this scrutiny still permeate our culture through fractal recursivity leading to the erasure of those who do not fit the racialized standards imposed by the broader icon of a Black and White racial dichotomy in the U.S.

### **Commodification of hair.**

The investment women made with their hair was reflected not only in the selectivity women showed in choosing a salon and stylist, but also through the time and money spent at the salon. The cost of the hair process in this salon was usually \$45 by the end of the whole blowout, plus the tip. Most women came in every 1-2 weeks, meaning they were spending approximately four hours (on an easy day) and \$50 a week on hair care. The price does not include hair coloring or account for busy days in the salon when some people must spend all day waiting to get their hair done.

Some women took issue with costs of service, but most said the blowout was a more affordable option than Black salons. Most people who had a problem with the price usually complained because they were with someone else who was paying less than them. The stylists justified the cost difference because the clients' hair was different textures or lengths and therefore led to using more product or taking more time to do. It was difficult for me not to speak up in these moments just like it was difficult for me to watch children

crying in pain in order to have straight hair. I justified my lack of action by telling myself that the children would either cry in the semi-privacy of the salon, or they might cry in public because their hair is not straight and they don't fit societal expectations/standards. These were moments I was confronted with and most uncomfortable with my hair privilege.

Not all of us choose to continue the tradition of straightening practices. Many Black women, as well as other women with curly hair, choose to wear our hair in other styles. Some of the styles require that we go to the salon still, but those of us who wear our hair natural are free from this biweekly obligation. Instead, those of us wearing our naturally curly hair invest our money into products. These products can be seen marketed in a variety of ways. During the summer I was able to attend two festivals – *Curlfest* (Figure 2.2) and *Essence* (Figure 2.3). *Curlfest*, as you might have guessed, is a festival



Figure 2.2 Curlfest

that celebrates curly hair. This relatively new annual festival, held in Brooklyn, New York, embraced many cultures, genders, and hair types. *Essence* is a more established

annual festival held in New Orleans, Louisiana, and largely celebrates U.S. Black culture. Both festivals were open to the public, but special access could be bought to certain areas of the festival. A large part of Black culture, particularly Black women's culture, is rooted in our hair and physical beauty. During my time at *Essence*, I engaged in participant observation in the Beauty Bungalow – the land of free samples and lines. Booths lined the walls with workers handing out samples of products. Each product was marketed toward naturally curly hair. While women with all hair types and styles attended, it was clear what was desirable – curls.



Figure 2.3 Essence's Shea moisture section at Beauty Bungalow

I attended not long after my *Dominican Blowout* experience, which seemed to deflate my curls. I remembered asking for advice, searching for restorative or repairative products, and feeling embarrassed by my lifeless curls. I was jealous of every curly afro I saw, which to be fair was not much different than how I felt when my curls were at their best. I went every day and stood in endless lines “for the sake of my research” and to collect each product they had in search of the miracle serum I never found. Products

catered toward hair types, such as *curly*, *kinky*, or *coily*. Only the Shea Moisture tent advertised to men and people with locks: otherwise, the Beauty Bungalow at Essence was a room just for Black women with curly hair.

## **Conclusion**

Going from the salon to the festival back to the salon again was jarring. I considered how curly hair could be both a way to empower and marginalize Black women. I thought about the money we all spend to be fierce and beautiful. I thought about the privilege I had to be from New Orleans and go to the festival without much worry about cost. I considered how inexpensive I felt the *Dominican Blowout* was in comparison to other Black salons I've been to, but the service was still not cheap considering the frequency at which women received the service to upkeep appearances. Upon reflection, I laughed at how easy it must be to buy a two-in-one shampoo and conditioner in the first grocery store you walk into when you don't have curly or Black hair. And I considered how when global musical icon Beyoncé in her culture shaking hit *Sorry* said "Becky with the good hair" some people would never know the deep cultural implications she reflected in the use of *Becky* as a stereotypically White woman's name meant to represent White women generally and the indexical relationship between Whiteness and *good hair*. Though this criticism is directed at Whiteness, the uptake is necessarily connected to Blackness in that only the people who know what it means to have *bad hair* could understand the significance of this reference as emblematic of a broader cultural struggle for Black women globally being compared to their White counterparts as most often lesser than. I've been told I have wash-and-go hair which is considered a privileged type of naturally curly hair, and I don't deny that my hair care

process is still not the most involved, but I also recognize that for those of us with marginalized identities connected to our hair I could be considered best case scenario – good hair. For some, I am “Becky with the good hair” as much as I try to distance myself from this ideology.

The relationship Black women in the global diaspora have with hair is experienced at varying degrees taking varying cultural understandings of what it means to be Black into consideration. While I acknowledge the privilege my hair has allowed me, I’m also aware that the stakes of hair care are different for women who have been categorized as having *pelo malo*, or bad hair. The difference between wearing Black hair straight or in a natural style could be a matter of job opportunity as can be seen in several cases of hair discrimination throughout the U.S (Johnson and Bankhead 2014; Stowe 2019). For the case of Black women with stigmatized hair and stigmatized linguistic features in Spanish through Dominican Spanish and English through AAE and Dominican English, the stakes are even higher as we consider the legal implications involved in non-standard language use legal discrimination cases. Considering hair care to be a mundane topic reveals a privilege of unawareness to the prejudices marginalized groups must grapple with when attempting to complete basic activities necessary for life.

The semiotic process of hair and racialized forced me to confront many of my own privileges concerning hair, but also made me question how constructed ideologies have allowed me to experience privilege. In thinking about the Dominican Republic and the United States, I am struck by how Blackness can be indexical of different categories of clashing semiotic systems concerning race and gender and how these processes of racialization lead to different forms of marginalization for U.S. Black women and

Dominican women in the salon. If we think about Blackness as originating in the transatlantic slave trade, then it is worth questioning our own racial ideologies and gatekeeping practices concerning Blackness in the U.S. as part of a globalized community full of diversity. It is worth working for a more inclusive definition of what Blackness can mean and look like to include those with complex migratory patterns that brought us to the U.S. By considering a historic approach to Blackness in terms of the transatlantic slave trade, we are able to make sense of differing conceptions of Blackness and understand how Black and Dominican women work together to understand race and space in the context of an Atlanta beauty salon (Thomas and Clarke 2006).



## CHAPTER 3

### DAILY SALON INTERACTIONS

The bilingual capabilities of the stylists are analyzed using a Bakhtinian framework on heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981). The theoretical framework on heteroglossia introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) in 1934-1935 addresses the importance of studying multilingualism outside of the confines of monolingualism. I draw on these works by attempting to answer the following questions about language use among Dominican and Black women in Atlanta beauty salons: Which codes do stylists and clients use to communicate? How is communication navigated when linguistic competence is uneven? While applying notions of polycontextual interactions, I consider voices as reflective of shifting stances. According to Blommaert,

“It is the packaging of topic, place, style and people that makes up the indexical direction of communication: the fact that certain topics require specific semiotic modes and environments, and so organize identities and roles (Agha, 2005). Goffman (1981) called such patterns shifts in ‘footing’: delicate changes in speaker position that were accompanied by shifts in linguistic and semiotic mode and redefined the participant roles in the interaction (Blommaert 2007, 119).”

In the context of the salon, multiple roles were available to clients and stylists depending on their contextualized relationships which will be explored further below.

During the one-month period I spent in the Dominican salon in Atlanta, GA I recorded approximately 39 hours and 43 minutes of informal interviews, formal interviews, and naturally occurring speech. Many of the informal interviews came from naturally occurring speech interactions in which I was able to ask clients questions about

their hair and experiences in the salon while the stylists were working with them or while they waited for the next step of their hair care process.

There were various linguistic practices in the salon. The Dominican stylists spoke predominantly Dominican Spanish and their clients spoke predominantly Black English. Jessica, Lily, and Etwin spoke Dominican English as well. During our formal interview, Raquela stated that she did not feel comfortable claiming to speak any variety of English though I occasionally heard her use English words and phrases like come to back, please sit, and hello. The clientele were not exclusively Black women, but the majority were, and these women spoke in Black English with each other and the stylists. Occasionally a Black client would come in who had a limited understanding of Spanish, but I never observed them engage in a Spanish conversation beyond politely nodding at the Spanish being spoken to them by the stylists. The clients who came in that did speak Spanish fluently were either from various places in Latin America and the Caribbean or were heritage speakers. Some of the regions the Spanish speaking clients came from included Honduras, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. Some had a similar trajectory as the women in the salon meaning they were either from New York or spent substantial time there.

Each stylist indicated that their English knowledge was based on salon interactions leading to domain specific linguistic ability. There were no interactions in my observations between stylists and clients where a client spoke Spanish and a stylist spoke English to this client. When Spanish was used by stylists, it was in-front of clients but not towards them unless mistaken for Hispanic/non-Black. When a new client came in, linguistic assumptions were made based on racialized assumptions indirectly indexed

by physical qualities like hair texture. Clients and the children of the stylists did not generally interact.

I witnessed native English-speaking clients with no knowledge of Spanish interacting with native Spanish-speaking stylists with a hair/salon knowledge of English. According to Blommaert, “The truncated repertoires of new immigrants often compel them to collaborative communicative work, in which the little bits of competence of some are added to those of others” (Blommaert 2011, 106). In cases with positive affect between clients and stylists, there seemed to be evidence of what Blommaert is *calling collaborative communicative work* in which clients and stylists work together to achieve a shared understanding through use of resources such as dictionaries, pictures, internet searches, and interpreters as well as their own knowledges of English. This process often involved the stylists code-switching and mixing into Spanish during conversations with English speaking clients. Intimate Grammars looks at the emotionality aspect of language use amongst Navajo speakers, making it clear that decisions to code-switch or mix can be reflective of different levels of connection with the languages being spoken and the speakers in the interaction (Webster 2016).

I argue, like Webster, that code-mixing and switching can reveal connections with each variety of language and with the recipient by the speaker (2016). Code-mixing revealed such intimacies during interactions in which both stylist and client were speaking English and the stylist would briefly mix in Spanish, for instance using *pero* instead of *but*. This mixture of Spanish into an otherwise English conversation happened when there was verbal communication between clients and stylists that was outside of the normal script in which they discussed hair styling and costs of service (discussed in

preface). The intimacy of these kinds of interactions is evident in the stylists going off script to communicate with clients. Though standard communication required stylists to use a minimal use of English to get their point across to clients, the need to speak more English than usual led to stylists mixing in Spanish. The use of unscripted English was most common when stylists were conversing with clients they had developed relationships with through doing their hair on multiple occasions. Code-switching into Spanish happened when stylists had side-conversations with another Spanish-speaker in order to negotiate how to communicate their desired thought in English to a client. Evidence of code-switching during stylist-client interactions will be interpreted in the following section.

