Understanding School and Interethnic Relations of Mexican Immigrant Youth in a Post-Industrial Community

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Graduate Center, City University of New York
UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL AND INTERETHNIC RELATIONS OF MEXICAN IMMIGRANT YOUTH IN A POST-INDUSTRIAL COMMUNITY

By

ROBERTO MARTÍNEZ

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

2016
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In A Post-Industrial Community

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

Understanding School and Interethnic Relations of Mexican Immigrant Youth

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Roberto Martínez

Advisor: Ofelia García

There is a dearth of literature on how immigrant groups understand minority groups in the United States, in particular, African-Americans. Increased technology and more rapid global movement in the 21st Century challenges 20th explanations of assimilation (Chicago School) and necessitates more research focused on how immigrant groups and racialized minorities interact to negotiate new worlds. This ethnographic research was conducted over thirteen months during 2012 and 2013 in a neighborhood in the northeast that had been the site of 11 purported anti-bias attacks against Mexican immigrants during the summer of 2010. Research questions focused on: 1) Mexican immigrant youth understandings of race, and how they understand and experience interethnic relations with African-Americans; 2) the role of school in the shaping of those understandings and experiences? Using purposive sampling, the author conducted fifteen (15) in-depth interviews with Mexican immigrants between the ages of 18-23, stratified by gender, schooling & immigration status, limited only to those who had lived, worked or gone to school in the neighborhood during 2010. Using thematic analysis, the author found that more formal schooling increased respondents’ linguistic capacity to discuss interethnic relations and that less schooling often resulted in avoidance of race and interethnic talk. Language is added as a category to build on Nancy López’s Race Gender Experience Framework Theory (2002), to help understand interethnic development. Building on Ladson-Billings (1994), Gay (2010), the author begins to explore inter-culturally relevant pedagogy to build trust in schools.

Keywords: Mexican immigrants, anti-immigrant bias, interethnic relations, Black/Latino relations, Nancy Lopez, Race Gender Experience Framework Theory, inter-culturally relevant pedagogy.
Acknowledgements

Community ethnography in a neighborhood you’d never been in before requires thanking many people. This dissertation has several important origins, academic, community, and family. Any omissions and oversights are mine.

I would like to thank Professor Stacy Lee, briefly at the CUNY Graduate Center, and now at the University of Wisconsin, Madison and Professor Pedro Noguera, formerly of NYU and now at UCLA, for encouraging me to investigate interethnic relations in the first place. In Stacy Lee’s class, I began the literature review on interethnic relations in the literature of immigrants and education. It was there that I realized that interethnic analysis is generally not central to the research of immigrants in education and I thank her for encouraging me to pursue this topic. She also introduced me to the work of Nancy Lopez, whose Race Gender Experience Framework helped make sense of my findings. Pedro Noguera’s course on Race and Class in Schools at NYU emphasized the reciprocal nature of communities to schools that acknowledged that work between immigrant and minority communities needs further development.

I’d like to thank a fellow student at the CUNY Graduate Center, Edwin Mayorga, now a faculty member at Swarthmore College, who when I suggested studying Black Latino relations in 2010 encouraged me to investigate what was happening in Port Richmond, Staten Island mid-summer 2010, as it could make a great site for study of my research interests. Six years later, he is still right. I fell in love with the community the first time I visited as it reminded me a lot of the South Chicago neighborhood where I first taught ESL.
right out of college. I had always wished to go back to that important place in my life and by working in Port Richmond, I felt I had.

Kudos, too, must go to Bethany Rogers, at the College of Staten Island, who when I reached out to begin to learn about Port Richmond, Staten Island, in 2010 and 2011 (YEAR) took me on a tour with community historians, who introduced me to the long history, and the new Latino diaspora that is the new Port Richmond. I was extremely lucky in that I was able to attend a conference celebrating the 400th anniversary of Staten Island where I heard the great Kenneth Jackson, wax eloquently about how Staten Island was more like the rest of the US than the rest of New York, and he was right. Bethany was also extremely helpful in later sorting out my findings at a critical moment. Bethany and I had crossed paths a decade earlier, when she was a doctoral student in the Department of Teaching and Learning at NYU, where I have now worked 24 years. As always Bethany, you’ve been so supportive of my studies and in particular this work in Staten Island, and I thank you as a colleague and a friend.

By the time all my courses were completed, it would take another two years from this dissertation’s conception for my proposal to be approved and even to begin fieldwork in the community: such is a life of a full-time employee and part-time doctoral student. Here I must thank my tremendous committee.

The great Ofelia Garcia, my dissertation chair, whose care and concern at every step of this process, in particular the final push to completion, and great editing at the 11th hour made this dissertation the success she said it could be. Gracias tanto, Ofelia, que Dios te bendiga. I will never forget you telling me when I just started working with you, how you were convinced that I could write something that people would want to read. It both
shocked and pleased me at the time that your true faith in my talents was revealed. I had two very important things to learn in this process: namely the importance of having my work criticized by peers and the vast amount of time needed to process my complicated academic goals. In some ways these lessons learned were more valuable than the dissertation itself and demonstrate a conquering of my demons and the extent of my growth to complete this task. I cannot thank you enough for not giving up on me and for pushing me to do my best. If there is any one person I must thank as I complete this dissertation, it is you. I only wish you could have met my mother somewhere in this process. You would have liked each other very much.

To Anthony Picciano, my committee member and executive officer of the Urban Education program, thank for your continued faith in my work and for writing memos believing in the importance of my work, while battling the GC administration in my very long process, 13 years to completion. Your patience in my completion is no doubt key as to why I was able to finish my Ph.D. and I must thank you. Your knowledge of this community of Port Richmond, Staten Island, and your family’s connection to Port Richmond High School, and next door, Mariners Harbor, brought a personal connection to this community in Staten Island, that most graduates in universities based in the other boroughs will never even get to visit.

Terrie Epstein, now at Hunter College, taught a History of Education class in my first semester at the Graduate Center in 2003, and introduced me to Edward Fergus, whose dissertation research in skin color and academic outlooks in the Mexican and Puerto Rican communities of Detroit, my home town, influenced my work substantially. Terrie was later a visiting faculty member in Social Studies Education at NYU for a bit and we worked
closely together with Masters Students in the Department of Teaching and Learning. It has been great working with you personally and getting to know you over the years in several institutions. I look forward to continuing work with you in the future.

The late great Jean Anyon, is the person most responsible for me coming to the Graduate Center and your influence on the breadth and depth of my work is nothing short of profound. I was thrilled Ofelia mentioned this influence to all during the dissertation defense. In the last two years it took me to write up these findings, I often remarked with your fellow student, Shannon Allen, that in reviewing our writing we’d ask ourselves, “How would Jean Anyon write this?” Every time we wrote we heard her voice. Her powerful elegance, and brilliant style are incomparable, and I will always value her ability to say with clarity, economy and grace exactly what needed to be said. That her seminal articles from the 1980’s still have an audience is a testament to her skill. Thank you, Jean.

To my fellow students, especially those of you who have been Jean Anyon’s or Ofelia Garcia’s students in the Urban Education doctoral program at the City University of New York, Graduate Center, you all inspire me! To the folks I met before I entered the program, now great scholars in their own right: Michael Dumas (UC Berkeley), Eve Tuck (OISE), Kathleen Nolan (Princeton), Amy Moran (Teaneck Public Schools), to the awesome members of Cohort 3, especially, my dear friends, Madeline Pérez (St. Joseph’s Hartford), Danny Walsh, Lynda Kennedy, and awesome members of later cohorts who are my colleagues and friends, especially Nelson Flores (UPenn), Alejandro Carrión (Northwestern), Amber Pabon (Pittsburgh), Joseph Nelson (Swarthmore), Darla Linville (Augusta), Mayida Zaal (Montclair State), Jessica Ruglis (McGill), Reva Jaffe-Walter (Montclair State), Kiersten Greene (New Paltz), Sara Zaidi, Rachel Lambert (Chapman),
Noah Heller (Chapman), and Nabin Chae, who I bonded with in Stacy Lee’s class as we were each minority kids who spent the greater part of our life with white Midwesterners (she in Sarasota and me in Downriver Detroit) and we had more in common than I imagined. Erica Chutuape, I’ve enjoyed our writing and coffee time more than you can imagine. Current students who deserve a shout out are Alisa Algava, Jose Alfredo Menjivar, Rachel Chapman, and Kylah Torre. I am rooting for you dear Maria Persons, Cohort 3, who is in the final throes of dissertation writing herself in Philadelphia. I remember our talks on the Q train after class to Brooklyn.

Members of Ofelia Garcia’s dissertation writing group for the last year must also be thanked including Sarah Hesson, Kate Seltzer, Luz Herrera, Laura Kaplan, and Luis Guzmán Valerio in Spanish linguistics, who has become is a dear and trusted friend. Laura Kaplan, keep going, I was thrilled to know we were still at it, at ahem, our seasoned age. Tatyana Kleyn (City College) and Kate Mencken (Queens College), two brilliant protégés of Ofelia Garcia. I stand in awe and in your shadows.

I have shared my many supports but now I must thank the individuals and organizations who make life better for all the residents of Port Richmond, Staten Island, especially the tremendous work done by non-profit groups to assist immigrants in Port Richmond, El Centro del Inmigrante, in particular Gonzálo Mercado, and Make the Road New York, Saúl López. My deepest thanks must go to employees of Project Hospitality, in particular the Rev. Terry Troia, whose efforts on my behalf were nothing short of astonishing, and two of her staff, Karen Jackson and Paul Quevedo, who I spent many hours with while conducting ethnography in 2012 and 2013. I must thank the youth of the “Mind
Openers”, for letting me attend meetings and trust you benefited in some small way from my presence in a way that you have enriched my life immeasurably.

Most special thanks goes to my fifteen participants Susana, Katya, Javier, Andrés, Leonardo, Eduardo, Lorenzo, Yazmín, Miguel, Isel, Fernando, Jovita, Enrique, Pedro and Nicolás: I have listened to your voices in my head for three years and you were courageous enough to share some of the most intimate secrets of your lives with me and I can’t thank you enough. I hope I can repay your generosity of time and talent to the community in some small way. To the many parents and community members who touched my life and assisted in data gathering thank you, especially Naflan Doole, Jason Harris, Pedro Meza, Marlent Ramon, Hina Naveed, Arianna Rodriguez, and Michael Winecup. Very special thanks must also be extended to Ms. Evelyn Cuevas, the GED Plus teacher at Port Richmond High School who went above and beyond the call of duty in helping me to recruit participants. To the students at Wagner College involved in partnerships in Port Richmond: you are the lucky ones.

Prior to my ethnographic work, I must thank the staff at the CYO, Northfield Development Corp, especially Kathleen Bielsa, staff at the Staten Island Museum at Snug Harbor and Christopher Mulé, former director of Folklife at the Council on the Arts and Humanities for Staten Island. Special thanks must go to Lori Weintrob, Professor of History at Wagner College, whose deep interest in all things Port Richmond, including her book (with Phillip Papas) were invaluable to my dissertation.

As I write this, I am preparing to leave a place I have worked and called home for 24 years, NYU, the last 20 years in the Department of Teaching and Learning. Many of you have been great colleagues. Mark Alter hired me 20 years ago and never in my wildest
dreams did I ever think I would remain in that building for 20 years. I was there when I was
lost my father, was a bystander to both World Trade Center Bombings, and survived 9/11
and a brief bout with cancer. Former colleagues whose kindness and support especially
stand out include: Beth Markowitz, Patricia Romandetto, Frank Pignatosi, Melissa
Bonaparte, Khanh Le, Marni Vassallo, Teress Williams, Victoria Carr, Irina Belova, Lena
Singh, Michele Reich, Chelsea Bailey, and especially Amy Lui my sister from another
mother who always supported my efforts. Former bosses who have always been incredible
support include: Robby Cohen, and Frances Rust, and numerous faculty from the 8 Masters’
programs I have worked with particularly, Susan Kirch, Suzanne Carothers, Cynthia
Copeland, Miriam Eisenstein-Ebsworth, Lixing (Frank) Tang, Erin O’Connor, Fabienne
Doucet, David Kirkland, Pamela Abder, Robert Wallace, Jason Blonstein, Cath Milne, Mary
Leou, Raul Lejano, Sarah Beck, John Mayher, Gordon Pradl, Irene Shigaki, Joan
Rosenberg, Barbara Schwartz, and to the memory of Trika Smith-Burke and Constantine
Georgiou, you have left your mark on me.

NYU doctoral students and good friends who helped me along the way, include
Mellie Torres, Tonya Leslie, Anne Simmons Beitlers, Fernando Naiditch, Max Meyer,
Daryl Hucks, and the awesome, Yolanda Sealy-Ruiz. Bree Picower and all the members of
NYCORE, who keep me company late at night on Fridays, thank you! A cadre of close
friends now at Brooklyn College including Sonia Murrow, Jennifer Adams, Flo Rubenstein,
Paul McCabe, María Scharrón del Río.

Special thanks must go to two individuals. Wayne Reed, who I met a lifetime ago
and reconnect with when our paths crossed again at Penn Ethnography a dozen years ago.
Your constant mentorship and friendship has meant the world to me. Thank you for being
there. To Liza Pappas, for your honesty and shared drives to D.C. You each made an incredible contribution to work and I must thank you.

I must thank my family, in particular my two siblings who took the greatest care of my mother, Rafaela, my brother David, who lived with her and my oldest sister Sue, who encouraged me monetarily and emotionally, and who literally changed my life by suggesting I apply to Harvard many years ago when I scored well on a Catholic High School Entrance Exam. Thanks for all you did for our mother. Without your support and encouragement this dissertation could never have been a possibility. Ricardo Martínez and his partner Jim Harding have been great siblings and colleagues at almost every step of the last 25 years. Dan, Ruth, and Danielle, Dale, Angela, Eric and Arlo, Diana, Carmen, Clint (Val), Marissa (Randy) and Jordyn, Jillian and Aaron, including Detroit friends like family, Gretchen Ridenour, Joe Zarazua, Roseanne Micallef, Mary Jane Town and Father Joe Mallia, and the Cabrini Crew, especially Kathy Grisdela, Lori Booms and Ann Shaw. To my family in Monterrey, Mexico and California, and my RAZA family including Laura Gómez, Aida Sánchez, Luís V. García, Peter Serrano, Richard Ray Perez. You have all made me feel at home.

And deep thanks to Mark A. Spina, and his family, who have put up with me while I wrote this over a decade. You have been a rock to me. You introduced me to travel outside of Latin America and as I write this you are in Manila now doing incredible work. Thank you.
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CHAPTER 1
Introduction

Immigrant bashing is a significant rhetorical feature of Campaign 2016, and outbreaks of anti-immigrant violence, predominantly targeting Latino immigrants in the United States, have occurred in rural, suburban and urban contexts nationally (Holthouse & Potok, 2008) and throughout the Northeast in the 21st Century (Barnard, 2009; Susman, 2010). Anti-immigrant sentiment reached a fever pitch and anti-immigrant legislation progressed widely in the Southern and Western U.S. in the post-9/11 era, but 2011 was a record year for state-wide anti-immigrant legislation with 164 anti-immigrant laws passed in states during 2010 and 2011 (Gordon & Raja, 2012). No fewer than five states (Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, South Carolina, and Utah) passed anti-immigrant legislation similar in spirit to Arizona’s State Bill 1070, considered the strongest and broadest anti-immigration law in the country. Under its provisions state law enforcement officers are required to determine an individual’s immigration status during any type of lawful or unlawful stop if there is reasonable suspicion that the individual is an “illegal immigrant” (Arizona SB 1070, §3.). Over 107 towns, cities and counties passed have anti-immigrant laws in the United States and opposition to immigration has been greatest in communities where predominantly homogenous, white localities experienced a rapid increase in immigration, changing communities like Hazelton, Pennsylvania (Lenz, 2011).

The events of the summer of 2010 in Port Richmond, Staten Island, present an interesting example of interethnic conflict as reported in the media. Here eleven (11) suspected anti-immigrant bias attacks in Port Richmond, Staten Island, represented a contrasting narrative of anti-immigrant violence, one that exposed racial divides not
between nativist whites and immigrants but between African Americans and Latino immigrants (Susman, 2010). Appendix A contains a timeline of the eleven incidents of reported anti-immigrant violence reported in the media, in Port Richmond, Staten Island, from April 2010 to August 2010, along with victim’s names and attackers names where listed in the public record and investigated as possible bias crimes by the New York City Police Department. This timeline is interspersed with significant community events by the police, mayor and other public officials, along with media coverage from across the country and the globe where noted. Accusations and convictions are noted when listed in the public record, primarily in the local paper of record for Staten Island, the *Staten Island Advance*. For the most part, the race of the attackers was not mentioned save when there were criminal trials where photographs were used in the newspapers.

In 2010, residents of Port Richmond alternately blamed the attacks on the economy, unemployment and, the general anti-immigrant sentiment throughout the nation, including Arizona’s immigration law. Although most of the suspects were described as young black men and investigated by the police for bias crimes, a grand jury has indicted only one of the seven people accused of a hate-crime charge (Annese, 2010e).

Make the Road New York, a community organization that serves Port Richmond along with two other distressed New York City communities, describes Port Richmond as being, “predominantly populated by poor and working class Latinos and African Americans, including many immigrants” (Young, D., 2011). The organization cites the average yearly income of a family of three in the neighborhood as being below $19,000. Between 2000 and 2008, the number of Latinos living on Staten Island grew roughly 40 percent (Bergad, 2008) with much of the growth coming from the Mexican immigrant community.
In the most documented attack, recorded by a store’s surveillance camera, 26 year-old baker, Rodulfo Olmedo was on his way home from a local club when he was set upon by four teenagers ranging in age from 15-17 on April 5, 2010 in Port Richmond, Staten Island (Annese, 2010a). The four young men, three African-American and one Hispanic, badly beat Olmedo with unidentified objects believed to be baseball bats or wooden planks and possibly a chain before robbing his unconscious body of cash and a cellphone.

The often sensationalist media accounts of these attacks exposed community fault lines as media representations of these attacks were part of a large city government response. From the words of my first participant, Susana, “First the Spanish language media got a hold of this and then the English media started coming – then it all blew up.” Spanish language media presented this as part of a recurrent narrative, a clear case of hate crimes similar to other incidents in Farmingville, NY in 2005 and Patchogue, NY in 2008, but this one here in the city of New York (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2009). Many African American residents of Port Richmond had a somewhat different take on the story. While some blamed the economy and rising illegal immigration, others blamed drug addicts looking to rob people to feed their habits. “To jump to bias issues is out of whack,” said David Johnson, an ex-boxer who lived in the neighborhood (The Grio, 2010). Participants noted that some African Americans were resentful that Latinos had their own media (Spanish language media) that publicized their victimization, and African Americans had no corresponding media presence. She recalled hearing one very outspoken African-American woman saying, “That it’s not fair that something has to happen to the Mexicans for anybody to care about Port Richmond” (Susana, HS Graduate, 2013).

This interethnic fault line between Mexican immigrants and African American lies at
the heart of my research interests. A child of Mexican immigrants who works in education, I had long been interested in the education of Latino immigrants, but as a native of Detroit, and growing up in its segregated suburbs, I was also long interested in Black American culture. I grew up in a White community where I was often treated as a racial outsider and phenotypically I was. In my first interethnic experiences with African Americans in High School, I was the kid with the Afro and often blended right in. After much study, I learned that immigrant education rarely spoke about interethnic interactions with other cultures and particularly with African American culture.

In my research I begin to ask questions about understandings of race and interethnic relations among immigrants and minority communities. The community chosen for my site of research was one post-industrial community in a northeastern urban area, with high concentrations of minorities, high levels of poverty, and distinct experiences of urban inequality. Studying the context of anti-immigrant violence in Port Richmond, Staten Island, where African-Americans primarily were accused of violence against Mexican immigrants on eleven separate occasions in 2010, I hope to bring the importance of understanding Black and Latino relations in the New York Area and the changing geographies of conflict, contestation and hope to the fore.

To understand the interethnic experiences of Mexican American youth, my research questions are:

- What are Mexican immigrant youth understandings of race, and how do they understand and experience interethnic relations with African-Americans?

1 This beginning research will only study inter-ethnic relations in one direction, Mexican immigrant understanding have of African Americans and other races. Time constraints made it impossible to conduct primary research within each community. The author hopes that future research will include this important dimension.
• What is the role of the family, the school, and the community in the shaping of those understandings and experiences?

There is a dearth of literature about how all immigrants, and specifically Latino immigrants, confront and/or understand African-Americans and African-American Culture. African-American thought and culture is not considered central to an understanding of American ideas in most all immigration education research. Late 20th Century research on immigrants emphasized the various ways immigrants assimilate or not assimilate to white middle-class America (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Alba & Nee 2003). For much of the immigration literature, ‘race’ as a construct has been subsumed for research purposes under the larger paradigm of ethnicity with the goal of assimilation. For a variety of reasons, primarily that race broadly considered is a social construct and not a biological construct, social researchers, hoping to appeal to broader scientific purposes, have been reluctant to categorize, and give scientific credence to social constructions (Mukhopadhyay & Henze, 2003) and hence the study of ‘race’ has been controversial for social, scientific and political reasons. Nevertheless, ‘racism’ is a social construct with clear societal repercussions worthy of study in the context of immigrant research (Leonardo, 2009).

Using urban immigrant youth as a context, and young adult Mexican immigrants in particular, my research will argue for a closer examination of poor Mexican immigrants residing and working in close proximity with non-immigrant African-Americans. Using race, ethnicity, and interethnic understandings, this study hopes to argue that twentieth century notions of assimilation need to be complicated with twenty-first century racializing realities. While class mobility and American assimilation continue to be goals for immigrants, perceptions of limited work opportunities among racial minorities and
understandings of American racial stratification work against living the American dream for many immigrants (Carter, 2006).

With respect to education and urban education specifically, I will also argue that changing demographics require that education need not only be culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995), but that it be inter-culturally relevant. In my theorizing, *inter-culturally relevant education* uses Critical Race Theory to examine cross-minority experiences, here the lived experience of newly arriving immigrants with native-born minoritized groups, to examine how they work interethnically across racial and ethnic boundaries. This work is place-based in specific understandings of students and families with an aim to build trust within groups and institutions by valuing beliefs and practices (Bogotch, 2014). By arguing for overt discussions of race and identities, I am also arguing against technocratic tendencies in current education reforms and managerial leadership practices that ignore overt discussions of race and identities, and hence, deny the key role of trust for leadership, teaching and pedagogy in complex urban schools.

Understanding how immigrant groups will succeed or fail in future generations in the U.S. requires not only an understanding of how immigrants relate to mainstream middle class society but how interethnic understandings are shaped, fostered and deterred in high minority and high immigrant contexts to improve opportunities for amelioration. By negating how immigrants understand African Americans and their experiences and not paying attention to how interethnic understandings can be improved, we relegate a large percentage of recent immigrants and racialized minorities to further marginalization rather than social inclusion into the complex fabric of this nation.

This dissertation considers the ways in which ‘race’ is used in the United States and
in Latin America and how this discussion is woven within discussions of ethnic boundaries within the U.S. and in Mexico. Barth (1969) posited that ethnicity is developed to establish social boundaries between groups during social interaction. This ran counter to earlier thinking that ethnicity reflected innate cultural differences. Telles and Ortiz (2010) build on Barth assertion that even though race overlaps with ethnicity and also involves social boundaries, racial boundaries tend to be more rigid, as they assert the idea of a social hierarchy and often lead to discrimination. For the purposes of this research, ‘race’ then is a group “that is defined as culturally or physically distinct, and furthermore, ranked on a social hierarchy of worth and desirability” (Telles & Ortiz, 2010, p.23). The sociological process that designates people by race and implies their position in a social hierarchy is called ‘racialization’. Telles & Ortiz, (2010, p. 15) say: “Racialization creates images or stereotypes about people that are used to evaluate them and thus to guide social interactions with them. The idea of racialization as a process is also useful because it recognizes that these categories and placement in them change over time and across societies. The term ‘race’ will be used to examine social constructs for both Latinos and African-Americans in a predominantly U.S. context, and the different ways Latinos understand race in Latin American contexts. Telles and Ortiz argue that racialization is more complex for Mexicans than it is for Blacks in the US, in that Mexican Americans out-marry and reside in more integrated neighborhoods overall than African Americans and that Mexican American ethnic and racial identities and political affiliations are generally more fluid than those of African Americans (p. 15).

This dissertation consists of six parts. In my introduction, I present the broad racial and ethnic frameworks that I will use to study the Mexican immigrants. I also introduce the
reader to the unique circumstances surrounding this Port Richmond, Staten Island community in 2010 that made me want to study this community.

My theoretical framework employs Zeus Leonardo’s Critical Social Theory in Education as a way to frame my own theories on interethnic relations, race and education. My work hopes to be in conversation with Leonardo’s theoretical framework, as well as theories of assimilation and acculturation, and in particular recent critiques of these that emphasize racialized and gendered understandings.

Chapter Two is divided into four sections. The first section explores the range of Educational Explanatory Models of Latino Student Achievement to examine how Latino student education has been researched. I also look at how Latino researchers have studied Latino students in a variety of areas, and specifically how researchers of Mexican students in the United States have categorized their learning efforts.

The second section on Immigrants and Race will examine the literature on immigrants in education in depth to see how ‘race’ is discussed and also to examine how interracial dynamics are explored, if at all. By examining the Asian and Black immigrant discourse on race, in addition to that of Latinos and Euro-Americans, I hope to understand how the socially constructed concept of race gets discussed in formal and non-formal contexts. I hope to examine how immigrants themselves understand the perceptions of race, tensions and conflicts between races.

The third section on Latinos and Race will discuss the present confusions, official and unofficial, in discussing how Latinas/os, particularly Mexican immigrants, view their own racial identities within the U.S. Then I will examine the ways in which two Latino scholars have broadened an analysis of race to include gender in their theorizing (López,
I will then focus more deeply on the unique experience of Mexican Americans, arguing that for most of the last 150 years, Mexican immigration to the United States has been based on periodic waves where immigration was at times tacitly encouraged by the U.S. Government, only to be followed by periods where migration to the U.S. was sanctioned and criminalized. The unique relationship Mexico has with the United States will be examined from the era prior to the Mexican-American war when 1/3rd of Mexico was captured during the era of ‘Manifest Destiny,’ through the late 19th Century and early 20th Century where European and Asian immigration was often limited and restricted, while labor flows from the Western Hemisphere particularly through the southern border of the U.S. were not limited.

My research engages borderland theories and pan-minority coalitions, not directly, but as an influence emanating from the fields of ethnic studies; Chicano Studies is a profound influence in my work. The influence of Chicano Studies is evident even in asking my research question in an attempt to decenter whiteness in immigrant research. I consider how the emergence of the ‘Brown Power’ movement in the 1960's was a direct reaction to African Americans’ nascent ‘Black Power’ movement founded in the wake of the Civil Rights movement and courageous efforts to defy segregation and second-class status. Affirmative action established in the 1970's in the United States was originally crafted as a way of systematic redress of African Americans’ historical subordinate status in this country, yet buy-in from Latinos, Asians and Native Americans was required for white lawmaker’s support (Gómez, 2011). Much of the work of Mexican and Chicana/o leaders like Cesar Chavez and Corky González was an acknowledgement that not only African-
Americans experienced second-class citizenship, but that Hispanics were worthy of redress as well. Much recent scholarship has advanced the important histories of Latina/os fighting for their rights in schools, subsequent to and even prior to the 1954 decision of Brown vs. Board of Education Topeka, Kansas, Hernández v. Texas, 1954; Méndez v. Westminster, 1946 (Gómez, 2007). In fact, Roberto Alvarez v. Lemon Grove (1931) was the first school desegregation case argued in the United States (Alvarez, R., 1986). In addition, this section will examine the unique past of Mexicans in the United States and how Mexicans are researched and theorized by others, as well as by themselves.

In the fourth and last section of the literature review, I examine some of the literature on Black-Latino relations and the differing ways African-Americans understand the increasing role of immigrants in their midst, as well as the ways in which Latinos understand African-Americans. In recent years there has been a significant number of community histories and ethnographies in the South and West, and in urban areas of the Northeast, but none have addressed this issue in Staten Island, New York.

Chapter Three will describe the parameters of the ethnographic research methods employed, and discuss the participants and a preliminary framework for organizing the data, along with giving a brief historical context of the post-industrial community being studied.

My findings are then divided into five chapters.

Chapter Four explores how respondents experienced the changes in post-industrial Port Richmond, highlighting the growth of the Mexican community within a few decades. Environmental concerns of a post-industrial neighborhood are also raised, demonstrating how families and youth only learned of these hazards only after childhood.
Chapter Five situates the Youths’ Racialized Lived Experiences to contextualize the ways in which the Mexican immigrant young adults are racialized as they enter U.S. society at a time of tremendous globalization pressure that effects their housing options, labor choices and educational outlooks. I also explore ways in which their heritage understandings of race conflict in their experiences with the U.S.’s unique racial hierarchy.

Respondents’ reactions to the anti-immigrant violence of the summer of 2010 is the focus of Chapter Six, with some knowing the victims, but with all sharing vulnerable family experiences with violence. Reasons for the violence will be explored where proffered.

Memories of race and the other in U.S. Schools is the focus of Chapter Seven. Race and interethnic relations will be explored from middle to high school and beyond. Next the chapter then focuses on the explicit interethnic relations the immigrant youth shared in an attempt to understand the ways in which the Mexican immigrant youth understand race in this slice of America.

Chapter Eight explores the outlooks and prospects for interethnic relations in light of their experience of the ubiquity of racism in their worlds.

For the purposes of understanding how Mexican immigrants understand race and interethnic relations, I begin to adapt and extend López’s Race Gender Experience Framework theory to include language, what I will call, the Language Race Gender Experience Framework (LRGEF), to acknowledge the ways that these individuals’ bilingual and bicultural experiences shape the way they understand race in American contexts.

My discussion in Chapter Nine will further my argument for LRGEF in view of my findings in conversation with the literature on interethnic relations.

In conclusion, I will examine more fully the ways the literature illuminates my
findings, through a close examination of my findings with the interethnic literature, as well as argue for continuing work in this field, particularly as it relates to urban communities and urban schools.

Before continuing, let me give a few notes on terminology. I will use the terms ‘youth’ and ‘young adult’ interchangeably. Originally this study was envisioned as working with school-aged youth, however, it was decided that limiting respondents to only those over 18 would eliminate a significant hurdles in human subjects review, particularly since some of my respondents and their families were undocumented. I will use the terms ‘Latino’ and ‘Hispanic’ interchangeably. I will typically only use the word ‘Hispanic’ when used by one of my respondents or when referred to directly in the literature, and I typically default to the term “Latino” to denote a broad pan-ethnicity. “Mexican” is used broadly to describe the cultural and ethnic heritage of all participants, but some participants and I will use the term “Mexican American” on occasion to distinguish between those born on U.S. soil, or more broadly to describe experiences that have only happened in their receiving country.

**Theoretical Framework on Race**

‘Immigration’ is the ‘Prohibition’ of our day it’s very widespread but not all pay the price for flouting the law. (Griswold, 2010)

My work is informed by Zeus Leonardo’s (2009) criteria for a ‘critical study of race in education,’ within the larger general critical study of race, and from the perspective of
critical social theory. It is necessary to explore Leonardo as his philosophizing and theorizing gives rationale for the centrality of my work. Since I argue that the immigrant and education literature does not explore interethnic understandings, Zeus Leonardo centrally poses the intellectual problem of ‘whiteness’ in education; that is, the ubiquity of ‘whiteness’ in social research. (My work directly tries to de-center whiteness in immigration and education research.) However, he doesn’t argue for a new ‘paradigm,’ but rather engages a criticality of race study that does not situate it within any particular school of thought. Leonardo thus recruits multiple positions on the matter of race, that Leonardo calls a *critical social history of race and education*.

In his complex but elegant argument, Leonardo’s framing engages three distinct but influential schools of thought on race that are important for our educational considerations:

1) Critical Race Theory (CRT),

2) Critical Theory of Race (CTR),

3) Race Critical Theory (RCT).

I will briefly discuss each of these below.

Leonardo first argues that *Critical Race Theory (CRT)* in Education, the most researched and well known of the three theories he considers, highlights the pedagogical dimensions of racism and affirms an equally pedagogical solution rooted in anti-racism. CRT in education “focuses its attention on conceptual and practical strategies to end racism” and less on eliminating the construct of race as an organizing principle. Many scholars engage the concepts of CRT in their research (Gillborn, 2008; Yosso, 2006; Dixson and Rousseau, 2005; Parker and Stovall, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Taylor, 1998; Tate, 1997).
The second school of thought on race, *Critical Theory of Race (CTR)* is not so much a study of race at all, but a racial analysis of class antagonism within capitalism “which in turn gives rise to the lived reality of racial divisions (Leonardo, 2009, p. 5).” Marxist rhetoric is powerful in that it singlehandedly deconstructs and discredits the socially constructed phenomena of ‘race’ itself. In arguing for a Critical Theory of Race, Darder and Torres (2004) vividly consider ‘Critical Race Theory’ as it is derived from legal studies as a ‘veritable oxymoron’ (p. 5): how can theory be focused on the study of an ideological concept [the social and not biological construct of race] and justifiably be called ‘critical?’ Darder & Torres (2004) argue that the concept of “race” in current rhetoric is a mask for the class oppression that underlies late capitalist American society, and the seeming tolerance of ‘diversity’ seen in everyday life (multiculturalism, difference, and more recently, whiteness) is nothing but a smokescreen to powerfully obscure and disguise entrenched class interests².

Leonardo also argues that while the Critical Theory of Race (CTR) is powerful, its reliance on class analysis limits its utility, (Leonardo, 2009). Darder and Torres do not argue for the importance of understanding ‘racism’ as meriting critical study, for it is rooted in political economy. Leonardo argues that ‘racism’ is worthy of analysis as an “ideological relation of production” (Mills, 2000, p. 141, as quoted in Leonardo, p. 5). While Leonardo argues that the Critical Theory of Race derives primarily from the Frankfurt School’s focus on emancipatory critique and makes claim to the ‘critical’ study of race, it does not argue for a critical study of the political economic consequences of ‘racism’ directly, and does not hold claim to the broadest and most powerful social contexts (Cole & Maisuria, 2007; McLaren & Scatamburlo-D’Anniale, 2005; Darder & Torres, 2004; Miles, 2000; San Juan,

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² Recent calls for diversity in during the 2016 Oscar race, resulted in some critics asking not for ‘diversity’ in Hollywood, but for ‘decolonialization’ of the entertainment industry.
For the third school of thought on race, Leonardo considers Race Critical Theory (RCT) as framing ‘race’ within the context of discourse formation and Leonardo places this argument within the field of ‘cultural studies’ or a post-structural critique of ‘race.’ Leonardo states that: “this school of thought promotes being theoretically critical of race and being race-critical of theory while still employing race categories, unlike, a Marxist theorist of race who does not lend much credence to them” (p.5). Race Critical Theory is focused on race as an artifact of culture (Cho, 2008; Leonardo, 2009). While decentering and destabilizing essentialist renditions of race as biologic, pigment-oriented, or deterministic, Leonardo believes that RCT maintains continuity with ‘race men and women’ (Goldberg, 1990, 1993) who center race analysis (vis-à-vis a class analysis of race) (Leonardo, 2009, p. 6). Leonardo sees Gilroy (2000) as going one step further, in suggesting that “‘race’ as a mode of analysis and organization, has reached its limits as a viable alternative in a world” where diasporic (his)stories and cross-cultural identities and relations require new concepts and categories for understanding (Leonardo, 2009, p. 6.)” If RCT is correct and we have entered a ‘post-race’ era, then ‘race’ itself cannot be resignified to something more benign and less harmful. As Gilroy (2000: 12) has said: “No amount of resignifying race can escape its problems in a world that approaches the limits of race understanding’ [. . .] and to think we could do so would be to exaggerate the power of critical and oppositional interests. Destroying raciology and transcending race are warranted goals (cited in Leonardo, 2009, p. 6). Along with Ignatiev (1995), Ignatiev and Garvey (1996) and Roediger (1991) who support the abolition of whiteness, Gilroy seeks the abolition of race (Leonardo, 2009, p.6).
Leonardo embraces the whiteness project of dismantling race, but leaves the door open to acknowledge that this project is not something to be feared nor guaranteed, but only a theoretical possibility. The “Post” in post-race signals the possibility of a social formation without race, but this would be its most obvious reading. A more nuanced reading suggests that the post-movement opens new possibilities for critique, and new questions to be posed about race in a way that was not possible heretofore. If race as a concept is to continue in the USA, it will be a nonessentialist relation or the risks become predictable (Omi and Winant, 1994). If race is to be dissolved, there is good reason for ending a relation that has, from day one, transformed education into enlightenment for whites and a burden for people of color.

(p.6)

Post-race analysis suggests that an opportunity presents itself to critical social theory. In his work, Leonardo wishes to delineate criteria for a critical study of race in education, locating the central problem of whiteness in education. He post-structurally argues not for a study of race in education that locates it within a particular school of thought, but one that blends multiple positions on the matter of race, that he calls \textit{critical social theory of race and education}, a project that is less possessive of essentialist assumptions, but one that engages dialogically in a critical framework (p. 6). While the use of this philosophical standpoint is not without its challenges, it goes a great deal toward avoiding the study of race as an essentialist construct, and accepting the study of racism as necessarily bound with a multidisciplinary knowledge base (p. 13). In Leonardo's world, the pre-modern, modern and post-modern exist simultaneously. In my research and in my literature review I aim for multidisciplinary ways to interpret how Mexican immigrants understand race in America. By employing \textit{critical social theory (CST)}, Leonardo (and
hence I) engage in a theoretical discourse that broadens our horizon of the possible, expands our sense of a larger humanity, and liberates U.S. from the confines of common sense (p.13). My research specifically hopes to interrogate the confines of common racial knowledge that masquerades as common sense (p. 13).

The Critical Social Theory of Race and Education (CSTRE) affirms the central role of criticism as core to the experience of students’ educational quality and promotes criticism as the defining aspect of a quality education (p. 13). Leonardo affirms that by presenting CSTRE as a form of criticism, he is also shifting emphasis from education as a role of knowledge transmission to that of knowledge transformation, key to the emancipatory project of critical education (Horton & Freire, 1990; Freire 1994; McLaren, 1995; Giroux, 1988). Leonardo concludes that: “In education this means that race analysis proceeds with no guarantees,” (p. 6) and argues that race must be analyzed, in a variety of educational macro and micro contexts and transcended into consciousness, and to undo the ‘relation’ itself (p. 6), just as “we must be conscious of black and white in order to transcend black and white” (Wu, 2002, p. 27).

By placing the individual study of how ‘race’ is understood in individual and group immigrant experiences within the larger macro- historic and economic contexts of colonialism, race and racism, I embrace how to learn and unlearn race, but also how to learn to unlock emancipatory avenues for critical and social learning. While my project is predominantly emancipatory, I join with researchers in the field of critical multiculturalism to question the efficacy of forms of celebratory multiculturalism most common in K-12 classrooms. I do so by researching and interviewing these children of foreign born parents, some born in the U.S. and others brought to the U.S. as young children or teens first, 1.5 and
second-generation Mexican immigrants regarding their understandings of the inequalities of power, in particular those that motivate violence and distress, the anger that results from practices of racial and ethnic discrimination. Stemming from the pedagogical project of Critical Race Theory, critical multiculturalism is antiracist, dedicated to social justice and structural change, and connects U. S. ethno-racial conflict to its global contexts, an appropriate context when studying the lives and experiences of immigrant youth. In so doing, and in working on interethnic and inter-racial understandings, I join with colleagues in Whiteness Studies, who challenge the centrality and privileges given to ‘whites’ by challenging the centrality of whiteness in the research on immigrant assimilation and acculturation, that is, by eliding a key part of the urban immigrant experience.

As in Leonardo’s work, the pre-modern, modern and post-modern exist simultaneously and in my dissertation work, I hope to analyze the omnipresence of race in one particular micro context from a variety of gendered and immigrant statuses in a post-industrial community. However, my consciousness of the larger historical, economic and macro-contexts cannot be obliterated, and competing standpoints grounded in historical racism cannot be ignored. Therefore, I take to heart Leonardo’s theoretical perspective that all these contexts and influences exist simultaneously and in interrelationship.

Here I will go several step further than Leonardo and argue that changing demographics require new models for understanding immigration and education in the 21st Century. Here, I choose to call Chicago school sociology, twentieth century notions of immigrant assimilation as Vertical Assimilation, while conditions for twenty first century assimilation require awareness and understanding of fellow immigrants and native minoritized groups including African Americans, that I will call Horizontal Assimilation.
Horizontal Assimilation allows for broader study of interethnic influences in individual, community and interethnic interactions. Horizontal assimilation also addresses the awareness ofracialization that occurs in urban schools and poor urban communities. Though complex, this analysis exposes the realities of mixed race peoples, ‘*mestizaje*’ who as racialized subjects in our globalized migration need to exist and thrive on both sides of the Black-White divide. Given the persistence of intransigent critiques on opposing sides of the issue of ‘Black Lives Matter’, I argue that Leonardo’s CSTRE offers a way of complicating interethnic discourse without eliminating the stark and experienced realities of capitalist realities and interethnic racism.

I am also arguing here that education in the 21st Century need not be only culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995), but that it be inter-culturally relevant. Inter-culturally relevant education uses Leonardo’s CSTRE to build on Ladson-Billings’ framework to explicitly decenter whiteness in educational contexts to examine cross minority experiences. This is only the beginning of the pedagogical work that needs to be done, but I hope to begin this investigation with my work. By examining the lived experience of newly arriving immigrants with native minority groups, I need to focus on the ways knowledge, communication and pedagogy examine how individuals work interethnically across racial and ethnic boundaries. For now, individuals and groups, sometimes work together or against each other, sometimes working in complementary ways, or in seemingly parallel universes. My desire to promote *interculturally relevant pedagogy and work* is based in specific understandings of students and families in tangible communities with an aim to build trust within groups and institutions by valuing beliefs and practices. Technocratic tendencies in managerial leadership practices and current school reforms ignore overt
discussions of race and identities, and by often denying their existence, deny the key role of trust for leadership in complex urban schools (Bogotch, 2014).

Much of this review will be geared toward grounding my future micro-contexts within larger macro processes. My literature review will be focused on discussing macro-readings of the research, while my dissertation work will be focused on examining the practical experiences of micro-contexts in situ. In conclusion, I hope to overlay my micro findings with macro theories to investigate new ways to improve intercultural understandings.

My literature review begins with an investigation of the explanatory models that have been used to explain Latino achievement. Latino student achievement deserves specific examination, for in much of the mainstream education literature the achievement of Latino and African Americans is often spoken in the same breath. This is already a standard refrain in research in urban education, where the terms, Latino and Black are mentioned so frequently together that spoken together it often sounds like one continuous word—‘Latino and Black’. In most urban education research Black and Brown people are deemed to have the most in common with one another, and from the perspective of skin color, labor market segmentation, educational status, academic achievement, and school outcomes, that may be the case. Yet as is true with much research that reports averages without analyzing exceptions, differences that separate often trump similarities. Analyzing how Latino student efficacy has been explained by researchers and analysts over the past fifty years will help to emphasize how Latino student achievement is both similar to, but differs distinctly from that of African Americans.
CHAPTER 2

Models and Issues in the Education of Latinos

Introduction

Understanding school and interethnic relations of Mexican immigrant young adults in a neighborhood where interethnic violence occurred required that a review of the literature address areas of concern and tension for individuals, families and schools in this community. This literature review is divided into four parts.

First, explanatory models of Latino student achievement give a baseline for understanding how the education of Latino students in the U.S. has been argued and researched in U.S. education contexts. The multiple purposes of schools as well as the variety of educational deficit and additive interventions for Latino students is explored.

Second, in arguing that the 21st Century will see wide demographic changes I study of how interethnic relations has been explored, or often rather not explored, in the literature of immigrants and education.

Third, I argue that the context for Mexican immigration to the United States differs radically from immigration to the U.S. from all other countries, due to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that brought an end to the Mexican American War of 1848. When one-third of Mexico instantly became one-fifth of the United States, is a situation different than any other immigrant sending nation. In addition, understandings of race in Mexico, Latin America and the United States are distinct and how they are distinct is key to understanding Mexican immigrants’ understandings of race once they are in the U.S.

Fourth, previous research on Black/Latino relations is examined and the ways in which class and gender contexts explain attitudes and beliefs that sometimes result in
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conflict negatively, and offer hope in some of the ways that interethnic work can improve cooperation.

Educational explanatory models of Latino student achievement

Educational explanatory models of Latino student achievement and underachievement comprise many broad theoretical perspectives from descriptive to normative and prescriptive. Research on Latino student achievement has mainly focused on a few key areas of academic research: linguistic research into language barriers and the importance of maintaining bilingual language development (García, E. 2011; Ramírez, 1991, 2000); sociological research on a wide variety of topics including immigrant status, income and place of residence (Gándara & Contreras, 2010; García, E. 2001), and class-based lenses based on Marxist critiques of the low-socioeconomic status of Latinos in the U.S. (Anyon, 2011, Delgado-Bernal, 2000). These offer only partial explanations of both, the causes or solutions necessary to improve the educational trajectories of Latinos in American schools. Eugene García (2001) cites many risk factors for the educational failure of Latino students, beginning with inherent inadequacies within the institution of schooling in the U.S. Primary for Latino students at the end of the 20th Century was that many of them did not have access to preschool services and Latino children under the age of 5 had the lowest rates of preschool attendance: He adds:

Probabilities are high that most of the Latino students in these schools will be exposed to a broad array of other significant factors that place them at risk of educational failure throughout their preschool, elementary and high school years. Most of the risk factors, moreover, negatively impact on each Latino student’s readiness to learn in general, learn English in particular, learn grade-appropriate
subject matter, stay in school, and go on to college and secure meaningful careers. These students represent a schooling dilemma of national proportions (García, E., 2001, p. 311).

Eugene García, like Anyon (2005) pleads for the interplay of personal, environmental, school-specific and learning-specific conditions. For example, with regards to matters of well-being, García finds that Latino students were less likely to have health insurance than either White or Black children, and children without health insurance were more than six times as likely to have no usual source of health care. Within families, about 45% of Latino parents with 15-18 year old children had a high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma, while over 90% of White parents had a high school diploma or GED. In 1998, over 50% of all teachers in the U.S. reported teaching limited English proficient or culturally diverse students, and 71% reported that they taught students with special needs; while only 20% and 21% respectively reported being trained to address these groups’ needs. García argues that educational reforms must not only be systemic and comprehensive, but they must be fully informed as to the multiple and holistic learning needs of the students.

Montero-Sieburth & Batt (2001) (henceforth, Montero-Sieburth) found approximately 20 major theories used to explain the educational achievement of Latinos in the last 40 years. Here I will briefly summarize and elucidate some of her categories as they explore the wide range of major theoretical frameworks used in the recent past to research education of Latinos in the US. The theories are:

The cultural deficit model. The cultural deficit model, widely espoused in education in the 1960’s (Lewis, 1966; Hess & Shipman, 1965; Engleman & Bereiter, 1966),
assumes that students cannot achieve due to their culture, ethnicity, language, or race.

Stemming from the 19th Century late enlightenment and growing scientism, these theories embraced the idea of ‘genetic deficits’ and the Darwinian concept of “survival of the fittest” to objectify different races and classes of people as socially and culturally inferior. Exacerbated by testing regimes of intellect and scholastic achievement in the mid-20th Century, social and emotional deficiencies were seen as the cause of students’ lack of academic progress. Highly ethnocentric, these theories continue to have influence today through a variety of conservative movements, for instance the controversy surrounding Herrnstein and Murray’s *The Bell Curve* (1994).

