Dominance & Survivance: Urban Latino Communities and Education in Racial Neoliberal Urbanism

Edwin Mayorga
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DOMINANCE & SURVIVANCE: URBAN LATINO COMMUNITIES AND EDUCATION IN RACIAL NEOLIBERAL URBANISM

by

Edwin Mayorga

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

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Abstract

Dominance & Survivance:
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by

Edwin Mayorga

Adviser: Professor Michelle Fine
Professor Jean Anyon (Original Chair, deceased)

U.S. Latino youth are as undereducated and underprepared today as they were in the 1960s, leading some to declare that there is a national “Latino education crisis” that is affecting the lives of millions. While this problem is national in scope there are multiple narratives that underpin this story. Of particular interest in this study is the intersection of urban Latino core communities and public schools. This dissertation is based on the Education in our Barrios Project, #BarrioEdProj, which is a digital, critical participatory action research study of urbanism and urban education in the Latino core community of East Harlem (El Barrio) in New York City. Applying a cultural political economic lens that “trabaja en ambos” (or works in both) critical theories of race and political economy, this dissertation maps the way neoliberal racial urbanism as a cultural grammar of place would remake El Barrio and its schools over the last 15 years. How, the research collaborative asked, has racial neoliberal urbanism shaped the social conditions that the people of El Barrio have experienced, and how have they navigated those conditions? Through qualitative interviews, archival research, and project collaboration, I argue that racial neoliberal urbanism has been part of a changing same wherein supposed reform policies have been central tools for culturally and materially dominating and erasing Latinos and poor people of Color in general. Through racial neoliberal containment, exploitation and political and historical disconnections, Latino core communities are dominated. I argue that at the same time that these cycles of dominance are taking place, the people of El Barrio are also engaging in varied forms of navigation and strategies of survivance to resist and survive these conditions.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Latinos are the largest ethnic minority group in the United States, making “the future of the U.S.,” as President Obama passionately declared, “inextricably linked to the future of the Latino [Hispanic] community” (United States. Dept. of Education. & White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans (U.S.), 2011, p. 2). According to the 2010 U.S. census, there are 309 million people currently living in the United States, and 50.5 million are Hispanic/Latino (Pew Hispanic Center, 2012). This multi-national, multi-racial group, combined, also “represents the fourth-largest concentration of Spanish-heritage people in the world, after Mexicans, Colombians, and Spaniards” (Arreola, 2004, p. 1).

Between 1968 and 2011 the number of Latinos in the public school system grew from two million to eleven million, which is an astounding 495 percent increase (Orfield, Frankenberg, Ee, & Kuscera, 2014). Over those four decades, this dynamic community has been chronically underserved by the nation's public schools, leading experts to declare that we are in the midst of a “Latino education crisis” (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; United States. Dept. of Education. & White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans (U.S.), 2011). Despite a myriad of projects and investments to
improve the quality of education for all students over the past three decades, Latino children and youth are as undereducated and underprepared today as they were in the 1960s (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Moreover, Latinos are now the most segregated racial/ethnic group in schools across the country (Orfield et al., 2014), leaving them in educational situations where there is a concentration of challenges that are connected to poverty and structural racism that produce a set of disadvantages for students that are extremely difficult, if not impossible to overcome solely through improvements in instruction (Rothstein, 2013)

The Statement of the Problem: The Latino Education Crisis as part of Urban Crisis

US Latinos remain in a state of crisis that goes beyond education. One might describe the experiences of many, though not all, US Latinos as being a “conjunctural crisis” where there is a convening of multiple related, but not necessarily the same, crises. In addition to the struggles in education of Latinos, Latino children in particular face troubling conditions with respect to economics, health, incarceration, and immigrant status, among many other issues. Following the most recent economic downturn, roughly three quarters of all Latinos reported, “their personal finances are in fair (46 percent) or poor shape (30 percent)” (Lopez, Livingston, &
Kochhar, 2009). Latinos have also expressed concerns over housing foreclosures and many have had to adjust their economic practices because of current conditions, including decreasing the amount of remittances sent by individuals to Latin American countries. Roughly 25 percent of Latinos are living in poverty according to Census data and even more alarming is the fact that more than one-third of Latino children live in high poverty neighborhoods (communities with poverty rates of at least 20 percent) (Mather & Foxen, 2010, p. 11). In addition to economic conditions, “Latino children and youth are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system and are increasingly placed in adult facilities” (Mather & Foxen, 2010, p. 4). And roughly one in six Latino males (one in three Black males) will be imprisoned at some point during their lifetimes (p. 23). These are just snapshots of the challenging conditions many Latinos face in the US that contribute to the overall crisis.

While these are national trends that I am referencing here, I contend that Latino crises are urban crises. Between 1970 and 2010 the demographic make up of the US and its urban centers had changed dramatically, with much of that attributed to the rapid growth of Latinos. Frey (as quoted in Latino Urbanism) indicated that fifty-eight of the US’s metropolitan areas were “majority minority” in 2010, which is up from
forty-three in 2000 (Diaz & Torres, 2012). Clearly the bulk of Latino experiences in the US are urban, and this centers the city, urbanism, and urban education as a site for understanding how the state and various social actors respond to conditions and effect the direction those conditions take.

Forty years ago urban sociologist Ray Pahl argued that metropolitan cities in all societies provide a crucial arena for the making visible of fundamental social, economic, cultural and political relations and conflict (as quoted in (Grace, 1989, 2007). Metropolitan regions that include suburbs and anchor cities “account for 80 percent of national output, and drive the economic performance of the nation as a whole” (Anyon, 2005, p. 8). These metropolitan regions are dotted both at their geographic margins, and cultural margins within the city, by Latino core communities (Morales, forthcoming), or barrios. This reality suggests that within struggles in urban cities and urban education Latinos are a population that cannot be ignored, and that they are in fact inextricably entangled with the future of this nation state. And yet, as Perez et al (2010) remind us “the material conditions and actual experiences of U.S. Latinas/os are largely unexplored, misunderstood, and frequently trapped in racialized stereotypes” (p. 1).
Examining Crisis

The few statistics I’ve shared should make evident that the majority of Latino youth and families have been and continue to be living in very precarious conditions. Comprehensive policy changes are needed to change the situation (Nieto, Rivera, Quinones, & Irizarry, 2012). There has been a number of policies and related programing developed for the purposes of closing the educational achievement gap aspects of the crisis, including increased accountability systems for students and teachers, school closures, and college and career readiness programs. But as Gándara and Contreras (2009) contend, “weak social policy is as much to blame for this state of affairs as are educational policies that fail to support these students’ aspiration” (p. 304). The question then is how might analysis be strengthened to in turn make policy and action more effective in responding to crisis?

For several decades, Jean Anyon (1997, 2005, 2012) and other critical scholars have alerted us to the continued disconnection between education policy and the struggles in society, particularly within cities. As such, any attempts to construct and implement education policies and practices that ignore the broader cultural political economy are ineffective at best, and violently damaging at worst.
Forty years ago, Puerto Rican scholars and activists also stressed the importance of examining education in relation to social economic conditions. This is most aptly presented by the Puerto Rican Socialist Party’s (1974) declaration, Desde las entrañas, where they state:

Tampoco se puede separar la escuela de medio social que le rodea. La misma afecta directamente el funcionamiento del niño en ella, sus posibilidades de aprender y su actitud hacia la enseñanza que recibe. Un niño mal alimentado, rodeado de un ambiente de violencia, en un vecindario en deterioro, acosado por los problemas de sus padres y victima diaria del racismo, mal puede aprender unos conceptos que, además, se colocan en un contexto que no tiene relación alguna con el ambiente que vive.¹” (PRSP, 1974)

¹ We cannot separate the school from the social conditions that surround it, for these conditions affect the child’s school performance, his possibilities of learning and his attitude toward the instruction he received. An undernourished child, surrounded by a violent environment in a decaying neighborhood, besieged by problems his parents suffer, and victimized daily by racism, can hardly learn ideas and concepts which are explained
What all of this previous scholarship suggests is that effective and nuanced analyses of the Latino education crisis, cannot be separated from our understanding of the cultural, political economic context that serves as both the terrain of struggle and as a set of determining factors in defining the crisis.

I don’t employ the word crisis here lightly. Stuart Hall et al (1978) challenged us to understand that crisis is a socially constructed term used to different ends depending on who is using it and why. In some instances crisis has been used to describe a state of moral panic over threats to state perceptions of harmony and stability in society. As moral panics emerge, as Hall et al (1978) show in the use of the term “muggings” in Britain in the 1970s, and in the uprisings of the U.S. Civil Rights movement, amongst others, the state treats the moral panic as a crisis. Within this framing, state declarations of war against these crises are rationalized and authorized, leading to legislation and actions to smother out situations that counter state sanctioned harmony.

On the other hand crisis can be used to signal the critical, and often deadly, conditions that people are experiencing, and require much needed attention. In the first

in a context that has absolutely nothing to do with the world in which he lives (1974, p. 26)
editorial of *The Crisis* in 1910, for example, W.E.B. DuBois noted that "the object of this publication is to set forth those facts and arguments which show the danger of race prejudice, particularly as manifested today toward colored people" (The Crisis Publishing Company, Inc, 1980, p. 331). Crisis is thus a reveille for raising critical consciousness, clarifying analysis, and action. Aligned with this latter use of the term, I use crisis here to amplify the visibility of conditions that Latinos in general, and in barrios in particular, face in society and education as a means to inspire social change.

Crisis, and the words that are attendant to any crisis, become ideological conductors for how a crisis is constituted, framed within social discourse, and responded to by the state, all with important material effects. I am thus asking how discourses around urban and educational crises are connected to larger "questions of power and of the organization of economic life" (Grace, 2007 p. 38). More specifically, it leads me to thinking about both present day and historical forces that have transpired in the process of the formation of urban crisis, educational crisis, and the Latino education crisis. Within this convening of multiple urban crises I also ask, how do the state and other social actors address these
crises, and what does it say about how power is exerted through policy and action?

The Study

The Education in our Barrios Project, #BarrioEdProj, is both platform and study. First, the Education in our Barrios Project is a relational platform for multiple studies that operate within the spirit and traditions of critical, Participatory Action Research (CPAR) and digital, public, social science (DSS). As such, the participants in the platform are committed to the call for “research and/as action towards liberatory projects” (M. E. Torre & Ayala, 2009, p. 387). #BarrioEdProj is also the first study that emerges from this platform, and I will refer to the study as #BarrioEdProj through out this dissertation. #BarrioEdProj, is a digital, critical, participatory action research (D+CPAR), study located at the intersections of urban remaking, education reform and U.S. Latino core communities within this period of late racial capitalism (Melamed, 2011; Robinson, 1983). Collaborating with two Latina, college-aged, young women from East Harlem, the #BarrioEdProj research collaborative came together in 2013 to conduct research on education in El Barrio and encourage conversation about educational change in the community. Primarily the first year of the project centered around doing a historical ethnographic examination of the
remaking of public education, East Harlem, and New York City during the mayoralty of Michael Bloomberg (2002-2013).

The last forty years have been marked by dramatic changes across the globe, and nowhere is this more evident than in New York City. U.S. cities have been sites of macroeconomic shifts that have restructured economies and widened inequality. At the same time they have undergone massive demographic movements that have made them more diverse while adapting, but not interrupting, racialized divisions and oppressions. These conditions are indicative of racial capitalism as an organizing force and racial neoliberal urbanism as a current grammar of this organizing force within cities and barrios.

As a spatial formation, “barrios emerge out of histories of segregation, marginalization, and exclusion-based race, class, ethnicity, and citizenship, that vary regionally but share what anthropologist Diego Vigil describes as the experience of being inferior places ‘spatially separate and socially distanced from the dominant majority group’” (Pérez, Guridy, & Burgos, 2010, p. 3).

The barrios across US cities are culturally and economically diverse, but they are also connected by shared “experiences of displacement, marginalization, and land loss” (p. 3), indicative of the structural forces that shape racialized
urban space and the harsh conditions that the urban poor face. At the same time, the barrio also serves as a site of contemporary, and historical, cultural and economic production, and political and racial/ethnic solidarity. Historically, it has been in the barrios that new and old forms of creative expression have emerged, and where community-based services have emerged in response to difficult social conditions, and where political organizing can find its source. As a construct that holds up both pejorative and transformative characteristics, el barrio thus remains a significant analytic entry point for the study of not only US Latinos, but also discussions of urbanism and urban crises.

Further, this study is premised on the notion that the ongoing transformation of cities and barrios is bounded to policies and practices in the politics and practices of urban education. This set of entanglements is what I describe as the school-community nexus. I argue that the school-community nexus is a critical site for documenting and understanding the multiple, but interconnected, crises that urban Latinos face within the material conditions constituted by racial neoliberal urbanism. From this vantage point, I am also recognizing the agency that the state, institutions, organizations and individual actors exercise in order to navigate, survive and challenge the changes wrought by the
remaking of neighborhoods and schools. In short, this study is about the dialectic relationship between modes of dominance and strategies of survivance.

**Engaged Scholarship and the Creation of #BarrioEdProj**

I am an educator-scholar-activist-of-Color (Suzuki & Mayorga, 2014) who has labored, and fought, for educational and social justice before, during, and after, the 12 years of New York City Mayor, Michael Bloomberg’s tenure as mayor. I locate my scholarship at the intersection of critical education studies, cultural political economy, critical theories of race, digital social science, and social movement theory. It is my view that activist research plays an important role in making transparent the circulation, and material effects, of the era racial capitalism (Melamed, 2011; Robinson, 1983) in which we live. Following Melamed (2011), I argue that this, state-driven, racio-economic partnership, adapts and revises white supremacy and capitalism, in order to maintain dominance. In these circumstances, my research program and conceptual framework aims to trace the contours of structural oppression, and histories of resistance, through participatory and digital methods, in order to foster social justice (Anyon, 2009).

I initiated the #BarrioEdProj Research Collaborative to document and interrogate oppression, and to inform social
justice-centered policies and practices. Through #BarrioEdProj my primary concerns have been the relationship between the cultural political economy, and the school-community nexus. The school-community nexus is a frame for thinking about the shifting, discursive, and material, entanglements that move through what happens in, and around schools, and the larger society. The school-community nexus is also recognition of the importance of scale. Centering on urban neighborhoods is a meso-scale analytic entry point that affords a perspective that pays attention both to macro-scale (municipal, state, national, global) and micro-scale (individual, family, classrooms, etc.) questions and processes.

More specifically, I am looking at the circulations of racial capitalism through cities, neighborhoods and its public schools. Using the notion of racial neoliberal urbanism I seek to link urban policies to urban education. Processes like gentrification, governance reorganizations, divestment, and privatizing of public goods (like schools) are part of a variety of strategies that are at once supportive of capitalist accumulation and a possessive investment in whiteness (Lipsitz, 1998). Using a cultural political economic lens, I map the machinations of racial neoliberal urbanism in order to analyze both policy and the actions of individuals and organizations in response to policies and social
conditions. In bridging structures to lives on the ground, I contend that this work can contribute to a form of race radical scholarship that addresses the Latino education crisis construct, and encourages more humane and responsive policies and educational institutions.

#BarrioEdProj is a documentation and analysis of the school-community nexus through a focus on the Latino core community of East Harlem (El Barrio) in New York City. The design of the study braids digital social science (DSS) and critical participatory action research (CPAR), a design that I describe as digital, critical participatory action research (D+CPAR) (Mayorga, 2015). Working with two, college-aged, Latina young women from East Harlem, we have spent over a year in the field developing our research questions, conducting interviews, attending community events, creating a website (http://barrioedproj.org), providing workshops and analyzing data. This study is being written while the project is still at an early stage, and as such the data that is analyzed focuses on the collection of 16 interviews we have conducted, the collection of archival materials we gathered from various archive, and secondary source information. This dissertation is also a meditation on the actualized, and potential impact of D+CPAR on participants, the neighborhood, and social and educational policy.
The Latino core community of East Harlem and its Public Schools

In my exploration of historical and contemporary studies of New York City schools I found that there had been uneven attention given to Latino education (Nieto, 2000) and Latino core communities (Morales forthcoming). Initially majority-Puerto Rican, the New York City Latino population has rapidly increased and diversified since the 1960s. While Latinos have been a major voice in struggles over public education through most of the twentieth century, only certain aspects of the Latino education story, like Bilingual Education and immigrant education, have been told. Latinos also recently became the largest population of students in the city’s public school system (Chu, 2013). With these ideas in mind I decided to focus on the Latino core community of East Harlem (El Barrio.) Latino core communities, like East Harlem, are “codified as a homeland (both real and imagined) for Puerto Ricans, and by extension many other Latino immigrant groups, not only through demographic and sociological analysis, but also through a tropicalization process transmitted through literature, music, and visual art” (Morales forthcoming, 2). The Lower East Side (Loisaida), Williamsburg (Los Sures), Washington Heights, Corona, and parts of the South Bronx fit into this emerging Latino core community construct.
Once a home to Italian and Eastern-European Jewish immigrants, East Harlem would become a Puerto Rican stronghold following the en masse migration of Puerto Ricans to New York City in the late-1940s/early-1950s. During this period there was also a strong presence of Black (non-Latinos) people as well (Dávila, 2004). Since the 1960s, when immigration laws and post-colonial struggles in Latin America took place, the diversity of Latinos moving to neighborhoods like East Harlem have broadened and complicated Latinidad (Latinoness) (Dávila, 2004; J. Flores, 1997) in East Harlem and New York City. Puerto Rican social action emerged during the 1960s, with organizations like Aspira, United Bronx Parents, and the Young Lords. Later years saw an infusion of institutions like El Museo del Barrio and the Julia de Burgos Center that reinforced the primacy of Latinidad in the neighborhood’s socio-spatial imaginary. The most recent iteration of urban restructuring that East Harlem has undergone is marked by a rise in luxury housing over affordable housing, a cultural rebranding of the neighborhoods as Upper Yorkville or SpaHa (Spanish Harlem), and an increasing displacement and departure of long time residents (Dávila, 2004; Fullilove, 2005; Morales & Rivera, 2009; N. Smith, 2002) circulating through many, formerly poor, primarily of Color, communities. This latest
phases of these process are what I describe as racial neoliberal urbanism (RNU).

As East Harlem has undergone economic and social change the public school system in the neighborhood and across the city has also undergone tremendous change. Moving from a highly centralized control apparatus in education from the early 1900s to the late 1960s, to a decentralized formation that dispersed bureaucracy and gave families limited but varied forms of choice, to a re-centralized system under mayoral control, East Harlem schools have been both a site of innovation and educational squalor. I will go into greater detail on this in this paper, paying particular attention to the four decades between 1970 and 2013.

**Research Questions**

As this project moved from proposal to the field the research questions were worked and reworked as we came upon new understandings through our data collection and analysis. Ultimately, there are two research questions I am using for this dissertation. **First**, how did strategies of racial neoliberal urbanism reshape the neighborhood and its schools over the last 40 years? **Second**, how did individuals and institutions within urban schools navigate the effects of racial neoliberal urbanism?
In the first question I am looking back from the 1970s to 2000, tracing ways that the overlapping but distinct trajectories of cultural and economic change would circulate around and through New York City, East Harlem and the public schools. The intent is, as I mentioned previously to map dominance in order to understand how varied technologies of government adapt in order to maintain control and maintain a racial capitalist order. The second question is specifically concerned with navigation and resistance, or forms of what Vizenor (2008) has described as survivance. What would become evident over the course of the first year of the project was that while the last several decades has witnessed the emergence of a safer and cleaner neighborhood and global city, it was at the expense of heavy surveillance, organized abandonment, and an intense dispossession and displacement of the already marginalized. This was, from the perspective of those committed to equity, justice, and social democracy, a period of defeat. And yet, efforts were made and people have survived, though greatly fatigued. What more can be learned from the decisions individuals and institutions made in order to survive and thrive? How can these lessons help move people into the struggles of the future?
In what follows I move from documenting the contours of racialized neoliberal urbanism, to exploring models of survivance, and finally contemplating the actual and potential impact of #BarrioEdProj as a form of engaged and participatory scholarship.

Chapter Two is a detailed discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of the project and key areas of literature. I present my working notions of neoliberalism, structural racism, racial capitalism and racialized neoliberal urbanism. Racialized neoliberal urbanism serves as the construct by which the remaking of space and the remaking of schools are linked. I am particularly focused on the nuances of racial neoliberal urbanism when a Latino core community is the primary unit of analysis.

Then Chapter Three provides a cultural political economic history of New York City, East Harlem, and East Harlem schools. I give a brief overview of different aspects of El Barrio’s history, including economic conditions, housing, demography, criminalization, and education governance. By tracing the last 40 years, I present a backdrop for thinking about racial neoliberal urbanism during this times period, and especially during the Bloomberg administration (2001-2013).
Chapter Four is a discussion of methods and the design of the project. I discuss briefly the notion of critical bifocality and the design of #BarrioEdProj. As I had mentioned previously, this dissertation is being written after the first year of an ongoing project. While there is a multiplicity of data streams that the project has procured, this dissertation is historical in nature and focuses on the collection of interviews we have conducted, archival materials and secondary source material.

Chapters Five to Seven are an opportunity to elide between the macro and the micro of the school-community nexus. In Chapter Five I discuss how the grammar of racial neoliberal urbanism has operated within the remaking of East Harlem, particularly with regard to housing, retail, science and technology industry, and policing. Chapters Six and Seven are two case studies of dominance and survivance. Each case is anchored by interviews of local leaders individuals involved in education in East Harlem: the director of a bilingual head start program and a parent-community education advocate. The cases are organized to first shed light on the circulation and material effects of racial neoliberal urbanism on lives on the ground, and then making sense of the ways people have navigated these conditions in order to survive and resist dominance, and imagine their own futurities.
In Chapter Eight I conclude this work with an introspective discussion of the politics and pedagogies of #BarrioEdProj and a call for race radicalism in research and organizing. I anchor the chapter in the people who gave this project life, namely, our two youth co-researchers and our project participants. From this vantage point, #BarrioEdProj is understood as a pedagogical tool, or a ‘guide to action’ whose impact was felt first by the participants and was, by the end of the first year, beginning to spread its influence. Then thinking through #BarrioEdProj, I review the strategies of survivance examined through the study and make an argument for the necessity of what Melamed (2011) describes as race radicalism within policy research, urban schooling and urban space. Centering engaged scholarship in race radicalism, I argue, those of us who use these practices are capable of disrupting racial neoliberal urbanism and bringing us closer to a more just society.
CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

How might engaged scholars and on-the-ground activists make sense of the Latino education crisis and urban crises in general? In this chapter I discuss my theoretical framework and review literature that informed our research group’s work and this specific study. I begin by describing cultural political economy as a theoretical framework where I work critical theory of race and critical political economy “en ambo” (“in both”). I see racial capitalism as a descriptive term for the dominative set of ideologies, policies, and practices that have shaped ecosocial life for centuries. As this study is bracketed in a 50-year period, I suggest that racial capitalism has been adapted in uneven ways in order to maintain and advance the current social order over the course of time. More specifically I argue that the last 35 years can be characterized as a racial neoliberal period in which the cultural and material dimensions of capitalism and structural racism have operated in ways that are so subtle they almost do not appear as a system.

If racial neoliberalism functions as a descriptor of social conditions, then racial neoliberal urbanism can be thought of as a “grammar of place” (Goeman, 2014) that centers on the remaking of cities, neighborhoods, and urban schools at this current conjuncture. Here I link the state, neoliberalism, structural
racism, urbanism, and education. I explore Latino core communities as sites of racial neoliberal urbanism to insert the investigation of cities and urban schools into “the wider social, economic and political framework within which they are located” (G. Grace, 2013, p. Chapter 1, Section 2, para. 2).

Within racial neoliberal urbanism, I am specifically looking at key constructs like urban renewal, governmental decentralization, and development as contact zones where urbanism writ large intersects with urban education. I contend that over time and on multiple scales, different but related forms of racial difference and capitalism have operated in shaping relationships between people, land, and the state in order to locate bodies and communities within a social and economic order that is premised on the expansion of capital accumulation and the maintenance of white supremacy. In so doing racial capitalism relies upon articulating a racial-economic logic or grammar to facilitate a social ordering that normalizes the oppression of many for the sake of the small group of people in political and economic power. In this case, I am defining this grammar as racial neoliberal urbanism. Further I will assert that racial neoliberal urbanism sets up the conditions that educational institutions, youth, families, and concerned community members are required to navigate as a means of survivance. I end this chapter with a discussion of a “typology
of navigation” as a way to document and think through how the actors and institutions that were part of this study navigate these conditions.

**Cultural Political Economy as Analytic and Political Framework**

For decades, the education of U.S. Latinos has been looked at by various disciplines, but much of the discussion has focused on cultural and linguistic difference and has emerged within an academic colonial project (Darder & Torres, 1997, p. xiii). Academic colonialism, as Darder and Torres (1997) suggest, is the recognition that the majority of academic studies of Latinos have been formulated through “traditional social science values and methods, which generated many of the problems faced by Latinos” (p. xiii–xiv). In saying this I am not suggesting that there have not been significant contributions made to understanding Latino education or Latino-led struggles that have sought to improve conditions. Rather, I am suggesting that a bulk of scholarship on Latinos and education has been ahistorical and apolitical, at best, and tools for reproducing oppression and the minoritized/colonized position of Latinos, at worst.

Critical Latino education scholars have called for scholarship that counters this troubling tradition by focusing attention on, among other things, Latino community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), documenting and analyzing structural
barriers (Nieto et al., 2012), situating Latinos within the political economy, and rethinking categories such as race and ethnicity (Darder & Torres, 1997). Much of this work applies critical theory. Calhoun (2008) argued that critical theory is not just criticism of other theories, it is an orientation to the world that combines the effort to understand why it is as it is (the more conventional domain of science) and how it could be otherwise (the more conventional domain of action) (p. xxv.)

This study’s theoretical starting point is that humans’ relationships to each other, to the built environment, and to the land are structured within the shifting forms of a racial capitalist policyscape (Appadurai, 1996). Recognition of the convening of cultural and economic forces within racial capitalism warrants an analytic framework that addresses the entangled relationships of a cultural politics of race and political economy.

Heeding the call for more critical research on Latinos and education I posit that a “Latino cultural political economy,” as an interimbricated analytic framework, would add depth to educational studies and provide a way to use theory to work toward justice (Dumas & Anyon, 2006). In using this term, I am not attempting to create a distinct new field but to make clear that my construction of cultural political economy keeps Latinos
and Latinidad at the center. Cultural political economy, in this case, is an interimbrication of political economic analysis and a cultural, race- and Latino-centered analysis. Nancy Fraser (2000) importantly suggested that an interimbricated analysis is one that contends with both cultural and economic forms of social ordering.

An interimbricated analysis recognizes not only that cultural and economic forms of social ordering exist but that they operate in entanglements, being adapted and modified in relation to one another in order to advance dominance. To elaborate further I draw from one of my own home languages, Spanish, by using the phrase “trabajar en ambos,” or “to work in both.” In some parts of Latin America “ambos” is used to describe a coordinated two-piece suit, and here I am suggesting a coordination of a racial and political economic mode of analysis that does not privilege one over the other but instead sees a coordinated bothness. Trabajando en ambos offers what Leonardo (2012) describes as an “intersectional, integrated, or what I am calling a raceclass perspective” (p. 438). The form of cultural political economy I am presenting here is thus centered on the necessity of trabajar en ambos as a means to understand society as holistic, relational, and changing over time.

Thus far I have focused on cultural political economy as an analytic framework, but I want to make clear that my form of
cultural political economy should also be understood as a political framework. Theoretically and materially, this framework is most closely tied to what Melamed (2011) describes as race radicalism, an attempt rooted in the Black radical tradition (Robinson, 1983) to:

rupture how race as a sign has been consolidated with the cultural and ideological political and material forces of official antiracism and to reconsolidate race as a sign with the cultural ideological, political and material forces of world and radical antiracist movements, which have crucially analyzed race with the genealogy of global capitalism. (Melamed, 2011, p. 49)

In line with Melamed, my use of cultural political economy as a form of race radicalism is rooted in the Black radical tradition and is in solidarity with the decolonial politics of Native, Puerto Rican, and Chicano movements. In short, cultural political economy is a framework for a politics that is both antiracist and anticapitalist. In taking this epistemological and political stance, the goal is to contribute to advancing redistribution, interrupting the differentiated effects of structural racism and ultimately shifting relations of power. In what follows, I momentarily disentangle political economy and critical theories of race, for clarity. I then return to
entanglements through the notion of racial capitalism and racial neoliberal urbanism

**Critical political economy**

My working notion of cultural political economy centers on four characteristics of “critical political economy” that Wasko, Murdock, and Sousa (2014) present in the *Handbook of Political Economy of Communications*. As I go through each of these characteristics I begin to posit particular notions of race and racism in the discussion.

“Firstly, it is holistic,” Wasko et al. (2014) note, “rather than treating ‘the economy’ as a specialist and bounded domain, it focuses on the relations between economic practices and social and political organization” (Introduction, Section 1, para. 4). Neither the economy nor other social phenomena and practices are treated as discrete entities cut off from other aspects of society. Race as “a modality in which class is lived” (Hall, 1980) can thus be given appropriate attention in the organizing of social relations alongside, within, and in contradiction to the machinations of capital. It is in the asymmetrical relationships between structures—people, ideologies, and the state—where we see “the drama of life” take place. What happens on the scale of the school and the neighborhood is connected to forces and flows in the broader society.
Second, critical political economy “is historical... insist[ing] that a full understanding of contemporary shifts must be grounded in an analysis of transformations, shifts, and contradictions that unfold over long loops of time” (Wasko et al., 2014, Introduction, Section 1, para. 4). Analytically and methodologically, the emphasis of this study is historical and processual, using the Marxist concept of conjuncture as a way to capture specific moments in “historical time and geographical space in which related economic, social and political events are taking place” (Faulkner, 2012). The conjuncture society is currently living through is distinct but related to previous conjunctural moments.

A distinguishing aspect of each conjuncture is the convening of crises that emerge within each respective conjuncture. As Hall and Massey argued,

a conjunctural crisis is when these “relatively autonomous” sites—which have different origins, are driven by different contradictions, and develop according to their own temporalities—are nevertheless “convened” or condensed in the same moment. Then there is crisis, a break, a “ruptural fusion.” (p. 38, as quoted in Clarke, 2010, pp. 338–339)

Race-, economic-, gender-, dis/ability-, sexuality-, and linguistic-centered sites of struggle, among others, are equally important strands that concurrently convene in a particular
conjuncture. Our current conjuncture is often cast as an economic crisis, but a cultural-political-economic lens brings to the fore the convening of multiple struggles that constitute the “state of affairs” (Faulkner 2012). From this vantage point the economic crisis, market-driven urban renewal, and the Latino education crisis, for example, are understood as distinct but connected issues that are markers of the broader crisis.

The third and fourth aspects of critical political economy that Wasko et al. (2014) present pertain to questions of objectivity and a scholarly obligation to social change. The authors state:

third in contrast to economics that severed its historic links with moral philosophy in an effort to present itself as an objective science, critical political economy continues to be centrally concerned with the relations between the organization of culture and communications and the constitution of the good society grounded in social justice and democratic practice.

Fourthly, critical analysis places its practitioners under an obligation to follow the logic of their analysis through into practical action for change. (Introduction, Section 1, para. 4)

Housed squarely in Marxist thought, Wasko et al.’s four elements of critical political economy remain concerned with economics
without losing sight of the relationship between economy and the material organization of social and political life. Anyon (2011) notes that for Marx, “economic class relations strongly influence the social situation outside the work place,” (p. 9) affecting domestic and civic life. And this is specifically with respect to capitalism. Over the course of time, macroeconomic shifts have defined structural arrangements and social relationships in order to best benefit the ends of capital.

Critical political economy critiques capitalism and makes evident the way its “everyday operations perpetuate[d] exploitation and injustice, manufacture[d] inequalities, and undermine[d] mutuality and solidarity” (Wasko et al., Introduction, Section 1, para. 3).

Moreover, critical political economy’s grounding in material conditions is central to moving from analysis to action. Analysis is intended to inform and incite action, and I argue that this process is not necessarily linear. Analysis and action are in a dynamic relationship, informing and reshaping one another. In other words, critical political economy, and thus cultural political economy, are praxis-oriented frameworks.

At the heart of the #BarrioEdProj and this dissertation is a mapping of the circuits of dominance and modalities of navigation and resistance as a means of fostering social justice. By mapping dominance (Clarke, 2010), resistance,
compromise, and complicity, the broader purpose is to inform analysis and action to improve conditions now and into the future.

**Neoliberalism as a strain of capitalism**

The crises of recent years have made Marxism and critical political economy ever more necessary, particularly in urban politics and urban educational studies. Neoliberalism is both an elusive and, at times, overused descriptor for the strain of capitalism that has primacy in our current conjuncture. Its more public emergence in the academy and activism over the last decade has been important politically for providing a framework for understanding the goals of capital since the 1970s, the ways these goals have been sought, and the material effects of these dynamics. But along with this development has also come a tendency to label contemporary expressions of inequality as neoliberalism without providing a more nuanced understanding of what neoliberalism is. Importantly the strain of capitalism described as neoliberalism by critical scholars has been centered across scholarly and activist work that seeks to understand contemporary social arrangements and relations.

Here I want to highlight two aspects of neoliberalism that are of particular importance to this study. First is the centrality of the market to the operative logic that gives shape
to social life. The second point is the role of the state in circulating this logic.

**Centrality of the market**

In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, David Harvey (2005) is particularly instructive regarding neoliberalism's marketization of social life. He notes:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. (p. 2)

Neoliberalism is material and cultural. Materially it can be experienced in a variety of ways including participation in the free market economy, purchasing and selling of land, the relationship between profit and labor, financial cuts, the reorganization of social structures, dispossession for failing to paying rent, and many other aspects of day-to-day human practice that ultimately oppress the working class. In education we see, as examples of neoliberalism I will go into in more detail about later, policies that privilege school choice and personalized learning for optimizing the learning experiences of individual students and an increase in the autonomy of principals over the control of their schools.
Neoliberalism is also cultural. By culture I refer to Goldberg (1993), who states that it “is made up by the totality of created knowledge...and [it] involves a set of rules or conventions, a logic or grammar of their relation, and a vocabulary of expression and expressibility” (p. 8). Gramsci (1972) reminds us that advancing the changes in human relations that any form of capitalism proposes relies on dominance not only through force but also through the power of consent within the world of ideas and knowledge. Returning to Harvey, neoliberalism centers discourses and practices of liberation or freedom through free market ideas. In order to enable these discourses and practices to gain traction, the market-centered theories of human well-being must become common sense amongst the multitude.

Harvey (2005) further demonstrates how this theory is primarily based on two logics of power: territory and capital. Capitalist logic refers to the organization and ideology of market exchange and the efforts to expand capital accumulation, including the privatization of the public sector like health services and education. In tandem with this capitalist logic is territorial expansion. To prevent a crisis of overaccumulation or underconsumption capital must, according to Harvey, continue to find new territories to expand into and then dispose of people who are not able to pay rent.
The application and circulation of these two logics ultimately frame a change in social relations. Ong (2006) suggests that neoliberalism can be conceptualized as a technology of government that reconfigures “relationships between governing and the governed, power and knowledge, and sovereignty and territoriality” (p. 3). Treating neoliberalism as a technology enables a documentation of the multiple ways that our capitalist-centered structure evolved, adapted, articulated, and rationalized as processes and ends. Presuming the global ubiquity of neoliberalism, a technological perspective affords an analytic perspective where one can focus on the nuances of local, place-specific implementations of neoliberalism, underlying ideologies, and the navigation of neoliberalized conditions on the part of people on the ground.