### **Types of Interactions**

There were four main types of communication that I observed in the salon: stylist-to-stylist, client-to-client, stylist to her children, and stylist-to-client. The first two types of communication occurred in one language at a time while the latter two involved various expressions of bilingualism. I will analyze each type of communication focusing predominantly on the bilingual behaviors evident through discourse analysis of stylist-to-client interactions through positionality, identity, and indexicality. The following tables detail the types of interactions present in the salon and which codes were used during these interactions.

***Stylist-to-stylist.*** When speaking amongst each other, stylists spoke exclusively in Spanish. If there were interactions that involved stylists and clients, the stylists usually spoke to the clients in English and each other in Spanish. Interactions between multiple stylists and clients were not common. Stylists voiced a casual style when speaking to

Chart #1: Stylists Interactions

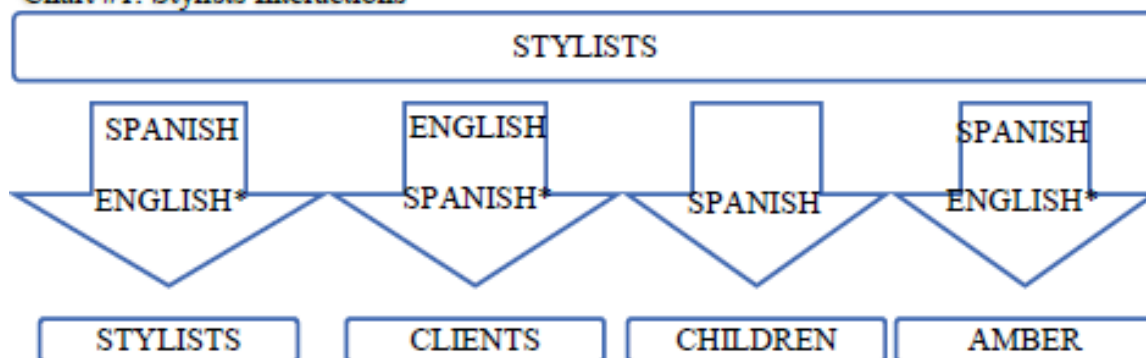


Chart #2: Clients Interactions

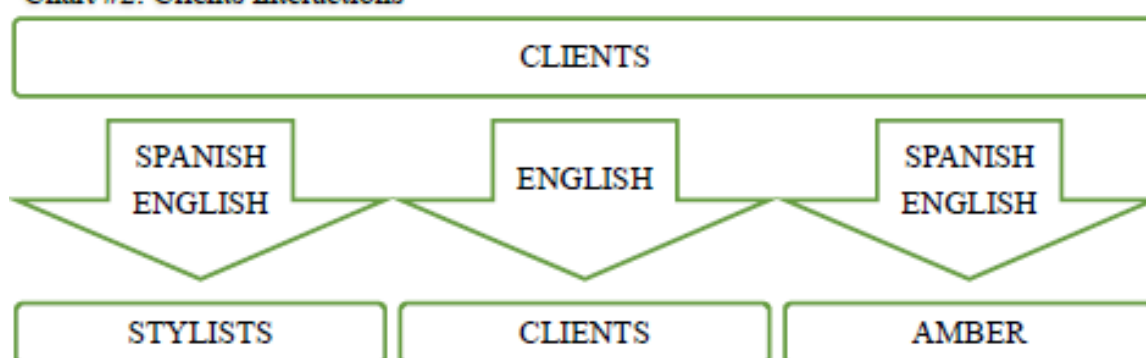
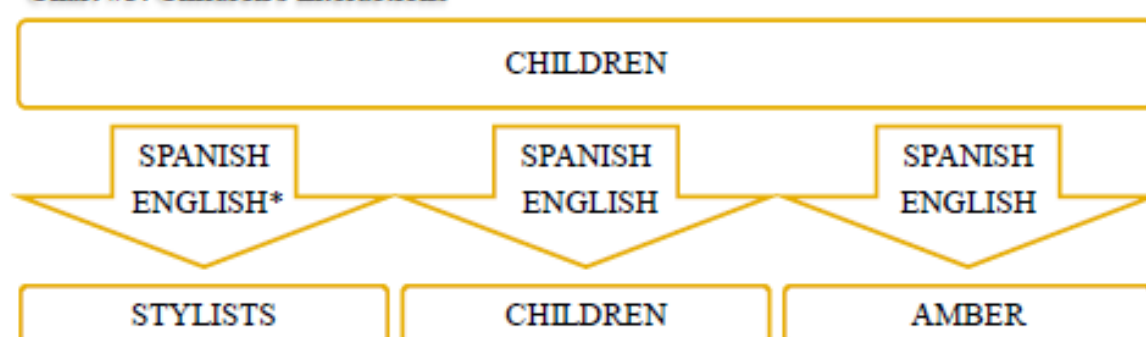


Chart #3: Children's Interactions



Key for Figure 3.1 Interactions by speaker

\* - happened under specific circumstances detailed below

NOTE:

Chart #1 stylists are using multiple codes

Chart #2 does not indicate clients are using multiple codes, but rather linguistic diversity in clientele

Chart #3 children are using multiple codes

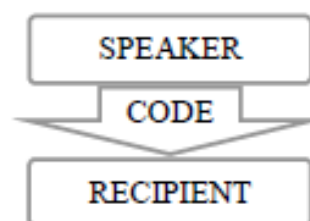


Figure 3.1: Interactions by speaker

### SPANISH INTERACTIONS

		<i>Speaker 2 code: Spanish</i>			
<i>Speaker 1 code: Spanish</i>		stylist	client	children	me
	stylist	YES	YES	YES	YES
	client	YES	NO	---	YES
	children	YES	---	YES	YES
	me	YES	YES	YES	---

### ENGLISH INTERACTIONS

		<i>Speaker 2 code: English</i>			
<i>Speaker 1 code: English</i>		stylist	client	children	me
	stylist	Y/N*	YES	NO	Y/N*
	client	YES	YES	--	YES
	children	NO	---	YES	YES
	me	Y/N*	YES	YES	---

### SPANISH & ENGLISH INTERACTIONS

		<i>Speaker 2 code: English</i>			
<i>Speaker 1 code: Spanish</i>		stylist	client	children	me
	stylist	Y/N*	Y/N*	Y/N*	Y/N*
	client	NO	NO	---	Y/N*
	children	NO	---	YES	Y/N*
	me	Y/N*	Y/N*	Y/N*	---

*KEY for figure 3.2 Interactions by Language:*

YES – interactions occurred

NO – interactions did not occur

Y/N\* – interactions occurred but under specific conditions discussed further below

Figure 3.2: Interactions by language

other stylists who were co-workers and equals, except for Jessica, the salon owner but even her relationship between the other stylists was casual since they were either friends or family. The stylists also carpooled regularly because only some of them had cars. They lived in close proximity to one another in neighborhood approximately 30 minutes from the salon. Because of the amount of time they spent together, stylists formed a kinship

network and Jessica made it clear that that's how she preferred to run the salon because they can trust and rely on one another as kin.

Jessica often provided lunch for everyone working in the salon, including myself who usually ran to get the food. As the stylists became more comfortable with my presence in the salon, they began asking me to run errands for them like getting their lunch from nearby restaurants. We spent a lot of time discussing food, but they never spent much time eating their food. Since there were often clients waiting to be seen, the stylists would stagger their lunch breaks and only eat once they had completed a head or paused in between steps.

Due to their close relationships, stylists spoke regularly while working and their communication topics varied including politics, current events, work, television programs, and their social lives. The following table is an example of an interaction between Ewind and Lily who are discussing the 2018 World Cup.

Table 3.1 Ewind and Lily discuss World Cup

1	Ewind	Ya el domingo era final	<i>Sunday was the finale</i>
2		El último y ya	<i>The last one and that's it</i>
3		La misa gana Francia	<i>France won again</i>
4		Yo no quería que gana Inglaterra	<i>I didn't want England to win</i>
5	Lily	Aye no	
6		Para mí	<i>For me</i>
7		que gane Croacia	<i>I wanted Croatia to win</i>
8	Ewind	O o Francia	<i>Or or France</i>
9		Porque eta::	<i>Because it's</i>
10	Lily	[Creo que-]	<i>[I think it's-]</i>
11	Ewind	<b>[Es otra] jugar</b>	<b><i>[it's a different] game</i></b>
12		Croacia con Inglaterra	<i>Croatia against England</i>
13		Allí jugó	<i>There France played against<sup>23</sup></i>
14		el Francia co[:n]	
15	Lily	[Bélgica]	<i>Belgium</i>
16	Ewind	Co::n	<i>Against</i>

<sup>23</sup> Literal translation of lines 13-14 is *There played/France with*

17 Lily	Es Bélgica creo	<i>I think it's Belgium</i>
18 Ewind	Co::n=	<i>Against=</i>
19 Lily	= <b>Con Bélica</b>	<i>=<b>it's Belgium</b></i>
20 Ewind	Sí	<i>Yeah</i>
21	Ganó Francia	<i>France won</i>

This interaction occurred on a slow Monday when the other stylists weren't working. The World Cup games were a popular topic among stylists in the salon, but I rarely observed clients being equally invested in the games. The international nature of the games was particularly striking as Ewind and Lily aligned themselves with European teams as Dominican women living in the United States. Though clients were engaged in a globalized service by seeking out a Dominican salon, they did not seem to appreciate the global impact of the World Cup in the same way their stylists did, pointing to a cultural difference in sports preference<sup>24</sup>. Race may play a role in the decision to align with teams based on not only the national affiliation of the teams and its fans, but also the racial demography of the teams, which speaks to the sense of pride individuals feel for their own race especially when someone is a member of an underrepresented group<sup>25</sup>. Ewind and Lily discussed several other topics that day as they worked on clients and waited for new clients to arrive. Occasionally, Mondays would be such a slow day that they would close the salon at 4 in the afternoon instead of 6 in the afternoon.

***Client-to-client.*** Clients interacted with each other in Black English. Spanish speaking clients were so rare that there was not more than one present in the salon at one time during my fieldwork. The use of English was generally unmarked between clients

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<sup>24</sup> The clients may have been disinterested in the World Cup for a number of reasons that will be explored in a later work.

<sup>25</sup> An analysis of the role of Black bodies in the profit of sports in a globalized economy may also impact this.



because of the broader context of the U.S. and as such English use by clients did not indicate a specific voice the same way it did for stylists. This was also due to clients only having one language in common. The clients' voicing was not marked by code like with stylists but rather by friendliness, familiarity, and topic of conversation (if conversational at all). The following example demonstrates an interaction between clients who were strangers in the salon.