Teachers who hold these opinions of perceived or inherited lack of intellect and cultural sophistication are inclined to form low expectations of students; and the lack of high expectations becomes self-fulfilling and student achievement declines (Villegas, 1991). Minority students are often labeled as “not caring” about their education. Delpit (1995) has argued that dominant and minority teachers have internalized the dominant cultural values: student, family and community are blamed for student failure, with limited scrutiny of teachers and schooling practices.

**Cultural difference theory.** Cultural difference theory (Erickson, 1976) focuses on the micro-contexts and dynamics of classroom interactions. Erickson (1976) was a strong proponent of this approach using the term “micro-ethnography” to examine “naturally occurring interactions in people’s lives” (p. 137). By focusing on the ‘micro’ elements of people’s lives and communities cultural difference theory opened a door to analyzing cultural ‘blind spots’ between teachers, students and communities. One significant case study that employed cultural difference was Heath’s (1982) *Ways with Words*. Erickson
argued that this type of research involved interaction, praxis and even transformation. In addition to linguistic researchers, this micro-ethnography method has been used by Delgado-Gaitán (1987) and Trueba (1988), specifically in their research on Latino and Chicano students. The theory is not without its detractors: some white teachers become effective for large numbers of non-white students without catering to cultural differences (Cooper, 2003) and some students overcome significant cultural barriers to be high achievers (Stipek, 1993).

Montero-Sieburth considers bilingual education a specific type of cultural difference model that emphasizes communication systems versus purely cognitive academic language (Montero-Sieburth & Batt, 2001). In the US, due to prominent anti-immigrant and English-only legislation, subtractive bilingual education in the form of transitional bilingual education programs garners more public funding and wider acceptance, though the research does not always support this. In transitional bilingual education teaching is done in a child’s home language, usually for no more than three years, to ensure that students do not fall behind in content areas like math and science with the express intent to learn English. The goal is aimed at helping students transition to mainstream English-only classrooms as quickly as possible, and the linguistic goal of such programs is English acquisition only (Hakuta, 1986; Cummins, 2000; García, 2009).

Developmental bilingual programs, sometimes called Dual Language programs are less common in U.S. public schools though slowly increasing in gateway cities and elsewhere. Research indicates they are extremely effective in aiding the long-term performance of English learners in school. While many public school students do not have access to developmental bilingual programs, many successful private schools are based on
this model with fee-paid foreign language schools in French, Arabic, Japanese, Mandarin or Russian, existing in many parts of the world.

In the 21st century, neither subtractive nor additive bilingualism may be an appropriate model for U.S. Latinos. In contrast, dynamic bilingualism in the form of translanguaging (García, O., 2009) emphasizes the “using” and “doing” of language and not the “having” of “a” language. In this context, Latino Limited English Proficient students are not LEP, but Emergent Bilinguals, who use all the communicative strategies available to connect. Bilingualism occurs on a continuum and is not a category. Williams, as cited in García, Kleifgen & Falchi (2008), imagines four advantages to the use of translanguaging: deeper understanding of the subject matter, development of competence in the weaker language, greater home and school cooperation, and explicit apprenticeships for early-level learners with fluent speakers (as discussed by Baker, 2001: 280-284). Emergent Bilinguals do not acquire a separate language, but develop and integrate new language practices into a complex dynamic bilingual repertoire in which translanguaging is both the supportive context and the communicative web itself (García, O., 2009).

**Economic explanatory models.** Market driven models emphasize neo-liberal economic theories that purport to benefit from increased competition in educational contexts for both individuals and schools; for example, charter schools, private schools, college scholarships bestowed on first graders to encourage school completion, etc., (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Hanushek and Jorgenson, 1996; Ladd, 1996). These appeals rationalize monetary rewards for motivation and represent a major current in contemporary U.S. education reform. While Latino students are not the sole objects of these oftentimes-contentious efforts, poor and minority children and their academic achievement are expressed to be a
primary focus for these attempted reforms. This ideology involves cultural adaptations toward economic restructuring of the institutions of schooling. This market model assumes that benefits to society and schools can be financially manipulated to maximize educational outcomes for marginalized students.

**Theories of Resistance Models.** These theories refer to the explanations and needs of oppositional behavior to demonstrate human agency (Montero-Sieburth & Batt, 2001). Educational resistance theories arose from the critical turn of the Frankfurt School, building on the work of Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse, who argued against the suppression of subjectivity, against the fallacy of objectivity, and critiqued mid-20th century assumptions that progress served all equally. Based on the cultural production work of Habermas, Goffman, and Marx. Foley (1990), for example, speaks about Mexican-American students’ ‘expressive practices’ as Mexicans that transform the racial order of a town in South Texas. Solórzano and Delgado-Bernal (2001) argue that the role that individuals play in the process of social resistance quite often reflects a self-defeating resistance of working-class students that helps to recreate the oppressive conditions from which such resistance originated (Anyon, 1980, 1997; Fine, 1991; MacLeod, 1987; McLaren, 1993; Willis, 1977). Solórzano and Delgado-Bernal argue for a critical theory that focuses on the social transformation itself, and not merely its reproductive aspects. They conclude, “In other words, the majority of resistance studies provide information about how youth participate in oppositional behavior that reinforces social inequality instead of offering examples of how oppositional behavior may be an impetus toward social justice” (Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001, p. 310). Theories of resistance stress the concept of critical thinking as primary for self-emancipation and the basis for social change.
Critical Race Theory and its Latino variant, LatCrit, frame Solórzano and Delgado-Bernal’s analysis of Chicana and Chicano student resistance (Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001, p. 310): “It is crucial that educators, policy makers, and community workers better understand how students engage in resistance strategies that attempt to counteract the conditions and results of ineffective educational practices,” (Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995, as quoted in Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001, p. 310). Delgado Bernal (1997) studied four different types of student oppositional behavior: (a) reactionary behavior, (b) self-defeating resistance, (c) conformist resistance, and (d) transformational resistance, in an effort to expand theorizing and introduce Chicana and indigenous types of resistance and community building. In this way, Delgado-Bernal seeks to uncover power inherent in resistance in order to unleash its power for community aims. Mere theories of resistance do not always capture what Johnson (1988) calls the layers of subordination, based on race, class, gender, language, immigration, status, accent and phenotype. Yosso (2000, p. 162) adds: “These students do not ‘fit’ into a single category of [critical] consciousness and/or forms of resistance.” LatCrit and Critical race theory celebrate the centrality of experiential knowledge, and for Solórzano and Delgado-Bernal this means that for Chicanas and Chicanos theories of resistance must be examined at an intersection that includes language rights, cultural rights, and the influence of immigration status, in addition to matters of class and social reproduction. The ethnic studies controversy in Tucson, Arizona, explored in the film Precious Knowledge (2011) cites a Mexican American Studies program as a site for emancipatory education.

**Cultural capital sociological theory.** Monteiro-Sieburth refers here to another type of economic explanatory model that applies cultural adaptations to economic structuring
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models. Variations in achievement are based on variations in *social and cultural capital.*

Widely used in contemporary educational thought and heavily used in research with Latino/a students, *social capital* refers to the value of social relations and the role of social networks to get educational results leading to economic or community gains (Portes, 1998), while *cultural capital* refers to non-financial social assets; be they educational or intellectual, that may promote social mobility (Bourdieu, 1972).

These latter categories of social and cultural capital have been tremendously fruitful for many scholars researching Latino students for they factor in a large degree of cultural and social factors in defining consequences and causes for Latino/a student underachievement. These include the mismatch between college aspirations and requirements (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999); inequities in housing options leading directly to inferior schools (Orfield & McArdle, 2006); lack of knowledge and access about the role of schooling (Gándara & Contreras, 2010; Patillo-McCoy, 1999); the role of cultural capital in school success (DiMaggio, 1982); the role of lowered expectations to dampen achievement (Kao & Tienda, 1998; Gándara, O’Hara, & Gutierrez, 2004); the role of social capital and the development of youth (Coleman, 1988; Lareau, 1999, 2003; Noguera & Wing, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999); the mismatch of parent’s aspirations and parent’s social capital (Rumberger, 2003; Ream, 2004; Horn & Chen, 1998; Gándara, O’Hara, & Gutierrez, 2001; Teranishi, Allen, & Solórzano, 2004); and the limits of peer support for school success (Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Henderson, 1997; Steinberg, 1996; Kao & Tienda, 1998). One could argue that the largest number of researchers in the Latino educational project employ social and cultural capital models to explain student achievement or lack thereof, without seeming off-base. As this research addresses cultural and family
differences and distinctions, it’s one way to address the specificities of Latino/a schooling experiences without generalizing class and income distinctions, and preserving unique cultural histories and dimensions.

**Academic Failure Explanations.** Academic failure explanations (push-out, School-to-prison pipeline, etc.) refer to students who are “at risk” to move beyond sociological pathologies to encompass how educational institutions enable students to become at-risk. Montero-Sieburth distinguishes this category from purely poverty-based or class-based explanations for student academic failure. Types of academic failure for these students include push-out (Fine, 1991) and the school-to-prison pipeline (New York Civil Liberties Union, 2011), with remedies including the alternative school movement and small schools and ways to eliminate the criminalization of student behavior, i.e. policing the hallways (Nolan, 2010). While these programs disproportionately affect poor and ethnic minority students, these programs are not limited or segregated by race or ethnicity, but affect students in a wide variety of urban and poor school systems.

Gil García (2001) researched factors that placed Latino/a students “at-risk” for school failure. By addressing both the growing numbers of non-native students entering schools and the number of native and foreign born students with limited English proficiency (LEP), García addressed shortcomings, primarily finding that English-only environments combined with increased emphasis on mandated state testing requirements do not promote sufficient support for emergent bilingual students to learn English. Limits on bilingual education severely constrict the language of instruction. Moreover, educational and administrative decisions about the length of time a student can receive special support services are made regardless of individual student needs (García, G., 2001). Primarily, these
one-size-fits-all English language policies do not account for variability among students in native-born or foreign-born status, formal schooling in their native country, and the wide variety of language and learning needs and heterogeneity of the English language learning population, including inadequate school preparation, limited language proficiency and household poverty status (García, G., 2001, p. 4-5).

Rather than looking at ‘At-Risk’ students, Montero-Sieburth found other researchers investigating success factors explanations to showcase features that fostered academic success. Paredes, Reyes, and Scribner (1999) examined *High-Performing Schools* to see how they were similar and differed from other successful schools in working with Latino children. While research showed that in high-performing schools, teachers facilitated student excitement that translated into student responsibility for their own learning (Blase & Blase, 1994), high performing schools for Mexican American students shared a vision for all students, and ignored any and all barriers to learning associated with “deficit thinking” (Valencia, 1997).

The high-performing schools serving Mexican Americans that Paredes, Reyes and Scribner (1999) researched not only developed true communities of learners, but they differed from other successful schools in at least four areas: 1) employing inclusive and collaborative school governance; 2) emphasizing curricular and instructional connections to students’ funds of knowledge and cultural backgrounds; 3) an advocacy-oriented assessment focus by teachers and staff that pre-referred students for intensive scaffolding of English language learners to encourage instructional adjustments instead of bureaucratic sanctions; and 4) involving community and family by building on the cultural values and funds of knowledge of Mexican American parents, fostering personal and formal communications
with parents, creating a warm environment for parents and facilitating structural accommodations for parent involvement that extended beyond purely educational concerns to meet a variety of community needs in health, safety, and economic issues. Honoring culturally relevant values such as respect (respeto), informal small talk (confianza), and personal contact were important in building school-community relationships (Villanueva & Hubbard, 1994). García, O., Flores, N., & Woodley, H. H. (2015) demonstrate how teachers and educators negotiate official school language policy to build “in-between spaces of promise” (p. 221) where students translanguage to build on learning in concept development as well as resist bifurcated ideologies of language, embracing their lives as dynamic bilinguals.


**Dual Frame of Reference Theories.** Dual frame of reference theories refer to the different avenues to success afforded to immigrants of varying generational status and much of this research has been completed for, and about, Latino immigrants. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (1995) argue that first-generation immigrants often possess a "dual frame of reference," where individuals align their experiences in the host country with memories and
understandings of their life in their sending country. For recent Mexican immigrants, such a frame of reference enables them to feel that their life in the U.S. is significantly better than the life they left behind. Second generation children of immigrants do not have access to a dual frame of reference, and do not see their current status as one of being "better", and tend to see themselves as marginalized when compared to the dominant culture. The additional demands of the second generation, including responsibilities for translating and caring for siblings, run counter to cultural expectations for children in the US, adding stress to social and economic pressures these children already feel and sometimes engender psychological differences between generations. There are interesting parallels here with idea of double consciousness coined by DuBois (1903/1993) to describe African American psychological awareness despite slavery and segregation.

Upon reviewing the literature, Montero-Sieburth (2001) called for more research into how Latino students learn in non-school contexts: at home, or through their peers, and what kinds of community funds of knowledge may assist school achievement. She critiques the basis of educational policy analysis by targeting the assumption of “epistemological imperialism” that there is only one way of knowing, that is statistically through the measurement of test scores for state bureaucracies, which are superimposed on other ways of knowing, with gendered, ethnic, and indigenous ways of knowing considered illegitimate and unauthentic. Research paradigms based on these ‘imperialistic’ assumptions infer a wide range of ideological frames from “saving students” to providing more “compensatory or remedial” educational opportunities.

I turn now to the literature on how race and racism are contextualized in the broad immigrant education literature. Within this topic, I do a more thorough examination of
contexts of ‘race’ and ‘racism’ in immigration contexts, then finally examining research that explicitly focuses on racialization in a U.S. context. To do so, I first start with different immigrant groups before I focus on Latinos.

**Race and the education of immigrants**

*When race has been mentioned in the research on immigrants and education it is most frequently employed as a tool to contrast European immigrants with each other and with non-assimilating groups, those groups whom Ogbu would later call ‘involuntary migrants,’ whose histories of migration were not optional (African-Americans, Chicanos, American Indians, etc.) where certain groups of people were successful with cultural assimilation and certain groups were not.*

Waters & Jimenez, 2005

This section will give an overview of the role of race and interethnic understandings in the immigrant and education literature, keeping in mind the key concept of assimilation in the literature, and the ways in which the literature on various immigrant groups have negotiated the interrelationships between race, ethnicity and culture. Focusing on the ways immigrant students are affected by race and racism will situate my own work in understanding how Latino immigrants encounter African Americans in the Northeast. A historical gateway city for immigrants, New York has not always been defined along the paradigm of the Black-White divide as in much of the US. Learning how recent arrivals and their families understand race in this particular location would help to theorize aspects of interethnic relations and gain knowledge of how race is conceptualized in social, political and schooling contexts. Two key qualifying statements need be made: one, for much of the immigration literature, race as a construct has been subsumed for research purposes under the larger paradigm of ethnicity, with assimilation at its center (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996; Alba & Nee, 2003). While ‘race’ or ‘racism’ is often not explicit in much of the immigration
literature, it is often implicit: the goal of assimilation is racialized to the extent that ‘middle-class values’ in the United States, reflect mainstream (read: White) values. Second, the discourse on race and the racialized experiences of immigrants of color in the U.S. is understood predominantly within the framework of Black/White relations (Ngo and Lee, 2007, p. 442). Any attempt to know how immigrants undergo a process of racialization and understand race and racism, must begin with a recognition that most immigration literature of the twentieth century is colored by the myths and paradigms used to understand “the Other,” in this case the foreigner in U.S. society. These frames of ethnic and nativist interaction are often mirrored and understood through the persistent historical and colonial lenses of Black/White interaction in the U.S. and by Occidental/Orientalist perspectives throughout the West (Said, 1978). By analyzing the literature on immigrants and schooling, with the focus on experiences of ‘race’ and ‘racism,’ I hope to conceptualize further how ‘race’ is understood in the literature of immigrants and education in general, and the literature on Latinos/as and schooling in particular.

**Assimilation.** For much of the immigration literature, race as a construct has been subsumed under the larger paradigm of ethnicity, with assimilation at its center (Portes & Rumbaut 1996; Alba & Nee 2003). *Cultural assimilation theory* of the early twentieth century found lasting expression in the metaphor of the ‘Melting Pot’ whereby all nationalities and ethnicities (and implicitly races) became blended in the new nation/race of Americans (Zangwill, 1908). This earlier notion of assimilation is predominantly about *acculturation* where immigrant cultural practices veer toward the mainstream host society slowly over time and often over generations. In corollary, *accommodation* refers to the process where individual and group behaviors become modified to adapt to new experiences
in the host country, whereby people change their behaviors and communicative strategies to be more similar to the mainstream. The ‘Melting Pot’ paradigm of assimilation continues to drive much of the work and attitudes about immigrants to this day, implying that the construct of race can and should be melted away through the practices of acculturation and accommodation.

By the 1970’s the social mores that supported ethnic stereotypes and customary gender roles were upended, and the ‘melting pot’ was denounced as unrealistic, and racist for conferring permanent low status to non-Anglo-Saxon ethnic groups. With the dawn of the civil rights and women’s rights movements, the more buoyant metaphor of the ‘salad bowl’ found favor among some like-minded liberals trying to explain the way immigrants were to blend within majority culture. But this metaphor never gained a consistent audience in the US, perhaps or perhaps due to the lack of a powerful verb, (the making or eating of salad carries none of the blood sport entertained by a melting metal pot). Another metaphor that also became popular was the “mosaic” of cultures (used frequently in Canada) where each piece is different and distinct and which creates a very different and more vibrant global whole. While the ‘salad bowl’ and ‘mosaic’ metaphors represent generally multiculturalist perspectives reflective of more liberal attitudes toward immigrants and assimilation, they are not invoked frequently in the U.S. either in common parlance or academically — the concept of the ‘melting pot’ still holds sway due to its historic power and authoritative metaphorical edge.

That the ‘melting pot’ concept comes to favor in early 20th Century America is not surprising. In the late 19th Century vast waves of predominantly European immigrants entered the US, leaving behind multi-ethnic realms like the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian
empires. These vast expanded empires fell to the nationalist uprisings of pre-War Europe, roughly the same period of time marked by immigration to the U.S. In this worldview, the instability of the immigrants’ former empires does much to forge nationalism in their prior homelands. In the desire for economic and political stability in the new country of the USA, social and political leaders encouraged a new forged identity of a ‘melting pot’ through the 1920’s (Harper, 1980). This also explains why U.S. restriction on European immigration does not occur until 1924, decidedly after the Great War, with the final stages of the Russian and Mexican revolutions barely in place, and the unification of Italy as a political state not complete until well after the First World War. Given the cumulative effect of the First and Second World Wars in industrializing and developing the continental United States, it is not surprising that the metaphor of “melting pot” does not go away lightly. Given the metaphor’s persistence it would not be a stretch to consider that this myth of Americanization is behind a great deal of English-only and anti-immigrant legislation today, including recent efforts to repeal the Fourteenth Amendment, the citizenship clause granting citizenship to all born within its borders. To many non-immigrants, the cultural assimilation of immigrants to mainstream middle-class values is the height of immigrant and hence ‘melting pot’ success, and does not leave room for ethnic and racial exception.

In the late 20th century, since the introduction of melting pots, salad bowls and mosaics, two major advancements regarding theorizing of immigrant assimilation have been advanced. In 1978, Ogbu introduced the notion of ‘involuntary migrants’ from observations

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3 Glazer and Moynihan (1963) argued that successive generations of immigrations would maintain ethnic connections in spite of the ‘Melting Pot’. When the 1980 U.S. Census first asked about ancestry 83% of Americans selected an ancestry. Glazer later argued that the surge in European ethnic consciousness was a reaction to the civil rights movement of the 1960’s, while Moynihan believed it was due to social and media changes.
of people from different countries but of the same race. He concluded that the country could be divided into ‘voluntary minorities’ (those who chose to come to the U.S. and their descendants), versus ‘involuntary’ or ‘caste-like’ minorities (descendants of those who found themselves U.S. subjects or came to the U.S. against their will). Ogbu (1981) argued that ‘involuntary minorities’ often adopted an “oppositional identity” to the majority culture in response to a perceived glass ceiling imposed or maintained by White society, as well as by those others who have assimilated. He reasoned some non-Whites fail to observe the link between educational achievement and access to jobs. Ogbu (2003) later argued that some students did not perform up to their abilities due to a fear of ‘acting White,’ a concept that will to be explored later in the literature review.

By the turn of the millennium, Zhou (1997) and Portes and Rumbaut (2001) had advanced the field of assimilation studies by proposing their segmented assimilation theories, observing how a system of social stratification in the host country can affect second and subsequent generations differently. Immigrants get absorbed by different segments of society depending on the social and cultural capital they bring with them. Some get absorbed into middle class life while others get pushed to the margins of society, and much of this acculturation can be observed as effecting genders and immigrant generation differently. Portes and Rumbaut (1996), among others, argued that sociologically distinctions must be made between the first generation, foreign-born citizens who move to a host country as adults or late adolescents, and the second generation, the first generation of a family to be born in the host country. Study into these generational differences prompted the creation of new designation, the 1.5 generation, persons who immigrate to a country prior to their early teens. They combine aspects of both cultures and more easily assimilate
to the host culture than people who immigrate as adults (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). One paradigm shift of the segmented assimilation research is that it questions the assumption that all assimilation to a cultural norm necessarily benefits the migrant, and many bring with them positive models for education and co-ethnic peer support. Not all immigrants from a country enter with similar class backgrounds or religious securities, and many other immigrants are from racially stratified societies or caste-like systems. The historical assimilation by White migrants in early twentieth century U.S. may not be a helpful paradigm with regards to the multi-ethnic immigration of the present twenty-first century.

Fergus (2004) and López (2002) have also challenged the predominant view of assimilation and the melting pot for Latinos, as well as critiquing Ogbu’s framework. López states that: “Reducing race and gender to elements of assimilation is problematic because it deflects attention from ‘the ubiquity of racial [and gender] meanings and dynamics’ in everyday life experiences as well as institutional practices” (p. 6). It is this ubiquity of understandings that I also hope to explore. I start, however, by considering how race has been understood in studies of different immigrant groups and the intersections with their education in the US.

This section reviews the literature on the education of immigrant groups and how the concept of race has been differently viewed within immigrant assimilation debates. To do so, I start by considering the literature on the education of Asian students, and review the literature’s treatment education of Korean, Hmong, Vietnamese, and to a lesser extent South Asian and Chinese students. I describe the studies and the ways in which race is discussed as benefiting or inhibiting Asian students. Complicating the concept of racial difference further, I then review the literature concerning the education of Muslim students, and the
relationship that religion has with race in U.S. educational pursuits. Finally, I bring the race question to the fore by discussing the literature on the education of Caribbean-African students. A separate section on the education of Latinos will then follow. Throughout all these sections, I focus on immigrant youth’s own understanding of race, and highlight how the literature of immigrant student research does or does not experience interethnic and interracial interaction.

**Race and Asian immigrant students**

I’m not black. I’m not white. I’m Asian [laughs]. They don’t talk about us.

A Vietnamese Junior. (Kiang & Kaplan, 1994, p. 96)

Asher (2002), Lee (1996), Wing (2007) and other scholars of Asian-American immigration argue for the elimination of the ‘model minority’ stereotype that pits the perceived economic and academic success of South Asians and East Asians against other people of color in the United States, without acknowledging that Southeast Asians and many Pacific Island natives do not have the same levels of success of some East and South Asians. Wing (2007) argues along with Lee (1996) that the “Model Minority Myth” is fallacious and dangerous in that the other, the foreigner, is seen as a threat to the American mainstream, “the Yellow Peril”. Structurally, the myth is used as a “wedge” by mainstream and conservative Whites to denigrate Latino and African-American demands for equity, increase the vulnerability of a small minority group in the country and deflect attention from Asian Americans who live in poverty and have high economic needs (Lee, 1996; Wing, 2007).

**Koreans.** Employing a social capital framework, Lew (2006) argued that middle class Korean parents gave their children structural and educational resources that emphasize kinship and co-ethnic network supports in the social contexts of church, work, and
community to reinforce the familial values of education, bilingual skills and ethnic ties (p. 32). Middle class Koreans send Korean children to after-school academies and hire private bilingual educators and counselors to manage U.S. educational systems. Co-ethnic networks employ key informants to navigate complex public school systems. Korean parents thus highlight the collective and ethnic investments required to sustain ethnic identities for a child’s long-term development. Parents’ aspirations for their children are then class-based arguments: education will improve the ethnic standing of Korean people through educational investments (p.33). The role of interracial dynamics is not directly addressed in Lew’s work, but by employing a cultural framework to explain parental support, the author highlighted how parents instill a collective ethnic identity into their children. The author also delineates who fits in and who does not in the Korean ethnic community (Barth, 1969; Nagel, 1994). Interethnic experiences that improve class status are tolerated and accepted, whereas interethnic experiences that may question and deny class improvements tend to be avoided.

By contrasting the parents of stereotypical Korean high school success stories with stories of Korean dropouts in High School Equivalency Diploma programs, Lew (2006) efficiently demonstrates that a combination of structural and institutional barriers limit the type of social capital some individuals possess, regardless of ethnic background. Inadequate housing, limited job opportunities, and frequent mobility for jobs and/or housing were all factors that plagued lower income families and severely constrained the ability of co-ethnic networks to support educational improvements. Poorer families employed co-ethnic networks to assist them in obtaining more basic needs (i.e. food, shelter, etc.). This lack of a complex social capital for poorer Korean parents, meant a stronger reliance and trust in the
leadership of urban public schools to support their children’s social and economic development. Whether through school failure, individual academic failure or cultural isolation resulting from being racially targeted, these Korean high-school dropouts felt ethnically and racially isolated from other minorities in less than adequate, under-resourced public schools. The social and political limitations of urban schools exacerbated academic and family shortcomings, isolating the students from other minority peers in urban schools. Korean dropouts relied on co-ethnic networks for easy-to-obtain low-paying service jobs from Korean entrepreneurs. Whereas this served the immediate economic needs of families, and supported co-ethnic networks, it also seemed to perpetuate students’ long-term disengagement from schooling (McNeal, 1997; Rumberger & Larson, 1998).

Lew (2006) also found that low-income Koreans often attended low-resourced schools with Asian, Black and Hispanic low-income peers, and that this racial and economic isolation perpetuated this groups’ distrust and alienation from Whites. Lew also found that the dropout group defined the “dominant society” as grouping together wealthier Koreans, upwardly mobile Asians along with Whites. By doing so, Lew argued that the students “aligned their experiences of racism and low socioeconomic status with their low-income minority peers—Blacks, Hispanics and Asians (p. 99).” In the popular imagination, White culture and Asians were aligned with success, while Blacks and Hispanics were associated with failure. The dropouts internalized the “model minority myth” (Lee, 1996) by associating upwardly mobile Koreans with Whiteness and placing themselves with Blacks and Hispanics whom they saw as monolithically poor and disenfranchised (p. 103). Lew’s discussion of Korean dropouts is framed by marginalization and the mainstream (1994): Koreans occupy a ‘near-Black’ or ‘near-White’ racial status that is historically and socially
constructed. Successful Koreans occupy a place that is near-Whites and Korean dropouts occupy an ‘invisible’ state that is completely de-contextualized and de-racialized (pp. 102-103). That successful Koreans can play into a status of near-Whiteness mirrors Bonilla-Silva’s (2004) work on race. Some possibly lighter-skinned and more middle-class Latinos and Asians, he argues, will achieve ‘honorary Whiteness’, but many Latinos and Asians will represent ‘collective Blackness.’ “Model Minority” is a near-White status, although Lee (1996) posits that not all Asians benefit from this near-White category.

**Vietnamese.** Zhou and Bankston (1998) used social class and race/ethnicity as analytical frameworks to understand how Vietnamese children were situated in American life in their case study of the children of Vietnamese refugees in a neighborhood in New Orleans. To conceptualize the plight of immigrant students who must bridge the ancient traditions of their parents' world with their rapid assimilation into contemporary America, Zhou and Bankston coined the term “Straddling the Gap” (p. 160). The authors’ concern with the Vietnamese community and its organization led the authors to argue that ethnic and cultural factors (cultural contexts) shaped outcomes for these children more than socioeconomic and structural reasons (economic contexts). They reasoned:

> [W]hile structural and individual factors are certainly important determinants of immigrant adaptation, these factors often work together with immigrant culture and group characteristics to shape the fates of immigrants and their offspring; the original culture may be seen as hindering the adaptation of members of the ethnic group (the assimilationist perspective) or as promoting this adaptation (the multiculturalist perspective). (p. 8-9)

Hence, they argue that ethnic and cultural factors cannot be considered in isolation from
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structural or socioeconomic factors, but must be contextualized. Zhou and Bankston (1998) then theorized that the gap between the old world and the new meant that first generation children especially occupied a separate place from either parents or peers, or their descendants.

The authors demonstrated the overall educational success of the Vietnamese students, especially compared with the African-American students who predominated in this New Orleans community. Relying on quantitative datasets regarding Vietnamese and English language fluency data, graduation rates and school completion rates, Zhou and Bankston scrutinized the Vietnamese success in American society and in American education. However, they reported very limited analysis of the interactions between the minority Vietnamese community and the majority African-American community in the neighborhoods in New Orleans where the high schools they studied were located. The main high school site they examined, Washington High, was 20 percent Vietnamese, 77 percent Black, and 3 percent White/Hispanic (p. 135). Jefferson High School had a similar ethnic make-up: 74% Black, 15% Vietnamese and 11% White. When comparing students at both schools, the authors found that Vietnamese students outperformed Black students in both schools, and outperformed both Blacks and Whites across the state on standardized test scores (p. 137). Zhou and Bankston praise the importance of ‘Confucian’ culture for variations of success between East Asians (Koreans, Chinese and Vietnamese) and Southeast Asians (Cambodians, Laotians, and Hmong). Peer group relations and interracial interactions are discussed, but predominantly limited to a discussion of [juvenile] delinquency.

Zhou and Bankston report that few survey respondents note any White friends due to
their location in a predominantly Black neighborhood, but Vietnamese respondents also rarely report having any Black friends, and those who reported Black friends were much more likely to be considered delinquent or members of local gangs by their co-ethnic groups (p.194-196). They observed that the ‘problem kids’ tended to hang out with primarily co-ethnics but had extensive social contacts with non-Vietnamese students in the neighborhood and school; some within the Vietnamese community and school community speculate that they are ‘problem children’ because they are too Americanized and associate too much with the native minority youth in an underprivileged neighborhood. Even though these Americanized Vietnamese may have adopted the behavior and dress of Black peers, Vietnamese students rarely interacted with Black peers on an individual friendship basis, but rather primarily on a group basis.

Zhou and Bankston (1998) argued that while these more likely 2nd or 1.5 generation students held a selective American identity, contexts for separate socialization arose from a lack of individual parental support and the limited language and educational ability of parents, thereby positing that the social and ethnic contexts for their Americanized Vietnamese students were similar to Lew’s Korean ‘drop outs’ (2006, pp. 98-104). They argued that Americanized Vietnamese are culturally assimilated into American society in these contexts, but they are not structurally assimilated into the native youth culture found in the local social environment, i.e. while they understand ‘Black’ and perform ‘Black’, they are not inculcated into the institutionalizing aspects of being Black in America (Zhou & Bankston, p 214).

Kiang and Kaplan (1994) reported on Vietnamese student perspectives after a Black-and-White racial conflict in South Boston High School, a high school with a long history of
racial intolerance. Because of the widely publicized conflicts between Black and White students in the 1970’s as a result of busing for integration, media and school officials went to great lengths to emphasize how the events of 1994 paralleled the past. As the event was framed as a Black-White phenomena, mostly silent in the public discussion was the fact that the composition of South Boston High School had changed in the subsequent two decades. By 1994 over one-third of the students were Latino or Asian, with White non-Hispanic students compromising just over a quarter of all students, and Black students under 40%. Non-Black and non-White perspectives of the conflict were marginalized, if not ignored, even though they constituted a third of the population. Their experiences did not fit the traditional narrative of a Black-White divide.

Out of 20 articles about South Boston High appearing in the *Boston Globe* from May 7th to May 18th, 1993, only three—two Hispanics and one Asian American—referred to dynamics at the school in more than Black and White terms. A Puerto Rican member of the Boston School Board, for example commented, “We’re not looking at a [B]lack and [W]hite issue, we’re looking at a multicultural issue.” (p. 98).

In the aftermath of a ‘violent clash’ between Black and White students, the investigators wrote to ‘authorize’ the voices of Vietnamese immigrant students. They found that in the weeks before and during the riot itself, Vietnamese students were not informed of any racial conflict within the school’s history. Only three Vietnamese students knew of their own school’s violent history and racial dynamics, from cross-district busing in the 1970’s and 1980’s. Not one of the Vietnamese students expected a clash of this magnitude. During the riot, Vietnamese students were not informed of what was happening or why, resulting in students just being scared and their concerns not being addressed. The significant
demographic change of increased numbers of Asians and Latinos was never discussed in classes or in assemblies by the school (Kiang & Kaplan, 1994, p. 104), leading to silencing and invisibility. Many Asians were improperly and socially assigned the racial identity of “Chinese” and “Chinks” by administrators and peers without any public correction. When students complained to adults about being called racist names, individual teachers told them to “forget it” (p. 105) and they reported that the bullying continued. While the Vietnamese students did not share the perspective or experience of the riots, the racial tensions at South Boston High School had many roots: media bias resulting from the 1970 riots, unequal power relationships, historical baggage of the Vietnam War, and cultural and linguistic ignorance (p. 106). Kiang and Kaplan argue that the complete absence of Vietnamese students from public discussions of the event negated the immigrant students’ shared commitments to the school, and the students’ sincere desire to share educational spaces and create new safer spaces for Vietnamese students. Among the implications for further research Kiang and Kaplan report that assumptions between and among other racial groups be examined through ethnographic inquiry into family attitudes, neighborhood race relations and community structures of inequality (p. 115). This is precisely the focus of my dissertation research.

The Hmong. Lee (1996, 2005) explores the role of race in education in ways that go beyond essentializing notions of color and limiting notions of ‘culture’. In her work on Asian immigrant students (2005), the Hmong students in her study were outsiders in their school, adding that Hmong American identities were also “constrained and limited by racial barriers” (p. 2), but not fully determined by racialization. Parents, teachers and school administrators in this predominantly White-led school continued a de facto separation:
insiders were overwhelmingly White, and the outsiders were the Hmong students. School officials did not view this division as de facto, and generally gave race-blind and race-neutral explanations when any ethnic division was made explicit. Many school personnel saw the Hmong within the framework of cultural deficit theory, or a culture of poverty, yet never seemingly reflected upon their own status as White people and possessing a culture of ‘wealth.’ It is this implicit, even surreptitious status quo, the culture of ‘Whiteness,’ that Hmong students are up against in Lee’s title.

More revealing is how members of the Hmong community itself, particularly immigrant parents, distinguished between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Hmong students. ‘Good’ Hmong students were those who preserved their traditions, while ‘bad’ Hmong students were assimilated and Americanized (p. 50). Like other researchers (Valenzuela, 1999; Waters, 1999; Zhou & Bankston; 1998), Lee found that for Hmong parents, the forces of Americanization augured the greatest threats both to their cultural survival as well as their economic livelihood. Lee posited that Hmong parents prefer accommodation without assimilation or selective acculturation for their children rather than wholesale assimilation (2004, p. 51) and this social expectation directly conflicts with school expectations for positive assimilation to achieve school success. In Lee’s understanding of Hmong family life in Lakeview, Wisconsin, ethnicity and family life become prisms to learn about race, and race itself becomes not just about phenotype or skin-color, but a blended notion of color, language, culture, host society and homeland ways.

Lee found that how American adults or Hmong parents understood Hmong children was of less consequence than how Hmong students connected to peers. Be they White or Hmong: peers mattered. The barrier between “Traditional” and “Americanized” Hmong
youth is typically understood as a generational distinction (1\textsuperscript{st} and 1.5 generation vis-à-vis the 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation). Lee’s thick contextualization presented this distinction as not just a line of demarcation, but as a chasm of self-identification that deepens with continued and complex youth development. “Americanized” youth were seen as both assimilating to American culture (both good and bad) but also separating themselves from their ethnic traditions. This distinction in and of itself operated as a cleaver with the past, severing a modern impersonal future, almost pre-ordained, from the familiar and ancient ways of community elders. In this sense, ‘race’ was not an essentializing element, as much as the shifting ways in which becoming American transform and mold traditional culture to multi-adaptive contexts (Lee, 2004, p. 124). In this way, how the Hmong students distinguished themselves were more potent paradigms for understanding Hmong life and thought than any comparison using an outside paradigm, say the American racial paradigm of ‘Black/White’ division. That “Americanized” youth formed identities vis-à-vis “traditional” youth was not surprising, given that identities were formed in relation to those they identify as ‘others’ (Barth, 1969; Nagel, 1994). While traditional students differentiated themselves from Americanized youth, more assimilated youth used peer pressure and ridicule to separate themselves from ‘traditional’ students. More assimilated Hmong youth used derogatory terms to denigrate the status of the more recent arrivals and to mock their inability to grasp the American culture of consumption by poking fun of their clothes and cars. Lee (2004: 54) stated: “For the Americanized youth, the traditional youth represent the foreign identity from which they want to distance themselves.”

One distinct way “Americanized” Hmong students in Lee’s study were signified was in the context of clothing. According to teachers and school leaders, hip-hop style clothing
was associated with urban youth culture, which in turn was gang-style or ‘Gangsta.’ Lee found that Americanized Hmong immigrant youth, like most American youth of color, were criminalized in the dominant imagination often by virtue of phenotype and clothing (p. 66; Cammarota, 2004; Ferguson, 2000, as noted by Lee, 2004).

School spaces were distinct between Hmong and White students, with little meaningful contact (p. 66). The only clear White friend in close proximity to the group was a White female truant who hung out with truant female Hmong (p. 66). Overall, Lee found that Hmong Americans’ standing among White students was driven predominantly by a status of invisibility: Hmong student concerns and welfare were dismissively silenced by the greater student body, whether actively or passively, and were occasionally targets for ridicule by White students over concerns such as family size and welfare receipt. Such distinctions made by White students only further fostered divisions between White and Hmong students.

Comparing Americanized and traditional students, Lee maintained that first generation traditional students may see social distance as rooted in language, while more Americanized students 1.5 or second generation may see distancing based on race and culture (p. 68). Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) have likewise argued that second generation students are not committed to a ‘dual-frame of reference’ (as immigrants and Americans) and were much more likely to see themselves as only Americans, unwilling to overlook moments of real or perceived racism and discrimination. Lee theorized that first generation Hmong youth see self-identities as rooted in language differences, while later generations view race and culture as stronger self-signifiers of identification. Lee argues for a centering of race and racism in the immigrant educational experience, particularly of the
1.5 and second generation and beyond, and infers that to comprehend American contexts necessitates an intellectual, if not affective understanding, of American racial paradigms.

Lee found that the relationships between African American and Hmong students could be summarized as ambiguous at best, with no overt friendships between members of the two groups, yet with no “overt expressions of animosity” either (p. 68-69). Lee reasoned that Americanized Hmong students grew up in the poorer parts of Lakeview in close proximity to most African-American families and that this meant they had a familiarity with African-Americans that was not the case with Whites in Lakeview, although it’s unclear whether the African americans were more middle-class or working class because of a predominance of racial segregation in housing in the US. Americanized Hmong youth were more attuned to a racial hierarchy that included social capital frameworks that rewarded some African-Americans for achievements like sports success. In addition, for African-Americans, positive social capital was afforded to hip hop clothes, music and language, due to its power in oppositional and consumerist cultures (Kelly, 1997, as stated in Lee, 2004). Lee discovered that some Americanized Hmong adhered to hip-hop styles to consciously choose a style that was not associated with White middle-class, whereas other Americanized youth merely followed the peer status quo without any such social or political consciousness (p. 69-70). The teachers in school presumed the adoption of hip-hop style clothing signified gang involvement for Hmong youth; however, no such correlation was made for White students who adopted the same style.

The fact that Lee does not discuss the existence of Latinos highlights that the interaction of racialized Americans with other ‘racialized’ Americans is not central to Lee’s argument, nor is it central to the vast majority of the immigrant educational literature. This
is an absence that is conspicuous. In a Bourdieuan perspective, the *habitus* of immigrant research is not focused on inter-minority understandings with non-White people. One could argue that this shows the long reach of the early 20th Century Chicago School of Sociology expecting assimilation to the American mainstream and not interaction with poorer minority cultures. Moreover, the interethnic/interracial considerations that are explained in Lee’s study consist of only Black/Hmong connections. Interracial understandings between the Hmong and other minorities are negative in that they are not discussed and barely acknowledged. While this lack of attention to this interaction is not quite a vacuum, it most clearly represents a relationship that is either completely hidden or marginal.

**Chinese.** Vivian Louie (2001, 2004) reported on Chinese immigrants to the United States and how college-going identities foster enhanced ethnic identities, particularly within the context of public higher education. Model minority stereotypes encouraged academic success yet such pressures also worked to marginalize Chinese American girls’ wishes for social success. Chinese families’ class status determined how ethnic networks were employed. Middle class parents used ethnic networks to navigate advantages for future educational and economic gain, while working class parents engaged ethnic networks to secure basic necessities of housing and jobs, with long hours and limited English proficiency limiting the families’ interactions with schools, similar to how Lew (2006) reported on Korean families. Louie did not report on interethnic interaction in the first, 1.5, and second-generation immigrants.⁴

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⁴ The literature on Chinese immigrants in American education, and to a lesser extent South Asians in the next section, is stymied by many of the reasons that make research into Mexican immigrant education very complex. The country is large with significant regional variation, with immigrants to the U.S. from China having arrived over several centuries in many separate waves. The author apologizes for the brevity of the analysis of Chinese immigrants in U.S. education and hopes that analysis of variations demand future research.
South-Asian students. Asher’s (2002) work about how Indian-American high school students negotiate both professional and ethnic identities is predominantly a cultural and class analysis, rather than a racial analysis (Asher, p272). Identities are to a degree fluid in that the students express a range of identities whether in the context of the home “Indian” culture and the “American” context of school.

Gibson (1988) in her early work writing about Punjabi students in California critiques the paradigm of assimilation as linear and omnipresent, presenting data mined by future scholars to amend assimilation theory with theories of ‘segmented assimilation’ (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly & Haller, 2005). Gibson argued that Punjabi students did not wholly assimilate into American culture; however, they did accommodate to American school rituals without fully assimilating into American social mores. By doing so, Punjabi students increased their opportunities for academic success.

Race and Muslim Students

So yeah, it is really depressing in the future, I mean because, you know; all this is going to do is breed more hatred in American society because basically the average American did not know too much about what Islam was pre-9/11 and post-9/11; all they are seeing is a war against Muslims because they are attacking Muslim countries and they are fighting against Muslims and that is all they are seeing. So what the average American if he is going to learn about Islam going to learn a really negative image. And that is really troubling for our futures in this country; it is really troubling. --Young Muslim American on isolation from the American mainstream. Sirin & Fine, 2008 (p. 182) (italics in original)

Sarroub’s (2005) ethnography examined Yemeni American girls’ attempts to construct identities as Muslims, Arabs, Americans, daughters of immigrants and teenage high school students focusing on the differing roles required by religion and schooling and how intra-Arab identities were forged in an American high school. The book is not about
‘race’ per se, but straddles religion, ethnic identity, gender, language, social economic standing, and in particular, how the girls’ traditional religious cultures confront American school socialization norms. Moreover, with a focus on the variations of Arab-American identities in a school in Southeast Michigan, Sarroub establishes the many ways Arab cultures from different national and religious contexts were mediated by gender, nationality, clothing, custom, religious and cultural tradition. Like many other works on the context of education and immigration, race and interethnic understandings are secondary or tertiary concerns to cultural and nationalistic understandings of religion and the gendered self.

Adding greatly to the literature on Muslim American Youth, through a wide variety of methods, Sirin and Fine (2008) explored the many distinct hyphenated identities of Muslim American youth, exposing their diversity of origin (Asia, Africa, and Europe) as well as differences in education, gender and class. Analyzing this groups’ understandings of their identities in the period of time during and after the 9/11 attacks, the authors acknowledged that the concept of ‘Muslim-American’ in the early 21st Century was both socially constructed and historically bound. Identity emerged directly as an outcome of the attacks over a decade ago. Sirin and Fine add to the social psychology literature on youth identity development by focusing on this under-researched population of Muslim-Americans (p. 19); school was the major socialization context for youth to learn about self and other and self in relation to the other. Using a complex mixed-methods design and innovative identity maps, the authors hoped to “forecast the psychological, social and health consequences and the innovative forms of resilience and resistance that young people generate in the face of moral exclusion (Opotow 1990) embedded in government policy, media representations, and social relations among intimates and strangers” (p.19) (italics in
The political and social ramifications of Sirin and Fine’s research project are extensive and eye-opening. How Muslim-American youth participate in “relations at the hyphen, and how they experience, negotiate and perform in relation to others” (p. 157) provides a lens for my own work. Methodologically, Sirin and Fine’s research meant moving away from individual surveys, interviews and identity maps toward considering “collective discourses deployed in single-sex focus groups in which self, other, and the relations between them come to life” (Benjamin, 1998; Cushman, 1995, Guidano, 1987, p. 157), discovering the conditions under which contact “with others” provokes a silencing of self, and which conditions allow one to embrace, cross borders and engage. First using content analysis, they coded for invited or imposed contact (p. 160), and then tracing their emotional responses to contact, the authors employed “a discursive analysis of how young Muslim American women and men, in sex-segregated focus groups, created together a gendered, collective narrative of contact with the other, people they consider, ‘American’” (p. 160). Examining the micro political discourses of human relations, shared histories remain dormant unless provoked by experience. Fine and Sirin wrote that at sites of contact, “collective memories spill over,” echoing the standpoint of fear or desire, eroticized or exoticized (Frosh, 1999, as quoted in Sirin & Fine, p. 161).

Sirin and Fine also found that Muslim American females were often eager to educate others and find common ground, as non-Muslims were often “ignorant, lacking, without understanding” (p. 162); and the Muslim American females “were committed to working through these social relationships with others and with peers” (p. 162) and “relentlessly committed to educating others—even taking this on as a cultural and gendered
responsibility, perhaps a burden—these young women launched personal campaigns to correct social stereotypes” (p. 163). The dominant discourse revolved around the Muslim American women’s duty to educate others about Islam. Yet, Sirin and Fine allow micro political aggressions to be exposed. Focus group members discussed experiences when family members, classmates or friends made racist comments about African Americans, and were unsure whether people were being ‘deliberately mean’ or just ‘ignorant’ (pp. 164-165). Focus group members collectively agreed to remediate “Americans,” but then pointed inward to center critique on themselves or on the Muslim community. This then developed into ‘ambivalence’ around understanding the motivations of others and evolved into more ambivalence for speaking up about racist situations, especially if it involved their friends or families. The discussion continued by acknowledging that drawing attention to oneself by talking about racist experiences could be counter-productive by inducing a ‘pity party’. While females were empathetic to the pain resulting from prejudiced comments, it was tempered by either gendered social expectations or self-preservation: sticking one’s neck out in certain situations seemingly does not honor the family or honor the self even if one walks the moral high ground. Sirin and Fine found that this was when the conversation became tense. When discussion turned to the subject of airports, all focus group members experienced moral exclusion. After a lengthy discussion, members began to use the term “we” to include Black and Latino people, indicating their solidarity with other people of color (p. 168). In speaking about their experience of ‘racism’ the women criticized their family life because others in their family often spoke about racialized others. They also criticized ‘desi’ (south Indian) society as being often implicitly racist and favoring whiter, lighter skin, especially when discussing marriage. Sirin and Fine comment:
What is so interesting is that these young women, at least in this conversation, are very critical of white racism and yet are willing to educate white Americans. […] Because they are frustrated and angry when they can’t create change, it is intriguing to notice that after they criticize white racism and confirm their solidarity with communities of color, the conversation shifts to expressed racism within the Muslim community. They ally with people of color, and, over time in the group, were willing to critique their own families for color-based racism (p. 170).