The capitalist state

A second dimension to consider is the state. The state is not merely the central governmental instrument of the capitalist class or a subject unto itself. Rather, I suggest that the state is an “institutional ensemble” of relational forces that does not have its own power. From the vantage point of critical political economy, “the power of the state is the power of the class forces that act in and through the state” (Jessop, 1990). But why then does the state matter? Gilmore (2007) notes, “the state makes things, but it is also a product of what’s made and
destroyed—of the constant creation and destruction of things such as schools, hospitals, art museums, nuclear weapons, and prisons” (p. 23). The state goes through these processes of creation, constitution, dissolution, and destruction because part of its charge is to produce stability and growth in the general political economy (p. 22). The state is thus a way in which power is exercised to order society, but it is not only a facilitator of power. It is also a multiscalar crisis manager. The state matters because it is always present in struggles over social and economic power through governance structures and policy formations. From the perspective of communities, neighborhoods, and individuals the state is often the way power is imposed on them. In serving in this capacity the state also becomes a prime target for applying pressure to demand social change.

While earlier decades of the neoliberal turn emphasize the shrinking of the state, the move during the last fifteen years has been toward what can be described as a hollowed-out state (Klein, 2007). As former World Bank president Wolfensohn noted, “Far from supporting a minimalist approach to the state, [the world’s development success stories] have shown that development requires an effective state, one that plays a catalytic, facilitating role, encouraging and complementing the activities of private business and individuals” (World Bank, 1997, p. iii).
Ong (2006) also observes a shift in understandings about the role of what she describes as a neoliberal state. Whereas earlier debates positioned the market in opposition to the state, the logic of neoliberalism has reconceived the state not as shrinking but as repositioned. Indeed, as Clarke (2010) has noted, antistatism must not be equated with a desire to get rid of the state; “rather, it involves what Jones and Novak (1999) nicely term ‘retooling the state,’ reconfiguring it in a form favorable to capital’s current interests” (as quoted in Clarke, 2010, p. 204). The retooling of the state is pertinent to understanding how racism is also circulated through the state. As I will discuss later in the section, the state circulates racism as much as it circulates neoliberal doctrine.

In sum, a critical component of a cultural-political-economic perspective of education today is the placing of a spotlight on the way neoliberalism, as a strain of capitalism, has always been part of the circuitry of education reform. The three decades since A Nation at Risk (1983) have been described by some as the ascendancy of neoliberalism in education. The rise of a standardized testing accountability regime, divestment in public schools, and the realignment of school system leadership under city mayors and state commissions are just some of the ideologies, policies, and reworkings of governance that have been facilitated by power through the state and circulated
through schools in the United States and across the globe. In sum, this constellation or hydra (Picower & Mayorga, 2015) of discourses and material processes has been used to make schooling fit a neoliberal vision of the world. Critical political economy has contributed greatly to identifying these various phenomena in education.

Still, as Clarke (2010) reminds us, there are dangers in making the recent global crises solely economic. As he notes, So much of the writing about the crisis assumes, presumes and reproduces the “economic-ness” of the thing. As a result, it seems that other issues, approaches, or ways of thinking can be put into suspension until we have grasped the economic character of the crisis. I am not sure this is helpful in thinking about either the present as conjuncture or the present as crisis. (p. 338)

What I find either missing or undertheorized in macroeconomic-focused scholarship is a nuanced consideration of race. Racism is rendered as static and a product of economic processes. I turn my attention now to discussing critical theories of race and specifically Latino theories regarding race to complement this discussion on critical political economy.

Race, racism, and Latinidad

For some time it has been argued and demonstrated that while our contemporary understanding and use of race has its
origins in Western biological sciences, race is a social construct (Alcoff, 2006; Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Omi & Winant, 1994, 2015; Silva, 2007). The speciousness of biological definitions has meant that there is no single social constructivist definition of race; some have argued that race is a myth whose presence is solely ideological, while others have argued that race is an elemental category of identity that defines groups by a shared set of characteristic histories and political interests (Alcoff, 2006). Race as an “illusion” has led some to argue that it is no longer useful as a construct and/or that race will be, if it has not already been, eliminated through a “nonracist” or postracial social order (Omi & Winant, 1994, 2015). Drawing on Alcoff and Omi and Winant I provide here a working definition of race that I use to frame and inform my research questions. Alcoff calls for a contextual definition where:

Race is socially constructed, historically malleable, culturally contextual, and reproduced through learned perceptual practices. Whether or not it is valid to use racial concepts and whether or not their use will have positive or negative political effects depends on the context. (p. 182)

For Alcoff a contextualist definition allows for a fluidity and open-endedness to an understanding of race while also
accepting that historically and currently, race continues to have very real and devastating “operative effects in the social world” (p. 182). Omi and Winant (2015) suggest along similar lines that “race is a concept that signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies” (p. 110). What should be apparent from these definitions of race is that it is a social category, and a social categorization of humans that is an integral component of social structure.

Scholars like Omi and Winant (2015) also urge us to think of race as not merely a social category but rather a master category that has global implications. Omi and Winant suggest that as a master category, race is “a fundamental concept that has profoundly shaped, and continues to shape, the history, polity, economic structure, and culture of the United States” (p. 106). While race is sometimes thought to be solely a U.S./norteamericano problem I argue that it is a global master category or global construct (Silva, 2007) that assumes diverging and contested meanings across contexts and histories. This final point is of specific importance when we consider U.S. Latino populations.

“Latino” and “Hispanic” are U.S. ethnic constructs according to the state and in scholarship (J. Flores, 1997), but my attention is on how these constructs are situated in the
racial field (Kim, 1999). Ethnicity references shared nationality, language, and other cultural constructs. Its saliency as a sociological term emerged from the work of Glazer in the 1950s and 1960s. Race was deemed problematic because of its supposed biological basis, and the role of the race relations paradigm persisted as the focus of studies of race. The work of Blauner (1972) and others in the 1960s critiqued the ethnic construct and the race relations paradigm. While ethnicity was useful in referring to aggregations of people in “quantifiable slice[s] of the social whole” (Flores, 1997 p. 186), it obfuscated the oppressive effects of racism (Steinberg, 1995). In this study, ethnicity with respect to nationality and language are topics of discussion, but I approach them from a framework that centers on the oppressive effects of racialization and racism in the United States and globally.

Latin American and U.S. Latinos’ historical relationship to the United States have been an ongoing interruption of the U.S. color line for nearly two centuries. Mexicans, for example, moved from being White to racial other as political and economic policies resituated them within the racial field to protect and advance U.S. political-economic agendas and racial and class hierarchies. Puerto Ricans, who became U.S. citizens through colonization, presented a racialized problem even before the first major waves of Puerto Ricans migrated to the United
States. Puerto Ricans were described, along with Pilipinos, as “little brown brothers” during and after colonization (Clark, 1975), legitimizing the need for colonial rule. The increasing im/migration of people from various Latin American nations, particularly following World War II for Mexicans and Puerto Ricans and even more so for the rest of Latin America following the Immigration Act of 1965, forced the census to change, and the use of the term “Hispanic” in the 1980 census was seen by some as a political victory for this growing population.

It is the raciality of Latinidad (Flores, 1997), or how Latino images and bodies are racialized as other both historically and contemporaneously, that is of pertinence to my frame of analysis. As Goldberg (1993) noted some time ago in liberal Western societies “race is irrelevant, but all is race” (p. 6), and this notion has resurfaced as a center of debate in the United States and globally at a moment where the United States has elected a Black president and yet millions of Black and Latino men and women are either incarcerated or remain within the sphere of the carceral system (Alexander, 2010; Gilmore, 2007, 2011).

Importantly, as Pulido (2006) reminds us, “by recognizing [race] as the product of human activity and imagination, we can shift the focus of our inquiry to questions of process” (p. 9–10) like structural racism. Race as a social construct has
assumed global significance not solely because of its categorization of people into social groups based on racial difference but because these forms of differentiation have been tied to power and the structuring of a social order that ultimately advantages Whites and Whiteness. In essence race “creates the conceptual conditions of possibility, in some conjunctural conditions, for racist expression to be formulated” (D. T. Goldberg, 1993, p. 42). Gilmore defines racism as a practice of abstraction, a death-dealing displacement of difference into hierarchies that organize relations within and between the planet’s sovereign political territories. . . . racism produces effects at the most intimately “sovereign” scale, insofar as particular kinds of bodies, one by one, are materially (if not always visibly) configured by racism into a hierarchy of human and nonhuman persons that in sum form the category “human being” (Agamben 1999). (2002, p. 16)

Taking up Gilmore’s definition, racism is a practice or technology that is a formidable force in the organization of relations and the formation of differentially valued subjects. Racism and neoliberalism therefore coexist, collaborate, and contradict one another in the pursuit of a power-laden social order that benefits the few at the expense of the many.
One key aspect that is often overlooked or underexamined in research is the racialization of Latinos. Cobas, Duany, and Feagin (2009) argue that the process of Latino racialization often “entails minimizing historical, cultural, and linguistic differences among peoples from the same region... Such labels as ‘Hispanic’ typically collapse diverse peoples into a single overarching group according to criteria devised by the dominant white majority” (p. 9). Within schools this collapse leads to a failure to recognize the diverse experiences of various groups and how they are able to address the education system. I will go into this further in later chapters, but a key example is citizenship status. In New York, for example, Puerto Ricans are citizens while Mexicans are primarily immigrants, some undocumented. Puerto Rican and Mexican families, arguably, have very different capacities for addressing issues concerning their children’s education. Citizenship status, a form of difference tied to race, nationality, and colonization, can often go unnoticed in policies that essentialize Latinos and other racial and ethnic groups. It is also tied to the political economy via educational and economic opportunities and the racialization of the groups that individuals are assigned to. I thus return to the interconnections of racial capitalism as my means of thinking through education policy and reform in East Harlem and New York City.
Racial Capitalism as a Unifying Theoretical Construct

In laying out a description of neoliberalism and structural racism my intention is to intertwine these two threads to provide a nimble framework for understanding the current conjuncture. In doing so I borrow Cedric Robinson’s (1983) term racial capitalism.

Seeking not to reject Marxism but to complicate Marxist thought, Cedric Robinson’s (1983) book Black Marxism asserts that the particular racialism, or the “legitimation and corroboration of social organization as natural by reference to the ‘racial’ component” (p. 2), would emerge and circulate through the machinations of capitalism. Robinson contends that racialism preceded capitalism, suggesting that a particular form of racial capitalism emerged over the last 500 years as capitalism became the dominant ideological and material arrangement of Western society. As Melamed (2011) points out,

Cedric Robinson’s theory of racial capitalism clarifies the economic dimension, explaining that because “the development, organization, and expansions of capitalist relations [have] pursued essentially racial directions [in modernity],” racialism is to be considered a “material force” and a “historical agency” of capitalism, with no outside between the two. (p. 8)
Racial capitalism captures a dynamic relationship between racism and capitalism where they are always already together, relying on adaptation to protect and expand domination.

Racial capitalism also describes a changing set of conditions over time. In his brief and poignant essay, *Trayvon’s Legacy: How Diversity Hides Racism*, Christopher Phelps (2014) reminds us that the United States is in a third great system of race and class, moving from “chattel slavery and formal Jim Crow” to a current system, “which operates so subtly that it gives only the barest appearance of being a system—maintain[ing] diversity as an ideal even as it continues to produce injustice in the aggregate” (para 9). In *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism*, Melamed (2011) further unpacks the evolution of racial capitalism by tracing the racial in the years following World War II.

In response to Winant’s notion of an incomplete racial break where “a global accumulation of sociopolitical forces—demographic, experiential, institutional, and ideological—that combined to discredit and finally undo the old world racial system” (as quoted by Melamed, p. 5) gave rise to a racial dualism where white supremacy coexisted with commitments to racial justice, Melamed argues that that racial break was completed and inspired the development of a new racial project, “a formally antiracist, liberal capitalist modernity that
revises, partners with, and exceeds the capacities of white supremacy without replacing or ending it” (p. 6–7). Melamed is making apparent how state-conducted antiracisms change as a means to protect white supremacy by adapting to the changing economic world. She continues:

The emergence of a global order through a world-embracing system of capitalism, nation-states, colonies, and imperial rule was able to constitute itself as a global social structure only to the extent that it was racialized. By representing and assigning meaning to human identities, white supremacy made it possible to locate all human individuals and collectives with an emerging world social order. White supremacy also allowed for an overarching and unequal system of capital accumulation by inscribing race on bodies as marker of their relative value or valuelessness. (p. 7)

Melamed traces the currents of racial capitalism in the years following World War II, noting that antiracist social goals within racial capitalism have adapted as needed to maintain the social order. Melamed maps three distinct periods of state-recognized U.S. antiracisms within this period: racial liberalism (1940s to 1960s), liberal multiculturalism (1980s to 1990s), and neoliberal multiculturalism (2000s). These antiracisms have functioned
as unifying discourses for U.S. state, society, and global ascendancy and as material forces for postwar global capitalist expansion. (p. 1)

This study focuses on the neoliberal multicultural era but looks back at the liberal multicultural era as a way to think about these shifts over time within urbanism and urban education.

The structuring of the social order is thus always already racial and political-economic, and racial capitalism is the relation by which various technologies and grammars are used to set the discursive and material terms upon which social order takes shape. I next turn to racial neoliberal urbanism as the primary grammar by which racial capitalism circulated in el barrio.

**Racial neoliberal urbanism as a grammar of place**

In his 1984 book, *Education and the City: Theory, History and Contemporary Practice*, Gerald Grace (2013) makes the important argument that urban theory and research is “marked by fundamental limitations, the most obvious of which is the abstraction of the city (and of city schools) as objects of investigation from the wider social, economic and political framework within which they are located” (p. 16). This approach has led, Grace asserts, “to a consequent emphasis upon discrete ‘urban problems’” (p. 16). The delinking of cities and city schools from broader social forces creates a siloed approach to
urban analysis, thus rendering institutions like city schools uninhibited by the cultural political economy and the general social context. Some critical education scholars have made similar critiques, most notably Anyon (1997), Lipman (2011), Leonardo (2009, 2010), and Gulson (2011). Gulson and Lipman in particular assert that education plays a co-constitutive role in the formation of the city, and studies of urban education are thus simultaneously studies of urban space. In what follows I want to explore racialized neoliberal urbanism (RNU) as a term for describing the remaking of both cities and urban schools.

The literature on Latino education, I argue, has insufficiently theorized how the remaking of cities and urban education reform are connected to Latino education and Latino lives. Walsh (2000) provides a good example of this kind of work as she makes sense of the changing political economy of Milltown and educational struggles that occurred in the city. By centering Latino core communities in this dissertation I intend to demonstrate how education is an integral aspect of the transformation of the city and to further broaden how race is understood in this time of racial capitalism.

Racial neoliberal urbanism (RNU) refers to the grammar or logic of place that is formulated and circulated within, through, and for racial capitalism. I invoke the term “grammar” to describe the set of things that provide “a system of rules,
indexes and thus forms certain patterns, structures and meanings” (Goeman, 2014, p. 237) to urban spaces and urban schools. As a grammar, racial neoliberal urbanism is constituted by the varied policies, strategies, redistributions, ideologies, and practices that contribute to defining the imagined and material edges and boundaries of a place like a neighborhood or a school. It should also be understood that racial neoliberal urbanism became the dominant grammar that reigns over the character of contemporary urbanism over time. Referring to DeCerteau, Goeman (2014) contends that any dominant “grammar of place” stems from “sets of power relations that happen within the mapping process that gives authority to some grammars while denying, erasing, or overlaying others” (Goeman, 2014, p. 236).

At any conjunctural moment multiple grammars of place are present, but for societies structured in dominance, the form of urbanism that most aligns with dominance becomes a hegemonic force.

Central to any “contest of urbanism” is the city as a geopolitical anchor for global capital. As Lipman (2011) notes, Over the past 30 years, cities and large urbanized areas have become fundamental geographical units in the spatial reorganization of the international division of labor. In a new global–local configuration, cities and metro regions
compete directly in the global economy for investment, tourism, and production facilities. (p. 23)

As integral locations in the global economic order, cities are attuned to global processes, but in order to be understood as stable sites by which capital can circulate, cities must also be active in forming themselves to be palatable to those needs. Cities must therefore focus on making themselves friendly to capital and able to effectively manage the increasing number of dispossessed people that capital relies on to advance itself. The strategies used to fulfill these interests are what fall under the term racialized neoliberal urbanism.

The interlocked relationship between capital and racism is, I argue, a distinguishing characteristic of U.S. education reform over the last 35 years. Historical research on U.S. schools has demonstrated that schools and school systems are essential components of the work of the state (Apple, 1996; Spring, 2013). On a very basic level, the school has served as the site to meet the state’s need to develop individual members of the society, where personhood remains a contested notion. From Jeffersonian ideals about the role of education for democratic participation to the child-centered approaches attributed to the likes of psychologist Jean Piaget and to the economic logic of human capital theory, the focus has been on articulating state-sanctioned modes of behavior that are then to
be enacted by the individual. Coupled with this notion of developing the individual is the school’s position as a site of social reproduction. From the formation of centralized bureaucratic management systems (Tyack, 1974) to the struggles over racial desegregation (Dumas, 2011; Orfield et al., 2014; A. E. Phillips, 2005), schools have been integral to social control, social policy, and reform projects created to meet varying and often conflicting economic, political, and societal needs (Spring, 2013).

Gathering what has historically been the purpose of the school, it should come as no surprise that a racialized neoliberal order would require a racialized neoliberal school system. How schools are established, managed, closed, or reinvented by the state; what policies are generated and enacted; and the various modifications and improvements in curriculum and pedagogical practice are all processes that are never devoid of political and ideological motivations cycled through the state (Apple, 1996). These continual cycles of human and institutional activity provide ample material for tracing and examining how both the state and the populace’s actions in relation to the state become indicators for how power is established, reframed, subtracted, or redistributed. Processes and relations of power are thus continually reworked through education.
Since the 1980s, public education has been a central site through which various crises have been understood, rationalized, produced, and managed. As noted by Apple (1988), within this context, education became the dumping ground upon and through which social and economic conditions were understood and rationalized:

The political right in the United States has been very successful in mobilizing support against the educational system, often exporting the crisis in the economy to the schools. Thus, one of its major victories has been to shift the blame of unemployment and underemployment and for the supposed breakdown of "traditional" values and standards in the family, education and the paid workplace from the economic, cultural, and social policies of capital to the school and other public agencies. (p. 284)

By the late 1990s and early 2000s high-stakes testing, the growth of charter schools and their subsequent appropriation by education management organizations over individual (Fabricant & Fine, 2013), extensive student and teacher evaluation systems, the institution of teacher merit pay plans, antiteacher tenure legislation, school closures, and school district takeovers became common practices in education reform across the United States and its primarily of-Color and poor urban centers. It was, as Apple (1988) describes, a fragile coming-together of
neoconservative and neoliberal intentions. In Chicago, New York, and several other cities, education reform was also aided by the expansion of mayoral control of the school system and school governance reorganizations. Under the rhetoric of efficiency and effectiveness, dismantling governance structures that afforded some popular voice, like elected school boards, reflected a reorientation of school management into a market model of statecraft.

These discursive changes in statecraft mark an emphasis on the purpose of school to produce individuals who are able to flexibly participate in an economic system where work is often contingent and highly polarized between an elite class and a large sector of underemployed and unemployed people. The development of human capital, rather than human development, becomes a dominant message about schooling and the strategies implemented to reform education. In short, education is central to the formation of human subjects and institutional practices for the purposes of advancing a neoliberal form of capitalism. What is at times missing in popular discourse around education reform of this type is the racial dimension, but I posit that structural racism works hand in hand with neoliberalized education, as the racialized valuing and devaluing of humans, groups, and spaces that has been historically present is rearticulated to support neoliberalism and white supremacy. This
study’s underlying objective is to examine the circulation of racial neoliberal urbanism through a barrio and its schools.

**Literature Review**

I now turn my attention to reviewing literature that I examine to varying degrees through this study. The first category is an overall discussion of U.S. Latinos and Latino education. The following categories are work-through terms that connect urbanism and urban education.

**Latinos in the United States and New York City**

In order to think about Latinos, Latino education, and urbanism, we need to know more about Latinos across the United States and New York City in particular. Latinos have been part of the United States since the colonial period and of New York City since its dawning (Remeseira, 2010). Today there are roughly 50.5 million U.S. Latinos, and nearly 64.8 percent of them are U.S. born while 35.2 percent are born outside of the United States (Pew Hispanic Center, 2012). Sixteen million are Latino children and youth—92 percent of whom are U.S. citizens (Mather & Foxen, 2010, p. iii). By the year 2060, Latinos are expected to constitute nearly 30 percent of the entire U.S. population (Colby & Ortman, 2015).

It is critical to recognize how immigration, attendant statuses of un/documentedness, and the place of immigrants in society are discursively draped over Latinos as a whole. Since
2000, the primary source for the growth of the Latino population has been U.S. births, which accounted for 9.6 million compared to 6.5 million Latino immigrant arrivals. It should also be noted that Puerto Ricans, who are U.S. citizens by birth, make up 9.5 percent of the total U.S. Latin population and are the second-largest group behind Latinos of Mexican descent, who make up 64.1 percent (34.6 million) of the total population (Lopez et al., 2009). Further, there are over 11 million immigrants living in the United States who are undocumented. The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) (2013) estimates that of the 11 million, 71 percent (8.1 million) are from Mexico and Central America, and another 4 percent (455,000) are from South America (MPI, 2013). What is most important for the purpose of understanding these numbers is recognizing the living conditions documented and undocumented immigrants experience and how immigration policy has been used as a social frame for Latinos generally.

Beginning around 2006 there has been an explosion of immigration reform legislation, much of which has sought to establish undocumented immigration as a federal crime, along with any acts in support of known undocumented immigrants (N. Molina, 2014). This legislation only perpetuates the racialization and criminalization of Latinos and reflects a vitriolic backlash against Latinos and people-of-Color groups who are framed as “always foreign” within media and U.S. policy
discourse. This discourse cuts across cities and regions and contributes to the precarious situations Latinos must navigate not only with regard to their citizenship status but also to what housing and employment options are actually available to them. It has been extremely helpful that some U.S. cities and counties have opted to function as “sanctuary cities” where local governments refuse to fully cooperate with immigration authorities in reporting undocumented individuals (Tarlton & Green, 2015), but this does not always translate into changes in overall conditions for urban Latinos.

While the growth of Latinos has been tremendous, the struggles many face remain daunting. Since 1980 between 23 and 25 percent of Latinos have been living in poverty (Stepler & Brown, 2015), for example. During this same 35-year period, unemployment rates hover between 9 percent and 13 percent (10–18 percent for U.S. Blacks), peaking at 12.9 percent in 2010 (14.8 percent for foreign-born Latinos), which is second to U.S. Blacks (17.9 percent). These numbers are just some of the data that demonstrate the difficult economic situations many Latinos face.

**Latino Education in the United States**

Education statistics show a mixed picture, with some important improvements. In 2010, for example, Latino children were underrepresented in early childhood programs, and 42
percent scored below basic reading levels by the eighth grade (Mather & Foxen, 2010, p. iii). The high school completion rate among 18- to 24-year-old Latinos was at 85 percent in 2013, which is the highest percentage for Latinos to date, but they continue to have the lowest graduation rates among all racial and ethnic groups in the United States (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2015). Of those who do graduate from high school, the number of Latinos who enroll in college has increased to 18 percent of all college enrollees, which is up from 12 percent in 2009 (Fry, 2014). The Latino education crisis continues within this mixed picture, and it is important to look to research on Latino education.

The history and sociology of Latino education in the United States is a vibrant field. Charting a New Course: Understanding the Sociocultural, Political, Economic, and Historical Context of Latino/a Education in the United States (Nieto, Rivera, Quinones, & Irizarry, 2012) provides an extensive and critical description of Latino/a education in the United States, and I rely heavily on this set of documents to discuss this area of the literature.

Important scholarship on the history of Latino education in the United States has been produced but has not received the attention it deserves. MacDonald (2004) has produced the most expansive discussions in her book Latino Education in the United
States: a Narrated History from 1513–2000 and a cowritten chapter in an edited volume (MacDonald & Monkman, 2005). In her work MacDonald documents and examines cultural, political, and legal histories that have shaped the education of Latinos across the United States. She also documents some of the key victories achieved by different Latino groups as they have sought to resist oppressive education policies and poor educational conditions for Latino youth.

Scholarship on bilingual education, given that Spanish speakers make up the largest population of emergent bilinguals (Garcia, 2009b), has also made numerous contributions to the study of Latino education in the United States (for just a few of many examples see Baker, 2011; Blanton, 2004; San Miguel, 2004). Another important area of historical research takes place on regional and local levels. This includes important work by Ruben Donato (1997, 2007) on Chicanos and Mexican Americans in the southwest and west coast. The historical section of Angela Valenzuela’s (1999) seminal piece Subtractive Schooling is also a key contribution to the untold stories of Latino education in Texas. Work focusing on Chicago has been equally essential for its attention to both Mexican and Puerto Rican populations (Fernández, 2014). In the northeast, much work has focused on Puerto Ricans, including publications by Sonia Nieto and others (2000) and, more recently, scholars like Irizarry and Antrop-
González (2007) and Jesus and Rolón-Dow (2007). Bartlett and García (2011) developed work that spoke to some of the history of Dominicans in New York City. Wortham, Murrillo, and Hamman (2002) also initiated documentation of Latino education in regions where Latinos were only recently moving in large numbers, such as Indiana, North Carolina, Georgia, and Maine. In sum, the historical work has moved across nationalities, regions, and urban/suburban/rural contexts and gender (though I have not addressed this here), over time. Less attention has been paid to varying social class groups.

In *Charting a New Course*, Nieto et al. (2012) delineate three levels or domains within the literature on Latino education: interpersonal, instructional, and institutional. The interpersonal refers to literature that examines sociocultural dimensions of relationships and cultural tools in mediating educational achievement for Latinos. Much of the research in this area addresses cultural deficit-based perspectives on Latinos that have been used to explain low levels of achievement among Latinos and other groups of Color. Scholars have responded to deficit frameworks with assets-based approaches. Examples of research on the interpersonal level include studies of peer groups, family relationships, and relationships with teachers.

The instructional domain refers to examining pedagogical approaches that build on assets-centered frameworks, such as
culturally relevant pedagogy and participatory action research (PAR), which address the intellectual strengths and needs of Latino youth, bolster their social-emotional capacities by fostering a sense of belonging, and enhance their capacities to take constructive actions to challenge social inequities.

Finally, the institutional domain refers to policies and policy-related structural barriers that mediate the educational experiences of, and outcomes for, Latino youth. Attention is paid to literature that examines No Child Left Behind (NCLB), immigration, linguistic difference, pushouts/dropouts, special education, and teacher quality. The authors capture how the current education policyscape is anchored by the punitive testing and accountability regime that was ushered in, most notably, by the rebranding of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as NCLB in 2001.

Recently, the U.S. Congress reauthorized NCLB as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) ESSA, among other things, returns a significant amount of decision-making power and student evaluation to states, and decouples testing from the high stakes implications for students (though it does not get rid of testing) (OBrien, 2016). The effects these changes in federal policy will have on the educational experiences of Latino students is left to be seen, but the work of critical scholars like Nieto et al. must still be heeded. As they have pointed
out, the over-determination of testing and accountability has distracted scholars, policy makers, educators, and families from addressing the social-structural barriers that are propelled by poverty and discrimination based in cultural differences. The authors argue that schools must remain cognizant of these structural issues and address them through curriculum and community engagement work that connects the school with the needs of the communities they serve.

In the realm of policy, the authors call for a critical review of current policies and assert that because the plight faced by Latinas/os occurs across a multiplicity of social concerns, including housing, health, employment, and citizenship (among others), the focus cannot be placed solely on school reform. Rather, the authors assert that a focus on poverty is needed and this should be a "community and national responsibility" (Nieto et al., 2012, p. 35).

This dissertation draws on all three domains of the literature but is primarily a study of institutional, structural processes that give shape to the conditions that Latino youth and families face within school and in their everyday lives. The work in Charting a New Course is a wellspring of insight and path-making ideas to ensure a better set of conditions for Latinos in education and across social sectors. By centering poverty and deculturalization the authors provide a compelling
and often tragic depiction of how these forces shape relationships, teaching, and learning. One perspective that is not explicitly pointed to in the study is an identification and deconstruction of racial capitalism as a root cause of the discursive and material effects of poverty. Puerto Rican scholars and activists, for example, articulated an imbricated mode of analysis decades ago. This was evident in the Puerto Rican Socialist Party’s 1974 declaration, Desde las entrañas, as I noted in the introduction, and was the emphatic thirteenth point of the Young Lord’s 13-point platform:

We want a socialist society. We want liberation, clothing, free food, education, health care, transportation, utilities, and employment for all. We want a society where the needs of our people come first, and where we give solidarity and aid to the peoples of the world, not oppression and racism. (Enck-Wanzer, 2010, p. 13)

Puerto Rican political thinkers, among others, were articulating a theoretical and activist framework that leads to a cultural-political-economic mode of analysis. This approach treats objects of analysis as part of a social totality while paying attention to the particularities of culture, difference, space, and time. This approach, importantly, centers racism and capitalism at a moment where critical education scholarship has alerted us to the powerful forces of structural racism and
capitalism in education policy and practice today. The convening of this brand of racial capitalism takes place, as Latinos are becoming the largest racial/ethnic minority group in the United States. By focusing on structures and policies, this dissertation seeks to continue this tradition of imbricated, cultural-political-economic analysis in the current literature on Latino education.

**Latinos and the city**

This multinational, multiracial, multilingual group amounts to over 50 million of the 309 million people living in the United States, with 16 million being Latino children and youth – 92 percent of whom are U.S. citizens (Mather & Foxen, 2010; Pew Hispanic Center, 2012). This dynamic, vibrant community is also chronically underserved by the nation’s public schools, leading experts to declare that we are in the midst of a “Latino education crisis” (U.S. Dept. of Education & White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

While Latinos have also been central to rural and agricultural politics, the U.S. Latino story is primarily an urban one. New York, Los Angeles, Miami, and Chicago were home to the largest absolute numbers of Latinos between 1980 and 2000, but more recently cities like Atlanta and Orlando have become new Latino destinations and have seen the fastest growth
(Suro & Singer, 2002). The sixty metropolitan areas (cities and suburbs) with the largest Latino populations totaled a little over 39 million people in 2011, or approximately 77 percent of the entire U.S. Latino population (Pew Hispanic Study 2011). Taking these statistics into consideration within a framework that pays attention to the link between urbanism and urban education, the importance of examining urban Latino education as an aspect of urbanism becomes evident.

**Dimensions of Urbanism**

In what follows I describe key dimensions of urbanism as a grammar of neighborhoods and public schools. Some of these aspects of urbanism are processes that I suggest are present in both neighborhood change and urban schools, while others are more specific to education. I start with governance and public engagement and then turn to material and cultural remakings of urban space, working specifically with Harvey’s (2006) notion of accumulation by dispossession. I then briefly discuss notions of development with respect to both neighborhood development and human development, and then I look at school choice.

**Decentralization**

New York City’s governance structures have historically been a mixture of governance traditions. The mayoralty has primarily been a strong system in which the mayor has played a central role in policy making for the city. While the mayors
have used various strategies for creating and enacting policies, such as innovation, arbitration, negotiation (Bellush & Netzer, 1990), or executive decision making, that policy has gone through the mayor rather than a city manager or the governing bodies. At the same time municipal government did go through a professionalization of its bureaucracy whose ranks grew through a merit system based on service exams. Designed as a tool to combat a corrupt patronage system where government leaders would be pressured to advance policies following the direction of the most significant contributors, the bureaucracy grew increasingly more powerful, and mayors have needed to navigate between this bureaucracy and the agendas of other entities and communities. These relationships have changed as shifts in the political economy, among other factors, have created different social policy issues that must be addressed. Still, the municipal government was a powerful force, which has not always been the case in U.S. cities.

Importantly, as the economy began to stagnate and middle class whites began to leave the city by the 1960s, the disconnect between the bureaucracy and the increasingly Black and Puerto Rican and economically impoverished population of the city made the city government a key target in demanding reforms to improve the conditions that the poor and people of Color were facing in New York throughout the century, but more so through
the 1960s to the present. The logic followed that with power
decentralized or redistributed within the governance apparatus,
the poor would have a better chance of seizing power of sections
of a highly centralized power structure. The call for
decentralization was one of the demands, and the clearest
example of decentralization was the school system.

Much has been written about New York City’s public schools,
the largest urban school district in the United States, and
about the struggles over the governance of the school system in
particular. Highly centralized around an enormous bureaucracy
located at 110 Livingston in Brooklyn between the early 1900s
and the mid-1960s, the school system was touted as the “one best
school system,” proving to be a techno-rational government
solution to the highly corrupt local ward system of the previous
century (Tyack, 1974). The system was profoundly challenged by
an organized demand for community control in the 1960s.

Citing increasing neighborhood racial and economic
segregation and the tie between residence and school
assignments, the poor and working class communities of Color of
New York City argued that their children were being provided an
inferior educational experience (Jeffries & Jones, 2012). The
demand for community control of schools in the 1960s emerged as
part of a larger constellation of the civil rights/people of
Color power movements’ demands for freedom and self-
determination. For Puerto Rican/Latino, Black, and Asian American group advocates control over education was seen as pivotal terrain for growing power and passing on this power to future generations. Community control was, as Heather Lewis (2013) intimates, a move to take control of the education system as a key site for increasing capacities for self-determination among poor people of Color. The struggle for community control of schools was therefore a move not toward removing the negative obstacle of desegregated schools but rather a move toward imagining a new, democratic institution (Lipsitz, 2004). A redesigned, democratic education institution would be premised on redistributing power and resources and as such posed a huge threat to interrupting the raced, classed, and gendered power relations in the city.

Ultimately, the demand for community control begat a short lived but volatile experiment in community control between 1968 and 1970. Each of three sites in the city—Intermediate School 201 in East Harlem, the Two Bridges area of Manhattan’s Lower East Side, and the Ocean Hill–Brownsville neighborhoods of Brooklyn—locally elected its own school board, which was then to manage a set of schools. Strife among local families, community control advocates, the Board of Education, and the teachers’ union (United Federation of Teachers–UFT) ensued. When seven white teachers were removed from Ocean Hill–Brownsville area
schools, the struggle turned explosive, with the UFT going on strike between May and November of 1968. Podair (2002) described this period as the strike that would change New York, breaking the fragile coalition among Jewish communities, Black and Latino activists, and labor unions.

The experimental districts were dissolved as a decentralized model was proposed and implemented between 1970 and 2002. Decentralization involved breaking up the city school system into 32 school districts of varying sizes and covering neighborhoods of uneven levels of political and economic clout. Each district elected its own school board and had a localized bureaucratic body for managing budgets, evaluating schools, and informing broader City Board of Education issues. This included Community School District 4 (CSD4), which, composed solely of East Harlem, became the first Latino majority school district in the city (P. Pedraza, 1997).

Chapter 3 of this dissertation is a historical chapter that focuses on examining the move from community control to decentralization as an indicator of the changing relationship between the city, the schools, and the people of East Harlem. Key outcomes to changes between the decentralization era and mayoral control, I argue, were ideological, cultural, and material, as competing notions of choice, development, community, and governance were being jockeyed for primacy in the
direction of urban education and social policy. Situated in racialized neoliberal urbanism and mapped onto changing forms of school governance, the contestation over these ideas was articulated through market-based, democratic, and bureaucratic frameworks during mayoral control. The historical chapter and data chapters will also focus on how changes in governance have been navigated and resisted over the years.

**Public engagement**

Related to decentralization is the ongoing problem within democracies of public participation or public engagement. There is a wealth of literature surrounding various forms of engagement within the school-community nexus, but the primary focus has been on parental involvement (Barton, Drake, Perez, Louis, & George, 2004) and singular views of parental and community engagement (J. Henig, Gold, Orr, Silander, & Simon, 2011). For far too long, Barton et al. (2004) argue, a deficit paradigm has dominated notions of parental involvement where it has “been understood largely in terms of ‘what they do’ and how that fits or does not fit with the needs of the child or the goals of the school” (p. 3). Drawing on historical data and interviews I focus on reorganizations of governance structure as reflective of changing public engagement policies in the New York City school system and East Harlem (CSD4) during decentralization and
the mayoral control era. Did changes in governance and community engagement policies alter public engagement? And if so, how?