Table 3.2 Client-client interaction

1	Client 1	You think they done wit me?
2		I gotta go pick somebody up
3	Client 2	They prolly say pay first
4	Client 1	Hu?
5	Client 2	They prolly wanchu to pay first
6	Client 1	Oh okay
7	Client 2	Yeah
8		Long as you pay
9		We're good
10		They shouldn't mind
11	Client 1	I'm coming back though

Interactions like the one above were rare since clients did not often initiate conversations amongst each other; the exception was usually surrounding childcare. Children were often dropped off at the salon to get their hair done and their caregiver would be called using either the salon line or the child's cell phone to pick up the child at the end of the service. Sometimes the caregiver would stay with the child, but this was uncommon. It was more common for a caregiver to drop off multiple children together to get their hair done and watch out for each other, especially when the first day of school began to approach for many in the area. It was also common for mothers to bring babies into the salon while the mother got their hair done. They would either hold the baby during the service or bring in the baby's carrier to sit on the floor near them. There were

several instances when clients would initiate conversations with each other solely to interact with the baby or get more information about the baby. Once a client who did not know the mother, took the baby from the mother to console the baby while the mother was getting her hair done. At first the mother protested, but she eventually let the woman help her and others in the salon gravitated to the situation.

As previously mentioned, it was common for clients to arrive with others (romantic partners, children, parents, grandparents) who came and went freely in the salon. Since the women would be getting their hair done for substantial periods of time, this would often overlap with traditional mealtimes and clients would have people bring them food which they ate while under the dryer or waiting for their turn. Sometimes young children were passed off between caregivers during this time as well.

***Stylist-to-her children.*** There were a few instances when the children of the stylists were present in the salon since school was not in session for the children over the summer. Jessica had one daughter, Faith (12), and a son, Rubén (22). Lily had two daughters, Ellie (13) and Mercedes (9)<sup>26</sup>. The three girls spent a few days in the salon during which time I noticed a few trends in language use between the children and the other stylists. The children were bilingual, and Lily often compared my Spanish abilities to theirs. In my opinion, their linguistic competence far exceeded my own. The stylists expected me to speak to their children in English, however, which we did. The children spoke to each other fluently and fluidly in Spanish and English, favoring English. The mothers and other stylists spoke to the children exclusively in Spanish. The children did not interact with the clients unless saying excuse me or something small. The children

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<sup>26</sup> Raquela and Ewind had children as well but they were not in the salon during my fieldwork

were expected to help out by cleaning and answering phones, which were usually my jobs. This speaks to my role in the salon and the stylists' positioning me as young and childlike. In the following pages, I'll demonstrate the linguistic complexities present in an interaction between Lily, her daughters, and Jessica's daughter.

Table 3.3 Lily, her two daughters, and her niece part 1

1	Mercedes	Quiero merienda	<i>I want a snack.</i>
2	Lily	Merienda?	<i>A snack?</i>
3	Melania	Quiero?~merienda	<i>I want? A snack</i>
4	Faith	<i>(Making noises with game)</i>	
5	Lily	Propita	
6	Ellie	Yo~quiero~merienda	<i>I~want~a~snack.</i>
7	Lily	Ya che y antes me (con)vinsa comenzar de sacarme la propina	<i>Alright already and before I'm convinced start to take the tip</i>
8	Mercedes	Sí Ellie	<i>Yes Ellie</i>
9	Ellie	Yo tengo hambre	<i>I'm hungry</i>
10	Faith	Si:: tí:a:	<i>Yea:h au::nt</i>
11	Lily	Poco lo comiste?	<i>You only ate a little?</i>
12	Mercedes	No:::	
13		No ahora no	<i>No now no</i>
14	Ellie	Pero no tanta hambre	<i>But I'm not that hungry</i>

The above interaction occurred exclusively in Spanish while Lily was present. The linguistic behavior between participants in the interaction shifted as the group split into Ellie and Faith playing a video game<sup>27</sup> and Lily and Mercedes discussing the snack still. Though it was difficult to capture all speakers' overlapping speech in the transcript, the conversation between Faith and Ellie came through most clearly in the audio recording and as such is recorded below. Though Lily and Mercedes were still nearby speaking in Spanish, Faith and Ellie communicated exclusively in English with each other.

<sup>27</sup> An analysis of how the children negotiate roles while playing would be an interesting analysis for another work. See García-Sánchez (2014), Goodwin (1991), or Reynolds (2013) for more on children's play interactions.

Table 3.4 Lily, her two daughters, and her niece part 2

15	Faith	Watch
16		this one starts following you
17	Ellie	You don't have to put water on top of his head?
18	Faith	Yeah
19		Starts following you
20		The way you do it is you have to go on
21		Go on top of his <b>head</b>
22		and then squirt him
23		You want me to help you?
24	Ellie	Yeah
25		Go
26	Faith	Ok
27	Ellie	I know how to do it?
28		I just don't want to do it ( <i>trails off</i> )
29		This is really easy
30		You're not that good at this

Though the children are clearly linguistically competent in both Spanish and English, they chose to speak Spanish with Lily and English with each other. I argue that when the children are communicating in Spanish with Lily, they are positioning themselves as children/niece, whereas when they communicate in English with each other, they are positioning themselves as cousins and equals. The children are making dynamic linguistic decisions, though maybe not consciously, to voice and position themselves in complex ways among different participants. Language is a tool for these children to position themselves within the power dynamics of their kinship structure within the context of the salon. They are drawing on both home socialization by speaking in Spanish with their mother/aunt and broader hegemonic influences from the U.S. to communicate in English with each other all while inside of the salon thus demonstrating another level at which salon is a hybrid space. In the last part of this interaction, I demonstrate what happens

when the children negotiate multiple linguistic codes, and therefore multiple voices, amongst themselves and Lily while adhering to multiple contexts within one interaction.

Table 3.5 Lily, her two daughters, and her niece part 3

31	Lily	<b>Por</b> favor	Please
32	Mercedes	<b>¡Po:r favo:r!</b> ( <i>stomping</i> )	Please!
33	Lily	Cómprala algo de cincuenta centavos	Buy her something worth fifty cents
34	Mercedes	<b>Eh</b> escu-	Um li-
35		Escucha::?	Listen?
36		<b>Escucha::?</b>	Listen?
37	Ellie	Press down	
38		<b>Press down</b>	
39	Faith	I'm trying to go	
40		Estamo~escuchando	We're listening
41	Ellie	<b>down</b>	
42		<b>Yo::</b> <sup>28</sup>	
43	Faith	I'm tryi:::ng to:::	

Positionality was not indexed by linguistic code, but instead indexed by obvious power dynamics based on kinship and age and expressed through voicing. Ellie and Faith were still communicating in English with each other about the video game they were playing as Mercedes interjected in Spanish with her mother. She chose to speak in Spanish because though her speech was directed at Ellie and Faith, she was performing Spanish to align with her mother as an authority on getting snacks. Though Ellie, Faith and Mercedes all share a similar level of linguistic competence in Spanish and English (taking age differences into account), Faith responds to Mercedes in Spanish in line 40 to voice the two different positions she holds in this interaction. Her use of English indicates her voicing of herself as a cousin/peer involved in videogame peer play while her use of

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<sup>28</sup> Unclear whether this is Spanish for *I* or English slang, but from the context appears to be English slang and is therefore not translated.

Spanish points to her positionality with deferential respect to Lily's presence as her aunt and an authority figure who represents a pressure for Faith and Ellie to acknowledge Mercedes though they clearly are more preoccupied with their game.

Table 3.6 Lily, her two daughters, and her niece part 4

44	Lily	Amber si quiere una-	Amber if you want one-
45	Mercedes	Amber	
46	Lily	Si quiera algo:	If you want something
47		De la bodega	from the corner store
48		Ya te traiga	Bring them

The previous three tables from this interaction show clear examples of the multiple positions that children of stylists negotiated in the salon. While this section has focused predominantly on the role of children in these interactions, Lily was also positioning herself in distinct ways as a caregiver. Though in previous interactions with Ewind, Lily positioned herself as a peer and in the next section she positions herself as stylist and friend, in this interaction she demonstrated her role as a general caregiver (mother and aunt) and authority figure among the children. In the final portion, she shifts stances again to address me in Spanish. This interaction is also exemplary of her being a big-sister-like-figure in our relationship and how this way of characterizing our relationship is even more appropriate considering how my responsibilities grew to supervising the children to go two doors down to the bodega since this activity required us going through a group of men who sat on the stoop and drank alcohol during business hours, occasionally harassing the women in the salon.

**Clients and stylists.** The interactions between clients and stylists yielded the richest data by far because clear linguistic negotiations were constantly at play indexing larger trends in the data pertaining to the previously outlined arguments particularly

regarding indexicality and identity. If the clients did not speak Spanish, the stylists would speak to them in English. These interactions were usually brief and initiated by the stylists. They were usually asking the client how they wanted their hair styled or cut or giving them some type of direction. In these cases, gestures often accompanied speech by both clients and stylists. An example of a typical interaction between Lily and one of her clients is given below. In a later section I will analyze a less standard interaction between Lily and one of her favorite clients, Loni.

Table 3.7 Typical client-stylist interaction

43	Lily	Bye mama take care ( <i>directed at client leaving</i> )
44		(0.5)
45		What you like done? ( <i>Directed at next client</i> )
46	Client	Hm?
47	Lily	What you like done?
48	Client	Um just straight
49		With a (?) part

While the majority of time clients were English speakers, there were instances when Spanish speaking clients came to the salon. These women either already had relationships with the stylists before they came in, or they built friendships from their time in the salon. The stylists usually had much more involved conversations with the women who shared their native language.

Side conversations between stylists working to communicate with clients often involved me as the language broker. This was a common occurrence while working in the salon between clients and stylists, but also for stylists as they handled daily affairs with the bank or their children's activities (García-Sánchez 2014; Reynolds and Orellana 2009). I believe the stylists shared confidential and important information with me

because my linguistic competence in both Spanish and English made some of their daily activities easier and because my linguistic competence positioned me as an authority on subjects which can be juxtaposed to my positionality as often childlike when communicating in only Spanish.

Instances of bivalency in the salon were most common when stylists were trying to get the attention of a client by calling them *mama* or *mami*, like Lily does to say goodbye to a client in line 43 of Table 3.7. Stylists referred to the blow-dryer as a *blower* which may not be how it is referred to in English but shares English orthography.