Young Muslim American women were willing to approach issues of prejudice and racism, but mostly among their peers and in their own families. They expressed their desire to educate family members and peers. Perhaps one way Muslim women could gain strength in family and social contexts is as moral arbiters of ethics and generational knowledge.

The knowledge the young Muslim American men brought into interethnic relations was generally not limited to situations of negotiation: when men described contact situations where they confronted men, they often spoke about White men who had authority and power over them. In identity maps and interviews, Muslim American men spoke about feeling stuck between “two national circles,” not fitting in with the nationalist discourses of their families’ home country and feeling “alienated from the most contentious aspects of the U.S. government, the media and popular culture” (p. 170). Employing Bourdieu’s (1991) concept of symbolic violence, Sirin and Fine see contact as “contentious, politically dangerous, offensive, engulfing, or annihilating” (p. 171). Much of the literature on young men suggests that young men perform selves with hypermasculinity and bravado, yet here Sirin and Fine discover practically an admission of politically induced retreat, that reconciles a global calculus that requires that Muslim males embody conflicting politics and
learn to live lives in frequent tension. The young Muslim men were reluctantly resigned to becoming the Americans their parents wished for, and they learned to be apologists for all Muslim activities.

On the whole, young Muslim American men reinforced the need for self-silence and were adamantly reluctant to ‘bring up’ politics and religion with outsiders for fear of seeming to challenge colleagues and friends. Those who did not censor themselves were very careful about their language and selective about their audience. Young Muslim American men expressed great caution over surveillance in most every aspect of their lives. Given these political realities, young men experienced a silencing of voice and shrinking of goals, reiterating the tension between speaking out and punishment. As a result, most young Muslim American men presented future outlooks filled with external or self-imposed limitations and ambiguity.

Muslim women and men negotiated family and cultural resources and strengths, explored identity, especially in the aftermath of 9/11, and centered the function of race and racism through experiences in airports, schools, and especially when confronting the rhetoric of popular culture. While women were eager to educate peers and family members, men generally retreated from inherent positions of weakness rather than engage. Interethnic dialogue and inter-racial exchanges were not data gathered in this study, nevertheless how young women and men saw their interactions with racialized others was explored as sites of personal growth to the identity development of Muslim youth in their homes and in the public sphere.

**Race and Caribbean/African Students**

You see I am not an American, and I do not see myself as having been deprived by the [W]hites of America. To the contrary I came
Understanding race in America is central to Waters’ book: *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities* (1999). Waters studies the complexities of class and race with immigrants from countries of the English-Speaking Caribbean (The West Indies). She highlights the continued shocks first and second generation West Indian people experience with school and workplace racialization in the US. If there is any limitation, and this is a very minor criticism, it is that Waters’ research in schools is surprisingly narrow especially when compared to the in-depth ethnographic work she conducted in a food service workplace that hires many West Indians (Waters, 1999, p. 94-139). Waters’ original focus was on the self-definitions and identifications of first generation Caribbean immigrants and highlights workplace concerns (p. 9). Her research on schools more directly focused on 1.5 and second generation students and appeared to be a secondary concern. The logistical issues of conducting in-school research that she explicates in the Appendix (pp. 350-351) clearly limited her observations and interviews in schools, and less attention was paid to school personnel opinions to contextualize American racialization. With less of a focus on school data, Waters’ research on younger second-generation respondents revolves primarily around issues of identity (Waters, 1999, pp. 285-325).

Waters delineates the sociological and segregated contexts of the schools and neighborhoods and exposes the problems and pathologies of public schools in poor neighborhoods by focusing on institutionalized segregation and the issue of violence in
schools in racial ethnic enclaves in Central Brooklyn. She highlights her participants’ aspirations to live in better neighborhoods and attend better schools, and in so doing, she analyzes the persistent effects of segregation that lead many West Indian immigrant students to endure schools that are chaotic and deteriorating. Waters discusses the ‘downward spiral’ associated with schools that the NYC Department of Education defined as “racially isolated” but which Waters rightfully called ‘segregated’ — schools that are all-Black in communities like Bedford-Stuyvesant and others that were the result of mid-century ‘White flight’, rapid segregation, that slowly resulted in the loss of even the Black middle-class by the 1970’s, the loss of breadwinners who had previously diversified the socioeconomics of a community.

While Waters’ treatment of students in schools is brief — a mere twenty pages (pp. 267-284) — the complex experiences of teachers and students in two of these ‘racially-isolated’ schools are highlighted. Waters’ discussion of the data from the two high schools draws upon general demographic information about college-going rates and incomplete dropout rates (mid-1990’s). For instance, only 30% of students from the two schools go on to study at a four-year college. Her ethnographic data explored the intricate and complex attitudes regarding school violence, weapons possessions in schools, and disciplinary issues with students transferring from school to school. Waters situates school problems within the larger public structural forces of institutionalized racism of mid-20th century that caused White flight.

Waters also discusses the assumptions of parents from the Caribbean who initially believe that teachers in the U.S. will do all they can to educate and protect their children. She finds that immigrant parents’ trust of teachers and schools is often misplaced. Waters
finds that violence and chaos in schools produce teachers who often prefer the status quo to preserve personal safety and extend only minimal effort to intervene on behalf of students to reduce violence. When Waters introduces the Bourdieuan concept of “cultural capital”, she does not explicate it much, but uses it as a springboard to contrast class differences between and among Caribbean and African-American parents and families. She also uses this concept to contrast earlier waves of West Indian immigrants through the 1960’s and 1970’s who held occupational visas in nursing, whereas beginning in the 1980’s more poor and working-class Caribbean immigrants entered the United States.

Even sympathetic teachers in the schools tied the downward spiral in the schools not to the immigrants per se, but to the increasingly racially isolated schools, exposing that the New York City Department of Education had a “conscious policy” (p. 271) of preserving White and integrated schools by opening new schools in all-White neighborhoods, thereby changing the neighborhood boundaries from where Black schools drew their students to poorer and less economically and racially mixed districts. Waters elucidates that the ‘downward spiral’ fed on itself, white-flight resulted in capital flight and all-Black schools developed reputations as unsatisfying places to teach due to increased remediation and academic need, and emerged as places of fear and violence in the White imagination. Waters’ discussion on segregated schools highlights the types of teachers who end up in hypersegregated schools: new teachers who may not yet have developed into good teachers, and who are likely to be in the profession for only a few years; and “older, burned-out teachers who are marking their time until retirement” (p. 273).

Waters emphasizes the differences between schools in the West Indies and in the US, highlighting how immigrant students encounter both the best and worst of the U.S.
school system — free-flowing, democratic spaces that encourage fun in some classrooms, contrasted with the increased presence of weapons and resultant fear, racial segregation, community poverty and under-resourced schools. Waters concludes that many of the problems lie not in the immigrants themselves, but with the urban areas where many poor immigrants found themselves. Waters’ work explored ethnic identities and focused on race and racism. Water’s work on schools primarily highlighted community resources and strengths; family resources and strengths highlighted West Indians’ unique colonial pasts and different countries’ racial histories and trajectories. The preservation of attitudes and accents were passed down from the first generation to later generations to disarm white bosses and co-workers and remind them of their shared pasts as immigrants.

As the literature above shows, race has been treated differentially in examining immigrant groups from different ethnic racial backgrounds. However, what is evident in this review of the literature is the general lack of attention paid to inter-racial relations among different racial groups. This is precisely the contribution that my dissertation work will make, for the focus of my question includes not only how immigrant youth understand race but also how they experience and understand interethnic relations? I will now turn to the question of how racialization has been reported in the education stories of Latino immigrant students

**Race in the Education of Latino Students**

This discussion will center on two separate bodies of Latino immigrant education literature — research that does not focus on ‘race’ per se, but sees race through the prism of ethnicity and assimilation; and literature on Latino immigrants and education that explicitly highlights the topic of race, highlighting how race and issues such as gender intersect. I will
end with a discussion of how race is used in research on Mexicans in New York, especially by Smith (2002, 2005).

**Latino immigrant education: Ethnicity and assimilation.** Immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean differ from immigrants from other parts of the world in two important ways. For one, these immigrants all reside in the same hemisphere as the United States. One outgrowth of the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 is that immigration in Western Hemispheric contexts differs from immigration to the U.S. from all other global regions. In arguably the greatest break between 19th and 20th Century immigration, the Immigration Act of 1924 restricted immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe, and Africa and Asia, intentionally omitting restrictions on immigration from all countries in the Western Hemisphere. This immigration law remained intact through much of the 20th Century until major changes occurred with the Immigration Act of 1965. Moreover, immigration from Mexico, a country that borders the U.S. is unique in that the Mexican American War of 1848, in an effort to condone slavery in the South, officially sanctioned that Mexican citizens, who lived in the area seceded by Mexico to the US, were officially deemed ‘White’ by law, regardless of the fact that in practice Mexicans were not treated as equals to Whites (Gómez, 2007). In education, as in society, Latino and Mexican contexts for assimilation and acculturation differed widely from other immigrant contexts primarily from Europe, those historically understood to be ‘immigrants’ in U.S. society.

Valdés (1996) prefaced her work by setting down historical arguments for the school failure of Mexican children (i.e. genetic, cultural, class arguments) but focused primarily on what family interventions were available for parents in schools to help their children. Valdés found that school interventions often did not show respect for deeply ingrained family
resources and devalued the social and linguistic contributions of families. She theorized that school-based interventions that consider families a priori value-neutral do in fact devalue families, and these policies hold long-term negative consequences for children. Valdés explained how *consejos* (advice) and *respeto* (respect) showed that Mexican families brought ethically clear standards of what constituted academic and social success. Her work argues for the pressing need to respect family culture in the educational contexts of Mexican immigrants.

Valdés’ ethnographic portrait examined ten families in border towns along the U.S. Mexican border, and consequently employing border and borderland theories deriving from Chicano/Chicana Studies in lieu of purely race theories. The Black-White binary of the American racial hierarchy was not the predominating dividing line. Here the interwoven, intergenerational families with members on both sides of the border employed theories that bespoke a larger political divide than either language or racial distinctions alone. *Borderlands theory* (Anzaldúa, 1987) established that the border is at the heart of this discourse (language, modes of knowing and living of people who live between two worlds) (Elenes, 1997). By employing borderland frameworks, Valdés gives emphasis to a state of ‘being’ beyond the binary, specifically for my purposes challenging the ‘binary thinking’ of American racial thought beyond the Black-White divide. While Valdés does not engage the theoretical framework of the borderlands directly, she does explain that political boundaries alone are inadequate to explain the lived realities of these connected families.

Valdés adopts a ‘*mestiza*’ consciousness to explore alternative ways of knowing and seeing the world, *la facultad* to see things beyond their surface (Elenes & Delgado-Bernal, 2010), and in particular to see the borderlands as its own special educational space and
place. While this does not address the issue of race directly, Valdés critiques the Black-White binary historically at the heart of American understandings of race, and stresses the importance of cultural and family contexts in Latino immigrant education.

In *Subtractive Schooling* (1999) Valenzuela argues that “schools subtract resources from youth in two major ways: firstly, by dismissing their definition of *education* and secondly through assimilationist policies and practices that minimize their culture and language” (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 330) [emphasis mine]. Race and racial differences here are employed only as backdrops to frame this argument, first in her discussion of teachers in her school site who employ additive or subtractive schooling, both White and African-American. Valenzuela discusses the terms *educación* and *mal-educado* that represent the cultural understandings of being educated in the Mexican sense, that of acting in a caring, respectful and well-mannered way. This is contrasted with American notions of ‘educated’, American teachers holding a college degree [and thus ‘educated] who do not always share this ethos.

Racial and ethnic differences and students’ attitudes toward these differences are numerous in peer-to-peer discussions and student-teacher exchanges. Examining ‘the Rappers’ social group of U.S. born youth, one student, Norma, spoke of her parents thinking her boyfriend Chach as being too “*agringado,*” which Valenzuela translates as “too White,” and later Chach’s musical taste for rap music adds to his identity confusion, and Norma remarks: “It’s like he doesn’t know who he is, like he wants to be Black” (p.145). Like other discussions of youth and youth culture (Lee, 2005, p. 91), musical tastes and clothing are proxies for a ghetto culture that revels in poor African-American culture, Norma goes out of her way to both explain that her boyfriend does not understand why she is not ‘angry’: “It’s
like he’s angry and the music’s angry. He can’t understand why I’m not angry. [...] [y]ou know, with Whites and the system getting you down. It’s a Black thing. What I think is if he’s more Mexican or Tejano there’s more to live for” (p. 145). Valenzuela here calls attention to the gendered details of how Norma ‘coaches’ her boyfriend, both toward a positive connection to school and a desire for him to embrace his Latinidad. Norma wished to diminish any lingering feelings of racial resentment Chach may hold. Identities of resistance here are not framed as a Latino or Mexican student concern, but for Norma, resistant behaviors are ‘Black’.

Valenzuela also makes reference to a mixed-race couple, Melissa, who is a US-born Mexican, and Scott, a Black male friend, in the context of affirming Valenzuela’s earlier point that women were coaches or helpmates to men. Valenzuela’s data highlights the central role played by gender to engage social capital. While race was mentioned, it is not directly engaged with or analyzed, though referents to phenotype and skin color are made. Some immigrant students are said to have a clean-cut “northern Mexican look” (p. 118). Valenzuela does not explicate this, but I took this to mean persons from the Regio-Montana, or regiomontanos, the mountainous region of the north, who are stereotyped as taller, lighter-skinned, even more industrious and thrifty (Williams, 1990), as opposed to the people from the central and southern Mexico (Oaxaca, Puebla) who make up the predominant number of immigrants in New York City. Valenzuela’s analysis here shows that girls’ resistance to gender-role expectations was directed toward their parents and not their peers (p. 148). Gender roles and their ways of supporting the cohesive values of family objectives are the predominant way Valenzuela showed that nurturance and caring are family values that transferred culturally through predominantly female teachers and females
in families. Male teachers could be ‘caring,’ yet in Valenzuela’s work these teachers seemed more frequently the exception rather than the rule.

Valenzuela also uses the students’ ethnicity, their *Mexicanidad*, as a proxy for the deep cultural division between the students and the majoritarian culture of the school. While this discussion is not directly about ‘race,’ per se it is about a racialized ethnicity and it reinforces distinctions of difference with inter-group and intra-group distinctions.

Valenzuela engages McCarthy’s (1993) theoretical framework of the “politics of difference” to explore how individual differences are “routinely masked by such inclusive terms as ‘Hispanic,’ ‘Latino,’ or even ‘involuntary minority’ (Ogbu’s [1991, 1994] term) (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 161).” This framework is helpful for my work on understanding race in the immigrant and education literature. McCarthy argued that the study of minority groups in educational settings demands great attention to the “multivocal, multiaccented nature of minority/majority relations in education and society” (McCarthy, 1993, 337, as quoted in Valenzuela, 1999, p. 161). Examining educational trajectories of subordinate groups in education requires that researchers investigate intragroup as well as intergroup differences to understand immigrant and minority needs, interests, and desires, for they do not share a similar consciousness. Valenzuela suggests that knowledge of immigrant subjectivity must “reframe[e] racial and ethnic differences” (p. 162) to reach beyond stock descriptions and stereotypes that are manipulated by teachers and students to navigate institutional life. Valenzuela concludes that these differences are “dynamically linked to a larger historic process of subtractive assimilation, more commonly known as Americanization” (Hernández-Chávez, 1988; Bartolomé, 1994, as quoted in Valenzuela, 1991, p. 162), and that to study school lives of Mexican youth incorporates a much larger
backdrop. McCarthy, and in turn, Valenzuela, acknowledge that to investigate the school
lives of Mexican youth, researchers must readjust framings of the concepts of difference
(here the concepts of race, ethnicity and gender) to understand the complexity and unique
educational outlooks that individual children in particular and distinct classrooms and
schools will hold.

Valenzuela also reflects on the unique perspectives of a first generation immigrant
and a second generation student recounting a scene that negotiated the touchy relationship
of language to identity that mirrored Lee (2005) earlier. Aarón, the first generation
immigrant stated that his friend Michael, a second generation student, was not ‘Mexican’
because he did not speak Spanish fluently enough. Michael took umbrage at his remarks and
fellow classmates, then recalled other stories of how cousins, grandparents and family
members, challenged their identity as ‘Mexicans’ and how disappointing this was, since
within the US, their Mexicanness is their primary ethnic identity. First generation
immigrants like Aarón saw being Mexican as more a function of language maintenance of
the Spanish language tied to clear bonds to their previous nation-state, while many of the
second generation classmates saw being ‘Mexican’ in a less linguistically exclusive way, as
being racialized by the predominant culture. Mexican immigrant students learned to identify
themselves in relation to the ubiquity of the dominant culture. Second and one-and-a half
generation Mexican youth were upset when dismissed by friends and relatives as
“gringa” (White), “agringada” (Whitened), “pocho” (half-breed/corrupted Mexican), or
“Americanizada” (Americanized) (p. 169). In a strict nationalist framework employed by
first generation immigrants, there is no room for these subtly distinct variegated identities.
Valenzuela then connects this struggle for an identity (here ethnicity is more or less framed
as a distinct racialized other) with her major premise, that while American schooling can sometimes impart the skills of our techno-efficient world, American schooling also subtracts valuable linguistic, cultural and familial resources for Latino students. While symbolic capital can gain some credence for Mexican students, for example Mexican food and at times Mexican arts, familial and linguistic contexts for minority learning hold little sway within the current predominant technocratic framework of educational accountability.

Racialization processes, intra-ethnic and interethnic discussions, do surface in Valenzuela’s discussions on the divisions between and among Hispanic youth. Immigrant female youth encounter problems not primarily with White students, but with Chicano students, involuntary minorities per Ogbu (1991). Immigrant male youth identify with manual labor and working class people and not cultures of schooling in the United States. Also Mexican immigrants’ connection to the indigenous cultures of Mexico and to the rich traditions of Indian heritage in the U.S. is barely celebrated in Mexico at all with, Mexican Indians occupying the lowest rung of the Mexican racial hierarchy. Indian heritage then is often minimized, sometimes treated as something of which to be ashamed. The Kicker group, a Texan term used for folks who wear cowboy boots and ‘kick around’ identified not as Chicano or Mexican-American but as Texan or Tejano and saw Mexican immigrants and Chicano youth as interlopers and unwelcome in their land (pp. 216-220). Discussion of African American students is limited to a small mixed-race student group that includes both immigrant and Black students. This group was notable for its lack of involvement in school activities, and additionally this group did not speak Spanish with one another. Valenzuela reasoned that for this group, impoverished class status was all-encompassing: students in this group addressed Valenzuela with the term ‘ma’am,’ while most all other groups use the
more customary ‘miss’. She reflected that this stance was an automatic deference that helped build their identities as service workers. These students shared a strong orientation toward “collectivism,” a result of living in the same neighborhoods, attending the same schools, and having internalized the working class curriculum that school and society wanted them to learn (Anyon, 1980).

Valenzuela’s work does not directly address the issue of race in school. But by exploring students’ ethnic identities through many variations, as well as the students’ own use of the term *raza* or ‘race’, Valenzuela does acknowledge the variety of ways students grapple with their own identities and confront and embrace a Mexican past of a mestizo culture, one that comes to grips with a mixed-racial heritage, predominantly Indian and Spanish. Valenzuela focuses on how American schools do not build on family resources and strengths but typically remove/subtract family resources and strengths. By exploring intra-group variations in ethnic identities, Valenzuela argues that traditional schooling for Hispanic minority kids (in Hispanic majority schools) fails its students through policies that are sometimes well-intentioned, but often racist.

**Latino immigrant education: Race and gender.** The last decade or so has seen increased interest in the role that race and processes of racialization have played in immigrant education, particularly for Latinos (Aguirre & Bonilla-Silva, 2002; Bonilla-Silva, 2004; Cammarota, 2004; Carter, 2003, 2005; Cornell & Hartmann, 1998; Gómez, 2000; Lewis, 2003; O’Connor, Lewis & Mueller, 2007; Smith, 2002). In this next section I will examine the work of two Latino researchers, López (2003) and Fergus (2004), who explicitly engage race to study Latinos and education.

Understanding School and Interethnic Relations

generation all too often employs the assimilation paradigm in non-racial contexts, while the
very networks (read: ethnic and non-ethnic) and resources (read: education and jobs) that are
open to second generation youth were structured primarily along racial and gender lines:
“Reducing race and gender to elements of the assimilation process is problematic because it
deflects attention from ‘the ubiquity of racial [and gender] meanings and dynamics’ in
everyday life experiences as well as institutional practices” (p. 164). López draws upon
concepts from racial formation theory, i.e. racial projects that occur at both the macro-level
of institutions and the micro-level of lived experiences, and critical race feminist theory,
where race and gender are overlapping experiences and where experiential differences seek
to derive meaning and theory. To address this amalgamation combining lived experience
and theory López developed the Race-Gender Experience Framework (RGEF) where race
and gender expressions are socially constructed and intertwined. The RGEF employs two
central concepts toward understanding experiential differences with race and gender
processes, namely, race-gender experiences and race-gender outlooks. Race-gender
experiences are the past social interactions in a given social sphere, public spaces, schools,
work, and the home, where men and women undergo racial and gender processes. These
experiences and embodied memories with processes of race(ing) and gender(ing) frame how
future experiences are understood, including how men and women view the role of
education in their lives: “Because of their disparate experience with race and gender
processes, young men and women from the same ethnic and class backgrounds come to
view the role of education in their lives in vastly different ways” (López, 2002, p. 6). These
different experiences are not due to essential or innate differences between men and women,
or biological or cultural differences between races, but rather to social interactions and
structural relationships. López argues that Latinos, are not innately ‘White or Black’ but
rather are racialized as ‘White’ or ‘Black’: they are contextually involved in historically
variable social relationships that are continually being created and limited by macro and
micro level experiences. Thus, due to differences in experiences, both qualitative and
summative, the race-gender experience framework navigates and negotiates widely varying
race-gender outlooks.

López first conducted focus groups with Caribbean respondents, following up with
observation and participation and interviews of sixty-six men and women from the
Dominican Republic, West Indies and Haiti, ages 18-30. López found that second
generation Caribbean males encountered more violent or aggressive treatment at the hand of
school authorities, and that Caribbean women encountered much more subtle negative
treatment. She found that males, even those never getting into trouble, were in a constant
process of negotiating institutional expulsion, while women alternated between processes of
institutional engagement and oppression due to their gender and racialization. López states:

The strength of the race-gender experience framework is that it examines how youth
and young adults were assigned racial meanings that were gendered, and how these
definitions became “naturalized” and institutionalized throughout society such that
they produced qualitatively distinct life experiences for second generation Caribbean
men and women. Race-gender experiences, not ethnic identity, are the keys to
unraveling the schooling trajectories of youth. (p. 165)

Lopez’s research with Caribbean immigrants highlights some of the complexity and
confusion in trying to research race with students who are not only ethnically different but
from mixed racial backgrounds: “the terms “Latino” and “Black” used in survey research,
obfuscate concrete differences in the lived experiences of people with different phenotypes, genders, sexual orientation, etc.” (p. 10). López remarked that all her interviewees were of varying ‘dark-skinned’ complexions and that according to the U.S. one-drop rule all participants could have been racially categorized as ‘Black’. While some of the participants stated that they were sometimes mistaken for African-American, none stated that they were ever mistaken for Whites, though a few of the lighter-skinned participants were thought to be Puerto Rican (p. 10). In addition to López’s description of the raced and gendered hierarchies, i.e. that in the Black-White binary of the US, Whites comprise the top tier and anyone with one drop of African blood occupies the bottom tier, López reported that consensus around the terms Latino or Hispanic does not exist. While some state entities use Hispanic/Latino as racial categories for statistical purposes, the 2000 U.S. Census stated definitively that Hispanics/Latinos are not a racial group (p.18). Moreover, invoking Omi and Winant (1994), López restated that simply removing ‘race’ from our discourse will not make the fundamental relationships of power, subordination, and contestation disappear (p. 19). While new codes for “racial others” continue to be created including “inner-city” and “urban youth,” these terms “are impregnated with racialized social meaning that are widely understood to signify racially stigmatized groups” (p. 19). She argues for the totality of the critical feminist project where experience is the cornerstone of the definition and the acquisition of knowledge (invoking Hurtado, 1996): “[R]ace and gender are mutually constitutive and inseparable and they cannot be examined independently of one another” (p. 20).

López’s clearly articulated her position with regards to “race,” yet her book as a discussion of interethnic understandings is limited for seemingly paradoxical reasons. Urban
High School, the main educational site of López’s research was overwhelmingly minority – 90% Latino (mostly Dominican, then Puerto Rican, and Cuban with a sprinkling of Mexicans), 9% Black (mostly African American and second generation youth from Haiti, Anglophone West Indies, and parts of Africa). While 1% of the school was deemed to be White or Asian, López stated that not once did she see a White or Asian student in the school. As such, most documentation of inter-racial exchanges in her book occurred between school staff and students, predominantly classroom teachers and not between peers. On the one hand there were teachers like Ms. Mastri, a White teacher in her 20’s, who spoke Spanish and who spent a summer abroad in South America and had a context for understanding her Latino students’ lives. On the other hand, there were teachers like Mr. Green, whose well-intentioned efforts to stay on task only seemed to highlight the numerous ways his authoritative pedagogy prevented meaningful discussions of race and privilege.

While interethnic exchanges do occur between Latinos, West Indians and Haitians, López does not highlight these interethnic tensions or explore intra-Latino clashes. She points to the fact that discourse, in addition to being raced, was always simultaneously gendered. Dark-skinned boys were racialized and profiled by the very teachers and schools who were charged with guiding their futures. Girl students were, for the most part, supported in their efforts to preserve their femininity, and the social behavior regimes of school reinforced this; however, their class status, race and under-resourced urban schools tracked them into lives of institutional disengagement and marginalization. Thus, while López researched key subgroups of second generation students, and engaged race (and gender) as keys to her analysis, the primary focus of her work concerns the nexus of race and gender in second generation Caribbean youth from a critical racial and feminist
perspective, and not the importance of inter-racial or interethnic communication.

Fergus’s work, *Skin Color and Identity Formation: Perceptions of Opportunity and Academic Orientation among Mexican and Puerto Rican Youth* (2003) would likely be criticized by López (2004, p. 5) for employing the short-comings of the segmented assimilation theory, and by reducing important racialization processes to the static notion of “color.” Whereas, López’s work hoped to conceptually bridge a variety of literatures in education, sociology and anthropology because they seldom speak to one another regarding a range of theories (racial formation theory, critical race theory, sociology of education, segmented assimilation theory, critical race feminist theory, Black studies and Latino studies), Fergus framed his research predominantly from the perspective of the opportunity and achievement literature in education and questioned whether the ethnic and racial identification of minority students was a self-imposed categorization process, as the literature assumes.

Like López, Fergus, of Panamanian descent, used his book to critique theory, in his case Ogbu’s Cultural Ecological Model (CEM) (1978, 1987). In brief, Ogbu argues that students disengaged from school to the extent that they believed that members of their own racial group (compared to Whites) would not reap comparable economic and social rewards for their performance in school. Fergus argued that Ogbu’s model, employed by a good deal of the second generation segmented assimilation research, did not lend sufficient attention to the disparate ways members of an ethnic group would self-identify and the ways they are identified by others. Fergus posited that: “CEM’s construction of Latino/a immigrant groups is limited as the immigration research itself has not interrogated the within-group variations (e.g. skin color and language) that can also shift and/or alter the adaptation process of
Latino/a immigrants, regardless of generation” (p. xvii). Research into phenotype differences among ethnic minority groups, particularly African-Americans and Latino/as, has repeatedly found that individuals with lighter skin tones fare better than those with darker-skin tones and are often considered more attractive (Arce, Murguia & Frisbie, 1987; Gomez, 2000); darker skin tones are correlated with lower educational attainment and, in turn, have implications for social mobility (Murguia & Telles, 1996; Telles & Murguia, 1990).

Latino/a groups shift their ethnic identification to the U.S. racial categories based on how others situate them (Oboler, 1995; Rodríguez, 2000; Rodríguez-Cordero-Guzman, 1992), (from Fergus, 2004, p. xvii). By placing emphasis on the internal and external subjective nature of racial/ethnic identification, Fergus’s work examined some of the micro-level versus macro-level explanations in academic variability, by exploring the relevant impact of self-identification and external confluence of racial and ethnic identification. In doing so, he wished to explore how students negotiated their racial/ethnic identification alongside other’s perceptions of their skin color, and how these negotiations moderated perceptions of opportunity and influenced academic orientation.

In particular, Fergus explored several concepts to establish within-group variation of Latino/a students. Students’ understandings of their racial or ethnic heritage were keys to their identity, and he classified them into three separate categories: Hyphenated-identities used by many second generation youth to incorporate their U.S. native status with their ethnic identification (i.e. Mexican-American, Detroit-Rican [a la Nuyorican] etc.); Ancestral/National identification where second generation identification is strongly tied to first generation immigrant parents (i.e. Puerto Rican, Mexican, etc.); or Cultural identification (i.e. Boricua, Chicano, etc.). Puerto Rican students, he found, were inclined to
discuss their culture from their material artifacts (musical instruments, music), multi-racial ancestries, and patterns of social relations (loud parties, dancing). Mexican students defined their cultures by focusing on ancient indigenous histories, family involvement and the significance of religion and family.

Students not only constructed their ethnicities using self-defined understandings, but also negotiated external notions of their race and ethnicity. Here phenotype, or skin-color were typologized by Fergus into groups of “White-looking, Mexican/Hispanic looking or Black/Biracial looking” students. For the most-part, Mexican/Hispanic looking students and Black/Biracial students held parallel perceptions, as their identities were connected to their ethnic identifications, whereas White-looking students were much more likely to be categorized via their ethnic solidarity behavior. For example many of the White-looking students performed a Mexican or Puerto Rican identification (wearing t-shirts emblazed with ethnic pride, for instance) to fit in so they would not be mistaken for White. On the other hand, Puerto Rican students often had to contend with being misidentified as Mexican, particularly by African-American students and teachers, who preferred to use a collective term rather than investigate individual identities. The Black/Biracial students were all Puerto Rican in Fergus’ sample and oftentimes they donned a Black persona as they were in predominantly African-American schools. Students’ perceptions of life chances or academic orientation brought forth findings that mirrored those of López (2002) in that student outlooks were gendered, as well as effected by race.

Even though Fergus (2004) used the typology of variation in skin color without the reflexive criticality of López (2002), his focus on students’ academic variability combined with their understandings of their own identities, and their perceptions of how others
identified them as racial others, brought conclusions that are similar to López’s in that the majority of his findings of life chances and academic orientations are not only racialized but gendered as well. Female students “regardless of phenotype always negotiate from the standpoint of gender” (p. 102), whereas boys are often not cognizant of this. Mexican/Hispanic-looking and Black/Biracial looking girls emphasized the importance of “maintaining a positive self-outlook” (p. 102) along with a focus on individual effort to combat barriers posed by race/ethnicity and gender. Boys emphasized the importance of “desire” and strength of “effort” to achieve and succeed, and White-looking boys did not discuss race or ethnicity as defining social outcomes at all. Fergus found that phenotype is a mitigating factor in realizing social and educational outcomes, but acknowledges that gender is also a strong mitigating factor.

Though gender is not in the title of Fergus’ book, it is interesting that two Latino researchers on race in Latino immigrant education each of whom approach their research from very different perspectives and theoretical frameworks, independently have comparable findings pointing to the centrality of gender in working on the problems of Latino and Caribbean second generation students. López (2002) referred to the ‘Race-Gender Experiences’ that influenced her students’ ‘Race-Gender Outlooks’, while Fergus (2004) found that students’ racial/ethnic self-identification and external identifiers (skin-color as well as gender) influenced their perceptions of life chances and academic orientations. It is interesting to note that variation between and within Latino/ethnic groups that for Fergus appears first as a phenotypical phenomenon, is ultimately mediated by gender as well. That educational research by Latinos who wish to research and discuss race, 

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5 See Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio in Campaign 2016.
finds expression in gender as well is not coincidental, but adds concretely to layers of complexity in studying race in the education of immigrants. I will now turn specifically to how race and gender are viewed in the education of Mexican students in New York.

**Race and gender in the education of Mexican students in New York City.**

Researchers specifically working in the Mexican community in New York in the last ten years or so have looked to explain specific aspects of the Mexican experience in the city. The educational psychologist Jocelyn Solis (2001, 2003, 2004) looked toward understanding how immigration status affected the identities of recent migrants to New York City by placing increased symbolic significance on the often ‘violent’ and constructed notion of ‘illegal’ identity and how it played out with communities, parents and children in schools. Robert Smith, the sociologist, researched the specifics of how transnational identities are created, sustained and supported by migrants through a transnational ethnography of one town in the Mixteca region of Mexico and how this region as an exporter of labor to New York City may be well on its way to being replaced by other less cohesive communities (Smith, 2005). Researchers at the University of the Americas in Puebla are examining how indigenous family structures are supportive of native and non-native language development both in Puebla and in New York City (Murillo, 2005).

As I am interested in how Mexican immigrants learn to understand race in U.S. contexts and I am working in metropolitan New York, I would be remiss not to give a racial and inter-racial analysis of the major work of Robert C. Smith. A sociologist who has written extensively on Mexican immigrants in New York, Smith’s *Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants* (2006) is an ethnographic study of the residents of Tícuani, a rural village in Puebla, who experience both circular migration and transnational
living as they move back and forth between Puebla and New York City.

In discussing first generation immigrants, Smith echoes previously mentioned authors by emphasizing how men and women negotiate gender in their homeland and in their receiving societies differently (Fergus, 2004; Lee, 2005; Lopez, 2003). In the context of New York, where Mexican immigrants often leave New York City to return to their small community in Mexico for weeks on end, Smith confronts the contrasts between ‘Ranchero’ masculinity and ‘Ranchera’ femininity. Some men bring more traditional masculinities and expect “marriages of respect” (requiring female deference to male authority), while other men learn to adopt more egalitarian “companionate marriages” (Mummert, 1993, 1994, 1999 & Hirsch 2003, as quoted in Smith, 2006, p. 95). Smith defines ranchero masculinity as one of hegemonic configuration of gender practices that legitimize men’s dominant and women’s subordinate position. This type of Mexican masculinity roughly translates into American understandings of the concept of machismo, especially as employed in rural contexts. In contrast, ranchera women do not express ‘‘inappropriate sentiments’ or any lack of respect for men, displayed through anger or disagreement” (Besserer, 2000, as quoted in Smith, 2006, p. 97). Women who do so show a lack of vergüenza (shame), an emotion that Smith determined to be a primary ranchera virtue. He argues that in ranchera femininity, vergüenza is not embarrassment or situational, but a quality women possess, “[it] is in particular the inability to respond (or at least the willingness not to respond) to male anger, the male gaze, or other exercises of male power” (p. 97); “[t]o exhibit sentiments such as anger toward men is to behave shamefully because one has challenged male authority; a woman of appropriate shame would not be able to respond” (p. 98). Smith adds that ranchero masculinity and ranchera femininity confront dominant images of a
“crisis of masculinity” and “liberating femininity” frequently used in migrant research. These men imagined they would return to Mexico, while women seemed to prefer to stay as they gained relative authority. Smith acknowledges that while he sees gender as dynamic, he remains well short of queer theorists like Judith Butler, who argue that identities are performative and frequently in flux. In Ticuani, Smith’s research site, he found little public acknowledgement of homosexuality.

Smith’s discussions regarding race generally concern second-generation immigrants and their performance of identity in both the U.S. and Mexico. Ticuani immigrants often went to great lengths to prove how Mexican or Ticuani they were in an effort to fit in with recent arrivals who insinuated a more authentic ethnicity (See Valenzuela’s first generation immigrants similar). Due to their connection to Mexican culture that combines ancient and European civilizations, the Ticuani immigrants in his study did not perceive themselves at the bottom of New York’s economic, social and racial hierarchies, for they appraised Puerto Ricans and Blacks, more racially mixed Latinos, as holders of less trumpeted backgrounds.

Smith refers to media portrayals of Mexicans as powerless and victimized in the 1980’s and 1990’s in New York. Interviewees spoke of how widespread the use of “Mexico” as a generic insult was. And yet, this made it easier for them to be “different from and superior to Black Americans” (Omi & Winant, 1986; Roediger, 1991; Feagin and Sikes, 1994, as referenced in Smith, p. 165).

Smith found that the dynamics of racialization was most apparent in the formation of two youth groups — the Ticuani Youth Group and the Organization to Defend the Race (Organización de la Defensa de la Raza, or ODR). In particular, ODR was “founded in 1985 to ‘defend the Hispanic Race’ against Blacks and Puerto Ricans. Puerto Rican and
Black minors in gangs often assaulted Mexicans walking alone or in small groups [...] and the police never prosecuted them” (p. 165). Additionally, ODR’s definition of Raza Hispana included Mexicans, Central Americans, South Americans, and Puerto Ricans born on the island, but excluded Blacks and Puerto Ricans born in the United States. As Smith says: “ODR’s view clearly distinguishes good ethnic Mexican immigrants and bad racial minorities” (p. 166). In ODR’s view, “Mexicans work hard without either English or a visa; they don’t take drugs or commit crimes; and Mexican women do not go out alone and get pregnant (or, if they do, at least the men marry them) (p. 166)”. Yet, Smith also pointed out that the emergence of Organización de la de Defensa de la Raza was different than others in that in this case, Mexican group members were fighting other Mexicans and not ethnic outsiders. As one community leader explained in astonishment: “If they are going to fight anyone, they should fight the Puerto Ricans and Blacks who have been abusing us all these years!” (p. 166).

The Ticuani Youth Group was also a response “to threats posed by New York to their Mexicanness and to their well-being, and to the negative perceptions that they felt motivated their attackers—the [widely-held] belief that Mexicans were powerless” (p. 167). Beyond crime, drugs and teen pregnancy, and “disobedience to parents”, the Ticuani Youth Group tried to “inoculate” immigrant Mexican adolescents against the threat of cultural or physical exposure to Blacks and Puerto Ricans, by “expressing a belief in ethnically segmented assimilation” (p.167). This ethnically segmented assimilation was in their minds, a superior demarcation. In addition, city life too was gendered, with males more often targets of violence, and females, due to fear of violence in poor neighborhoods, girls then become what Carola Suárez-Orozco calls las encerradas (the shut-ins) (p. 171).
Religion also bridged the transnational second-generation through the ritual of *promesa*, a promise to perform physical acts of gratitude or devotion to *Padre Jesús* or *La Virgen* for intervention on a particular issue. Females grew their hair longer for favors from *Padre Jesús*, and men ran races and carried heavy statues in processions. Smith developed a “theory of social proprioception” to extend the work of Oliver Sacks; that is, how one corporeally and emotionally experiences the self in relation to other people and in particular places, and to engage Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s insight that we need to see how others see us, to experience awareness of our own bodies and selves (p. 179). Smith found that in religious ritual, especially one that bridged transnational space, embodied practices brought one back to a firmer identity by revisiting in time and space, a place of origin.

One significant outgrowth of second-generation identity by Mexicans in New York in the 1990’s and 2000’s was the transnationalization of Mexican gangs. Smith posited that this was partly due to changes in immigrant legalization that resulted in larger numbers of teens brought to New York through family reunification (post-IRCA 1986), combined with larger numbers of undocumented teen migrants coming for economic reasons. The presence of teen Mexicans in New York schools, parks and neighborhoods transformed family understandings of adolescence, as Puerto Ricans and Blacks changed racial dynamics and ethnic understandings. Smith’s informants stated that these groups took advantage of the Mexicans’ small stature, often undocumented status, lack of organized resistance, and lack of political power. Smith drew on several perspectives of gangs: gangs as growing out of the disorganization of immigrant communities and at the same time, growing from within organic parts of the community.

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6 The power of the liminal state in pilgrimage is a key finding of Turner & Turner (1978).
Smith argued that several factors coalesced to support gang life in New York. On the one hand, because of family reunification immigration regulations, it became possible to bring children. On the other hand, extended separations of parents with children sometimes led to unrealistic expectations on both sides. Once children arrived in New York, they hardly saw their parents since they worked long hours. Also, parents’ limited education offered few resources in providing academic help to their children. Moreover, as they were not accustomed to living together and because family life requires much work, they became frustrated. Ceres Artico (2003) found that adolescents understood their parents’ absence as abandonment or heroic sacrifice, depending on the constancy of parental support, and how caregivers discuss the absence.

Additionally, Smith conceived that media images of Mexican gangs, in particular two films, *American Me* and *Blood In, Blood Out* both released in 1992 that told tales of Mexican characters who begin as powerless but end as empowered in the face of white and black gangs. Finally, as boys have freer rein outside the home, the creation of safe “Mexican” spaces becomes a reason to defend their honors and support “hypermasculinized” versions of being “Mexican”. Smith recounted several exchanges that exposed ethnic victimization and justified violence toward outsiders by Mexican gang members to demand ‘respect’ from ‘oppressors’.

Smith conjectured that teen migrants often experience the pressures of the first generation to earn money, and the pressures of the second generation to do well in school and succeed. Even while enrolling in school, these teens feel inordinate pressure to leave school and earn money. Teen migrants were by their own reports most likely to experience discrimination and maltreatment and these pushed many teen migrants to a *cholo* narrative.
While much of Smith’s work exposes differences of family cultural resources and strengths, and engages methodologies that explored ethnic identity in local and transnational contexts, he centers race and ethnicity as constructs that engage gendered, ethnic and religious identities. He explores interracial interaction with outsiders mostly insofar as it resulted in male interactions via gang expression and violence. His examination of how gendered and religious expression was imbued with both religious observance and ethnic expression goes a long way to explain how this group of transnational migrants confront life in New York City and at home in Ticuani.

Black/Latino Relations

Race in Mexico: Africans in Mexico. Blacks and Latinos have had a history of interaction in the New World prior to the beginning of the African Slave Trade that began in Spanish America in the 1550’s (Tischhauser, 2002). The first Africans came to the New World as both voluntary conquistadors and involuntary settlers (Restall 2000). Africans brought from Spain and Portugal were both “ladinos” or hispanicized, Latinized, acculturated Africans, who assisted the Spanish expeditionaries, and ‘bozales’, who were recently captured slaves living as involuntary settlers (English translation: the ‘muzzled’). African slaves did not reach large numbers in the New World until the mid 16th Century when the earlier enslavement of native Indians resulted in the devastation of Indian populations and cultures through forced work and the ravages of disease. The first census of the native population of Mexico in 1518, counted 25.2 million Indians: fourteen years later it decreased by 10 million, and sixteen years later it decreased by another 10 million. By 1568, 50 years after the first census of native peoples in Mexico only about a 10th of the
indigenous population of Mexico from 1518 had survived. By the early 17th Century, fewer than 750,000 native inhabitants of Mexico remained (Borah, 1983), a survival rate of barely 0.03%. Within a span of just over 100 years, the Indian population of Mexico was statistically decimated. To make up for this rapidly diminished workforce increasing numbers of African slaves were ‘imported’ to Latin America, and by 1600, over 62,500 slaves were transported to all of Spanish America. By the 1550’s Mexico’s population was 15% Black. Aguirre Beltran (1946) documents that during the colonial era, there were more Africans than Europeans living in Mexico, primarily from the Arguin, Cape Verde and the region near the Senegal and Gambia rivers in West Africa. By 1570, there were three times as many Africans in Mexico than Europeans. By 1580 most African slaves were imported from the Congo and Angola; these slaves were often already Christianized by the Portuguese (Bennett, 2003).

Nevertheless, though Africans were a large percentage of Mexico’s population in the 16th Century, slaves brought almost no material culture. The lack of any economic power whatsoever in resulting generations of African descendent people made this marginalized group easy to sublimate in the re-telling of Mexican history.

This obfuscation of an African past in Mexico is both traditional and intentional. There are few official statistics on the numbers of Afro-Mexicans in Mexico, and Census 2015 marked the first time the Mexican government asked respondents to self-identify themselves racially (INEGI, 2015). The official narrative, from the founding of Mexican independence from Spain in 1820, is of a modern mestizo7 people both Spanish and Indian (Akeowo Yanga, A., 2009). Most of the African presence in Mexico was pushed aside in the

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7 The use of the term mestizo is not popularly used in Mexico today. Most mestizos would prefer to identify themselves as Mexicans. I use the term mestizo when referring to racial admixture of Mexicans.
interest of an official national identity based on a mixture of indigenous and European
cultural mestizaje. Official data since Independence, from the 19th and 20th Centuries
diminishes the power of all non-mestizo people in Mexico, and certainly all those without
European blood or colonial customs. While indigenous people have been much ignored in
Mexico, both indigenous peoples and African peoples are discriminated against. To most
observers black Mexicans are economically shunned, with no official voice and with the
government making only a recent attempt last year to count them. That the mestizaje of the
Mexican people includes an African presence in colonial Mexico has been obscured by

While cultural contexts for Afro-Mexicans do exist, they are not material; they
predominate in music and dance. La Bamba is a Mexican folk song played with European,
indigenous and African instruments, and folkloric dances of the Caribbean coast do
explicitly acknowledge an African past. State records from Veracruz and the Costa Chica
(near Acapulco), where the more visible Afro-Mexican communities live, rarely mention the
presence of blacks in Mexico and make the group particularly marginalized and excluded.
Researchers note that few visibly blacks persons are seen in Mexico today, as five centuries
of intermarriage have diluted the genomic contributions of the African people into the
official state sanctioned mestizaje.\(^8\)

Scholars have uncovered Mexico’s role as a sanctuary to African American slaves
during the 1800’s (Rodríguez & Gonzalez, 1996). It is not hard to imagine individual free
blacks and organized runaway slaves fleeing south via landmass or by sea from the southern

\(^8\) Scholars of the American West have only recently investigated the important role played by Afro-Mexicans
in the origins of California, with 26 of the original 46 settlers of Los Angeles being Black or Mulatto, as well
as the final California governor in 1845-46, Pio Pico (Bancroft Library, 2008).
United States to live in Mexico after Mexico abolished slavery in 1829, nine years after winning independence from Spain: it would be another 36 years, almost two generations, before the U.S. would pass the 13th amendment finally abolishing slavery.

Current understandings of Africans in Mexico are limited. This history is important to emphasize as a precursor to understanding how black people are understood in Mexico today. Blacks in Mexico were designated as an official *tercera raíz* by the Mexican government only in 1992, Columbus’s quincentenary, after indigenous (first) and European (second) roots. So while Blacks may be part of Mexico’s cultural ancestry and genetic makeup, they were not popularly considered part of Mexico’s patrimony through all of the 19th Century and most of the 20th Century. The official and unofficial context of Blacks in Mexico is practically invisible and noticeably silenced. It is this erasure of understanding Black Mexicans that Mexicans bring with them when coming to the U.S. today.