Another aspect to the changing work of governance or the practices of the state within New York City is the role of local nonprofits. While I do not delve too heavily into this area of the literature, I do want to acknowledge that in doing the archival research that we did for the project, it became evident that nonprofit organizations, whether settlement houses, service organizations, or more formalized social action organizations, assumed an increasingly larger political position in El Barrio. During the mid-20th century there were many organizations such as Union Settlement and very active social workers, like Ellen Lurie and Preston Wilcox, who were very involved in trying to ensure that the neighborhood and public housing was not only livable for residents but in fact instrumental to the material and political nourishing of families and children. In the archives we came across lists that identified 50 local organizations working on various projects that all employed unique approaches, and they too evolved in the kind of work they were doing.

The evolution of nonprofits is important to understand here because these organizations often took up responsibilities and service provision that could have or should have been provided by the government. Job opportunities, health provisions, and
education were among a litany of services that these small organizations, which varied in resources and capacities, provided when the state would not or could not provide resources. These patterns continued throughout the second half of the century until the Giuliani mayoralty severely cut funding for nonprofit organizations (P. Pedraza, 2013). This had an unevening effect, where small “mom and pop” nonprofits became unable to sustain their work, while large nonprofits such as the United Way were able to either remain steady or expand in the changing climate. Moreover, and as I will go into further detail in a later chapter, some of the education-focused organizations, such as East Harlem Tutorial, a 50+-year-old educational organization, moved to creating its own charter schools rather than remaining focused on out-of-school or after-school activities.

**Material and cultural dimensions of accumulation by dispossession**

Discussions of urbanism or urban renewal often focus on gentrification. I argue that gentrification is only a part of the story, though an important one. Gentrification, generally speaking, refers to policies and processes wherein low-income disinvested neighborhoods are infused with capital reinvestment for the purposes of attracting wealthier groups of people, which leads to ongoing displacement of previous residents. Hackworth
and Smith (2001) distinguished between various waves of gentrification, starting with the first wave of the late 1960s and 1970s. Some of the distinctions between the waves have been the level of coordination of gentrification processes and the role the state plays in advancing them. Gulson (2011) draws on Smith’s notion of “third wave gentrification” as a way to describe contemporary neoliberal urbanism. Third-wave gentrification is a “new amalgam of corporate and state powers and practices that span across planning and social policy realms and is seen to underpin large urban development” (N. Smith, as quoted in Gulson, 2011, p. 12). In the data chapters I am mapping how third-wave gentrification circulated through El Barrio, paying particular attention to gentrification and struggles over affordable housing.

In the context of the Bloomberg era, Harvey’s notion of accumulation by dispossession is particularly useful for understanding both the cultural and material effects of urbanism in El Barrio. Harvey (2003) defines accumulation by dispossession as a process in which assets that belonged to one group are taken and put into circulation as capital for another group to profit from (as discussed in Buras, 2011). Once such capital is within the market ready for investment and speculation, Harvey (2003) explains, “new terrains for profitable activity were opened up...Once in motion, however,
this movement created incredible pressures to find more and more arenas, either at home or abroad, where privatization might be achieved” (p. 158). Furthermore, the strategy of organized abandonment lay in the search for arenas of privatization (Gilmore, 2008) where disinvestments in infrastructure and public institutions (like schools, libraries, and parks) in economically vulnerable and “culturally deficient” communities and places are opened up for displacement. I will argue that in a cultural-political-economic context that centers on expanding profit and protecting and adapting structural racism, third-wave gentrification and organized abandonment follows a pattern of material accumulation by dispossession.

El Barrio is one of the key sites of state-driven urban renewal during the middle of the 20th century where large public housing towers replaced huge swathes of tenement housing in impoverished neighborhoods to provide a safer, cleaner living experience for the poor. As I will discuss in Chapter 5, public housing and affordable housing in New York in general has been under sustained attack, though not in as swift and destructive a manner as has been the fate of housing in other cities like Chicago or Detroit. More to the point, the decline of housing has converged with the ongoing desire of real estate developers, the city, and others (such as the biomedical technology field) for cheap space to accumulate. In sum, I will argue that in the
loss of housing and the unaffordability of luxury apartment
housing built by moneyed interests, the poor of El Barrio have
been materially dispossessed or dismembered from the
neighborhood. Dispossessed land and buildings are able to be
bought, thus creating sites of profit accumulation. In
conjunction with demographic changes, and specifically the
immigration of the poor from Latin America, Asia, and Africa,
the precariousness of housing and the gentrification of
neighborhoods have contributed to the production of changing
notions of poverty and who the poor are.

With respect to the struggles over housing in recent
decades, what should be evident is that housing and
gentrification are always already racial and cultural struggles
as well. A social constant over the last 50 years or so is the
cultural deficit framing of people of Color who live in public
and tenement housing. As far back as the Moynihan Report on the
Black family in the 1960s (Greenbaum, 2015) the cultural framing
of these particular populations has vilified and dehumanized
them. Since the 1960s, then, there has been an ongoing
adaptation and remixing of a culture of poverty discourse that
places the responsibility for the challenges faced by poor
people and people of Color on their own shoulders. I will argue
in Chapter 5 that by remixing the culture of poverty discourse
in the contemporary period, local policies rationalize or
legitimize the notion that the poor and their institutions have brought upon themselves a rationale for dispossession.

At the same time that this kind of cultural dispossession is occurring, there are also practices of cultural exploitation. Whether it takes the form of appropriating the cultures of people of Color or of marketing cultural expressions, exploitation occurs as one seeks to commodify cultural forms, and its goal is to use culture as a means to accumulate profit. In doing so cultural exploiters resist acknowledging the roots of these culturally situated ways of being, obfuscate the material conditions of people of those marginalized and exploited cultures, and sanitize cultural difference through a rubric of diversity in order to create some false notion of safety in still “ghetto” spaces.

**Racial Neoliberal Urbanism in Education**

In the struggles over education in New York City the amount of space and who controls those spaces made available to schools have been ongoing struggles and are illustrative of material forms of accumulation by dispossession. Into the 1970s the number of students in the school system continued climbing to over 1.1 million, thus making the need for space critical. Even as the economy was stagnating and the school district continued to have budget shortages in the early 1970s, the chancellor proposed a $678 million budget to support 87 different school
construction projects, describing the need for additional space as a “desperate” situation (Buder, 1971). It is not always clear where profit accumulation is being made in battles over space in New York City schools, but it is important to look more closely or to more vigilantly “follow the money.” For example in the 1980s and 1990s the School Construction Authority was seen as conducting corrupt practices; it had close ties to the mob and was making billions while failing to complete the array of building projects the city needed (Kontorovich, 1998).

More pertinent to our case, however, is the redistribution of space in favor of some over others. Two ways in which redistribution or reorganization of space occurs in schools is colocations and closures. Colocations are the placement of multiple schools into a larger site. Colocation has a history in New York. The small-schools approach in El Barrio that began in the 1970s was partially made possible by asking, and at times forcing, existing schools to share space in their buildings. In very real ways, then, physical space is taken from one school community and given to others. This of course by itself does not necessarily suggest dispossession for those who have lost space, but it did and continues to create complexities in management of school buildings and the sharing of resources. As I argue in Chapter 7, colocations as a reform strategy took on more adversarial tones during the Bloomberg era as the administration
concertedly used this strategy to break up large schools that were perceived to be failing and to co-locate new small schools and charter schools. By 2014 there were 900 schools in collocated relationships across the city (Fertig, 2014). At that point inequities of material resources and dispossessions of those with less became readily apparent.

Another form of accumulation by dispossession is school closures. A school closure refers to the closing or gradual “phase out” of a school that has been deemed failing according to district metrics (Aggarwal & Mayorga, 2012; Kimple, 2015). Like colocations, school closures had occurred in New York and other school districts in previous decades but were rare, even as struggling urban schools started to be described as “dropout factories” (M. Fine, 1991) in the 1980s. The dropout crisis continued into the 2000s (Balfanz & Legters, 2004), and as I will discuss in Chapter 7, closures became a key strategy for addressing this problem during the Bloomberg era. The city’s Department of Education (DOE) combined student test scores with school evaluations and other criteria to decide whether or not closure was the “best” approach to change the situation. Materially, closures led to the dispossession of students, given that they often meant a loss of resources when the population started to shrink. Culturally, schools and their students were to varying degrees framed as failing and thus meriting closure.
In sum, closures thus marked material and cultural dispossession, with the city closing 160 schools between 2002 and 2013.

What is most relevant to closures in El Barrio is the dispossession of students and ensuing contention over space. As schools were being phased out, students belonging to highly vulnerable populations, like English learners and students with disabilities, remained and made up a larger part of the remaining school populations, unable to find alternative schools to attend (Aggarwal & Mayorga, 2012). As I will discuss later, in El Barrio closures and colocations were connected, though not coordinated, with schools being phased out when space became available. For those who remained or arrived in the postmortem of a closure, intraschool relationships, inequities in resources, and claims to space were among the variety of issues that created tensions.

Choice

Another aspect of racial neoliberal urbanism of particular relevance to a study of El Barrio is school choice. Choice, or schools of choice, refer to a set of models that give families the opportunity to choose the school they would like their children to attend within a district. Like the other reform strategies discussed here, choice also has a history to it. Aggarwal (2015) traces choice back to Milton Friedman, who in
1955, the same year as Brown vs. Board of Education II, articulated a plan that treated choice, rights, and freedom as inextricably linked. To Friedman state-enforced desegregation impeded individuals’ right to choose the most appropriate form of education for their children. Rather than using forced forms of segregation or desegregation, choice, Friedman concluded, would provide a “third alternative” where families could have the flexibility to withdraw their children from the mandated school and reinvest in a range of options that included alternative public, private, religious, and even segregated options (Friedman, 1955, as discussed in Aggarwal, 2015).

Friedman’s model follows a free market vision where there are no particular limits to parent options, but this is not the only model of choice that exists. Schneider et al. (2000) point to three models: controlled choice, option-demand choice, and universal choice. The controlled choice model refers to choice programs that still hold desegregation as a parameter for available seats for students. In this model, families rank the schools they would like their child to attend, but racial and other demographic characteristics within the district are still factors in what school their children are ultimately accepted into. Universal choice, another model, is similar to controlled choice in that families rank their school options, but there are no constraints concerning balance in racial or other demographic
characteristics. Instead schools are monitored along with the choices families make. Following school closure logic discussed earlier, any school that is seen as struggling or of low interest to families is more closely evaluated and, if need be, restructured or closed. These options only include public schools, whereas Friedman’s model includes private and parochial school options.

The model most relevant to this study is the option-demand model. In this model a school district will expand the range of educational alternatives available to parents and students. Unlike the aforementioned models, this option has programs working alongside neighborhood schools that are still based on a geographic zone (or catchment area). Parents usually opt out of their zoned neighborhood school and then rank their available options. Across most of the models there is some kind of decision-making process operated by district-level administrators. In some cases, it is based on a lottery system, as alternative schools are often popular in districts where neighborhood schools are seen as being of poor quality. This model describes the alternative small-school approach that East Harlem adopted in the 1970s. I will discuss this history further in the historical chapter, but this change led to the East Harlem miracle in the 1980s and 1990s. However, as the 1990s came to an end and the Bloomberg administration took over in
2002, parental choice became a crucial aspect of school reform, with charter schools becoming a larger player. Charter schools, neighborhood schools, and the old alternative schools came to vie for students by making every effort to improve test performance and to make concerted efforts to promote their school as parents’ best option for their children, in order to expand their control of the education market.

**Notions of development**

Racialized neoliberal urbanism carries with it at least two notions of development. First there are notions of individual human development. The interest here is on the development of human beings for society. Views on development are varied and tied to ideology. Development based on human capital theory, for example, is premised on, as Lipman (2011) suggests, investing in your individual child in order to help them “better compete in the labor market” (pp. 14–15). Conversely, Vygotskian notions have at their core the notion that “human nature and development has to do with people collaboratively transforming their world in view of their goals and purposes—a process through which people come to know themselves and their world as well ultimately come to be human” (Stetsenko, 2008, p. 474). In any case, the school is seen as a key site where this development work takes place, again reinforcing the place of the schools as part of urbanism. Following along this logic of development is,
as I will seek to demonstrate in the data chapters, the regime of accountability in urban education.

The other distinct but related form of development at play here refers to structures and processes that shape place, social structure, and social relationships. Cindi Katz (2004) suggests that:

development is the iterative influx of capital moving across space and time, making and unmaking particular places; structuring and restructuring social relations of production and reproduction; and being met, engaged and countered by social actors whose own histories and geographies enable and call forth broad and differentiated material social practices. (p. ix)

Capitalist notions of development are global and historical, circulating on multiple scales and over time. Capitalist development discursively and materially shapes the frameworks of policies and institutional practices, on down to individual humans. Capitalist development is also racialized as the terms of the subject, community, land, and nation are driven by the desire to protect a white supremacist-patriarchal-colonial-capitalist system and thus becomes code for strategies for controlling, containing, exploiting, and disposing of racio-economically subjugated groups. Walter Rodney noted this astutely when he observed that transnational development in the
late 1960s and early 1970s was a veiling for the devastating effects of global capital’s control of the darker nations of Africa.

The machinations of racial capitalist development are also evident, in varying ways, for Latino countries. For Puerto Rico, for example, colonial capitalism was the definitive force in remaking the island nation and motivating the mass migrations to the United States, New York specifically, in the 20th century. An initial irony of this process is that the Puerto Rican diaspora involved their resettlement on already colonized land. Their location within what Kim (1999) described as the racial field was already partially constituted by their contradictory position with the larger project of colonialism.

Racialized deficit discourses of Puerto Ricans legitimized the colonial project taking place on the island and were modified and used on Puerto Ricans as they settled or were situated into New York City. Framed as other (than white) and foreign (though they were U.S. citizens) on the racial field, Puerto Rican experiences were tied to material inequities like curved job opportunities, limited housing, and lack of social services. This was particularly evident in education, where starting in the 1950s with the Puerto Rican Study (Morrison, 1958) attention was paid to the struggles of Puerto Rican youth in the public school system. This show of attention to Puerto
Rican youths’ needs might be described as a characteristic practice of racial liberalism (Melamed, 2011) that focused on still-limited cultural understandings of Puerto Ricans that evaded the recognition of material and institutional inequity.

More to the point, racial capitalist development for Puerto Ricans in the United States has involved two waves of spatial remaking that reflect settler colonial notions of development. First were the massive urban renewal projects that involved the demolition of tenement housing and the building of public housing, followed by the period of abandonment and then gentrification that continues today. Whereas the first of the two waves involved mass displacements via relocation, the settler colonialism of the current era involves the introduction of capital and pioneers who are resettling land and space abandoned by the state. The tragic irony for Puerto Ricans, then, is that they are experiencing multiple cycles of colonialism, perpetuating a permanent colonial condition in the name of development.

Conflicting notions of development are a point I will return to in the chapter focused on the East Harlem Bilingual Head Start. What is important to note here is that these processes reproduce structural racism and undergird the advancement of capital use development in ways that veil and legitimize state control and state violence, all the while
placing on the oppressed the responsibility of getting out from under the rug of oppression.

**Resistance and survivance**

Cindi Katz (2004), drawing on Neil Smith, uses the term “revanchism” to describe the mean and vengeful material social practices of late-20th-century capitalism that have dramatically remade social relations and place. The state-driven remaking of neighborhoods and schools during this period of racial capitalism have produced daunting if not impossible conditions for individuals, families, schools, and communities to navigate.

Navigation of these conditions is often plunged into a binary of resistance or complicity. Katz (2004) complicates resistance, recasting individual and collective agency under three categories: resilience, reworking, and resistance. Resilience for Katz refers to day-to-day small acts that individuals and institutions make in order to get by. Reworking refers to “practices that alter the conditions of people’s existence to enable more workable lives and create more viable terrains of practice” (p. 247). Resistance, to Katz, takes up the practices we find in reworking but with an oppositional consciousness driving this set of practices.

I use Katz’s three categories as a way to describe the varied strategies East Harlem individuals and institutions use as they navigate racialized neoliberal urbanism, and I will do
so in the case study chapters that follow. But I also argue for a reintegration of the three categories under what indigenous scholar Gerald Vizenor (2008) described as survivance. Vizenor states:

Native survivance is an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction, however pertinent. Survivance is greater than the right of a survivable name. Survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, detractions, obtrusions, the unbearable sentiments of tragedy, and the legacy of victimry. Survivance is the heritable right of succession or reversion of an estate and, in the course of international declarations of human rights, is a narrative estate of native survivance. (Vizenor, 2008, p. Chapter 1, para 2)

Survivance is an articulation of individual and collective work that is about neither survival nor transformative justice alone but is in fact both. Reflecting on Vizenor’s idea, what does survivance look like within East Harlem at this racial capitalist moment? This question of survivance operates in conjunction with our question concerning dominance. As such, notions of survivance become a springboard for contemplating the continuation of this participatory project.
In sum, materially and culturally vulnerable neighborhoods like El Barrio are convergence points for a constellation of strategies of racial neoliberal urbanism. In this study we are seeking to document how El Barrio and its schools experience life at the crossroads of crumbling affordable housing, disinvestment, gentrification, cultural rebranding, and exploitations of the dispossessed. Furthermore, how do communities navigate or resist these social conditions? In Chapter 4 I will look at urbanism in El Barrio and New York City over time from the 1960s. In Chapters Five to Eight I then document processes of dismemberment, dominance and survivance through different case studies.
CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL SNAPSHOTs OF NYC AND EAST HARLEM

New York City lives two distinct but interrelated lives. One is an economic life that is driven by the global financial market. For over a century New York has been deeply connected to both the world and national financial markets, and as such shifts in the global financial market symbolically and materially affects the city more acutely than the rest of the U.S. Over time the way that the city relates to broader changes in the political economy is what help to mark New York as a world, or global, city. The other life that the city leads is the local socio-political life that composes the city. Questions of labor, civil rights, housing, and social services like schools are sites of contestation that are always already entangled with both New York’s global narrative, and state and city level politics.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide historical context to what takes places during the Bloomberg era. Applying a cultural political economic lens, I am contextualizing my analysis of urbanism during the Bloomberg era in “transformations, shifts, and contradictions,” (Wasko et al., 2014) that have unfolded, primarily focusing on the era between the 1950s to the 1970s. This is not an exhaustive history, but rather a series of snapshots that are anchored around the
economic crisis that the city would face in the mid-1970s. I touch on different, but always entangled, dimensions of urban change: the city’s economy, demographic change, labor, housing, policing and education. I end the chapter by highlighting some relevant moments that occurred in the years and decades after the economic crisis. I draw on census data, archival materials, and secondary source readings to discuss each of these dimensions. Archival materials were gathered by different members of the research collaborative and, along with some of the secondary sources, were part of collaborative discussions over the course of the first phase of the project.

A number of tensions define New York, including the tension between city’s global capitalist interests and local political and economic issues, and the adaptive persistence of structural racism as the city became increasingly Black and Brown. After the economic crisis of 1975, this merchant city was transformed into a neoliberal, global city (Sassen, 1991). As tensions escalated it was evident that these were racialized struggles over space (land), wealth, and political power. As a result, life for poor people and people of Color operated as a “changing same” where policies and social arrangements would change but people’s vulnerability to further structural oppressions stayed the same.
Still, these circumstances did not mean that Latinos, other people of Color, unions, and white allies, did not engage in a variety of cultural and political survivance strategies. On the contrary, this 40-year period is a peak moment in a variety of Civil Rights movements for Latinos, Blacks, Asians, Women, and LGBTQ, among other minoritized groups, and education is a pivotal arena in which these struggles took place. When possible I point to some of these survivance strategies here, but I admit that I am not able to discuss survivance strategies as fully as I had intended because my priority was on mapping dominance. This is a period where crumbling capitalism converged with movements of power from below. Crises function as opportunity, and in this case this became this crisis would become an opportunity for the logic of the capitalist elite and white supremacy to ascend. No matter where one stands with respect to what comes to pass, much can be learned from those struggles.

Prior to the Economic Crisis

The crisis is at the center of the city’s transformation from a transnational, manufacturing-based, economy, to a “global city” based on finance, real estate, and expansive wealth disparities. Even though the city, and the world, was heading into “the deepest economic downturn since the Great Depression” (Moody, 2007, p. 9) in the mid-1970s, New York was moving from being a transnational hub of industry to a
finance-focused global city. Here I want to highlight some of the economic conditions that the city and the city’s Latino population navigated as it headed into the crisis.

The 1960s was a period that moved from stagnation to rapid growth. Post-War New York’s peacetime economy was a production-focused transnational city that depended on a powerful port, small manufacturing, and strong union density. By the early 1960s some manufacturing companies had either left for more affordable, larger production spaces, or had been pushed out in the midst of urban renewal (Freeman, 2001). The waterfront had also become outmoded and problems with corruption marked the decline of the docks.

These trends were welcomed by a business elite that was interested in pushing industrialism out of the city center and replacing it with office buildings and housing that would be welcoming to the establishment of corporate headquarters and producer service industries like advertising and telecommunications. By the mid-1960s, Freeman (2001) notes, “136 of the nation’s 500 largest goods-producing corporations had their headquarters in the city. So did dozens of major financial and communications firms” (p. 167). This growth, along with growth in city government, the nonprofit sector, and medical services, offset the decline in manufacturing and
undergirded the significant economic growth of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The rise of producer services and finance propelled a major boom in office building-focused real estate: “Between 1967 and 1973, 66.7 million square feet of office space were built in Manhattan, two-thirds of it from 1970 through 1972” (Moody, 2007 p. 13). The office buildings became a primary form of fixed capital that was needed to facilitate production in a service-production economy. Key dangers in depending on office buildings as fixed capital were the vulnerability created by office vacancies during recessions and the tax-exempt status of much of this real estate explosion (The World Trade Center being a key example). In these circumstances, city revenues struggle to grow proportionally with the cost of land and office space rents.

As Moody (2007) suggests, “in little more than a decade and a half the economy of New York was transformed from a diverse production site in which 45 percent of its workers made or moved tangible goods and structures to one in which half that proportion did so” (Moody, 2007, p. 14). While the economy grew significantly this dramatic transformation also meant a greater vulnerability to shifts in the global market, as becomes evident during the crisis of the mid-1970s. But before discussing the crisis I turn my attention to situating
Latinos within the city’s cultural political economy prior to the crisis.

**Puerto Ricans/Latinos in New York City**

New York City Latinos are a multinational, multiracial, multi-classed, ethnic group that have been a part of New York City’s story since the city was established (Remeseira, 2010). Though diverse in places of origin, since the start of the 20th century the New York City’s Latino population has been predominantly Caribbean, and primarily Puerto Rican. In 1940 there were 134,252 Latinos with 61,463 of that number being Puerto Ricans (45.8 percent of the total). By 1960 there were 757,231 Latinos with Puerto Ricans making up nearly 81 percent of that population with 612,574 people (Haslip-Viera, 2010) (See Table 3.1). As such I will focus on Puerto Rican experiences in this chapter.

Having become a territory of the United States in 1898, the economic and political relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States has been fraught with challenges for Puerto Ricans both on the island and the colonial mainland. By the 1940s, Puerto Rico’s primary economic engines (sugar, tobacco, and needle industries) were already under the control of the U.S. business elite (Lee, 2014), and the island faced major economic recessions. Within these circumstances an economic recovery program, called “Operation Bootstrap,” was
instituted. The program relied on strict labor repression, emigration and reduced fertility, and “ultimately privileged the interests of U.S. corporations and burdened Puerto Rican workers with the responsibility of bearing the island’s troubles” (Lee, 2014, p. 37).

The island became increasingly dependent on the U.S and the opportunity to have a self-sustaining economy declined, spurring a dramatic rise of migration to
*Figures include the total number of Puerto Ricans and total “foreign-born” and “native of foreign or mixed parentage" for other nationalities in the 1960 census; total number of Cubans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and total number of “foreign-born” and “native of foreign or mixed parentage” for other nationalities in the 1970 census; total number of Cubans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and total number of “foreign-born” only for other nationalities in the 1980 census; total number of persons of “Hispanic origin” by nationality for other groups in the 1990 census.
the mainland. Neighborhoods that had already had a Latino community established during the 1920s and 1930s, like East Harlem, the Lower East Side, the Brooklyn Navy Yard and Williamsburg, expanded significantly between the 1940s and 1960s. East Harlem had a population of 210,000 people in the early 1950 with 63,000 Puerto Rican residents (Zipp, 2010).

The Puerto Rican community is the most prominent story here, but the growth of other Latino groups during the second half of the twentieth century is critical to understanding Latinos and Latinidad in New York. As Table 3.1 indicates, between 1960 and 1970 the entire Latino population grows from around three quarters of a million people to 1.2 million people. The percentage of the Latino population that was Puerto Rican dropped from 80 percent to 50 percent by 1990. The growth can be attributed to the large influx of Latino immigrants from all parts of Latin America, and specifically from the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico.

Looking beyond numbers, the growth of the Puerto Rican, and Latino, communities had cultural and political impact on New York City. As more Puerto Ricans arrived the notion that the city had a "Puerto Rican problem" became a popular racist, classist, discourse that emerged within the media and policy.
Claims of having of ‘overpopulation,’ having poor hygiene, being economically dependent, a racial other, incapable of creating leadership within its own community, and having very limited educational potential, were just some of the pathologies that were said to characterize Puerto Ricans (Lee, 2014; Thomas, 2010). Mainstream media described Puerto Ricans as New York’s “Okies” during the mid century (Lee, 2014), and racist descriptors for Puerto Ricans, like “spic” and welfare dependent, become the dominant narrative of the community. These deficit perspectives of Puerto Ricans were, as Lee (2014) argues, emblematic of the “culture of poverty” construct that New Yorkers and U.S. policy makers used to frame racially and ethnically minoritized groups during the middle of the twentieth century. The “culture of poverty” construct became a systematic framework and rationale that was used to rationalize cultural practices and social conditions as a product of impoverished, low level, cultural ways of being. While the cultural dimensions of this construct were discriminatory, it was the materiality of the framework that is particularly egregious as rationales for policies, programs and funding were laced with this pejorative framework.

Moreover, as the Latino population changed in the latter half of the century, elements of these deficit cultural framings were also expanded to include newer arrivals, and
Puerto Ricans were categorized as part of an urban underclass. Questions about legality and immigration, employment and education became a significant part of the conversation, even for Puerto Ricans who were U.S. citizens.

The cultural framing of Puerto Ricans and Latinos must be understood within the context of U.S. political liberalism and flawed democratic governance structures. Being U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans have had a relationship to the U.S. that is distinct from other Latino groups. Thomas (2010) traces the evolving political identity of Puerto Ricans in twentieth-century New York, and demonstrates how Puerto Ricans wrestled with questions over “citizenship,” “sovereignty,” “racial identity” and “redistributive justice” as political leaders sought to move the community forward.

At the same time politically mainstream leaders involved themselves more directly with the political apparatus of the U.S. and New York. While U.S. citizenship provided Puerto Ricans with opportunities for electoral politics, and historical evidence clearly demonstrates the active politically-informed efforts within the community, Puerto Rican’s raced and classed positioning contributed to the framing of Puerto Ricans as having weak “associational life” and a lack of “creative leadership” (Thomas, 2010, p. 252). Here then is an example of deficit framing within the
political sphere that is central to how Puerto Ricans were, and are, continually denied access to resources and levers of political power.

Deficit-oriented discourses are not static, as a range of moving pieces, including legal and political change on the island, the city’s political economy, and the changing characteristics of liberal antiracism, and the counter-efforts of Puerto Ricans, would affect how Puerto Ricans were framed over the course of the twentieth century (Thomas, 2010). In the fifties, for example, some media and government institutions made some moves away from deficit framings of Puerto Ricans, by focusing on adapting services to meet their needs, as was evident in recommended changes to educational services for Puerto Ricans that came from the Board of Education’s (BOE), Puerto Rican Study (A. De Jesus & Pérez, 2009; Thomas, 2010).

Changes in discourse do not necessarily translate into social and economic justice. The recommendations from the Puerto Rican Study, for example, were not heeded by the BOE, perpetuating the poor quality education Puerto Rican children were receiving in the school system (A. De Jesus & Pérez, 2009). Institutional inaction was a tool used in the oppression of Puerto Rican and Latino communities, and fueled
Latino’s dissatisfaction with the educational system and the city’s services overall.

What I want to stress here is the entangled nature of racial, economic, and political processes. Over time, these entanglements had, and continue to have, a strong impact on the formation of Puerto Rican and Latino barrios in the city. I have also begun to point to Puerto Rican and Latino acts of survivance in response to the forces of oppression. Through political organizing and cultural expression, Puerto Ricans and Latinos have taken action to counter dominance. I further elaborate on this point by turning my attention to the areas of labor, housing, policing, political organizing and education prior to the economic crisis of the mid-1970s.

**Puerto Rican/Latino labor & poverty**

The deficit framing of Puerto Ricans as inferior, foreign, and submissive would be used to legitimize and sustain a workforce that was stratified along race, class, gender, and socio-linguistic difference (Haslip-Viera, 2010; “Puerto Ricans bring schooling problem,” 1947). Most of the Puerto Rican emigrants of the mid-twentieth century were “impoverished, unemployed, or under-employed persons from rural and urban areas of the island, with minimal education and few skills” (Haslip-Viera, 2010, p. 43). The large migration of Puerto Ricans, along with the migration of U.S.
Blacks, created a plentiful source of cheap labor that replaced the exodus of white workers to the suburbs.

Many Puerto Ricans were funneled into the city’s already declining manufacturing sector, and the garment industry was of particular importance. In 1950 over 57 percent of Puerto Ricans in New York worked in manufacturing while only 6 percent of Blacks (non-Latino) were in these industries (Lee, 2014). Puerto Rican and other Latina women would often work as domestics, needle workers, and garment workers. Men would work as laundry workers, laborers and construction workers, janitors, and handymen (Padilla, 1947). Employment opportunities were thus limited to mostly low-paying fields. Two ways that this narrow labor market affected Puerto Ricans are the impending decline of this job sector, and the fraught relationship Puerto Ricans had with unions and union leadership.

As I have previously discussed, New York City transitioned from a manufacturing-focused transnational city to a global city based on finance and a large service sector. This transition was particularly painful for Puerto Ricans when manufacturing left the city in the fifties and sixties. In 1950, 57 percent of Puerto Rican New Yorkers were in manufacturing, and many of them were working in garment making (Lee, 2014).
Deindustrialization meant a decline in stable jobs that were offered by the port and manufacturing sectors, an increase in unstable low wage/service sector jobs, unemployment and an increasing dependence on government aid. In this increasingly stratified labor situation, Puerto Ricans were being pushed further to the economic bottom. The situation in East Harlem in the late 1960s and early 1970s is illustrative of what was happening.

In 1969 median income figures for Puerto Ricans across the city was $5,576.00, while Whites were at $11,097 and Blacks were at $7,150 (Aguirre, 1974). In East Harlem, specifically, average family income (amongst all racial/ethnic groups) was at $5,895, whereas the average family income south of E. 96th street (which had become an imagined dividing line between East Harlem and the Upper East Side) was $17,490 (Aguirre, 1974). In East Harlem 27.5 percent of families had incomes below the poverty line (11.5 percent for the rest of New York City), and 35.4 percent of East Harlem Puerto Ricans had incomes below the poverty line (Aguirre, 1974). What this demonstrates is that even though the 1960s was a period of tremendous economic growth and change, the effects of those changes were not felt the same way by Whites and wealthier classes, as compared to people of Color, and the working class.
In short, the fifteen year period prior to the crisis was a transition away from manufacturing that led to both economic growth and increased vulnerability to market changes. Puerto Rican and other vulnerable populations never just accepted these conditions, and instead devising and engaging in a range of politics.

**Housing in El Barrio**

Housing in New York and East Harlem was, and continues to be, a key dimension to the racio-economic landscape. East Harlem had very low quality housing stock (Aguirre, 1974; Cayo Sexton, 1965; Zipp, 2010). East Harlem was teeming with dilapidated tenements that had been built in the 1930s and that were densely populated. Health problems related to poor housing (i.e. lead paint, respiratory disorders, and tuberculosis) were chronic issues that families of East Harlem faced. With poor housing conditions, and a stratified workforce, the process of ghettoization was clear. East Harlem had already become a “civic and social wasteland” (Zipp, 2010).

These conditions would become the discursive rationale for the massive remaking of the neighborhood through the urban renewal work lead by Robert Moses. The Slum Clearance and Community Development and Redevelopment program, an urban renewal project, would dramatically reshape different parts of
the city between the 1950s and 1970s. The program was part of the Housing Act of 1949, which called for the “elimination of slums by using public capital to acquire, demolish, and clear blighted areas” (Tattenbaum, 1997, p. 225). Moreover, the program was part of an urban revitalization plan that promoted reinvestment from the private sector through subsidized incentives by granting eminent domain to local governments along with critical funding and tax incentives that covered two-thirds to three-quarters of the costs of land acquisition. While funds were allocated to both state and local governments, in New York State, the majority of federal dollars were allocated to the redevelopment of New York City where Robert Moses headed the Committee on Slum Clearance created by Mayor William O’Dwyer.

East Harlem went through a dramatic remaking, as Moses would proceed to demolish major swaths of tenement housing and replace it with thirteen low-income public and three middle-income housing developments. Discourses of modernity and efficiency would physically remake the landscape, though not

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2 According to Tattenbaum (1997), Renewal for the 1990s: An Analysis of New York City Redevelopment Programs in Light of Title I of the Housing Act of 1949 by 1957, $267 million was allocated to New York City while only $133 was allocated to other areas of New York State.
without resistance from residents and engaged social workers like Ellen Lurie of Union Settlement (Zipp, 2010). The demolition of the tenements would mean significant displacements of residents and a steep decline in the number of available housing units, and thus a transformation of the population. When tenement dwellers and local proprietors were temporarily displaced to build the new towers, residents would be relocated and new requirements regarding income and family structure would be tied to the new housing. This would mean that many of the displaced could not return to the neighborhood. Many of those residents who could not return were the lower middle-income residents who had made modest economic gains. As Zipp (2010) notes, by 1961, eight new housing projects in the neighborhood resulted in a net loss of 2,043 dwelling units. “In a pattern playing out all around East Harlem in areas where NYCHA projects were built, a mixed community of all ages with a small but a crucial middle class was being replaced by a collection of young and poor families” (Zipp, 2010 Chapter 7, sec 2, para 4).

In addition the design of the new housing did not include proprietary spaces and public space. Many of the spaces for interaction like bodegas, social clubs, cuchifritos (fried food restaurants) and music shops that had blossomed in a number of corridors in El Barrio were disappearing. By 1969
the Puerto Rican shopping mecca between 111th Street and 116th Street along Park Avenue, La Marqueta, and many other historical markers of Puerto Rican presence has been erased (Aponte-Parés, 1998). This was happening as traditional borders between blocks that belonged to different racial groups would be blurred by the public housing as the super block footprint of many of these multi-building complexes would mean closing off of streets and cutting across neighborhood lines. Blurred borders lead to increased tensions in a neighborhood that in some sense had not been understood as a ghetto during the mid-century because it was racially diverse. While the neighborhood remained on the lower rungs of the economic ladder, the density and opportunities in housing created a buffer. In the end, the decline in economic diversity tied to losses in public and private spaces for friendly communal interactions would reflect a ghettoization of East Harlem that came to a head with the city’s economic crisis of the mid-1970s.