Non-verbal communication was also an integral part of salon communication as both a supplement to verbal communication and in its own right. Hand gestures were used most frequently when stylists and clients were discussing how to cut and style hair. The stylists asked every client which side they wanted their hair parted on when finishing the *Dominican Blowout* which is why the client in Table 3.7 states her preferred part in anticipation of being asked. This question usually followed long periods of silence between the client and stylist, or followed the stylist speaking Spanish with another stylist. Both situations usually confused the client who was often not paying attention and was therefore unprepared when the question about the part was asked to them of their stylist. The stylist often initiated the gesture at the top of their head with their hand alternating pointing to the left or right side of the scalp for the part in response to confused facial expressions by the clients or verbal questions like what. Clients mimicked this gesture to indicate a particular side, sometimes fumbling with their words to compliment the gesture. The verbal communication was not usually as clear as the non-verbal gesture. It was also noisy in the salon so hand gestures were used when people



couldn't be heard. They were additionally utilized when verbal communication was misunderstood because of differing languages. When there were verbal misunderstandings the stylists would occasionally ask me to interpret for them to make sure the hair style was negotiated appropriately. Clients who were more familiar with me would ask me to interpret as well, but most clients did not initiate conversation with me.

### **Collaborative Communicative Work**

In this section, I consider the linguistic negotiations that occurred during interactions between stylists and clients. As power dynamics were negotiated so were linguistic decisions. English use indexed more standard interactions for stylists when interacting with clients during business transactions. Spanish use indexed familiarity and comfort since this language was being used between peers and coworkers in the salon. I argue, like Urciuoli (1996), that when stylists switched from English to Spanish during interactions with clients this indicated a level of familiarity between clients and stylists distinct from other English-speaking interactions in the salon. Language use fluidity indexed the complex relationships and negotiations happening between stylists and clients. The ability to negotiate linguistic boundaries in the salon reflects the safe yet hybrid space of the salon discussed in chapter 1 by demonstrating the comfort clients and stylists felt to mingle codes.

The following transcript is from a naturally occurring speech interaction between Lily and Loni. Loni was a client who came in on several occasions that I built a relationship with from observing the already strong relationship between her and Lily. During this interaction, the two were speaking predominantly English as was common during stylist and client interactions. While English use would normally indicate a certain

amount of detachment between the stylist and client, when Lily began introducing Spanish to the conversation she was also introducing a less standard role of speaking to the client.

Table 3.8 Lily and Loni part 1

1	Loni	Well Lily I don't know how you gonna come over
2		You can't see it
3		You be here on Saturday
4	Lily	You work in the morning
5	Loni	Morning afternoon evening
6	Lily	What time you go Saturday in the morning
7	Loni	um
8		6
9	Lily	6
10	Loni	6
11		Am
12		morning
13	Lily	6 in the morning
14		And what time you finish
15		3 o'clock
16	Loni	You be here
17	Lily	Sometimes I take the customer at 5 o'clock
18		He can go
19		Or
20		Maybe he go and say yes I can do it

In Table 3.8, Loni and Lily are negotiating when Lily's husband can do electrical work at Loni's house. They go over what time Lily will be available in excess through repetition in lines 8-13. This may suggest an insecurity in linguistic competence between the two. Loni in lines 10-12 is shortening and pausing her utterances to meet Lily where she thinks her English competence is at. Though ordinarily this kind of infantilization of language could be understood as offensive and demeaning, I argue Loni does this in an effort to ease the communicative burden on Lily since Loni cannot speak Spanish and only Lily can move between codes. Loni perceives Lily's pauses between utterances as a

miscommunication or Lily struggling to understand, and she thus overcompensates by trying to contextualize her original response by redundantly stating *am* and *morning* in lines 11 and 12. Loni mentioned on several occasions the importance of Spanish and her, albeit empty, interest in learning Spanish. Lily asked me to translate eventually. The amount of resources they use to make their communication work shows their level of intimacy through collaborative communicative work (Blommaert 2011). Loni and Lily's intimate relationship is clear through the effort they both put into the interaction. During interactions in which the clients and stylists were not as close as Loni and Lily, this amount of attention to detail to subjects outside of hair was not found.

The linguistic and business negotiation between Lily and Loni continued as Lily pulled me into the conversation to translate their interaction. At this point, Lily understood what Loni was asking concerning the electrical work. Lily asked me to clarify the interaction not because of any linguistic misunderstanding on her part, but because she understood Loni's request to be ostentatious in terms of her own experiences with electricity. In effect because Lily and Loni had differing socio-economic statuses, they had different understandings on what was a reasonable standard of living in terms of electricity.

Table 3.9 Lily & Loni part 2

69	Lily	Yes I know but	
70		Cuando ya usa eso	<i>When does she use this</i>
71		Lo que yo digo	<i>What I'm saying is</i>
72		Cuando	<i>When</i>
73		para que	<i>for what</i>
74		Cuando se va la luz	<i>When the lights go out</i>
75	Amber	Sí	
76	Lily	Y se va la luz cuando día vive	<i>And the lights go out during the day</i>
77	Amber	Lily wants to know if the lights go out a lot	

78 L&A (laughter)  
 79 Loni Huh  
 80 Amber Lily wants to know if the lights go out a lot  
 81 Loni No  
 82 But this is for **emergency**  
 83 Lily  
 84 Lily Oh oh?  
 85 Loni No  
 86 for **emergency**  
 87 L&A (laughter)  
 88 Loni So the frigerator'll be **working**  
 89 So-(laughter)  
 90 Lily Hay que lindo? *Oh how lovely*  
 91 (laughter)  
 92 Loni **No**  
 93 Just for **emergency**  
 94 When the lights go out  
 95 I want the frigerator on  
 96 I want- (laughter)  
 97 Lily Mmmm  
 98 Loni Girl you understand?  
 99 Lily It's fine?  
 100 Loni Ok  
 101 Not-No they don't **go off**  
 102 Lily I understand?  
 103 Loni You understand  
 104 **For emergency**

Lily shifts stances several times during this interaction through her use of code-switching.

I argue that Lily code-switching into Spanish at times is indexical of her familiarity with Loni as a client. This familiarity can also be found in the topic of conversation. In line 1 Lily is still voicing herself as Loni's friend, but when she shifts languages from English to Spanish, she's shifting her attention from Loni to me and thus positioning herself in terms of our relationship where I serve as a language broker and she as someone with limited proficiency in English. Though Lily understands what Loni is saying and does not need a linguistic translation, I argue that Lily positions herself in this way because she felt she needed a cultural broker to explain why Loni wanted the service not what service

Loni wanted. Lily asks a lot of questions about what Loni wants to clarify she understands what's being asked. In line 74 when Lily cracks a joke about the request Loni is making the level of understanding Lily has is made clear. This also represents another shift in the interaction as Lily and Loni reposition themselves in the conversation. The three of us continue to laugh throughout this segment of the interaction as Lily says *Hay que lindo* in line 82 and Loni defends herself exclaiming *just for emergency* in the following turn. The socio-economic misfire is revealed in the next segment when Lily explains what an extravagant request hooking up the generator like this is based on her cultural experiences in the Dominican Republic and the United States.

Table 3.10 Lily & Loni part 3

105	Lily	This is doing the-the people
106		Lotta-lotta have a money
107		You know
108	All	(laughter)
109	Lily	Becau::se
110		the light
111		Ok
112		I understand now I live in the apartment
113		Pero
114		I have the friend who have the house
115		Y no put it like that
116		Because
117		maybe it's one day
118	L&A	(laughter)
119	Loni	When the lights will go off <b>right</b>
120		And I need my lights
121		<b>Yeah</b>
122		So we lookin for somebody
123		[who can do that]
124	Lily	[Maybe for one day]
125		You put it the condo or something
126		Pero no she want it- (laughter)
127	Loni	Yes that's what we want
128	All	(laughter)
129	Lily	Ok
130	Loni	You understand

131 Lily Yes

In line 90 Lily positions herself as socioeconomically different from Loni in that she lives in an apartment, not a house like Loni. She assures her that even with a limited personal knowledge on houses, she still understands what's appropriate based on a cultural understanding of personal expenses. For Lily, being inconvenienced without electricity for a day is not enough to ask for this service with the generator. She goes on to discuss various experiences with electricity in the Dominican Republic which informs her opinion that the generator is an extravagance unlike Loni who sees the generator as a reasonable request for occasional power outages.

Table 3.11 Lily & Loni part 4

69	Loni	So
70		when it storms=
71	Lily	=No no no no
72	Loni	[you don't have to worry about it]
73	Lily	In <b>my</b> country
74		Usen a lotta because
75		You don't have the permanent light
76		Where my mom lives
77		have it some permanent light
78		But sometimes the light go out for five or six hours
79		And come back the same day=
80	Loni	=Yes yes yes
81	Lily	But in some place
82		the light goes for like four hours and that's it
83		Or like twelve hours and that's it
84		And he needa the light here
85	Loni	Yeah that's what we want
86		That's what we want
87	Lily	Okay?
88	Loni	So we won't have to plug it
89		(laughter)
90		Now you can tell him about it

It's clear that Lily is asking questions of Loni in Table 3.9 not because she doesn't

understand the code Loni is using but rather she doesn't understand why Loni would want something so extravagant. Lily talked about her own experiences with electricity in terms of the Dominican Republic. I argue that while Lily and Loni spend a considerable amount of time discussing the logistics of this service, the priority of the communication is not that the service be completed, but rather that the discussion of the service be used as a social lubricant between Lily and Loni. Because Lily and Loni consider themselves to be friends beyond the standard stylist-client relationship, it is necessary that they perform this closeness to each other by discussing something besides hair. In this performance, they demonstrate their familiarity with each other by Loni asking Lily for help with a service outside of the salon, by Loni knowing Lily's husband's occupation, and by the light banter between the two of them around the sensitive topic of socioeconomic status differences. The topic of the generator matters only to the extent that it establishes familiarity between the two speakers.

In several instances, Lily used Spanish and me as a translator during their conversation for the purpose of engaging with the collaborative communicative work Blommaert describes (2011). Lily does not do all of the work, though. To make their communication collaborative, Loni alters her use of English to match what she believes Lily can understand. I argue the code-switching between languages and styles is only happening because of Lily and Loni's intimate relationship as not just stylist and client but friends, even if only in the context of the salon. Their friendship is further demonstrated by the personal details Lily shares with Loni. When Lily reveals that the generator request is in her opinion extravagant, she is also positioning herself at a lower socioeconomic status than Loni.

## **Conclusion**

The women in the salon drew on several resources in their cross-cultural communications. Stylists, clients, and children voiced their stances in interactions through their linguistic repertoires. While linguistic decisions were not necessarily intentionally made, they did reveal complex systems of communication between speakers. For the stylists children in the salon, they were able to use multiple codes at once to communicate and take multiple stances within a single interaction. Though typical interactions between stylists and clients did not involve much verbal communication, interactions between stylists and clients with relationships that had been building for years revealed complex linguistic decisions when positioning the self in relation to another. The next chapter will consider how raciolinguistic ideologies differ for women in the salon and how these differences impact interactions.