Gates (2011) in his widely viewed television show on PBS and the accompanying book *Blacks in Latin America* filled additional pieces of the puzzle. Two of the heroes of the Mexican War of Independence from Spain in 1810, José María Morelos y Pavón (Morelos) and Vicente Ramón Guerrero Saldaña (Guerrero), were descended from Africans. Guerrero, an Afro-Mestizo became the Second President of Mexico, more than 100 years before Barack Obama would be the president of the U.S. His reign as president would last less than one full year. Elected in April 1829, he abolished slavery in Mexico on the anniversary of independence, September 16, 1829. Guerrero freed the slaves of Mexico much to the consternation of the settlers in the northern territories (i.e. Texas), who after threatening his life, communicated that “Texan slaves would not be freed”. Guerrero was deposed in December of 1829, and never regained power. This occurred at a time of great
growth of Anglo settlers in Texas (Sprague, 1939). The Republic of Texas would be created seven years later in 1836 (Gómez, 2007).

Furthermore, as important a contribution as the abolition of slavery in 1829, Guerrero and his ‘Liberal’ colleagues, had previously in 1822 abolished the multiple 16 *castas* of the preceding century and abolished any and all racial categories from all certificates of birth, marriage and death (Gates, 2011, p. 77-79), in an effort to create more equal state. Gates acknowledged the well-meaning spirit behind the efforts of Guerrero and his colleagues, but argued that the action had the unintended consequence of erasing any and all categories of blackness, to the point, that even today most Mexican citizens are not aware that two of their most formidable leaders of independence were of African descent (Gates, 2011, p. 78).

**Emergence of a Mestizo consciousness.** Mexico itself, in memory and myth, was a conglomeration of Spanish monarchic traditions and grand Indian civilizations, and had certainly been proclaimed as such by a series of powerful *Caudillos* since its declared independence from Spain in 1820 (Krauze, 1998). Krauze, in his sweeping *Biography of Power* (1998) argued that the Caudillos who governed independent Mexico since 1820, took great pains to weave Spanish myths with Aztec and Mayan myths to secure power for the *criollo* elite. The myth-making project was most complete in describing a culture that had been distilled from Spanish royalty and Indian gods, with Catholic cathedrals and Aztec and Mayan pyramids and ruins as material culture. That Afro-Mexican history was squeezed out of the official narrative was not of concern to the power brokers of the 19th century. Mexico's independence from Spain and the building of a national identity on the idea of *mestizaje* drove African Mexicans into invisibility.
When Beltran’s research, on the Black population of Mexico was published in 1946, it was highly controversial and widely reviled in Mexico by his contemporaries. That Mexico was a key port of entry for African slave ships is not generally taught in the history textbooks of either Mexico or the United States (Vinson, 2005). African slave ships docked primarily on the Caribbean coast near Veracruz. Only last year, in 2015, did the Mexican government include Afro-Mexican as a possible answer in racial self-identification and 1.8 million people self-identified as Afro-Mexican. Primarily due to the actions of Guerrero and his colleagues in 1822, it took almost 200 years for the Mexican government to officially assess the needs of Afro-Mexicans.

Race in Latin America. While the history of race in Mexico is unique, it is important to describe briefly several major ways race in Latin American contexts is distinct from Mexican and U.S. contexts. Racial categories in Latin American are often externally inscribed in some governmental contexts, without reference to how an individual feels about their own self-identity. Ethnic and thus racial status often stems from having a shared degree of cultural and linguistic similarities, as well as a belief in shared roots. Unlike in the US, ancestry can be irrelevant to race, with linguistic, cultural and somatic differences key. Socioeconomic factors may also play an important part, with phenotypical features playing less of a role but more their intersection with economic class, dress, education (Schaefer, 2008). Latinos from other countries bring their assumptions about race to the media and institutional representations in a place like New York City, and pan-Latino culture here makes room for Caribbean and South American notions of race that may contrast with Mexican understandings of race in complex but oftentimes complimentary ways. As Mexicans in New York City are rarely the majority of Latinos, they must often interact with
other Latinos interpersonally and in media and institutional representations, aware that race is more fluid in Latino contexts than in American ones.

**Black/Latino Relations in the U.S.** Census data, particularly since the 1980’s, declared the ‘Decade of the Hispanic’ by *U.S. New and World Report*, has been a particularly fruitful arena for comparative work on Blacks and Latinos. C. Rodríguez (1992), Rodríguez and Cordero-Gúzman (1992), Falcón (1995), Rodríguez-Morazzini (1998), and López (2005) have written extensively on the role of ethnicity, race and racial identity in the U.S. Census, as it pertains to Latinos as a whole, and individually for different Latino subgroups: Puerto Ricans, Cubans and Mexicans predominantly. Arce with Murguia and Frisbie (1987), Telles and Murguia (1990), C. Gómez (2000), Darity, Dietrich and Hamilton (2005), have also written extensively on the role of phenotype with Latinos as it relates to embracing racial identity and the distinctions between the self-classification of identity and the social-classification of race.

Méndez v. Westminster (1946), the first Supreme Court case to argue segregation issues with respect to Mexicans in the U.S. (California) set legal precedence eight years before the Brown v. Board of Education Topeka (1954) decision. Delgado v. Bastrop (1948) argued segregation in schools in the state of Texas in Federal District Court and presaged Brown by approximately 6 years.

Cruz (2002) has analyzed the capacity for African-American and Latino political coalitions within the formal context of Congress and found that it has been difficult for individual Black or Latino congressmen to work together in creating Black-Latino coalitions (Dzidzienyo & Oboler, 2002). Johnson (2002) argued that if race has permeated one aspect of the law, i.e. racial profiling in criminal law enforcement, it permeated all aspects of the
law, e.g. immigration enforcement especially post 9/11 and the consequent War on Terror. Knight (1990), Wade (1997), and Cruz-Jansen (2001) write specifically about the idea of race and the idea of Blackness in Latin America, with Cruz-Jansen writing specifically about *Latinegras* (Black Latina women). In this decade The Afro-Latin@ Reader (Román & Flores, 2010) spotlighted Latinos of African descent in the U.S.

Political scientists in the past three decades have focused on the changing and sometimes contentious quality of Black-Brown relations from the context of ascending or descending political power in cities with large numbers of Blacks and Latinos — Los Angeles, Miami, Houston, Chicago, Washington, and New York. I will focus only on the cities closest to the northeast: Washington, Chicago and New York.

In Washington, DC, Manning (1996) reported that the tremendous growth of the Latino and Asian populations in the 1990’s caused divisions within the formerly biracial city. Low-income Central American immigrants, some with refugee status, disrupted the relative calm between the majority African American city and the white power elite. The 1991 Washington DC Riots, also known as the Mount Pleasant Riots, eventually spread to Adams Morgan and Columbia Heights over two days, and began when an African American policewoman tried to arrest a Salvadoran man for disorderly conduct and then shot him when she claimed he had a knife. By nightfall over 400 youths were battling police with approximately 50 injuries. A 1993 report by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights found a history of abuse, harassment, and misconduct by the DC Police Department against the Latino Community, coupled with underrepresentation of Hispanics in DC government jobs and inefficient government services for the Latino community.

In Chicago, battles reached a fever pitch between the Latino and African American
communities during the late 1980’s after the death of the first African American Mayor, Harold Washington in 1987. DeGenova and Ramos-Zayas (2003) wrote expansively on the dynamic between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago during the 1980’s and 1990’s, with each group experiencing their own understandings of *Latinidad*. These separate understanding of Pan-Latino ethnicity underscored the nationalist perspectives that were combined in the made up category of Latino. This new definition of “Hispanic Unity” stood in marked contrast to the other Mexican and Puerto Rican groups’ understanding of their ethnic identity, and remained in contestation with recent African American political and civic gains and White business and civic leaders. By the late 1980’s, the era of *Time* magazine’s ‘Decade of the Hispanic’, it was apparent that the number of Latinos in Chicago could be significant enough to demand a ‘Latino’ congressional seat. Upon Harold Washington’s sudden death in November 1987, the progressive movement and Democratic Party machine were in shambles. Two interim mayors served briefly – one appointed for a few weeks, the other, Eugene Sawyer, a compromise candidate from the Chicago machine who split the Black vote and handed power to a coalition of White Alderman and older Black politicos. Sawyer, the second African American mayor served out Harold Washington’s term until 1989. At the end of Harold Washington’s term, Luis Gutierrez, progressive Puerto Rican city councilman and Washington supporter, astutely threw his considerable political muscle around Richie Daley in the mayoral election of 1989. Daley was the son of Richard Daley, the legendary Chicago Mayor. When the new ‘Latino’ congressional district was carved out, to no one’s surprise, Luis Gutierrez (D) won the Democratic primary, with support from the Washington progressive coalition and splintered some of the machine support. Luis Gutierrez still holds the 4th District congressional seat in
Illinois today.

In New York City, Latinos and Blacks have clashed particularly around electoral politics and the control of public institutions. Skirmishes between Puerto Ricans and Blacks during the Civil Rights era emphasized how the outcome of Civil Rights assistance often benefitted African Americans, marginalizing and angering Puerto Rican constituents (Barbaro, 1977). And in 2001, the failed candidacy of Fernando Ferrer, the Bronx Borough President, for Mayor of New York City, highlighted the fractious nature of Latino-Black coalitions in New York politics, especially given that a black man, H. Carl McCall, was running for Governor on the same Democratic ticket (Mindiola, Niemann & Rodríguez, 2002). Neither candidate won that election, but neither candidate was given anything more than token support from constituencies of the other presumed coalition member. In 2013, Carlos Menchaca became the first Mexican American city councilman in New York City, unseating an incumbent Puerto Rican woman. He is the first Mexican to win an elected post in New York City.

Historians and ethnographers are also rewriting Black Latino relations in community studies. Emily Straus’s *Death of a Suburban Dream: Race and Schools in Compton, California* (2014), explores the 20th century history of Compton through its schools, where White flight mid-century was followed by Black middle class flight later in the century, and finding that the Black leadership of the city conflicted with a burgeoning Latino enrollment by the turn of the century. Woldoff (2011) writes of changing waves of White flight and Black flight in Parkmont, a neighborhood in the northeast US with particular attention to inter-racial and interethnic relationships.

Some of the most revealing work on inter-racial perceptions and stereotypes come
from political scientists, psychologists, historians, and sociologists working in Houston, Texas (Niemann, et al. 1994, Mindiola, Flores Niemann, & Rodríguez, 2002). Houston, a city that is two-thirds Hispanic and African-American, has been a prime place for research on African-American and Hispanic-American relations dating back to the late 1980’s. Blacks and Latinos literally helped create the Southern City in what was formerly Mexico, with Black slaves and Mexican prisoners of war from Santa Ana’s army clearing the swampland that would become Houston in 1836.

Examining both Hispanic views of African Americans and African American views of Hispanics, Niemann (1994) found that Hispanic college students express more negative views about African Americans than vice versa. But stereotype research has found that the general population holds views that are very similar to the research on college students. It has been shown that U.S. and foreign-born Latinos describe African Americans “noisy/loud, hostile, athletic, aggressive, angry, poor, welfare recipient and violent” (Mindiola, Niemann, & Rodríguez, 2002, p. 31). In turn, African Americans describe Latinos as “hardworking, family oriented, poor English, dropouts, lazy, illegal and Spanish-speaking” (Niemann, 1999).

The negative beliefs and feelings African Americans have about Latinos are often grounded in competition for resources (Guevara, 1996; Johnson & Oliver, 1994). In turn, Hispanic beliefs and feelings about African Americans may also be grounded in competition (Mindiola, Niemann, & Rodríguez, 2002).

Explanations for the difference in perceptions and attitudes regarding African Americans differ among U.S. born and foreign born Hispanics, including: variations in length of residence, English language fluency, geographic location or dispersal, contact, and
the likelihood of working in ethnically diverse settings (Gurin, Hurtado, and Peng, 1994). The lack of language facility in English often places immigrant Hispanics at the bottom of workplace structures, and lower status may affect how they perceive African-Americans (Mindiola, Niemann, & Rodríguez, 2002). Research also indicates that ethnic group esteem is predictive of Latino attitudes toward African Americans, and lower group esteem (as opposed to self-esteem) results in more denigration of others. However, the reverse is not true (Phinney 1990, 1991), and African American group esteem does not affect opinions of Latinos (Mindiola, Niemann, & Rodríguez, 2002). Presumed reasons for such findings are diverse — the denigration of groups on the basis of racial identity may be more forbidden for African Americans as a result of their history of racial oppression; African Americans may not be as threatened by their collective and ethnic social identities; and they may be more accustomed than Latinos to the stigmatization by others. In contrast, the stigmatization that immigrant Mexicans feel upon entering the United States, even if expected, may be sudden and acutely felt, and more threatening to collective ethnic esteem than for African Americans (Mindiola, Niemann, & Rodríguez, 2002).

Mindiola, et. al., (2002) hypothesize that “positive in-group identity that serves to raise the perception of their group without denigrating each other’s group may facilitate positive intergroup relations” (pp. 39-40). The authors argue that ways of facilitating this awareness are to teach ways in which each group has survived extreme oppression and celebrate ways in which Latinos and African Americans have shaped U.S. culture. Research demonstrates that college students who pursue ethnic and multicultural studies generally exhibit greater acceptance of differences between groups, and that this acceptance decreases or eliminates between group feelings of hostility (Blaine, 2000; Niemann, 1999). Buy-in on
intragroup moral norms is related to intergroup acceptance (Manstead, 2000). If collective group esteem for Latinos and African Americans includes an inculcation of acceptance of the other and the moral treatment of each other, those attitudes would be related to positive behaviors (Terry, Hogg, & White, 2000).

Reducing conflict and enhancing group relations requires accurate and current information on Black-Brown stereotypes. If commonalities among African Americans and Latinos can be found, leaders can use this to forge inter-group identity, reduce conflict, enhance relations, and move toward beneficial political progress (Mindiola, Niemann, & Rodríguez, 2002).

African Americans and Latinos represent heterogeneous groups. Research shows that members of an ethnic racial group perceive their own members as more heterogeneous and perceive out-groups as more homogenous (Simon & Brown, 2000). Mindiola, et. al, (2002) argue that improved relations between Hispanics and African Americans require that group leaders help members understand the heterogeneity of each group. Only in increasing the complexity of intergroup perceptions do closely held stereotypes experience any generalized change. Hewstone (2000) outlines a four-step outcome of positive consequences when encountering complex intergroup perceptions: 1) members are less likely to stereotype all group members as one type; 2) members are more likely to see out-group members as distinct and differentiated as are members of their own group; 3) members are more likely to work with out-group members; 4) awareness and understanding of heterogeneity reduces generalized stereotyping and makes members more amenable to the situated contexts resultant from past and current oppression and discrimination of African Americans and Latinos.
Research in Houston has shown that interracial interactions occur primarily in the workplace, then in neighborhoods, then schools and other places. Residential integration has increased in Houston over the last several decades, beginning when Whites began to move to the suburbs in the 1970’s, when African Americans started moving in, and Latinos and Latino immigrants began to move into both formerly White and African American areas. Foreign-born Latinos reported considerably fewer interactions with African Americans than US-born Latinos. Language differences and workplaces that hired low-wage earning immigrants exclusively explained these low levels of interethnic contact (Rodríguez, 1996), and US-born Latinos often become mediators between African Americans and foreign-born Latinos. This occurs commonly in the workplace and broader society where US-born Latinos have become involved in protecting the rights of immigrants as never before, as more and more immigrants from Latin America arrive in the U.S. (Mindiola, Niemann, & Rodríguez, 2002). (This is discussed more below after in a discussion of Jimenez’ concept of immigrant replenishment) Social distances between the groups are more tolerated in work and neighborhood settings than in intimate relationships, such as dating and marriage. African Americans are more tolerant of interracial dating and intermarriage than Latinos, especially Latino immigrants. Higher income African American males, who have the most interaction with Latinos, approve of intermarriage the most (Mindiola, Niemann, & Rodríguez, 2002).

Mindiola’s research in Black/Brown opinions on political issues found two general divides: African Americans hold views distinct from US-born and foreign-born Latinos, and foreign-born Latinos hold different views than African Americans and US-born Latinos. All Latinos are two times as likely to believe that government programs favor African
Americans, than African Americans do. African Americans object more to the use of Spanish in the workplace than do US-born or foreign-born Latinos. But not surprisingly, it is around the topic of immigration around which the widest divide occurs: African Americans are more likely to believe that the overall effect of immigration is bad because immigrants take their jobs, hold wages down, and take more from the economy than they contribute (Rodríguez & Davila, 2000; Klineberg, 1996). Foreign-born Latinos differ from U.S. born Latinos and African Americans generally on social issues—opposing abortion and how children should contribute to a family. Many immigrants believe that the children of Latino immigrants who work should contribute to the family and not keep the money for themselves (Mindiola, Niemann, & Rodríguez, 2002, pp 53-55). Most immigrants acknowledge that there exists a great deal of conflict between Latinos and African Americans, and believe that African Americans wield too much power (pp. 56-57). African Americans who perceive conflict tend to have less contact with Latinos, but they also believe they themselves are less united than Latinos, and experience more discrimination. They likewise believe that Latinos have not fought for their rights in the way African Americans have.

Mindiola, Niemann, and Rodríguez (2002) argue that key to understanding interethnic relations between African American and Latino relations can be discovered by analyzing their relationships with Anglos. African Americans and US-born Latinos are split between those who think Anglos do not have a preference, and those who feel that Anglos prefer Latinos. Foreign-born Latinos believe that Anglos prefer African Americans. African Americans and both foreign-born and US-born Latinos are also split on whether they think Anglos fear Latinos or African Americans to the same degree, or whether they fear African
Americans more than Hispanics. Mindiola, et. al (2002) argue that the empirical information suggests that Anglos favor Latinos and fear African Americans — intermarriage and residential integration rates are higher between Latinos and Anglos who live in closer proximity to each other than those of Anglos and African Americans (Valdez, 1999). The authors conclude that as a result Anglos are more amenable to forming coalitions with Latinos and much more likely to discourage Latinos from forming alliances with African Americans (Mindiola, Niemann, & Rodríguez, 2002).

Social class was found to be a better determinant in explaining the views of African Americans than in shedding any light on the views of US-born and foreign-born Latinos. Middle and higher income African Americans see less prejudice toward Latinos, they see immigration in a more positive light, and do not believe immigrants take their jobs. Lower-income African Americans may be more threatened by immigrants because immigrants may compete with them for the same jobs.

Mindiola, Niemann, and Rodríguez, (2002) found that African American and Latina women held more hostile attitudes toward each other than their male counterparts. In Hispanic culture mothers are highly respected, and women, in particular, may wield their only significant form of family power in the form of social influence over children (Vasquez, 1984, 1995). Furthermore, when Hispanic women grow older, their status in the community increases: they are seen as respected doñas (an honorific term for women) and abuelas (grandmothers). Research has shown that Hispanic mothers transmit their values, including those having to do with other ethnic and racial groups, to their children (Rodríguez, Ramírez, & Korman, 1999). Foreign-born Hispanic mothers tend to be more conservative and closer to their culture of origin. Immigrant women tend to experience
relative segregation and isolation in domestic service, sweatshops and low-skilled labor environments (Segura, 1994; Zavella, 1987), and have less contact with African Americans than U.S. born Latinas. In these isolating contexts, the media are especially powerful resources of information for those with little contact with African Americans.

Child rearing is contrasted: African American women play a dominant role in their children’s socialization and incorporate discussions of racism in the socialization of their own children (Essed, 1991). Instructing their children to be independent and assertive earlier than do Hispanic women, African American women teach their children an awareness of prejudicial attitudes and appropriate defense strategies against discrimination. Mindiola, Niemann, & Rodríguez (2002) agree with Gilkes (1994) that the effect of racial oppression on the lives of their children are the most important sources of discontent for women of color. Gilkes found that the lives of women of color are historically organized around the defense, nurturance and advancement of an ‘oppressed’ public family and that these roles to defend their own family also work to keep these women from uniting with other oppressed women from different racial groups (Mendiola, Niemann, & Rodríguez, 2002).

In an effort to explain why women’s attitudes toward each other were more hostile than male attitudes, Mindiola, Niemann and Rodríguez applied a feminist frame to analyze this conflict. Analyzing survey responses dealing with identity led them to a clue. When asked which factor — gender, race-ethnicity, social class or sexual orientation — had the most impact on their lives, the following responses were given:

- White women consistently responded that gender most affected their lives;
- White men responded that social class most affected their lives;
- Black and Latino men almost always pointed to race as most affecting their lives;
however, Black or Hispanic women frequently stated that they could not separate the
twin effects of race and gender in their lives.

- African American and Latina women who are raised in poverty found that race-
  ethnicity, gender and social class were inseparable.

The authors argue that findings regarding “conflict, prejudice, discrimination, power, fear,
competition for jobs, Anglo favoritism, opportunities for government programs, impact of
immigrants, amount of interaction and overall relations between groups” (p. 83) must be
understood within contexts of racism, classism, and sexism. These experiences are
intertwined with the distinct experiences of the hierarchical social structures of gender and
the historical colonized status of women.

They argue that one function of institutionalized racism is to devalue all cultural
differences. Experiences of gender oppression interact with racism and poverty, inflating
women’s experience of trauma-activating survival behaviors and feelings of alienation.
Latina and African American women are particularly vulnerable to being racially objectified
as exotic sex objects and are popularly portrayed in the media as “deserving or wanting it”
(Gómez, L., 1997). Feminist scholars argue that the forces of colonization intersect with
both race and gender to negate women’s individuality through sexual and racial
objectification.

When men of color compare their definitions of manhood with White upper-middle-
class standards that are unattainable, some men of color assert domination and masculinity
within families and personal relationships. This results in experiences of domestic violence,
sexual abuse and even incest (Rodríguez, 1997; Romero and Wyatt, 1999).

Perhaps the most pervasive form of sexism is the economic realm, as Black and
Hispanic women are likely to be paid less than men of any ethnic racial group and less than White women (Thomas, Herring & Horton, 1995) (p. 90). They are less likely to have a formal education, and when they do, they may have fewer returns on their investment in education than men or White women, and lower earning power, associated with limited preventative health care and poor health outcomes, including higher infant mortality (Singh & Yu, 1995), higher exposure to crime (Rolison & Keith, 1995), and unsafe housing with environmentally hazardous conditions (Rogers, 1995).

Some of the reasons for the conflict and hostility between Latina and African American women were set through the history of the early suffrage movement: White upper-middle-class women did not always support equality for men and women of color, and these exceptions continued through the 1960’s and 1970’s. Struggles for equal opportunity of the sexes often confronted racial and ethnic struggles. While women interact with women not of their own ethnic group more than male counterparts, their interactions are mired in histories of distrust and competition for family survival.

**Interethnic understandings of race: Latinos and Blacks.** In recent years, scholars have addressed the great internal diversity of the Mexican origin population in the U.S. who arrived in various waves of immigration. Mexican Americans range from those who can trace their ancestry in this country to before 1848 to very recent immigrants.

Second and third generation Mexican Americans and beyond are the subject of *Generations of Exclusion: Mexican Americans, Assimilation and Race* (2008) by Edward Telles and Vilma Ortiz. This work began accidentally in 1993 when construction workers retrofitting the UCLA library for earthquake support, found boxes of surveys from the 1960’s documenting the Mexican American Study Project of urban Mexican Americans in
Los Angeles and San Antonio. Telles and Ortiz then began the fifteen year long process of trying to track down the respondents and surveying and interviewing them again, allowing for an unprecedented longitudinal study comparing responses of some of the original respondents, and children and grandchildren of the original respondents. In addition, by having generations of data in their research, they were able to examine and retest a variety of theories of assimilation, regarding ethnic identity, status attainment, within group variation, intermarriage, comparisons of urban contexts (Los Angeles vs. San Antonio) and neighborhood contexts, boundaries of ethnicity, and continued contact with race and racialization. As the title infers, unlike traditional straight-line theories of assimilation, Mexican-Americans in this study show stagnation in educational attainment in the third generation and beyond, and define education as the ‘linchpin’ in limited assimilation. The authors cite theories of racialization as a powerful impediment to equality in educational achievement.

Regarding self-identification, over 1000 original respondents of the 2000 survey, that is, over seventy percent chose the label of Mexican or Mexican-American; sixteen percent a pan-ethnic label (Latin American, Spanish, Hispanic or Latino); ten percent chose American; while only one percent chose the label of Chicano/a. Later generations were more likely to choose a pan-ethnic label (possibly reflecting greater intermarriage in their background), but even then the largest group of respondents, over forty percent, chose the term Mexican American. The authors speculate that an emphasis on Mexicanness may be strong among third and fourth generation Mexican Americans because they continue to be largely working class. Moreover, they also speculate that persistent residential segregation may reinforce ethnic identity. They also expect ethnic markers, such as surname, phenotype,
and limited or accented English, among others to play a larger role in ethnic identification for some later generations (p. 233).

Telles and Ortiz argue that the extent to which ethnic boundaries persist may be a function of how “racial” respondents are viewed: “Racial distinctions in later generations persist despite economic status and adopted culture” (p. 233). The 1930 U.S. Census classified Mexicans as a separate race, but outcry from the Mexican American community removed that category by 1940. Since the 1970’s the Census has relied on a compromise by creating a separate Hispanic question apart from a racial one. For instance, in the 1990 Census over half of all Mexican Americans identified as racially ‘other.’ The authors argue that avoiding the “easy path of checking the white box,” even though their birth certificates may designate them as such, means that Mexican Americans understand Mexican as a racial category (p. 229).

When asked questions regarding race, stereotyping and discrimination, almost half of the original respondents felt perceived as Mexican, while later generations find that over a third of outsiders perceived them as Mexican, a slight drop-off in self-perception of ethnicity. In discussing discrimination, while over a third of original respondents felt discriminated against, about two thirds of their children and subsequent generations felt similarly, meaning that later generations are more likely to report or experience discrimination than earlier generations. The authors also found that the regional context of racial identity differed greatly between Mexican Americans in San Antonio and those in Los Angeles. Those in San Antonio were more than five times as likely to identify as white, and the authors argue that the Chicano movement of the 1960’s, that pursued a racialized identity, became more entrenched and accepted in Los Angeles than in San Antonio.
Another researcher, Tomás Jimenez (2010) uses the term “replenished ethnicity” to explain how Mexican American assimilation is distinct from previous waves of European immigration. Jiménez found that standard models of assimilation and racial conflict explain less about the identities of Mexican Americans today, than their experience with continued and ongoing Mexican migration to the U.S. He argues that crucial to an understanding of what it means to be a Mexican-American today is the continuing inflow of migrants from Mexico, who shape and reshape the meaning of being Mexican in second, third and subsequent generations. Ongoing Mexican immigration makes ethnicity a larger part of identity for later generations of Mexican, much different than previous waves of European immigrants in the US.

Jiménez also describes how his respondents in a smaller agricultural town in California and in the Midwest, often explained the feeling of “being caught between two peoples and two identities” (p. 139). Due to larger waves of Mexican immigration in recent years, non-Mexicans often embrace aspects of Mexican culture (food, drink, family, church, etc.), but not always the immigrants themselves. Later generations of Mexican-Americans are more accustomed to American ways of life, speak in English and navigate American institutions, habits and lifestyles. By tracing their roots to a country that sends more immigrants to the U.S. than any other, along with sharing a two-thousand mile border, Mexican Americans share not only an ethnic origin with Mexican immigrants but a social environment as well, in which large scale Mexican immigration increasingly reinvigorates Mexican ethnicity. The ethnic origin of Mexican Americans is thus heavily defined by new waves of foreign-born Mexicans (p. 139).

Ethnic boundaries and consequences for interethnic understandings are also
informed by Jiménez’s findings. In particular Jiménez employs the term “nativism” to describe the type of racism he sees Mexican-Americans experiencing. Mexican Americans experience “intergroup boundaries,” between Mexican Americans and non-Mexicans. While Mexican immigrants are often targets of “nativism,” Mexican Americans experience an indirect influence of this racial rhetoric, by “making the boundaries between people of Mexican origin and non-Mexicans more rigid” (p. 141). Jiménez adds:

Nativism is often couched in a racialized language that ties discontent about immigration to all people of Mexican descent, not just Mexican immigrants. This nativism activates immigration as a core event defining the Mexican American experience, leading respondents to identify with the experience of their immigrant co-ethnics. Race matters in how Mexican Americans experience boundaries, particularly when they are mistaken for immigrants. In a context of heavy Mexican immigration, skin color and sometimes surname become markers of ethnic origin, nativity, and even legal status in such a way that Mexican Americans become the direct targets of nativism (p. 141).

Mexican Americans also experience “intragroup boundaries” that divide them from Mexican immigrants, for immigrants get to define what it means to be a “real” person of Mexican descent (see Smith, 2005). Mexican Americans manage the boundaries of ethnic authenticity with Mexican immigrants with a variety of strategies, “ranging from active resistance to passive retreat” (p. 141), using language, heritage and skin-color primarily.

While Jiménez classifies nativism as a type of racism, he argues that it is not racism in the classic Black-White dichotomy, for it refers more to the prejudice and discrimination experienced by recent migrants. He argues that “racism pure and simple does not account
for this discrimination” (p. 141). Jiménez argues that Mexican-origin people do not fit neatly into the model of an assimilating ethnic group or an aggrieved minority, but instead operate as a permanent immigrant group where assimilation and ethnic boundary-making last well into future generations, for “discrimination still marks the Mexican American experience well into later generations” (pp. 141-142).

One perception among non-Mexicans is that the Mexican origin population is foreign born, for they are the most visible among people of Mexican descent and are large amongst all immigrants in general. Yet, because of their large numbers, cultural differences and poverty, Mexican immigrants are the primary targets of anti-immigrant fears, and non-Mexicans are free to express their anxiety about immigration in public and interpersonal ways. At the core, these expressions represent intolerance, anxiety and fear.

Conclusion

The review of the literature demonstrates the various treatments of both immigration and race, as well as class and gender, of the different immigrant groups of students, particularly in education. Although we consider the ways in which Asian, Muslim, and Afro-Caribbean students are educated and racialized, it is the process of educating Latinos, particularly Mexicans, and the role that racialization, race construction, and interethnic relations play in their education that is the focus of this paper. Furthermore, the broad review here reveals the gap that exists in researching interethnic exchanges between Latinos and African Americans and other immigrant groups. It is precisely this gap that this research seeks to fill.
Outbreaks of anti-immigrant violence, predominantly targeting Latino immigrants in the United States, have occurred in rural, suburban and urban contexts (Potok, 2007) and throughout the Northeast (Barnard, 2009; Rogouski, 2007; Susman, 2010). Immigrant bashing has become a significant feature of Campaign 2016. Anti-immigrant sentiment reached a fever pitch in many parts of the U.S. and anti-immigrant legislation progressed widely in the Southern and Western U.S. in the post-9/11 era. 2011 was a record year for statewide anti-immigrant legislation with 164 anti-immigrant laws passed in states during 2010 and 2011 (Gordon, I & Raja, T, 2012). No fewer than five states (Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, South Carolina, and Utah) passed anti-immigrant legislation similar in spirit to Arizona’s State Bill 1070, considered the strongest and broadest anti-immigration law in the country, under which state law enforcement officers were required to determine an individual’s immigration status during any type of lawful or unlawful stop if there is reasonable suspicion that the individual is an “illegal immigrant” (Arizona SB 1070, §3.). Over 107 towns, cities and counties have passed anti-immigrant laws in the United States (O’Neill, 2010) and opposition to immigration has been greatest in communities where predominantly homogenous, white localities experienced a rapid increase in immigration, changing communities like Hazelton, Pennsylvania (O’Neill, 2010).

Setting for the Study

As stated in chapter one, there were eleven (11) highly publicized suspected anti-Hispanic bias attacks in Port Richmond, Staten Island, in the Summer of 2010. These represented a contrasting narrative of anti-immigrant violence, and one that exposed racial
divides between African Americans and Latino immigrants (Susman, 2010). In the best-documented attack, recorded by a store’s surveillance camera, 26 year-old baker Rodulfo Olmedo was on his way home from a local club when he was set upon by four teenagers ranging in age from 15-17 on April 5, 2010 in Port Richmond, Staten Island (Salazar, C., 2010). The four young men, three African-American and one Hispanic, badly beat Olmedo with unidentified objects believed to be baseball bats or wooden planks and possibly a chain, before robbing his unconscious body of cash and a cellphone.

The Latino population on Staten Island grew over 2.5 times from 1990 to 2010 with much of the growth coming from the Mexican immigrant community (Bergad, 2013). Between 1990 and 2010, the Mexican population living on Staten Island grew from 1,741 in 1990 to 16,054 in 2010, a growth rate of over 900% percent (Bergad, 2013).

Make the Road New York, a community organization that serves Port Richmond along with two other distressed New York City communities, described Port Richmond as being, “predominantly populated by poor and working class Latinos and African Americans, including many immigrants” (Make the Road NY, 2011). The organization cites the average yearly income of a family of three in the neighborhood as being below $19,000.

In 2010, residents of Port Richmond alternately blamed the attacks on the economy, unemployment and, the general anti-immigrant sentiment throughout the nation, including Arizona’s immigration law. Although most of the suspects were described as young black men and investigated by the police for bias crimes, a grand jury has indicted only one of the seven people accused of a hate-crime charge (Annese, 2010f).

This account is incongruous for many reasons. For one, Staten Island is relatively isolated and is the most suburban-like borough of New York City. Home to just under half a
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million people it is more like the rest of the U.S. than most parts of New York City. Many live in detached homes instead of apartments, need cars to get around, and a ferry to get across New York Harbor into Manhattan. For another, the borough is 75% white, with blacks making up only 10% of the population (Census, 2014). Previously publicized incidents of anti-immigrant sentiment on Staten Island prior to 2010 emerged predominantly from the white population of the island and not the black population (Appendix B).

**Statement of the problem**

The Mexican immigrant community in New York has settled into neighborhoods other than traditional receiving barrios and is expanding into areas of the city with the cheapest and most available housing stock. Recent arrivals have expanded into poor and often traditionally African-American communities in the outer boroughs of Brooklyn, the Bronx and Staten Island. This new immigration, this New Latino Diaspora (Villenas and Murillo, 1997), has often juxtaposed Latino immigrants with longer standing African American communities, with the consequent challenges of segregation and poverty. Port Richmond, Staten Island is one such community.

In much urban education research, Black and Brown people are deemed to have the most in common with one another, and from the perspective of skin color, educational achievement, schooling outcomes, social status, and labor market segmentation that may be the case. Yet, as is true with much research that reports averages without analyzing exceptions, differences that separate often trump similarities. Studying the context of anti-immigrant violence in Port Richmond, Staten Island, I hope to bring the importance of

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9 According to Kenneth Jackson, Staten Island is the borough in New York City that most mimics the rest of the US in housing, transportation, racial make-up, growth. Comments made at the keynote of the Staten Island 350th Anniversary Conference, College of Staten Island, Sunday, March 20th, 2011.
understanding Black and Latino relations in the New York Area and the changing geographies of hope, contestation and conflict to the fore.

**Research Questions**

To understand the interethnic experiences of Mexican immigrant youth, my research questions are:

- *What are Mexican immigrant youth understandings of race in a post-industrial community, and how do they understand and experience interethnic relations with African-Americans?*

- *What is the role of the family, the school, and the community in the shaping of those understandings and experiences?*

The belief underlying this investigation is that interethnic research on Black-Latino relations is key to improving the lives of new arrivals and established people of color in poor communities. The assumptions of the study are that 1) Mexican immigrant youth hold attitudes and perspectives of African Americans in the United States that unconsciously or consciously help or hinder interethnic understandings, and 2) by focusing on the unexplored tensions between two separate ethnic/racial groups educators’ understandings of race and interethnic contact and conflict can be enriched.

**Significance of the study**

There exists a dearth of literature on how immigrant groups, especially Latino immigrants, confront and/or understand minority groups in the United States, in particular, African-Americans. Much late 20th Century research on immigrants has emphasized the various ways immigrants assimilate into the mainstream, focusing on principles developed by the Chicago School of Sociology in the 1920’s and 1930’s (Portes, A. & Rumbaut, R.,
Mainstream immigration research and theorizing do not regularly examine interethnic understandings between one immigrant group and different immigrant groups, nor between an immigrant group and classified minority groups, like African-Americans. For much of the immigration literature and research, ‘race’ as a construct has been subsumed under the larger paradigm of ethnicity for a variety of reasons: Race is a social and not scientific construct and social researchers, hoping to appeal to broader scientific purposes, have been reluctant to categorize and give this concept scientific credence (Telles & Ortiz, 2010). Nevertheless, interethnic racism is a social construct with clear negative social repercussions worthy of study in the context of immigrant research (Leonardo, 2009). The results of my study may educate Mexican youth, African American youth, and schools, teachers, and community leaders in how to develop awareness of interethnic conflict in communities, classrooms and schools, and work toward alleviating them.

**Procedure**

To better comprehend how Mexican young adults (18-23) understand race and understand and experience relations with African Americans in their home, school, and community, this qualitative study employed critical ethnographic research methods (Cresswell, 2013) to collect stories of fifteen (15) Mexican immigrant young adults about their educational, familial, and community experiences following the anti-Hispanic bias attacks in Port Richmond, Staten Island from April 2010 to August 2010, up to the current day. The localized effects of hate crimes and violence have been understudied in the realm of immigrant education literature, especially at this precarious time when larger social forces engage in unceasing anti-immigrant rhetoric and frequent racial profiling.
The study encompassed thirteen months of ethnographic work in Port Richmond, Staten Island from October 2012 to November 2013, a site of the New Latino Diaspora (Villenas & Murrillo, 1997) where by 2010 Mexican immigrants had become the largest ethnic group (US Census, 2010). Six months of hanging out as an adult mentor at weekly meetings of an anti-violence youth group preceded any interviews. By late March I began conducting audiotaped interviews with 15 Mexican immigrants between the ages of 18-23 engaging only those who had lived, worked or gone to school in Port Richmond during the spring and summer of 2010, three years prior to 2013 when the community had eleven investigated incidents of anti-immigrant violence (Susman, 2010).

Appendix A is a timeline of the events surrounding the attacks in 2010. This Appendix lists the eleven incidents of reported anti-immigrant violence in Port Richmond, Staten Island, from April 2010 to August 2010, along with victim’s names and attackers names when listed in the public record. These events are interspersed with significant community events by the police, mayor and other public officials, along with media coverage from across the country and the globe. Accusations and convictions are noted when listed in the public record, primarily in the paper of record for Staten Island, the Staten Island Advance. For the most part, the race of the attackers was not mentioned save when there were criminal trials where photographs were used in the newspapers. (Appendix B is a timeline of anti-immigrant violence on Staten Island prior to 2010.)

As a catalyst to revive memories of the attacks from the Summer of 2010, I employed photo elicitation methods to launch the interviews and respondents commented on recurrent episodes of vulnerability and violence in everyday life. Photo elicitation began with showing graphic images (Appendix C) from the anti-immigrant episodes of violence in
2010. Reflection on the racial hate crimes in their memory drove the interviews (Creswell, 2013). For some subjects, especially those with a personal or familial acquaintance with a victim, the photographs resonated strongly of that brief period of time, regarding a series of events three years prior.

While the aim of this dissertation is primarily to understand the experience of the individuals and not merely to offer perspectives of this topical event, I employed Rubin and Rubin’s (2011) responsive interviewing model. Responsive interviewing acknowledges that qualitatively interviewing is dynamic, and that questions are not just a set of mechanistic tools and procedures, but can be modified to match interest and experience of the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). As Rubin & Rubin have stated: “Qualitative research is not simply learning about a topic, but also learning what is important to those being interviewed” (2005, p 15).

Respondents were given three series of photographs (see Appendix C). The first series of photographs showed security camera footage of the attacks and their aftermath; the second series of photos highlighted early 20th Century history up to the recent past of the neighborhood; and the third group of photographs highlighted the Mexican community in Port Richmond today. Historic photos of the neighborhood, followed by present day photos of the Mexican community hoped to raise comments about the industrial history and post-industrial context of their community. By asking informants to respond to actual events in their lives, it is hoped that the breadth and depth of interviewee responses will decrease the chance of researcher bias.

The audio-taped interviews lasted from an hour and a half to three hours and were primarily conducted in English with some Spanish and were later transcribed. During the
research period I also attended some community events, local celebrations and weekend trainings in which I took field notes or audio field notes which were later transcribed.

The use of photo elicitation (Creswell, 2013, p. 161) encouraged responses based on memory and on the experience of a specific event. It also limited responses so that I could probe on experiences of the separate events, the feelings, memories and perspectives of themselves, their families and friends. This narrative research invoked in-depth descriptions over a relatively short time frame about a series of highly charged historical events and its aftermath. The photo elicitation technique helped develop rapport with participants and enabled them to discuss in detail aspects of the narrative being studied (de Marrais, 2004, p. 53). Showing photos of the security towers, or victims’ faces and bodies sparked memories and participants were asked to remember what they felt at this time. Questions and comments that emerged examined a broad range of responses regarding participants’ individual and families’ histories and contexts.

In addition, I asked supplementary questions, following an Interview Protocol that appears as Appendix D. The combination of the photo elicitation technique, followed up by other questions permitted me a degree of flexibility to capture data not only about the event itself, but also about race and interethnic relations in general, and the role of the family, the school and the community in the shaping of those understandings and experiences. These questions generated first-person descriptions of a limited domain of experience: particularly the experience of being a Mexican immigrant youth who shares the ethnic identity of a persecuted neighbor, and understanding how this experience is felt and understood. I also sought to understand whether the experience was related to racial messaging from leaders and peers in broader institutional contexts like schools and churches or primarily related to
the more micro contexts of families. It is hoped that the interethnic experiences of youth in Mexican immigrant families emerged from interview detail.

**Sampling strategies.** Purposive sampling allowed the interviews to be stratified by gender, education and immigration status providing efficient ways to answer larger questions of interethnic understandings with a small group of people (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002, p. 204). By controlling for age range and ethnic background, I interviewed a range of individuals who vary in resources, outlooks and responses to triangulate and compare responses in an effort to reduce interviewer bias (Kain, 2004, p. 76).

While it is often best to avoid snowball sampling and the self-selection it implies, given the contentious nature of the social issues investigated I was only able to obtain interview participants through stakeholder referrals. Respondents were then acquired instead of selected, as young adults who volunteered information on such sensitive and volatile matters should necessarily be ones who wish to speak of these matters explicitly (Spradley, 1979). While I presumed that some students may have been resistant, unwilling or unable to share deep seated personal or familial views based on the volatility of the subject, the students ended up sharing a great deal of private and possibly contentious personal information. By sharing photographs of a critical incident in the neighborhood, and through my ethnographic ‘hanging out’ in a neighborhood for over a year, respondents themselves started the ball rolling by focusing on the incidents and short-term outcomes to then focus on family, and school, and reveal an in-depth perspective of the immigrant-self and community. By beginning with photo elicitation and leading into questions and discussions of the community, school and family, I found that respondents were more candid and forthright in their responses in a short time.
Of those whom I could interview, I had most ready access to high school graduates, as they were the ones involved in extra-curricular activities with youth development groups and were the youth leaders in community groups. They often had the most to say and a deeper historical perspective of their community. Obtaining interviews with those who did not graduate from high school took a great deal longer. While I had easy access to one, what I call, a High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirant, recruiting other students who were not high school graduates took a great deal longer. At least one of the respondents turned down my request at least twice in the first 12 months and only after repeated interactions with this individual in community and immigrant legal training settings did the said respondent agree to an interview. Other respondents were recruited only after visiting a High School Equivalency Diploma program and securing support from a teacher committed to her work with the students and who believed in the power of my project. All respondents were between the ages of 18-23. Permission was not granted to interview minors as some of my interviewees were undocumented and I was forewarned to be wary about researching highly vulnerable populations.

**Data Analysis.** Interviews were conducted and digitally tape-recorded; due to time constraints, tape recorded interviews were sent to an outside agency for transcription. I took field notes during and after the interviews. Being a co-ethnic helped to clarify the transcription, meaning and intent, as well as capture its tone, inflection, hesitation, emphasis and analyze facial expressions. By doing the interviewing and analysis of this work myself, I had greater opportunities for inductive analysis with relevant theories and research literature (Erickson, 1986). Creating a conceptual framework through which the data could
be understood was the goal of this analysis, and grounding theory in reality (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) accounted for as much data as possible.

Thematic analysis of the data was employed (Aronson, 1995). After transcription, themes and sub-themes were all collected and re-assembled to create a comprehensive picture of the interviewees’ lives in the neighborhood. By focusing on the linkages between the biographical particulars vis-à-vis constraints and resources within self, family and the community, I hoped to understand how Latino youth understand race and construct relationships with African Americans (Chase, 2010). I was interested in how participants told their stories, and shaped them within political and community contexts. While I was attentive to the themes in the participants’ stories, I was equally interested in how respondents positioned themselves in the face of many different worlds. Unfortunately due to time constraints (primarily my own work obligations) I was unable to interact regularly with any of the participants after the interviews to clarify and concretize any sub-themes. Any errors here, then are my own.

My unit of analysis is the individual. Therefore, I continually compared, contrasted, and aggregated the data (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 169) in order to theorize a formalized structure for learning about these Mexican youth’ experiences with race, during and after experiencing the violence of bias crimes in the community.

My keen awareness of the emotionally charged nature of the interviews and the importance of sufficient emotional framing needed to be anticipated and felt beforehand, to manage and engage appropriately with the interviewee. In a less esoteric sense and of more import in the interviewing process, I tried to listen to responses without judgment and without imposing my anti-racist political agenda. Getting at the key issues involved in
Black-Latino relations necessarily required honesty of responses in all directions prior to formulating political agendas. Nevertheless, emotional distancing on my part would have made it harder to hear the voices and experiences of my respondents.

Given the incendiary nature of the topic of immigrant violence, participants may have had a variety of personal feelings that arose during questioning. In some cases, respondents may have reverted to platitudes in an effort to disguise sorrowful or shameful memories, and thereby bias the data. This is especially so when respondents are vulnerable with limited financial resources. Due to social mores, one cannot ask respondents directly if they are racists or bigots (Taub, 2016). Respondents in acute distress may have told me what they thought I wanted to hear, rather than what they really felt out of fear.

Nevertheless, the narrators’ stories were their own and not mine.

**Historical Context of Life in a Post-Industrial Community**

This historically rich community of old churches and Victorian homes, devolved into an economic backwater by the late 1970s as commercial and residential development shifted south of the Staten Island Expressway.

The 10302 zip code (mostly Port Richmond, but including part of neighboring Westerleigh) has the highest percentage of Hispanics of any zip code on Staten Island, at 41.3%. Of the Hispanic population, it is the only zip code on Staten Island where Mexicans outnumber Puerto Ricans: Mexicans make up 20% of the population of the zip code (Datasheer, 2013). The zip code includes parts of nearby Westerleigh so Mexicans make up roughly 23% of the population of Port Richmond, with the presence being highest along Port Richmond Avenue, and in the northern part of the neighborhood in general (Neighborhood Scout, 2013).
The neighborhood has a long history. It is a community whose fortunes waned considerably in the late 20th century. Recent immigration has changed the neighborhood’s trajectory but its forgotten industrial heritage will continue to define this community in the most residential borough of New York for some time to come, especially given that the waterfront remains blighted. A thriving port for several centuries, the building of the Verrazano Bridge mid-century led to rapid suburban development on the rest of the island by the late 1960’s. Late 20th century changes in the development of container shipping, global capital and telecommunications changed the need for small industrial ports near cities. The nearby Ports of Newark and Elizabeth developed into the great container port on the Eastern Seaboard of the US, the third largest in the US, with smaller ports in the area all but diminished (Lipton, 2004). Similar fates were met by the docks and dock workers along the Hudson in Manhattan and by those of the Port of Brooklyn, Redhook. By the late-20th Century longshoremen and goods no longer docked in the strait between Staten Island and Bayonne. The few ships that now sail this area head a mile or two farther west and south to the Ports of Elizabeth and Newark, nearer to Newark airport and closer in to where the Ikea in Elizabeth now stands. (Ironically, container ships do sail the Kill van Kull to get to Ports Newark and Elizabeth, thereby passing Port Richmond daily. In fact the current construction at the Bayonne Bridge is intended to raise the roadbed by 64 feet to accommodate super container ships (Heffernan, 2015.)