Policing

In 1965 Cayo Sexton asserts that because East Harlem was more racially mixed (with Puerto Ricans, Blacks and Italians) than Central Harlem, there is generally a greater sense of safety in the neighborhood. She notes that while East Harlem was very quiet as the 1964 “police brutality” riots exploded in
Central Harlem a few blocks away, the people of the neighborhood still had very strong feelings about the police. A middle-aged Black interviewee tells Cayo-Sexton (1965),

> The police, they really is too brutal—with the kids, or even with colored people. I keep quiet, I got a family to support, so I got out of it. The killing of this kid\(^3\), it stirred up a lot of people: It stirred up me, it stirred up our leaders, it stirred up all Negroes. Do you know what I mean?...It’s not safe in Harlem now. You don’t know what the Police Department is going to do. They might shoot anyone. They’re afraid. Look at me, I’m afraid. Even if I see something going on wrong. I’m afraid to say because you can’t trust the Police Department (p. 110)

The interviewee’s commentary speaks to the contentious relationship between poor, communities of Color, and the police’s often-punitive approach to dealing with youth. It also raises questions about the differences in the police’s relationship to Blacks and Latinos, and the dynamics of more racially mixed neighborhoods and clearly segregated contexts. Cayo-Sexton argued that East Harlem was quiet during the 1964 riots because of its mixture of Puerto Ricans, Blacks and

\(^3\) A 15-year-old Black young person in mid-Manhattan that was shot by police. This incident ignited the 1964 police brutality riots.
Italians compared to Central Harlem’s homogenously Black. Because people lived by side by side, Cayo Sexton argued there was a better sense of community. More as East Harlem residents have noted through oral histories, in the past the police often walked their beats and were familiar with the residents. In this way the police were more approachable (Bell, 2012).

While not negating that El Barrio was more racially mixed, this argument obfuscates perceptions and realities of juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, and related policing. El Barrio was described as a place of high levels of juvenile delinquency throughout the century. In the 1950s local gangs were key organizations in the El Barrio. There were many gangs that functioned as social clubs, but there were some gangs involved in criminal activity and this was the larger, public, narrative of gangs. Whether they were committing crimes or not, gangs functioned as a way for the people in the community to govern themselves. As Young Lord Pablo “Yoruba” Guzman notes “gang days, we owned the block, and nobody could tell us what to do with the street” (Young Lords Party & Abramson, 2011, p. 68). And while the police were seen as more approachable, they still surveilled and harassed gangs and youth. The strengths of gangs would wane at the start of the 1960s with police harassment, and the rapid circulation of drugs.
Heroin and other drugs began to circulate through the neighborhood from as far back as the late 1940s (Bell, 2012). “Dope came in,” Guzman (2011) notes, “and messed everything up, messed our minds up and just broke our backs” (p. 69). Drug addiction was treated as a crime by city and state government as attempts at legislation to support drug addicts Harlem and East Harlem failed twice at the state level (Bell, 2012). As a result drug users were another section of the community that was surveilled and harassed by police. Gangs and drugs suggest that the relationship between the community and the police was more combative than Cayo Sexton suggested. And these tensions would escalate in the summer of 1967.

In July of 1967, Renaldo Rodriguez was shot by two off-duty police officers after Rodriguez had wounded another individual, and he had entered into a confrontation with the two officers. Happening in the wake of riots in Detroit, “thousands of Puerto Rican youth swept through the barrio in fierce antipolice demonstrations that left two people dead and many injured” (Gandy, 2002, p. 732). In addition to demonstrations, there were also several days of looting by several hundreds of individuals. Mayor John Lindsay would describe it as a disturbance, while others would call it a riot. Certainly Cayo Sexton could not have necessarily predicted this would occur, but what transpired illustrates
how confrontational police-community relationship were, and contradicts depictions of relative harmony and Puerto Rican docility in El Barrio. It was in these conditions that political organizations, like the Young Lords, and government-supported antipoverty programs, would emerge as major vehicles for political organizing.

**Political organizing**

Thomas (2010) and others (see Haslip-Viera, Falcon, Rodriguez, Rodriguez, & Pantoja, 2004; Lee, 2014; Whalen & Vázquez-Hernández, 2005) have shown that Puerto Ricans were not of one political mind. Socialist and other Leftist political groups, for example, have played an influential role since the migrations to the mainland in the 1920s, and in particular in struggles around labor. These efforts would also be central to the vision and actions of organizations, like the Young Lords, in the sixties and seventies.

While the unionized working class of New York grew to prominence during the post-War era, Puerto Ricans, Latinos, and people of Color, in general, found themselves marginalized by management and union leadership, as they had for much of the twentieth century. Puerto Rican and Latina women, in particular, had to navigate their precarious positions within racist and sexist internal union politics. One example of this is the struggles of Latina workers in the garment worker
union. Over decades Black and Latina women filed complaints of discrimination based on both their gender and racial/ethnic identities (Lee, 2014), with bosses referring to Puerto Ricans as “immoral and lewd” according to one Puerto Rican, woman, laborer (Lee, 2014, p. 66). At the same time Puerto Rican women face the patriarchal structure of labor leadership, as women were seen as too “backward” and “distrustful of people, that they were not capable of being effective labor leaders. These internal struggles were reflective of the lost opportunity to build coalitions between Black and Latino/a women and women in the 1960s.

And yet, as Lee (2014) suggests, participation in labor struggles taught Puerto Ricans a great deal about bottom-up organizing that they would take into other spaces where they could more freely exercise their political leadership skills. Puerto Rican’s remained engaged in political organizing, even as they were continually marginalized from the labor and electoral politics (See Delgado, 2005; Lee, 2014; Thomas, 2010). While the trajectories and political visions of these organizations varied, the 1960s saw a great deal of collaboration around a call for “community control” as part of a path to liberation on the mainland and the island.

Organizing in the 1960s and 1970s took up many configurations and much of it revolved around Leftist-
nationalist politics or more conventional Democratic Party efforts. This included Black-led political organizing by groups like SNCC and CORE were part of a Black Power movement, while others like Bayard Rustin would advocate for a more measured but holistic approach to racial and economic justice, and still others would stand behind the pre-existing democratic machine as a way to enter electoral politics. Puerto Rican-led organizing would emerge from under the powerful, important, though problematic, influence of the Office of Migration of the Department of Labor of Puerto Rico. The Office of Migration served as a way to come together and to articulate an agenda centered on aiding Puerto Rican survival in a context described as hostile and alien to Puerto Ricans. It was not until the later 1960s that Puerto Ricans, like their Black Power brethren would further expand their role in democratic machine politics, or evolve into assertive, politically critical, anti-colonial organizations like the Young Lords, the Puerto Rican Socialist Party and the Puerto Rican Student Union (Falcon, 1988; Haslip-Viera et al., 2004; Torres, 1998).

These activist organizations also emerged from within, and in opposition to, state-run antipoverty programs. A key example was the city council’s Massive Economic Neighborhood Development (MEND) organization, which would coordinate
antipoverty programming in El Barrio (Lee, 2014). Focused on hiring people from the community to lead “subcommunities” or sections of East Harlem, MEND focused on teaching advocacy strategies, like rent strikes. MEND also encouraged coloration between Puerto Rican and Black leadership that was tremendously important within the divided relationships between these two marginalized communities. Organizations like MEND were crucial in mobilizing for the March on Washington as well as the New York City school boycott in 1964, and were symbolic of the liberal framework of nonviolence and interracial organizing of that time period. As social movements changed in the late 1960s, groups like the Young Lords began to move away from this liberal framework.

Concerns were raised about the way antipoverty programs subdued political resistance by providing superficial forms of democracy and professionalizing community activists. Quoting Yoruba Guzman (2011) again, “they [the city]” brought [anti-poverty] in full-force and they bought out a lot of the young cats who were leading the rebellions. A lot of dudes who were throwing bricks one day found themselves directors of anti-poverty programs the next” (p. 68). Guzman captures a counternarrative of antipoverty programs as a state strategy for controlling and defining what were acceptable forms of advocacy, rather than resistance or survivance. One of the
effects of this strategy was the “picking off” potential leadership, as offers of income and advocacy skills was very appealing to people who were living in poverty. Losing leadership, made people suspicious of antipoverty programs that were also seen as propagating a liberal framework for politics that had reached its limits.

Nationally, organizations like SNCC had begun to move away from integration and dependence on state support. Instead efforts were turned toward community control and self-determination. In East Harlem, former MEND member Ted Velez, for example began critiquing MEND and working outside of its structure. In education, as I will go into later, the call was for community control of schools. And the Young Lords solidarity work with Black Power movements in the City University of New York, and then their occupation of the First Spanish Methodist Church in El Barrio. Altogether, these movements were indicative of the ideological and political shift made by some in the late 1960s and early 1970s that made calls that those in the liberal establishment found too far outside of what should be done.

Another dimension of the economic landscape to note here is the tenuous relationship between people of Color and municipal unions, and specifically the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). The struggle over community control of schools
during the 1960s, that would climax in the teacher strikes that were ignited by the dismissal, or transferring, of seven white teachers in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville experimental school district, signified the decline of the liberal coalition of unions, Jews and people of Color (Blacks, Asians and Latinos). The UFT was seen by some communities of Color as one of the most racist organizations of the period, being situated as an increasingly powerful union that was an obstacle to community of Color-led politics. This powerful Left-leaning bloc that had existed during the post-war era, was turned on its head during the late 20th century. The unraveling of this coalition was evident in the fight for community control of the schools.

**Public education and community control**

Between the Brown decision in 1954 and the 450,000-student school boycott in February of 1964 the fight for racial equality in education was primarily focused on school integration. But in the years that followed, New York’s civil rights movement began to splinter, with many grassroots activists turning away from citywide organizing for integration and toward “neighborhood activism for Black Power” (Perlstein, 2004, p. 3) or community control (D. A. Goldberg & Griffey, 2010).

The splintering was, at least partially, a response to decades of state racial liberalism that protected a racist
social order. Emerging as an enormous bureaucracy with a student population of nearly one million, the Board of Education (BOE) struggled with managing a budget that had been expanding since the 1940s (New York Times, 1948) and providing high quality education for its growing number of students of Color. The school system articulated deficit perspectives of low income students and students of color, particularly Blacks and Puerto Ricans. As far back as the 1930s Puerto Rican students, for example, were defined as a problem population that were “adding greatly to the already tremendous problem of intellectually subnormal school retardates of alien parentage, whence are recruited most delinquents and criminals (Sacks, 1935 as quoted in Pedraza, 1997, p. 75). This racist, deficit, discourse was a powerful frame for the formation of policy, including policy around desegregation. This discourse also set the terms for how communities of color would view and engage the BOE.

In the years following Brown v Board of Ed, 1954, increased pressure was placed on the BOE to integrate the schools. The integration of schools was part of a grammar of racial liberalism that valued “equal opportunity, abstract equality, possessive individualism, and market liberties” (Melamed, p. 25). Despite the demands for integration, the BOE would take a muddled position of denial and incapacitation. As Board officials and the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. William Jansen,
stated in 1957, “[we] have insisted that segregation does not exist here, except as it may follow the housing pattern” (B. Fine, 1957). In this instance they denied that the schools were any more segregated than the city, absolving them of being responsible for systematically addressing this issue. By taking this position, the state made racialized, capitalist-produced, geo-spatial inequalities a normalized dimension of the social order. More, by naturalizing, or normalizing, segregation the state would protect segregated schooling by framing segregation as something beyond the control of education policy.

After continued pressure, the development of a city-wide integration plan became a BOE priority, and it included the proposed construction of several new integrated school buildings in “fringe areas” of neighborhoods where there was a greater likeliness of a mixture of children being around the school (Fine 1957). This strategy was the rationale behind the building of Intermediate School 201 (IS 201) in Harlem. But IS 201, like many of the other new schools that were built would fail to attract white students and the district would try to claim successful integration when a schools was 50 percent Black and 50 percent Puerto Rican. By 1962 the school system was still lagging in its ability to integrate the schools (Buder, 1962), which was met with a massive school boycott by students demanding integrated, high quality, schools by 1964.
As others have demonstrated (see Biondi, 2003; Lee, 2014; Perlstein, 2004; Podair, 2002, etc) the 1964 boycott would be a high point in the move supporting integration in New York City. One of the limits of integration was premised on a symbolic equality gained from inclusion, which bracketed the possibilities of material equality through the redistribution of political power and resources. Frustrated by the “slow pace” of programs like the War on Poverty and resistance to integrating schools across the country (not just the South), a broad and varied collection of people of color-lead groups began to splinter off from the integration movement and turned their attention to community control. The call for community control in schools, as well as other arenas like labor (Goldberg & Griffey, 2010), and reproduction rights (Nelson, 2001), between the 1960s and 1970s was a critical, evolving shift in the antiracist materialism of Civil Rights/People of Color Power movements throughout the 1960s.

The people of Color-led movements of the time were by no means singular in vision, but community control came to be a leading messages. For Puerto Ricans/Latinos, Black, and Asian American, group advocates control over education was seen as pivotal terrain for growing power and passing on this power to future generations. As Lee (2014) notes, “schools were the closest social institutions that could be modeled by direct
action, partially because school leaders had to remain accountable to the widely held belief that schools were the greatest equalizers of American Society” (p. 13). In this case community control of schools served as a site for direct action where the primary goal was achieving “maximum feasible participation’ of the poor on their own terms...” and “empowerment of their own local communities rather than racial integration” (Lee 2014, p. 13). It is thus this form of materialist antiracism that would come up against the forms of antiracism used and circulated by the state.

The demand for community control of schools in the 1960s was part of a larger constellation of the Civil Rights/People of Color Power movements’ demands for freedom and self-determination. For Puerto Ricans/Latinos, and Black and Asian American group advocates, control over education was seen as pivotal terrain for growing power and passing on this power to future generations. Increasing power, and specifically political power, is often presumed to open up spaces for navigating and transforming oppressive social conditions. The social movements of the 1960s were vehicles for making demands on the state for racial and economic justice.

In the move from community control to decentralization, a key vulnerability these movements faced was anticipating, or responding to, the array of statecraft strategies that occur
as the practices and dominant ideologies of capital are adapted in order to resolve its own crises. The institutionalization of social movements and economic crisis would converge and buttress a deeply racialized, deficit-oriented formation of Blacks and Puerto Ricans as a permanent underclass that was becoming the face of a failing school system and "inner city" neighborhoods. From almost the very start of the decentralization era, the school system and its fledgling community school districts were caught in a realignment of statecraft that focused on austerity measures and an attack and retreat on racial justice.

There are a number of ways to think through the community control movement, but here I focus on governance-centered struggles and community-rooted education initiatives in New York City and specifically East Harlem. By design the decentralization model was a key strategy for curbing "power from below" by dictating the nature of governance and public engagement around education. As schools and neighborhoods would increasingly become racially and economically segregated, social services and infrastructure continued to be structurally adjusted, and finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE) sectors were growing exponentially. The troubling cultural political economic conditions that surrounded and circulated through the schools would be the terrain through
which education and community advocates would act. I argue that having a decentralized education system coupled to the racially and economically divided conditions of the city made systematic change and cross-neighborhood organizing nearly impossible. Local school board politics were focused on building power at the expense of developing high quality schools within districts and across the city. With limited options, one of the few viable ways to enact educational change was having a local leader who was savvy enough to speak across social and political boundaries, and to creatively bend budgets as the city continued to head into economic crisis. This kind of leadership emerged in East Harlem when Anthony Alvarado became local superintendent, as I will discuss later in this chapter.

The Crisis and its Aftermath

In 1974 and 1975, the city went into a full-blown economic crisis following a mixture of expansive short term debt spending and a decades-long expansion of the expense budget. At the same time, President Nixon had cut back on federal aid and social spending, exacerbating the city’s deficit and forcing the city to borrow funds to pay for daily operations rather than rely on revenue or aid. Dealing with a deficit of $2 billion and a short-term debt of $5 billion the city was continually borrowing money on a day-to-day basis in
order to keep funding social services like the police, the fire department and schools. The debt service had grown by 350 percent between 1965 and 1975, and all of that money was going directly to the banks. Moody (2007) also reminds that the city’s costs were also being driven by the expansion of the “contract, supplies and equipment” line on the expense budget, which refers to funding expenses other than salaries. The line been rapidly expanding between 1961 and 1975, and by 1975 this one line was at $1.3 billion, a growth of 621 percent from 1961. Moreover, in the decade prior to the crisis the welfare rolls had begun to expand, as more and more people were losing jobs to deindustrialization and then the crisis. The city was going bankrupt, highlighted by the New York Post headline from President Gerald Ford, telling New York City to “Drop Dead” (Van Riper, 1975).

There were different ways the city could have resolved its economic problem, including returning real estate assessment values to their proper levels, rather than following the 50 percent rate discount that real estate had petitioned state and local government to provide. Ultimately the city’s navigation of the crisis marked the business elites return to dominance in the political life of the city. Prior to the 1970s, the city was not based on having a strong autocratic mayor as the city operated like a complex political
interest group machine that included borough presidents, and state-level actors from Albany, competing for contracts and capital projects. These varied interests groups were embedded in the race-class formations and the city’s transformation enabled the elite to access more readily, and with limited resistance, their power in the policy making process. The shift in the city’s power dynamics shut the door on the social democratic polity that New York had become in the years following the World War II.

The economic crisis was “resolved” through the enactment of what would be described nowadays as a set of austerity measures that would blame the poor and working classes, and municipal unions, and force them to bear the burden of the reforms. In 1975 the Municipal Assistance Corporation (MAC) was created as a state agency that was backed by the city’s retail sales and stock transfer taxes that were collected by the state. MAC represented finance and major business services, tourism and retail appointees by then New York governor Carey and city Mayor, Abraham Beame. The Mayor and the state government focused on retiring the city’s short term debt and improving the city’s public credibility with lenders and the federal government, who were demanding that the city “fire thousands of city workers, force the municipal unions to defer already negotiated wage increases, institute a wage
freeze, and make massive cuts in spending to the city’s public university system (CUNY) and other city programs” (Spear, 2010, p. 354). In the summer of 1975 Mayor Beame would fire 40,000 city workers, including police, sanitation workers, teachers, and school crossing guards. These austerity measures were insufficient and the state legislature would then pass the Emergency Financial Control Act, which included the establishment of an Emergency Financial Control Board (EFCB) in September of 1975. The EFCB was composed of the mayor, governor, the state comptroller and three governor-appointees from the private sector (i.e. Business elite). The EFCB would ensure that exercising significant power over the city’s budget, finances, and labor relations would enforce the austerity measures. The EFCB and MAC were designed to operate during the crisis, but both institutions would continue to operate through 2008. EFCB and MAC symbolized the reinvigorated place of the business elite and the reworking of capital to manage the current set of contradictions and crises that it had a major hand in creating.

In order to legitimize these austerity measures as necessary, though painful, the elite would place the blame on the poor, people of Color, and the municipal unions that had just began to gain power in the 1960s. The decades long period of deindustrialization pushed more and more working people
across racial/ethnic lines to either leave the city or move into the city’s welfare rolls. Despite the fact that working people of Color often faced discrimination in the industrial sector, there were still significant areas where entry was possible for both Puerto Rican men and women. By 1970, the industrial sector made up 40 percent of the Puerto Rican workforce, and thus the deindustrialization that began in the late 1960s would have a tremendous impact on employment for all New Yorkers, and especially Puerto Ricans. Unemployment rates would move from 5.28 percent in 1970 to 11.54 percent (for males) and from 6.42 percent to 12.24 percent (for females) between 1970 and 1980.

Poverty rates would explode for all New Yorkers, with 14.48 percent of all New Yorkers living in poverty in 1970 and would rise to 18.34 percent by 1980. For Puerto Ricans, the situation was even worse as poverty rates would increase from an already large 32.92 percent in 1970 to 42.04 percent by 1980. Overall, welfare rolls would dramatically expand, just as the city was beginning to go through its neoliberal transformation. While the poor, and poor people of Color, were clearly experiencing the pains of economic crisis, the increasing dependence on welfare was framed as a weighing down the city’s financial stability. Blacks and Puerto Ricans became “native minorities” (different from the post-1965 Third
World immigrant wave entering the city) who were seen as an increasingly permanent underclass that suffered from its own self-defeating victimology (Falcon, 2004 p. 90).

Given these circumstances, the power elite-driven governing bodies decided to cut municipal pensions and social services. Municipal worker pensions were also framed as a major problem and a key resource to shape the city’s ability to navigate the crisis. The growing power of the public sector unions and their ‘rapidly growing’ pensions were seen as a drain on the city’s coffers. The city realized it could borrow from the pensions in order to stabilize the city’s economic situation. Lead by DC 37 executive director, Victor Gotbaum, the municipal unions would take a survival approach to navigating the institutionalization of these austerity measures.

In order to avoid being completely shut out from the emerging regime, the municipal unions would use their pensions as a way to be seen as team players and thus maintain their institutional power. The UFT and its leader, Al Shanker, would be the last municipal union to agree with the approach. This approach would have a profound effect on the way both public and private sector unions would engage in labor struggles in the decades that followed. It is important to recognize here
is that labor was being blamed for the crisis and was forced to help bail out the city.

Just like pensions, social services and welfare programming were seen as places to cut cost. Between 1974 and 1976 the Board of Education, for example, had to cut the teaching force down by 25 percent, with the number of young Black and Latino teachers declining from 11 to 3 percent (Freeman, 2001). These austerity measures were seen across city services including higher education, health, and housing, making them all “second-rate entities” (Freeman, 2001, p. 273) that those who could afford to would avoid.

These austerity measures were in operation as the relationship between municipal unions and people of color-led movements was becoming deeply fragmented as a result of the struggles over education and inclusion in the labor system during the 1960s. The ability to rally collectively was, for all intents and purposes, impossible in the 1970s and the decades that followed. The teachers union, amongst the municipal unions, continued to follow a business unionist approach to their work that carried along with it a liberal antiracism that focused on economic and cultural inclusivity over demands at redistribution. The union, under the leadership of Albert Shanker and then Sandra Feldman, was suspicious of racial/ethnic-centered politics, arguing that
this approach spurred racial animosity rather than unity (Kahlenberg, 2007). Politically, people of color-led social movements had diminished or been integrated into the professional nonprofit operations. Moreover, changes to the organization and function of electoral processes meant the undermining of Puerto Rican and Latino political participation. The Democratic Party often ignored or undervalued Latino voices and third party politics were also an ineffective path (See Cruz, 2004). This created a disempowered posture for Latino politics through out the second half of the twentieth century. As a result the political conditions were ideal for the emerging neoliberal cultural and economic regime that had begun to take power during the crisis.

**Latinos after the crisis**

The growth and change in the Latino population had begun in the mid 1960s and would continue to the end of the twentieth century. Fleeing political and economic turmoil at home, and the city’s ongoing search for cheaper labor, Latinos saw New York as a viable place to move. The Latino population increased 135.5 percent from 757,231 in 1960 to 1,783,511 in 1990, and non-Puerto Ricans accounted for a substantial portion of this increase” (Haslip-Viera, 2010, p. 46). Haslip-Viera (2010) argues that the wave of Latino immigrants that came in this
period were more middle class, urban and better educated than the Puerto Rican immigrants that came mid-century, but it would be a major oversight to not recognize diversity of experiences within and across Latino groups. Argentineans and Uruguays fit this more middle class image, while Dominicans, Hondruans and Mexicans were much more working class and both urban and rural. Divisions based on racial/ethnic and immigrant status within Latino groups translated into various forms of racial discrimination that also had an impact on labor, housing, policing and education, as I will discuss later.

It is also important to recognize the variety of ways that Latinos have made a cultural and social impact on El Barrio and New York. The political movements and social advocacy of the 1960s and 1970s lead to the establishment of scholarly and cultural institutions like El Centro de estudios puertoriqueños (Center for Puerto Rican Studies) at the City University of New York, the Mexican Cultural Institute, and the Caribbean Cross Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute (CCADI) among others. Each of these institutions have been engaged in not only preserving and supporting Latino cultural heritage, they have also been involved in political and educational advocacy and community development. Latinos also fueled in artistic and literary movements, including the Nuyorican poetry movement and the creation of Hip Hop music, dancing, and graffiti art.
Interwoven into all of these cultural and political movements is language. Zentella (2010) argues that given this diversity the greatest unifying force in Latino New York during the 1980s and 1990s was bilingualism. Zentella notes that all Latino groups shared high levels of Spanish use at home in 1990 that was coupled with a strong desire to improve their English as well. In classrooms, the ballot box, and the workplace, among other places, Latino New York engaged in the protection and expansion of bilingualism. These efforts were waged in the midst of increased anti-Latino violence in the city and across the country during this period as declining economic and job opportunities, poverty, drugs and crime became intractable problems in New York and across U.S. cities. From a policy perspective, calls for heightened security along U.S. borders and English-only policies became part of several policies and legislations that can also be understood as anti-Latino, though they were not explicitly about Latinos. In these circumstance advocacy for bilingualism functions a key site of struggle and solidarity across Latino groups. Bilingualism was a way to preserve cultural distinctions of different Latino groups while promoting efforts to work together. Still it is important to see bilingualism in all its complexities. As I will discuss in later chapters, for example, bilingualism can be used to promote racial and class divisions when it is promoted as an asset for
the privileged, while it is framed as a hindrance for people who are racially, economically and linguistically marginalized.

Overall, as the Latino population grew and diversified, and social movements emerged, they made a profound impact on the city. At the same time, the growing diversity of the population stretched the possibility of a unified Latino community, with bilingualism as a key site for solidarity. Still, economic and racial structures of oppression have continued to affect the social conditions that most Latinos face in El Barrio and New York, and I want to turn my attention to economic issues in the decades after the crisis.

**Economics after the crisis**

As a diversifying group, Latinos have experienced the economy differently. For Puerto Ricans, economic conditions grew worse in the decades that followed the crisis, though there were signs that some of aspects of the situation were getting better, or at the very least stabilizing. Unemployment rates for Puerto Rican men and women, for example, grew tremendously between 1970 and 1990, growing from 5.28 percent in 1970 to 14.38 percent in 1990 for Puerto Rican men, and from 6.42 percent to 13.13 percent for Puerto Rican Women. This was despite that fact that employment in the city’s restructured economy had risen almost 15 percent between 1977 and 1989 (Torres, 1995) for example, and poverty rates amongst the city’s Puerto Ricans was high, with a
poverty rate of 36.5 percent in 1990 (Cruz, 2004). During the 1980s, it is Puerto Ricans were gaining access to more professional and managerial fields, and sales, administrative support and service occupations (Cruz, 2004). Puerto Rican educational attainment and the participation of Puerto Rican women in the labor force also increased significantly during this period, though it was still low compared to city averages at the time (Cruz, 1994). In short, the economic conditions in the years following the crisis did show signs of improvements, but these improvements were not enough to stave off the challenges that poorer Puerto Ricans have continued to face over the years.

The mixed socioeconomic and racial characteristics of the Latino population that had reached nearly 2 million by 2000 meant a mixed set of economic conditions. Latino immigrants of higher economic status have had more access to white-collar work if they had sufficient command of the English language, for example. But across social class categories, Latino immigrants “experienced downward economic and social mobility upon their arrival in New York” (Haslip-Viera, 2010, p. 47). Some have been able to open small businesses, but most have been able to only access working class and service sector jobs.

Bounded to class status is U.S. racial order. As the Puerto Rican story of the twentieth century has shown, Latinos have
been understood as a racial other by the state, and how Latinos are positions with respect to both state power, whites, and other people of color has shifted most often to maintain social division. More, the raced and classed distinctions amongst Latino groups have also played a key role in the how different Latinos are positioned within the economy. Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, for example, are key segments of the supermarket/grocery sector of the city’s economy, but Mexicans primarily make up the lowest level jobs, while Puerto Ricans and Dominicans may occupy supervisory roles where they have some access to head management (Rosen, 2013), though being part of head management continues to be inaccessible for most Latinos.

Another important aspect to Latinos and economics in New York are undocumented individuals. With the shift from a majority Puerto Rican (U.S. citizen) population to an immigrant population, the challenges that arise due to undocumented status became a more significant problem over these last few decades. As such, undocumented individuals provide a stream of exploitable laborers that have little to know protection from a range of human rights violations. They thus occupy a prominent position within informal, underground, economies that are difficult to document. In general, economic and labor problems for Latinos have persisted, and these challenges are observable within other sectors including housing.
Housing after the crisis

During the economic crisis would-be investors and the state would abandon the stage for a deeply bifurcated remaking of the city in which financial office real estate would be booming as poor and of Color neighborhoods. In the three decades that followed, the city continued to recuperate by following a trajectory that was underpinned by a corporate economic and cultural logic, albeit differently by the various mayors that would lead. During the Koch Era there was great emphasis placed on expanding office buildings and cutting back on public housing that Koch saw as a major obstacle to remaking the city. In the years that followed, public and affordable housing in New York was still recognized as one of the most stable systems in the country, as it was able to avoid the pattern of massive demolition that we see take place in cities like Chicago (Goetz, 2012).

Scholars argue that housing and neighborhood integrity for Puerto Ricans and Latinos has been comparatively more fragile than it has been for Black communities.

In El Barrio, specifically, housing after the wave of public housing building of the 1950s and 1960s ended was a housing options were scarce. As Freidenberg (1995) notes:

In the 1990s, housing shortages are higher in East Harlem than in the rest of the city. Housing units in East Harlem
have actually decreased by 16 percent in the last decade: units are lost to fire or abandonment, the city has virtually stopped the construction of public housing, tenements are left in various states of disrepair, and gentrification has opened some pockets that are not affordable to the local residents (p. 8)

In sum, housing in El Barrio was limited and thus left residents in vulnerable positions. For some this vulnerability meant a lack of affordable options, or being unable to continue holding on to homes, that were mostly rentals, because of rising process. This set of circumstances ultimately meant displacement for many longtime residents. In addition to lack of affordability, the contracts for affordable housing began to expire during the late 1990s, which meant the option of affordable housing was beginning to shrink, and this issue continued to ramp up during the 21st century. Most resident of El Barrio thus found themselves in precarious situations, and leaving the neighborhood open to an increasing number of investors who were buying up properties that signaled an emerging wave of gentrification that I discuss in later chapters.

**Policing after the crisis**

Policing is inextricably linked from crime and criminalization, and economic conditions. I noted earlier, the
economic conditions for Puerto Ricans did improve in some ways after the crisis, but poor neighborhoods generally struggled to recover. Issues with poverty, participation in the informal economy of the drug trade abandoned housing, and increased crime rates made poor communities like El Barrio dangerous to live in. In the early 1990s, East Harlem’s number of violent crimes was said to be twice the city’s average (Fliegel & MacGuire, 1993). Conditions had clearly deteriorated since the economic crisis, and the police responded with increased surveillance and acts of brutality in poor communities and communities of Color.

The relationship between the police and the Latino community was divided and violent. Former Young Lord, Richie Perez (2010) noted in his 1985 essay in protest of the film Fort Apache, the Bronx, that “in the nine months preceding the first announcements that Fort Apache, twelve unarmed blacks and Puerto Ricans in New York City were shot or beaten to death by police” (Sec 3, para 1). During this period, Perez was a leader in the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights’ Justice Committee (now Justice Committee), which focused heavily on stopping police brutality. But Perez and others understood that brutality and police killings were “just the tip of the iceberg. They are tragedies and must be organized around, but they are ultimately enabled by the daily abuses, disrespect, and human rights violations faced by our communities at the hands of NYPD
officers that go unaddressed” (Kang, 2016, p. para 1). El Barrio was not unique in its violent relationship with the police over the last half century, but is symbolic of the racial state violence that was being waged on poor communities of Color.

The brutality of racial state violence was undergirded by policy. The size of the police force was exponentially increased during the Giuliani administration from 29,000 officers to 40,000 (Moody, 2007), and during the Giuliani era the police began applying “broken window theory” as a key policing strategy. Broken windows theory is premised on the notion that by being hyper-vigilant with minor offenses, major-crimes would be reduced. What resulted from this application of broken windows was policing of the poor, and racial profiling (Fagan & Davies, 2000; New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU), 2014). Most notably, this approach to policing raised tremendous controversy after an unarmed black man, Amadou Diallo, was profiled by four white officers and then shot and killed (NYCLU, 2014).

While I primarily focus on information prior to the year 2000 in this chapter, I want to bring this discussion of policing into the twenty-first century as I do not discuss it as extensively in the following chapters, but it is a critical to having a full picture of the context upon which this dissertation is built. Under Mayor Bloomberg the police turned to “stop-and-frisk” as a policing practice. According the New
York Police Department, "stop, question and frisk" is an NYPD policy wherein police will detain and question pedestrians, and potentially search them, if they have a "reasonable suspicion" that the pedestrian in question "committed, is committing, or is about to commit a felony or a Penal Law misdemeanor" (Matthews, 2013). The initiative raised tremendous controversy, as the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) and other organizations began to learn that the NYPD was not submitting reports about the initiative to the City Council. Once that information was gathered it was apparent that the number of stops had exponentially grown from 97,000 in 2002 to half a million people in 2006, and that the police were heavily targeting Black and Latino New Yorkers. In a 2014 report the NYCLU found that between 2003 and 2013, NYPD officers recorded 5,081,689 stops, with 4.4 million innocent people being stopped (New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU), 2014). The NYCLU also noted:

In 70 out of 76 precincts, black and Latino New Yorkers accounted for more than 50 percent of stops, and in 32 precincts they accounted for more than 90 percent of stops. In six of the 10 precincts with the lowest black and Latino populations (such as the 6th Precinct in Greenwich Village), blacks and Latinos accounted for about 70 percent or more of stops.
Young black and Latino men were the targets of a hugely disproportionate number of stops. Though they accounted for only 4.7 percent of the city’s population, black and Latino males between the ages of 14 and 24 accounted for 41 percent of stops between 2003 and 2013. Nearly 90 percent of young black and Latino men stopped were innocent. (NYCLU, 2014, p. 1)

As this data suggests, “stop and frisk” became the latest mode for criminalizing and containing poor, people of Color in the city. During the Bloomberg era, El Barrio was one of the neighborhoods most affected by “stop-and-frisk.” Based on percentage of police precinct population, El Barrio’s two precincts were in the top five for stops in the city (See Table 3.2). As I will discuss in later chapters, this form

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Top 5 Precincts</th>
<th>Total Stops (2003-2013)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>Brownsville, Ocean Hill*</td>
<td>237.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>East Harlem (south)</td>
<td>178.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>BedStuy (west)*</td>
<td>164.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Mott Haven, Melrose*</td>
<td>151.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>East Harlem (north)*</td>
<td>148.2%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bottom 5 Precincts</th>
<th>Total Stops (2003-2013)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Riverdale, Fieldston, Kingsbridge*</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Upper East Side</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Borough Park, Kensington</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Kipps Bay, Murray Hill, Turtle Bay</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Majority black and Latino precincts. Central Park excluded due to lack of demographic data.

of racial state violence was occurring at the same time that waves of urban renewal and disinvestments in public housing were pushing people out of the city.

Clearly El Barrio was heavily surveilled and East Harlem youth were also affected both in the neighborhood and the schools. While city-wide crime levels had reportedly declined, youth gangs in El Barrio reemerged as an issue for the community to address. The NYPD reported “an increase in identified youth gangs in Upper Manhattan from 10 gangs and 150 members to 29 gangs and 1000 members,” between 2007 and 2009, and that “gang-involved youths were responsible for 29 percent (7 of 24) of all gun-related homicides in Upper Manhattan in 2009, and 30 percent (31 of 102) of non-fatal shootings” (East Harlem Juvenile Gang Task Force, 2011, p. 6).

In response to these trends, the Harlem Community Justice Center convened the East Harlem Juvenile Gang Task Force as a way to address these concerns, and one of the areas that they point to is education.

The task force (2011) references a 2011 New York City Department of Education report stating that 20 percent of School District 4 (CSD4) K-12 students were chronically absent from school. They also note that “citywide school suspensions increased by 66 percent, with African-American students accounting for 53 percent of all suspensions and Hispanic
students accounting for 35 percent” (East Harlem Juvenile Gang Task Force, 2011, p. 10). In the 2008–09 school year K-8 schools in El Barrio reported over 1000 student suspensions. For the task force, absenteeism and high suspension rates are key factors that shape youth relationships with gangs and the carceral system, and they are issues that El Barrio faces. While not disputing these educational statistics, the task force does not explore further what student experiences are like in school as part of the factors that might lead youth to be absent or suspended at such high rates.