## CHAPTER 4

### RACIOLINGUISTIC NEGOTIATIONS OF IDENTITY AND BELONGING

The previous chapters focused on place and race as factors of belonging for (im)migrants from the Dominican Republic in the United States. I've discussed the migratory trajectories of the stylists in the salon focusing largely on the importance of the Dominican Republic, New York, and Georgia to address how where someone is from can impact their racialization process. The regional location of this analysis is especially important when considering the prevalence of Blackness in the North Edge area of Atlanta, Georgia and how perceived phenotypic characteristics are used to assign individuals into the racial category of Black. This analysis will be extended in this chapter by adding the dimension of language use to the process of racialization and subsequent sense of belonging in the context of the U.S.

Hill (1995) adds to Bakhtin's notion of polycontextuality by considering the ways in which the emotional self and the responsible self can reveal ideologies based on linguistic choices made by an individual with multiple linguistic repertoires. What are the raciolinguistic ideologies present that guide stylist-and-client interactions? A Bakhtinian approach helps disentangle the connections between language and identity by analyzing the polycontextual spaces that bilingual speakers navigate, and the ways identity is understood as a result of the linguistic negotiations that happen in polycontextual spaces (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Tejeda 1999; J. H. Hill 1995, 1998; Woolard 1999).

I have three arguments that will be demonstrated throughout this chapter which

engage with the polycontextual nature of interactions between individuals using multiple codes (García-Sánchez 2014; Mortensen 2017). In my first argument (1), I analyze how language is used to make ethnic distinctions between Dominican stylists and U.S. Black clients based on raciolinguistic ideologies. The role of the salon as a hybrid space (discussed in chapter 1) is integral to the analysis of Dominican stylists as part of an ethnic group distinct from their U.S. Black clientele. The salon is advertised as a Dominican salon offering the service of the Dominican Blowout as emblematic of a Dominican ethnic identity; the use of Spanish reinforces this ethnic distinction between clients and stylists who share a racial heritage by way of the African diaspora (discussed in chapter 2). I argue, however, that the shared heritage by way of the African diaspora for U.S. Black and Dominican women is overshadowed by linguistic and ideological differences which begin as ethnic group distinctions and later lead to racial group distinctions evident through raciolinguistic ideologies. Ethnic group distinctions are made through the ideology that being Dominican indirectly indexes a Spanish-speaking identity and being Black indirectly indexes an English-speaking identity (Ochs 1992, Urciuoli 1996). These indexical understandings of ethnicity and language are used to make assumptions about linguistic ability revealing the raciolinguistic ideologies of stylists and clients (Flores & Rosa 2015, Rosa 2019). Ethnic group differences lead to racialized perceptions of difference based on language use and ability in combination with phenotypic characteristics.

The second argument (2) is that raciolinguistic ideologies promoting *double monolingualism* were revealed as stylists and clients evaluated the linguistic competence of speakers in English and Spanish (Heller 2006; Rosa 2016; Urciuoli 1996). Heller

describes double monolingualism as “the ideal bilingual is one who can act as a monolingual, but in two (or more) languages; ideal bilingualism is a kind of double monolingualism. What underlies this notion is the idea that true, real, good linguistic competence is that which takes as its model the way one uses a language in a monolingual setting” (2006: 83). Speakers were largely evaluated based on a double monolingual ideology that privileged unaccented linguistic ability in second language learners. The stylists were reflexive about their own domain specific knowledge of English and made self-evaluations of their linguistic ability. Stylists’ self-perceptions were reinforced by raciolinguistic ideologies expressed by their children concerning an association between lack of linguistic ability and accented language use. This section will also examine the ways linguistic abilities of speakers indirectly indexed race for listeners in what Rosa terms *sounding like a race* (Ochs 1992; Rosa 2019).

My final argument (3) engages with the different experiences individuals who are Black, Hispanic, Latinx, or Afro-Latinx have in the salon as a hybrid space versus in White Public Space (Hill 1998). The previous two arguments suggest that the experiences of stylists and clients who are women within the salon, while this argument examines Rubén’s (Jessica’s son’s) experience with raciolinguistic ideologies outside of the salon. Those who are both Black and Hispanic encounter raciolinguistic ideologies as members of the Afro-Latinx community which leads to a unique experience in that their language use in combination with their phenotypic characteristics determines whether they are marked as Black or Other in various situations (Rosa 2019, Urciuoli 1996). Furthermore, through Rubén’s narrative we see how Blackness is questioned for those belonging to the Afro-Latinx community who speak Spanish because of the linguistic expectation that

Blackness means English-speaking in the U.S. The relationship between Blackness and English is unpacked in my second argument while my fourth argument analyzes this relationship for those outside the safety of the salon.

### **Linguistic Boundaries of Race & Ethnicity**

Similar semiotic processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure can be seen in the ideological relationship between race and language. Within the U.S., there is an iconized relationship between U.S. Americanness and U.S. American English-speaking which marks non-U.S. American English speakers as non-American, thus placing them on the periphery of U.S. culture and marginalizing their experiences in the U.S. Racialization is related to this because of the ways race in the U.S. has historically been dichotomized as Black and White, resulting in the marginalization and erasure of other groups. Therefore, being U.S. American assumes a racialization as either Black or White, based on the indexical evaluation of phenotypic characteristics outlined above, and that those who are Black or White in the U.S. must speak English, which means that those who are not Black or White and those who do not speak English are not seen as U.S. American regardless of political status in the U.S. The fractal recursivity of this process can be seen in the way that those who speak English with a Spanish accent are not seen as full U.S. citizens, but are assumed to be immigrants and/or not in the U.S. “legally”. Additionally, people who are Black are assumed to be U.S. citizens (with all the discrimination Blacks in this country are subjected to) and to speak English, but most importantly, the Black people in the U.S. are assumed not to speak Spanish (or any other language) and those who do speak Spanish, of any color, are not considered Black, or are considered somehow less Black, because of the raciolinguistic ideologies surrounding

language and race in the U.S. These ideologies subsequently erase the existence of Spanish-speakers who are citizens and Spanish-speakers who are Black<sup>29</sup>. This will be illustrated in the manuscript by discussing the cases of research participants Rubén and Raquela.

Bonnie Urciuoli (1996) discusses the distinction between inner and outer sphere experiences in the United States. She defines these spheres based on markedness and unmarkedness. For the purposes of her work, this distinction was made in order to address differences in ethnicization and racialization. Urciuoli examines the intersection of race, class, and ethnicity among Puerto Ricans in New York. She found that “Puerto Ricans often find their speech typified by Americans as ‘broken’ or ‘mixed’ and their accents as ‘heavy,’ all of which is contrasted with ‘good’ English as if good English were a clearly defined object. Such typifications arise not from astute linguistic observations but from assumptions about race and class” (1996, 2). I examine how linguistic evaluations are tied to ideas surrounding racialization for Dominican women in the salon. According to Urciuoli, “Language provides an easily objectified and coded set of elements on which to hang other aspects of identity and difference” (1996, 4). This was true during my experience with Dominican and U.S. Black women in the salon whose language use indirectly indexed ethnic identity for stylists and clients. Urciuoli also claims that

...in the continental United States, the range of situations in which people use English ordinarily extends from the most intimate, familiar, and equal to the most external, unfamiliar, and authority-weighted. The range of situations in which people use Spanish is ordinarily limited to the intimate, familiar, and equal, although there are exceptions: bilingual classrooms, Spanish-speaking churches,

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<sup>29</sup> An analysis of second language acquisition could also be relevant here but will be left for a later work.

some public media, some workplaces (1996, 6).

While Urciuoli is speaking about the Puerto Rican experience in the U.S., I found similar results when studying Dominican interactions in the salon. The salon could be considered one of the workplaces that the range of situations in which English and Spanish were used varied beyond the boundaries Urciuoli introduces.

H. Samy Alim and Geneva Smitherman also consider how race and language co-constitute identity through their theory of *linguaging race* (2012). In this effort, they claim that “[Language] plays a crucial role in the construction of racial and ethnic identities (Alim and Smitherman 2012, 3).” In my work with Dominican and U.S. Black women, I consider the ways in which linguistic differences categorize these groups into ethnic identities which are subsequently racialized. Alim and Smitherman emphasize that linguistic positioning is not an intentional act, “Language, no doubt, is a significant form of ‘symbolic power.’ Yet its central role in positioning each of us and the groups that we belong to along the social hierarchy lies largely beneath the average American’s consciousness” (2012, 3). They address the ways in which racialization becomes a way in which others are heard and therefore positioned based on perceived linguistic ability in relation to perceived racial categorization. I explore the ways in which linguistic choices shape how women in the salon are positioned as Black and/or Dominican by stylists and clients. Raciolinguistic ideologies refers to the co-construction of perceived identity based on race and linguistics (Flores and Rosa 2015). Rosa theorizes raciolinguistic enregisterment to be “a process...whereby race and language are mutually perceivable” (2019, 7). Rosa discusses this phenomenon in terms of “looking like a language” and “sounding like a race” meaning that those classified as Latinx are racialized based on

phenotypic and linguistic expressions.

Jan Blommaert considers how language changes as it is mobilized into a global economy and evaluation of language practices evolves during its mobilization so that “what counts as ‘good language’ in one place can easily become ‘bad language’ in another (2011, 127).” When thinking about language ideology through the lens of globalization, the history of the speaker and their relationship with said language becomes just as salient as the history and relationship the listener has to it as well. Both interlocutor and receptor navigate language ideologies when communicating. In such interactions, questions of identity arise and complicate shared understandings of language ideology. During interactions in the salon, the way I was racialized depended on my language ability and the evaluation of my language ability depended on my racial identity. As a non-native Spanish speaker, my language skills were glorified, but not until my racial identity was determined not to be marked as Hispanic or Latina.

**Raciolinguistic ideologies: *Looking like a language.***

In the following table, the Dominican salon owner (Jessica) is setting a client’s hair who she perceives to be Black (Client 2) while I’m conducting an informal interview with a non-Black Latinx client (Client 1)<sup>30</sup> who is having her hair set by another stylist (Lily). I was conducting an informal interview with Client 1 when Jessica interrupted to ask about my perception of the texture of Client 2’s hair in comparison to my own which she likens to that of Client 1. The informal interview between Jessica, Client 1, and myself was happening in Spanish and English. When Jessica interrupted the interview, the interaction turned into a conversation between Jessica and me in Spanish.

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<sup>30</sup> This client claimed to have British, Dominican, and Puerto Rican ancestry and did not identify as Black.