**Interviewer as instrument**

In qualitative research the researcher becomes the instrument through which data is obtained (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 368). As the sole interviewer of this project I faced
challenges that limited triangulation and peer evaluation. Photo elicitation and comparison of data allowed for limited triangulation and evaluation.

Several factors allowed me to access personal information in a relatively brief period of time. For one, I was an ethnic insider: like the participants I was ethnically Mexican and given the recent growth of the Mexican community in New York City, I was able to insert myself as an adult mentor in the community in a relatively short period of time. Even though I met Latino leaders in Port Richmond, Staten Island, and many of the Mexican leaders I met there were directly involved in organizing immigrants, most of them were recent arrivals rarely more than 20 years in the US. By contrast I was someone who was ethnically Mexican but had been born in this country and had long roots as a Mexican immigrant in the US from both sides of my family. Other Latinos involved in the community, not Mexican, had often lived or worked in other parts of New York City prior to working in the community or had experiences with non-Mexican populations or Mexican populations outside of the New York Metropolitan area. Another reason I gained trust was that I was seen as a college-educated Mexican American passionate about the history and people of the Mexicans in the United States. While I was not a recent immigrant, I could share immigration stories from within my own family that corroborated and complemented their border crossing stories. As a bilingual Spanish and English speaking ethnic Mexican, I was a bridge builder between the community of higher education, where I worked as an academic advisor in a teacher education program and my own standing as a doctoral student, and the community of youth wishing educational and financial empowerment, particularly in light of the then recent advantages brought by Obama’s executive order on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA, 2012). The months when the study was
conducted were in particular a period of high optimism for undocumented young adults, many seeing the short-term possibilities for full-time work or study under a protected immigrant status. The implications for this executive order made law were only just beginning to be appreciated by some respondents and their families during the duration of the study.

In what at first seemed a major delay to data gathering, the early weeks of my hanging out in Port Richmond in October 2013 occurred just prior to the devastating weather event brought by Hurricane Sandy on Tuesday, October 29, 2013 and Wednesday, October 30, 2013. Hurricane Sandy was one of the largest hurricanes ever to hit the Eastern Seaboard of the United States and certainly the most devastating to New York and Staten Island in recent memory. The storm surge a record 13 feet high, flooded low-lying areas of Staten Island including parts of Port Richmond, the neighborhood under study. In a rare move by city officials, the New York City Department of Education peremptorily closed all the city’s public schools on Tuesday and Wednesday for storm management, but when lower Manhattan lost power due to a flooded electrical station on East 14th Street, things did not return to normal quickly: streetlights were not operating and subways did not run, most of lower Manhattan was at a standstill and the New York City schools were not reopened until the following week. By the time I drove out to investigate the mayhem that following Sunday, street level water had mostly subsided, but many businesses and residents had piles of debris in front of their homes, and were removing water damaged items from basements, first floors and garages. Businesses old and new near the harbor were flooded and some small businesses, and fast food restaurants, were closed for months, as sewage had flooded basements and needed to be sanitized. Many of my respondents, too, were affected by the
damage wrought to their community and nearby communities, especially those immigrant males who worked and toiled in construction, much of which was at a halt in the City and surrounding areas for months. For a few months, the priority of rebuilding damage in coastal areas of the city, took precedence over new development in central areas of the city. The episode proved to have long lasting repercussions with many of my participants working in ‘Sandy relief’ as volunteers or short-term paid employees with non-profits in the succeeding months.

When I returned to hanging out in Port Richmond in mid-November, I did so as a volunteer with the youth, hauling bags of clothes and pallets of water from trucks to vans where they would be delivered to emergency shelters. We visited several floors of a temporary adult shelter and family shelters of people who had lost their homes, and even visited a pet shelter for surviving pets who no longer had a home. I worked and volunteered with them and this shared experience lasted several months. There were other adult community members who also volunteered, but my being a part of the volunteer effort to help aid Sandy survivors ended up being a great way for young adults to know that I was there for them, and that I shared in the responsibility of helping needy families in their community.

The Respondents

Most of the fifteen (15) respondents knew at least one of the ‘victims’ by name or had a parent or close relative (Aunts, Uncles) who knew at least one of the victims. All Mexican-born respondents had families from Oaxaca, or Puebla in Mexico, reflecting the origins of the vast majority of Mexican immigrants to the New York City metropolitan area (Smith, 2005). Their parents’ origins were often from the same town or neighboring towns,
with some parents having met in Mexico City as young adults before migrating to the U.S.
All US-born respondents were born in New York City. Nine of the respondents reported
being raised in multigenerational households with three of the respondents reporting having
been raised in families with seven or more children (Jovita, Leonardo, and Javier). Of the
fifteen respondents, just under half (seven) lived in households with their birth parents. In
several of the remaining cases the main caregiving parent had moved on to another partner
and eight of the respondents spoke of having siblings from at least one of their parents’ new
partners.

Table 1 gives a demographic overview of the fifteen respondents included in my
study.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name /Age</th>
<th>Generational Status (Age arrived U.S.)</th>
<th>Languages spoken</th>
<th>Citizenship Status</th>
<th>Level of Ed/Ed Status</th>
<th>Career Aspiration</th>
<th>Family Origin</th>
<th>Lives with/ Siblings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Susana (19)</td>
<td>US Born</td>
<td>Spanish, English</td>
<td>Citizen Mixed Status family</td>
<td>HS Grad / In College</td>
<td>Writer/ youth advocacy</td>
<td>Oaxaca Came 23 yrs ago</td>
<td>SBB/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Katya (20)</td>
<td>Mexican Born/ (Age 7)</td>
<td>Spanish, English</td>
<td>DACA Mixed Status Family</td>
<td>HS Grad / In College</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>M-Puebla F-Oaxaca</td>
<td>MSS Mother 2 sisters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Javier (19)</td>
<td>Mexican Born/ (Age 8 mos.)</td>
<td>Spanish, English</td>
<td>DACA Mixed Status Family</td>
<td>HS Grad / Trade School</td>
<td>Medical Profession</td>
<td>M-Oaxaca F - Oaxaca</td>
<td>MFSSBBBBB 9 siblings 7 and parents still in the house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Born/Status</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>School Remarks</td>
<td>Mother Floor</td>
<td>Additional Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Andrés</td>
<td>Mexican American, Age 5</td>
<td>Spanish, English</td>
<td>DACA/HS Grad</td>
<td>Not in School</td>
<td>M-DF F- Toluca</td>
<td>Older sister not documented, all stepsiblings US citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Leonardo</td>
<td>US Born, Age 20</td>
<td>Spanish, English</td>
<td>Citizen/HS Grad</td>
<td>Trade School – some college</td>
<td>Oaxaca Came 23 yrs ago</td>
<td>Mixed status family (brother to Javier – see above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Eduardo</td>
<td>Mexican American, Age 18</td>
<td>Spanish, English</td>
<td>Wants/HS Grad</td>
<td>(Catholic) /Wants college</td>
<td>Oaxaca</td>
<td>BBBM, Youngest brother US born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lorenzo</td>
<td>Mexican American, Age 21</td>
<td>Spanish, English</td>
<td>DACA/HS Grad</td>
<td>In College – Med Tech</td>
<td>Oaxaca</td>
<td>MF – 4-S 5-B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yazmín</td>
<td>Mexican American, Age 19</td>
<td>Spanish, English</td>
<td>Green Card/HS Grad</td>
<td>Wants College</td>
<td>Juxtlajuaca, Oaxaca</td>
<td>SSM Nuclear family Green card holders, Aunt &amp; Uncle live upstairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Miguel</td>
<td>US Born</td>
<td>Spanish, English</td>
<td>US Citizen</td>
<td>Special Ed</td>
<td>Oaxaca</td>
<td>MBBB, Father S (nephew)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Isel</td>
<td>Mexican American, Age 18</td>
<td>Spanish, English</td>
<td>DACA applicant</td>
<td>12 Grade /Wants to go to College</td>
<td>Oaxaca</td>
<td>MFSSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Equivalency Diploma Seekers</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fernando (20)</strong></td>
<td>Thirteen (13) respondents were bilingual Spanish/English, one respondent was trilingual in Mixteco, Spanish and English, and another grew up in a household where Mixteco was spoken. Mixtecan languages comprise one of the largest indigenous language groups spoken in Mexico with approximately half a million speakers in Mexico (Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, 2012). Martino-Velez is quoted as</td>
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<tr>
<td>US Born</td>
<td>Spanish, English, US Citizen</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th Grade / In HS EQUIV. DIP. Class</td>
<td>Policeman Oaxaca - MFBB</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jovita (20)</strong></td>
<td>Spanish, English, US Citizen</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed Status Family</td>
<td>10th Grade / In HS EQUIV. DIP. Class</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Enrique (22)</strong></td>
<td>Spanish, English, Wants DACA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed Status Family</td>
<td>Left HS with 1 semester left Wants HS EQUIV. DIP. Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pedro (23)</strong></td>
<td>Spanish, English, Wants DACA</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Age 14)</td>
<td>6th Grade in Mexico In High School EQUIV. DIP. Class</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nicolás (20)</strong></td>
<td>Mixteco, Spanish, English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abandoned by father two years ago</td>
<td>7th Grade Returned in 9th Grade EQUIV. DIP. Class</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language

Thirteen (13) respondents were bilingual Spanish/English, one respondent was trilingual in Mixteco, Spanish and English, and another grew up in a household where Mixteco was spoken. Mixtecan languages comprise one of the largest indigenous language groups spoken in Mexico with approximately half a million speakers in Mexico (Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, 2012). Martino-Velez is quoted as
estimating 25,000 – 30,000 Mixteco speakers in the New York Metropolitan area (Torrens, 2011). All of the students spoke Spanish and English and all interviews were conducted in English, with some Spanish thrown in.

**Gender**

Overall ten (10) of the respondents were male and five (5) were female.

**Citizenship & Immigration Status**

Eight (8) of the respondents were U.S. born. Of the seven (7) respondents born in Mexico, three of those (3) had applied for and received Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a presidential executive order given in 2012 to allow children who had arrived prior to the age of 15 and who had either graduated from high school and/or joined the military to receive a work permit renewable every three years (DACA, 2012). The remaining four (4) Mexican-born respondents were on a trajectory to complete the General Educational Development (GED) Test, to qualify for DACA and had added incentive only in the prior 15 months to do so in a timely fashion.

**Education**

I have categorized the fifteen (15) respondents into two groups **High School Graduates** and **High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirants**. From early on it became clear that the level of educational attainment of the respondents was responsible for the relative openness of the interviewees when discussing interethnic understandings. From the beginning it appeared as if those who had graduated from high school had a language for discussing interethnic understandings in ways that were socially acceptable and somewhat varied, while students who did not have a High School Diploma tended to have more limited vocabularies and perspectives for interethnic talk. Those without high school diplomas
sometimes avoided interethnic talk, or at times relied on color blind notions when speaking of race.

Often individuals employed strategies intentionally meant to alert to the interviewer an outward obvious sign, for example, that the individual speaking was not ‘racist’. Whereas this strategy occurred to some degree in all interviews it appeared to be most pronounced among the High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirants. Perhaps it represented the low priority interethnic talk played among this group, as interethnic communication consequentially developed out of a good deal of reflection in meaning making. Moreover interethnic talk represented liberal notions of tolerance and an appreciation of and for diverse perspectives, not always valued by individuals in poor families focused on their primary objectives of shelter, security and sustenance.

In many ways the High School Graduate group functioned similarly to the second generation immigrants in much research in Segmented Assimilation research (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly & Haller, 2005). I am not denying the power of this research in understanding how immigrants are incorporated in separate ways depending on their accommodation, class and achievement outlooks into U.S. society. But I am arguing here, much like Lopez (2002) in her Race Gender Experience Framework that the study of interethnic relations, particularly with U.S. minority groups, is not served well by focusing on aspects of ‘assimilation.’ “Reducing race and gender to elements of assimilation is problematic because it deflects attention from 'the ubiquity of racial [and gender] meanings and dynamics’ in everyday life experiences as well as institutional practices” (Lopez, 2002, p. 6). I will extend this argument stating that the paradigm of assimilation, and its corollary of segmented assimilation is helpful but insufficient to explain interethnic experiences,
particularly between immigrants and native minorities.

High School Graduates were the largest category and made up ten (10) of the respondents. Six of the high school graduates included among them the first wave of beneficiaries of Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals (DACA), an Obama executive order in August 2012 that secured work permits for children brought before age 15, with a high school diploma or a GED, in college or in the military (DACA, 2012). Four (4) of the high school graduates had applied for and received DACA, and the other two were in the process of applying for it. Citizenship, or the receipt of DACA offered promising opportunities in schooling and careers for these high school graduates, however, it cannot be overstated that in the midst of this positive outlook, each and every high school graduate in this category came from a mixed-status family, where a sibling or parent did not qualify for the benefits of US citizenship or the short-term benefits of DACA. Changes in the immigration law due to Obama’s Executive Order on ‘Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) raised the stakes for undocumented youth to complete a High School Equivalency Diploma program for employment, post-secondary study, or military service, to obtain protected status.

This category included nine (9) High School Graduates and one (1) who was on the verge of graduating within weeks and graduated soon after conducting the interview. Six (6) of the HS graduates were pursuing post-secondary education: three (3) of the high school graduates, one US citizen (Susana) and two DACA recipients (Leonardo and Katya), were currently attending college and two (2) others, one citizen (Lorenzo) and one DACA recipient (Javier) were attending trade school. Another was in the process of applying to college and DACA simultaneously (Isel). The remaining four (4) High School Graduates were at the time of the interviews unsure of their post-secondary trajectories: one DACA
recipient (Andrés) and one Mexican-born but now a green card holder (Yazmín) leaned toward further training in the not-too-distant future. The other two (2) represented unique circumstances: one US born respondent held a Special Education Diploma and wanted a unionized labor job (Miguel) and one Mexican born respondent was unable to apply for DACA due to an arrest record that needed to be adjudicated before applying (Eduardo).

Five (5) of the respondents did not graduate from high school representing a key subset of the Latino experience. Latinos have long had the highest drop-out rate of any racial/ethnic group in the United States, and in 2013, the Bureau of Educational Statistics found that 14% of all Hispanics were high school non-completers or status drop-outs (Chu, 2013). All five of the High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirants were at various stages of seeking their GED’s: three (3) of these had attended only schools in the US and two (2) had left formal education in their senior year of high school soon after becoming parents, one US-born (Jovita) and one Mexican-born (Enrique), while two (2) others, both males (Pedro and Nicolás), had been born in Mexico, had had limited education in Mexico, and had arrived in the US as teenagers.

Students in this final sub-category of those with limited education in Mexico represent one of the fastest growing percentages of Mexican immigrants to the US (Terrazas, 2010). In addition those students represent the only respondents who grew up in households where an indigenous language (Mixteco) was spoken: one of the respondents grew up in a Mixteco speaking household but did not speak Mixteco himself, while the other student was trilingual in Mixteco, Spanish & English fluent in Mixteco. Indigenous language exposure both enriched and complicated the formal educational and career trajectories of these students. In earlier eras of immigration to the U.S. in the 19th and 20th
Centuries, individuals who lacked formal education could pursue jobs in manufacturing and manual labor. Immigrants lacking formal education in the 21st Century are deeply handicapped by a lack of formal schooling, given the loss of an industrial economy and the growth of a post-industrial society that emphasizes service work and information technology. Declines in manufacturing also result in a decline in the value and importance of manual labor, and blue collar workers without formal education in this post-industrial political economy essentially meet a dead end for economic prospects.

High School Graduates

Four of the high school graduates were two sets of siblings, one set US-born, another set Mexican-born; of each pair one sibling is in college and one is in trade school:

Susana is 19 years old, US Born, and an English major in college who wants to be a writer. After having interned in several youth development organizations in the metropolitan area, Susana has a very sophisticated understanding of progressive politics and coalition building. Living with an older sister who is an activist in the Dreamer movement, Susana is well aware of the issues surrounding immigration. Both she and her sister are effective public speakers.

Lorenzo, Susana’s brother, is 22 years old, US Born, a high school graduate who has tried several college majors from nursing to medical technology, but has finally decided that at this point in his life, college is not for him. He attends a proprietary trade school in auto mechanics and so far enjoys working with his hands. He doesn’t rule out college at some point in the future, but it’s not in the cards for him now. Unlike his sister he prefers to be in the background and not be in the public eye.

Leonardo is 21 years of age, was brought to the US at age 10, and is in his senior
year of study at the local public college to become a medical technician. He, too, wants a
career in the medical field and is committed to working in the field. He is optimistic about
his career. Lorenzo considers himself more a regular guy with his brother, Javier, having
more of an edge.

Javier, is 19 years of age, born in Mexico, and brought to the US at age 8. He is a
high school graduate and a recent recipient of DACA of age. He wants to start college,
work in the medical field, and then travel the world. A six-week proprietary trade course as
a nurse’s assistant opened the doors to being a nurse during data collection. He is both
optimistic and extroverted with many friends from many walks of life.

The remaining two (2) high school graduates were the first in their families to
complete high school in the U.S. And at the time of the study were undecided about which
academic or career trajectory would be in their future.

Andrés is 20 years old, born in Mexico and brought to the US by age 5. He is a high
school graduate and DACA recipient with the soul of a radical revolutionary. After several
years of working as a deli assistant through high school, he wants to apply to college, made
more possible by DACA, and get a more substantial job. His passion and compassion make
him the most open to leftist politics and organizing.

Yazmín at 19 years old is in her first year of study at the public college where she
hopes to work in the legal field. She is the recipient of a Green Card due to judicial
discretion under the “Special Immigrant Juvenile Status” law after proving long term
abandonment by her “donor” father soon after they entered the U.S. While she was raised
by her birth mother, her mother had been the victim of a crime limiting her financial
opportunities. (She called me back after our interview to not use the term ‘father’ in any of
her interviews as her only knowledge of him dates prior to age 5 and she does not really consider him anything more than a ‘donor’.) She is optimistic that life for her and her sister will improve as they were both granted this status. She was brought to the US by her mother at age 10.

Even though he is a graduate of a Catholic High School, 19 year old Eduardo’s path is the most troubled of all the participants. Family members say he has skirted involvement with gangs and drug dealers throughout high school. Colleagues are trying to get a recent arrest for larceny removed from his record, but if they are unsuccessful they know he could be deported. While his mother worked hard to send him on the straight and narrow path, he now faces a very uncertain future, and while he has some key allies, they may not be able to help him much anymore.

Isel, just 18, is finishing her final year in the local high school and is currently applying to college with aspirations of becoming a law enforcement officer after college. Her father is a cook at a well-known taco stand on the North Shore. She’s started doing more extra-curricular activities in high school and recently acted in a local play to push her boundaries. She is in the process of applying for DACA.

Katya is 19 years of age and was born in Mexico and brought to the US at age five. She is an accomplished student with the goal of becoming a teacher and already works as a tutor to elementary and high-school aged students. Ambitious and a diligent student, Katya has received several college scholarships both locally and regionally for her academic excellence and her efforts in the community. She has also applied for and received DACA, and was the top choice for several job offers. During the time of the research, she “came out” as undocumented (Jones, 2010) and at a rally in Union Square in 2013 she also “came
out” as a survivor of sexual abuse.

**Miguel** is 20, is US Born and received a Special Education diploma at age 18 from the local public high school. His father has been very active in the community as the right-hand man of a lead organizer in the community. He hopes to work in city government in sanitation one day or an equally stable job elsewhere to help raise a family.

**High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirants**

The High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirants are students who were actively looking to complete a High School Equivalency Diploma as they did not complete a high school diploma program but had attended at least ten years of schooling in the US. The two (2) respondents in this category dropped out of high school when they became teenage parents, and another dropped out due to health conditions. Two (2) others are students who had only a limited education in Mexico. Two (2) others of the High School Equivalency Diploma seekers are US citizens and the other one (1) was brought to the US at age 3 and does not remember life before the US. The two students with limited education in Mexico arrived as young adolescents.

**Jovita** is 19 years old, US born and had a child in her final year of high school and is only one part away from completing the writing portion of her High School Equivalency Diploma. Sweet and grounded, Jovita comes from a large extended family based in Brooklyn where she lived alongside many siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles in one big building. Her father moved to South Carolina during a bump in her parents’ relationship, along with several of her brothers. She is considering joining him there, even though it may jeopardize the custody of her child.

When Hurricane Sandy hit, **Enrique** answered the call to volunteer in helping his
neighbors in Staten Island, unfortunately his job as a contractor’s helper ended temporarily as damage to the community they worked on in Far Rockaway, Queens prevented their continuing the contract. In the interim, he found out that he may be eligible to qualify for DACA if he could get some minor violations removed. As of this writing, and with legal help, he had charges of driving without a license and attacking a plains-clothes officer dropped (the officer had pushed his then-pregnant girlfriend). As a senior in high school his girlfriend gave birth and he went to work to help raise his daughter with one semester left to graduate. However, at 23 he is in a Catch-22, too old to get into a city-sponsored High School Equivalency Diploma program, and until these charges were dropped, he could not safely apply for DACA. Should he finish his High School Equivalency Diploma and receive DACA he’d like to join the Marines. He was brought to the US at age 3.

Fernando is 19 years old, US born and is in the process of finishing up his High School Equivalency Diploma. He had only completed part of his freshman year when a freak accident by a contractor working on the façade of his high school left him blind in one eye. After many surgeries within six months of his freshman year, the doctors were able to save his eye, but the damage to the eye was irreparable. His focus and eyesight deteriorated and he had to relearn how to read and navigate private and public spaces with one eye. His recovery took longer than all had hoped. He lost a year of schooling and after turning 16, Fernando never returned to high school. He is hoping to go to college after completing his High School Equivalency Diploma and with funds obtained from the out-of-court settlement with the contractor that he hopes soon will be final.

High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirants with Limited Education in Mexico. Two of the High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirants were Students with
Limited Formal Education, Pedro and Nicolás. Pedro had not attended any formal K-12 schooling in the US. Nicolás attended only a brief part of seventh grade upon his arrival before his father yanked him out of classes to work to help support the family and never returned to traditional public schooling before age 15; he returned on his own volition as a 17 year old in the 9th grade. They are the most recent arrivals in this study, having come to the US in the last ten years and represent the roughly one-third of the 11 million estimated Mexican immigrants in the US who arrive as adolescents or young adults after 2000 (Terrazas, 2010).

Strikingly, both respondents grew up in households where an indigenous language was spoken: Pedro’s mother spoke Mixteco in the home and on the street but did not speak it to him; Nicolás was a Mixteco speaker who learned his family’s heritage language at age five when his parents moved back to their home community in Oaxaca from Sonora where Nicolás was born and raised as a young child. It’s important to distinguish this fraction of the High School Equivalency Diploma seekers as they represent a key subset of the Mexican immigrants as more than half of Mexican immigrants do not hold a high school diploma: Mexican immigrants have lower rates of education than migrants of other countries (Passel, et. al, 2012).

Nicolás is in the process of taking his High School Equivalency Diploma in English after unsuccessfully doing so in Spanish, and is hoping to be eligible for DACA. He had very limited formal schooling in Mexico. After arrival in the US with his family at age 12, and after beginning the 7th Grade, his father took him out of school permanently, after a couple of weeks of classes, demanding that he work to help support the family. Now a determined entrepreneur, Nicolás has started his own business selling vitamins and
supplements out of a storefront franchise with another Dreamer in the neighborhood. He canvasses the neighborhood to drum up business.

**Pedro** is 20 years of age and came to this country at 14 years old. He never received any formal schooling in the US and only had limited formal schooling in Mexico. He used to assist his father in the family transportation business driving a bus from Oaxaca to Mexico City a couple of times weekly, layovering overnight with relatives in Mexico City and driving back for 5-8 hours the next day. When offered the opportunity to travel to the US at the young age of 14 he answered the call for adventure and change, joining his sister and her husband in making the trek across the border. An optimistic young man with a charming personality, he has developed his considerable English skills on the job in contracting work and interacting with several skilled bosses and a wide range of American homeowners. However, his limited written skills in English and Spanish may prevent him from successfully completing the High School Equivalency Diploma that would be his ticket to DACA and more opportunities. His hard work and engaging personality increased his ability to hustle in the big city.

**Limitations**

Despite the need for a larger in-depth study of the events in Port Richmond, this study will not be a comprehensive case study about the individual incidents of violence that occurred in 2010, due to budget and time constraints. Nor will this be a psychological study of the effects of hate crimes on immigrant youth development.

Employing qualitative techniques of interviewing will limit generalizability. This is an ethnography of one immigrant community, a limited narrative of fifteen youth, as I interpreted their feelings and meaning-making at one point in time, regarding their current
lives and a series of threatening events in the community three years prior. Engaging in discussions surrounding controversial events, the researcher anticipated not being able to generalize findings but only to examine in depth certain themes that arose from the narratives.

A fuller study might interview respondents in the African American community for a more balanced and thorough investigation of interethnic understanding, however, given time constraints this dissertation will only address interethnic understanding in one direction and hopefully in another time and situation, can African American residents in the community be studied on this phenomenon as well.

**Who Are Mexicans: Young Adults’ Perceptions**

The fifteen (15) respondents shared a tremendous amount of personal insight into their lives in the U.S. and in this community of Port Richmond, Staten Island, particularly in this community that had been the site of anti-immigrant violence in the recent past. The Mexican immigrant young adults in my study navigated daily life concerns around the intersecting issues of immigration status, poverty, work, and English language use. I’ll begin my analysis examining perceptions of how the Mexican immigrant youth identified themselves and their families.

Immigration issues, particularly for families with undocumented members was an often repeated refrain. All respondents reported residing in mixed status and extended families (mixed-status family is where one or more parent(s) is a non-citizen and at least one of the children is a citizen (Fix & Zimmerman, 2006.) Only a little over a third of my respondents (6) were citizens by birth or naturalization, though with the implementation of DACA another third (5) had obtained a level of protected status in the US. The conferral of
DACA status added plenty of optimism and a great deal of relief from anxiety to this mix, but as this was only a temporary status for some individuals under 30, the longer-term repercussions as well as any permanent consequences of this executive order had yet to be decided.

The lack of legal status for these respondents and/or their parents and family members colored neighborhood experiences regarding personal and familial safety and shaped their outlook toward living in an urban area with sporadic episodes of violence. For these young adults, victims of violence were frequently nuclear or extended family members exposed to a wide variety of threats while conducting day-to-day transactions that to many US citizens would seem innocuous and commonplace.

Take banks, for instance. Several respondents noted that day laborers, often single male immigrants who are recent arrivals, do not use banks regularly for a variety of reasons: lack of legal photo identification in the US, lack of residential stability, and primarily, lack of regular earnings where regular bank services would be worth engaging. Workers in the underground economy, including day laborers, get paid in cash to bypass taxes, minimum wage laws, and immigration laws entirely. The market for undocumented labor can bear much lower wages than that which legal US citizens would demand. Given that these men are often carrying a larger percentage of their earnings with them and/or have it stashed in crowded quarters, makes them more vulnerable to unscrupulous colleagues, family-members and even passers-by.

Another area fraught with complications is transportation to jobs (Anyon, 2014). Staten Island is just that, an island, making public transportation to areas outside the island, where the majority of jobs opportunities are, all but difficult. There is a rail line, part of the
MTA called the Staten Island Railroad, that connects the ferry area (St. George’s) to the southern tip of the Island (Tottenville), but most public transportation on the island consists of buses that generally connect to the Ferry Terminal whisking people to Manhattan and in a few cases to Brooklyn and/or New Jersey, with a minor hub around the Staten Island Mall. Still the vast majority of mall users use cars, not buses, to get there. Service sector and construction jobs are predominantly located in adjacent counties and municipalities, and not Staten Island.Repeatedly after a significant period of work, many laborers will save their money to buy a vehicle to drive to job sites, often without a legal US driver’s license, making them vulnerable to accidents or suspicion by police.

All Mexican-born respondents had families from Oaxaca, or Puebla in Mexico, reflecting the origins of the vast majority of Mexican immigrants to the New York City metropolitan area (Smith, 2005). Their parents’ origins were often from the same town or neighboring towns, with some parents having met in Mexico City as young adults before migrating to the U.S. All US-born respondents were born in New York City. Nine of the respondents reported being raised in multigenerational households with three of the respondents reporting having been raised in families with seven or more children (Jovita, Leonardo, and Javier). Of the fifteen respondents just under half (seven) lived in households with their birth parents. In several of the remaining cases the main caregiving parent had moved on and eight of the respondents spoke of having siblings from at least one of their parents’ new partners.

Conclusion

Respondents reported tensions regarding violence on Mexican immigrants in the years prior, and the time following the attacks in 2010. As we have seen before in Appendix
A around the time of increasing Mexican immigration to Port Richmond, from 2004 to 2009 there was anti-immigrant violence. Changing demographics on the Island were already a target for nativist sentiments prior to 2010. My respondents offered an important perspective on the community, their racialized lives, as well as the racial hate crimes themselves.
CHAPTER 4

Port Richmond: A post-industrialist context

Changes in Post-Industrial Port Richmond

[Port Richmond’s] changed a lot, like you know, like I said, before used to be a lotta black people here, now you go down the block you see a bunch of my cousins out there (Enrique, High School Diploma Equivalency Aspirant, 2013).

Respondents’ comments on community changes had two areas of foci: how the steadily increasing Mexican population of recent decades has changed the neighborhood and a greater awareness of the environmental state of the neighborhood after many decades of neglect. Respondents with strong community ties demonstrated a greater awareness of why immigrants were allowed to move there: much of the neighborhood sat on the site of former factories so much so that Veteran’s Park, a center of the community, had lead and arsenic abatement in the 2000s. In this chapter I report on the interviewees’ reaction to the photographs I showed them of the community then and now (see Appendix C.)

Population Changes in the Neighborhood: The Mexicans

High School graduates, respondents who represented the majority of the students who had lived in the neighborhood for ten years or more, spoke about how the neighborhood has changed as a result of increasing Mexican immigration over the last ten years. When I asked about the changes in the neighborhood, Lorenzo, a HS graduate, born in the US and raised in this community his entire life, gave the most historically grounded analysis of the area, things he had learned in previous years working with the community with his youth group:
What a lot of residents don’t realize is that Port Richmond is actually a port […] Uh, most of the times you, uh, you can’t even see into the ocean, into the river. A lot of buildings and fences blocking the view. […] We don’t really get much of a view even though we’re on a riverside. […] Port Richmond stopped being […] the center […] because the Mall was opening […], businesses had the choice of either closing down or mov-, relocating to the mall. And that’s when a lot of the stores were emptied out.[…] Then the Mexican community started building their own stores here. (Lorenzo, HS Graduate, 2013)

Long-time residents of the community seemed most proud of the community they lived in, referring to its honorable past. However, this grand history and current changes in population did not go uncriticized by their former classmates who lived in other more affluent parts of the Island. Susana, who attended a public high school in the middle of the island, explores how this current history of the community gets tied up in the micro-politics of Staten Island, of the separations and demarcations of those on the North Shore (North of the Staten Island Expressway), and its opposite communities of those in the center and South Shore:

Well, there’s a growing Mexican population. Um, well, I guess the Port Richmond went from, like, looking all fancy and, un, a great, um it spot for the older, um, generation and has now become, like a regular, um, like town, I guess. I actually, um, it was, I was at the Wagner group IDEA [Interfaith Dialogue Education in Action], and this girl said that she wouldn’t want to come to Port Richmond because it’s ‘a ghetto’ and, uh, my teacher she
actually, um, like said, ‘are you serious? [...] you know, there’s people in this group that live there.’ And then, [...] my friend and I, we both live here, [...] I was just telling her matter-of-factly, [...] we’re the only community [on the North Shore] that doesn’t’ have a projects or housing development, we were the, [...] Fifth Avenue before the Mall? Everyone went to Port Richmond to do this [...] [...] I like Port Richmond, it looks nice, I’d rather live here than anywhere else where there’s, like subsidized apartments and giant buildings of condos, and which is what’s happening in Stapleton, they’re building condos, but who’s gonna live there if the neighborhood is rundown looking. …(Susana, HS Graduate, 2013, p. 30)

Students whose families were longer term residents of the community often had younger siblings whose present-day experiences differed greatly from their own a decade ago. When shown pictures of the neighborhood in the past, Leonardo’s brother, Javier said:

Well, there was definitely a more [...] Caucasians,[...] the black community was [...] also there. But… the Mexican community wasn’t here until, like, the, the late 1990s [...] That’s when they started, that’s when my, one of my first uncles came, and they decided, you know, we, we want this to be the place our kids could grow up. And our family. [...] Yeah. So they decided, that’s, my whole family came here after that, their family and friends started coming here and it just started becoming a … Mexican-populated place. [...] Before walking in the streets, you know, there wasn’t much Mexican stores, now there’s…

He describes how before it was more empty and he didn’t see many Mexicans. In his school,
PS 20, he says:

It was diverse, growing up, yes, it was definitely more diverse, each year kept getting more diverse. And now, last year, uh, like, mostly all Mexicans…all the Hispanic people coming outta that school. Before it was more whites [and blacks]. (Javier, HS Graduate, 2013)

Javier made direct comparisons with the predominantly Mexican schools he sees his younger sisters attending and the formerly more diverse schools, he attended as a kid. Neighborhood changes seemed stark, especially when respondents compared their own school age experiences with the school age experiences of younger siblings.

In trying to discuss with Javier’s brother, Leonardo, why neighborhoods changed, Leonardo responded:

I don’t know, the neighborhood changed […] more immigrants came. […] I guess you could say, I guess now I see Port Richmond more, more crowded. Yeah, it’s more crowded where before it wasn’t that crowded, you know. […] ‘Cause I remember when I came her it was more, like… Quiet. Like, quiet, Now it’s like Ouff! […] There was […] like less people and less stores, you know. It was quiet, you could walk, and, like don’t see nobody. Now you see, like … People all the time! (Leonardo, High School Graduate, 2013).

Leonardo speaks about how the neighborhood has grown and changed in recent years, primarily with the increasing numbers of Mexican immigrants. A quiet post-industrial backwater has become an inviting place for new waves of immigrants, transforming a once moribund community into a satellite immigrant community in the big metropolis.
Vulnerability in the Physical Environment: Environmental Changes to Port Richmond

“Yes, [I played in the park] all the time. […]

Before I knew it had arsenic in it!”

(Leonardo, HS Graduate, 2013)

The second focus of comments regarding changes in the neighborhood centered on the general habitability of the neighborhood including comments about the park, Veteran’s Park, found to have hazardous levels of lead and arsenic in the 1980’s. Several respondents made direct comments about the pollution in the local park. Veteran’s Park now has signs warning children not to play in the dirt as lead and arsenic are in it. However, several respondents noted that the signs were a relatively recent addition (2009) explaining that when they played in Veteran’s park as children for years, they did so without knowing that the local park was full of contaminants including dangerous levels of arsenic and lead. In not an uncommon legacy of long term industrially polluted sites, it was into this neighborhood that poor Mexican immigrants were allowed to move. I asked Lorenzo if he’d spent time in Veteran’s Park as a kid.

Oh, yeah, I basically grew up in the park, played in the dirt, with the lead.[…] what they had done was they removed the top soil and replaced it. So now, the, you just have to dig a little bit deeper.[…] I believe it was three feet or four feet […] what they used [to fix it] was a soil, [mixed with] manure, so it would smell for months. […] It was really horrible. […] Nobody went then. […]No, no, not even close to, the radius was probably blocked down. (Lorenzo, HS Graduate, 2013)

Enrique commented on the current physical state of the neighborhood as less desirable than his former adjoining neighborhood of Westerleigh. Looking at the pictures I
showed him, he said:

[It’s] not like how it used to be – clean, and everything. Mmmm…I don’t know where that’s […] uh I don’t know, over here it shows, like, its beautiful, like you wanna live in Port Richmond. Over here, ehh, you iffy about it. I don’t know, like, back then, I guess it had more respect, now it doesn’t, now it’s a whole free-for-all. You against whoever…I mean, you know[…]the sun comes out for everybody, you gotta find a job or something but…you know…I don’t know what to say about that [points at picture of the Day Laborers] (Enrique, High School Equivalency Diploma goer, 2013).

In addition to commenting on the clean streets and the pristine park from when it had just been built back in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, Enrique is making an oblique comment about day laborers, “You gotta find a job or something,” he says pointing at the day laborers. He doesn’t come right out and say that they are a blight on the community, but by referring to how people ‘find jobs’, it’s clear he doesn’t see himself as one. While not born in the US, Enrique has been here since age 3 and sees himself as more of an American than others.

Pedro, a laborer with limited formal education, discusses the neighborhood changes primarily in racial terms:

[…] Yeah, when I first came out here […] there was blacks, I mean, but it was a little, little bit more blacks than Mexicans. (…) And then after years it was just completely gone, like, there was just, like, couple of them and a bunch of Mexicans…so I was like, wow, like it’s changed a lot, you have a bunch of Mexican stores, Mexican owners. […] [ten years ago] it wasn’t anything like that…there used to be, you know… white people owning stores around here, stuff like that,
Chinese… and now it’s, like, one Chin-, one or two Chinese people … or like, one black person owning the store … and a bunch of Mexicans! (Pedro, High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirant, 2013).

Given that Pedro had arrived at a later age, he does contrast the US of his early adulthood to the Mexico of his youth with in a way that highlights American cultural referents and contrasts them to the childhood values he learned in Mexico. Later in the interview, Pedro offers commentary about his experiences with American culture, rather than make any reference to the class context of the neighborhood. He compares life in the US to how he remembers life in Mexico pointing out differences.

Conclusion

Changes in the community of Port Richmond were most apparent to longer term residents of the neighborhood. All recognized that the neighborhood was now more of a Mexican immigrant neighborhood due to the significant growth of the Mexican community in the residential and commercial areas of the neighborhood. In addition, only in the last ten years had these young adult immigrants become aware that they lived and played in a neighborhood that had once been the home of heavy industry. High levels of arsenic and lead found in Veteran’s park, the village green of the neighborhood, meant that many of them realized that they had been exposed to the deleterious effects of industrial pollution only after a decade or so of living in Port Richmond. Poor immigrants get to settle a neighborhood filled with environmental compromise, whose negative effects may only be known in the long and not short term.
CHAPTER V

Youth Racialized Experiences

My participants’ racialized lived experiences had to do with issues of work, family, residential mobility, indigeneity, banks, and police. These are the issues that address their racialized experiences and frameworks that they raised which I discuss in this chapter.

Issues Confronted by Immigrant Families in Poverty

Poor families with immigration concerns confront trying circumstances. Several respondents shared difficult family circumstances including parental abandonment (Yazmín), alcoholism (Nicolás), drug use (Eduardo), spousal abuse of parents by family members and partners (Yazmín) and childhood sexual abuse (Katya). In some cases these situations were exacerbated by the separation of families caused by migrating to the northeast trying to secure jobs to pay for the remainder of the family to join them. For other respondents, life in the United States and the difficulty in obtaining and securing employment and residential stability were to account for the deterioration of the family circumstances. In most cases, parents took pains not to include their children in a failing partnership, however, if and when dissolution of a marriage happened all children were affected.

The issues confronted by the respondents informed many aspects of their lives. When I asked, Yazmín what she wanted to be in the future (career aspirations), she responded, “Well, right now really…well, I’m confused but I have an idea, I think I might want to become a domestic violence attorney, or if not an anesthesiologist.” When I probed further about what appealed to her about the careers, specifically the domestic violence attorney, she responded, “Well, like, from what I know, like, all my, all the women in my
family have been, like, gotten beaten up. (...) Beaten up by, like, my, the men, so I’m like, this is something that affects me, like my family. (...) Yeah, so it’s really, like, cl- personal, yeah.” (Yasmin, HS Graduate, 2013)

“Strong enough for work”

One overriding refrain of all respondents had to do with the necessity of work by parents and even themselves, often from a young age. High school graduate Andrés proffers reasons given by his mother for why Mexicans need to work.

My mom was just always working and she would tell me […] the minute I turned thirteen she thought that I was, like, strong enough for some reason to just work. So she’s like, ‘find a job’. […] I would just be like, ‘she’s kidding right’? I would [work] I did it for a minute, like a month, just thinking she was kidding but she was, […]she was serious about it and so she got my dad to encourage me to go to work and I’m like, I’m, ‘Mom, by, by law, I’m supposed to have this paper, no’? And she’s like, ‘yeah, well that’s for the Americans, […] So I’m, like, ‘what is that supposed to mean’? She’s like, ‘well you’re a Mexican and us Mexicans we work hard’. So, she’s like, ‘no matter the age. I was working since I was a little girl and look at me, you know,’ and blah, blah, blah, […] basically, I always worked, I always worked, […] she grew that mentality inside of me that it was wrong…[to not be working]. […] That, that I had to make money […] to learn how to make […] because eventually, like, right now I really know the essential part of money ‘cause now I really, really feel it, I feel it […]. Then she tells me, ‘remember all those times you worked? Do you, feel that, […] did you accomplish something?’ [At the time] I felt that I haven’t. And she’s like, well, yeah, ‘well basically if you don’t have a
Andrés tells of his mother’s fortitude in encouraging him to be successful, even though, her ideas of work exceeded his expectations for work, especially as an American teenager. After explaining that his mother works in a nail salon and his father works in construction, Andrés said that they were always working:

Honestly my mom was always working, my father was always working that I really never got to grow that affection towards them, like […] most common kids would. So, right now, to me, I still have that affection towards it, […] They still live with me. (Andrés, HS Graduate, 2013).

Andrés talks about a common refrain, that parents’ long working hours change first and second generation immigrant children’s attachments to their home countries and home cultures (Suárez-Orozco & Qin, 2006). While boys may have more freedom in home and community and girls may have more household responsibilities, children may spend less time with their parents in a host country than they would in the sending country. Many participants shared their experiences working as young men: Eduardo spoke of working in a car wash and Leonardo spoke of working in a deli. Several of the women talk about working at restaurants and bakeries (Jovita), as well as in occasionally cleaning houses with their mothers or aunts (Yazmín).

“Blood” and blended large extended families

As is common in the literature, more than half of the Mexican immigrant youth respondents identified themselves as being part of large or extended families. Three of the
respondents identified as being part of families with seven or more children; one third were from families of three children, and one respondent was one of two children, both closer to the current average of 2.2 children per Mexican family (Rhoda & Burton, 2010). Given their relative youth most respondents lived with some of their siblings, but depending on the ages of their siblings, not all currently lived with their siblings. Not one of the respondents was an only child.

While many spoke of living with at least one parent (8) or two (6), most respondents spoke of living in multi-generational families currently or for some or part of their childhoods. Several others reported living in close proximity, often the same building, where aunts, uncles and cousins lived down the hall or a floor above or below the respondents. More than half described coming from blended families. Pedro immigrated to the US with his sister and her husband, but no longer lived with them. Jovita was typical in discussing her current living arrangements after her father left for South Carolina and her mother connected with a new man.

Andrés’ discussion of his family was more creative than most but not atypical for a core group of respondents (1/3). “I have one blood sister, that blood sister and a baby, uh, stepbrother [half-brother] and then, then I got another baby stepbrother [half-brother] from another mother [father’s previous wife], and then another, three stepsisters from another mother.”

Only Miguel, spoke of having been separated from his family when he was seven years old. Miguel was the only one who spoke of having been in foster care, he

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10 Seven or more children is still far above the current average in Mexico and in the U.S., though closer to the average size of families from the Mixteco region of Mexico (4.1 children) from the states of Puebla, Guerrero and Morelos (Rhoda & Burton, 2010).
acknowledged that he and his siblings came back home after six months. When he returned at age seven he said he saw the neighborhood through a new lens. I did not ask what caused the foster care experience and only that it had happened; of that he was very matter of fact.

**Lack of Residential Stability / High Residential Mobility**

Several respondents described having moved domiciles within the last 3 years. Enrique spoke of a previous domicile and the unique circumstances requiring his parents to move:

> I don’t know, I think I was better off where I used to live, in Westerleigh. We moved because my father’s boss sold the house. So we moved to Port Richmond ‘cause we found a house that has a lotta rooms so that’s why we rented it but, honestly, like the girl that got shot two days ago in the face? [Tells me the story of the woman who got shot in the face- a waitress at the Emporium at 4:30 in the morning after leaving work.] […] That’s the type of stuff I don’t like, you know, you don’t’ wanna hear ‘cause you’re right around the corner (Enrique, High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirant, 2013).

Enrique’s discussion of a recent neighborhood shooting was unfortunately, not isolated in this neighborhood, though these episodes of violence during my research seemed to come dispersed in waves, primarily at the height of the summer. Finding a residence in a relatively safe neighborhood was a primary family preoccupation.

Yazmín spoke of moving from the south of the island, Eltingville, to Port Richmond two years ago. She said she was happy to be in Port Richmond, as living there (Eltingville) she felt more isolated: “It was, like, people that I couldn’t really connect with: I didn’t see any Mexicans there (laughs). Yeah. And I also went to a school there, and I was, like yeah,
the only Mexican in my grade (Yazmín, 2013).” Moving from a mostly white neighborhood to a neighborhood with more Mexicans connected Yazmín more closely with her roots.

Many respondents spoke of finding a secure place to live being a key concern of their families, many mixed status with parents that were undocumented, and often this meant moving to more established neighborhoods in the north and center of Staten Island and very occasionally in the south of the island. Doing so, however, often meant integrating with people of different backgrounds, blacks in North Shore neighborhoods, Whites in the center and south of the island, and immigrant groups particularly from Sri Lanka and Liberia in the center and north of the island.

**Indigenous Youth**

The two respondents with limited or interrupted formal education in the study, each grew up in households where an indigenous language was also spoken in addition to Spanish, and once in the US, also had to become fluent in English. Pedro spoke only Spanish and English, he grew up in a household where his mother spoke Mixteco (footnote), even though he did not speak it. Nicholas, while raised first in a Spanish only household in Sonora before age five, evolved into a bilingual in Mixteco and Spanish when his family returned to their village in Guerrero. Being in a household where parents spoke an indigenous language complicated the bilingual Spanish/English binary. It complicated notions of identity along with complicating educational trajectories. In retrospect, it is not surprising that the only two respondents who grew up in indigenous speaking households were in turn my only respondents who experienced the significant interruptions in formal education. Mixteco, is not an official language in Mexico and carries no world language status as Spanish does. Rural areas of southern Mexico unsurprisingly have the highest
rates of illiteracy and lowest levels of education.