One of the major distinctions between the pre- and post-economic crisis eras in education is the presence of police in schools. In the 1990s crime and violence rates inside schools had grown significantly, pushing the school system to attempt a number of crime reduction and violence prevention strategies, including deploying metal detectors in high schools and school safety agent teams in middle schools with high rates of violence (Ayoub, 2013). Ultimately the Giuliani administration would construct a Memo of Understanding (MOU) that placed the schools system’s School Safety Division under the supervision and training of the NYPD.

The Bloomberg administration would enact a variety of policies regarding school safety that included expanding its relationship with the NYPD, changing and expanding the
discipline code, and expanding surveillance technologies (Ayoub, 2013). By the 2008-09 school year, there were 5,055 school safety agents and 191 armed police officers in the public school system (New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU), n.d.) With this increased police presence, suspension rates grew significantly between 2006 and 2013, growing from 49,588 suspensions in 2006 and peaking at 73,441 in 2011 (Ayoub, 2013). Suspensions have not been found to actually reduce crime, but have been connected to increased student disengagement, low achievement and criminal behavior as the Juvenile Gang Task Force asserted.

Moreover, reports have found that there were major racial disparities in school suspensions and arrests. In one report the NYCLU (2011) found that Black youth in particular are “overrepresented in every facet of the suspensions system, accounting for approximately 33 percent of the student population and 53 percent of suspensions over the last 10 school years” (p. 18). Also concerning is the disproportionate suspension of students with disabilities, who made up 30 percent of all suspensions between 2001 and 2011 (Miller et al., 2011). In sum, both in El Barrio and across the poor, majority-people of Color schools, the presence of police and anti-crime school safety policies has exploded since the 1990s. This has created an educational system that operates as a police state, and it has been profoundly harmful to youth and communities.
Political organizing

The ramping up of policing, ongoing racial discrimination and precarious economic conditions for the poor are indicative of the emergence of two New Yorks, one for the elite and another for the poor. A pivotal way in which these two New Yorks was constructed is the reshaping of Latino political organizing since the crisis.

With the severe cuts to social services community-based organizations (CBOs), a more recent label for community advocacy and service groups became more and more important to the provision of basic social services. Some of these organizations were those that had emerged prior to the crisis through antipoverty efforts, but some organizations also came from the decline of direct action organizations that had emerged in the 1960s. Many of the activists that had remained in the direct action organizations would begin to enter many of these service organizations, or create organizations themselves, as a way of institutionalizing some of the work they had been engaged in previously. This change in the role of community organizations was thus marked by the further professionalization of political organizers. For the city, the growth of CBOs provided a convenient replacement for the crumbling infrastructure, even though many of these CBOs had
very small budgets and did not have the capacity to take on
city-scale projects.

While a great deal of pressure was placed on these
organizations, some of them had a profound effect on the city
in the second half of the twentieth century. As discussed
earlier antipoverty initiatives in the 1960s had spurred a
growth of CBOs. Many of activist organization received
foundation support to expand and develop justice-focused work
for the first time, including the Puerto Rican Forum which
took the money it was given to develop an institution to
organize and provide services to the Puerto Rican community;
thus ASPIRA was born. ASPIRA was part of a constellation of
organizations that would create a system of social services
designed to support and advocate for communities in need of
support. As I will discuss later, ASPIRA was also an essential
actor in the Latino struggle for educational justice.

The overall transformation did not necessarily translate
into electoral power and political representation. The work by
organizations like the Young Lords, the Black Panther Party,
the Puerto Rican Socialists were beginning to fade by the
early 1970s as internal divisions would emerge, some members
would redirect their efforts to developing related
institutions or organizing efforts, like bilingual education
or the founding of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, and
still others would move into electoral politics. At the same time the Democratic Party machine was active within various neighborhoods, including in East Harlem. These local would persist to the present in having its impact on political careers. These changes reflect the challenge that sustainability poses to social movement-centered organizations, but it also reflects what was perceived as viable as austerity measures were put into place following the economic crisis of the mid-1970s in New York. Responsibility for the crisis was placed on the shoulders of working class people and poor people of Color, and the business elite would regain political power of the city.

Through these organizations and institutions, New Yorkers of Color created a powerful force within struggles around social and economic issues that increasingly affected the lives of these politically and socially marginalized populations. Their impact was felt most directly in social struggles around racial justice and political recognition within the city. This growing power, while formidable, would not solidify power within establish institutions and electoral politics, nor would it be able to slow down the destructive effects of deindustrialization and the crisis.

City government and labor leadership, as well as the impact of drug epidemics, the explosion of incarceration
rates, and the ongoing decline of stable jobs during the 1970s and 1980s systematically muted radical, liberation-oriented, organizational visions that had characterized the decade prior to the crisis. In sum, the economic crisis made apparent that two New Yorks existed and became the opportunity for the elite to retake power. As the capitalist class re-assumed its political, ideological and cultural position, the economy would grow substantially, benefiting the economic elite and improving the global image of the city in the eyes of global capital. At the same time, this approach left those already vulnerable (people of Color and the poor) in increasingly precarious economic conditions where employment and income were highly polarized. This divided landscape was also coupled to major racial and cultural changes in the population of the city.

As the Latino population was growing and diversifying Black-Latino coalition politics and pan-Latino political solidarity were increasingly elusive possibilities. Demographic changes blurred racial and ethnic markers that had underpinned political organizing in New York for over century. For Puerto Ricans and Black activists, the White political apparatus of the 1970s and 1980s turned their demands on their heads by charging that these demands were forms of “reverse discrimination” and focused on economically wasteful social
spending (Lee, 2014). This strategy effectively undermines cross-racial politics, and contributes to the formation of a Black and Puerto Rican underclass whose leadership has been moved into a distant professional class.

The breaking of this coalition work opened up the possibility of Hispanic or pan-Latino solidarity work. Lee (2014) argues that these efforts were primarily lead by middle class Puerto Ricans and, increasingly, other Latino leadership. This cadre of political leaders, according to Lee, focused on disassociating from Black and more radical politics. Instead they opted to become Hispanic representatives that were included in the White political apparatus. Hispanic, pan-Latino, politics were attempted in across social sectors as was evident in The Puerto Rican Association for Community Affairs’ (PRACA) convening of Los Niños de los Barrios conference in December of 1994. At this conference advocates focused on Latino education, community infrastructure, culture and health, came together to articulate “a uniform call to action concerning the future for Los Niños de Los Barrios” (Puerto Rican Association for Community Affairs, Inc. (PRACA), 1994, p. 1). These efforts have resulted in important work being accomplished in various sectors, but it has yet to foster a coalition politics that is
able to cut across inter-ethnic divisions within the Hispanic or Latino population.

New possibilities for coalition work have emerged in labor, housing and urban development. With the majority of newer Latino immigrants working in low-wage, non-unionized, industries, worker alliances, such as the Domestic Workers Alliance have grown significantly. Similarly, housing and anti-gentrification efforts, like East Harlem’s Movimiento por Justicia del Barrio (Movement for Justice in El Barrio), and Right to the City campaigns, began to take shape in the early 2000s. By focusing on issues that cut across racial and class lines, these organizations provide opportunities to engage in coalition building amongst Latinos. As this discussion moves more into the Bloomberg era, it is evident that there were some spaces for cross-racial political work. Still, an area where political organizing remained limited following the economic crisis was education, which is what I direct my attention to now to conclude this chapter.

**Education after the crisis: From community control to decentralization**

The school system was decentralized in 1970 following the tumultuous, and ultimately under-supported, experimentation with community control between 1968 and 1969. The experiment in community control was focused on having community elections
for representation on a local school board that would manage personnel and budgets, and inform curriculum teaching and learning and the cluster of schools under its charge. Arguably, these experiments were a brief glimpse into a thick democracy (Barber 2003), where governance would be premised on high levels of engagement with the public.

For advocacy work lead by activists of Color, community control in education was part of a broader strategy for racial and economic justice for these marginalized groups. As the efforts of local Black Power efforts in a number of cities across the country demonstrated, community control was connected to advocacy around gaining political power in labor, public health, and creating bases for power building (D. A. Goldberg & Griffey, 2010). Seen as a coordinated collection of projects, the movement that would emerge from Black, Latino (primarily Puerto Rican), and Asian organizing in New York City articulated a theory of change that focused on establishing spaces and institutions for community-centered development. This was a response to the failures of state reforms that ebbed from what Melamed (2011) described as a racial liberalism that followed a doctrine of integration and inclusivity that would neither name or interrupt white supremacy or the capitalist arrangements of U.S. society to favor a shrinking white population. In the case of community
control of schools, the state was primarily represented by the central Board of Education at 110 Livingston in Brooklyn.

Seen as a model that would undermine labor and foster racial and ethnic insularity rather than integration, the teachers union (United Federation of Teachers), would be the central adversary to the community control experiment. The contestation would peak with the teacher strike in 1968. The struggle would make clear the racial and economic divisions that had existed in the city and would reflect the eventual political realignments that would take place in the city in the years that followed, particularly the dissolution of the collaborative relationship between White Jews and the increasingly poor and working classes of Color. The experiments would be resolved with a democratically thin (Barber, 2003) compromise — the decentralization of the system into 32 local “community school districts” (CSD) (See Figure 3.1).

In decentralization, each district would have a local superintendent and a locally elected school board where community residents age 18 and older could run for a position. The local school boards would have their own budgets and have power over the K-8 schools, interpreting and implementing policies articulated by the central board and the Chancellor, shaping the curriculum, and providing professional training
for teachers. Neither community activists nor the UFT was pleased with the resolution, as the districts varied in size and would often contain multiple neighborhoods and racial/ethnic communities that were divided along race and class lines. This top-down compromise would mask pre-existing divisions and asymmetrical power relationships, as was made evident in strident battles that took place in District 1 (CSD 1) in lower Manhattan, where White Jews and the primarily Puerto Rican and Chinese communities of the Lower East Side (Loisaida) would be caught in overtly racist and anti-Semitic battles over schools for many years (Cardona interview). It would also not address raced and classed power differences between districts and the central board. Still, both the UFT and Community control activist groups understood that the institutionalization of 32 local school boards would mean 32 different battlegrounds where power and influence needed to be fostered (See Figure 3.1). For the UFT, this meant being active in local school board elections (Lynn, 1975). For community control advocates like United Bronx Parents, a key Puerto Rican lead organization, decentralization meant not only working within the framework, but going beyond by continuing to demand community control (A. De Jesus & Pérez, 2009; Lee, 2014). In the majority Puerto Rican, and Black, neighborhood of East Harlem, decentralization became an
opportunity for a dramatic transformation of the schools that was centered on pushing the decentralization model to its edges, without completely destroying it. While this approach would have an important transformative impact on barrio schools, the strength of the bureaucracy and the lack of a strong accountability system would be among of a number of factors that would arrest democratic, civic, development.


Having district offices that a local resident could get to with relative ease, having an opportunity to elect school board representatives, and attending public board meetings,
were key changes that affected public engagement around education. These new openings would provide opportunities for
innovation and transformative work by individual administrators, educators, and community groups. East Harlem,
Community School District 4 (CSD4) (See Figure 3.2), was one of the smaller school districts geographically, and was
actually not part of the initial renderings of the school districts. Only after advocacy by Latino advocates was a district with a Latino majority created (Lewis, 2013; Nieto et al 2000). Still, during the early 1970s whites drove local politics even though the community was majority people of Color. The first school superintendent was White and it would take further politicking in order to appoint a Latino superintendent. Described later as the “East Harlem Miracle,” (Fliegel and MacGuire 1993) the school districts’ years under the leadership of Anthony Alvarado, a Latino educator who began his career at the first Bilingual school in the Bronx, would witness the creation of a number of alternative schools (middle and elementary schools) that were small and educator-driven, as well as a number of innovative bilingual/bicultural schools.

Heather Lewis (2013) described Alvarado as an “activist administrator” who was looking to turn around a set of primarily Latino and Black neighborhood schools that were consistently ranked at, or near, the bottom of all districts. According to CSD4 officials, for example, “15.3 percent of the district’s students could read at or above grade level” in 1974 (Kirp, 1992). For the next ten years, Alavardo’s approach was centered on pedagogical and organizational innovation while maintaining power in the local district office. Already existing schools
were supported in introducing new pedagogical ideas and practices. In 1974 the city’s office of Bilingual Education organized a centralized system for bilingual instruction that included ten bilingual centers (Pousada, 1987) Designating CSD4 as a bilingual district and establishing the small schools (or programs) of choice structure were some of the projects that educators, outsiders, and local advocates created to address educational inequality. This vision for change would produce an organizational framework where various groups (schools, community advocates, CBOs, etc.) create “strands of innovation” that were circulated through the center of local power (i.e. the activist administrator).

While these various innovations worked their way through the district, these strands seemed to move in parallel directions that were rarely coordinated. This model of change would have a dramatic impact on the school district as it moved from a perennial bottom dweller in educational outcomes, to one that hovered around the middle of the 32 districts. Despite its success, I argue that the parallel trajectories of change in CSD4, and its’ dependency on a strong administrator, and uneven forms of public engagement, would affect how effectively the schools could navigate the ongoing financial problems of the city, the school system, and the neighborhood in the 1980s and 1990s.
One set of actors that were more directly connected to the community than some of the outsiders Alvarado would invite, were proponents of bilingual education. The newly minted Center for Puerto Rican Studies (Centro) Language Policy Task Force (LPTF), for example, had begun to focus its research and advocacy in East Harlem during the 1970s. LPTF would be key advocates in the court case that would lead to the ASPIRA Consent Decree in 1974, the foundation for providing emergent bilingual (Limited English Proficient/LEP at the time) students adequate resources and conditions for learning (Reyes, 2006; Santiago-Santiago, 1978). The LPTF began by engaging with residents from East Harlem and documenting the language practices of Spanish/English bilinguals of East Harlem. It was through this work that they began to define the practice of “code-switching” amongst bilinguals, where individuals would switch between languages in varying and inventive ways (Pedraza, 2013). In addition to this important community based research, the LPTF would be part of a group that would push for establishing CSD4 as the first Bilingual School District, where bilingualism would be central to the vision of the entire district, though not all schools would offer the same language education models (Pedraza 1997; Pedraza 2013).
In the post-ASPIRA Consent Decree era, schools continued to primarily use the transitional model where the focus was on transitioning students into English, rather than developing both their home language and English. Maintenance bilingual, dual immersion (two-way), and English as a Second Language (ESL) models and reading programs more responsive to the language needs of bilingual students would be established in various schools across the city, but that would not happen until the 1990s. Schools, such as the Bilingual mini-school in East Harlem would be part of efforts at maintenance bilingual models, but city-wide most schools would primarily offer ESL programming. By the end of the year 2000 maintenance bilingual and dual immersion models would only make up about 4 percent of the programming offered as part of English language learner services.

The network of small schools of choice that would be ushered in by Alvarado is another, and much more widely known, aspect of East Harlem school transformation. Starting with the invitation of Deborah Meier and a group of progressive educators that would start Central Park East I as a small program within the PS 171 building in 1974, Alvarado would support the growth of a number of elementary and middle schools that families both in East Harlem and around the city could attend. As a predecessor of what are now described as
co-locations, each school would be established as a special program within pre-existing schools, and then allowed to develop their own school vision.

**Activist leadership in decentralization**

Local political advocates and politicians who wanted to expand their influence in education and other social services were key actors at the intersections of political organizing and education. Alvarado's model of innovation was criticized for creating a bifurcated district where the small schools seemed to gain more support over the older schools and educational quality and outcomes would mirror this division. Still, Alvarado would be thought of as a person who was effective at speaking to each of these audiences, and general outcomes, according to evaluation scores, provided a convincing argument for administrative activism and school choice as paths to improving schools (Lewis, 2013).

Alvarado activist leader approach would prove vital to protecting the transformation East Harlem schools, and it speaks to his ability to speak in multiple political languages: bureaucracy, community advocacy, and professional educator-ese

Meier described Alvarado as a savvy administrator who could effectively navigate between the school people (educators and administrators) and neighborhood advocates and
leaders in a way that propelled the district forward even if there were dissensions amongst these stakeholders. “Tony asked me to not attend community meetings,” Deborah Meier noted, “I did my teaching in East Harlem, but I did my activist work at home (the Upper West Side)...he knew I would not stay quiet” (Meier, 2013). When there were problems, as Alvarado’s right hand man, Seymour Fliegel (1993) would note in East Harlem Miracle, “we would just walk over there or make a phone call and talk it out...” (p. xx).

At the same time, Alvarado would navigate relationships with community groups that were often not on the same page as the new small schools or the preexisting schools. Some concerns raised by the community had to do more with squabbles within the neighborhood or more radical interests on the part of the community (Meier, 2013), but they would loop back to questions of educational governance, access to the schools, and management of educational resources across the district.

Most relevant to this dissertation is thinking about the approach to communication and public engagement that remained available in this governance structure. It was these personal communicative and engagement strategies that would be key to Alvarado’s success. In retrospect, keeping communication amongst varying groups personal separated but focused on improving the schools would enable work to be accomplished
while keeping power in the district offices. In this way the local board and the superintendent were accessible, but also serve as an advocate, policy interpreter, and defensive buffer between the community and the citywide bureaucracy. The CSD4 model during Alvarado’s tenure was in many ways an implementation of a model open to having a strong meso-level central governance apparatus. This model could be open to the public while power remained in the administrative hands of the state.

Still, the decentralization model was flawed as it obscured or ignored preexisting inequalities, relied too heavily on the actions of individual leaders, and ultimately did not avoid corruption. The decentralization model was vague, which was an attempt to appease community control advocates while it protected the power of the bureaucracy. In the case of East Harlem, this vagueness allowed an activist administration to massage fraught relationships and move forward with their vision for education, but it also maintained divisions between perceived educational experts and local families. Johnny Rivera, an East Harlem resident who was the last school board president and the first Community Education Council president felt that even before Bloomberg would take over the schools the notion of democracy in East Harlem schools was already an illusion.
What I saw was that as community partners you really didn’t have much to say in the situation, so I think on paper there’s this appearance of a democracy, but in reality the administrators were the officials, the UFT knew what needed to be done. School teachers … and I thought, I think for the most part we [the community] were viewed as something that had to be elevated.

(Rivera, 2013)

Rivera’s comment captures the weakened state that the local school district model was in following 1996 legislation that had already turned some of the power of the districts over to the Chancellor of the school system (Lewis, 2013). It also captures the asymmetrical relationships between school people and residents.

Another key problem that arose was the challenge of institutionalizing and reproducing a “politically savvy” culture what would be sustainable through the course of changes in leadership. As Lewis (2013) notes, once Alvarado leaves CSD4, the school board and administrators were unable, or unwilling, to keep the model moving forward, and school quality would again be in decline. There was no pre-designed process of grooming future leaders to effectively engage with various stakeholders and work with the bureaucracy making it increasingly more difficult to sustain improvements. The local
bureaucracy would thus be directed and influenced by machine politics and community organizations, with leadership that was not as effective at engaging these different factions. Unable to effectively work through asymmetrical power relations nor being able to transmit a culture of politically savvy and participatory engagement practices, the decentralized model would ultimately arrest the even the modest promises of thin forms of democratic engagement. Ultimately the weaknesses of the model would make the entry of the mayoral control era an easy task for new city mayor Michael Bloomberg.

**Education finance in El Barrio**

Alvarado and the District would also become notorious for finagling their budget in order to get work done. Decentralization meant preserving a central Board of Education and bureaucracy along with a significant realignment of funds and administrative powers to the locally elected district school boards and district superintendents. The local district offices were charged with, among a number of things, allocating funding to each of the schools, teacher hiring, facilitating curricular programs across the district, and holding monthly board meetings that were open to the public. The districts themselves were different in geographical size and racio-ethnic and economic make up, bringing with them inherent political divisions and inequities that underpinned the collections of neighborhoods
grouped into each district. Low voter turnout for board elections, financial and political corruption, and administrative ineptitude were some of the hallmarks of many of the districts.

Decentralization was seen as poorly designed, and yet another part of the stagnant, glutinous, Board of Education. Even at the final meeting of the Central Board, Ninfa Segarra, the last board president, would say, “I think the rigidity, the poor design of this institution often prevented members’ honorable purposes from resulting in practical improvement” (Zhao, 2002). Moreover, socio-economic divisions within the communities and neighborhoods of a district would play out within the context of community school district venues.

In his interview with historian Lewis (2013) Anthony Alvarado notes that the “District 4 choice model lacked sufficient accountability mechanisms. Schools needed greater support and timely interventions when achievement lagged” (p. 132). This lack of accountability on the district level would, to a degree, trump the ongoing success of individual schools in the district. As such, the district, and the system as a whole, was thought to require a profound transformation that centered on restructuring governance and keeping schools in line. Then in 1996, New York State legislators voted, almost unanimously, to return more control of the system to the
Chancellor (Dao, 1996). Chancellor Rudy Crew would place a lot of focus on cleaning up the school system’s budget, and would include this as part of his call for accountability. This would make the practice of finagling budgets more challenging to accomplish, though it did not end it. This ongoing practice would be part of a call for cleaning up and streamlining the bureaucracy during the Bloomberg era.

**Conclusion**

The historical snapshots I have presented here leave us at the doorstep of El Barrio at the start of the Bloomberg era. Together these snapshots do not present some striking contrast to what I discuss in the chapters that follow. Rather, the past is the fertile ground through which the remaking of the neighborhood and its schools during the first decade of the twenty first century would come to be. By the time Bloomberg would take control of the education system, the system was a fragmented, bureaucratic, mess that most were ready to get rid of by any means necessary. Bloomberg’s take over is a pivotal point in the trajectories of the schools and the city as the takeover operated with the intention of hollowing out the school bureaucracy and signaled twelve years of neoliberal forms of governance, engagement, and the coordination, or co-optation of a number of “progressive” reform projects that had emerged during decentralization.
What follows is a mapping of the contours and nuances of state and capital in motion, and the various modes of survival and survivance that the people of El Barrio have engaged in, in response to these processes. By learning while mapping, the intention is to gather lessons and tools to add to a collective guide to action that contributes to the disruption and abolition of these conditions.
CHAPTER IV

METHODS, RESEARCH DESIGN

#BarrioEdProj is an embodiment of my commitment to engaged scholarship. As a digital, critical participatory action research project is a means to understanding and challenging racial neoliberal urbanism. #BarrioEdProj is an ongoing project that will include multiple PAR projects and employ multiple methods, but this first study is a historical ethnography. In this chapter I discuss my positionality and then go into details of the design and methods used in this specific study. To note, this study was approved by the CUNY Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) at the CUNY Graduate Center, and all research collaborative members were certified to conduct human subject research.

On Individual and Collective Positionalities

My personal-political commitments play a definitive role in shaping my approach to research and my position with respect to neighborhoods and communities that I sought to work with in this study. My approach to work in and through education has been focused on the transformative and decolonizing potential of education and education research for those oppressed by society and its institutions. To that end I define myself, as an “engaged” or “activist” researcher (Calhoun, 2008; Lipman, 2005) and my research is about trying
to do work with and for (D. E. Smith, 2006) Latino core communities. Representing the university and not being of the community would position me as an outsider, but I needed to think through how I would position myself in relation to institutions in the neighborhood and the schools. As a U.S.-born child of working-class-Nicaraguan and Nicaraguan-Chinese immigrants, who is originally from Southern California, a former New York City public school educator, and an education activist, I am not of the community but do have certain connections that afforded me some access to the neighborhood. For one, having a life partner who is a public elementary school educator in East Harlem and having done educational advocacy work with East Harlem residents and scholars, gave me and the project some recognition in the community and provided me with contacts that I could refer interviewees to, if they needed additional reassurances.

My recognition within the neighborhood was also shaped by my participation as Community Liaison and Co-instructor in the participatory, open online course (POOC) at the CUNY Graduate Center, Reassessing Global Inequality: East Harlem Case Study (Daniels et al., 2014). As community liaison, I worked to connect various East Harlem organizations with the course through personal outreach and social media platforms. While our efforts to connect with these institutions and individuals
achieved results that were uneven at best, I was able to gather a number of key contacts within the neighborhood that I was able to follow up with for this study. Still, doing participatory and community engaged research raises tensions about our own position in relation to the neighborhood and the research group.

A key reason that #BarrioEdProj would evolve from an individual journey to a collective and participatory one was a desire to expand and deepen the connections between the project and the neighborhood. With funding provided by the CUNY Graduate Center’s Digital Initiative grants program, I was able to provide a paid co-researcher internship that I designed for two youth from the East Harlem area. Two Latina young women (ages 18 and 22) from East Harlem would be hired as co-researchers, following an interview process. The two researchers were students of a colleague who is the director of Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) at a local university. One of the co-researchers identified as a Dominican woman, who was born in the Dominican Republic and had lived in the East Harlem area for the majority of her life, but she also spent much of her life living in the Dominican Republic. The other researcher identified as a Mexican (and later Chicana) woman and was born and raised in New York City and East Harlem. They both had attended
elementary and middle school in East Harlem and Greater Harlem, but the Dominican researcher would go back and forth between East Harlem and the Dominican Republic at various points in her educational career. The Dominican co-researcher attended a high school in midtown Manhattan, while the Chicana co-researcher had attended a public all-women’s secondary (6-12) school in East Harlem.

Central to our collective research process was our team meeting and we often reflected on our positions as researchers in the project and as people in the broader world. The fact that my co-researchers were college students allowed me an initial level of trust with the youth researchers. Additionally, my identity as a Latino and the Latina identities of my PAR researchers would provide personal, cultural connections that would not necessarily be possible in other racial contexts. The check-ins at each team meetings was an essential way to also develop trust and interdependency amongst the entire research group. In retrospect, we collectively discovered that while the two co-researchers were long time residents, their understanding of the neighborhood was both extensive, yet limited. They had a deep affective and lived understanding of the neighborhood, its rhythms its people, its sounds. They felt the complexities of gentrification and poverty, as they saw luxury condos popping
up throughout the neighborhood and the displacement/relocation of neighborhood friends. They also had an emerging awareness of how racism, economic inequality, and gender politics operate as structures and social force.

At the same time, they had very little knowledge about the neighborhood’s history and what might best be described as its civic life. Prior to the project they had limited information about who the local political representatives were or the wealth of community-based organizations and institutions that serve East Harlem. At various points during our work together both researchers would express a level of frustration and anger regarding this lack of knowledge, describing how they had felt as though they were denied access to their own history. Finally, their role as “co-researchers” was also a process of assuming or shaping a new aspect of their identity. In the early months of the project, there was a lot of time spent in generating research questions, research skill training, and project planning, but it was evident that they entered the project defining their role as one of research assistant rather than co-researcher. We focused on developing a collaborative culture, but early on they would defer to me to make decisions and felt surprised when I thought to consult with them first. In the field, they appeared much more comfortable as they would present themselves as researchers.
For all of us, our positionality within the group was a process of unlearning and learning what it means to be community-engaged researchers of Color. It was these more internal tensions that would then shape how we would collectively position ourselves and how others would position us in the field.

Collectively, the group used different strategies for inviting interview participants and building a certain amount of recognizability within the neighborhood. We began by doing outreach to people that we knew as a way to start. During the year that the project has been active we have attempted to build relationships with individual educators and school administrators (both traditional public and public charter schools), parent liaisons, the local school superintendent, attend local Community Education Council (CEC) meetings and public education focused events. Having been an elementary educator in the school system, an educator activist with the New York Collective of Radical Educators, and a teacher educator in two local schools of education, gave me some recognizability and legitimacy in these circles. Specifically my work provided the project an initial pool of individual educators and leaders in some community based organizations (CBOs) to invite to participate. Equally as important was the co-researchers connections to East Harlem as students of the
neighborhood. They had contacts to members of the neighborhood that I was unfamiliar with, and this permitted us to expand our outreach.

Our collective position did not, however, extend itself to recognizability within the local schools and governing bodies. During the last year, the local superintendent retired, an interim acting superintendent was put in place, and a new one was appointed by the Department of Education (DOE). To date, attempts to sit down with any of the superintendents have resulted with little success, as we have been informed that their schedules are extremely overburdened, making a meeting with our project difficult to schedule. The Community Education Council, which is comprised of parents who volunteer to participate and borough president appointees was more receptive, but also difficult to follow up with as this particular CEC has an email address and a phone number but the email was not functioning at one point during our outreach (Field notes). When communication was possible we did not receive responses. Individual schools were also challenging to get in touch with, as school administrators were often too busy to sit down with us, or there was a feeling on the part of some that, politically, it would not make sense for them to participate. We are continuing to do outreach, but for the purposes of this study, we have ultimately focused on our
interviews with various community stakeholders who were not directly working in a school and the few individual teachers we have been able to connect with.

**Braiding Methodologies and Methods**

I have come to describe the #BarrioEdProj study as digital participatory historical ethnography. This study would as Denzin and Lincoln (2011) suggests, work through a methodological triangulation as a way to increase the certainty of the interpretation of the data.

Methodologically, the study was a venture into braiding digital social science (DSS) and critical, participatory action research (CPAR). Digital sociology, and digital social science (DSS) more broadly, are often misunderstood strands of contemporary social science. As Lupton (2014) cautions, “digital sociology is not only about sociologists researching and theorising about how other people use digital technologies or focusing on the digital data produced via this use” (p. 14). Rather, I contend, digital social science might best be understood as a convergence where digital technologies and digitally mediated society become methods, tools, and objects of study. Digital social science “encompasses both quantitative and qualitative approaches; it involves new data sources (such as social networking data), methods (such as social network analysis), capability (such as collaboration
tools), scholarly practices (such as new publishing models), areas of study (such as Internet studies), and scale (such as global collaborations)” (Spiro, 2014). DSS is thus broad, organic, and yet not completely without shape. DSS remains centered on bringing together new and old approaches to the work of sociology — addressing social problems and teaching about them. At the same time, the process of working with, around and through, digital technologies is an opportunity to, as Lupton (2012) suggests, raise questions about the practice of sociology and social research itself.

#BarrioEdProj study provides a convergence point where digital technologies and ubiquitous social media tools are leveraged to support and animate a form of public social science, and specifically critical participatory action research (CPAR). Over a decade ago, Burawoy (2005) called for a concerted and spirited return to public sociology that had been muted, though not completely extinguished. Burawoy (2005) argued that after a century of honing and expanding a professional sociology that comprised of techniques and specialized knowledge, “we are more than ready to embark on a systematic back-translation, taking knowledge back to those from whom it came, making public issues out of private trouble…” (5). At the crux of Burawoy’s argument was a notion of public engagement where the work of the sociologist was not to merely theorize and make sense of the
world, but to actually participate in the world in order to
device ways to communicate these ideas rather than impose them
on anyone. Engagement with, and for, publics was not an add-on
activity, but instead a primary responsibility of the
sociologists.

CPAR, I argue, takes public sociology further into the
in notions of democracy and social justice and drawing on
critical theory (feminist, critical race, queer, disability,
neo-Marxist, indigenous, and poststructural), critical PAR is an
epistemology that engages research design, methods, analyses,
and products through a lens of democratic participation (p.
171). CPAR places the processes of problem posing, research,
analysis, and data sharing, in the interlocking hands of adults
and youth, of the focus community, and partnering scholars and
activists. CPAR is thus not a method, but a reimagining of the
sociological research process. It is a recasting of the
“researched” as participants in the design of research, the
production of knowledge, and the sharing of knowledge with the
broader publics. Further, the integration of a broad and
flexible digital sociological imagination to the principles of
CPAR create a variety of potential directions for social
research.

The affordances and generative ideas that DSS has presented
to #BarrioEdProj are primarily in two aspects of the project: data gathering and data sharing. Very early on in the implementation of the project, the overall research design and data gathering methods moved from community survey to digital historical ethnography. Initially, the idea was that we would post questions, bits of descriptive statistical data and excerpts of video recorded interviews to invite participation and discussion concerning education and local issues. For a variety of reasons this approach did not gain traction, but the two central motivations for the change were the nascence of social relationships and the limited grounding we had in the history of the community.

A common problem in social research, digital or otherwise, is the importance of fully establishing physical or online relationships within our community of study. There was interest amongst individuals and organizations in learning more about our project, but we had not yet created the level of relationship where people felt comfortable committing their time and energy to us. Moreover, as we moved forward with our interviews, the youth co-researchers would note that they had little exposure to events or ideas that were mentioned in interviews. They often felt as though their education had been denied. From a research vantage point, their frustrations reaffirmed the impossibility of understanding current social conditions without developing a
historical understanding of the phenomena under study (Kornblum, 2004). As a result, we redirected our attentions to gathering more archival materials about the community and the public schools on our website, using social media to gather relevant photos and information of interest, and continuing to conduct video recorded interviews with individuals associated with education in El Barrio over the course of the last forty years. In short, the project was becoming a dynamic archive.

By focusing on archival materials and interviews, the project had become a form of historical ethnography. Hunter (2013) asserts that “[t]he goal of historical ethnography, as with any other ethnography, is to gather and convey an internally valid description of a site and the peoples therein (231). As a process, historical ethnography relies on the construction of temporally, and spatially, situated narratives that are triangulated through archival materials (Hunter 222). This approach enabled a contextual understanding of change in East Harlem and its schools, as well as the actions of individuals to these changing social conditions. The collaborative design of #BarrioEdProj does require us to add additional forms of triangulation as the process of data gathering and data analysis includes project participants. In this case digital tools do not supplant traditional data gathering methods in historical ethnography, but instead amplify
historical ethnography’s reach primarily providing additional sources for archival materials, motivating the production and sharing of archival materials through digital video interviews or oral histories through Vimeo, and digital images through Instagram and digital photography. With this said, I turn my attention to the various methods we used for the study.

Data Methods

Semi-structured interviews

Over the course of one year, the project researchers interviewed 16 individuals who are, or were, connected to education in East Harlem between the years 1970 and 2012. “In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006, p. 3). Interviewees were gathered through convenience (non-probablistic) sampling where interviewees were identified either through researchers relationships with interviewees, at public forums, or based on their affiliation with local institutions currently or historically. Given the four-decade time span of the study, interviewees were multigenerational, ranging between the ages of 18 and 81. Interviewees and their relationship included the following:

Former East Harlem Student
EH Parent, and Local Researcher
EH Pre-K Director
EH Parent and Educational CBO Administrator
EH Parent
EH Resident and Community Activist
EH Parent
Former EH school director
EH Parent
Former EH Teacher and EH Resident
Director of EH Arts and Ed CBO
EH Teacher

Interviews lasted between 45 minutes to an hour and a half. The focus of the interviews was not on the individual’s life history but instead on eliciting the meanings that policies and events that have transpired around education and the neighborhood “hold for those who lived through them” (Chase, 2009, p. 209). Interview questions asked interviewees about their relationship to East Harlem and its schools, their perspectives on cultural and economic change in the neighborhood and the schools, and, finally, their views on the future.

As part of the digital comments of the project, excerpts of interviews were digitally recorded (audio or video) and then edited, produced and then embedded on the project website.
(http://barrioedproj.org), where viewers can make comments. Viewer commentary is not part of the data being analyzed for this dissertation. Video will be collected and used as part of presentations of the material at community events and professional conferences. At this point only comments about the content of the footage made by researchers during team meetings are analyzed.

**Observations**

Ethnographic observations of public, education-focused events were conducted over the course of two years. Events included forums around school reorganization facilitated by the New York City Department of Education, Community Education Council 4 (CEC4) meetings, Community Board 11 Youth and Education Committee meetings, and forum on Education and East Harlem that I organized through a CUNY Graduate Center POOC on Inequality. On one occasion, we video recorded the public event. Fieldnotes of each observation were kept.