Table 4.1 New client interaction part 1

1	Jessica	Como tú describe tu <u>hair</u> - tu cabello	<i>How do you describe your hair – your hair</i>
2		Amber	<i>Amber</i>
3	Amber	Mi pelo?	<i>My hair?</i>
4		Rizo	<i>Curls</i>
5		Rizado	<i>Curly</i>
6		Eh mmm	
7		Un poco largo ahora=	<i>A little long now=</i>
8	Jessica	=Entonces si tu compara tu pelo	<i>=So if you compare your hair</i>
9		Por ejemplo con	<i>For example with</i>
10		Con la que haciendo Lily ahora	<i>With the woman Lily's doing now</i>
11	Amber	Con Lily?	<i>With Lily?</i>
12	Jessica	Oh no	
13		La que está haciendo ella	<i>The woman she's doing</i>
14		Como tú describe este pelo	<i>How do you describe this hair</i>
15	Amber	Como es su pelo	<i>How is her hair?</i>
16		U:::m	
17		Que es	<i>That it's</i>
18		mu:y muy chino	<i>Ve:ry very curly</i>
19		Es más rizado que mío	<i>It's curlier than mine</i>
20		U::m mmmm	
21		Oscuro	<i>Dark</i>
22		Mmmm=	
23	Jessica	=Este es color	<i>=that's color</i>
24		Yo intenté de la textura	<i>I meant the texture</i>
25	Amber	La textura?	<i>The texture?</i>
26		mmmm	
27		Solamente muy chino para mí	<i>It's just curlier to me</i>
28		Sí	<i>Yeah</i>
29	Jessica	Esa la diferencia	<i>That's the difference</i>
30		Más rizado	<i>Curlier</i>
31	Amber	Mhm	

In lines 1-31, Jessica and I are discussing Client 2's hair texture. Though Jessica and I have had several conversations about hair texture before and I can see she is becoming frustrated in lines 8 and 23 when she latches onto my speech, I am unwilling to describe the client's hair texture beyond curly because as a Black woman I am aware of taboos surrounding hair evaluations in the global Black community. While Jessica is not



content with my responses, she is also aware of these taboos and the stakes she has as a business owner in evaluating her client's hair texture in front of her. Therefore, she switches from Spanish to English to interpret our conversation for Client 2 who is now at the center of our analysis. Though I did not see what made Jessica switch from Spanish to English, she was attune to the client's presence during the interaction. Through her act of interpretation for the client, Jessica assumes that the client does not speak Spanish. I argue that this assumption is based in the raciolinguistic ideologies that Jessica holds surrounding race and language use among Black women in the Dominican salon. This assumption is rooted in the semiotic theory of iconization that was explored in chapter 2. In this instance, however, hair is not only indirectly indexing race, but race is indirectly indexing language.

By switching languages, Jessica also switched positionality and illustrated the differing stances she took through her *repertoires of voices* (Blommaert 2007). In Table 4.1, she voices herself as an expert stylist and teacher when communicating with me about Client 2's hair texture. In Table 4.2, we will see Jessica switch positionality through a linguistic shift in which by speaking English to Client 2 she voices herself as a stylist still but instead of coming from a place of power and authority like she did when trying to teach me about hair textures, she comes from place of humility in trying to repair the interaction with Client 2. This position of humility may also be influenced by her additional responsibility as the owner of the business.

The table I provide below is when Jessica interrupts the conversation to explain to the client in English what was being said in an effort to repair the interaction. Jessica attempts to repair the interaction because she is aware of two taboo behaviors that she

engaged in during the Spanish portion of the interaction: (1) speaking in front of the client in a language she was presumed to not understand (Spanish) about the same client and (2) evaluating Black hair, especially from the privileged position as stylist who the client has entrusted with an intimate part of the body.

Table 4.2 New client interaction part 2

32	Jessica	Um
33		I'm sorry
34		We talking about
35		What she think about
36		The different hair
37		Texturize the hair
38	Client 2	mhm
39	Jessica	One is more curls
40		She has the curls but yours is more curls
41	Client 2	mhm
42	Jessica	That's what makes the difference
43		The texture the hair
44		That's only we're talking about

During lines 32-44 Jessica is explaining the interaction we were having in Spanish about the hair of the client whose hair Lily was currently doing (Client 2). She uses “um I’m sorry” in lines 32-33 to mark the transition from Spanish to English and to direct her speech to the Client 2 who is the only person in the interaction assumed not to speak Spanish and therefore need an English interpretation. The hair evaluation of Client 2 that happened at the beginning of the interaction is directly connected to the linguistic assumptions now made by Jessica. This connection is a clear example of what Rosa means by *looking like a language* (2019) in that Jessica is making an assumption about the client’s linguistic ability based on her hair texture and other phenotypic characteristics. The hair texture that I describe as very curly is used to racialize the client as U.S. Black based on the indirect indexical relationship between hair and race discussed

in chapter 2. Once her race is assumed to be U.S. Black by Jessica, what follows is the assumption that Black women do not speak Spanish. Therefore, Jessica addresses the client in English. However, as the interaction continued this assumption proved to be problematic. Whereas in Table 4.2 Jessica and Client 2 maintained one position each throughout the interaction, Jessica as humble stylist/owner and Client 2 as non-Spanish speaking client, in the next table several positions emerged which complicated the stances being taken by Jessica.

Table 4.3 New client interaction part 3

45	Client 2	Oh no you're fine	
46	Jessica	No no no	
47		Because -	
48	Client 2	My dad is Dominican	
49		So I know what y'all are sayin	
50	All	(laughter)	
51	Jessica	Ooooh	
52		Bueno	
53	Client 1	Ya see?	
54	Jessica	Estamos la raza	<i>We are the (same) race</i>
55		Estamos la raza	<i>We are the (same) race</i>
56		Entonces	<i>So</i>
57		Tú entiendes lo que estamos hablando	<i>You understand what we're saying</i>
58		Que bueno	<i>Good</i>
59		Que bueno	<i>Good</i>
60	Client 2	Yes	
61	Lily	Entiendes español	<i>You understand Spanish</i>
62		Hablas español	<i>You speak Spanish</i>
63	Client 2	I don't	
64		my mom is Black	
65		(laughter)	
66		But I understand it	
67		He talks it to me all the time so	

When Client 2 revealed herself to have Dominican heritage, the tone of the conversation shifted along with the positionality of everyone involved. In line 70 when she said her dad was Dominican and then immediately after that she understood what was being said,

the assumption was that because her dad was Dominican, he spoke Spanish and did so with her. Client 2's positionality shifted from being a non-Spanish speaking client to a client who was aligned with the broader community in which Jessica imagined herself, Lily, and Client 1 to be a part. Jessica attempted to repair the interaction by positioning Client 2 in lines 76-77 to be the same race as herself. She recognized the client as a part of *la raza* because her dad was Dominican whereas before Client 2 made this point, Jessica assumed Client 2 was U.S. Black and English-speaking made obvious by her code-switch. This positioning revealed that Jessica's raciolinguistic ideology did not usually consider U.S. Black English-speaking clients to be a part of *la raza*. Jessica and Lily emphasized their new alignment with Client 2 in *la raza* by speaking in Spanish to her and in doing so demonstrated a similar repertoire of voice as the one they had previously been using with Client 1 as a fellow Spanish-speaker. By speaking in Spanish Jessica shifted from her humble stylist/owner position to the voice of egalitarian camaraderie as a fellow Dominican. Client 2 continued to speak in English informing the stylists that though she was familiar with Spanish, she did not speak Spanish. When Lily confirmed Client 2's new positionality in lines 65-66 and Client 2 responded that her mom was Black, the assumption again was that Black people did not speak Spanish therefore her mom did not speak Spanish which, for Client 2 and the stylists, explained her limited linguistic competence in Spanish. This meant that Jessica, and I would argue the other stylists, did not see themselves and the clients as ethnically equals inside of the salon because of linguistic differences.

Table 4.1 can be understood in terms of a semiotic framework of iconization introduced by Irvine and Gal (2000). Recalling from chapter 2 that hair texture indirectly

indexes race through the hair texture valorization hierarchy of good and bad hair, we can further explore how race and language together index raciolinguistic ideologies in the salon through hair. Whereas in chapter 2 the iconic association of phenotypic difference was the racial dichotomy of Black and White in the U.S., in this instance the iconic association based on presumed language ability – that U.S. Americans speak English and those who do not speak English in the U.S. must be foreign. Two types of fractal recursivity happen when these fractally recursive iconic associations are taken up in the Black community: (1) those who are Black in the U.S. speak English, and (2) those who are non-English speakers, in this case Dominican Spanish speakers, are not Black. When both of these implementations of fractal recursivity are taken together those who are non-English-speaking and Black are erased, like Client 2 in Table 4.2. Though she speaks English and identifies as Black, she recognizes a Dominican and Spanish-speaking heritage though it is not the identity she draws on most strongly. With this understanding of the semiotic relationship between race and language, it is clear how even for Jessica who is from the D.R. and is aware of Afro-Latinx individuals assumed that Client 2 was Black because of the indirect indexical understandings of hair and race (discussed in chapter 2) and the indirect indexical understanding of race and language. While hair texture directly indexes hair quality for the stylists in the salon and hair quality indirectly indexes race, Black as a race indirectly indexes English-speaking in the context of the U.S. and therefore, non-Spanish-speaking. Under a semiotic understanding of these processes, it is clear how raciolinguistic ideologies are informed by indexical relationships between hair, race, and language which led to the erasure of Client 2 as a possibility in Table 4.1.

In the previous example, assumptions were made based on raciolinguistic ideologies surrounding Blackness and Dominicanidad, and language use. While the stylists assumed Client 2 did not understand or speak Spanish based on phenotypic characteristics, particularly her hair texture, stylists also assumed that certain clients could understand and speak Spanish based on clients' phenotypic characteristics. There was a specific instance in which a client came to the salon who had a lighter skin complexion, longer hair, and looser curls than most clients who came to the salon. In this case, the stylists initially addressed her in Spanish and when the client could not appropriately respond, the stylists switched to English. In switching to English, however, the stylists also asked the client about her identity. The assumption in this instance was that the client *looked like a language* (Rosa, 2019) meaning her phenotypic features indirectly indexed non-English-speaking. The raciolinguistic ideology held by the stylists led them to believe the client was Hispanic; and when the client proved not to have linguistic competence in Spanish, her identity was still interpreted as Latinx until she said otherwise because of the way speaking Spanish is racialized as beyond just the code but also as connected to a larger diasporic community from various places in Latin America to the United States.

### **Raciolinguistic Ideologies: Good & Bad Language**

The following is a table of naturally occurring speech between Lily, Ewind, myself, a Dominican-American client (Diana), and Diana's U.S. Black friend. During the interaction, Diana and her friend expressed confusion upon learning I was Black and not Hispanic. She explained that she originally thought I was a Dominican who spoke bad Spanish, but upon learning my ethnicity, changed her stance to believing my Spanish was

good. She reflected a similar ideology to those Rubén struggled with in the next section, to mean that those of a certain race should look a certain way and speak a certain language. According to Rosa’s concept of raciolinguistic ideologies, I *looked like a language* to Diana. Since I have already analyzed the ideologies surrounding race and appearance in chapter 2, I will now focus on the ideology surrounding linguistic expectations for a particular race.