In speaking about his experiences with the Mixteco language, Pedro explained:

“Yeah. So, they never teach me… [...] In the house… [...] And in the house is always Spanish. [...] So … I would see, like, little kids, you know, like, right now you see a little kid and then see how fast he learn the, he learns. And then you’re talking to him and he talks to you and everything. So that’s what I was seeing there with those little guys, little kids, like [...] They all speaking Mixteco! And I’m, like, it was, like it was funny, like in one way I wanted to learn it. [...] Never got the chance so it…and plus it’s, it’s tough to, like, when you’re, like eleven, twelve years old to start, to start another language. [...] Just putting the words together.. [...] Just challenging [...] Unless you use it, but if you’re not it’s a challenge just to [...] put the words together. [...] Could be different, I mean, you know, like…

Pedro shares his fascination with his own heritage in a positive way, by being amazed, if not a bit envious, of his fellow young Mixtecos speaking Mixteco in the US. Given his relatively limited exposure to education in Spanish, one can relate to his sense of difficulty in getting a high school equivalency diploma in what by many accounts is a 3rd home language.

Nicolás was the only Mixteco speaker that I interviewed, but like Pedro, he also had a history of interrupted schooling. He seemed eager to share his unique story with me and explained what he had both experienced and lived, knowing that it was a unique story. He was born in Sinaloa but he was five when his mom moved to Oaxaca. He is proud of his three languages, but considers it hard.

Yeah so, so it’s, it’s hard. Yeah, hard for me…’cause when, when I came the first
time when I came here, my mom, she told me that, she, she said that there’s this school. I only went there two months then my father came, he took me away, said no that school’s not for you, you have to go work, so you come with me to work. So then he took me from the school, he sent me to work. I had to work 12, 13, 14, 15, 16…. […] And then when I, when I get, like, uh, like, grow to the, to the 17…said, nah. [I] HAVE to go back to school. Uh huh, I said, then he said ‘No, you can’t go to school’ and he, like, he got mad, like, I don’t know, he don’t, he don’t [want] me to… […] He, he just, uh, come work, […] so I send myself to school.

Nicolás’ testimony of being pulled out of school in seventh grade by his father who thought he should work as a thirteen year old instead of attending school, replays an immigrant narrative more common in the 19th and 20th Centuries than in the 21st. While the vast majority of my respondents represent narratives aligned with 19th and 20th century immigrant narratives, aspiration for betterment in income and education, 21st century young adults speaking indigenous languages were logistically unable to attend regular formal schooling in Mexico. Moreover, only Nicolás critiques life in Mexico. When he states, “in Mexico it’s the same,” Nicolás is talking about a culture of theft and violence among poor people in Mexico, especially his experience as an indigenous person in Mexico. Some of the HS Graduates who are confident in their Americanness and in their ability to master English enough to fight back verbally, so that they do not feel like they were targets. However, this Mixteco speaker, states that life is not safer in Mexico, and from his story about his mom’s experience and fears for her safety, he is not convinced he necessarily will be safer in the United States. Nevertheless he would like to stay in the US, so he can make something for himself. While violence may be the same in both places, the opportunities available to him
here are greater than they are in Mexico.

Along with working for pay, come unstated obstacles for immigrants in preserving and saving money. For undocumented immigrant one concern worth particular caution is in the area of money and banks.

**No Banks**

Males commented on always needing to be careful with their personal safety and take pains not to be vulnerable, especially with money and banking. Concerns surrounding the secure storage of money were voiced most vehemently by the male seekers of high school equivalency diplomas. When prompted, Enrique gave me a keen analysis of what happens on the street with Mexican immigrant males.

So they just keep it [the money] on ‘em and, you know, that’s what happens. They, they catch you at night, and bang! Hit you and take you, take your money and stuff…and you, you, you know, you’re not gonna run to the cop… […] In New York it’s not, they can’t say anything if you’re illegal. If you’re legal or not legal. […] Jersey, they will. […] Yeah, Jersey … if you’re caught without a license in Jersey, you get… right to jail. […] Then they can deport you from Jersey. That’s what sucks. That’s why I don’t drive in Jersey. […] I don’t touch a car in Jersey (Enrique, High School Equivalent Aspirant, 2013).

Immigrants carry money on them because they lack access to banks. This makes immigrants vulnerable to crime. Enrique notes that things are different in New Jersey, where if one is caught driving without a license and pulled over, one is much more likely to be subject to deportation proceedings. The City of New York’s Executive Order 41 (2013) puts strict limits on city officials, including law enforcement, asking about individuals’ federal
immigration status unless it’s necessary for the receipt of a benefit or when investigating criminal activity. In contrast, two nearby New Jersey counties, Hudson and Monmouth have signed on to 287(g) amendments of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement arm of the US Department of Homeland Security (2009), thereby deputizing county officials to enforce federal immigration laws. No counties in New York State have currently signed on to this provision.

**Police and immigrants: “They didn’t know anything”**

Many of the respondents had a critical perspective of police in the neighborhood, especially during and especially after the attacks. When I asked Susana about what she thought of the cops, she gave an especially nuanced answer, both appreciative and critical:

> Um, I think they [cops] have a hard job. And uh, some of them like to use their authority and their power just, to just do whatever they want. Others, um, they try to understand but unless you’re from the community then you don’t understand anything. Um, yeah (laughs).

Susana thinks that cops are not effective against petty violence, especially when it occurs on the side streets. The violence continues, although the presence of the cops means that the crimes are committed somewhere else:

> I don’t think anything improved, I mean, it’s just I don’t know. I don’t think crime stopped when they were there, I just, I think that, um people knew they were gonna be, so they went to other places to commit their crimes.

Susana describes the difficulties between the cops and immigrants:

> Um, I know that the cops, um, well, with anywhere where there’s, um, an immigration population and, um, there’s a language barrier, um, immigrants don’t
know that the cops are there to help you, so they’re less likely to report crimes because they fear deportation or questioning of their status or, um, being, uh, thrown in jail as well. So I think that factor, no matter the time, no matter what’s happening, there’s still going to be a problem with, um, well a problem that’s happening. Um, but I think great organizations like El Centro and, um Project Hospitality and Make The Road, were there to help the community along, but, I don’t really see any improvement, we just had, um a stabbing, we had a shooting [Yates, 2013], um, all within the last month.

Susana also reflects on another problem between cops and the immigrant community – their lack of knowledge of the community. She continues:

All the police were just on Port Richmond Avenue, none of them were on the side streets and that’s where petty crimes do happen and all of the police officers were from other boroughs so they didn’t know the neighborhood, they didn’t know the language, they didn’t know anything and that was one of the things that was very frustrating.

Susana concedes the difficult job cops have, and the extent to which some cops make an effort to understand the neighborhood. In particular she highlights the fraught situation that immigrants have in dealing with the police and disincentives immigrants may have in reporting incidents of violence to the Police. Susana criticizes the cops for not venturing into the side streets of the community and vents frustration that the cops were only concerned about crime on the major thoroughfares of the community. This critique is shared by several others (Lorenzo, Pedro, Enrique) with a regularity that makes it appear as if this perspective has been discussed within the community and within families prior to my
asking. The community believes that cops stay on the main drag, protect businesses, but rarely venture out into the side streets to patrol the blocks where petty crime thrives. (For more on cops’ fears to venture in urban communities see Leovy, 2015). Pedro reiterates this critique of cops.

We seen all these cases on TV and then we see the, um, the police on, uh, on Port Richmond. But you know what, something that I, like…I don’t understand, like, how the police tried to….react when, uh, all of these cases happened. They just…they show up, or meanwhile they just, they just stand, you know, on Port Richmond, like, waiting ‘til something to happen, meanwhile look what happened down the block. [He relates the discussion of the events in 2010 to the shooting of the barmaid that occurred the week before (Yates, 2013).]

Enrique mentioned the undercover nature of police work during the time of the attacks, something not brought up by others. But in his streetwise world view, organizing and fighting for more protection would not necessarily change the outcome of street violence. He says:

You know, with the immigrants getting beat up, every other cop was walkin’ up and down, undercovers, and, you know, it was much safer, and you c-, I could come out at four o’clock in the morning and I know a cop was gonna be at the corner.

For many and for Enrique, life changed briefly during the publicity that accompanied the 2010 attacks. Community concerns were made public and by their relatively quick response, the cops’ presence was generally a positive contribution to the problem. However, for Enrique, street violence by punks was not going to go away.

Enrique later told me a story of personal altercation with the cops that resulted in his ending
up in jail for three days. As he explains it, he shoved a cop after the cop had unwittingly shoved his then pregnant girlfriend. (He was justifiably upset that he was jailed for three days, “he did it because he was a cop and he could do it,” the incident had later been removed from his record, as a minor violation, after enlisting the aid of a lawyer to clear his record. Given the minor circumstances that led to him being jailed, it sounded as if justice had been served in removing the incident from his record.) In addition, there was at least one situation for which Enrique did not appreciate the cops. I asked Enrique directly if he liked the cops being in the neighborhood and he recounts:

They [the cops] pulled me over when, when they first started ‘cause I had, uh, Pennsylvania plates. So you know, they see a Mexican with out-of-state plates, you pull ’em over. That’s what I didn’t like about it.

Enrique mentions that another issue with cops has to do with transportation. Undocumented immigrants get hired by individual contractors, but sometimes have no way to get to work. Issues regarding day laborers will be discussed more fully in the next section.

**Day Laborers- A Largely Gendered Divide**

When I showed pictures of Day Laborers in the neighborhood, three of the male respondents reported having waited their turn to obtain work as a Day Laborers in the past, though all three noted that they had not done this recently (not in the last two years) (Pedro, Eduardo, Leonardo.) In this context, Day Laborers refers to men who stand at a well-known location typically street corners in Port Richmond, waiting for small business owners (building contractors, landscapers, etc.) to offer work. Two of the male high school graduates and one of the High School Equivalency Diploma aspirants spoke specifically of
having spent a brief period as day laborers themselves (Eduardo, Leonardo, Pedro). Most males spoke non-judgmentally of the day-laborers, with one exception, Andrés.

Andrés had been told by his father, and was adamant in his retelling, that you can never wait for work, that to obtain work you go up to stores and businesses to offer your services and see if anyone needs anything. He was dismissive of day laborer efforts and wanted to dis-identify with the day-laborers. To be clear Andrés spoke negatively about the day laborers’ efforts more than the day laborers themselves. He related his father’s feelings on the subject and had internalized them.

Uh…my father would be like, like, he would…he would call, like, almost everybody, if he ever lost a job he would call his friends, his uncle, like, his family members, but he never stood in, in the corners, like, to him it was just something, like, something, like, it wasn’t honorable to do…like, he was like, always told me, ‘like, yo, don’t wait for somebody to give you a job, just go get it’. And he’s just like, ‘if you ever stay in there, like, in those streets don’t, don’t even come to me like that’, because, like, he…he doesn’t, I don’t know why, my mother never liked it either…like, my mother was just, just like, you know, like, ‘jobs are out there go get ‘em’. ‘People like that, either they just don’t know how to speak English that they, that they have to wait for somebody to give ‘em a job…but you, who, you know, like, you’re stronger, you’re bilingual, like, if you don’t know the job I bet you could learn’…just, like, [father] always told me, like, not to be in that crew because in that crew there’s also a lot of people who, you know, who are also doing drugs, who are also…are alcoholics…(Andrés, HS Graduate, 2013).

Andrés has internalized his parents’ expectations for work in the US. He also extols
the virtue of being bilingual in today’s world where he can communicate in both English and Spanish. According to his parents’ view of labor, being bilingual bestows him with social capital, access to language abilities that day-laborers often do not share.

Almost all females had a critique of at least the behavior of some of the day-laborers, though several pointed out that they had relatives who had been day laborers and some shared stories they had heard of day laborers who were hired in Port Richmond, only to be abandoned in New Jersey without a car or transportation information once their shift was over (Katya, HS Graduate, 2013).

Susana was the only respondent who clearly did not identify with the day laborers as being not from ‘her’ group:

I remember a while ago we were having a community meeting or dinner and some woman brought up the fact that whenever her 13 year old girl, um walked to school the day laborers would whistle and do cat-calls and all that stuff. I’m not sure what happened because I still see, um day laborers standing there, but, you know, that’s something normal, here in Port Richmond. I grew up with being catcalled and all that stuff. […] Yes it still happens. It happened … last summer, I was actually in Chinatown and so, um, these three Mexican guys in Chinatown are just like, walking around, and um, …and, they looked at me and they were like, “Beautiful, beautiful” and I tried to ignore it but I couldn’t and so then, I, I told them off, I cursed and all that stuff, and every, every person on the street just stopped what they were doing and looked at what was happening and then the guys, they walked away and they apologized. […] But yeah, I mean, that’s nothing new. I do, I do see day-laborers on street corners but I never see them get picked up. (Susana, HS Graduate,
Susana’s words were critical, and were not typical of female respondents, but they hint at the expectations of public behavior for men by women who were high school completers, for a higher level of civility. They also reflect a divide of opportunity between their worlds and the world of the day laborers.

However, Susana’s words and the words of Yazmín may reflect an increasing gender divide between how women and girls view their roles and opportunities in the U.S. as opposed to women’s roles in more traditional Mexican communities, what Smith (2008, p.97-99) calls ‘ranchera femininity’. ‘Ranchera Femininity’ in its extreme is “to defer to men, and lack moral autonomy and competence in relation to men.” Women who are high school completers are somewhat critical of traditional social roles and represent women’s willingness to confront the status quo of acceptable female and male behavior. (Smith also discusses how transnational women and families must renegotiate femininity in light of the greater autonomy afforded women in the US. For a fuller discussion see Smith 2008, Chapter 5.)

Susana’s words above were more critical and did not seem at all typical of respondents, but they reflected the opinions of some second generation Mexican American woman, as well as some 1.5 generation Mexican American women. Susana’s words and the words of Yazmín about day laborers reflect an immigrant divide that’s also gendered, between how women and girls view their roles in the U.S. as opposed to women’s roles in traditional Mexican societies to which they have been exposed. In this light the predominantly male day laborers are viewed through a female lens of personal safety and are not tolerant of bad male behavior. They are critical of traditional social roles and
represent women’s willingness to confront the status quo of acceptable female and male behavior. Susana relates how dealing with day laborers is part of her reality and continues to be part of her reality even outside of her community. She is embarrassed by how Mexicans act in public in areas around town not her neighborhood, yet groups of young men are sorely mistaken if she will take their objectification without response.

High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirant, Jovita, also shared her experiences with day-laborers and they were not always positive.

When you walk, yeah, that’s why…my, my little, younger sister [just turned twelve years old] she doesn’t like them. […] She doesn’t like Mexicans, period. […] Yeah and she’s, I tell her, like, you’re Mexican, your parents…and she was like, yeah but I don’t like them, the way they are that they just whistle, talk to you and they don’t even know how old are you just because we may look older doesn’t mean, you know, they can do that. […] Like, she, I guess she feels harassed by them, she doesn’t like, she rather walk around the block than go through Port Richmond Avenue. […] It used to bother me, it did. Um…it, it bothers me when I’m with my son. […] I think that’s disrespectful. And when they do that, I do get offended sometimes and I turn around and just stick the middle finger at them. […] And you know, like that’s, I find that disrespectful especially when I’m with my child, I don’t like that. […]

Jovita talks about how her younger sister, U.S. born, does not like the ‘Mexicans’ on the streets, the day laborers, as they harass her despite her young age. Jovita is less critical than her sister; she sees it as a form of ethnic solidarity to at least reign in her sister’s broad critique as critical of her own co-ethnics. But for her 12 year old sister, no such solidarity is
bestowed, portending future intraethnic cleavage.

**Conclusion**

My participants’ racialized lived experiences had to do with issues of work, family, residential mobility, indigeneity, banks, and police. Labor expectations for the youth by their parents and by the young adults themselves, highlighted opportunities for improving immigrant family economics, as well as raising the precarious residential instability some families felt. Their indigeneity was read by some in their skin, hair and language. Some males felt a stronger gaze from the police than individual females. All these aspects helped play a role in how they understood the anti-immigrant violence in the summer of 2010 explored in the next section.
CHAPTER 6

Respondents Reactions to Racial Hate Crimes

In this chapter I explore how Mexican young adults processed the neighborhood violence in one post-industrial community. In this chapter the youth narrate their reactions to the 2010 racial hate crimes. They do so as a reaction to the photographs that I present to them of such crimes (see Appendix C).

The Vulnerability of Immigrants and the Memory of Violence

“Well you feel anger – you knew it happened but it wasn’t that big before.”

(Leonardo, HS Graduate, 2013)

Most of the fifteen (15) respondents knew at least one of the ‘victims’ by name or had a parent or close relative (Aunts, Uncles) who knew at least one of the victims. For participants with a personal or familial acquaintance with a victim, the photographs they viewed resonated strongly of that brief period of time. In discussing the attacks respondents’ comments centered around concerns for physical safety for themselves and within their families. On occasion, violence in the neighborhood interfered with concurrent data collection. A student who was pursuing his high school equivalency diploma I had wanted to interview, and who seemed eager to meet and talk, Jovita’s male cousin it turned out, had been the victim of an attempted robbery, near the school where he attended his high school equivalency class, and lost or broke his cell phone in the scuffle and made it next to
impossible to reach him. “He was walking to school and they tried to rob him on Sharpe Avenue” (Jovita, High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirant, 2013). In another episode, a waitress was shot in the jaw leaving a bar where she worked on Port Richmond Avenue, and several respondents commented on that (Annese, 2013c).

For those without a personal connection to the attacks, the photo elicitation quickly became a springboard to relate personal stories of violence against family members and friends. In many of these cases respondents seemed eager to unburden themselves of these specific family memories of violence, memories that functioned like family secrets: not spoken about in public and once told rarely repeated within families themselves. As an interested outsider, but an ethnic insider, respondents relayed story after story of events that generally were not spoken about or shared. Public figures with whom they had come in contact in the past, like politicians, community leaders and teachers, generally did not ask about violence in public or rarely if ever about episodes of personal or family violence. A sense of shame and fear colored those events. Details of public or private vulnerability were only communicated to family and close friends, and again rarely, if ever, repeated. Like a family secret, once spoken, details of pain and hurt did need not frequent verbalization to be understood, they existed like open sores on the skin of a family, implicit to anyone who shared this connection.

To understand how the participants in my study viewed the 2010 incidents, I am analyzing the interview data by separating those with a high school education from those without one. As we will see, even though both groups have experienced violence within their families and with friends, their reactions differ. I start first by recounting the experience of those with a high school diploma.
“Right down the block”: Reactions to the 2010 incidents by high school graduates

Spurred by the photographs, several of the High School Graduate respondents mentioned they knew one or more victims by name, or had family members who were friends or acquaintances of a victim. Given the personal social capital of the high school graduates and the community involvement of their parents and siblings, it’s not a surprise that they were the ones most likely to be acquainted with victims, personally, or through their families. One respondent, Miguel, was atypical in that he was the only respondent who mentioned the names of two individuals used in my photo elicitation study. He even recognized himself and his siblings when very young in one of my community photos. Given that his father assisted a key community organizer, and was well versed in community responses to these incidents, it is no surprise that some of these victims were known to his immediate family. When I told him he was the first person to tell me the names of those involved in the incident, he said:

Yeah, yeah, they,’cause, they these came out racial…like…people be telling me, oh, oh Black versus Mexicans…they were just calling us […] calling us wetbacks, we came here to take, take care [sic] of their jobs […] like I said, my dad was one of the first people [Mexicans] come to Port Richmond…they’re just, like I don’t know what they got against the Mexicans but […] Why they did that for? (Miguel, 2013, High School Graduate.)

Miguel’s rhetorical question is mirrored in many of the responses, an overt questioning as to why attacks like this ever happen at all. Many, if not most of the respondents, shared this bewilderment with a summer of attacks, wondering how this series of events even could have happened.
Only one woman discussed the attacks directly; Susana, sister of Lorenzo, and daughter of a community activist gives the run down:

This happened right down the block, um, in front of --- Bakery Café [Cafe con Leche] Yeah and um that was, uh, uh, that’s, it, it’s a little scary because that’s where everyone goes to get their cakes, like, it’s the local bakery, uh, yeah. That is right down the block (Susana, High School Graduate, 2013, p. 6).

Given her concerns for social justice, Susana frames her remarks in terms of the community response:

I remember that the community came together, um, and said we cannot tolerate this, so we, um, called in the police chief and they actually set up all these [security] towers and they had more police patrols, um, but it was scary, yeah, um, I had my friend, my mom’s friend, her husband was beaten up and he doesn’t even live around here. […] I would hear about them [the attacks] through my parents, and um, I didn’t really worry much but then when, once it they started reoccurring and happening again and again, that’s when I got worried. (…) Well, I was scared for my parents’ safety, um.(…) but, I, it didn’t’ change my way of life. I still went out after dark. [Italics mine] (…)

Well, women in general, you know, they always have to look out for themselves but I don’t remember feeling scared for my safety, just for my parents. And just being angry that it was happening. […] Yeah, at the time we were still having, um, Friendship Dinners\textsuperscript{11} so we would bring up these attacks and that’s how

\textsuperscript{11}The Friendship Dinners began in 2000, at the suggestion of the Department of Justice District in New York City, when the first waves of Mexican immigrants were resettling in Port Richmond, changing the demographics of the neighborhood, and inter-ethnic violence
we got, um, a more structured community to ask for the police to come and surveillance and all that. So my parents were there. When my mom found out that her, her friend’s husband was beaten up she got really worried too, um, but I don’t, my father still went out and worked, um, he worked at the time at a different bakery, like, around the block from there… […] well, I can’t speak about what was going on through their minds but we weren’t really worried, I don’t think so. I don’t know why. […] I think they were going after, like, day laborers. […] But knowing that it was youth that were doing these attacks was just crazy.

When I asked her about the age of the attackers, Susana replied:

I think no older than, like 21. Some were very young, like, 14, 15, um, but that was just, like about one attack that I heard about. Yeah. And they were, some of them were girls who were attacking. (Susana, HS Graduate, 2013)

Later in the interview Susana emphasizes how day laborers were targeted, as most attacks occurred against men walking alone late at night. She also states that while her own behavior, as a teenager in her neighborhood didn’t change, her father’s did: he no longer walked to work, he only drove to work, even though he lived three or four blocks away from his place of work. Also by stating that she was more afraid of her parents’ safety, she is clearly identifying herself as less of a ‘target’ because she was ‘more American’, than her

began to occur. The Friendship Dinners brought together churches of different denominations, nonprofits and unaffiliated residents to a monthly dinner where issues in the neighborhood could be discussed over a shared meal. In one of the more publicized cases from the early 2000s a white resident of Staten Island drove his truck into Latino grocery store to protest increased immigration to the area. (Annese, J., 2010a) The Friendship Dinners have been organized for ten years prior to the Summer of the attacks that I study (2013) and they celebrated their 14th Anniversary in October 2014, where the police chokehold death of civilian Eric Garner in the Summer of 2014 was one of the main points of discussion.
parents.

The theme of Americanness shows up in Javier’s comments as well. Javier, who was the younger brother of another one of my interviewees, Leonardo, described himself as more of the family rebel, identifying himself as one who had friends of all backgrounds and races and seeming popular in this regard. Javier raised the specter of language and fashion as being an inhibitor of violent attacks:

I [do] remember this summer, it was hot and…a lot of things were going on…but it wasn’t dangerous, *I wouldn’t consider it being dangerous for me* [Italics mine], walk, […] just, like, a group in Port Richmond, that’s it. […] You know, and, and they talk to other groups, you know, they think it’s all…they wanted to turn to a gang. They would, they turn into a gang, you know, they get satisfaction out of it. (Pause) It’s upsetting, you know, it’s, it’s upsetting this has to happen.

R: Do you think things have gotten better?

Javier: Yeah things got better, you know, the people, the people that were doing this, they started to realize, you know, that…they’re not as big as they think they are […].

R: Did you know anybody that was doing it or they were older guys?

Javier: No…didn’t know, honestly I didn’t know anybody. I don’t, I didn’t associated with nobody that was doing this. […] I didn’t get involved, neither.

R: So you just stayed, doing your own thing.

Javier: Uh, him, he was an innocent guy, I, I suppose. [Pointing to photograph of Rudolfo Olmedo] […]

R: What do you remember about that whole period of time when all these people were getting beat up?
Javier: Well personally I, I’ve never encountered a situation with a, with a, with the Black community, not with racism or, you know, they weren’t beating me up but, you know, stories do go on like that but I was personally never targeted neither was, like, the people I know, it was mostly, like, the day-laborers…the guys that look like they comin’ outta work, you know, they have some money in their pockets…’cause, like, this, this was a stupid situation from what I know. And that…you know, that was, that had, that did happen to be, like, a biased crime.

R: Mhm...what? The first one?

Javier: The first one, yes [Rudolfo Olmedo]

R: Yes. Mhm. Do you remember any, how did you feel when this was, uh, going on?

Do you remember?

Javier: Honestly, I was, it wasn’t something new because it did, it was happening…[...] Later on it just became a, a bigger situation…when it got introduced to the media, before the media -- it wasn’t present in Port Richmond until, you know, I guess…uh, certain people just come out and, you know, they talk about it…but, yeah, there’s been a lot of changes, good changes that, um, there’s a lot of police. (Javier, HS Graduate, 2013).

Javier doesn’t think life in the neighborhood was dangerous for him because he walked and talked like an American on the street. He dressed like other urban youth and conversed in English. Wearing contemporary street clothes and speaking English made one less susceptible to being a target. He reasoned that day laborers with money in their pockets were the easy targets.

Andrés, another of my participants who was also a High School Graduate, gave me
his animated take on some of the photographs:

The first one on top, [Olmedo] […] he was really intoxicated and the story goes that…that…um, these two individuals that were, they jumped him at, uh, they, they saw him really drunk and…they really, like, jumped him and took all his money and stuff and, uh, to my understanding he also got, like, into a coma. (Andrés, HS Graduate, 2013)

About the third photograph Andrés relayed the following, after I explained I had heard that maybe this victim was not like the others:

Yeah, something of that nature. And um, it went all wrong. He didn’t like the trade…so they’re, like, ‘oh yeah, whatchu gonna do about it?’ And he said, ‘I’m gonna fuck you up’ and he got jumped. It was really uncomfortable, honestly. . . . Yeah, I felt uncomfortable […] it was just, like, I have nothing to hide or anything however, just seeing so many cops and knowing that somebody’s about to get jumped or knowing that there’s gonna be a fight down the block and having these people right there, I’m like[…] why do we have cops like that, […] if, me who’s just some kid from the street knows something big is gonna go down and you don’t know it, it makes [no sense] (Andrés, HS Graduate, 2013).

Andrés’ response represented knowledge of life on the streets of Port Richmond, a small corner of the city with big city ills, aware of various turf scuffles and different factions in the community. His comments on the third photo were corroborated by Javier and others. In choosing photographs to spur talk, the clearest photo of a young victim in my possession, I had unknowingly picked a photograph of a young man who had been attacked not for being an immigrant, per se, but for making a dumb move in a drug deal gone bad.
He didn’t like the pot he had bought so he dared ask for a refund from the drug dealer. At the time he was caught up in a media and governmental frenzy that resulted in his being put in front of the media as part of [the attacks]. (Javier, 2013, HS Graduate)

The photo of that young man, Christian Vasquez had been used as an example of a victim, and paraded before the media as part of the anti-bias attacks. However, soon after the media highlighted him as a victim, the reason there were so many good photos of him, his story unraveled. As Javier said, he was caught in the media frenzy.

In addition to speaking about the victims themselves, the High School graduates, used the photo elicitation to speak about violence in their worlds. Javier said:

Uh, well, like I said it wasn’t nothing new, I think in the year 2000 my father got, um, battered, uh, with a, you know, a bat, by, [someone in the] Black community. […] You know, they took his wallet and they, they, I was young at that time so I wouldn’t remember much but I know that happened and, like, you know, it’s something where, it wasn’t new to us, you know. […] Yeah, I knew about it ‘cause my dad came home gushing with blood. (Javier, High School Graduate, 2013)

Javier relates how much of an impact this violent event had on his life and on the lives of his brothers and sisters. He was sad but as a male he had to figure out a way not to let this happen to him and he stored the memory for future reference. It changed his life view and made him determined not to be a victim.

Leonardo, Javier’s brother, clearly empathized with those who had been attacked, but he also had emotional responses related to the acts of crime committed against his own family. The attack against his father had occurred well before this series of events in 2010,
but his older brother was also attacked in the winter of 2009-2010, predating the media circus by a few months only. He was resigned by the lack of evidence available to punish the perpetrators. Like others in high school at the time of the attacks, he related that the school said nothing about this. [The College of Staten Island is located several neighborhoods south of these events and the vast majority of its students do not reside in the Port Richmond neighborhood.]

The remainder of the HS male respondents who spoke about the attacks did so in generalities. High School Graduate Eduardo was typical of respondents, as he was able to reconnect with some of the emotions surrounding that period but not directly speaking about individuals involved in the attacks:

I just remember that it was always like the Spanish, Mexican dudes getting jumped. I don’t know if it was, ‘cause, […] people see them as, like easy targets ‘cause, you know they be drunk. So I don’t know if they see them as easy targets or it’s just, like, they wanna beat up a Mexican person. Or, I don’t know but it was just, it’s just crazy’ cause, like, why, why downgrade yourself to something, to be something like that, you know. Why…why downgrade yourself to a … to wanna beat up somebody just to get money, you know, like I don’t know, working…[…] I’m just saying, it’s mostly Latinos that get, get it.

Well, I feel like, like I wanna help but then again I can’t help. Like, physically, I can help but then, like mentally I wish I could make, just make them understand that, like you know, it’s not, it’s not about being, who’s the best out there it’s about helping each other, everyone coming to, like a unite, united circle and just, like be friendly with each other and everybody they’re good instead of being bad and
all that. (Eduardo, High School Graduate, 2013)

Eduardo was willing to engage in an exchange about the events, but mostly from an ethical perspective, giving reasons why an individual should not attack others. Eduardo’s responses are complicated by his own personal history in that he had been arrested a few times, most recently for dealing drugs, along with others in a local gang. His comments on group unity and comments on ‘good’ behavior versus ‘bad’ rang a tad hollow knowing that he had not always followed these ethical guidelines for himself.

These students were deeply knowledgeable about the incidents of 2010, yet, they weren’t afraid of these crimes that were committed “right down the block,” as Susana said. Instead, as high school graduates, they thought that they had the knowledge of the street and the appropriate clothing and ways of walking and talking that would protect them from these crimes. And yet, they were afraid for their parents who shared some of the characteristics of Mexicans that they saw in the photographs. The reasons that they gave for not being afraid is further examined in the next section.

“My family members were also beaten up:” Reactions by Female HS graduates

The majority of females did not speak directly about the attacks but used photo elicitation to share stories of family violence. When asked about the 2010 attacks, HS Graduate, Yazmín, had little directly to say. Yet she shared very personal experiences of interethnic violence experienced by family members:

Well, actually I don’t know, like, this case personally…But I actually, like, saw my family members that were also beaten up by…yes, around here. . . .

Yeah, my uncle actually got beat up and two, [distant] family members.

Actually, like, last year my aunt got, like robbed by African Americans, too. […]
She was a female and three guys tried to, I don’t know what they were trying to do, they were trying to steal her stuff and they choked her, yeah. […]

Yeah, like I actually was in my house and then all of a sudden I hear her crying and the police was with her. […] My uncle came to visit us and when he left… like, you know, Port Richmond High School? […] He went, he was trying, he passed there and there’s where he got beat up … by, like, students, I guess.

Yazmín expanded on her aunt’s story.

Well, she works around, I forgot where, like, by St. Mary’s and she had to walk at night because she leaves, she finishes work around ten. So she always walks by herself and everything and nothing ever happened until that day. And now, her boss takes, like, they drive her to our house.

Yazmín commented on the attack on her uncle saying:

Yeah, he, well back then he was, like, I guess 25, around there. And yeah, he, he well, he left our house and it was around five or six and he got beaten up. […] I don’t recall that part, but I’m pretty sure. I don’t know if he went to the hospital. I just know that my mom got a phone call from my aunt saying that he, he was, like bleeding, everything. […] it was a group of kids.

Yazmín’s, measured and matter-of-fact delivery belies the regularity of crime in poor urban communities, but it’s clear she openly wishes to share her testimony with me. To Yazmín, violence of all kinds is a way of life and was woven through all parts of her life. Earlier, when I had asked about her future career goals she stated that she wanted to be a domestic violence attorney, as every female in her family had suffered violence at the hands of a husband or boyfriend. Poor immigrant women in Port Richmond while vulnerable to
violence from outsiders, can also be the targets of domestic abuse from male co-ethnics. In this particular case, Yazmín sadly reiterates that domestic abuse is generational, and has occurred multiple times within her family. Her career goal reflects a sense of personal empowerment that is afforded by education in the United States, her knowledge of English, and a special Visa Status to protect children who are abandoned by at least one parent, and a mother who was victimized.

“I speak English” and other reasons why HS graduates did not think they were vulnerable.

[They were targeted more] than me
‘cause I spoke English. (Javier, 2013)

Several high school graduates repeated a key reason why they were not victims of violence: speaking English. For Javier and his brother Leonardo speaking English was a barrier to becoming a victim of violence. Javier posits that responding to possible attackers in their own language was disincentive enough. Javier described himself as the only immigrant child in his family who rebelled, but by the end of high school he saw a need to turn himself around:

Before I got to college I just started thinking about…changing up. But I’ve never, like, encountered, you know, because I’m Mexican you know, somebody saying, you know, whatever you’re Mexican or you’re brown or something, I never encountered that.

When I asked him whether he had ever seen that happening to other young people, he replied:

Yeah, I guess, ‘cause, since I grew up here I spoke English so, when people just
come from Mexico, I got to see a lot of people come, come here from Mexico, so they get picked on, they don’t know the language or, you know, you’re not dressed like how they expect you to dress or some type of stuff like that…(Javier, HS Graduate, 2013).

High school graduates note that language, specifically language ability in English, works to their advantage in their host society. Javier notes that over the years, he saw many recent immigrants get picked on and teased because they aren’t dressed as they should be, and they don’t speak the language. These high school students are acculturated to the fact that insiders in urban communities are designated by their clothing and they know what to wear in the neighborhood so as not to draw undue attention to themselves. They framed themselves as more American, young American who knew how clothing, walking with a purpose, and speaking English fulfilled expectations for assimilation and acculturation. Recent immigrants from Mexico who wear clothing that may have been appropriate for their lives in Mexico may be ostracized for wearing the wrong kind of clothing, cowboy boots and cowboy hats for instance, that signify their status as outsiders.

Andrés explicitly expresses this, “Like…I noticed that it was my generation that changed, like, my generation, like, I consider my generation somebody from the, from five years, either younger or older than (…)” (Andrés, HS Graduate 2013). Both Javier and Susana referred to ‘our generation’, ‘my generation,’ and by doing so they explicitly distinguish between themselves and their older siblings, or neighbors, those Mexicans who were 5-6 years older and part of the first wave of Mexican migrants to the neighborhood. Both Javier (brought to the US as an 8 month old) and Susana (US Born) see their upbringing in America and their time in school as being a wholly different experience than
others half-a-decade older. For one, Mexicans were not such a visible group in the 
neighborhood when people arrived to Port Richmond in the 1990s, and so they experienced 
lives more as outsiders. Secondly, their generation, had attended US schools their entire 
lives and as such they were bilingual, they spoke English and Spanish. Susana implies and 
Javier states that they were less victimized because they spoke English. Both continued 
walking in the streets during this time of troubles and they personally did not feel as targeted 
from any attackers because they dressed and acted and felt more American, and spoke 
English like an American.

**Students Pursuing a High School Equivalency Diploma Relate Personal Stories of 
Violence**

The Five (5) High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirants did not have the personal 
and institutional connections to either the attackers or community respondents, but they too 
often relayed experiences of violence of extended family members or close friends. The 
High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirants complicated notions of an homogenous 
immigrant community as two (2) were US born and two (2) were more recent arrivals with 
interrupted education in Mexico (one was brought to the US at age 3). In addition, 
individuals in this group represented a distinct point of view that was different for the high 
school graduates. They were more likely to have used color-blind notions of race in 
avoiding race talk (Jovita), raised the specter of intra-ethnic racism, color-consciousness 
within the Mexican immigrant community (Fernando), and readily accessed the mores of 
the street (Enrique).

Enrique expresses surprise in his recounting of the events of that summer:
Yes they [my parents] reacted, you know, they were surprised! They didn’t think it would be, like, all of these violence out here. You know, through the years, we we, been able to go 3, 4 in the morning and walk around and nothing happened […] and now it’s the fact that you can’t even do nothing. You have to have, you have to have a car and go somewhere ‘cause then without a car you going’ to get hit, like when you, when you’re in a car you don’t get hit so. […] Yeah…so, you know but it would bother you, so that’s what my parents do now they drive everywhere. To go to the corner, they drive!” ….. “Just basically try and protect themselves ‘cause you know, if my father gets hurt or my mother gets hurt, the life of my brother and sister are hurt. […] They were surprised. You know, careful and everything, don’t get beat up. (laughs)

When I asked Enrique whether he took any precautions after the 2010 incidents, he replied:

I mean, I stopped, you know, I stopped going out as much around that time ‘cause, you know, it was happenin’ frequently, so I would just stop. […] Yeah, yeah. And then, after that, when, when it calmed down, like when, when everybody thought it, [community leader] had [calmed down], she would come out and you know, tried to do friendships and stuff […]. You would be a little more comfortable. The police presence made it a little more comfortable. (Enrique, High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirant, 2013)

Enrique presents a vivid portrayal of the epistemological bent of many in the Mexican immigrant community, that current and future well-being is viewed through the prism of the family (Hidalgo, 2005).
Jovita, in contrast, tells me:

Um, well at the time, it was… I felt, you know, scared. Because I’m like, they’re doing it racially. [...] And everybody thought that it was something that had to do with racism but, um, it was kind of scary, you know, going out. (…) And knowing this can happen to you next. [...] My mom, she was scared. Um, my uncles, I remember that they said, um, that you can’t even step out of your own house anymore knowing if you’re gonna come back alive or not. […]

Jovita feels that the incident gave the neighborhood some needed attention and protection. She resents, however, that everyone now has forgotten because they just don’t care:

Well, I guess in a way it was good ‘cause then people will feel, you know protected. I guess. So, we did, and …[…] when they see that these cases stop happening they left. You know, they took the tower down, you know, they don’t have police officers in every corner, you know, they just, I guess, they just did it for, like the moment that his was happening but right after, you know, it stopped, they just..like, they didn’t care. They just left.

Jovita feels a sense of being abandoned and narrates another case of violence and what she perceives as a cycle of violence and neglect that will not go away:

I don’t know if you heard about the case that just happened about that woman that got shot in the face. […] I told my mom. It’s.. I don’t know. .. I don’t … I don’t think it’s no one’s fault but then, you know, […] like at night … when I used to, um, go to work, I used to walk home, you know, and, um, I used to find, you know, Mexicans drunk in the street, just laying there. And, I think, like, if you don’t want
nothing to happen…that’s why you have to be home by, you know, a certain time […] like eleven.

Sometimes I used to work late shifts. […] It depends, like you know, what time I used to go in, they would be drunk in the floor, and once we went with my mom to the store very, it was very early, it was, like nine and there was, like a Mexican guy that was just laying there in the floor…you know, on the street, and I’m to my mom I was like, ‘Did you see him?’ And then they want, you know, they expect no one to do anything to them, like rob them or something, they’re laying there all drunk. … But everybody has their own life. Can’t judge them. (Jovita, High School Equivalency Diploma Goer, 2013).

Jovita spoke about the attacks as being ‘racial’ and doing so consciously or unconsciously invokes the term ‘racialism’ vis-a-vis ‘racism’. Later on she would add that she doesn’t understand racism as it’s just about color: “Honestly, I don’t find the point to racism. […] Cause you discriminate, just because by, it’s basically color. […] [Everyone discriminates] It’s just a chain that keeps, you know … just flowing.” For some, use of the concept of ‘racialism’ evokes a more value-neutral construct of studying others’ racial hierarchies without the negative connotations of the term ‘racism’. For others use of the term ‘racial’ is intentional misuse intended to mislead anyone arguing for superiority of one race over another, something that is not necessarily racism in their minds, but inter-racial. Jovita is uncomfortable with racism, and doesn’t like it, but for now at least embraces a color-blind perspective of race.

**Students with Limited Formal Schooling Getting a High School Equivalency Diploma: “In Mexico’s it’s the same.”** The two students with limited formal schooling
used the term ‘American Culture’ when describing the reasons for the attacks. Whether this referred to a particular aspect of American culture, a predilection towards guns and violence, or whether it was a catch-all phrase to describe anything different from life in their homeland it was unclear. Did ‘American culture’ refer specifically to ‘African-American’ culture, or urban American Culture? In at least some respects it was used to refer to ‘materialistic’ culture. In a conversation I had with one of these two respondent and his girlfriend on another occasion, the two were critical of parents who buy their spoiled kids everything, many who frequent the Staten Island Mall. They talked about how young people wanted the newest and latest product, whether it be clothes or electronic gadgets, and how some parents just gave it to them. They were acutely aware of rampant materialism in that aspect. Which aspect of ‘American culture’ were these respondents referring to when they used this phrase?

One student, Nicolás, said that he saw it in the news, “black people they..they hit Mexican people” And he continued:

Yeah. It was just….it’s more cops, it’s more of the police around you […] the black people they attacked Mexican people so you feel more, like, sad, ‘cause….American culture [italics mine] . . It is scary, it’s scary ‘cause you, we don’t know, you don’t know, like, […] when the people are going to attack you, or rob you or something. Just as the High School graduates, Nicolás also has had experience with crime and violence in the family:

My sister she get, she get robbed. ‘Cause, uh, some guy, some, uh, black guy, they robbed her iPhone […] Some black guy, they, she was on the bus so the guy come and took her phone away so…and after that, like, um, uh…two weeks later, my mom
got robbed in the morning. So...they say, oh, you know what, well we had to move
to Florida...like...what? Let's stay here. [...] My mom said [...] that she, that she
wanna move to Florida. Then I say, no, we don't have to move, let's stay here. What
we have to move for? [...] 'Cause over there it's not, like, I don't know she said it's
not dangerous but... for me it's same, same...[...] Wherever, wherever...It's same,
yeah. In Mexico's it's the same.

Nicolás recounts how his mother lost 200 dollars and she was really upset and “was
crying the whole day.” He continues that he didn't speak about the incident with anybody
because he was trying to “keep my own secret.” He says that when he “went to high school,
I didn't want to talk to nobody.” He describes: “People asked me, because I was sad, so
people asked me, asked me what, like, what's wrong with you, like” But he wouldn't tell
even his Mexican friends. He recounts:

Like, they asking me, like, even, even my, my close friends, they ask me, ‘Yo,
what’s wrong, like, like you changed, you sad.’...Nothing. Just, uh, like...I don’t
know, 'cause, it's the one thing I don't want. I don't wanna make it big because may,
maybe it’ll...how do you say that one...maybe, maybe, uh, if I told my friends, like,
he, he’s close, he’ll say ‘oh, they, they do that to your mother, let’s, let’s go
back’...Like, like, let’s go back, get that, get that money back. Like, I don’t wanna
like, I don’t wanna do a thing. (Nicolás, High School Equivalency Diploma
Aspirant, 2013).

Nicolás describes how he didn’t want trouble because: “I had, I, I came, I come to
the USA....to be somebody. And to be, like, uh, something that I, that I can’t get in
Mexico.”
Even though Nicolás was very upset about the incident with his mother, he was not at all too concerned about the violence in 2010. For example, he didn’t remember anyone talking about these incidents at school. And the only thing he recalls is that there were protests close to the ferry to get police “to get more protection to the people”. (Nicolás, High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirant, 2013).

When discussing the attacks, and his response to the attacks both in the media and to his family, Nicolás was avoidant. Here was a poor kid whose father had yanked him out of school at age 13 to work and help support the family, and he had returned to school to find his footing, but he did not want to dwell on the attacks. He was singularly minded in achieving his goals. He did not want to talk about violence, and interethnic relationships were not a priority for him. In some respects, Nicolás’ avoidance of talk of violence is a disassociation with his feelings and empathy, common to individuals who had experienced trauma. (For more on immigration and trauma see Foster, 2001; Brown & Hyatt-Burkhart, 2013.)

As a resident of the community, Pedro, our other student with limited formal schooling and aspirant to the high school equivalency diploma, was less attuned into the individual attacks, but was tuned into the media presentation. In his retelling of events, he managed to make it a criticism of youth, as well as a criticism of the cops. He remembers the experience being sad, and adds:

These people….I don’t know, people, I just, I just feel that the younger generation …they’re not willing to work, they’re not…they just…they, they want to keep everything and just rob someone. […] I don’t know, for some couple dollars which is…what are you gonna take outta that guy? […] Or why you gonna beat him
Certainly Pedro felt personally threatened by the attacks:

Yeah. Just to, like, keep it careful, know what I’m saying. [...] No, the daytime has always been good, it was, like…everything. [...] It was just the nights when people just started going crazy. Um…they’re…that community started hating against us….which was, like, not fair. [...] I never was scared, like, I used to walk in there, but, like, say I’m always being, like …I got my eye open. (Pedro, High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirant, 2013)

Nicolás and Pedro reiterate the ubiquity of violence in their worlds, and that for poor people, Mexico itself is not safer than the US. People need to be cautious everywhere. Both teenage migrants also emphasize their singular focus on the importance of work. Work, any kind of work for pay is valued, and is among the pre-eminent reasons that teenage Mexican immigrants take risks of exposure to violence to get a chance at higher pay and a better standard of living.

**Conclusion**

Photographs of the immigrant violence, led to discussions about the actual crime victims for many High School Graduates, particularly the males, but it also became a springboard to relate family stories of violence for all respondents whether High School Graduates or not. High School Graduates were more likely to reason that they were not victims of the crimes due to how they dressed and that they spoke English. While they may have been protective of their parents and family, their personal vulnerability was limited as local teenagers in high school at the time, and they were confident in not being victimized. The High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirants offered a range of responses to the attacks up… [...] if he doesn’t got money?
from a color-blind perspective, to the two males with limited formal education blaming ‘American culture’. These two males did not have the history with the community some of the High School Graduates had, and they clearly had a frame of reference that included the realities of poor workers in Mexico.
Chapter 7

Memories of Race and the Other in U.S. schools

Like, we didn’t really hate people [in Mexico]:

like they hate on the races, here.

(Leonardo, HS Graduate, 2010)

Immigrant Vulnerability in Middle and High School

Life in Middle School. Most of the male respondents, and some of the female
respondents testified that interethnic conflict between Black and Mexican students was most
evident in middle school, a time of lopsided physical and emotional change. For students in
Port Richmond, 6th grade was the year students left the safe environment of their local
elementary school and began interacting with peers from other neighborhoods in a middle
school generally farther away. Middle schoolers face more social pressure and adjustments,
including navigating a new building in new surroundings where teachers each teach
different subjects. Students entering middle school go from being the oldest kids in an
elementary school to the youngest kids in a new building – and many students feel they
don’t measure up (Juvonen, et. al., 2013).

For students who immigrated as children, learning about race was fraught with
adjustment and conflict. Leonardo says:

Well it happened to me, you know, when I was in […] intermediate school, more
like, we weren’t that close with the other people, like […] we didn’t get along, […]
we didn’t really get along with the Black people (Leonardo, HS Graduate, 2013).
Leonardo had immigrated at age 11 and began his US education in middle school. As a 1.5 generation immigrant, Middle School was where he began to learn about racism against Blacks and against Mexicans.