Given the participatory action research model of the project, discussions and activities that occurred during the team meetings were also observed. Team meetings, generally, began with personal check-ins, project updates, discussions of either readings related to the study or digital tool skill training, and planning for future work. Notes were taken at each meeting and these became field notes to draw data from.
Archival research

Archival research can take on many forms as dependent to the purposes of the research. And as such I map out my particular rationale and research protocols. For this study the archival data provided a clearer understanding of the changing cultural political economy over time, complimenting secondary source information, and providing insight into the changing ideological and material priorities of educational institutions, community based organizations, and individual actors. Archival sources included an extensive surveying of the *New York Times* digital database where data was gathered around educational, political, and economic topics in East Harlem, the Board of Education/Department of Education, and the East Harlem community school district (CSD4). The *New York Daily News*, *The Post* and the Spanish speaking newspaper *El Diario/La Prensa*, were also surveyed for the same topics as those used for the *New York Times* archives.

There were three archival sites used for primary source research. The Center for Puerto Rican Studies Archives’ (Centro) collections of personal papers, Centro task force work, and Puerto Rican/Latino advocacy organizations, provided reports, informational fliers, and correspondences that were concerned with East Harlem, New York and education within public schools and the community-based educational work. The
New York City Municipal Archive, and specifically its Board of Education collection, was a second vital source for historical material. Research in the municipal archives focused on going through the material collections of the School Chancellors, the Office of Educational Research, and the Latino Education Commission. In those collections there were a number of reports, memos, and school and district level materials. Finally, the New York Public Library archive housed the Aaron Diamond Foundation collection, which provided information regarding a number of different educational projects that they would fund during the 1980s and 1990s, including the Barrio Popular Education Project, East Harlem Tutorial, and the New York Networks for School Renewal.

**Digital ethnography**

This study and all related data is part of the Education in our Barrio project (#barrioedproj), which is digital and participatory in nature. Murthy (2008) highlights six different ways that social networking sites can be used by social researchers, and in this case #BarrioEdProj falls in line with the idea of a research blog that would be used to “collaboratively share research data and results...” (p. 846). Lassiter (Lassiter, 2005) (as quoted in Murthy, 2008) calls this kind of digital work “‘collaborative ethnography’, where the community meaningfully becomes invested in the
researcher’s work through consultation and critique. In this way, blogs can be seen as potentially democratizing forces in the ethnographic process” (p. 847). The three research methods used in the study were used with digital ends in mind, meaning that some of the collected data would be accessible to the public. Permitting public access to data was intended to help develop partnerships with local community entities, and provide interested individuals an opportunity to develop greater understanding of the issues and histories that we were documenting.

We designed a Wordpres site (http://barrioedproj.org, hosted by OpenCUNY.org) that serves as a clearinghouse and interactive space for collecting, sharing and discussing public data. The website was launched in June 2013 and while data collection ended in December of 2013 the website will continue to be available for the foreseeable future. The bulk of the gathered data comes from the digitally recorded, semi-structured, video interviews with a multi-generational and bilingual (English/Spanish) group of East Harlem education community members. In addition to interviews, relevant readings and community resources about education and urban change are being posted on the website as blog posts and through Twitter (@barrioedproj) and Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/barrio.edproject) feeds. Posts and
tweets include links to news articles about education and urban planning policy, pedagogical practices, school closures, standardized testing, and local education-related forums and meetings. The research group has also used the site to post educational resources relevant to needs of East Harlem youth, families and educators. Two such examples are a “tips sheet” about getting into college and a blog post with different financial resources to pay for college.

Social media tools are used to not only provide information, but also to foster a digital community, collect data, and publicly document the research process. With Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (#BarrioEdProj), we have been building up a small but active following that includes individuals and organizations who are or were from the neighborhood, as well as a contingent of people who are interested in education and development of Latino core communities across the U.S. With Instagram and Flickr we have been collecting images of the neighborhood and shots of the research group “in action” as an archival and analytic strategy. The images of the research group tell a life story of the project.

With a bevy of data sources we are being selective in composing specific stories that we will assemble into an action project. The research group is in the process of
creating paper and digital documents that present some of the key findings of the research in an accessible and meaningful way for East Harlem community members. These products will be the central texts around which one or two face-to-face forums will be held to discuss the study and consider the future of school-community relationships in East Harlem.

Using social media and digital tools in these varied ways has allowed us to create a template for D+CPAR. We contend that what is emerging from this work is a dynamic and critically bifocal archive of struggles over education and urban restructuring in East Harlem. The local work of researching and sharing local (hi)stories through digital means provides opportunities for more human connection across space/time and provides insights into more global structural processes and conditions. We are currently in the process of designing community events where audience members will have the opportunity to learn about the work and be able to speak to one another as we collectively consider the future of education in East Harlem and beyond.

**Data Analysis**

As Burawoy et al. (1991) reminds us, “analysis...is a continual process, mediating between field data and existing theory (p. 11). As such, data analysis in this study focused on having a “running exchange” between data, processes of
thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) and archival data analysis, and theory.

A thematic analysis protocol described by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used as the guide for our analysis of data gathered primarily from interviews and observations. The researchers and transcription services transcribed interviews, which were both in English and Spanish. After repeated readings of the transcriptions and observation notes initial codes were generated to “identify a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that” appeared interesting to use to the analysts (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88) Coded data was categorized into groups and then potential themes were generated through conversations amongst the research team members. Themes were then reviewed through the collected dated extracts to confirm that coherent patterns existed. A theme, as Braun and Clarke also remind us, “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (p. 82).

The thematic analysis of interview and observation data was braided with analyses of archival data. For example, in our case, we asked, How do various participants’ support of “homegrown charters,” or charter schools initiated by local community based organization, teach us about how individuals
and organizations have made sense of the current cultural political economic landscape in order to provide high quality education? This question moved us to ask, What has school choice meant to educational stakeholders in East Harlem over time? Asking these questions was part of an analytic process where we “situate[d] our analyses of communities, schools, and lives historically, economically, and socially so that the material context within which individuals are "making sense" can be linked to their very efforts to reflect upon and transform these conditions” (Weis & Fine, 2004, p. Introduction, para 9). In order to better situate the responses of interviewees, we analyzed archival materials in juxtaposition to the themes that had been we had begun to gather from initial readings of the interview data. Ramsey (2010) contends that looking at a an individual person’s papers “can be used as evidence in learning about what types of subjects were important to the person and can sometimes reveal information about a person's interests that may not appear in secondary sources such as biographies or encyclopedia entries” (Part II, Section 4,para 6). In my archival research I treated the different governing bodies and educational groups that I studied as people in some sense, considering the policy focus, budget allocations, and responses of governing bodies and individuals (in this case
the education boards and School Chancellors) to create opportunities to explore contradictions and consistencies between entities of the state and the individual interviewees.

Equally as important is how the archival data presents a picture of the broader cultural political economy. As we went through archives, we would also begin to generate themes as a way to trace the trajectories of the school system in relation to the broader political economy. While many may recognize that a financial crisis in the 1970s would have had devastating effects on the city, less has been done on exploring the financial implications of this economic crisis on the public schools. In the archives we began to map how budgets were being rolled out and how projects were being supported. In making these connections, we were asking how these decisions worked with the intellectual and political relationships and experiences amongst different people.

Limitations

The study has presented various limitations. First, as a qualitative study there have been questions about scalability and generalizability of the study. Upon starting to conduct our interviews the project team would quickly be reminded that neighborhoods are varied and complex, and to study neighborhoods from a qualitative perspective would mean that it would be a challenge to gather a robust number of varied
views that would capture neighborhood diversity. The project would proceed with a focus on interviewing stakeholders who were active in the neighborhood at one point in time or another, but this meant that we were missing voices of less active or engaged residents. The design would also seek to focus on depth and particularity as a way to get generalizations to share within the broader literature.

Another limitation was trust. Being interviewed by outsiders, and specifically being interviewed on camera, made some potential interviewees hesitate or resistant to participating. In addition, the research team’s lack of awareness concerning the nature of relationships amongst the various stakeholders we sought to interview made it challenging to remain balanced in whom we would be able to connect with, and who would be willing to participate in the study.

Still another limitation revolved around digital social practices and digital infrastructure. First, the neighborhood has poor quality digital infrastructure. Reading the most recent iteration of the New York City Digital Road Map (2013) and New York City Department of Information Technology and Telecommunication (n.d.) website information, it became evident that like many low income neighborhoods in the city, East Harlem does not have sufficient free and accessible
internet. As the map below demonstrates (See Figure 4.1) whereas Midtown Manhattan is filled with a number of locations where one can gain free Internet access, East Harlem only had its two public libraries and restaurants like McDonalds offering WiFi.

Figure 4.1 Free Wifi in East Harlem, Community District 11, 2013. Source: Created by Edwin Mayorga using Open Data Source NYC

Moreover as the project team sought to develop partnerships with local organizations and individual participants, it became evident that while many residents have found ways to access the internet by paying for it themselves
for their homes, using their smart phones, or accessing some of the limited computer stations in the neighborhood (the libraries and the local community board office), the uses and practices of participation on the internet were not necessarily geared toward what might be defined as civic-minded internet practices. Civic-minded practices refers to Internet use for discussion and consumption of digital materials concerning local politics, policies, and other related social issues. The Pew Internet Research Institute recently reported that a significant percentage of adults across the US do use the internet to access information about civic issues or to participate in political-centered discussion, but in East Harlem there were a narrow tier of individuals who are civically engaged in the internet. Based on who has connected with the project through social media platforms, it appears that there are individuals already civically active in the community and online. At the same time, other interviewees who were active in the community, expressed the fact that they were not very active on the internet at all, while one participant suggested that while he sees digital tools being used, he felt the neighborhood and organizing in the neighborhood still revolved around face to face connection because working and poor people don’t have
time and resources to be on the internet (Field note, 2013). The issue around the Internet was thus economic and cultural.

The cultural dimensions to this question were also reaffirmed in working with my co-researchers. While they were both very active on the Internet, they were most active on Instagram, which focuses on posting photos amongst your followers, and less interested in using Twitter and Facebook. Across the platforms they had primarily used the tools as a way to engage with friends and family, rather than using them as ways to read news or to discuss social issues. At this point, engagement around the various social media tools is underdeveloped. This reinforces the importance of the digital as a compliment to face-to-face relationship building.
CHAPTER V

TAKIN’ HITS, RACIAL NEOLIBERAL URBANISM IN EL BARRIO

It was a sweltering summer day in the city when Mariely, one of the project co-researchers, and I, met in front of the local Community Board (CB11) offices on Park Avenue and East

4 “In New York City, Community boards are local representative bodies. There are 59 community boards throughout the City, and each one consists of up to 50 unsalaried members, half of whom are nominated by their district’s City Council members. Board members are selected and appointed by the Borough Presidents from among active, involved people of each community and must reside, work, or have some other significant interest in the community.

Each community board is led by a District Manager who establishes an office, hires staff, and implements procedures to improve the delivery of City services to the district. While the main responsibility of the board office is to receive complaints from community residents, they also maintain other duties, such as processing permits for block parties and street fairs. Many boards choose to provide additional services and manage special projects that cater to specific community needs, including organizing tenants associations, coordinating neighborhood cleanup programs, and more.” (New York City Community Affairs Unit, n.d.)
117th St. We, thankfully, entered CB11’s air conditioned meeting room to interview Hector Nazario, an East Harlem resident, public school parent, and the head of CB11’s Youth and Education committee. Born and raised in East Harlem, Mr. Nazario is in his mid-forties and has spent the last fifteen years formally involved in neighborhood education issues, first as president of the School District 4 Community Education Council (CEC 4) and more recently as part of the CB11 Youth and Education committee.

Mr. Nazario notes early on in our interview, “...if we go to the history of things, into where we're at now, there would be a lot of weariness, a lot of understanding of what's coming and I'm pretty sure you have an idea...a nice dark cloud is coming.” Mr. Nazario’s comment is indicative of the devastating effects of ongoing cycles of state driven urban renewal and abandonment that have continued into the present. Dávila’s (2004) Barrio Dreams, is an impressive historical ethnographic analysis of the remaking of El Barrio that documents these cycles of urbanism and masterfully demonstrates how processes of gentrification and Latinization converged in El Barrio over a decade ago. As such, this

5 Approximately nine months later a residential building a few blocks north would explode. This is now referred to as the East Harlem Explosion.
This chapter is intended to contribute to what Dávila has laid a foundation for and deepens our collective understanding of Latino urbanism in the twenty-first century. This chapter is anchored by our interview with Mr. Nazario and also draws on observation data, archival materials and relevant secondary source data in order to document these cycles of urbanism.

In this chapter, like Dávila (2004), I attempt to move between cultural and material aspects of the analysis in order to create a more comprehensive picture. I start with the cultural and demographic shifts in Latinidad in El Barrio, and then move to the remaking of public and affordable housing, cultural framings of the poor, cultural exploitation, the growth of biotechnological industry, and the policing of the poor. I will then briefly turn to strategies of survivance that are being used by people in response to social conditions. How, I ask, do people in El Barrio are trying to move beyond surviving the devastation of racial neoliberal urbanism?

**Interviewing Mr. Nazario**

Before delving into the interview, I wanted to say a few words about our, and my, relationship to Mr. Nazario. In doing research and community-centered work in the neighborhood, I had seen Mr. Nazario on a few different occasions, but our interview was the first time we had more formally spoken to
him. Based on my observations of Mr. Nazario and conversations I had had with others involved in local education and community development, it was clear he had become an influential actor in local education issues. He had been described by different people who knew him as "a little rough around the edges," or "still 'hood," in his mode of speech and interaction. Over time it became evident that he did not differentiate his mode of speech significantly across informal and formal settings.

I, an outsider, as a researcher invested in contributing to public education, found Mr. Nazario to be both accessible and intimidating. He repeatedly expressed his commitment to the youth of East Harlem and appeared appreciative of the political commitments and research of our project. At the same time his commitment to the neighborhood also made him very protective of the community and his own position, making him understandably suspicious of outsiders. His way of communicating with the project and me was what I might describe as cautious openness. I should also note that after our time with Mr. Nazario, Mariely often returned to this interview because she viewed it as representative of El Barrio that she knows and grew up in. To paraphrase Mariely, Mr. Nazario “told it like it was” in East Harlem.
There were moments in the interview where his comments communicated particular presumptions about what I already knew about issues or the neighborhood, so his responses would often not include any background on the issue. At times, I would clarify some of what he alludes to in the sections of the interview that I use in this chapter.

A Changing Barrio

Glumly, Mr. Nazario (2013) comments, "the history, the historicalness of East Harlem is diminishing for the simple reason of the push that's coming into our community on the development level." At the intersections of demographic change, economic inequality and urban renewal is a changing Latino core community. It is a change where history and people’s connections to a place are being cut. As I have argued throughout, these changes in the midst of racial neoliberal urbanism are both racio-cultural and economic. Here then I begin with demographic shifts in the makeup of El Barrio over the last decade.

While in decline, and sometimes precipitously, since 1950 (210,000 to 110,000 in 2000), the district has generally been growing over the last decade. By 2010 El Barrio was comprised of over 122,000 people, of which 61,164 identified as Latino (49.8 percent of the overall population) (Community Board Eleven, 2013). Though Latinos continue to make up the largest
racial/ethnic group in the area, this was a significant decline from previous decades where they made up over 50 percent. Interestingly, the groups that saw the largest increases were Whites (moving from 7 percent of the population in 2000 to 11 percent by 2010) and Asian Americans (moving from 2 percent in 2000 to 5.6 percent in 2010) (Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York, Inc., 2013a).

Morales (in press) reminds us that the formation of a Latino core community is “located in the construction of a collective identity” (p. 2). The Latino “community” of El Barrio has seen both growth and change. To note, as the population of the neighborhood began to decline between the 1970s and 1990s, the proportion of the population that was Latino became larger (See Figure 5.1). CB11’s (2013) “Statement of District Needs: Fiscal Year 2014” suggests that while the Puerto Rican population remains the overwhelming majority of Latinos in the neighborhood (26.8 percent of the community’s population), the number of Mexicans, (9.5 percent), Dominicans, and other foreign-born Latino populations (13.5 percent combined) have grown significantly since the 1990s. As such
we see a change in who comprises the Latino population over the last two decades. Thus the question becomes: What does this mean for the El Barrio as a Latino “representational space” (Aponte-Parés, 1998)?

Looking at the make-up of some of the major retail corridors are instructive in observing spatial, representational, space. Each corridor varies in whose “presence” dominates. For example, East 116th Street has become a focal point for the Mexican community, with important Puerto Rican establishments like the Casa Latina Music Shop. At the eastern end of the 116th St. is the East River Plaza and its array of big box stores, which Dávila (2004) was beginning to
explore as her study was completed. At the same time, down by Lexington Ave and 104th St there is a mixture of Puerto Rican and Mexican businesses and an upscale pub called Lexington Social.

Aponte-Parés (1998) suggests that barrios are a political-cultural construct, and as such representational spaces are a production of encuentros (encounters) or choques (collisions) (Anzaldúa, 2012) of varying representational claims to land and culture. As such the conception of El Barrio’s as a Latino core community is never static, as different representations are chocando through the claiming of retail and residential spaces. In later sections of this chapter, I look at housing and cultural exploitation as related to this competition over space.

While I have focused on a politics of representation here to begin, it would be a mistake not to also pay attention to the material conditions that are also operative forces in life in El Barrio. Mr. Nazario is very aware of this, and comments:

Yes, a lot of issues that comes your way could strictly be Latino. In this way aspect because Latino goes a long way. In my eyes besides being a Puerto Rican man, you have Mexicans, you have Dominicans...I would put all of them in the same category Latinos in a nutshell, but Latino has been hitting a lot of brick walls for many, many years. A lot of people don't understand that a lot of people come from the
Caribbean to learn English and when they get here the way they're treated is unacceptable just because they speak a different language than others. They're discriminated once they walk into the door just because they're Latino. (Nazario, 2013)

Theories on gentrification suggest that economic conditions will improve with urban change, but change does not always occur, as East Harlem seems to suggest. By 2010 there were 97,213 work-age residents, but of that population 52 percent we either unemployed or not in in the official labor force (Community Board Eleven, 2013). Thirty percent of the overall population was living below the poverty line, and of that 30 percent nearly 40 percent of that group identified as Latino (Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York, Inc., 2013a). Perhaps most concerning is that in a community where 41.3 percent of children are living in poverty, 52 percent of Latino children in El Barrio were living in poverty (Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York, Inc., 2013b). Taking these statistics together confirm what I have said previously, which is that in El Barrio poverty is a “changing same” in that the poorest, mostly of Color, remain the largest portion the community. While the most recent wave of gentrification has been oriented toward appealing to a more monied, white,
middle class, the story of East Harlem continues to be that of the poor.

What is overlooked when looking at social class in the midst of gentrification is the thinning of upper working class, or lower middle class, people, who are a pivotal anchor in stabilizing poor communities. In El Barrio, where being middle class required a household income of $70,000 (O’leary, 2013), the population I’m referring to are those that make between $25,000 and $69,999, and the percentage of people in El Barrio who make up this group is approximately 25 percent of the community (and those making over $75,000 are over 30 percent of the population (Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York, Inc., 2013a). This kind of income distribution depicts a polarized landscape where the poor and the wealthy are overrepresented, while the lower middle-class is disappearing.

What I hope becomes evident here then is that the cultural and the economic are again entangled as questions of representation function along with, against, or in spite of, economic conditions. Housing is a critical venue where these social processes operate, and it is where I turn my attention next.
Urban Remaking and Housing

Racial neoliberal urbanism in East Harlem is driven, partially, by the coupling of luxury housing development and the decline of various forms of affordable housing. As I discussed in the historical chapter, the neighborhood has been a site of multiple waves of urban renewal, including the massive transformations centered on the construction of public housing super blocks during the middle of the twentieth century (second wave gentrification), followed by a process of gentrification characterized by luxury real estate development, and the related displacement of long time residents (third wave) (N. Smith, 1992). Marina Ortiz (2013), like a number of the interviewees, notes the changes in the neighborhood, “seeing all the new luxury developments coming up and that changing the demographics in a way has not been healthy for the neighborhood. Because you have some occasions with huge income and class discrepancies.”

Affordable housing and organized abandonment

A deterioration of public housing infrastructure and the city’s shift toward “affordable housing,” rather than public housing (Bloom, 2009; Zukin, 2009), became a prohibitive force in the remaking of East Harlem. It is this third wave, which began in the 1990s and has accelerated during this century,
that Mr. Nazario is addressing as he moves us from housing and the neighborhood to struggles in education.


As a resident of the Wagner projects (see Figure 5.2) for his entire life, Mr. Nazario centers his comments on the hits public housing in New York City has been taking over the years. East Harlem is home to the largest concentration of low-income public housing in the country (East Harlem Juvenile Gang Task Force, 2011). It is estimated that East Harlem has roughly 40,500 rent-regulated housing units, and of those 14,700 are public housing units, 9,900 are defined as rent-stabilized units, and another 15,900 comprise a variety of other rent-
regulation programs (RPA, 2012). Moreover, according to the East Harlem Juvenile Gang Task Force (2011) young people in East Harlem are more likely to grow up in public housing than youth in other parts of the city.

Public housing in New York City has been held up as an exception to the national retreat from public housing (Bloom, 2009) and the subsequent demolition of entire sites (Goetz, 2013), but this exceptionalism should not be accepted without further investigation. It is important to note that NYCHA residents, like Hector Nazario, have lived in public housing for multiple decades. The original intent of low-income public housing was to provide New Yorkers with residences until they were able to afford other housing options. The decline of job opportunities with livable wages made moving out of the residences next to impossible, and as such, residents like Mr. Nazario have made NYCHA houses into permanent residences, creating a form of permanency across large portions of East Harlem. At this point, the duration of residence in public housing average is 21 years (New York City Housing Authority, 2013) Until recently, there was a commonly held assumption that public housing would provide a protective bulwark against gentrification (Morales and Rivera, 2009).

The feeling of permanence provided by public housing appears to be a positive. But feelings of permanence have eroded
over the years, and most saliently during the last decade, when disinvestment from NYCHA by various levels of government has led to the deterioration of living conditions for residents and has put NYCHA itself in an extremely unstable position.

Over the last decade, divestment in public housing from federal, state and city government, and later economic troubles incited by sequestration, brought NYCHA to its knees. By 2001 the majority NYCHA development were built and supported through federal funding streams. Ongoing streams of federal funds come in the form of operating subsidies to support ongoing operations and capital subsidies, to provide funds for improvements to the built structures (Bach & Waters, 2014, 8)(See Figure 5.3). Between 2001 and 2011 these federal subsidies were falling short of expected levels, and this was only made worse when the federal budget was under sequestration. By 2013,

**Figure 5.3** NYCHA-Estimated Cumulative Losses, HUD Operating & Capital Subsidies, 2001 to 2013.
according to CSSNY, the cumulative operating subsidy loss over the previous 12 years had mounted to nearly $1 billion.

The impact of these federal losses was exacerbated by the steady decline of state and city level support for public housing. In 1998, for example, then state governor George Pataki initiated the termination of New York State’s annual cooperation subsidies for the fifteen state-financed developments (approximately 12,200 housing units), which was already at a low of $10 million at the time. Similarly, in 2003, the city would withdraw its annual operating subsidies for the six city financed development (8,000 units). The city has already started decreasing its subsidy the previous two years (from $34 million to 30 million in 2001, and down to $13 million by 2003). In 2003, Mayor Bloomberg also reduced the funding for the Department for the Aging (DFTA) by transferring the 29.4 million annual costs to operate 105 NYCHA senior centers to NYCHA. These subsidy cuts and additional operating burdens forced NYCHA to reallocate its federal subsidies to support the operation of all of its development. It was not until 2006 that NYCHA would make public that it was operating with a deficit that was then estimated at $168 million.

The consequences of NYCHA’s financial straits have affected all aspects of NYCHA, and the residents of the communities have felt the impact most acutely. The hit on
NYCHA is most visible in the deterioration of the buildings and NYCHA’s inability to address those issues. The CSSNY (Bach & Waters, 2014) report, *Strengthening New York City’s Public Housing*, notes, for example, that over a third of NYCHA residents identified “heating, leaks or major repairs” a serious problem, compared to 17 percent of low-income tenants in private-rental buildings” (p. 5). The report also notes that between 2001 and 2011 the proportion of “NYCHA residents reporting three or more deficiencies in their homes had increased from 20 to 34 percent of households” (p. 5).

In East Harlem the deterioration of the housing has persisted and in 2013 150 residents of the Lexington Houses on East 99th Street began to organize a rent strike following a three-week gas-outage (Weichselbaum, 2013). With cost-saving reductions in NYCHA workforce (from 14,700 staff members in 2001 to 11,800 in 2011) and maintenance and operations contracts in the first half of the decade decreased by $24 million, it was untenable for NYCHA to actually keep up with repairs.

In sum, the hits that public housing have been taking fall in line with what Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2008) has described as places of organized abandonment. These places are “planned concentrations or sinks—of hazardous materials and destructive practices that are in turn sources of group-
differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death...” (p. 35)
The purported exceptionality of NYCHA housing within the
national public housing landscape was curbed by the veiled but
destructive effects of divestment and the structural
adjustments to governance of these sites. The last 15 years
have bared witness to the toxification of these housing
structures leading to their material deterioration, and making
residents vulnerable to premature deaths.

**Remaking through privatized development**

Running parallel to the attack on public housing has been
private development. There have been attempts to privately
develop NYCHA owned property, which was thought to be
untouchable. Recently there was an attempt supported by NYCHA
to sell off parking lot spaces on NYCHA sites to build luxury
developments in and around the public housing. This “in-fill”
project (Mays, 2013b) continues to be explored though it has
been successfully challenged thus far. For those who remain in
public housing, and other affordable housing programs, their
stability is fragile as investment in infrastructure for
public housing fails to meet need, and many legal contracts
for affordable housing programs are set to expire within the
next five to 20 years (approximately 15,900 units) (Regional
Planning Association, 2012). As a result there is impending
precipitous decline in rent regulated and affordable housing
in the neighborhood that will most likely become part of the rapidly growing market-rate or unregulated housing in the neighborhood.

Large swaths of apartment buildings and old tenements have been purchased by local and international buyers. Many developers follow an 80/20 model where developers agree to make 20 percent of their units affordable (New York State Homes and Community Renewal, 2011). Of course affordability is premised on the Average Median index (AMI) for the area which stretches north and east into far wealthier suburbs and neighborhoods in the city. As a result, the affordability is not reflective of the economic situations of the majority of East Harlem residents who are not in public housing, which results in a very limited number of options that are actually affordable.

It is this decline of affordable housing and growth of unregulated housing that becomes a central vehicle by which accumulation by dispossession occurs. Unregulated markets fuel the expansion of capital, and results in the dispossession of middle class and working poor individuals who do not qualify for public housing but are no longer able to affordability in the neighborhood. The poor, who are not in public housing, are often immigrants, some undocumented, who are not able to easily participate in public housing opportunities given
various strict requirements needed to qualify for these homes. This makes their housing situations tenuous.

As Mr. Nazario (2013) notes, the undocumented, live "on the outskirts" of society, and as such they have "a lot on the line" when it comes to housing and employment. The struggles in the tenements and private housing sector very much remain part of the difficult conditions faced in El Barrio. Slumlords that seek to increase rents to push out people that are undesirable because they are not providing the amount of profit that slumlords seek to make is a recurring story in El Barrio [see the film Whose Barrio?: The gentrification of East Harlem (Morales and Rivera 2009)].

I will note later that these conditions have pushed people to organize in order to defend themselves, but here I want to suggest that these conditions contributed to a polarized situation where working class and lower middle class individuals and families are displaced, leaving those in public housing, those living on the "outskirts," and new "settlers" who are able to purchase market-rate housing. Processes of displacement are coupled to disinvestment becoming devastating traits of dispossession in racialized neoliberal urbanism. Moreover, the struggles in housing reinforce deficit cultural framings that make navigating social conditions even more difficult.
Culture of Poverty Remix

As residents in public housing or affordable housing programs, Ms. Ortiz and Mr. Nazario had much to say about how El Barrio and its’ residents were culturally framed within the urban imaginary. For Ms. Ortiz, El Barrio is represented in primarily two ways:

We’re the place where all crime and murder happens, and that within there is used to perpetuate stereotypes about Puerto Ricans and immigrants...If we’re not that, then we’re like the place to be, where all new hipsters are going and pioneers are coming to create a new East Harlem... It’s sort of like a real estate spread of the hottest places to eat and live and visit and cultural hot spots. (Ortiz, interview)

Taken together, these two forms of representation are indicative of a cultural framing process that criminalizes and exploits as a means to legitimize corporeal, economic, and political dispossession. More, the discourse draws on ‘culture of poverty’ themes that have vilified poor individuals and families, and Black and Latino families since the Moynihan report (Greenbaum, 2015; Soss, Fording, & Schram, 2011). Within the cultural political economy these pejorative cultural constructs are sampled and remixed to continue placing blame for current living conditions on the poor themselves. Soss et al
(2011) argue that the convergence of cultural and political economic processes bring forth modes of governance that do not eliminate the sources of poverty but instead “temper the hardships of poverty and ensure that they do not become disruptive for the broader society” (Soss et al, 2010, Chapter 1, paragraph 1). Following this line of thought, I unpack cultural themes of racial neoliberal urbanism beginning with dependence and disposability.

**Dependence and disposability**

Job insecurity, crumbling housing, and dependence on state financial assistance are overlapping marks of material conditions that shape the capacities individuals and families have in navigating their lives and advocating for themselves.

As much as issues of poverty and affordable housing are questions of material resources, and racio-cultural discourses that inform how the poor are viewed or rendered invisible in policy and the spatial imaginary. Mr Nazario is of Puerto Rican descent and has lived in public housing his entire life (44 years at the time of the interview). As such, the people of the projects are recurring actors in the stories he shared with us, and his descriptions speak to how the poor are framed. Mr. Nazario (2013) notes:

> These people at NYCHA are the people that have the schools next to them. Don't get me wrong, we have working
families in NYCHA but the majority of the families are families that are receiving public assistance or some type of thing from the government. When it comes to jobs, I call them survival jobs, like McDonald's, GameStop, the retail field that once again we can't really maneuver days off... you're very expendable, meaning miss one or two days they get somebody else in your place.

Mr. Nazario sees the residents of NYCHA as hard working but he also understands that their ability to make something of those efforts is hamstrung by structural arrangements. Being denied full access to jobs, the residents of NYCHA are forced to either live off of public assistance or to seek part-time or contingent employment. As they navigate these employment challenges, culturally they are framed as dependent and disposable.

Dependence is a well-worn cultural frame tied to El Barrio. Across the neighborhood, not only within NYCHA, the number of persons who receive some form of government assistance made up 45.9 percent (55,294 people) of the total population in 2011, which was actually a drop from 2005, when the 57,517 people receiving assistance made up 48.8 percent of the population of the community district (New York City Department of City Planning, 2011, p. 11). While the numbers make clear there is a large population that relies on
government assistance, there is a persistent cultural linking of economic dependence to social depravity, moral weakness, and overall laziness.

This cultural framing contributes to shaping labor market opportunities for the poor. Unless the poor are able to access educational opportunities and/or social networks that would afford them a broader set of employment opportunities, “survival jobs,” as Mr. Nazario described them, using public assistance, or accessing illegal and unregulated jobs within the informal economy, are their only options. Tied to dependence then is a cultural framing of the poor as disposable. From the perspective of employment, “survival job” employers rely on the precarious situations that their employees live in order to discipline their work. Because there are no job protections, employers are free to require of their employees as they deem fit. If employees do not meet expectations, it is easy to fire a person and hire another. As Mr. Nazario astutely notes, people are rendered “expendable,” or disposable.

In short, because the poor are seen as both dependent and disposable they are understood as antithetical to a neoliberal conception of the good, productive, citizen. As Soss et al (2011) note, “since Hayek in the 1960s to the present, neoliberalism has offered a moral and political vision of the
good citizen as an individual who is a disciplined entrepreneur who is able to “meet their own needs, accepts personal responsibility for their problems and manages their daily affairs with prudence” (Chapter 2, section 2, para 9). To be dependent and disposable is contrary to this construct and the poor are thus rendered as a hindrance to the economy and civic life, rather than important contributors to society. Seen as an intractable problem, there has been a shift in how the poor are culturally framed from “the deserving poor” to “marginalized single-parent, welfare, and minority families” (Goetz, 2013, p. 7) that merit being managed by the state. Drawing on already racialized discourses of dependence and disposability, the state is able to legitimately employ what Soss et al (2011) describe as a set of “neoliberal paternalist” policies and strategies that criminalize and exploit the poor.

**Exploitation**

In addition to the displacement of working and middle class, and of Color, people, neoliberal urbanism in East Harlem also rests on the cultural exploitation of the already dispossessed. When the global retailer, Target, opened its doors in East Harlem's East River Plaza, for example, the promotional campaign centered on including images of low rider bicycles, apartment buildings, and using Spanglish wording (ex NYSi for NYC) all over advertisements on train cars and local
streets. On the day of the opening, a banner that ran the length of the entryway doors and windows was dominated by the word “HARLEM” (Fernandez, 2010). Local resident were quick to point out, first that this was "East Harlem, and that, more importantly, these promotion practices demonstrated a superficial and limited understanding of the neighborhood and its history. As a result, these practices were clearly an offensive and exploitative use of local languages and cultures for the purposes of brand promotion and capital accumulation. These processes speak to a brand of neoliberal multicultural antiracisms (Melamed, 2011) that pivots on the advancement of capital by means of discourses of inclusivity that maintain material inequities. The tragedy, then, is that superficial appropriations of cultural and linguistic markers of a Latino core community is ‘taking place’ as the people and small businesses that produce these cultural markers are being displaced and economically disappeared from the neighborhood.

Given these current conditions, the outlook of the neighborhoods is not a very bright one for Mr. Nazario. "Once the NYCHA scenario folds," Mr. Nazario notes, "whoever is still around to talk about it will talk about it as our ancestors... You know how you go and they be like 'oh, I remember'... we’ll be in that same phase." As highly criticized as they are now, and historically, NYCHA housing became an
integral part of the cultural, economic and spatial formation of the neighborhood during the second half of the twentieth century. The precarious situation that NYCHA stands in reflects the difficult circumstances the neighborhood faces. The racialized neoliberalization of El Barrio involves a multiplicity of strategies of dispossession, divestment, and cultural erasure and exploitation. Most importantly, the material and discursive effects of these processes are being most directly felt by, as Mr. Nazario described, "the struggling people...the poverty people.". The question I turn to then, is: How do schools and the relationship between schools and the broader community fold into the circuits of racial neoliberal urbanism?

**Silicon Alley, Gentrification 2.0?**

Thus far, I have focused on retail and housing as two of the important sites where racial neoliberal urbanism works through the neighborhood. Another area of the remaking of El Barrio that has not received as much attention is the expansion of technology and biotechnology industry and education in, and around the neighborhood. Sassen reminds us that in the midst of an era of globalization and high technology, place is central to the “multiple circuits through which the economy is constituted” (Valle & Torres, 2000, p. ix). The initial dot-com boom of the mid 1990s was concentrated in particular regions across the
U.S., most notably the Silicon Valley in California and the greater Boston area. New York was a distant third to Silicon Valley and Boston up until 2007, when a number of digital start-up companies began to blossom (Bowles & Giles, 2012). As an entrepreneur who made his money through financial technology development, Bloomberg also encouraged the city’s digital evolution in both computer technologies and biotechnologies. Beginning in 2011, New York City began publishing New York City’s digital leadership, a “Digital Roadmap (DRM)” (New York City, 2013) that articulated the city’s vision for making New York “the number one digital city,” in the US (p. 1). The Bloomberg administration also used the city’s Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) to encourage bioscience industry development (Center for an Urban Future, 2013). This push in technology-driven industry would in varying degrees become part of the remaking of East Harlem as well.