Table 4.4 Raciolinguistic ideologies part 1

1	Diana	What are you
2	Amber	I’m Black
3	Diana	You’re Black?
4		Oh okay
5		(laughter)
6	Amber	What did you think I was
7	Diana	I don’t know
8		I thought you were some type of Spanish

In the next turns, Lily asked what was said and Diana translated for her and Ewind.

During this interaction, Diana’s friend got up from the couch in the lobby to look at me.

The five of us were laughing about the confusion when Diana expressed her

*raciolinguistic ideologies* concerning *double monolingualism* through Spanish (Heller 2006). She repaired her initial evaluation of my linguistic competence upon learning my race in the following table. In this repair, Diana repositioned me as a better Spanish-speaker than she originally assumed based on her raciolinguistic ideologies concerning my appearance.

Table 4.5 Raciolinguistic ideologies part 2

9	Diana	Your Spanish is very good then
10		I thought your Spanish was <b>bad</b> Spanish
11		Not-
12		(laughter)

13 Lily      When she came to me  
 14            I say to my sister  
 15            She-  
 16            Where she is  
 17            The father maybe  
 18            Puerto Rico  
 19            Cuba  
 20            I don't know  
 21 Diana    (laughter)  
 22 Friend    Are you part Spanish  
 23 Amber    No  
 24            I'm fully Black  
 25 Friend    How do you know how to speak it

As I've discussed in previous chapters, confusion about my race was common during my fieldwork. Lily explained that she was also surprised I was not Hispanic citing my appearance as seemingly mixed with Puerto Rican or Cuban influence in lines 17-19. Though she had not at this point seen pictures of my family, Lily assumed by looking at me and through her indexical understanding of hair and skin color with racialized geographies that I was Caribbean, potentially through my father though I think she meant my parents more broadly because of the lexical similarity between *padre* (father) and *padres* (parents). In this interaction, Lily reiterated the initial assumption held by Diana and her friend that I was Latinx. However during other conversations with Lily about my race, she compared my linguistic abilities to those of her daughters who were second generation immigrants to the U.S. from the D.R. and bilingual speakers of Spanish and English. In her comparison of me to her daughters, Lily revealed an expectation of second-generation Latinx immigrants to speak a marked variety of Spanish because of the influence of English when coming to the U.S. By assuming Spanish influenced by English would have a lesser linguistic competence, Lily revealed a *double monolingual* linguistic ideology. Like Diana, she thought my Spanish was good enough to



communicate but not as good as a native or L1 speaker.

Diana's friend in lines 22-25 reiterated what I've already argued in the previous section about the raciolinguistic ideologies surrounding Blacks in the U.S: that we speak English and not Spanish, and if a Black person speaks Spanish it must be because they are heritage speakers. This ideology reveals that Spanish is tied to an imaginary border outside of the U.S. which does not include Black people. It also reveals the ways in which non-English speaking indexes a lesser form of U.S. Americanness through the icon discussed earlier in which U.S. Americans are assumed to speak English. The fractal recursivity of this process of iconization is when someone in the U.S. speaks a language other than English, they are assumed not to be U.S. American and therefore an immigrant to the U.S. Though Diana expressed a raciolinguistic ideology of monolingualism which erased the experiences of those of us who are non-native and non-heritage Spanish speakers and Black, she is also inadvertently erasing her own experience in the U.S. as a U.S. American who speaks Spanish and is not a first-generation immigrant.

Though this was not a common experience in the salon, one stylist reflected the ways in which the stakes of Spanish-speaking U.S. citizens are heightened through a raciolinguistic ideology of monolingualism. When I asked Raquela during her formal interview if she considered herself an immigrant she responded, "*Yo pienso de inmigrante, tiene que no tiene su papel. Tengo mi papeles. Soy ciudadana.*"<sup>31</sup> In this concise statement, Raquela clearly disaligns with the identity of immigrant in the U.S. regardless of the fact that she was born and raised in the Dominican Republic before

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<sup>31</sup> "I think an immigrant is someone who doesn't have their papers. I have my papers. I'm an American." Papers here refers to U.S. government recognized legal documentation to be in the country.

moving to the U.S. as an adult. She does so because she has an indirect indexical understanding of immigrants in the U.S. as those who immigrate to the U.S. without U.S. government recognized documentation who are colloquially and pejoratively referred to as “illegal aliens” in certain spheres. While being Hispanic in the southeastern U.S. has a direct indexical relationship with being non-U.S. American and therefore an immigrant in the United States, there is an indirect indexical relationship between speaking Spanish, or any language other than English, and being in the United States illegally, which erases the experience of people like Raquela who both speaks Spanish and is in the country with documentation recognized by the U.S. government.

### **Raciolinguistic Ideologies: Place & Language**

In the above example, I illustrated how raciolinguistic ideologies impacted interactions within the salon. In my next example, I analyze how raciolinguistic ideologies impact interactions outside of the salon by focusing on Rubén’s construction of identity based on place, race, and language. Previously in chapters 1 and 2, I analyzed how Rubén understood his identity based on his sense of belonging and his experiences with racialization in both the United States and the Dominican Republic. I’d like to complicate my previous analyses by now considering the ways being bilingual have impacted his identity. In the following table, Rubén expressed frustration with other’s perception of him as U.S. Black instead of Dominican.

*“Being Dominican has always been like this interesting like middle ground between people tell me I’m Black and me telling them I’m Dominican. It’s like yeah, I can speak Spanish. I’m just more than what you see.”*

He juxtaposed Black and Dominican as discrete categories, though later in the interview he complicates this relationship (see chapter 1). Rubén used speaking Spanish

as evidence that he was both not only Black and that he was Dominican. Though the majority of the interview occurred in English, there were moments he mixed Spanish like in the following table.

*“And when I go [to the Dominican Republic] to visit like my Spanish has an accent and my dad’s side of the family’s much more Dominican. Hay son papi (?). They call me Rubécito. It’s like very more dominicanesque.”*

While explaining his relationship to the Dominican Republic through his use of Spanish, Rubén mixed “*Hay son papi*” and “Rubécito” to emphasize how these specific uses of Spanish were indexical of a Dominican identity. In making this distinction, Rubén pointed to how raciolinguistic ideologies were dependent on place. Whereas to White listening subjects in the U.S. any use of Spanish is marked and often stigmatized, in the broader Spanish speaking community distinctions between types of Spanish are made (Rosa 2019). Linguistic distinctions among Dominicans concerning Spanish learned and practiced in the Dominican Republic and Spanish learned and practiced in the U.S. led to exclusion for Rubén as a member of the latter group. In his case, Rubén’s Spanish was marked as inauthentic Dominican-Spanish in the Dominican Republic because of his connections to the United States. During a portion of his interview analyzed in Chapter 1, Rubén expressed how he didn’t feel Dominican enough in some regards. I argue that in the above table, Rubén’s characterization of his own Spanish language communicative competence as accented in the Dominican Republic is one of those aspects that made him feel less Dominican in the U.S. That his Spanish dialect was seemingly marked to native Dominican-Spanish speakers, points to his connections to the U.S. in a way that questioned his authenticity as Dominican meaning his understanding of true *Dominicanidad* was tied to the geopolitical place of the Dominican Republic whereas his

Blackness (explored in chapter 2) was boundaryless.

In the U.S. since Rubén was racialized as both Black based on his phenotypic characteristics (discussed in detail in chapter 2) and Latinx based on his bilingualism, his identity was marked in two ways when considering the broader U.S. and White Public Space. Those who identify as Afro-Latinx in the United States experience discrimination in unique ways because of how Blackness and Spanish-speaking are understood in a hegemonic system that reinforces power and privilege for those who are unmarked as both White and Standard English speakers.

Ironically, the same way Rubén had his language evaluated, he and his sister also evaluated their mother's (Jessica's) English as accented, using a monoglot Standard of English as a comparison (Silverstein 1996). On several occasions, Jessica compared our linguistic competencies (mine in Spanish against hers in English). She often considered my Spanish to be better than her English because, according to her, we could communicate effectively in Spanish because of my high competence in Spanish but not in English because of her low competence in English. One of the reasons she gave as evidence that her English wasn't as good as my Spanish was her children's evaluation of her English linguistic ability as accented. Though Rubén expressed frustration in being Othered because of his accented Spanish in the Dominican Republic, he expressed a double monolingual ideology concerning his mother's English use in the U.S. similar to the ideologies expressed by Lily and Diana in the previous example. This shows the pervasiveness of raciolinguistic ideologies throughout the Latinx and Black communities which hierarchize Standard linguistic ability that is perceived as unmarked over the linguistic abilities of bilingual speakers of non-Standard dialects in polycontextual

spaces.

After listening to hours of data containing misfires between myself and stylists during Spanish-speaking interactions, I can confidently disagree with Jessica's analysis of our linguistic competencies. I perceived Jessica's English competence to be comparable to my Spanish competence. While we both made grammatical errors that usually did not negatively impact our ability to communicate, we both also experienced moments where there were clear gaps in our vocabulary which for me necessitated the usage of dictionaries and for Jessica meant using me as a language broker. These differences in perception of linguistic competence in each language by the other could be attributed to the stakes of the interactions. The stylists knew I was dependent on them for my fieldwork and I was therefore required to communicate in Spanish with them to collect data. The stylists also saw me as a resource during my time in the salon because I am a native-English speaker who could communicate between stylists and clients. Jessica's own linguistic ideologies concerning quality of language use influenced her perception of my Spanish as better than her English.

### **Violations of Linguistic Safety.**

Usually in the salon differences in language competencies did not interrupt the flow of business. On a few occasions, however, clients would leave frustrated. I did not initially consider these instances to be related to linguistic competence. In these moments, I would continue observing and taking notes, but Jessica would become flustered trying to please the client and would look at me exasperated. At first, I interpreted this to mean she was embarrassed or didn't want me recording those moments. However, in my final day in the salon she confided in me that her concern was that it was a communication

issue between herself and the client which prompted the clients to leave abruptly. Jessica revealed that she internalized these moments as a reflection of her lack of proficiency in English thinking she miscommunicated something which caused the clients to become upset. Jessica often asked my opinions about what I observed and my vague answers never seemed to satisfy her, but on my last day I was shocked to hear this and vehemently assured her that I didn't perceive miscommunication or any lack of linguistic proficiency to be the cause of clients leaving abruptly. The conversation was prompted by a client leaving abruptly on my last day. She was doing someone's hair at the time and three of us began to discuss the latest occurrence. The client and I tried to comfort Jessica saying that the woman who had left was projecting some other matter onto the situation with Jessica, and that Jessica had been clearly communicating from the beginning.