Well, ‘cause, we didn’t really hate nobody [in Mexico]. We just learned that from here [in the US] ‘cause we used to, like, watch movies and, like, see, like everybody. We thought, like, they were the bomb you know, like, Will Smith [. . .]. Like, we didn’t really hated people: like they hate on the races, here. Like, I didn’t know, what were races but when I came here there was more […] why they hated me? […]

Yeah- I didn’t really see it as a kid [in Mexico] I used to get along with everybody, you know, I’m like one of those kids that, like tries to get along with […]. Like they used to curse at me and I didn’t even do nothing, like, Yeah, like what’s wrong, what’s wrong? I don’t get it. But it’s you know like people [guys] give you a hard time. I used to hate it [when people swore about Mexicans]. Now I’m like… just ignore it. (Leonardo, HS Graduate, 2013).

Having arrived from a relatively homogenous culture, where everyone is culturally accepted as mestizo, Leonardo had no preparation for living in a racially heterogenous space. In Mexico he did not have an awareness of different races, in part because governmentally this distinction is not made. [See Chapter II for more on how race is discussed in Mexico]. His introduction to Blacks in Mexico was via movies and TV. He references, Will Smith, a young powerful star with an international following. He doesn’t understand that the context for race in the U.S. is different until he is in the U.S. Because his sending country had a completely different relationship to race realities, he had to learn new race realities in his new country, the US, and new race realities in contentious middle
schools.

HS Graduate Andrés who came to the US at 5 years of age, speaks about his experiences in middle school with black students:

In the summer…like, since I was in junior high […] would be that time of the year where blacks [gangs] were just known to just jump people, like, it was like a hunting season in there, in a sense […] they said, ‘yo, this month we’re gonna just start jumping people for a week.’ Sometimes it would go for a month and I would, I would know because my friends were, you know, like, I don’t even know how they knew, they would always tell me, they would always run information…And they’re, like, ‘yo’…And, like, I’m walking down the block, I see four, three individuals….and, you know, I didn’t think nothing of it, they were African American descent and, um, I’m walking and then, I’m like, you know what, I don’t, I, I didn’t feel comfortable at their backs, just, just because I knew what, like, you know, they’re capable of…well everything I heard of ‘em, so I crossed the street and then they crossed the street too! So I cross the other street and they cross it too! So, then the minute I turn around they’re right in front of me and they’re like, “What are you f-ing looking at?” And I’m like, “Uh, well not much.” And they’re like, “what?” And they, one punches me in the face and I punch the other one and then I, somebody had heard and then in the corner of my eye, I hear saying, like, “yo, take it, take something out, the shank out,” and I’m, like, when I heard that , I’m, like, shank? I ran! I ran! Like, in front of traffic, and I’m like, nah, enough of that […] Yeah. I’m like, do I stay here and fight them or do I go with my pride and run? I’m like, I rather live another day. (Andrés, High School Graduate, 2013)
Andrés speaks about the need as a guy to be careful of his surroundings in middle school, and to have his eye on the street, especially as some of his friends had already warned him there may be trouble. He also states that he, in retrospect, has decided to prioritize his future prospects and not his ego. He decides to ‘run’, not to defend his ‘pride’ but to live another day. He acknowledges the risks in getting caught up in a cycle of violence and fighting, have too high a cost to even consider.

Enrique, who is pursuing his high school equivalency diploma presents a different perspective. He has lived his whole life in New York City. His street-wise perspective tells a different story than that of Leonardo’s immigrant adjustment.

Well you know, they’d uh, like I said, the black people would be … blacks versus Mexican. You know, that’s everybody would fight against each other now… ‘cause…They would, uh, [my middle school] used to have fights Mexicans versus Blacks and big brawl would pop out and Port Richmond, too, they would fight Blacks and Mexicans. That’s what always happened. Enrique . . . It was just blacks and Mexicans. […] It was a lot of violence against us but, like I said, I think you gotta learn how to be.

When I asked him whether he ever got beaten up, he says:

Naw! […] I could fight. I could fight. . . . So … my, most of my friends told, like that are related to people that would wanna fight with me… I would be like, ‘Listen, talk to your boy, if he wants to fight with me, we’ll fight one on one…but not in bulk’. You know, like clean fight and that’s it.

Enrique recounts how this happened every other week, and it was always the same group of kids. He continues: “and you know, you lost, and he wants a rematch … and his friend
wants to fight you again, retarded stuff.” This was his attitude, Enrique says, in middle school. Now, he says: “It was different when you have a kid, now. I think more…of my reaction. Try not to overreact.”

And yet, Enrique is friends with them. He tells me how they beat up his cousin “but I was still cool with them.” He shares the advice he gave his cousin:

I mean, I like I said, Like, I told him, you’re gonna keep goin’ at him, he’s gonna go at you and you… he’s gonna catch you by yourself one day and beat the hell outta you, so … just stop it now! He beat you up without [inaudible] … I mean, it’s no, there’s no point in keep goin’ back n’ forth, you got it, you got it, that’s it, keep going?

Although Enrique says that teachers tried to talk about the fighting, “who, who listens to the teacher?” And he answers:

Nobody listens to the teacher. And, I mean, at the end of the day, you think the teacher is dumb, or something. And when you go through life, and stuff like that, and you, you’re like, oh yeah…

But Enrique acknowledges that he listened to his friends a lot. “You know, do this, and I’ll go do it. And now, Like I said, it’s different. I have a daughter.”

Enrique talks about the common place occurrence of interethnic fighting in middle school in Port Richmond: Mexicans fighting Blacks happened all the time. However, he also states that the fighting predominantly occurred in middle school, suggesting that it tapered off sometime in high school, and that as a young adult, similar interethnic squabbles did not occur, at least not with any regularity. Moreover, he states that the fighting was not widely spread amongst all ethnic group members, but limited to a handful of (“five or ten”)
kids, the same ‘retards’ who feel they have something to prove. He doesn’t include himself among the instigators, but he does acknowledge that he had been in fights in the past, though possibly not to the extent of the interethnic conflict mentioned.

When I ask how if his school responded, or individual teachers, he states, “Who listens to the teacher? […] Nobody listens to the teacher. And, I mean, at the end of the day, you think the teacher is dumb, or something. And when you go through life, and stuff like that, and you, you’re like, […] oh yeah.” As a child, his reality does not encompass the perspectives of teachers, however well intentioned. His personal safety is paramount, not the teachers’ admonitions. He doesn’t state if the teachers who admonish him are female so whether this is a source of male pride or machismo, is undetermined. He does talk about how life changed overnight for him, after becoming a parent, “it’s different – I have a daughter now” and how financially and emotionally, he needs to be more emotionally mature to help raise her. He also states that as an adult the advice from teachers and other adults is not as easily dismissed; when younger, peers were paramount, but as a parent, the opinions of adults cannot be easily discounted.

**Life in High School.** By high school, the overt displays of interethnic bravado get downplayed but they do not immediately go away. Fights in high school play out in different ways, and students who are effected by them in high school can vote with their feet. They choose not to attend school and/or drop out. Jovita tells us the story of one such incident seared in her memory even though she wasn’t present:

I think it was around the time that there was a big fight in school, it was, I remember that there was also a big fight in school. I wasn’t present when it happened but a lot of people told me about it. It was all over, you know, the Internet that […] It was
more like MySpace back then. They were having a big fight by the lobby in Port Richmond High School, it was, like again gang related but it was, you know, uh, a gang of black people who were against a gang of Mexican […] I think they thought, uh, the Mexicans had killed, they thought the Mexican gang had killed, uh…the, the black person’s gang, I guess. One of the…something like that and then that’s why, how it went out. And they, I guess they saw each other in the school and that’s when they started arguing and they just started fighting. […] Yeah, I heard that a lot of, uh, police officers came and they were trying to arrest everyone, ‘cause even girls, I think, got involved. […] That’s when I think they start, they brang the, uh, metal detectors and they had everyone get searched […] I think they were tryin’ to like, catch people ‘cause they’ll do it on Monday and then they’ll just, like leave the whole week and then, just do it another day [metal detectors] […]. Yeah, surprise people, like you know, just come outta nowhere. ‘Cause then there was, they had a huge line outside the…you know, the school, where people had to stay in line and they had to remove their belts. and people would just turn around and walk away and go home. […] They would not even go in to the school. (Jovita, High School Equivalency Diploma goer, 2013)

Jovita explains that social media changed the parameters of the fight and so everyone knew about the fight that happened via ‘MySpace’. Her retelling is quite vivid for someone who wasn’t there and her representative retelling almost reaches the status of myth. The size of the fight was much bigger than she was used to, moreover, this fight happened inside the school, not just outside. She spoke about how one method of stopping more fights meant the school administration brought in metal detectors intermittently, but
that students would often times not want to deal with the hassle: if they saw the metal
detectors, or a line outside the school as they entered, many she knew would just take off.
Students voted with their feet. High School students did not need to be involved in the
hassle of metal detectors. Implied is that those for whom gang affiliations were more
important would stay out of school.

**Gangs.** Jovita also raises the issue of gangs. The vast majority of the respondents
when speaking of gangs only spoke about local groups of kids. But only two (2) males
mention gangs one the RIP gang (Respect is Power) is local with only loose connections to
other Mexican gangs.

Much of the gang activity is related to drugs. Eduardo is the only one who has a
police record for selling drugs. Many recall the drug dealing. Javier says:

Yeah, growing up, I, I used to, um, see a lot of this drug dealing, you know, crimes,
all in my, all in my neighborhood and I, I wouldn’t know what it was until I got
older…and start realizing, you know..

Javier recalls that he grew up with “groups.” He says:

I grew up with them, yeah, they, they’re not, most, they’re not associated, like, with
I wouldn’t refer them as gangs, they’re just, in a group that chill with each other but
they, they never gotten, like, into serious problems. (Javier, HS Graduate, 2013)

Javier describes that most of the ‘gang’ members he’s talking about are small cliques of
guys, who hang out and look out for each other, sometimes protect each other. He also
states that they had never gotten into ‘serious problems’, so he is not directly familiar with
members of more dangerous gangs, though he may be aware of them.

By high school, Black–Mexican violence was less common, but it was usually
instigated by a few kids. For the majority of young males, growing up demands maturity and requires ‘getting over it’. Disengaging from emotions and from petty retribution keeps you alive and gives you a second chance. In school, peers are more important. Teachers are not in your world. But adulthood and especially parenthood changes the dynamic in favor of responsibility and family and mitigates interethnic and other challenges.

**Immigrant Vulnerability & the Memory of School.**

Beyond interethnic school fights, respondents shared a significant number of microaggressions experienced by Mexican immigrants when attending public school. Microaggressions are the “everyday encounters of subtle discrimination that people of various marginalized groups experience throughout their lives (Sue, et al., 2007). Eduardo shared with me several types of microaggressions he experienced as the only respondent who attended an all-boys Catholic School.

I mostly experienced it in school […] like they were joking…[but] at the same time […] if you look at it it’s still like, racism. […] I’ll be, like especially in this school, St. Peter’s, ‘cause, […] I used to be the only Mexican there […] whenever they’d talk about, like, oh, *mowing lawns* and shit like that…like, they would like, straight some at me, like, oh.. ‘*go mow my lawn*’…and things like that. But to me, it really never got to me like that, like, I didn’t feel like, I didn’t take, I didn’t take it to the next step, you know […] I just didn’t care about what people were saying. I never did. Like, only when they were talking about my mom, then that’s when I would really get pissed but, like, they were racist to me and I really wouldn’t care, I wouldn’t mind it, just ignore it.

Yeah, it was like the whole class. That’s why, like I kinda, I kinda knew that they
were joking but at the same time, you know, it was still, like, inappropriate. […] It didn’t’ make me angry, it just made me like, you know, it just made me feel […] some type of way that I didn’t wanna feel. […] There’s mostly White people in that school so there was racism towards, like, Blacks and, and Mexicans, Hispanics, yeah.

Eduardo also describes what they used to say about Black people in his all-boys Catholic school:

They would just be, like, oh, um, ‘go pick my cotton’…and like, especially ‘they will use the N word’ or they, like, you know, stuff like that. It’s like common stuff but at the same time it’s stuff that you shouldn’t be doing no more. And people think, like, we are supposed to grow out of it [but it] just stays there. (Eduardo, HS Graduate, 2010)

Eduardo notes that saying racist things in school may be juvenile and inappropriate, but still persists. While he developed a strong enough core to ignore some of what was said and not take it personally, it nevertheless affected him, and made him feel things he “didn’t wanna feel.”

Male students in particular related that this was common place, being called names by peers in school. When I asked Mark about the violence against Mexicans he immediately relayed stories of racism he had experienced at his public school

One time I think they was talking about the…the swine flu, […] some kids at my school, they were just, […]they thought it sounded cool to call people, some Mexican people […] uh, “Swine Flu, don’t get near them.” […]. (Mark, HS Graduate, 2013)
In addition, to experiences at school, several people mentioned problems they had had walking the streets, getting to or from work. Public transportation is one area particularly fraught with tension. Enrique, brought to the US at age 3, relays the following story of what had just happened to him on the bus, right before our interview.

A black guy asked me for fifty cents, I was short on the bus too, I didn’t even have the 2.50 on the bus. So, you know, I paid the bus or whatever, I’m walking in and he’s like ‘yo, you got fifty cents?” I’m like bro, “I didn’t even pay the bus driver the fifty cents that I owe ‘em.” […] I was like, “what are you talkin’ about?” I was like, “Naw, but, I don’t I’m broke.” So he was like, ‘alright,’ […] I was like, excuse me. So he goes and pushes me with his arm … [to himself] What the hell is wrong with you bro? I’m like, “Yo, what’s wrong with you?” Like, oh, I said, “Watch where you going!” And I was like bro, I was like, “You got me confused, I’m not one of these guys, I’ll beat your ass!” And then, um, he turned around, he was like, “Alright,” he was like, “We’ll see after, […] we’ll see in Port Richmond.” I was, like, “alright!” Like, ahh…we-we’ll get a spot, man, I don’t care [to himself]. […] So I called my boy, and I was like, “Yo, meet me by the bus stop, just in case the kid pops outside.” […] I guess he heard me or something, ‘cause he was saying, like, he was holdin’ out, like, waiting for me, me, and him, me and him was gonna go at it. So he, got off a bus stop before m-mine, he got off. So I was like, yo, “What happened? Like you, you, you were froggy on the bus, what’s going on now?” So I, I told him, “yo forget it!” He jumped off. He was, like, “Alright man.” I was like, just keep goin. […] You know, but … stuff like that happens all the time. (Enrique, High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirant, 2013)
Enrique says minor conflicts, especially between young men and teenagers happen all the time, in this case an inter-racial confrontation. In this case, Enrique relies on his awareness of city life, as well as relying on his knowledge of English to sustain him. While the other guy pushes him with his arm, Enrique is annoyed but fearful that the guy may make good on his threat so he calls ‘his boy’ to offer backup once he gets off the bus. Whether it’s the phone call or the fact that Enrique speaks English that puts the guy off is unclear, but the guy doesn’t wish to follow up on any perceived threat and steps away. Perhaps it’s Enrique’s level of preparation that scares the potential perpetrator off.

Experiences in Schools: Supportive Teachers

“Sometimes you wanna take classes – but job interferes and you want to ask-for the day off –but you can’t you know.”

Leonardo, HS Graduate, 2013

Several respondents told of positive experiences in schools and wanting to be a teacher or guidance counselor. Javier said, “Well, I really like helping people, like, a guidance counselor, like, someone like that, you know, motivate people to do something with their lives, you know (Javier, HS Graduate, 2010). Andrés talks about wanting to work in schools too, but preferably as a Guidance Counselor rather than a teacher, “Yeah, I rather be a guidance counselor than a teacher, honestly, but, yeah, it’d be cool either way.” He then relays stories of his favorite teachers. Andrés spoke of Mr. Carter, his seventh-grade history teacher, who employed dramatic means including raising his voice and throwing books to simulate bombs the “one that made me fall in love with history.” He also raves about Mrs. McNeese, his guidance counselor, who didn’t judge him when he skipped class. She said he was young and that it was ok, so long as he pulled himself together and she’d
push him to college even though [he] had no intentions of finishing it [High School]. Her kindness and persistence paid off when he asked her to help him get back into school, something she did.

Andrés shared that occasionally teachers shared personal stories that resonated with the students to develop trust:

My teacher once told me that …when she was younger that, she, like, back when she was by South Beach, when South Beach wasn’t that…that many people there…that she saw the KKK burning up a flag, uh, a…[…] a cross…[Yeah a teacher]. Like, but this lady was, like, old […] she was, like…she got spooked that she, she encountered them. [When] they saw her she started to run for her life ‘cause she knew that [they] could’ve, like, [seen] her, something that [she wasn’t]supposed to see …and they, they got on her track until she lost ‘em […] (Andrés, High School Graduate 2013).

Andrés shares that a teacher went out of her way to share an experience of overt racism in their very own borough. Since my line of questioning raised the specter of racism and interethnic relations, Andrés felt compelled to share a memorable story, a story that the teacher felt compelled with him.

Other students expressed that schools and teachers were their salvation. In Katya’s case, she relates that doing well in school helped maintain her sanity: “that’s [School] the other reason for why my grades had been so, so high. Because that was the only thing that, that I can come home and, and do instead of thinking…and having flashbacks.” Having a purpose and focusing on the rigors of school helped relieve personal family trauma. School was an escape from the realities of home.
Yazmín speaks about a high school teacher supportive of her efforts to have a Dreamers club at her high school.

My sister and I, we planned it and everything and about twenty or more kids…said that they will want to be involved with the group but when this started…no one actually showed up, only one person and a friend of mine. […] One of them was, she was actually, um, Asian…[…] And she said that it would be interesting to help out. […] Yeah, and, another friend of mine, too. Well […] she just came along when she heard the announcements and I guess she was a supporter. I never asked her if she was … [undocumented or an Ally]. […] It’s good. Yeah. But I guess she was an ally too, and my friend…and we were [just] the three of us. […]

After that, I decided not…like, I guess I wasn’t…[…] encouraged to continue with the group just due to the amount of people that actually showed up. And they asked my friends to come too and I know that they’re also undocumented and they didn’t, they didn’t show up….[…] And I was like, I’m doing this for all of us, we have to work together. But they didn’t show up. So[…] Yeah, it was after school, like, they said that they will try, they never said that they had to do something after school. […] It only happened once and the teach-, like, I will go to the teacher and she was, actually, like, […] the supporter […] like, a teacher too, yeah […] a mentor. And she was, she wanted to continue with the group but I, I wasn’t encouraged to continue with it. (Yazmín, HS Graduate 2013)

Yazmín also mentions a particularly dedicated English teacher, a stickler for grammar, a difficult teacher, but Yazmín is appreciative of the teachers’ dedicated efforts:
[A]ctually, that was my favorite class out of high school. Like, the teacher, […] the way he taught the class I enjoyed that class so much. I wish I could go back!

[…] It was […] hard because I never had a teacher who was so strict with grammar, punctuation, or anything like that. Before that, teachers would will give me, like, maybe 80, 90 or 100 but with him I started from the bottom. He actually did, he was very strict with grammar, punctuation and things like that. […] Yes, I [learned something] and I liked that he was strict and he didn’t just give me a grade […]. He was very, like, he will look for detail and he wanted everything to be good. […] My writing did improve due to that class and they way he, like, I just love that class.

(Yazmín, HS Graduate, 2010)

**Relationships with African Americans**

On the whole, high school graduates, and the high school equivalency aspirants, noted that their poor interaction with African Americans waned after they left secondary school. The two quotes from High School Graduates now in college, speak to the ubiquitous experiences of urban youth in a post-industrial community: interactions with Blacks is common place but evolving, as interactions with African American peers highlights to a greater extent their similar status as outsiders in higher education.

Leonardo spoke above about how he did not understand what ‘races’ were when he came to the U.S. at 10 years of age. He contrasts what he sees his younger siblings experiencing and notes that it is different for them now.

Well it happened to me, you know, when I was in, like, in intermediate school, more like, we weren’t that close with the other people, like […] we [Mexicans and Blacks] didn’t get along, you know… And now, yeah, and my sister go to school,
like, they’re getting, like a little better, you know. Like better relationship, you
know. […]

When I ask Leonardo if he has African American friends today, he states, “Yeah
[…] from school.” When I probe as to why he has African American friends today he states
reasons for what has changed:

Well before [intermediate school] I wasn’t like, really into it […] I wouldn’t get
along with them, I don’t know, you grow up and you, you learn, you know, like, not all
people are bad… yeah. . . . I don’t know. […]. I don’t need to get along with them, you
know. […] They don’t, like, have the same needs […] they’re just cool to hang out. Yeah,
you know, like, I guess the more I teach them. [Makes you] less …racist. […] Yeah. More
Open-minded, you know. (Leonardo, HS graduate, 2013) Leonardo here stresses that
repetition of interactions with African Americans, over time and in different educational
contexts from middle school to college has changed his sensibilities. Is it that once he is out
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college relationships that he didn’t have in middle school.

[I] noticed, my [younger] brother goes to school and they get along better with…he
feels more comfortable […] in the school. Yeah, I talked to some other kids but we
didn’t really get along with the black people. But now it’s different. Or maybe I
grew up and became more understanding. (Leonardo, HS Graduate, 2013).

Leonardo notices that his younger siblings have very different interactions with
African Americans than he remembers. Is it that his younger siblings speak more English
than he did when young, or that they are now educated and socialized in classrooms where
Latino students are now the majority? Or is it that his youngest siblings are US born and
therefore US citizens? Or is it that his younger siblings have the benefit of the older siblings
experiences that he ‘teaches’ them the way. Surely his assumptions of race in America are
not the same as what his U.S. born siblings have experienced in this neighborhood.

Another High School Graduate and current college goer, Susana points out
differences between her African American friends from High School and the relationship
changes she experienced with them:

I used to [have African American friends] in [high] school […] but we don’t talk
much because they actually left the island for college. But now that it’s summer […]
but they never talk about anything like that [racism]. […] Um, I have friend […]
[Evelyn] she lives in […] West Brighton, but she lives in, like, um, one of those
pockets of, um, streets or of a block where the houses are really big and they’re well-
kept, and so her mom owns, like, a house. And so whenever we would go to her
house she said, “Oh, I hate walking here alone because the neighborhood is bad. “
Um, she said that her mom always stays on the phone with her when she’s walking
to the bus stop because they just don’t trust the neighborhood. And I’m just, like,
wow, really because I can just walk here [Port Richmond] just fine. […] Um, but I
guess it’s because, um, I’ve lived with that all round, um, as a kid I remember not
playing in certain spots because we knew that, like the drug dealers would come back and they would want everything the way they kept it. Um, so, I don’t know. […] I, I guess most of the friends that I’ve encountered are very sheltered, but, I haven’t encountered anyone who, like, lives in the neighborhoods that, um are considered bad. (Susana, HS Graduate, 2013)

Susana here expresses surprise that Evelyn (pseudonym) has fears walking in her own neighborhood. Even with some large well-kept homes, New Brighton is a predominantly African American neighborhood. Susana contrasts her own experience of living in a predominantly Mexican, though poorer, neighborhood, where she knows her neighbors and concludes that her neighborhood is not all that bad. (Susana had previously shared that even though her neighborhood is now more Mexican, her house in Port Richmond is located on a block that’s predominantly African American.)

In several cases students relayed stories that emphasized not only interpersonal relationships with African Americans, but a connection to African American cultural pride. One area some mentioned as overt inter-racial pride was through their interpretation of events surrounding the election of President Barack Obama. Yazmín, who attended a high school in the middle of the island, relates one story from that period of time, a time when the public consciousness of interethnic understandings seemed to be rapidly shifting paradigms.

Well, when President Obama won…um, on the internet, like a bunch of, like people were saying bad stuff about how Obama shouldn’t have won, that he was gonna bring the country down, that people were gonna, were gonna leave the country, that all African Americans were just voting for Obama because he was African… and stuff like that. […] And also in class people were mad that he won. . . . Well, he won
last year [2012], right? He got re-elected and a kid was mad and in class he was
[saying] that this country was gonna go down and everything. It was a class
discussion and he was saying things like that. Yeah. And he was saying that since
Obama, is like, African American, he said that he looked like a monkey and things
like that so it was getting to a point that the teacher actually told him to, like, be
quiet, yeah. (Jazmin, High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirant, 2013)

Yazmín also relates her experiences with microagressions towards immigrant students:

And my US History class, the same class, right, I used to sit in the back with
an Asian girl, a Chin--, a girl from China. She also immigrated to the U.S. Another
girl who also, from, from Africa. She actually came to the US too and there was me
and once we were having a discussion about, in class, about immigration or things
like that and a kid… he’s actually, he was Puer-, he’s Puerto Rican and he’s, like,
“All the minorities in the back” … or something like that, or “all the immigrants in
the back”. I actually heard him say that, I don’t think he noticed that I heard him say
that.” […] I think [the rest] were just copying their notes; I was just looking around
and I saw him, like saying things. (Yazmín, HS Graduate, 2010, p. 35)

Yazmín speaks to the ubiquity of Obama bashing and immigrant bashing in schools.
Immigrants are some of today’s most vulnerable members and yet they are easily the target
of prejudice in today’s world. In this micro-agression the young man she references, a
Puerto Rican (!) transposes the mid-20th Century American version of ‘Blacks’ to the back
of the bus to say ultimately ‘immigrants’ to the back of the bus. He can say this and it is not
countered, but it is clear where he positions immigrants in society today; Yazmín is clearly
critical and angry at his choice of words, but does not feel empowered to respond verbally
as either an individual or group member targeted.

Katya, another High School Graduate, now in college, relates that she has few African American friends but ‘mostly from junior high school’. She also recounts from her middle and secondary school experiences a certain amount of ‘jealousy and tension,’ from African American students, along with a sense that, “Hispanics should not be here” (Katya, HS Graduate 2013, p. 26). Katya also relates a particularly gendered framework to understand one aspect of interethnic relations in speaking about her relationships with some African American girls:

Um…that we don’t belong here or that…a lot of girls, um…did envy, like, my, my hair…’cause it was long, because it was straight or because…um…so appearance, I guess, it was that, um…or the ability to, have good grades. […] That, and I guess they didn’t have, um, the support from their parents or, or their peers to have, uh, have high grades and they always wanted to be in fights or problems. […] My peers which were also Hispanic, um, they felt the same way. […] why […] the African American girls couldn’t do the same, um study and have good grades […]. Yes, in their community or in their home, it wasn’t […] the same in our home. Where education was very important, rather than theirs was not as much. (Katya, HS Graduate 2013)

Katya is a particularly driven student who emphasizes a few points found in the immigrant and education literature. One is the priority education holds for first-generation students, where immigrant students are optimistic and hence believe in the power of working hard to fulfill the dreams of their parents’ sacrifice (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). First generation students are positive and less cynical about their future prospects. Their memory
of their parents’ sacrifice to bring them to a new country is part of their identity and part of their drive to succeed. Yet Katya, unique among respondents, also raises the issue of straight hair and the complicated relationship African American women have with Eurocentric notions of beauty. One is that straighter hair is fairly or unfairly considered ‘better’, by the beauty industry, image-makers and in turn by the African American women themselves, consumers of television and media images of Black women. Katya’s hair is Indian hair belying her indigenous roots: it’s black, straight, and thick. When she mentions straight hair, she almost immediately changes the subject back to education, as it’s almost uncomfortable to continue speaking of straight hair, so she embeds the comments between comments made about what is a comfortable subject for her (education) to an uncomfortable subject (hair). She returns to her passions of education: jealousy about hair from others, easily transitions from a comment about Black women desirous of straighter hair to a critique of the lack of seriousness of others of their education. (She is as critical of some of her Mexican peers on this metric as well.) A committed student, she explores intersectionality briefly, how race can be interpreted through a gendered framework of beauty, but she then returns to her comfort zone, a discussion of education’s importance in the immigrants’ worldview. She adds later when discussing students in schools that she saw ‘Americans’ [whites] copy off her work, not only blacks. To understand interethnic relations with Mexican immigrants it’s as important to get an understanding of how they interact with the majority culture: white people.

Another High School Graduate, Isel, comments that the interethnic attacks made her mad and adds that she doesn’t like “racism.” “Everybody knows there’s different types of chemicals that make your skin different; other than that everything else is the same. Except
for your language & culture, and I was mad because I don’t believe in racism (Isel, HS Graduate, 2016).

For one high school equivalent aspirant, Jovita, one major interaction with African Americans was in communicating in English to her mother’s landlord, on behalf of her mother. She states that in high school she had more Black friends than she does now.

It’s not that I’m […] racist, it’s just that I don’t […] Yeah, well, when I was in class, I did, I used to talk to a..uh, a girl that was there. Like, they’re funny. […] Well, my landlord, he’s Black so […] I talk to him when it has to do with, the apartment and all that. […] Yeah, ‘cause I’m, like, the only one that talks English in the house […] He ignores my mom […] I’m the translator so…he talks to me. […] Yeah, when I moved out, my mom used to call me, ‘oh, come and translate for me’ or ‘come in to the appointment with me’ or ‘come in to the appointment with me’.

[…] So I guess that’s really why she wanted to take me back (Jovita, High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirant 2013).

After saying she speaks with all kinds of people, Jovita, High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirant gives a color-blind explanation of race: She doesn’t see color:

I don’t think that there’s racism, racism on just, on the island it’s just particular people that are racist […] to other people. Because…mm…Honestly, I don’t find the point to racism. […]‘Cause you discriminate, just because, by, it’s basically color. […] You know, like, there’s white people that discriminate black people; there’s black people that discriminate Mexicans; there’s Mexicans that even discriminate other races. (Jovita, High School Equivalency Diploma Seeker, 2013).

Later she goes on to add that her mom is “non-racial” while her dad is more
“discriminating. He looks at color more than my mom.” Her father didn’t want Obama to win, while Jovita found herself at times trying to talk to him, trying to see the error of his ways. She tells me that her father used to work in a restaurant in downtown Brooklyn and was once beat up, the victim of a crime. He now works in a factory for White people in South Carolina. “But still over there in the factory but my dad is more, like, he doesn’t like African American people. ‘Cause he said they’re crazy’ and…but…like, I always told him […] one person doesn’t […] doesn’t talk for everyone.” Jovita, High School Equivalency Aspirant goer, and second generation immigrant has been assimilated and racialized in the American system and she ends up being the go-between African Americans and her parents, running interference to tell them about her more integrated ways.

For individuals who had attended school, or lived and worked in Port Richmond, Staten Island, interactions with African Americans were common place and evolving. Males in general spoke about interethnic interactions between Mexicans and African Americans in contexts that emphasized danger and violence. Whereas females may have spoken generally about those contexts, they were not related to personal first person stories of violence.

Those High School graduates who had lived in the community for over 10 years had the greatest interaction with African Americans as classmates and peers, as more recent arrivals to the neighborhood were a part of an expanding Latino ethnic enclave. During my research, attendance at post-secondary institutions by high school graduates appeared to increase significantly due to DACA, and in college, classmates’ friendships with outsiders increased. In my interviews college goers were the least likely to express seeing African Americans as threats, personally or institutionally, as African Americans were not a powerful or predominant group in college. High School Graduates, college goers
specifically, saw African Americans as peers, if not friends. In the local college, unlike in the local high school, Mexican immigrants were so small in number that they could not be viewed as the insider group and they shared an outsider status with African Americans.

High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirants, like in Jovita’s case spoke of how they interacted with African Americans as translators. Jovita tried to communicate to her father that Black people were diverse and successful and not just the sum of stereotypes. She internalizes a color-blind philosophy that is shared by her mother, as well. A color blind notion of race is how she can best handle her parents’ struggles around race, and make sense of it for herself.

**Relationships with Whites**

While I asked participants about their interactions with White people, only High School graduates related stories of interacting with White people with any depth; high school equivalency aspirants were less reflective of this issue over all, or possibly had fewer significant experiences, with fewer chances to connect with White peers\(^2\). For some it may have had to do with length of time in the country and in school: making progress in achieving goals meant surmounting milestones and achieving goals, not time spent reflecting on social interactions. There is first, as mentioned in the literature review, the complex legal precedent that Mexicans in the US have as a result of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1948) where Mexicans were “legally white” for the purposes of the treaty (and hence could not be enslaved). Many Mexicans do view themselves as ‘White’ in a US context but most view themselves as ethnically mixed; two-thirds of Hispanics say being Hispanic is part of their race, and about a third select ‘other race’ or ‘mixed race’

\(^{2}\) Mindiola, Niemann & Rodriguez (2002) argue that understanding interethnic relations between African Americans and Latinos can be discovered by analyzing their relationships with Anglos.
when asked to identify themselves racially (Gonzalez-Barrera & Lopez, 2015). Nevertheless the examples of Mexicans not being treated as equals are legion. In an extreme example Delgado (2009) states that about 600 Mexicans were lynched in the US predominantly in the Southwest U.S. between 1846-1925.

Students who were born in Mexico and brought here as children or youth, 1st or 1.5 generation were more likely to use the terms, ‘American’ and ‘white’ interchangeably (Katya, Pedro.) When speaking about their relationships with White people, this made clear that the term ‘American’ described cultural contexts and privilege as well as skin color, along with a clear, presumption of class, here middle class context, and well definitely not poor. White people were always thought to be better off and in comparison, Mexican immigrants saw themselves as poorer and disadvantaged; White people had certain advantages as U.S. citizens while Mexican immigrants not so much. White people were the ‘real’ Americans – and ‘Americans’ were White folks, not other races, colors and creeds.

Perhaps using the term ‘American’ meant they were more comfortable using an ethnic rather than racial designation, or given that their history in Mexico where the Mexican government does not officially count race, these students may be more comfortable with an ethnic designation rather than a purely racial designation. In Spanish and in parts of the US the term ‘Anglo’ mirrors this usage of the term ‘Americans’ for these youth.

U.S. born second-generation youth never referred to White students as ‘American’ but only as ‘White’, possibly in that they were ‘Americans’ by birthright. In what may be a mixed status family, being a natural-born citizen granted them certain privileges and rights that non-citizen members of their family never get to expect. US born youth are born, raised and grow up in US racial realities of the US, never questioning its habitus.
Historically and contemporarily, many Mexicans and many Latinos may consider themselves Mestizo but many Mexican immigrants, particularly those in the U.S., may also view themselves as ‘White’\textsuperscript{13}. In Latin American societies, color can be a designation bestowed by the observer not claimed by the participant and is a proxy for North American notions of race, using primarily phenotype to denote race as well as social standing (Schaefer, 2008). In addition, an ethnic designation of American as ‘White’ in the minds of many also means ‘not-Black’ and thus bestowing a certain privilege in the US. It also reinforces the conceptual rhetorical sense of the term ‘Black’. Jesse Jackson’s popularization of the term ‘African-American’ in the 1980’s, was an attempt to claim a long heritage of ancestry, equivalent to European-Americans, but ‘African-American,’ is still a term for racialized and marginalized outsiders in many aspects of American culture. In contrast, not a single respondent used the term ‘White American’. When using the term ‘American’ without qualifier, whiteness was presumed, and this default category meant, if used without qualification: ‘White American.’

Among high school graduates, some of the more socially active students used the term ‘Whites’ critically. A high school graduate, Susana, having attended a public high school in the center of the island, used qualifiers that set White people apart from other ethnic groups. She said she found many White students at her school ‘materialistic,’ thereby reinforcing the notions of Staten Islanders found in the mass media, in particular reality TV:

They [the White kids] were always, like, the materialistic preppy kids, teenagers that they are. Um, I think every teenager is like that so they don’t have a full

\textsuperscript{13} Telles & Ortiz (2008) note regional differences in race self-identification. Respondents from the San Antonio part of their study were five times more likely to identify themselves as “White”, whereas two-thirds of the respondents from the Los Angeles part of their study identified as mestizo or mixed race.
understanding of what’s happening regarding, any um, in injustice um, or anything in the community. […] Just being in school…I always felt like, um, um, no one really understood my passion for social justice and so I, I never really talked about it with anyone because I knew that they wouldn’t […] they wouldn’t understand the issue […] because they’d never faced it […] So, I never, I never tried to talk about it. I, I know in my English/Poetry class my poetry, my teacher, because I had interviewed her for my, um, as an exercise for my radio documentary she always nudged me to say, like, oh, you know, ‘when are you gonna bring it in, we wanna hear it, like, as a class we should hear it,’ and I always, like, um pushed it off or, like, forgot about it because I didn’t feel like… I don’t mind if, like, the whole nation, like hears about it but just sitting there in that classroom with people that I know won’t understand, just, I, I didn’t wanna do it. […] It would be opening my, myself up to […] there was some people there that I just didn’t like and I didn’t want them to, um, know more about me than I do them. (Susana, HS Graduate, 2013)\textsuperscript{14}

Knowing that activism was a passion of hers, I was surprised when Susana said she had not shared the radio documentary nor had she spoken up about this in school. I probed as to why she didn’t speak up more in school. She reasoned that White people in her school were too ‘materialistic’, inferring that said materialistic people would inherently not be interested in her passion for ‘social justice’. Her own acknowledgment of her toned-down behavior in high school was a surprise as this was the antithesis of how I saw Susana.

\textsuperscript{14} Susana was an intern at Radio Rookies and produced a spot on the anti-immigrant violence in 2010 that aired on WNYC. She encounters a nativist: “I went to the ferry terminal and I was just interviewing random people and I asked this one guy, I asked him about immigration and he said the only reason why […] undocumented immigrants come here is to have children so that they could be grandfather[ed] and now citizens. And I was just, like, wow. […] I was trying to keep up with him, because he was, like, walking away as he said it. They don’t own up to what they’re saying but, I guess that’s just the experiences that I’ve been through” (Susana, HS Graduate, 2013).
function in youth group programs for over a year - she was always among the most vocal adherents to social justice values amongst her own community. She was ‘the’ feminist most willing to call her male colleagues on their sexism and racism, to the point, that many males, in particular, self-censored their expressions around her. She was a strong fearless woman 15.

Andrés, another high school graduate, spoke at length about his interactions with White adults in the community, in particular in expressing how White adults viewed new waves of immigration:

I heard some lady mouthwash [sic] Hispanics, they’re like, ‘yo, they just came here, they messed up Port Richmond, I remember when Port Richmond was […]’.

Yeah…a White female, old lady, dressed really conservative…uh, started to say, like, how Hispanics messed it up and […] how, like, you know, at the end of Port Richmond was open still […] I didn’t put much attention after those words. […] I was in high school, I heard it, I’m like, wow … I heard it from a teacher too (laughs). (Andrés, HS Graduate, 2013).

Andrés verbalizes a situation that might never happen to a less outgoing person: listening to critiques of neighborhood changes from the mouths of long-time residents. It is unclear how many of my respondents may have had that memory as well, but Andrés is one who states it upfront. Similarly, Andrés also recounts his interactions with an old man expressing sentiments from a time prior to the immigrant shift. Speaking about his interactions with a senior citizen, he recalls the man reminiscing about life in Port Richmond prior to the building of the Verrazano Narrows Bridge:

15 Andrés testified that Susana has shut him down for using any term other than African American when describing Blacks.
Used to be...that people just forgot about Port Richmond. [...] He would curse out at that Verrazano, like as if the Verrazano had ears. Like, he said that just out of nowhere people just came out of nowhere. He said that, we, when he was young that, like, he would hear, like, the, like, the train [...]. (Andrés, HS Graduate, 2013).

After she inferred as much I asked Katya about whether White students were ever jealous of her being a successful student.

I'm not sure if it was jealousy, it ...it was my life view [...] why they didn’t appreciate the, the, the um, the rights that they had [...] I knew that they were US citizens, [...] I didn’t even know I was undocumented [until] I was in junior high school.

Um, but I did see that Americans did not do as well as, as we did. Um, and they...and most of the kids would copy off of my work and take my work and I’d be like, oh my god, where’s my work going (laughs). But I didn’t understand why they didn’t um, work as hard. [...] When I was in high school, I started noticing that, um, when I actually knew that I was undocumented [...] I saw that, and I said well, why couldn’t, why don’t they take advantage of ...because they have a social security number they can apply for all these programs and they can get all these scholarships. Why don’t they go for that? Why don’t they work as hard? (Katya, HS Graduate, 2013).

Katya here mirrored research on first generation immigrant strivers (Rumbaut, 2014), immigrants who see themselves as compensating for their parents sacrifices and thus work hard to achieve their goals for themselves or their parents. She has a hard time understanding how successive generations of Americans take these life and educational
advantages for granted.

The male high school equivalent aspirants had different interactions with White people. Enrique, raised in the U.S. since age 3, spoke about how when he worked in landscaping and painting on the South Shore of Staten Island White people said all sorts of racist things around him, as his client assumed that the Mexicans working there didn’t speak English. On the flip side, he said he felt ‘safer’ as a Mexican in a White neighborhood, only because they as workers were ignored. He admits that he was only there in the daytime and doubts he would “hang out” there.

Pedro relates a story where he is sitting in the back of his boss’ car being driven to a client, and the boss’ sister-in-law calls on the speaker phone full of vitriol about ‘Obama’ and how he’s helping the ‘Blacks’ and the ‘effing Mexicans’, going on and on. After a while his boss hangs up the phone, and in an about face apologizes to them for hearing that, saying some people will say whatever comes to mind, blame anything on anybody, blame the Mexicans. He tells them they should respect themselves, as he (the boss) does and not listen to this ‘crap’. People will always blame someone, they always try to blame someone, but as long as they respect themselves, ‘none of this matters’.

Male High School Equivalency Aspirants recalled experiences with overt racism, in the two cases mentioned as bystanders to White racism spewing forth in English. In one case, the relative doesn’t realize that members of the ethnic group are in the back seat of the vehicle. In another case, racist ideas are spoken in front of Mexican landscapers as clients believe that the workers do not speak English.

Two females espoused a color-blind framework (Jovita, Isel), one a HS Graduate and one High School Equivalency Aspirants. They were more likely to speak of race in
color-blind contexts, than any complex analysis of whiteness and/or white people, blackness
or Black people. Color blindness has a certain face validity and rhetorical power by
appealing to a basic sense of equality, i.e. ‘we are all the same’. In the interviews, these
females reflect a popular narrative in American society, with no intention or goal of
superseding it (though I should add, neither of them are past 20 years old). Critical race
perspectives challenge whether this race neutrality can exist in a post-colonial world,
embodying settler colonialism and White privilege.

**Relationships with Asians**

*R - How do you feel when interacting with Asians?*

*They’re more calm, calm. (Leonardo, HS Graduate, 2013)*

These young adults’ relationships with Asians was limited, and primarily limited to school
situations, or commerce\(^{16}\). In particular, Chinese restaurants were mentioned most often:

There’s a Korean, um, like JK Discounts that has always been there, ever since, like
I was young. But then across the street is another, um, Asian, um 99 cent store, and
uh, so it’s changing, I, it’s growing more diverse, I’ve seen more Asians living here,
um but yeah. I like it. (Susana, HS Graduate, 2013).

High School graduates, especially those born in Mexico and brought here as young children
often spoke of taking ESL courses with Asian students in their childhoods, and these participants
spoke most openly about friendships with Asians. Overall the primary place respondents interacted
with Asian peers was in elementary school in ESL classrooms:

[I had] one friend who was Asian in 5th grade – but they work harder […] [the

\(^{16}\) Even though Staten Island is home to the largest Sri Lankan population in New York City and one of the
largest communities of Sri Lankans in the world, respondents rarely mentioned Sri Lankans when asked about
relationships with ‘Asians’, deferring to East Asian notions of being Asian. Some Sri Lankan youth were
active in the local youth group.
Center] has good outreach programs, but she [Asian girl] did not have the opportunity to go to those kinds of events or those programs because her parents said you need to study, you need to concentrate in this. Her grades were better than mine but she, uh but she was happy, uh, that she had a good grades and she made her parents proud. […] I think that was that’s um, one of the things that they have is that they, um, they represent their parents in school a lot. Rather than…uh, what I feel the Hispanics, um, they do, Hispanic students do represent their parents in school, but it’s more about representing themselves as individuals rather than a whole, a family as a whole. (Katya, HS Graduate, 2013)

Katya here observes that the role of education amongst some of her Asian friends is different, and practically alludes to what scholars have termed the influence of Confucian education in East Asian immigrants (Zhou & Kim, 2006) In short, Confucian philosophy is argued to emphasize education, family honor, discipline, and respect for authority and is considered an equalizing force to help implement cultural, ethical and social norms in immigrant children. Her comment above also alludes to parents’ higher levels of knowledge, a factor Zhou and Kim (2006) argues is the result of immigrant selectivity among Asians allowed to enter the U.S. She does not raise the “Myth of the Model Minority” directly but both Katya and Leonardo in the quote above, infer that Asians are ‘Good Students’, who represent their culture in public.

By contrast, Katya’s perspective is traditionally ‘Western’ in focus. Family and cultural norms are taken into account, but ultimately, behavior in whether to commit or reject school was one that reflected on the individual most of all, not the group. While
Latino immigrant culture is often viewed as foreign and distinct, it nevertheless has internalized Western philosophical outlooks to a great extent, often unrecognized.

Yazmín also speaks to the skin she wears in her interethnic relationships, but physically her body is read differently, as “from China or, like, Chinese, or Asian…” Yeah, or Filipina. (Yazmín, HS Graduate, 2013, p. 36). Later, Yazmín adds that there have been times in her educational experience, both in ESL in childhood as well as in Chemistry class in high school, where Asian students, primarily Chinese students, readily invite her to be part of their study groups. I surmise that in her case it may be the result of phenotypic similarity with her fellow Asian students.

Yazmín also adds that Asians were one group of students who did not make fun of her in a conspicuous way. Yazmín arrived to the U.S. at age 10, She was told the family was visiting a new place, but she had not been told they were moving. She related a story of how she and her sister did not want to learn English and wanted to go back to Mexico and stay with their grandmother. She said it took a few years before they actually bought into the notion of staying in the U.S. As she came to the U.S. as a pre-teen, she is aware that she speaks English with an accent. She noticed that Asian students never made fun of her accent. When I asked her to relate her relationships with Asians she shared the following story:

I … didn’t’ spoke English.. I was made fun of and things like that. And then in middle school, well, throughout my high, I mean, my school I been, have been made fun of, like, for like, my accent or things like that and also. . .

R – By... White kids, Everybody?

Yazmín – Everybody
R – African American kids?

Yazmín – African American kids.

R – Asians?

Yazmín – No, never Asians. (…) Yeah, there weren’t that many and the ones that I, um, the Asians that I came across with, like, I, they were friendly to me. (…) who else? Only…well…so it was mostly white and African Americans (…) And, like, my friends, they were, like, mainly Mexicans but I guess I was playing around or yeah.

R – So you would make fun of each other but that’s different.

Yazmín – Yeah – that wasn’t being made fun of, yeah. (Yazmín, HS Graduate, 2010)

Yazmín is conscious of her Asian classmates, particularly those who came as young children like she did, may have as many issues with speaking English as she did. She is particularly empathetic toward Asians, on several levels, phenotypically, as an immigrant to the U.S. and in the realm of speaking Standard English. She is a Westerner and focuses her comments on Asians. This Confucian focus on doing well in school, the socially respected goal of education, is a goal she holds herself and something she shares with her Asian classmates. The goals Yazmín shares cross-ethnically with Asians co-ethnics is a good point to transition to understandings of racism in the Port Richmond community and with their Mexican co-ethnics.