Prior to the mid-2000s science and digital technology development was a challenge as it was not divorced from the socio-economic challenges that the neighborhood continued to face. In education, the digital struggle was one that came up against struggles over the continual struggles over crumbling facilities. Computer literacy was an area that the schools were beginning to pay attention to, as internet use policies were being implemented and funding to install wiring for internet
access was beginning to be included in budget discussions (BOE archives, box #?). In general, there was limited infrastructure to cross, let alone close, emerging digital divides. In impoverished neighborhoods like East Harlem, libraries were some of the few places where there was some access to the Internet and computer literacy courses were being offered in libraries and other education centers. It must also be noted that there were efforts, like the Young Scientist club, where culturally relevant content intersected with science and technology-centered skill development (Schauble & Glaser, 1996).

Most relevant to this discussion is the role of land in urban remaking centered on digital technologies. Over the last decade “rust belt” cities like Rochester, NY, and Pittsburgh, PA, have turned toward a model of urban renewal that has been described as Hospitals and Higher Education where medical and higher education institutions would serve as the primary economic engines to sustain what were thought to be dying cities. The idea was to make the cities incubators for biomedical, technological research and innovation. Larger cities, like San Francisco and New York would also adopt this approach, focusing on creating zones where there would be a concentration of established companies (like Google in New York) and start-up companies — thus the invention of Silicon Alleys (Oremus & Wolff, 2013). These Silicon Alleys have signaled
another set of processes for remaking the city and neighborhoods. While the first silicon alleys were in downtown Manhattan, the next wave has been focused on the familiar mantra of finding cheaper and larger spaces with the promise of contributing to local economic development.

East Harlem has been most directly connected to the Cornell University biotech campus planned for neighboring Roosevelt Island and the varied projects of Mt. Sinai Hospital. In the case of Cornell University, the building of the facility required the demolition of a Psychiatric hospital/hospice and the relocation of its 700 patients. East Harlem was designated as the site for building temporary facilities for the 700 patients. The head of the local community board, noted that in this case, East Harlem was becoming a solution to a temporal-spatial issue the city faced as it tried to advance its corporate agenda.

Mt. Sinai also stands at the crossroads of land and digital economies. In addition to a joint $100 million venture capital fund called the New York Early-Stage Life Sciences Funding Initiative, the city provided Mt. Sinai $5 million to launch the Mount Sinai Institute of Technology (MSIT). For MIST the goal is clearly focused on lining research to the market, as is made clear in its mission statement:
At Mount Sinai Institute of Technology (MSIT), our goal is to radically transform biomedicine through the discovery, design, development, and delivery of entrepreneurially-driven, technology-based solutions to critical unmet medical needs. Collaboration — across disciplines and organizations — drives our work forward. We bring together the resources and expertise of a top academic medical center with the creativity, flexibility, and commercialization opportunities of an entrepreneurially focused organization. Join us as we build an institute poised to catalyze biomedical innovation. (MSIT Website)

In addition to MSIT, Mount Sinai has also been supporting the launch of small start-ups, like KiiLN — Keystone for Incubating Innovation in Life Sciences, which was being launched by five women scientists from Mount Sinai (DNA article). KiiLN is also committed to being an incubator for entrepreneurial scientists, and explicitly notes that they want to “aid in the revitalization of East Harlem by building a culture that sustains innovation” (“KiiLN,” n.d.). Clearly, these projects that are receiving tremendous amounts of funding reinforce a culturally neoliberal discourse that situates the preexisting neighborhood culture as one that is moribund and lacking creativity and innovation.
Not coincidentally, local education sites have a longer history related to science and technology focused on education as a path to better educational outcomes for local students. In 1986, Benjamin Franklin High School on East 116th street, which had once been recognized as a site of community-centered support and innovation for the Italian and later Black and Puerto Rican populations of the neighborhood, was closed after years of being one of the worst performing and dangerous schools in the city. It was replaced by Manhattan Center for Mathematics and Science which was an initially small but highly structured educational program for the primarily of Color student population. The school was funded by the school along with significant support from local corporations like General Electric. Over time, however, fewer and fewer students from East Harlem would attend the school, as its reputation grew and it became a more selective option for higher performing students rather than a school that targeted local students.

Another major science-based initiative was the Young Scientist project that was established through the Center for Puerto Rican Studies. For ten years, the Young Scientist club has engaged youth in a variety of science skill development activities that were also grounded in cultural and historical understandings of their community.
More recently, education advocates have supported the development of Science and Technology-themed schools, as well as the creation of a top-line science lab in a middle school. Ironically, and sadly, the science lab in the middle school was part of a last ditch effort to prevent the closure of the school that was deemed chronically low performing.

The Harlem DNA lab continues to operate, offering summer programming for New York City students from across the city. As the DNA lab educator notes,

There was no real science education going on, specifically in East Harlem, where there’s a need for STEM education," said Marizzi, who is originally from Austria. "I think it’s a perfect place to expose kids to science, especially students who don’t have the opportunity to get science in school. (Lestch, 2013)

This kind of erasure of more locally driven efforts and their successes and struggles reinforces a decoupling of people to their history. This again reinforces neighborhoods as intellectual and cultural deserts rather than sources of experience and knowledge. This deficit framing of the neighborhood advances a reframing of the neighborhood as affordable and open to economic investment. As such this re-framing advances another reformation of the neighborhood.
Speaking with respect to the launch of the NY Life funding initiative and the MSIT, Sam Sia, founder of biotech incubator Harlem Biospace and associate professor of biomedical engineering at Columbia University notes “the two main ingredients most needed in early stage bio-tech are space and financing. Space is a huge challenge in New York City and if you have promising results you need investment.” Much like the city would focus on making itself seem credible during the economic crisis of 1975, East Harlem appears to be part of a remaking of the city for the purposes of further economic advancement that the majority of current residents will not be able to access because of insufficient training and education credentials.

Adding on to his comment, Sia notes that both San Francisco and Boston have the advantage over New York City when it comes to space and finance. This logic certainly f appears to be driving the current technological boom occurring in San Francisco, which should raise concern as recent studies and articles being generated by San Francisco-based activists, critical scholars and social media writers have been documenting the ways the boom has relied on and advanced the ballooning of housing costs and the displacement of the poor and people of Color. The digital boom in San Francisco is saturated in race/class conflicts that center around displacement.
Infrastructural weakness

Connected to the formation of “Silicon Alleys” is the question of digital infrastructure, and who has access to it. More precisely, I am referring to public access to Wi-Fi networks and related technology. The Digital vision was an informative piece of evidence that showed what the city’s vision was to improve the digital infrastructure across the city. This would require investment and other material resources.

One issue was the uneven, and unidirectional, use of social media for public engagement for local, civic, issues. One of the core tenets of the DRM is improving “digital engagement,” where the city focuses on improving its reach by identifying “the right technology and tool to reach their constituency and achieve their aims (p. 27). As such, the DRM’s vision of digital engagement defines engagement as a unidirectional activity, where governing bodies see themselves as information disseminators, for a public composed of consumers. This runs contrary to our own understanding of public engagement, where participants are seen as active, and equally legitimate.

About 42 percent of people in the US use social media for some form of political engagement. Of those 42 percent, the largest group of users are white males, under-50 years of age (Rainie, Smith, Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2012). Amongst our co-researchers, and interview participants (N= 18, there was
varying interest, and experience, in the use of social media for public, and political engagement. Participants who were under-30 years of age reported that they primarily used Instagram, and would use it to connect with their friends and family. They expressed not having used social media for political or public engagement very much. These patterns mirror national trends in social media use (Duggan & Smith, 2013).

Participants over-30, were more varied. Some noted being digitally engaged, primarily through Facebook and Twitter, while others stated that they were on social media (mostly Facebook), but rarely used it for either public, or personal, engagement. Anecdotally, one interviewee in the over-30 group, who reported he was “old school,” and didn’t use email and social media very much, noted that Twitter was vital to promoting a proposal he worked on for the Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP) [http://pbnyc.org/] in his district. PBP, is a community focused project where 10 City Districts are deciding, along with district residents, how to spend $14 million (PBNYC, n.d.). The most recent PBP evaluation report (Community Development Project at the Urban Justice Center, 2013) focuses on how organizers engaged local residents, and advocates, but makes little mention of the role of social media. Still, this interviewee’s comments made clear that the potential impact of social media for public engagement is understood, and used, by local advocates, but it
is not necessarily a part of the practice of the broader neighborhood.

In addition, we found that the local school district did not use a website, nor social media, to engage the public. Parents, at one local school, did request that the school use a mass text (sms) tool to provide families more school updates. There were also a few individual schools that used Twitter to reach out to families. In sum, our data suggested that using social media for public engagement, was not a common practice across East Harlem, and this, potentially, reproduced inequities of voice in political decision making. Equitable engagement was further inhibited by an unclear vision of digital practices amongst local institutions and government bodies. In the future, #BarrioEdProj would like to conduct a broader neighborhood survey to document how social media is used in the neighborhood, as a way to contribute to developing a neighborhood vision for engagement through social media.

A final aspect of this form of gentrification I wanted to highlight concerns digital infrastructure, and specifically access and adoption of high speed broadband. In the Digital Road Map (2013), it was reported that 99 percent of New Yorkers have residential access to high speed broadband (p. 3), 300,000 more low income residents have access to broadband (since 2011), there are 50 parks with free Wi-Fi, and the city has served
4,000 resident living in public housing (NYCHA) through its digital van initiative (New York City, p. 3).

Certainly, these advances are positive, but the DRM leaves open a number of questions concerning the scope of these improvements. For example, questions about broadband access and broadband adoption must be asked. Nationally, consistency of access to broadband remains varied, though more narrowly, along geographic, racial/ethnic, and social class lines. Types of social media used also vary along age and educational levels (Zickuhr, 2013). East Harlem is still a low-income, primarily-of-Color, neighborhood where 31 percent of people living poverty, and 24 public housing projects (14,700 units) make up large parts of the landscape. According to NYC Open Data maps (New York City, 2014), there are very few public Wi-Fi spots available in East Harlem, including McDonald’s restaurants and the local libraries. The two public parks with Wi-Fi are not mentioned in the map, nor are some of the other small businesses that offer Wi-Fi (openwifispots, 2014). Still, limited Wi-Fi access intersects with the fact that East Harlem libraries are in poor conditions (T. Anderson, 2014), and the neighborhood has one of the lowest levels of parkland per residents in the city (Chaban, 2012) Additionally, as a neighborhood with one of the highest densities of public housing in New York (W. Hunter, 2014), disparities in access to computers and the internet are
particularly stark (Wall, 2012). The 4000 people served by the NYCHA Digital Vans, city-wide, is a very small percentage of the 178,557 (March 1, 2014) residents that comprise NYCHA’s conventional housing program (New York City Housing Authority, 2014). What this suggests is that public access remains underdeveloped, leaving low-income residents with limited options for adopting broadband. Adoption is primarily mediated by financial constraints, including high monthly fees, hardware costs, hidden fees, billing non-transparency, poor quality of service and availability are major issues for low-income communities (Dailey, Bryne, Powell, Karaganis, & Chung, 2010, p. 3). At this point, data about access, and adoption, of high speed broadband in East Harlem is not available, and is something that we also want to include in future surveying.

**Policing Poor, Youth of Color**

El Barrio is a marginal place at the center of a global city. Nestled next to the elite space (land) of the Upper East Side, it is hard for the city to completely ignore El Barrio or directly dispose of the people who call it home. While less overt forms of dispossession continue to be key strategy in racial neoliberal urbanism, containment and discipline through the carceral system is central to defining the relationship between El Barrio and the state. Like other aspects of barrio life that I have discussed here, these processes operate within
the entangled politics of race and class. More, the youth of El Barrio who live in these difficult economic conditions are particularly vulnerable to being caught up in the carceral state’s clutches. Here then I mention briefly some of the particular ways policing of poor, youth of Color has functioned in El Barrio at this conjuncture.

Culturally, the gritty character of El Barrio is marketed and exploited, but it obfuscates the framing of the neighborhood as a dangerous ghetto that requires heavy-handed law and order. Marina Ortiz sees this in media and outsider depictions of El Barrio. She notes that El Barrio has been seen as “the place where all crime and murder happens, and that...is used to perpetuate stereotypes about Puerto Ricans and immigrants” (Ortiz, interview). Ms. Ortiz’ observation is another example of deficit-oriented cultural framings, and in this instance the deficit framing focuses on the poor as dangerous or threatening, and thus rationalizing and expanding policing.

“Stop-and-frisk,” as I discussed in Chapter III, was the signature policing practice of the Bloomberg era. “Stop and frisk” is a strategy involving aggressive stops and searches of pedestrians for a wide range of crimes that began in the 1990s (Gelman, Fagan, & Kiss, 2007). One of the key criticisms to this approach was the racial profiling that was being used and leading to a disproportionate number of people of Color being
stopped. In 2007 the NYCLU (2014) found that the number of total stops had exploded from 97,000 in 2002 to 500,000 in 2006 (Briefing Page). The NYCLU (2014) also found that

Young black and Latino men were the targets of a hugely disproportionate number of stops. Though they accounted for only 4.7 percent of the city’s population, black and Latino males between the ages of 14 and 24 accounted for 41 percent of stops between 2003 and 2013. Nearly 90 percent of young black and Latino men stopped were innocent (Np. 1).

With these astounding numbers, it was also striking how few weapons the police were able to find by employing this approach (2 percent of the time) (NYCLU, 2014).

Despite the decline in crime across the city, El Barrio was seeing an increase in criminal activity; specifically youth gang activity, school truancy and youth violence. For example, between 2007 and 2009, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) reported “an increase in identified youth gangs in Upper Manhattan from 10 gangs and 150 members to 29 gangs and 1000 members” (East Harlem Juvenile Gang Task Force, 2011, p. 5). Still the struggles for youth in East Harlem, and Harlem, are profound.

According to the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice, in 2008, Manhattan Community Districts 10 and 11,
representing Harlem and East Harlem, had the 3rd and 7th highest rates of detention for delinquent youth among all New York City neighborhoods (As noted in East Harlem Juvenile Gang Task Force, 2011). In 2009, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services indicated that Community District 11 had the fourth highest rate statewide of both delinquency filings in Family Court, and in the number of admissions to juvenile state placement. In November 2010, a total of 338 Manhattan youths were under supervision by the NYC Department of Probation. Of those, 179 (54 percent) were from Harlem neighborhoods (East Harlem Juvenile Gang Task Force, 2011, p. 9).

In addition, East Harlem schools have among the highest rates of suspensions and chronic absenteeism in the city, which is seen as clear warning signs for academic failure and potential criminal activity and gang involvement. More, much of the activity is based on geographic proximity, rather than an affiliation with more nationally known gangs, and the organizing of activity is based primarily through social media based communications. Combined these statistics seem to confirm the perception of El Barrio youth as potential criminal threats to other residents, even though it has been made clear that external factors like poverty and low educational achievement contribute to students beginning to be involved in criminal activity.
It was not a surprise, therefore, to see stop and frisk policy take on a prominent mode of control in El Barrio. In 2011 the New York Police Department reported that East Harlem’s 23rd police precinct had over 17,000 stop and frisk incidences, which was 4,600 more stops than the next highest precinct (32nd Harlem) (East Harlem Juvenile Gang Task Force, 2011). As such, youth were heavily surveilled and criminalized as a way to contain them and, the logic goes, displacing them through imprisonment.

Two other dimensions of policing that affect people in El Barrio is policing in the public housing and the policing of the undocumented. With the large concentration of public housing, there has been insufficient investment in either having more police presence or an engagement in advancing alternatives to policing by uniformed cops. Finally, in East Harlem there has been at varying times a presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, in the area. At one point, ICE was attempting to apply its secure communities strategy for identifying undocumented individuals. With about a quarter of the population being immigrant, and many undocumented, the impact of this policy and ICE, in general, was acute in El Barrio. While efforts have been made to curb the impact of ICE on El Barrio and the city (Khurshid, 2015) more recently, undocumented community members continue to live in fear of being
caught, making it difficult to move safely. With all of these daunting conditions and structural forms of dominance, the question turns now to how dominance has been and can still be challenges and resisted. I seek to address that question in the next and final section of this chapter.

**Survivance**

This chapter was primarily focused on mapping how racial neoliberal urbanism has circulated throughout El Barrio in order to situate the education-focused chapters that follow. Still it is important to recognize and learn from various modes of survivance that the people of El Barrio have engaged in, in this recent era. I will point to some of those efforts here, as well as in the closing chapter.

While I do not go into to great detail on this topic in this study, it is important to note that the political advocacy in El Barrio has also changed over the years. For example, the relationship between service models and direct action models has changed overtime. Lee (2014) has shown us that during the middle parts of the twentieth century, service organizations often supported and collaborated with direct action efforts to work toward change. Also, much of the leadership of direct action work would fold into the service organizations as activists began to be professionalized (Aponte-Parés, 1998), which meant a diminishment of direct action activity in El Barrio. When these
conditions were further layered upon by Giuliani’s severe cuts to non-profit, service, organizations (Pedraza, interview) by the 1990s, many of the smaller organizations that were often a combination of service and direct action were weakened, forcing many of them to close. By the time that the Bloomberg era began, much of the direct action work was in decline, and the service-oriented groups were present primarily through the larger organizations that survived the cuts in the 1990s. Despite these changes, the vibrancy of advocacy work in El Barrio continued in different ways.

The physical remaking of El Barrio has been premised on the displacement of the poor, and has given birth to political advocacy and social movement based on colonial/arrivant (Byrd, 2011) claims to space and land. As I demonstrated in the historical chapter, local government and non-profit organizations have played an important roles in advocating for, and with, the people of the neighborhood. During this period, City Councilwoman, and now Council Speaker, Melissa Mark-Viverito has been very involved in addressing gentrification and the lack of affordable housing.

In 2007, Mark-Viverito formed the El Barrio East Harlem Anti-Displacement Task Force, “a group of tenant associations, special-interest groups, social services and community activists who fight landlord harassment, evictions, homelessness and
overdevelopment” (Sheftell, 2007, p. para 13). The coalition of organizations that includes long time housing organizations, Hope Community, Inc. and the activist organization, Picture the Homeless is reflective of the shift toward non-profit organizations as they began to take a more prominent position in supporting poor neighborhoods in the mid to late twentieth century. This compensated for declining investment from the state. This model of survivance relied on governmental and organizational leadership to move forward their agendas.

In addition to government driven space-centered advocacy, El Barrio has a long history of direct-action organizing work that functions outside of traditional governmental channels. Historically the Young Lords and the Puerto Rican Socialists, among others, focused on engaging in a politics of liberation and transformation, rather than a politics of service. During the Bloomberg era, one organization that has taken this path is Movimiento por Justicia en El Barrio.

Movimiento started in 2005 by mostly migrant Mexican women to support primarily Mexican tenants fight against a slumlord named Steven Kessner (Morales, in press). While their focus has been on local housing issues, they see the attacks of gentrification and displacement as part of larger global struggle to support “all of those from below – those who have been hurt most by the capitalist system and by their governments
— to achieve dignity in their communities” (M. Molina, 2013). They have been inspired by both the Zapatista movement and the Young Lords, understanding their struggle as a global struggle against poverty, racism and displacement (M. Molina, 2013). Following Zapatista thinking, Movimiento also operated in a horizontal participatory model in their internal organization and external political work. The group defines its struggle as urban Zapatismo, drawing inspiration from the Zapatista movement in the Mexican state of Chiapas. As Movimiento organizer, Juan Haro noted, “we are practicing real democracy,” and continued: “Our form of struggle is based on the decisions made by the people, and it is the community that has the final word” (M. Molina, 2013).

This participatory approach creates a point of contrast with the coalition model that the Task Force was premised on. The Task Force’s coalition is one example of survivance that operates through a hierarchical leadership and representation model, and this shaped their capacity to influence social conditions. In exchange for greater reach, the coalition model leaves them vulnerable to losing control over their communicated interests as state-driven desires can play a major role in decision-making and action. On the other hand, participatory models like that of Movimiento present an approach that is incompatible with the power structure. Their capacity to reach
is often muted by the state and other entities, but they have more control over their shared interests.

Both models continue to exist in El Barrio as one can see in efforts led by NYCHA residents (Weichselbaum, 2013) or in the attempts to establish a Community Land Trust, which is "fighting for vibrant, equitable and sustainable housing and neighborhoods through community ownership of land" [as seen on New York City Community Land Initiative (NYCCLI) website (2014)]. In each of these instances there is coalition work being performed, though how much of a driving force elected officials or service organizations are varies in each case, and is successful to varying degrees. I think what these examples demonstrate is that land and space are among a number of critical aspects of urban politics that must be addressed. And like Morales (in press), "crucial to ameliorating this dynamic will be people-based movements and support from elected and community leaders to find ways to justify the preservation of core communities for core communities’ sake" (p. 29).

**Media & memory**

Another key form of survivance that pays attention to both the cultural and the political economic are local video and media production and public archiving. For a decade now, East Harlem Preservation (EHP) has been focused on being both a source of local news, as well as an organization that collects
and share local historical material. As EHP director Marina Ortiz (2013) notes, “we created the website . . . to provide an alternative to people to what the main stream media covers, and to show that there's a whole lot more to us. There's a lot more interesting things you can learn about East Harlem that are on the web in other places, but just don't go to the New York Post every day.” EHPs work is a direct response to the culture of poverty remixes that contributes to the persistent dispossession of people of Color. Through their website, social media platforms, and emails, EHP covers community meetings and political events, shares historical photos and current local news, among other things. As an organization where many, though not all, of the board members live in El Barrio, EHP has a physical presence at many of these discussions and advocacy meetings. In total, EHP thus becomes a strategy for articulating and organizing a communal memory of El Barrio.

Finally, there are two locally created films that have been central to documenting and resisting gentrification. (Morales & Rivera, 2009) film, Whose barrio? The gentrification of East Harlem, and Andrew Padilla’s 2013 film, El Barrio Tours: East Harlem Gentrification, both document aspects of gentrification that have taken place in El Barrio as a means to fight it. They both document the changing Latinidad of the community as processes of displacement, lack of affordable housing and luxury
condo development become the dominant processes of urbanism. Each film also highlights different attempts taken by groups of residents or organizations (like Movimiento en Whose Barrio?) in seeking to resist the effects of neoliberal racial urbanism. Screenings of the films have taken place in El Barrio, other parts of the city and across the country. In sharing these narratives of dominance, the films inspire conversation and calls to action in response to gentrification.

In being locally created video, El Barrio Tours in particular, become a powerful example of the power of placing production in the hands of those who are most directly affected by social conditions, the residents. We see this also in Youth Channel, the youth video production organization based in East Harlem, as well as Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute’s (CCADI) Apps Youth Leadership Academy, where “high school students receive hands on training in creating digital programs and apps while engaging with cultural histories of East and West Harlem, to prepare them for careers within the global digital economy” (Caribbean cultural center African diaspora institute (CCCADI), 2015). In each of these instances, local organizations have recognized the shifting political economy and the educational and civic skills young people need in order to produce their own individual and collective survivance.
Conclusion

Racial neoliberal urbanism has had a profound impact on spatial, cultural, political and economic make up of El Barrio. The stories told by Mr, Nazario and the other interviewees create a powerful picture of the racio-economic conditions that operate as a “changing same” in this economically vulnerable, but politically and culturally asset-rich Latino core community. In his interview Mr. Nazario would talk about how both the community and the schools were under siege, and this chapter provided some of the snapshots of this siege. Seen as meriting remaking, racial neoliberal urbanism has devastated the community under the guise of remaking the neighborhood, yet again, for the better. Remaking has been premised on cultural erasure and exploitation, as well as disinvestment and surveillance. I contend that this siege is a form of racial state violence that in many ways has carved up, or dismembered, the community as people are displaced from place, culture, relationships, and political power.

Still the people of the neighborhood have engaged in different modes of survivance in order to resist this form of state violence. Whether it be direct action or working through coalitions and more traditional channels within the political establishment, El Barrio has sought to stand up. We have much more to examine with respect to El Barrio, and what I have
presented here provides a template for moving our emphasis to early childhood education and educational governance at this conjuncture in the following two chapters.
CHAPTER VI

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR/DIRECTOR

Nestled across the street from the Gregorian-style Benjamin Franklin high school building, in a rather grey and thin-windowed building is the East Harlem Council for Human Services, Inc’s (EHCHS), Bilingual Head Start (EH-BHS). On a rather cold winter day I came to interview Rita Prats, the director of EH-BHS. Born in Puerto Rico, having lived in El Barrio since the mid-1980s, and serving as director of EH-BHS for the last 12 years, Rita has a nuanced perspective on the neighborhood and local early childhood education. Weaving Rita's perspective with relevant archival information and policy documents, I trace processes of neoliberalism and the procedures of racialization that latched on as they circulate through the Bilingual Head Start. I document and examine the ideological and material effects of these processes as well as highlight strategies and actions that the Head Start uses in order to navigate, and at times resist, the often-devastating effects of neoliberal reform.

The Changing Face of Who We Serve

Opening in 1969, EH-BHS was part of EHCHS' local work on the federal War on Poverty. To Rita, the struggles of El Barrio are primarily tied to the realities of poverty. “When you come to work...in this world, the real world, meaning El
Barrio,” Rita notes, “you understand that poverty... the challenges are greater,... la pobreza es increible, really incredible” (Prats Interview). As Rita would point out in our conversation, poverty continues to affect a large number of East Harlem residents today, but her comments would also make clear that who the poor are and how they are served has changed over the last 25 to 30 years. In this section I document poverty and the changing face of the poor, to distill aspects of the racio-economic field that the Head Start is situated in.

Reaching, for the latest edition of Keeping Track, a decennial study produced by the Citizens Committee for Children of New York, Rita points out that the percentage of East Harlem children living in poverty jumped from, an already high, 31.8 percent in 2008 to 44.2 percent by 2010 (include chart). It is apparent that despite the changing economic outlook of the city, “pockets of extreme poverty persist in the city, even in neighborhoods that are often thought to be improving economically” (Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York, Inc., 2012). There is a plurality of people in East Harlem who are either under, or un-, employed. Moreover, those who are employed are primarily in the service sector and many are part of the large informal economy.
As a director of an anti-poverty program, her focus centered on poverty, but this did not mean that she was not also paying attention to the changing racial-ethnic diversity of the neighborhood. Rita (2013) notes, since the late '80s, there have been many changes in the community, particularly regarding the demographics and culturally. In the '80s the Puerto Rican presence was very strong and started to change in the '90s where you started to see Mexicans, Guatemalans, Salvadorians, and people from Central America that started to come here. Basically, you started to see more the presence of the Mexicans. Everything started to change in the community, the image, the physical presence in the streets, the people.

East Harlem was shifting from a neighborhood where Puerto Ricans were the majority to a multi-Latino neighborhood where Puerto Ricans still made up a plurality, Blacks would be a large, but declining population, and Asian and White populations were small but growing.

Generally, East Harlem’s population had been in decline since the 1950s. White immigrants moving to the outer boroughs or out of New York altogether, then massive displacements that came with the building of public housing, and the abandonment of crumbling buildings, East Harlem was significantly smaller.
by the early 1990s. As the economic situation in the city was improving based on the enormous expansion of a service economy class in the 1990s, Mexican, Dominicans, Central American, Chinese, and West African populations, among others, would be key contributors to the growth in population in the neighborhood and the expansion of the those who would populate the service and informal economic sectors. It should also be noted that between 2000 and 2010, the White (non-Hispanic) population of the southern section of East Harlem would increase by nearly 55 percent (from 3,559 to 10,072 people), and the Asian population would increase by 83 percent (2,181 to 4,802 people) (Center for Urban Research, n.d.; New York City Department of Planning, 2013).

For EH-BHS, demographic changes in previous decades would mark a change in who they were providing services to. Having served the poor, mostly Puerto Rican, population that lived in both tenements and the housing projects, Rita notes that in this last decade,

most of the families that [they] serve are undocumented. We have some requirements to provide the service and that is income and age...We usually [serve] ...the lowest of the lowest, de los que se gana esos son los que les proveemos servicios, los pobres de los pobres... (Prats, interview)
While there are no definitive numbers on undocumented individuals living in East Harlem, the Census Bureau’s 2007 American Community Survey estimated that foreign-born residents numbered around 30,921 or 25 percent of East Harlem (as quoted in East Harlem Deportation Report, 2009), with 23 percent of the foreign-born coming from Mexico. Of the city’s 3 million foreign-born residents 499,000 (16.7 percent) were defined as "unauthorized immigrants" in the 2010 Census (New York City Department of Planning, 2013) Crudely assuming that the percentage of East Harlem’s immigrants were "unauthorized" the number would hover around 5,160 individuals. Indeed, an important shift in who was perceived as "los pobres de los pobres " (the poorest of the poor) was taking place in East Harlem, and this would produce a broadening of the differentiating effects of poverty on everyday life.

Living and learning in the shadows

EH-BHS’ undocumented, and mixed-status (Farina, 2013; Xu & Brabec, 2012) Latino families live in tenuous and difficult situations. First, like other new immigrant groups, these population’s struggles with navigating an unfamiliar system. “They’re facing challenges,” Rita comments, “as their stability here in the nation, their level of education, their level of understanding of the society...They don’t know how it works, the system.” In addition to a lack of knowledge about
systematic structures, undocumented families deal with limited access to the work forces, unstable housing situations, limited political recourse, and ongoing fear of deportation. Although immigrant populations that are documented and undocumented, have some work protections, this information is not made accessible, and as such undocumented individuals often deal with the blatant violation of their worker rights, including unfair wages and dangerous working conditions (NICE; WorkersJustice Project).

Moreover, immigrant families experience unstable housing situations that Rita Prats describes as homelessness. Immigrants, and particularly the undocumented, are often unable to access subsidized or public housing due to long waiting lists and restrictive admission policies (Waters & Bach, 2011). This situation results in immigrants having extremely uneven experiences with housing. Dominican immigrants, for example, have accessed much more regulated rental apartments, which include rent-controlled and rent-stabilized apartments (Regulation board site), while Mexican immigrants are primarily in unregulated rentals (Waters & Bach, 2011). Living in primarily unregulated rentals, Mexican immigrants are often faced with higher rental burdens, overcrowding and poor living conditions. In East Harlem, the mixture of high density of public housing, poor housing stock,
and the growing expansion of luxury building development, has 

further exacerbated the precariousness of housing for 

undocumented and documented immigrants. As Rita importantly 

notes:

My famil[ies], the families I serve, most of them are 

considered homeless. Homeless in the sense [that] ... they 
don't own or lease. You have several families living 
together on, under, one techo, you know? ...Under one roof, 
under one roof, and so based on that definition they are 
considered homeless. Most of the families we serve are 
considered homeless because of that particular reason. 
It's not that they're in the streets, is that they don't 
own their own apartment, their own lease. They share 
their house with all the families. (Prats Interview)

Unstable housing and working conditions are layered upon 
continual fears of deportation. Since the early 2000s, there 
has been a marked increase in the detention of undocumented 
immigrants across the nation, and according to “Amnesty 
International, approximately 67 percent of detainees are held 
in state and county criminal jails under contract with the 
federal government, ‘while the remaining individuals are held 
in facilities operated by immigration authorities & private 
contractors’” (East Harlem Deportation, p. 2). In New York, a 
city known to be a immigration sanctuary, the Department of
Correction allows “federal officials to interview, detain, and take custody of prisoners believed to be in violation of immigration law” (EH deportation, p. 2), and an estimated 13,000 New Yorkers have been placed into deportation proceedings through the relationships between the city and federal agencies. A “Secure Communities” program, where fingerprints of individuals booked in local jails is cross checked with the DHS database, further enhances the relationships between DHS and local authorities. Despite resistance from local groups and the City Council, the entire state of NY is obligated to use Secure Communities in 2011 (Iverac, 2012; Preston, 2012).

Anecdotally, the fear of violence that comes from tightened relationships between local and federal agencies was very real in East Harlem, as was made evident by the experience of a Mexican family in 2009. Presumed to be a member of a primarily-Mexican gang, NYPD and ICE agents entered this young persons’ East Harlem residence in the middle of the night and put him in jail. This high achieving student of a friend of mine did not have this terrifying experience resolved until his mother reached out to her son’s school for connections to legal services. What this anecdote demonstrates is the profound fear and difficult conditions that the “poorest of the poor” often face in East Harlem.
Astutely, Rita comments that the difference of those in poverty is more than just demographic, as differences in citizenship status between Puerto Ricans and undocumented populations means that there are “postures and options that [the] undocumented don't have” (Prats, 2013). The undocumented population has certain rights, but limited political and legal recourse, and Rita Prats is very aware of these realities. She went on to add that political and financial positions are differentiated by citizenship status, and “make it a different panorama in terms of the needs and social services and needs of these new residents of El Barrio” (Prats, 2013). Ultimately, the conditions that the undocumented face are of grave concern for Rita, as she states:

I'm worried about that [the needs of the undocumented, where it's going because let me tell you, if we don't do something with that portion of the population we're going to be in deep trouble. The future can look very uncertain, a population that isn't able to be self-sufficient is very worrisome... porque no podemos quedar en ghettos... we cannot continue being ghettos, marginalized from the rest of society. (Prats Interview)

It is with this changing racio-economic field that contemporary neoliberal reforms have circulated through EH-BHS.
The Neoliberalization of the Bilingual Head Start

While Head Starts are federally funded, these programs are local implementation organizations that are not immune to the ebbs and flows of the cultural political economy. As the population that EH-BHS serves has changed, it has also been feeling the effects of neoliberal education reform practices. In this section I want to highlight key practices of neoliberalism in education by examining more closely three aspects of current reform practices: funding, accountability, and common core standards.

EH-BHS is one of several hundred Early Childhood Centers that are under the direct management of the city's Administration for Child Services (ACS). Thus despite being a federally funded program, EH-BHS, is under the direction of both the city and the federal government. Early on during the Bloomberg administration early childhood education, ACS, and the Head Start programs it manages, would begin a process of realignment to the administration’s neoliberal rubric that would reach a major turning point with the implementation of EarlyLearn NYC in 2012. In 2005, ACS published a new plan for early childhood education and services titled “Rethinking Child Care: An integrated plan for early childhood development in New York City.” In the document, the authors state:
Because New York City’s child care system has faced severe budget constraints in recent years even while the need for care has continually mounted, *Rethinking Child Care*’s most pressing goal is to establish a mix of services that promotes full utilization of resources, makes contracted care and vouchers efficient and complementary, and responds to changes in communities. Most importantly, this goal will serve more of New York City’s children and their families (Chaudry, Tarrant, & Asher, 2005, p. 10)

Embedded in this statement was a focus on efficiency and coordinated control, a turn toward a more flexible model for accepting money for local services, and a maximization of preexisting resources. Many of the ideas in the document have appealed to family desires for better early childcare options. Notions like greater coherence within the system, more flexible requirements to increase access, and increased economic transparency on the part of local service providers, are ideas that seem like "good sense." With Head Start specifically, the document recognized that many New York City families living in poverty are still unable to access Head Start because of the narrow eligibility criteria that fails to consider varied costs of living levels (p. 18). Flexible
eligibility criteria appears to be a more responsive approach to meeting the needs of families.

Many, including Rita Prats, also welcomed greater accountability around fiscal management. She notes that in the past, "eran como fincas, en mi finquita podía hacer lo que quiera," (they were like farms, in my little farm I could do what I wanted) but, "today's very different with the [inaudible 00:51:00] you'll have to be accountable for each expenses, even the petty cash." In a framework driven by accountability measures, service and funding provision are less open to local control and, as the argument goes, local corruption. Still recognizing, as the document itself does, that public institutions and services are facing severe budgetary constraints, there is an underlying tone of, as Rita notes, "making do with less," while still being held to high performance expectations. This discourse can be understood as a disciplining force, where flexibility and resiliency in difficult situations becomes an esteemed set of cultural practices and questioning of the sources of poverty and inequity remain bracketed, and thus protected from sufficient critique. The issue of funding has been of particular salience to EH-BHS.