Even though I had seen Jessica perform competently in English throughout my time in the salon, I realized that her confidence impacted her ability to communicate effectively. This probably shouldn't have been such a shock to me since I also struggle to communicate in Spanish when I don't feel confident, but nevertheless after observing her proficiency as a native-English speaker I believed her to be fluent. She, however, did not see herself the same way. In fact, given the delicacy of the situation, I would argue that her language skills diminished with her confidence in the situation. I'd like to emphasize that her inability to communicate in this moment had less to do with her intellect and subsequent capability in the language, but instead as she lost confidence in the situation, she lost confidence in her English. Instances of clients leaving abruptly despite Jessica's efforts to prevent this were violations of the safe space U.S. Black and Dominican women shared as a hybrid sphere of linguistic fluidity. In the previous analyses, it's clear

how boundaries concerning English and Spanish use were challenged by stylists and clients. Linguistic fluidity is one of the ways the salon is reified as a safe space for stylists who would be considered to speak a stigmatized language outside of the salon in White Public Space. Therefore, the idea that a client was reacting negatively to a stylist's English use, also reified the monoglot Standard English ideology held by stylists in the salon thereby reinforcing their own negative evaluations of their English use as accented and marked.

### **Conclusion.**

The raciolinguistic ideologies revealed by stylists reflect a broader system of belief concerning race, language, and identity as mediated by hair styling decisions. This chapter has explored the ways in which raciolinguistic ideologies were revealed through hair texture evaluations within the salon. Though the ideologies of the stylists cannot be universalized about Black women, they do provide insight as to the ways Black women are evaluated based on phenotypic characteristics. While for some hair styling decisions may only be a matter of personal preference or stylistic choice, it is clear that for the Black women engaging in the *Dominican Blowout*, hair-styling decisions have consequences that can impact the way their identity is understood by others. For Black women in the global diaspora, choices surrounding hair-care have been largely controversial leading to discriminatory actions against Black women concerning several areas of life including work, school, and home (Johnson and Bankhead 2014; Stowe 2019). The way Black women navigate raciolinguistic ideologies even in a safe space reveals the magnitude of scrutiny under which Black women live daily. While hair straightening to some may be a mundane activity, for Black women engaging in the

*Dominican Blowout* hair straightening has consequences impacting identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005).

The raciolinguistic ideologies presented here reveal complex ways that race and language are intertwined when constructing identity in a Dominican beauty salon. Through my analysis, I have demonstrated the ways stylists interpret some clients as *looking like a language* (Rosa 2019). The negotiations that stylists and clients engage in reveal deeper ideological assumptions beyond stylistic choice. The *Dominican Blowout* is a hair-straightening technique that Black women engage in as agentive actors. Though clients could go to a variety of salons to have their hair done, clients choose the Dominican salon because of the way their identity is connected to the *Dominican Blowout*. Outside of the salon, Black women face pressure to conform to Eurocentric beauty standards. Inside of the hybrid space of the salon, Black and Dominican women can explore what in other spaces might be experienced as the rigid boundaries between English and Spanish.

Those who identify as Afro-Latinx are racialized based on not only phenotypic characteristics but also linguistic expression (Rosa 2019). This means that the stakes of racialization for these individuals are heightened because of the way race and language are policed in the context of the U.S. (Lippi-Green 1994). While Blacks in the U.S. face prejudice, racism, and discrimination, the stakes for Afro-Latinx also include a stigma around Spanish use in broader U.S. context. This is why having hybrid spaces like salons are important for Blacks, women, and Hispanics. These groups are normally forced to interact in White Public Space. The salon responds to societal pressure for straight hair and provides an outlet for them to act in a comfortable way without having to worry



about language policing with the same stakes.

## CONCLUSION

I began this project hoping to learn about the linguistic negotiations present in the salon through processes of racialization connected to the *Dominican Blowout*. I learned that for stylists and clients, the location of the salon impacts their sense of belonging. Stylists sought out Black clientele just like clients sought out Dominican stylists. The neighborhood of North Edge allowed for this mutually beneficial process. While U.S. Blacks and Dominicans have differing ethnic experiences and may have different racial ideologies, they are both racialized by hair texture evaluations. Linguistic differences combined with physical characteristics impacted the raciolinguistics of each group.

The stakes of Black hair are higher than for other groups because of the detail with which hair evaluations are made and because of the consequences Black women face for embracing Afro-centric beauty ideals. Black women are invested in hair care as evidenced by the time and money spent on it. Black hair is about choice over anything else. The women in the salon had a variety of options when it came to getting their hair done. They chose to get the *Dominican Blowout* over another style, like braiding or extensions. The women in the salon told me time and again that if they wanted another style, they would have gone to another kind of salon. Black women are aware of the stakes of hair care and the women in this salon made a conscious choice to have their hair straightened at a Dominican salon over any other salon.

Black hair becomes political because of the ways Black hair is discriminated against and the larger hegemonic pressures that idealize Eurocentric beauty standards.

Though the women in my study preferred the *Dominican Blowout* and thus wearing their hair straight, Black women have a variety of styles available to ourselves. While I've always chosen to wear my hair naturally curly, I was socialized into hair-straightening at a young age as I watched my mother and grandmother habitually straighten their hair. I remember encouraging my mom to wear her hair curly to match mine, but her reluctance because of the way her identity is linked to her hair being straightened. Often Blackness is simplified and homogenized, but through my writing I hope it is clear the ways Blackness contains linguistic and cultural diversity. I love curly hair because it can do so much. It's versatile just like the Black woman has to be in order to navigate the political terrain we constantly live in through language and hair texture evaluations.

While previous scholarship has focused on Latinx (im)migration in the Northeastern United States, my project considers the cultural and linguistic encounters that Latinx (im)migrants in the New South face through everyday experiences. There is a significant population of Dominicans in Atlanta and the surrounding areas which in my research led to interesting interactions between the Dominican stylists and the highly prevalent U.S. Black population. In my previous analyses, I considered how hair was a culturally unifying experience for Dominican and Black women in the salon through intentional efforts by both parties. The Dominican stylists sought out Black women in as clients while the Black women sought out a salon with Dominican stylists, leading to a mutually beneficial relationship within the community of North Edge.

Throughout my thesis, I have highlighted the ways in which Blackness is a diverse, dynamic, and complex racial category through racial semiotics. Though for other racial groups hair may be an unmarked daily chore, for Black women in the global

diaspora hair is a sign system full of sociohistorical implications which lead to racial negotiations through the manipulation of hair. I argue that though the process of hair manipulation in the Dominican Republic has historically been a way to negotiate racial boundaries, in the United States racial boundaries are more fixed based on sociohistorical policies like the One-Drop Rule and as such, hair serves as a way to index racial belonging while negotiating notions of colorism. Since racialization is a process that is informed by hair texture and styling, the *Dominican Blowout* for Black women of the diaspora in the United States serves as a way to index racial identity.

In addition to hair, I also analyzed the ways in which language complicates the process of racialization. Through hair, stylists and clients were able to find commonality in the salon, but through differing language use processes of racialization shifted. Thus through my analyses I explored the ways in which race and language are inextricably interwoven in the process of racialization. The connection between race and language is particularly important for those who are Afro-Latinx in the United States because of the ways in which raciolinguistic ideologies currently at play in the U.S. serve to erase their experiences. Because raciolinguistic ideologies in the U.S. currently understand Black and Hispanic as discrete categories, Afro-Latinx individuals are not recognized as a legitimate category, despite their experiences as being both Black and Hispanic simultaneously. By considering race and language together as a part of the process of racialization, Afro-Latinx individuals may experience more of a sense of belonging in the U.S. as opposed to the invisibility they currently experience. Hair and language as sign systems challenge exclusionary notions of Blackness and complicate the negative understanding of race in the U.S. as those within the global Black diaspora proudly claim

African ancestry.

By analytically employing a metasemiotic Bakhtinian approach to voicing, I was able to emphasize the ways in which speakers, particularly stylists, negotiated their roles in interactions among various recipients within the salon. By conceptualizing the salon as a hybrid space, it is clear how stylists and clients negotiated hair and belonging within an interaction through complex linguistic expression. Though linguistic competence in the salon was variable, the women in the salon worked collaboratively to communicate with each other and accomplish a shared hair-styling goal. In analyzing the polycontextual nature of their interactions, bilingual speakers in the salon used English and Spanish in intricate ways when voicing and positioning themselves in interactions among various recipients. In these interactions, the heterogenous nature of the Black experience was strongly exemplified as disagreements arose and repairs were made.

There is diversity in what it means to be Black, Hispanic, and an immigrant in the United States. While analytically it may be simple to divide groups based on perceived race, for those living in these culturally defined categories our existence is much more complex. To homogenize the experiences of an entire race is to misunderstand the diversity of what it is to be human. Though racialization played a critical role in the interactions in the salon, these were not always negative evaluations of personhood. Racialization has traditionally been studied as the imposition of categorization on groups of people without taking into account the sense of belonging people felt to the groups into which they were assigned as well as the broader historical implications impacting these groups. Though culture bonds members of a group together, individuals within a group still act with autonomy like the women in the salon choosing to get a blowout.

When studying racialization it is crucial to consider the influences of the broader hegemonic and institutional powers at play, but equally important is the lived experiences of the people being studied which is why I choose to study Blackness as an entity in its own right beyond a juxtaposition to Whiteness. Though Black individuals are often required to encounter Whiteness through hegemony in the U.S. (and beyond), spaces like the salon in which Blackness exists without the physical presence of Whiteness are just as significant to the conceptualization of Blackness, if not more, since these are spaces in which Blackness may be monitored, but not under the same stakes. Black women experience discrimination via marginalization in several areas of life, but in hair-styling decisions within the context of our hair salon we create a safe space for ourselves unlike spaces that we share with other races and genders. Though the salon is hybrid in nature with its own social limitations, there are few other spaces in which Black women of the diaspora are free to act outside the scrutiny of the public eye. It is my hope that the future of linguistic anthropology will include more work in which the lived experiences of minoritized groups will continue to be studied in their own spaces of comfort as legitimate and worthy of attention.

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APPENDIX A

THE *DOMINICAN BLOWOUT*



Figure A.1 Client 1 before



Figure A.2 Client 1 after



Figure A.3 Client 2 before



Figure A.4 Client 2 after



Figure A.5 Client 3 before



Figure A.6 Client 3 after



Figure A.7 Author before



Figure A.8 Author rollerset after wash and deep conditioner





Figure A.9 Author results of one hour under dryer



Figure A.10 Author back view of results of one hour under dryer





Figure A.11 Author back view of *Dominican Blowout* with bump on the ends



Figure A.12: Author side view of *Dominican Blowout* with bump on the ends