Conclusion

Understanding interethnic experiences between African Americans and Mexicans requires an awareness of the American racial hierarchy, and interactions with Whites are
necessary to examine. High School Graduates in Port Richmond were more likely to speak about African Americans as peers and not enemies, even though experiences of physical intimidation in middle school for males, highlighted racial differences. For girls, interethnic experiences revolved around social expectations for grades and looks, sometimes seemingly envied by African for occupying a space somewhere between White and Black. Interactions with Asians were primarily in ESL classes and in school, though females noted phenotypical similarities with Asians where they were not treated as outsiders.
CHAPTER VIII
Ubiquitous Racism and the Future

My primary research question was trying to understand how Mexican immigrants understood race in America. Prior to being a majority Latino community Port Richmond had been most recently predominantly Black (1980’s-1990’s), and prior to that mostly White, though integrated, before the 1970’s. As I have argued, interethnic relations are not deeply examined in the literature on the education of immigrants and given current demographic trends this oversight needs correction. When I asked these young adults about their interactions with people of various races and ethnicities, extending questions from the photo elicitations, school was the predominant social institution where individuals were forced to interact with a wide range of outsiders. When I asked these young adult respondents about their current relationships with individuals of other racial and ethnic groups, the responses varied depending on whether individuals were interacting with outsiders in schools or the workplace, where the level of interaction with other ethnic groups was also higher. While level of education mattered a great deal, language, immigration status and gender concerns were also at the forefront in understanding interethnic and inter-racial interactions.

To theorize how race is experienced and understood interethnically with the Mexican young adults I studied, I will expand on Nancy Lopez’s (2002) theory of Racial Gender Experience Frameworks (RGEF) where race and gender expressions are socially constructed and intertwined in experiences and in theory. To recap, the RGEF employs two
central concepts toward understanding experiential differences with race and gender processes, namely, *race-gender experiences* and *race-gender outlooks*. Race-gender experiences are the past social interactions in a given social sphere, public spaces, schools, work, and the home, where men and women undergo racial and gender processes. These experiences and embodied memories with processes of race(ing) and gender(ing) frame how future experiences are understood. These different experiences are not due to essential or innate differences between men and women, or biological or cultural differences between races, López writes, but rather to social interactions and structural relationships. López argues that Latinos, are not innately ‘White or Black’ but rather are racialized as ‘White’ or ‘Black’: they are contextually involved in historically variable social relationships that are continually being created and limited by macro and micro level experiences. Thus, due to differences in experiences, both qualitative and summative, the race-gender experience framework navigates and negotiates widely varying race-gender outlooks.

For the purposes of understanding how Mexican immigrants understand race and interethnic relations, I will adapt and extend López’s Race Gender Experience Framework theory to include language, what I will call, the Language Race Gender Experience Framework (LRGEF). Given the centrality of structural relationships and social interactions in shaping the interethnic and inter-racial experiences of the Mexican immigrants in my study, the bilingualism of the Mexican immigrants does introduce a level of linguistic relativity in the overt discussion of race if not in the covert understanding of race and racism. Use of two languages in concept and memory is a veritable borderland where race and gender are experienced. Bilingual and bicultural frameworks traverse experienced and projected notions of gender in the U.S. and Mexico, through personal experience, the media
and spoken languages. Bodies who inhabit the borderland negotiate fixed race assumptions in U.S. contexts via their own racialized experiences. Race, for Mexican immigrants then is experienced in mixed-race, mestizo frameworks, employing the fluid boundaries of Latin American notions of race, where race is not an absolute variable of phenotype but one that can be tempered with socioeconomic clout. It also confronts American notions of race as unrealistically deterministic. Interethnic understandings between mestizo mixed race people from Mexico, must navigate American social expectations for race in different contexts, as well as decide in situ on immigrant, white/black, or racialized identities. To restate Lopez then: Because of their disparate experience with language, race and gender processes, young male and female immigrants from the same ethnic and class backgrounds come to view the role of race and interethnic communication in their lives in vastly different ways. (López, 2002, p. 6).

**Intraethnic Relations: Individual and Organizational**

Mexican immigrants’ relation to others in their own ethnic group brought a wide variety of insights and experiences often highlighting the differences between their generation and their parents’ or the generation of community elders, as well as emphasizing gender and immigrant status differences. Intra-ethnic relations were most verbalized in a variety of realms: institutional, elders, peers and immigrant status.

Susana shares that she has been criticized as racist by members of her own community because she has primarily an academic orientation and not primarily a co-ethnic bonding orientation:

My mom’s friend […] told my other aunts that my sister and I are all racist because we don’t like hanging out with […] other Mexicans. Because we don’t socialize at
Mexican parties and because we never go to any Mexican, uh, churches or anything like that. And I’m just like, laughing my face off, because, first of all [...] I’d … rather hang out with people who know how to read, with people who actually achieve, like strive to graduate high school, with people who, who plan on going to college, who plan on making their lives better, and her daughter… all the, all the friends that she hangs out with are, like, the gangster kids (laughs) who rather skip class than to try to graduate. (Susana, HS Graduate, 2013)

Later she also comments on Mexican fiestas, multi-generational affairs with friends and neighbors of all ages, with lots of food and booze. As a maturing young woman she made it clear that there were some aspects of community fiestas that she did not enjoy: “For one thing, I don’t like going to Mexican parties because I don’t like having middle-age drunk men hit on me, or I don’t like dancing, or I don’t’ feel like I have anything to prove to the Mexican community.” Her comments brought up memories of parties my own parents would have with their comadres and compadres and while I was not subject to salacious groping, I was witness to a wide range of fun that sometimes descended into an adult’s drunken interlude. I could only imagine that she was telling the truth.

In another intra-ethnic conflict, Susana relates a story of trying to organize a Mexican folkloric dance group to attend a community event that will be publicized in the media in Summer 2010 to counter the anti-immigrant violence. When she approaches the dance troupe she is rebuffed as the dancers ‘need to practice for their upcoming performance’. Susana is shocked at the self-interested dance troupe leader, but she also became quickly aware, that organizing efforts in her community may not always result in cross community acceptance merely by being another co-ethnic group. She learned that
Katya, who came to the U.S. at age 7, contrasts her drive for education and schooling with what she sees among her fellow Latino peers:

Within my other […] peers that were Hispanic, not all of them, um, were as concentrated in school as I was. […] Some of them said just to […] not go to school, ‘I’m cutting’, um, not being in classes, um, but some of them did. Some of them did have that view of going to college, even though they were undocumented. [S]ome of them said no, that’s not for me…they saw college as…long, long way to, to go and it was impossible to go. (Katya, HS Graduate, 2013)

Katya finds kinship with fellow, as she says, ‘Hispanic’ students who share her belief in the power of education; but she also knows many Latino students who get discouraged after assessing the educational landscape, finding the barriers to high school completion and access to higher education too onerous to overcome.

Andrés, echoes Katya’s comment that many of her fellow peers had concluded they had no access to college because even though he was a high school graduate, he felt college was an insurmountable goal for most of his high school career. He speaks about how DACA itself has forever changed his educational outlook. He’s no longer a powerless person. He sees himself as similar to his American peers now, with an optimism for education that cannot be taken away.

I had no hope for college […] if two years from now DACA stops, the dream, it’s not, like, you know, they stop out of nowhere. […] I have gained enough hope to just be, […] like, fuck it, like, if I’m have to work with minimum wage, I’ll suck up
my rage and I will just proceed with, with life. (Andrés, HS Graduate, 2013).

When reflecting on the fact that DACA could be a temporary measure only, and he may have to go back to Mexico, he states that he, “would go back to my country, try to practice whatever I got…[…] [My sister] she gives me reasons to go back. Like, she says, […] now that […] I’m bilingual that […] I could go to Mexico, it’d be mad easy to find a job.”

He continues:

Yeah and I would like to go because…honestly, I feel that I’m neither from here or there. I been here so long that I forgot about there …and... And, like, but then again I cannot deny that I’m from there, like, my roots…

My, my skin, everything says it. And I wanna go because…if it, I wanna know my culture, I, I wanna know where I come from, I, I’m so curious to know how my people are …[…]…because they would hi-, hibernate. So I’m like…like, you know, like, knowing, knowing that my culture’s so rich that it’s still here in America…Oh, yeah, just, it shows how, how we [community] progressed through history, through time.

But I, I, I seen a lot of ‘em, like, damn, I’m like, like, they’re mad cool, like, I believe my culture’s mad cool, my peoples and all that but there’s that few individuals who fuck it up for everybody…who just, like, or…no…almost like bums, you know. I don’t even wanna say the word, it’s just that sometimes that’s exactly what they are. ‘Cause, you walking down the block and you walk in some empty, like, some lonely bridge and you see somebody just pop out of nowhere, like, damn… (Andrés, HS Graduate, 2013).
Andrés emphasizes the in-between status of 1.5 Generation students (Rumbaut, 2014), who were brought to the U.S. as children and thereby hold memories and experiences of the homeland yet are socialized as adolescents in their adoptive home. Having a high school diploma and benefitting from DACA has changed what Fergus calls his academic orientation and perception of opportunity, and many DACA recipients have benefitted from this change in orientation. After receiving DACA he sees himself and his people from a place of privilege.

Andrés also speaks powerfully about the role his cultural history plays on his identity and social formation, as one who even though he lives in the U.S., wears Mexico on his skin. He interjects the realities of living in the U.S. as an immigrant temporarily protected by DACA but politically savvy enough to know that these protections could be removed at any minute. He fantasizes about returning to Mexico and whether voluntarily or forced he feels well positioned to benefit from the education he has already received. He’s also familiar with the ubiquity of possible violence that lurks in urban communities. Just one guy ‘fucks it up’ for all the others.

Fernando states that he’s had a couple of fights – but only with ‘other Mexican kids’. “I had problems with Hispanic kids in Victory [Blvd.] (Fernando, High School Equivalency Diploma Goer, 2013).” He goes on to say, “But that’s one point that I’m left out on. Like, with Black people I don’t even have problems with them, it’s just mostly Mexican-on-Mexican.” He says there are more problems with Mexicans and that most of these kids have just ‘dropped out’; they don’t go to school. Fernando thinks these problems stem from the fact that he was born in New Jersey [Bayonne] and carries himself differently, and that others think he thinks more highly of himself. He lived in a less Mexican neighborhood as a
child, but moved to more Mexican Port Richmond by high school. He doesn’t feel any
different, but he’s the first to point out that the community may be large enough and
established enough to suggest intraethnic violence could be growing. Problems in the future
in this community may not be along racial or ethnic lines, but different distinctions all
together.

**Racism and Prospects for Better Race Relations**

*R: How do people act who are racist?*

*Javier: I guess, they act like you don’t exist. Yeah, I
guess you could put it as that.*

*(Javier, 2013, HS Graduate)*

When I asked respondents about racism most all acknowledged that racism existed
in many shapes and forms in Staten Island and in society at large: racism was ubiquitous,
existing in all peoples, and often at the heart of human nature:

Yes. There’s always gonna be racism. […] I guess it’s just a part of human nature.

[…] Probably just, you know, race, what race is at times. Um…just, it, it, it
exists…[…] Here, definitely. […] The racism could be, like, anything, based on
your religion, your race, your color, you know it’s, there’s always gonna be
prejudice, certain groups. […] I guess, they act like you don’t exist. Yeah, I guess
you could put it as that. You get ignored, and then you might get a little, you might
get bullied. Yeah (Javier, 2010, HS Graduate).

When I ask Javier’s brother, Leonardo, if there’s racism on Staten Island, he
responded that it is against “everybody.” “Yeah, everybody, like some people are more
understanding but some people … they’re like ‘no way dude.’”
Isel relates a story of how she was bullied by males in her Catholic elementary school, “two Italians and one Egyptian.” They would tell jokes at her expense: “What’s the difference between a Mexican and the dictionary? No papers.” She raised the issue with her teacher and parents and the kids who did this were punished, but she admits there is racism everywhere:

I see that people get more along…but […].. there’s also people that stay […] with their kind and try not to mix with everybody else because […] they’re probably scared or they don’t know […] what will happen […] if they talk to each other -- because some people have attitudes, others are kind. (Isel, High School Graduate, 2016).

Isel recognizes that with her education some attitudes have changed. There is more public tolerance but there is also an equal amount of fear, a fear of anticipation of the other people’s actions or reactions. The lack of interethnic interaction is self-protective at times, at other times borne out of fear.

When I ask Susana if there’s racism, she agrees but also speaks to classism on the Island:

Yes, there’s more than just racism, there’s classism. Especially the North and South Shore. Um, I think I notice racism more in the South Shore because when there was that, that mosque that wanted to be built, everyone said, “No, no!”

She tells the story of how some of the arguments used against the building of a mosque on the South Shore of Staten Island revolved around the lack of parking, but she recognized this for the red herring it was:

Um, nobody from the South Shore will ever come to the North Shore. Never. Never.
[…] They just think that it’s a bad neighborhood … that everything is, that they’re going to get robbed. They just have a very negative outlook on it. […] So then, like, the South Shore, they like to hide their […] racism, […] but there’s like classism. So over there their houses are bigger, they’re more expensive, they’re … only people with status and money move out there […]. It’s a big divide (Susana, HS Graduate, 2013).

Susana raises the specter of racism that is covert, hidden, just under the surface, not voiced or expressed. She also states that one way racism can be hidden is for arguments to be hidden in the guide of class conflict, for racism not be expressed overtly.

Nicolás, a high school equivalent student with limited formal education, held a point of view held by no others in my sample. When I asked him if there was racism on Staten Island, he answered, “There was […] for me, there was.” I ask him to explain himself as I was not anticipating this response:

‘Cause when I was in high school, we see, […] a lot of white people….just…that happened to me, like, uh, three times, they say, ‘oh you fucking Mexican, like, you gotta go back to your country, blah, blah, blah.’ […] White kids. And then after that, the Black kids said that. And…it’s, it’s….frustrating. But right now…[…]. They don’t, they don’t say that to me no more…’cause if they say something, I’m gonna be, like…[I’m] not here for a problem, you know. It’s work. That’s it (Nicolás, High School Equivalency Diploma goer, 2013).

Nicolás has compartmentalized the experiences of racism in his life as he experienced it from both Whites and Blacks. On the plus side, these racist taunts, now have no power over him and he has moved beyond it through his energy behind being a determined
entrepreneur. On the negative side, he may merely be burying his emotions as he testifies to taunting from peers of all sorts. In addition, he had been removed from school at 13 years of age by his own father, and may suffer from Complex Relational Trauma as is evidenced by his disassociation from racism (Cortois, 2008)

**Improving Interethnic Experiences - Expectations**

“You know, and, like, young guys, like me, as well, go, you know, if we teach this generation, we can teach the next one not to be that way.” (Javier, High School Graduate, 2013)

High school graduates, especially those who were members of this particular youth group, were a bit more reflective of changes in the community, extrapolating how they could view improvements in relations between ethnic groups, much more so than the high school graduates who were not members of the group. In this case, the social capital developed by working as a youth group that focused on interethnic relations, generally had positive effects on their outlook on interethnic relations and multi-ethnic work. Regardless of how involved Javier will be, he will try, like many others, to lead by example.

When I asked Susana what helped build relationships with other groups, she responded: Well, everyone knows what ‘The Mind Openers’ are, um, if not ‘Mind Openers’, then they know [Mary]. […] The Mind Openers have definitely, um, built up my, not only my self-confidence but I’m able to publicly speak, […] I’ve gained knowledge that I can share with others, I know how to facilitate, um, and the all came really handy when I applied for a job at Project Reach to facilitate workshops and, and so… I, um, I was able to connect with that organization and […] done workshops

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17 Mind Openers is an anti-violence group offering school-year and summer leadership opportunities for youth.
with them, as well.

Learning community service in her neighborhood developed her leadership skills. When I ask if her parents encouraged her to build friendships with others Susana responds that her parents encouraged her to make education her top priority and this encouraged her to socialize with kids who were always doing their homework because, “I guess, intelligence has no […] ethnicity. […] I’m able to, um, talk to other kids from different backgrounds about that” (Susana, High School Graduate, 2013).

There were, however, limits to community involvement. Within her family, her father was beginning to put pressure on her to get a job, like other teenagers, to help pay her own way. Susana was not upset about this but aware and somewhat resigned that this would be her fate.

Overall, while active members of the youth group were the most optimistic for future interethnic work, some were critical of certain steps neighborhood groups took. Javier was supportive of the work Eye-Openers did. When I asked Javier to discuss if race relations have improved since the attacks of three years ago, he stated:

Yeah, yeah, there’s been programs who make it better, like, the midnight soccer…but I kinda don’t agree with it […] midnight soccer at the CYO. […] Because they have the, the black community at the bottom [floor] playing basketball [where the court is located] and they had the Mexican community upstairs playing soccer, so they weren’t, they weren’t interacting. (Javier, HS Graduate, 2013).

Javier was less supportive of intramurals that reinforced cultural differences, rather than try to get kids to work together.
Conclusion

By introducing language to López’s Race Gender Frameworks, I am hoping to push her model to include language in frameworks that work in a variety of ways. High School Graduates are able to articulate broader notions of race and interethnic talk into their worlds as in their case, language has developed to include these concepts. For High School Equivalency Diploma graduates, interethnic talk and relations do not present themselves as priorities. Female high school graduates are more critical of possible male co-ethnic behavior than the other way around, though male perspectives of female behaviors were not explicitly explored. Citizenship, in particular, DACA, has opened up entirely new worlds for the High School graduates and identity and optimism have clearly shifted for them, making education purposeful, beyond just learning: it can bestow a government credential, however, temporary, where outlooks are more optimistic. All the High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirants see the value of finishing high school now and the motivation to pursue further study does empower them.
Chapter 9

Discussion and Conclusion

The Language Race Gender Experience Framework (LRGEF) brings a level of linguistic relativity to Lopez’s work (2002) that helps illuminate how race is understood in interethnic contexts. This linguistic relativity, brings to bear the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis (Kennison, 2013) that argues that language acts to create and shape reality. The language of race, gender and interethnic relationships are fraught with controversy and contention. The very research I have conducted can be criticized for being essentialist and determinative without acknowledgement of the fluid identities of race and ethnicity that Latinos, and Mexican immigrants here, embrace. Also my research in that African American responses were not obtained and any conclusions I make on interethnic relations in only one direction are bound to be incomplete and criticized.

While I am not one generally drawn to absolutes, I aim to argue here that Latino contexts for race talk and interethnic communication are different; White contexts for race talk and interethnic communication are different; and African American contexts for race talk and interethnic communication are different. What each group means by race, or how ‘race’ is understood in macro or micro contexts will vary greatly depending on a wide variety of factors: English language fluency, geographic location (or dispersal), variations in length of residency in a community between different individuals and different groups, extent to which interethnic contact is achieved, as well as the likelihood of working in ethnically diverse settings (Gurin, Hurtado & Peng, 1994). The lack of facility in English often places immigrant Latinos at the bottom of workplace structures and their lower status here may affect how they perceive African Americans (Mindiola, Niemann, & Rodriguez,
Hispanic beliefs and feelings about African Americans may be grounded in competition for resources (Guevara, 1996; Johnson & Oliver, 1994; Mindiola, Niemann, & Rodriguez, 2002.)

Given the centrality of structural relationships and social interactions in shaping the interethnic and inter-racial experiences of the Mexican immigrants in my study, the bilingualism of the Mexican immigrants does introduce a level of linguistic relativity in the overt discussion of race, if not in the covert understanding of race and racism. Here I am arguing in favor of Fishman’s Whorfianism of the Third Kind (1978)\(^\text{18}\) namely the “intrinsic value of ‘little peoples’ and ‘little languages (p. 5).’” Thinking of race in language patterns that are only in English, subtracts indigenous and mestizaje notions of race from our thought processes. Mexican and Latino immigrants understand ‘race’ in American contexts through their experience of blended histories and bloodlines, similar to how race is viewed in Latin American contexts (Schaefer, 2008). This is not an authoritarian view of racial hegemony, but a vastly more fluid one. Racialization processes of the 1.5 and second generation, cast these high school graduates as arbiters of racial conflict between multiple generations in their families and communities, should they choose to do so or not. The racializing experiences do shape their race-gender outlooks, but with the additive and dynamic, not subtractive Latin American contexts for race and race language.

Telles and Ortiz (2008) in their work, *Generations of Exclusion*, do find that racializing distinctions for Mexican immigrants tend to persist beyond the third generation, while Jimenez finds that Mexican notions of ethnic identity get ‘replenished’ with each

\(^{18}\) The first view of the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis is the objectionist championed by Lenenberg to test the hypothesis. The second view is the universalist view of language theory that all languages share universal grammars championed by Chomsky.
successive wave of Mexican immigration in the U.S., and here Northeast Diaspora. Instead of a deterministic finding of ‘immigrant exclusion’, Jimenez declares Mexicans to occupy a ‘permanent immigrant status’ in the American experience. He shies away just this side of a racialized determinism in that he finds prospects for Mexican immigrants to be varied depending on phenotype, class and socialization. Given the relatively recent phenomena of large numbers of Mexicans in the New York Metropolitan region, neither of these models tell enough of the story, especially in that Mexicans in New York are also often interacting with Latinos from the South American and Caribbean diasporas. Puerto Ricans and Dominicans are both larger and more established populations in New York City, and both descend from Caribbean traditions with much more explicit and celebrated Afro-Indo-European roots. When interacting geographically with these Carribean cultures, as well as significantly sized populations from Ecuador and Colombia in the region, how will historical Mexican racial frameworks be altered for future generations?

The High School Graduates in my study offer greater optimism for interethnic understanding and interethnic relationships in that this group is comprised of predominantly 1.5 generation and second generation Mexican Americans, and US born Latinos often become mediators between African Americans and foreign born Latinos as they straddle both worlds (Rodriguez, 1996).

The High School Equivalency Diploma Aspirants goers, by proxy, have seemingly greater language barriers, along with less social capital, that aligns with fewer workplace options. Low-wages, and lack of economic opportunity can explain certain amounts of low-levels of interethnic conflict (Rodriguez, 1996). Given the limited schooling experienced by the students with interrupted formal education, it is admirable that each of these men are
choosing to pursue a high school equivalency diploma, but they are also realistic and
determined about the possible benefits obtained by school completion, namely, for some,
DACA and the temporary work authorization it currently provides. High school equivalency
completion offers a formal educational threshold that will benefit all participants regardless
of their legal status or immigrant generation.

Each of the fifteen respondents in my study have unique race gender experiences and
race gender outlooks (Lopez, 2002) that effect their drive to academic achievement and
personal success. Their bilingual and bicultural frameworks enrich inherited notions of
gender in the U.S. and Mexico, through personal experience, the media and spoken
languages. The use of two languages in concept and memory is a veritable borderland
where race and gender are experienced, but language cannot be separated from this
experience. Bodies who inhabit the borderland are negotiating fixed race assumptions in
U.S. contexts, more variable assumptions of race and color via colonialized histories and
fluid Latin American notions of race. Their own racialized experiences will change as they
confront Whites and Blacks in American notions of race as historically if not unrealistically
deterministic. Interethnic understandings between mestizo mixed race people from Mexico,
must navigate American social expectations for race in different contexts, as well as decide
in situ on immigrant, white/black, or other racialized identities.

Let me restate Lopez again: Because of their disparate experiences with language,
race and gender processes, young male and female immigrants from the same ethnic and
class backgrounds come to view the role of race and interethnic communication in their
lives in vastly different ways (López, 2002, p. 6)
Stereotypes that have been explored in previous research must be addressed here as Niemann (1994) found that Hispanics expressed more negative views of African Americans overall than vice versa. This was not overtly expressed in my findings, but Leonardo states that, “I don’t need to get along with them, you know. […] They don’t, like, have the same needs,” drawing distinctions between his own ‘needs’ and the ‘needs’ of African Americans. (N.B. I did not follow up by asking Leonardo to explain by what he meant of ‘differing needs of African Americans.’) Nevertheless, Leonardo was 10 when he was brought to this country and it is argued that the stigmatization immigrant Mexicans feel upon entering the States may be sudden and acutely felt, raising the stakes for possible future traumas and declining co-ethnic esteem (Mindiola, Niemann & Rodriguez, 2002).

The ethnographic work I conducted with the immigrant youth group was in an organization that emphasizes ethnic and multicultural studies and researchers find that students working interethnically generally results in greater acceptance of differences between groups, thereby reducing or eliminating intergroup hostility (Blaine, 2000; Manstead, 2000; Niemann, 1999). Work on helping members understand the heterogeneity of different racial and ethnic groups helps improve interethnic relations. Reducing conflict and enhancing group relations demands overt, accurate and current research into Black and Latino stereotypes. Where commonalities can be found, African American and Latino leaders can use this to forge inter-group identity, reduce conflict, and enhance relations toward political means (Hewstone, 2000; Mindiola, Niemann, & Rodriguez, 2002).

Intermarriage and residential integration rates are higher between Latinos and Anglos who live in closer proximity to each other than those of Anglos and African Americans (Valdez, 1999). Mindiola, et al. (2002) find that Anglos are more amenable to
forming coalitions with Latinos overall, and much more likely to discourage Latinos from forming alliances with African Americans.

I did not find that African American and Latina women held more hostile attitudes toward each other than their male counterparts (Mindiola, Niemann, & Rodriguez, 2002), but that may have to do with the type of research I conducted — ethnographic and in-person interviews where I am a cisgender male, and the relatively low numbers of females in my study (males outnumbered females 2 to 1). This is a limitation of ethnographic methodology: perhaps less intrusive survey research with larger numbers of respondents may have discovered differently. Overall Mexican immigrant females spoke of fewer conflicts with African Americans, than did the males.

Mindiola, Niemann and Rodriguez (2002) applied a feminist frame to examine their finding of interethnic conflict between Latina females and African American females. They found that White women responded that gender most affected their lives; White males found that class most affected their lives; Black and Latino men almost always pointed to race having most affecting their lives; while Black and Latina women could not separate the twin effects of race and gender in their lives. They also argue that one function of institutionalized racism is to devalue cultural differences, and this ties in nicely with Bogotch (2013) that finds that devaluing intercultural differences leads to distrust in large urban schools.

Inasmuch as Mindiola, Neimann, and Rodriguez (2002) apply a feminist frame to make sense of problematic areas of their research, I apply a linguistic frame to analyze mine. Arguing for the use of the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis in the manner of Fishman’s third wave

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Foucault (1972) called this tendency to avoid interethnic differences as technocratic ‘dividing practices’ that resulted in the depoliticization of knowledge and hence of lesser utility.
(1978) requires that looking at interethnic understandings cannot solely be done via historical patterns for race analysis in U.S. English contexts. Latinos from the New World bring with them a consciousness of mestizaje and a variability when constructing notions of race and interethnic communication. Though these are not always supported by Latino media representations, nevertheless the linguistic power of this unique standpoint, finds more variability in interethnic communication and understanding than might be foretold by purely historical American Black/White divisions.

Conclusion

Sensational media reports in the Summer of 2010 about eleven incidents of anti-immigrant violence on the North Shore of Staten Island were the impetus for my research and the naissance of my dissertation, and, if not the origin of my research questions, then its embodiment in my continued quest to understand how interethnic relations between Mexican immigrants and African Americans occurred that summer or didn’t occur. By the end of the hazy days of the summer of 2010, the media focus on anti-immigrant violence in Staten Island had pretty much run its course. In the 12 months after September 2010, the Staten Island Advance, the newspaper of record on the island, recorded fewer than a dozen articles on anti-immigrant violence while the six months from April to September 2010 recorded more than 150. What began as a Spanish language television investigation into immigrant violence in Staten Island and escalated into news reports on all local channels and then national and international report from news organizations from the Los Angeles Times to The Guardian and The Economist, ended when the heat began dissipating that fall. By the time cold weather ensued, reporting on anti-immigrant violence in Staten Island was once again an isolated occurrence.
The research, conducted in 2013, occurred at one of the high water marks in the life of immigrant youth, mere months after Obama’s executive order of DACA assuring a quasi-protected status to immigrants brought here as children and educated in US schools. During this period, the prospects for immigrant youth born in Mexico but raised and educated in the U.S. improved dramatically and seemingly overnight.

In the interim period through mid-2015, bridging the divides of native African American communities and recent immigrant Latino communities seemed like an optimistic pursuit with possibly helpful consequences, one instance of changing demographics in urban and suburban contexts in a rapidly globalizing world. Given the differing migrant contexts, the historical contexts of minority community development cannot be viewed as being homogenous across native minority communities, nor is it homogenous with that of recently arrived immigrants. It is geographically specific.

As segregation in northern U.S. cities became less acceptable to government and the general public, racial integration of native minorities and immigrant communities are the inheritors of a significant consequence, that of economic segregation. Immigrants and African Americans live in low-income neighborhoods that are often poor (Alba, 2008).

As I have hoped to demonstrate in my findings chapters, these divides get played out differently depending on the social developmental context of schools (elementary, middle, high school or college). The social developmental context of schools, increase in the stakes as one moves from what frequently begins as neighborhood schools in elementary contexts, to often the first daily experience of travelling longer distances during middle school, to the importance of resilience and self-direction in completing the high school trajectory. Boys, and to a lesser extent girls, spoke more frequently of how conflicts based on racial and
ethnic lines occurred most significantly during the middle school years. When conflicts were spoken of in the high school contexts, while discussion of peers remained a focus, interactions with the general public and people in street contexts, often not peers, began to increase in self-reported importance. The socialization of peers, ever primary, expands significantly in college contexts beyond neighbors and classmates to include a greater awareness of different neighborhoods, immigration stories, and often most importantly different age ranges and socio-economic classes. For college goers, professors, advisors and administrators slowly become peers themselves over time.

As a way to understand how Mexican immigrants understand race and interethnic relations, I am arguing that Lopez’s Race Gender Experience Framework be extended to include Language. This resultant theory of Language Race Gender Experience Framework (LRGEF) is my effort to try to describe both the situated and grounded racialized experiences of Mexican immigrant youth and offers a dynamic model to help understand the multivocal, multidirectional, and multiaccented contexts for interethnic understandings (McCarthy, 1993). By using a linguistic frame to analyze racial and gender heritages and experiences, I argue that racial reasoning and linguistic patterning cannot happen in English only contexts with multiply raced peoples.

Learning about race becomes a journey with several twists and turns in different social educational contexts. Mexican youth learn about race in family, communities and schools, but inherit a family’s work history and survival mechanisms from the homeland, as they journey to a new settlement in the U.S. and share day-to-day folk knowledge about

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20 Smith’s [2014] qualitative longitudinal discussion of ‘Black Mexicans’ Mexicans who identify as black in high school to establish rapport with school-going peers and shed that identity after high school as it no longer serves them is one particularly compelling example.
how and where to find work. Sharing stories of work survival to children with needs for school survival, do not have a one-to-one correlation, but knowledge from parent to child is definitely transferred. Children’s narratives of life in the new country are shaped by their day-to-day experiences in classrooms, under the control of teachers with differing and sometimes clashing goals of academic achievement, personal fulfillment and administrative compliance. How the cultural and intercultural relations of children are negotiated becomes enmeshed with the immediate and long-term goals of teaching, and the management of classroom behavior toward cooperation, if not at least technocratic interruption and bureaucratic interference.

Bringing the pedagogical lens to bear on my findings regarding the key importance of school in negotiating inter-social spaces and discussions, I will now offer ideas regarding implications for teacher education and educational leadership. Overall I am arguing that multiculturalism in educational contexts is all too easily marginalized by the mainstream. By locating inter-culturalism within specific communities with particular histories and indigenous and immigrant vulnerabilities, we can avoid the larger trap of brushing with too broad a stroke.

Cross-cultural education and multicultural education are under-theorized, and we as educators must sharing ethnographic evidence to move from generic to specific understandings of students and families. As Anderson (2009) argues in Advocacy Leaders, leaders in multiethnic and multiracial urban schools, and subsequent race realities, requires that leaders become engaged in the political contexts and racializing contexts that shape much of the schooling experiences for immigrant and minority youth in urban and segregated suburban schools.
Primarily, a study of how immigrant minority groups learn about race from native minority groups points to the key importance of changing demographics and global flows of migration in understanding future communities in the U.S. I hope to argue that future work in this field must build on the work of Ladson-Billings (1995) to require that changing demographics require that education in need not be only culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995), but that it be inter-culturally relevant.

As I write this, on the cusp of 2016, a presidential election year, we have witnessed in the latter half of 2015 a media awakening about anti-immigrant fervor never seen before in my lifetime. The summer of 2015 was the summer of Trump, and invectives of Mexican immigrants in the general media, also reached a high-water mark. This was soon followed by Trump’s nativism on seemingly all fronts, from calling for an end to the birthright citizenship clause of the 14th Amendment of 1868 in the wake of the end of slavery and the end of the Civil War, to suggesting that a Black Lives Matters protestor at a media event of his, should in his words, ‘be roughed up’ (Johnson & Jordan, 2015). When the Paris bombings of November 2015 occurred it could safely be assumed that this was the most widely played terrorist event in the world since the days of 9/11, and unwittingly lent a pall of credence over Trump’s public admonition to ban all Muslims from entering the United States. A California shooting at a holiday party for staff at a facility for the developmentally disabled in December 2015, occurred concurrent to when Trump reiterated that he heard and saw, “Thousands of people in Jersey City cheering the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.” Rebutted by many in the media, but nevertheless presumed true by many others, it’s important to remember that Liberty State Park, the Staten Island Ferry and the North Shore of Staten Island all share views of the Statue of Liberty, albeit each from
different sides. “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free,” the foot of the statue reads in the words of Emma Lazarus. But even Lady Liberty did not account for the untold tens of thousands brought to the US against their will in the African slave trade, nor did it account for the approximately 300,000 Mexicans instantly made eligible for U.S. citizenship via the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.

Several centuries later, their untold stories separate and together, sheltered or hidden from view on the shores of Port Richmond, a ‘port without a view’, must also be heard.
## Appendix A

### Timeline of perceived anti-bias attacks in Port Richmond, Staten Island
#### April to August 2010 with key stakeholder responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Victim (age)</th>
<th>Attack</th>
<th>Aftermath</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 April 5, 2010</td>
<td>Rodulfo Olmedo (age 25)</td>
<td>Spent the night at a nearby club, and was on his way home when he was attacked, said Miguel Lopez, his boss at the Cafe Con Pan Bakery at 137 Port Richmond Ave. Olmedo lives down the block, with his mother and his brother. According to court documents, the four assailants allegedly converged on Olmedo early in the morning, calling him “an [expletive] Mexican.”</td>
<td>Two surveillance cameras captured the attack, and on Friday, police arrested four suspects, Tyrone Goodman and Rolston Hopson of Elm Park and William Marcano of West Brighton, all 17, and Ethan Cave, a 15-year-old of Mariner’s Harbor, charging them with multiple hate crimes. (Annese, J., 2010a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 April 9, 2010</td>
<td>First mention in El Diario La Prensa</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hopsen pleaded guilty in state Supreme Court, St. George, to second-degree robbery; Goodman and Marcano pleaded guilty to attempted third-degree robbery, said a spokesman for District Attorney Daniel Donovan. Cave pleaded guilty to third-degree robbery. (Donnelly, F., 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 April 11, 2010</td>
<td>21-year-old Asian woman and 21-year-old African-American man. Including the April 5 beating and robbery of Rodulfo Olmedo, the Port Richmond area has seen three assaults on Mexican immigrants in just three weeks (Annese, J, 2010b)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 April 25, 2010 (Erroneously reported)</td>
<td>Rogerio Vazquez 46-year-old</td>
<td>Beaten and Robbed.</td>
<td>Authorities yesterday said two suspects, Anthony Jones, 21, and Waheeda Sadick, 20, both of Ann Street in Port Richmond, have been convicted on robbery charges for the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td></td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 24, 2010</td>
<td>Alejandro Galindo, 52 years old</td>
<td>The savage assault on day laborer Alejandro Galindo — the latest spasm of violence in Port Richmond — has been classified as a hate crime by the NYPD. (Rich, K., 2010a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 26, 2010</td>
<td>Unnamed, 31 years old</td>
<td>The 31-year-old, whose name was not released by police, says he was attacked around 5 p.m. Friday by five young black males wielding a 2-by-4, according to an incident report. (In some places reported as 32 year old.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2010</td>
<td>U.S. Department of Justice</td>
<td>The rash of attacks in the area has led to the construction of a 24-hour command post at Port Richmond and Castleton avenues, two of the department’s NYPD’s three-story collapsible Sky Watch towers -- one at...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The NYPD deployed a task force in Port Richmond that includes a 24-hour command post at Port Richmond and Castleton avenues, two of the department’s NYPD’s three-story collapsible Sky Watch towers -- one at...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubén Beltrán, Consulate of Mexico</th>
<th>“police skywatch tower” to better monitor the streets, as well as the involvement of the U.S. Department of Justice and the Mexican Consulate, which have participated in a growing number of community forums on the problem (Zaitchik, A., 2010).</th>
<th>the corner of Port Richmond Avenue and Richmond Terrace, the other at the corner of Port Richmond and Harrison avenues -- a phalanx of patrol cars, officers and detectives, said</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 2010</td>
<td>Fernando Mateo, President, Hispanics Across America</td>
<td>Offered a $5,000 reward for information leading to arrests and convictions in a half dozen separate bias incidents since this past April. (Annese, J., 2010d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 23, 2010</td>
<td>(Unnamed) 40 years old</td>
<td>Five men attacked the 40-year-old Mexican man Friday night as he was walking home after a soccer game at Faber Park, cop said. The attackers allegedly pummeled him while yelling anti-Mexican epithets. The man suffered head trauma, a fractured jaw and needed ten stitches above his eye, officials said. The group of men made off with his backpack. (DeJesus, J., 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 24, 2010</td>
<td>(Unnamed) 32 years old</td>
<td>The latest incident took place in Meiers Corners, at about 8:30 p.m. Saturday. The NYPD's Hate Crimes Task Force is investigating the latest attack, though police yesterday said it was too soon to label it a bias crime. (Adjacent to Port Richmond). Perpetrator - white According to the NYPD, the victim, a 32-year-old Hispanic male walking to a bus stop was attacked in front of 281 Brielle Ave., after he got into a dispute with a white male. What they were arguing about wasn't clear last night, but the attacker beat his 32-year-old victim with a baseball bat. The victim's injuries were not considered life-threatening but he needed to be taken to a hospital for stitches. (Annese, J., 2010d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 26, 2010</td>
<td>Guardian Angels</td>
<td>Guardian Angels begin community patrols in Port Richmond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 27, 2010</td>
<td>Debi Rose (D-North Shore) City Council</td>
<td><a href="http://www.iamsi.info/">http://www.iamsi.info/</a> no longer active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 28, 2010</td>
<td>300 March for Peace in Port Richmond, sponsored by Make the Road</td>
<td>Yesterday, Ms. Rose (D-North Shore) announced a bilingual website designed to make Mexican immigrants on Staten Island feel safe and part of the borough's diverse fabric. (Annese, J. 2010d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 28, 2010</td>
<td>Unnamed 30 years old</td>
<td>A Port Richmond man carrying his groceries was pummeled by a group yelling anti-Mexican epithets as he walked on Richmond Terrace, in what police say is the fifth bias attack in the borough over the past three months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 28, 2010</td>
<td>Unnamed 40 years old</td>
<td>Unnamed 40-year-old Mexican immigrant whose name is being withheld by the Advance, was back in his Mariners Harbor home, recovering after a group of men swung a scooter at his head, breaking his jaw Friday afternoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 27, 2010</td>
<td>Guardian Angels</td>
<td>Guardian Angels start patrolling the streets of Port Richmond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 28, 2010</td>
<td>Sky Watch towers -- one at the corner of Port Richmond Avenue and Richmond Terrace, the other at the corner of Port Richmond and Harrison avenues</td>
<td>The massive NYPD presence in Port Richmond yesterday said it all: Enough is enough. (Rich, K., 2010c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 30, 2010</td>
<td>St. Philip’s Baptist</td>
<td>Interfaith vigil in Stapleton – family of Rodulfo Olmedo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 31, 2010</td>
<td>Christian Vasquez</td>
<td>Victim accused unknown assailants of beating him. Victim was caught up in and capitalized on the media frenzy of anti-immigrant violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 31, 2010</td>
<td>March against Hate</td>
<td>Rev Ruben Diaz marches in Port Richmond, Infamous pastor from the Bronx and state representative marches for 6 blocks in Port Richmond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 9, 2010</td>
<td>Archbishop arrives</td>
<td>Archbishop Timothy Dolan speaks at an 11 a.m. mass at St. Mary of the Assumption R.C. Church, Port Richmond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 22, 2010</td>
<td>Los Angeles Times reports on violence in Staten Island</td>
<td>Addresses the wave of crimes in the neighborhood and deliver a message of peace. (Johnson, B., 2010b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid September 2010</td>
<td>Police towers removed.</td>
<td>A total of seven arrests came out of at least 10 such attacks that began last April. Six are still being investigated as possible hate crimes. (Farinacci, A., 2011)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Publicly reported assaults on immigrants in the North Shore of Staten Island prior to the anti-bias crimes of Summer 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reported Victim</th>
<th>Reported Assailant</th>
<th>Aftermath</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 January 2010</td>
<td>Francisco Morales</td>
<td>None Reported</td>
<td>Broken shoulder still juts out after he was attacked and robbed on Port Richmond Avenue three months ago. (Annese, J., 2010a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Summer 2009</td>
<td>Victor Alfaro</td>
<td>None Reported</td>
<td>Still can't see properly out of one eye after he was beaten and robbed last year. (Annese, J., 2010a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Summer 2009</td>
<td>Hector Ortega</td>
<td>None Reported</td>
<td>And sometimes has to pass on the street the teens who attacked his cousin and pulled him off his bicycle last summer -- even though the assailants were arrested, they were young enough to be released from custody within days, he recalled. (Annese, J., 2010a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 June 2009</td>
<td>Luis Maltez</td>
<td>Joseph Sweeney, 24 and Albijond Kaja, 28</td>
<td>Last June, was assaulted and robbed in his home community of Bulls Head, after he and his roommate were confronted by two men, at a convenience store. Sweeney screamed at them: &quot;[Expletive] Mexicans, this is my country!&quot; and &quot;I'm waiting outside, you [expletive] Mexican!&quot; in the store, prosecutors allege. Minutes later, Maltez, who was walking home, was beaten with a bat and robbed of $200, and suffered a head wound that required 18 stitches. (Annese, J., 2010a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 November 2008</td>
<td>“Obama attack” of a Liberian immigrant on election night in 2008</td>
<td>Ralph Nicoletti, 18; Michael Contreras, 18; Brian Carranza, 21</td>
<td>As alleged in the indictment and other court filings, on the night of Nov. 4, 2008, shortly after learning of Barack Obama’s election victory, the group, along with a fourth friend, decided to find African-Americans to assault. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 September 2006</td>
<td>Ricardo Salinas, 33, a cook at Graniteville IHOP</td>
<td>Daniel Betancourt, 19 Travis King, 19 John Messiha, 17</td>
<td>Stalked because, as one of them told investigators after their arrest, they wanted to “rob a Mexican.” Salinas died of a heart attack as the trio beat and robbed him in Mariners Harbor. (Annese, J., 2010a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Photographs used in Photo Elicitation

The interviewer used three (3) large poster boards (22 inches by 14 inches) each with several photographs.

**Poster Board One** contained the following four (4) 4x6 photographs of the attacks of 2010 aligned vertically in the following order, without citations, as a springboard to discuss the anti-immigrant violence.

*Figure 1. Café Con Pan Store Surveillance Camera Still, April 5, 2010, as aired by NY 1 (2011).*
Figure 2. Video still of Rodulfo Olmedo. (Sanchez, A., 2010)

Figure 3. Photo of Christian Vasquez. Still of NY1 live feed. (NY1, 2010)

Figure 4. Police Surveillance Tower at Foot of Port Richmond. (Henderson, J., 2010)
Poster Board 2 – Port Richmond Community Heritage contained the following 7 photos.

Figure 5. The Port Richmond High School Minstrels won the Island title in 1948 and nearly won the city basketball champions at Madison Square Garden. (Papas & Weintrob, 2007, p. 81) (For more on their 1984 name change to the ‘Red Raiders’ see Hart, S., 2009.)

Figure 6. Basketball cheerleaders at the CYO in 1955. It was built in 1926 as the Masonic Temple but became the CYO building in 1944. (Catholic Youth Organization, as published in Papas & Weintrob, 2007, p. 79)
Figure 7. Playing basketball at the CYO in the 1970’s. (Catholic Youth Organization, as published in Papas & Weintrob, 2007, p. 79)

Figure 8. Senior Choir members of St. Phillip Baptist Church at their 134 Faber Street location in the 1940’s. The first African American Church in Staten Island it was founded in 1870 and remained on Faber Street until purchasing 77 Bennett Avenue, formerly the Scandinavian Lutheran Zion Church. (Fioravante, 1996, as published in Papas & Weintrob, 2007, p. 50)
Figure 9. Congregants enjoy a picnic in front of St. Philip’s Baptist Church on Faber Street. (Lee, B. 2009, as published in Papas & Weintrob, 2007, p. 62)

Figure 10. Veteran’s Day celebration local children in Veteran’s Park (Northfield Community Local Development Corp, as published in Papas & Weintrob, 2007, p. 41)
Figure 11. Children and their godparents proceed to St. Mary of the Assumption Church on Richmond Terrace in Port Richmond on May 20, 2006, for a mass in which dozens of children received communion. (Bohórquez-Geisler, I., 2006, as published in Papas & Weintrob, 2007, p. 55)
Poster Board Three – Port Richmond: Yesterday and Today --contained the following four (4) photographs of varying sizes without citations. The first two photographs contrasted an historic photograph of Veteran’s Park with a photograph of the current day.

The following three (3) photographs, highlighted day laborers in the community.

*Figure 12.* Old man in Veteran’s Park (Staten Island Historical Society, 1905, as published in Papas & Weintrob, 2007, p. 98)

*Figure 13.* Photograph of Veterans Park (Martínez, 2012)
Figure 14. Day laborers at the corner of Forest Avenue and Port Richmond Avenue. (Reinhardt, 2013).

Figure 15. “A group of immigrant day laborers stand on a street corner waiting for work in the Staten Island Borough of New York.” (Jackson, L., 2010)
Appendix D
Interview Protocol

Overall Research Questions

• What are Mexican immigrant young adults’ understandings of race, and how do they understand and experience interethnic relations in a post-industrial community?

• What is the role of the school and the family in the shaping of those understandings and experiences?

Interview questions

1) Begin with Demographics – Who are you?

Where is your mother/father from?

Who do you live with?

How long has your family been in the US? In Staten Island?

What would you like to be in the future?

Aspirations for work? Job? School?

prospects for the future? Work, job

2. Show photos of the event [Appendix C].

What do you remember about the anti-violence attacks in Port Richmond two years ago?

How did you feel?

Tell me more about why you felt (    )?

How did members of your family react and say?

What did your friends say? Who were your friends?

Was this addressed anyway in your school? If so, by whom? A teacher?

Was this addressed at mass/religious services?
3. (Show photos of Port Richmond then and now – two minutes)

What does this show? Are there changes?

How do you feel about these photos?

Why are there changes?

4) Do you have African American friends or relationships today? Why yes or no?
When/where do you interact with African Americans? Describe the experiences and say how you feel when interacting

When/where do you interact with other Latinos? Describe the experiences and say how you feel when interacting.

When/where do you interact with whites? Describe the experiences and say how you feel when interacting.

5) Is there racism in Staten Island? If yes, against whom? How is it enacted?
Have race relations improved in Staten Island since the events of three years ago?
Do you have Latino friends or relationships other than Mexican Americans? Who? Why yes or no?
Do you have white friends or relationships today? Why yes or no?

6) Can you think of a time when your school or program helped you build relationships with other groups? Describe it. Was it helpful? Why yes or no?
Can you think of a time when your family encouraged you to build friendships with youth of different groups? Describe it if yes. If no, why?
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