Over the twelve-years of the Bloomberg administration, promises of more early childhood funding would come up against
city budget cuts and dwindling funding streams that have placed early childcare programs under great stress. During the his first term in office, for example, Bloomberg would aggressively advocate for the state to provide $5.3 billion for education and $1.9 billion being specifically for early childhood (A. M. Phillips, 2012). While some in the city admired his demand, others argued that it was utopic to be demanding that the state foot the entire bill, and still others argued that he was using this aggressive approach to squelch criticism for the third grade promotion policy he implemented (Herszenhorn, 2004). In the years that followed, the number of children receiving some form of subsidized childcare services would be in decline (Head Start held steady at 18,000), as the city's budget would adapt to the economic downturn that began in 2008 (IBO 2012). In 2007, the city would serve about 127,000 children through subsidized programs, and by 2012 the city was serving 10,000 fewer students (Hamilton, 2012). Starting in 2010 the city's budget would include the cutting of thousands of seats and hundreds of millions of dollars in early childhood programs and after school programming. City agencies, including ACS, were asked to develop budgets that did not rely so heavily on city funds (Independent Budget Office of the City of New York, 2010), forcing the agencies to employ a number of cost cutting
strategies. One set of strategies focused on reducing the cost per child, which included "increasing copayments made by families, reducing administrative expenses, and shifting to a system that pays contractors based on actual enrollment instead of capacity" (IBO 2010 report, p. 5). Funding based on enrollment, rather than capacity, was coupled with proposals to reduce overall enrollment by obligating 5 year olds to attend DOE Kindergarten programs and Department of Youth and Child Development (DYCD) Out-of School Time afterschool programming (IBO 2010, p. 5). Finally, ACS proposed to close centers that have high lease costs, facilities in poor condition, and geographic locations where the need for subsidized child care was in decline (IBO 2010, p. 5).

In 2012 the city concretized many of ACS's proposed streamlining of childcare and cost cutting strategies through EarlyLearn NYC. At the press conference launching EarlyLearn, Bloomberg would say,

"EarlyLearn NYC revolutionizes early child care in New York City by standardizing education as part of child care...It gives us the opportunity to transform the system from the ground up and bring quality early care and education to New York’s neediest and youngest children during the critical developmental years of their"
lives. (New York City Administration for Children’s Services, 2012).


EarlyLearn would have a significant impact on the financial sustainability of many childcare centers. For one, unifying the management structure meant that funding and funding-allocation decisions would be completely centralized. Funding EarlyLearn NYC started at $487 million and would receive two additional funding increases from Bloomberg in 2012 (raising the budget to $558 million) as well as a onetime investment of $40 million from the City Council in 2013 (IBO 2012). Having a centralized budget, ACS would be able to reallocate funding according to the EarlyLearn framework that stressed providing for high poverty areas, according to zip code. This reallocation of funds would mean that children living in poverty who were not living in designated high poverty areas would have fewer affordable options available to them (de Blasio, 2012; IBO, 2012). Another issue was an initial cutting of 7,200 seats (IBO, 2012). The budget increases from the city and the City Council would prevent the
loss of seats for the first year, but the number of seats was not guaranteed in the budget for future years.

EarlyLearn also concretize ACS's proposal to base funding on actual enrollment rather than capacity (IBO 2012). By focusing on enrollment, the sites where enrollment was decreasing were also losing funding. While programs faced a loss of funding, EarlyLearn also instituted a "Pay for Play" system that required centers to contribute at least 6.7 percent match to the total annual operating costs (contributions could be monetary or in kind), and they would have to provide employees with health insurance (a cost that the city had paid in the past) (Scaglione, 2012; IBO 2012).

In sum, early care, city-wide, was experiencing the financial effects of the state's turn to a racial neoliberal governmentality (N. Flores, 2013; Rose, O'Malley, & Valverde, 2011) where problems in public services and institutions are solved through centralized government coordination, diminishing budgets, and increased responsibility of institutions for financial management and support of employees.

At EH-BHS, the staff has directly felt the circulation of these neoliberal practices, as they have tried to protect the programming they provide for the children (a topic I discuss later in this chapter). For example, "when President Obama
three years ago gave some monies for Head Start to be used to enhance salaries and other things," Rita notes, "the City of New York decided to use those funds for the debt of ACS" (Prats, 2013). While the rationale may be to protect the larger agency, these decisions clearly have an impact on the working and learning conditions at EH-BHS. "There have been no salary increases, nor any other form of quality enhancement," for EH-BHS staff "in four years," which Rita recognizes, "is a great challenge" for a group of women of Color who were already of minimal financial means. In addition the Head Start adapted its staffing pattern by not replacing staff members when they leave the school. By not replacing staff member, they have been able to avoid terminating its employees during budget cuts. This has also meant having fewer staff members to complete the same level of work that was expected with the larger staff. Throughout all of the reorganization of early care, EH-BHS was, as Rita had noted, having to do more with fewer resources. The difficulties of these conditions would only be further exacerbated by the increasingly punitive accountability system that was linked to funding and management schemes.

**Accountability**

In addition to on going funding cuts is the increased focus on measurement and accountability. In *Rethinking Child*
Care, ACS outlines the importance of having accountability procedures based on quality standards and performance measurements. Presented in the document is a performance measurement system that includes the following nine elements:

1. Program administration and fiscal management
2. Professional qualifications of staff
3. Teaching (pedagogy)
4. Curriculum and program structure
5. Assessment (of children for individualized instruction and for overall program planning)
6. Learning/physical environment
7. Child health and safety
8. Family support/partnerships
9. Community partnerships

It was proposed that the elements would be used as a framework for rating each childcare program. ACS notes that rating systems that reward higher quality and encourage providers to focus on program quality have shown promising results in improving programming (p. 21). What should be evident from this document is that early childhood education was following the trend toward accountability as a means for product quality control. It should also be apparent that quality and accountability was being tied to access to funding as an incentive tool.
In the midst of these budgetary adjustments in the city, early childhood would also have to deal with changes on the federal level. In 2011, ACS was listed as one of 132 substandard programs by the federal government. That year the Obama administration developed a new early childcare initiative that focused on increasing funding and increasing quality of Head Start. The trade off for increased funding was increased evaluation and the institution of a "recompetition" process. Head Start and other childcare agencies that were determined to be substandard would be forced to re-compete annually for federal grants. The thinking behind this competition was to open funding streams to broaden and diversify the number of care agencies, and expand the number of children that would receive services (Garland, 2011). For ACS, and centers that had contracts with them, like EH-BHS, being declared substandard put them at risk of losing $190 million (Garland, 2011). The competition would have a dramatic impact on the early care landscape as early care organizations that had been staples of communities for decades would "lose some or all of their programs," and many of the "smaller, stand-alone, centers were decimated" (Scaglione, 2012). The Obama and Bloomberg administrations' shared approach to improving quality in Head Start reflected a focus on market principals that tied funding to performance as a
means of disciplining organizations, educators, and students. The logic, simply put, our "education" product would improve through competition and heavy monitoring.

At EH-BHS, accountability and its ties to funding has meant an increase in compliance work, and increased public scrutiny. The school has seen an increase in paper work, the administration of evaluation tools, and the preparation of assessment data "that is then sent elsewhere" (Prats, 2013). Collected data was not used to inform and improve work, but used solely to ensure complicity with a set of expectations that were developed with little recognition of the economic and social conditions that people at the Head Start were living. At the same time, collected data was becoming a tool for other state actors to scrutinize and critique Head Start programs. Rita notes that in recent years there has been a reinvigorated critique of Head Start that references the 2012 federal study of Head Start's impact that noted, among other points, that any gains acquired through Head Start are lost by third grade (Puma, et al, 2012). Rita has found that in political circles, this critique of Head Start ignores the broader purposes of Head Start and devalues the influence of contextual factors that shape the programs. "All the gains are gone," Rita argues, "because they're not providing nothing else. Nobody talks about that, okay?" (Prats, 2013). Instead
of using the studies to ask how gains made in Head Start are sustained and nourished in the years that follow, data is used, as Rita suggests, "to desecrate Head Start." Here then is a prescient example of how program evaluation data is used to advance an attack on vital public institutions under the guise of accountability and reform.

The Common Core

Inside the classrooms, the accountability-funding framework has also shaped the curriculum. Developed in 2011, the "New York State Prekindergarten Learning Standards were designed to provide a framework that focuses on the learning and development of the whole child and was inclusive of the broad academic concepts of the newly adopted New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards" (New York State Department of Education, 2013, p. 5). Reading the guidelines, it is clear that they are firmly rooted in theories of learning that pay close attention to the individual development of children. On the next page of the guidelines, however, a slightly different message is communicated. It states:

The primary purpose of prekindergarten standards is to ensure that all children, including children with disabilities, students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), and English Language Learners (ELLs) have rich and varied early learning experiences that prepare them for
success in school and lay the foundation for college and career readiness. (p. 6)

The discourse of "college and career readiness" has been vaulted into the center of education reform discourse, as the "common sense" end-goal of education policy and practice (Kumashiro, 2008). Critical scholars, have on the other hand, demonstrated how this term marks a collapsing of US education into a single legitimate path, and often veils developmental and cultural difference and structural inequality, in order to contribute to the forming of flexible and contingent laboring subjects. I argue that the juxtaposition of "conflicting messages" is a characteristic procedure of neoliberalism wherein discourses that stem from notions of "developmentalism" and "holistic education" are re-worked to make the disciplining effects of the neoliberal logic that undergirds standardization, more palatable.

The writers of the standards themselves recognize the disciplining power of the standards, and continue to present conflicting messages as a technique throughout the text. For example, the guidelines state that the guidelines are NOT to "be used as assessment tools or to stifle the teacher and student creativity" (New York State Department of Education, 2013, p. 9). At the same time it also states that the guidelines should be a "guide for planning experiences and
instructional activities that enable children to meet the standards" and a bridge to "the standards for those attending K-12 in public schools" (p. 9). The inclusion of a list describing what the guidelines are NOT, can be read as an admission of the material effects of standardization. By including this "not" list, the writers are also absolving the guidelines from being responsible for shaping the behaviors of educators and students that would be deemed as misinterpretations and misapplications of the guidelines. In this way the guidelines are detached from the very material ways that programs are compelled to adapt to standards in order to survive.

Rita (2013) notes, "...there's a lot of pressure because the nation, we are behind the educational needs of this global world in this day's society. So [we] have gone with a trend. We have already implemented the standard core..." (interview). There is a sense of urgency at the school around keeping up with the world, and this urgency has contributed to the realignment to Common Core guidelines despite the fact that early childhood programs are not obligated to do so.

As centers like EH-BHS were realigning to the Common Core, the city was also creating Common Core compliant curricula. The production of these units was to provide concrete examples of childcare center realignment for the
purposes of creating high quality curriculum (New York State Department of Education, 2013, p. 9). At EH-BHS, the focus was on realigning while protecting their "creative curriculum" (Prats, 2013) that was centered on healthy foods, bilingualism and the arts for the children and parents. The EH-BHS example makes clear that undergirding the guidelines, and standards, was a presumption that curriculum quality was generally low, and thus permitting the state to set and impose their own terms for high quality curriculum. Ironically, the city's Common Core-aligned pre-K curricula, and an English Language Arts unit on plants (NYCDOE 2011), specifically, would be quickly criticized by parents and Common Core critics when it became apparent that the curricula was more appropriate for second graders, highly teacher centered, and did not allow for much physical movement (McLaughlin, 2012).

Yet another aspect of the remaking of the classroom that is made evident by Common Core's unmandated/mandated standards, are the competing conceptions of language education and culture. At various points the guidelines recognize the importance of language development, and they are particularly focused on communication expectations and English Language Arts (New York State Department of Education, 2013, pp. 17–18). Focusing on the guidelines a question to be asked is, Language education to what end? Specifically, I am interested
in how language, as a set of human practices, is discussed with respect to emergent bilinguals (EBs) (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010).

The guidelines state the following:

These standards use students’ first languages and cultures as the foundation for developing academic language proficiency, and encourage the education of young English language learners in a bilingual setting. The New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core envisions language proficiency that builds on language complexity, cognitive engagement, and context within the key areas of language development (speaking, listening, viewing, representing, reading, and writing). (p. 7)

Later, the guidelines state, “these Learning Standards acknowledge and respect children’s rich backgrounds, their heritage, cultures, and linguistic differences (p. 9). It is evident that there are discourses of recognition and respect of linguistic diversity and the cognitive demands of language development. Recognition and respect are terms that are desirable, progressive, and aspects of policy. But these terms must be seen within the racio-economic context in which they are being deployed. Looking at these Common Core documents as a manifestation of neoliberalism, I want to argue that attacks
on bilingual education and multicultural education were reworked into a form of neoliberal multiculturalism where difference is detached from systemic inequalities, and categories of privilege and stigma are detached from skin-color and plurilingualism. The 'neoliberal trick' of using difference evacuated of contention, reduces education inequities to individual responsibilization, makes unequal educational outcomes seem fair, and ultimately protects White supremacy and capitalist accumulation.

First, home languages, or what the guidelines describe as first languages, are positioned as tools to acquiring English. As was noted above, the guidelines frame first languages and cultures as the "foundation for developing academic language proficiency" (New York State Department of Education, 2013, p. 7), and they also encourage bilingual settings for English learners. Clearly present in the documents is a turn away from seeing home languages and home cultures as deficits, and there is encouragement for providing bilingual settings. Still gauging from the document, the end goal remains the acquisition of English rather than bilingualism. While the acquisition of English is a necessity, and an understanding of US cultural practices will emerge as part of on-going social interaction, the rhetoric in the Common Core, as is, does
little to interrupt "asymmetrical power relationships" (Young, 1997) between English and home languages and cultures.

It can be argued that these guidelines still promote bilingualism even if the end goal is English acquisition, but there remain questions as to how these guidelines are experienced and interpreted on the ground. In the Bilingual Head Start it should be evident at this point that the connection between standards, accountability and funding have had a profound effect on the work of educators and students. By suturing accountability instruments to the guidelines, the acquisition of English is privileged over bilingualism, forcing bilingual programs to operate from a position of defensiveness where bilingual education must be integrated creatively so as not to compromise English language development. Thus while the intent may be to promote bilingual education, the material realities lean toward monolingualism.

Moreover, an emphasis on cognition and learning is dangerously divorced from a recognition, let alone a critique, of socio-economic inequity. Overall the guidelines are divided in five broad and interrelated domains of development: Approaches to Learning, Physical development and health; Social and emotional development; Communication, language and literacy; and Cognition and knowledge of the world. Learning
and cognition are integrated throughout the five domains but I turn my attention to domain one and domain five.

Domain one, “approaches to learning,” frame a set of dispositions to facilitate learning including curiosity, persistence, and engagement. In the discussion of research supporting this domain, there is reference to socio-cultural influences such as gender, temperament, family expectations and cultural values. Still the emphasis is on the individual child's attitude toward the learning process. The creators of the guidelines recognize this domain as the least defined and contentious, but they argue that what has been agreed upon is provision of safe and supportive learning environments for the development of children's attitudes toward learning.

Domain five, “cognition and knowledge of the world,” provides benchmarks for science, social studies, the arts, and technology, but the broader concern is with the architecture of the brain and its development over time. Creating supportive and inquiry based environments, as in Domain 1, is the primary concept that the authors seek to impart to educators. While the authors organized the disciplines and content areas (science, social studies, the arts and technologies) into discreet categories, they explicitly suggest that cognitive development is present throughout the guidelines.
The emphasis on environment and individual cognitive development in the guidelines appear adaptable to local and individual needs and strengths, but its adaptability is contradicted by reductive notions of culture and socio-economic difference that veil the often harsh material realities experienced by educators and students in places like the Bilingual Head Start. A powerful example of these contradictory threads in the guidelines is stated here:

All children are capable of learning, achieving and making developmental progress. The Prekindergarten Learning Standards are intended for all children regardless of economic, linguistic, and cultural differences or physical, learning, and emotional challenges. (p. 8)

The recurring use of "all children are capable of learning" discourse can be understood as a hopeful perception of children's capacities, and it is amplified by the notion that development can take place across various social and economic difference. It is this repeated use of the premise that standards can cut across difference where the guidelines veil inherent cultural biases and cultural difference as something to overcome rather than to recognize, critique, and work through.
Notions like initiative, engagement, persistence and curiosity are characteristics that most humans demonstrate, but the recommended responses focus on adapting the classroom environment. While the influence of cultural difference is recognized in the guidelines, I argue that by emphasizing some learning dispositions over others a culturally and economically mediated valuing of learning approaches is taking place. Notions like persistence and engagement are presented as primarily individual aspects of development rather than relational, culturally and economically situated. It reflects, I argue, a bias toward cognitive skills and dispositions that can be framed as global, and not culturally or economically inscribed. Presented as such, the guidelines appear to be flexible a form of "common sense" (Kumashiro, 2008) rather than a form of cultural imposition or domination.

Moreover, the presentation of standards as tools for all children regardless of socio-economic and cultural differences permits the framing of difference as obstacles to be overcome through individual effort. Returning to the quote above a discourse of "all children are capable of learning" is bound to an applicability of the standards regardless of socio-economic conditions. This notions is integrated across the guidelines, emphasizing to educators that environmental changes that promote this set of cognitive skills and
dispositions is the key aspect of their work. The privileging of these dispositions aligns with notions of twenty-first century skills (Bellanca & Brandt, 2011) that best suit the advancement of capitalist U.S. society. Developing twenty-first century skills are presented as devoid of cultural inscription and cultural influence, providing a path for standards and intensive testing that has accompanied these standards to gain a privileged position in the work of schools over multicultural education and locally-based curriculum.

Consequently, this set of discourses avoids addressing inequitable education. This is particularly ironic within the context of a Head Start. As a product of the War on Poverty, Head Start is premised on recognition that poverty shapes child development. Emphases on altering the practices of educators as a silver bullet obfuscates how, for example, testing and testing outcomes force schools with larger numbers of poor students to align to standards in the midst of severe budget cuts and shifting governance structures.

The discourse of the culture of poverty was, and is, pregnant with problems and deficit perceptions of poor people, and poor people of Color in particular. Culture of poverty discourse requires continued critique, but the discourses and material implications of this neoliberal turn is comparably problematic as the material effects of cultural, racial, and
linguistic oppression are collapsed into a category of "overcomable difference" and thus rendering these material realities invisible or something of the past.

The marginalization of cultural and economic realities is a component of a direct assault on bilingual early childhood education in order to hold dominion over the formation of an ideal subject. The cultural and linguistic aspects of this educational work is as central to Head Start as an antipoverty strategy. As Rita Prat notes about EH-BHS:

We want to teach them ...how important it is... to keep alive that Spanish, because that boy and that girl... they [are] going to learn the English in school. While the Spanish se va a perder, van a perder el español y con eso pierden sus emociones. You lose your emotions and your cultural identity. (Prat, 2013)

The rationale for bilingual and multicultural early childhood education from this perspective is clearly centered on preserving and developing bilingualism and multicultural identities in the individual. EH-BHS's mission then extends this educational work from the individual to the community as they assume the task of reflecting the "socio-cultural fabric of 'EL BARRIO'" and promoting "a healthier lifestyle and a better future' (Prats, 2013). This presents a contradiction of intent between Common Core guidelines and Bilingual Head
There is a shared commitment to respecting home languages and cultural differences as part of efforts to improve educational outcomes, but beyond this shared commitment there is divergence. At the Head Start home languages and cultural differences are presented as assets to develop for the purposes of individual and community development. The guidelines recognize linguistic and cultural difference as either an obstacle that can be overcome or an asset to assimilation of a set of cognitive practices that are divorced of cultural and economic context. These diverging perspectives exist in asymmetrical power positions, where the notions of ahistorical difference and cognition-focused education more closely approximate the trajectories and values of the racist neoliberal state. As such, the guidelines, despite their heavy critique from both the political Left and Right continue the slow, but still violent, process of remapping bilingual education on to neoliberal discourses. Two key examples of this remapping have been the closing and opening of bilingual programs, and the adaptation of language education to Common Core alignment.

First, while EH-BHS has been able to maintain its bilingual early childhood program, the K-8 public schools of the neighborhood have fared less well. By this point in time citywide definitions of bilingual education referred to
transitional bilingual education (TBE) and dual language (DL) programs. Dual language here refers to two-way models “where the expectation was that there were approximately equal numbers of language minority and language majority students in the same classroom and both languages are used for instruction” (Baker, 2011, p. 228). The bulk of emergent bilingual students (Garcia, 2009a; Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010; Garcia, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008) were still enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms by 2002 (at 53.4 percent of all emergent bilinguals) with 39.7 percent of emergent bilingual students in bilingual education (Menken & Solorza, 2014). Before Bloomberg comes into power in 2002, bilingual programming in New York City had been under attack for decades even though official city policy had historically

6 “The term emergent bilinguals refers to the children's potential in developing their bilingualism; it does not suggest a limitation or a problem in comparison to those who speak English. As such, bilingualism is recognized as a potential resource, both cognitively and socially, consistent with research on this topic” (Garcia, 2009a, p. 322). It has been a call to move away from Limited English Proficient (LEP) students and English Language Learner (ELL) terms used in policy and practice.
been supportive (Reyes, 2006). In 2000, Mayor Rudy Giuliani organized a bilingual education task force that recommended that “every parent be given full information and be allowed to reject enrollment in the program” (New York Times Editorial Board, 2000). Giuliani’s approach was emphasized on parental choice over state power, and a presentation of bilingual education as a failed, failing, state project.

With the ramping up of accountability policies through No Child Left Behind, nationally, and Bloomberg’s centralization of power, locally, the next decade was marked by a profound decline in bilingual education programs. “In the 2010-2011 school year,” Menken and Solorza (2014) note, “only 22.3 percent of emergent bilinguals were in bilingual education programs while 70.2 percent were enrolled in ESL programming” (p. 99). Ironically, this period also began to see experimentation with gifted dual language programs by elementary schools in gentrifying neighborhood. For example in the Upper West Side neighborhood, dual language and dual language Gifted and Talented (G&T) programs were offered. This approach followed the growing appeal of bilingual education for primarily middle to upper class, and often white, families with children labeled as gifted (Palmer, 2009; Zimmer & Shapiro, 2013).
Conversely in neighborhoods where gentrification was more nascent, a process of dismantling bilingual programs was taking place, narrowing the programming to a few select sites and making the majority of schools offer English as a Second Language settings as the only option for populations in those schools. These contradictory trajectories would continue during the Bloomberg administration as the focus on testing, accountability and school evaluation processes increasingly shaped the work of schools. This was made evident when the local Community Education Council (CEC4) sought to expand dual language programming in the district at a few key locations but the Department of Education would not provide additional funding to the district. During the later years of the Bloomberg administration Dual Language education in gentrifying neighborhoods would continue to gain a stronger foothold, as more attention was given to the importance of bilingualism for those who were in economic and cultural positions to compete in the global economy.

It should be made clear that these trajectories of bilingual education preceded the more explicit neoliberal strategies of the Bloomberg administration, but during the Bloomberg era there was a continuance of these strategies rather than any kind of interruption. The material and political outcomes of this continuance was that dual language
programming increasingly became a place for the privileged. Community driven visions of bilingual school districts (rather than just individual schools) were completely silenced.

It is within this very moment of flux in bilingual education that the New York State’s pre-K Common Core steps into the conversation. As I hope I have shown, the genius in the Common Core is that it brings linguistic and cultural difference back into the conversation, but in a way that is palatable to college and career ready discourses. In doing so, “good sense” becomes an affirmation of socio-linguistic diversity and pedagogical practices that fit within a predetermined set of neoliberal subjects.

Modifying and adapting the purposes and designs of bilingual education, was a matter of survival within the cultural economic context. Bilingual education needed to modify its discourse and adapt its practices in order to demonstrate that it remained a valuable endeavor within the city and the state, even as the multilingualism of the city and state have only continued to expand. I will go into greater detail about EH-BHS in the next section, but on the state and city level adaptation has focused on the discourse of realignment.

EngageNY, the NY State Board of Regents education reform agenda website, includes documents regarding language
education. In one power point presentation, for example, the focus was on putting emergent bilinguals at the center of the Common Core through a discussion of academic language development that aligns with the goal of college and career readiness (Freeman Field, n.d.). The focus on alignment is historically a common pattern in schools and in bilingual education as it became an institutionalized aspect of the school system. What is perhaps distinct in this era in comparison to the preceding two decades is that contestations of bilingual language education and multicultural education were related differently to contests in the political economy. In those earlier decades, debates centered around nationalism and cultural homogeneity that were then sutured to economic questions. In education, alignment would thus mean complying with the radio-cultural discourses that dominated at the time at the same time, i.e. Whiteness and English-only. Diversity was a threat to be smothered. In the current era, conversely, the economic is the cultural, and linguistic diversity and multicultural education are centered pedagogically and culturally on fitting into global capital. As such, alignment is complicit with capital as an ontological framework. It is about a way of life and education.

In sum, I argue, that alignment is indicative of a politics of survival, where there is little questioning of the
standards and its underlying discourses, but instead a focus on how pedagogical work can be changed to comply with those discourse in a manner that still brings much needed attention to the needs of bilingual students. Given the conditions, a politics of survival can be thought of as the most realistic and viable option, but survival that focuses on alignment without critique, does little to foster an alternative vision that would ameliorate the harm that is being wrought on students. To close this case, I return to the Bilingual Head Start as a potential example of a politics of survivance. It is a window into how current conditions are navigated, resisted, survived and, potentially, transformed.

The New Way: Navigation/Resistance/Compliance

As I said before, Cindi Katz (2004), drawing on Neil Smith, uses the term ‘revanchism’ to describe the mean and vengeful material social practices of late twentieth century capitalism that have dramatically remade social relations and place. In the global North, acts of revanchism has included a demonization of already marginalized poor people of Color, and framing cities as uncontrollable in order to legitimately mobilize social policies that emphasize policing, prisons, privatization, and displacement over collectivity, human rights, and the meeting of human need. In New York City, the first decade and a half of the twenty first century has seen,
arguably, an expansion of revanchism through a direct corporate takeover of key components of the state apparatus. In this period, social policies like stop and frisk, the policing of the undocumented, a turn toward punitive accountability practices within schools, a dismantling of structures for community voice in education, union busting, and the displacement of the poor in the name of revitalization and gentrification, were among a constellation of strategies that circulated via the cultural and materially takeover of government. It was, in some sense, an attempt to institutionalize the corporate revolution that had begun in the early 1970s.

What should be clear by this point is that the state-driven remaking of neighborhoods and schools during this period of racial capitalism have produced daunting, if not impossible conditions for individuals, families, schools, and communities to navigate. For Rita Prats, the impact of current education reform policies has forced early childhood centers to adapt to a "new way." Navigation of the conditions has been plunged into a binary of resistance or complicity.

As I said before, Katz (2004) complicates resistance, recasting individual and collective agency under a three categories: resilience, reworking and resistance. In this section I highlight key strategies that the Head Start used in
order to, as Rita Prats said, "cope with it." These strategies fit into Katz typology, but I want to argue for a re-integration under the category of survivance (Vizenor, 2008).

Conceptualizing this day-to-day work as survivance I am cutting across Katz' notions of resilience, reworking, and resistance. Resilience for Katz refers to day-to-day small acts that individuals and institutions make in order to get by. Reworking refers to practices that alter the conditions of people's existence to enable more workable lives and create more viable terrains of practice" (p. 247). Resistance, to Katz', takes up the practices we find in reworking, but with an oppositional consciousness driving this set of practices. What I want to suggest in this section is that the Head Starts grounding in a mission centered on community development, healthy foods, bilingualism and advocacy, provide a potential framework of survivance in the midst of institutionalized, revanchist statecraft.

**Anchored by a community-centered mission**

During our conversation, Rita would share a copy of the EH-BHS mission state. With minimal changes, the mission has anchored the school as they have waded through the constant cycles of change that they have experienced over the last 45 years. To restate the mission says:
To offer bilingual high-quality, comprehensive, community-based early childhood health and human services to the community of East Harlem. To utilize the talents of the parents, staff, and community to promote a healthier lifestyle and a better future. To reflect the socio-cultural fabric of 'EL BARRIO,' one of the oldest Spanish-speaking communities in the City of New York.

The EH-BHS mission is a multifaceted statement that centers on the Head Start’s role in the community. I argue that this focus on community, a vestige of Head Starts' roots in the War on Poverty, serves as a counternarrative to neoliberal discourses of individualistic, consumer-based, education and development. From this vantage point, education is a dialogic process rather than a didactic, banking-like process. Moreover, youth and adult community participants are seen not only as recipients of educational services, but are key actors in the process of knowledge production, analysis, and skill building. Educational work is not only with students but with the parents as well, and as such the Head Start becomes a local node for collaboration. Through collective efforts, the opportunity to foster a better collective future is made possible. Moreover, while the term development is not explicitly stated in the mission, as an education site, there
are inherently two notions of development circulating through its works.

First there are notions of individual human development embedded in the mission where early childhood development involves the capacity for all children to learn, but it also recognizes the mediating effects of access to healthy foods and community relationships. This draws from Vygotskyian notions of development that centers on socially situated, culturally mediated and contextually grounded activities that give rise to psychological processes with individuals acting as actors actively involved in collaborative construction of knowledge through community practices (Stetsenko, 2011, 2015).

The other distinct but related form of development at play here refers to structures and processes that shape place, social structure and social relationships. Returning to Katz (2004), she suggests that

Development is the iterative influx of capital moving across space and time, making and unmaking particular places; structuring and restructuring social relations of production and reproduction; and being met, engaged and countered by social actors whose own histories and geographies enable and call forth broad and differentiated material social practices. (p. x)
The work of the Head Start, as seen through the mission is not only concerned with the development of individual children, but also a recognition that what takes place within and through the Head Start is a key element to the reproduction and remaking of the broader neighborhood and communities of El Barrio.

The discourse in the mission statement provides an intellectual and pedagogical anchor for the Head Start. The mission focus on socially mediated human development and community and place-based development run counter to neoliberalized notions of individualized, decontextualized, development that obfuscate the role of education in the reproduction of a racist capitalist society.

Recognizing that the needs of children are directly related to the life conditions of parents, the Head Start has been spending a lot of time on job readiness, financial literacy, and bilingualism workshops for parents. These are among a variety of workshops for parents that are informed by a close observation of the needs of the community, rather than on presumptions about the needs community members must have in order to align with top-down standards.

Another example of survivance is the commitment to nutrition and healthy lifestyles in the Head Start mission. Rita proudly notes that in the midst of the "new way,"
We have been able to keep our preventive ... we have been able to keep providing healthy eating habits to the children, to the families, which is crucial because in our community we have high incidence of everything; diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure. You mention it, it's here, so the way we eat is crucial to have a healthy future, which is part of our mission. (Prats, 2013)

Over the last ten years the school has been able to maintain and expand their work around nutrition and healthy lifestyles, through workshops and most importantly, an in-house kitchen where organic, healthy foods are prepared for the children everyday. They have also worked closely with the city's Department of Health and local programs provided by Cornell University to sustain and expand this part of the program.

These practices are indicative of commitments that seek to not only shape individual development, but also to help facilitate a recognition of pre-existing assets and an infusion of skills and knowledge that can help the broader community develop. In sum I argue that the mission provides a discursive and material framework where tools and practices needed in the struggle against an increased "vulnerability to premature death" (Gilmore, 2007) are shared within the community. In a less grave context, financial literacy and healthy lifestyle workshops might not be understood as
anything more than basic living skills. But in this context, in this very precarious conjuncture, the sharing of survival and development tools with human beings defined as disposable becomes a transgressive act.

Language development & culture

Certainly another area of survivance work is the centrality of bilingualism and multicultural preservation. Rita notes:

Language is crucial to keep alive who you are, particularly the way this community ... this society our society define culture and define identity, see? We need to have an identity because to say we're not Anglos, no, but Americans, what [does] that mean[s]? Everyone has a way of defining their own way of being American. Our people, our Latinos, they need to understand that they have to keep alive the tacos, arroz con habichuelas. It's like a... from the realidad point of view is that it's a political act to keep all those things alive. (Prats, 2013)

This work is seen not only in the classroom, but also in the workshops provided for families. The Head Start wants to encourage parents to see the cultural value of bilingualism and the important capacity developmental bilingualism affords to people as they try to safely navigate this country's
governance practices and policies. Language and culture are key relational tools between parents and their children as reproduction is being reworked as relationships and conditions change. Still the message of the head start remains the same. In the end Rita wants parents to develop a different understanding, as she notes:

At the end for them to understand, we are really ... you are, you as a parent, are the primary educator. You are promoting and educating your child to have those skills at the end of the road, because we know the more language, the more advantage you have in these days, [the] 21st century. (Prats, 2013)

An educational approach that not only honors home languages and multicultural identities but also makes the maintenance and development of bilingualism and multicultural identities a central aspect of their work is indeed a political act. Like the development of healthy life practices, advocacy for development and expansion of bilingualism and multiculturalism must be understood within a context of inclusivity discourses, deculturalized and depoliticized education, and a broader exploitation of culture. Within this context of exploitation, dehumanization, and disposability, advocacy of bilingualism and multiculturalism become acts of resilience, reworking and resistance. Certainly, rhetorical advocacy for this approach
in the classroom or in policy-making circles does not in and of itself make it forms of reworking or resistance, let along survivance. This requires mission-informed activity, action, and reflection amongst those involved in this work. This work does begin, I argue, in reworking school conditions.

**Our students learning conditions are our working conditions**

In order to effectively co-create an educational experience that is focused on survivance rather than complicity, working conditions for educators must also be taken into account. The budget cuts and divestments that have come along with more punitive accountability structures have a direct impact on working conditions. In order to counter that, the Head Start has sought to maintain a collaborative and affirming environment where accountability is an internal process defined by the school workers that partake in the work, rather than an external process of state management.

Rita comments that,

> You have to deal with the working culture and it's inevitable and this is something that many of our nonprofit organizations have to learn to really ¿cuál es la palabra?, promover, to promote a constructive working culture, positive working culture, a culture of accountability, the culture of respect, and a culture that welcomes, which is not easy sometimes. (Prats, 2013)
School workers include the educators, the administrators, and kitchen staff, among others. The work of the school workers is a process of continually making the socio-educational mission come to fruition, and as such a positive, respectful, constructive environment is a necessary pre-condition. The inequitable, punitive, conditions that are shaped by policies and funding become a central obstacle to thus enact the mission. Promoting a constructive work culture is a key strategy for working through these obstacles.

Working toward a constructive work culture is also an ongoing reworking of notions of accountability. Rita notes:

Yeah, but we have our accountability here as part of our working culture. We expect something from them and we protect them. I protect them, once I step out of here, I'm for them. I work for them. I'm here to protect them. Inside here internally I expect them to do certain things, to do in a timely manner, the assessment that I require that I have to submit someplace else, that's accountability. That's what makes a difference, no? Better outside there but claro que yo tengo el tiempo a mi gente pero internamente tenemos reglas de trabajo hay que producir pero también tenemos miedo a todo esto, somos non-profit. (Prats, 2013)
Rita’s depiction of accountability is, like many discussions of teacher accountability, focused on productivity, reflective of practices that might be considered resilience work. But traces of reworking emerge when we consider who one is accountable to, and how they are held accountable, within the EH-BHS model. There is a recognition that accountability structures from "some place else" do exist, and in this context Rita takes an aggressive and protective position with respect to the staff and families of EH-BHS. In this way, Rita’s work is one of resilience, where there is not a questioning of the accountability structured, but rather a focus on complying sufficiently to not be further bothered by structures in the future. More importantly, for her, is an internal accountability where productivity is defined internally with respect to the mission. Productivity is measured by presence, effort, and professionalism with colleagues, parents, and student rather than reductive measures of student outcomes.

**Leadership development**

Another key aspect to survivance work is sustainability and reproduction. As education institutions and advocacy organizations position themselves, and are at the same time positioned by other forces, within the cultural political economy, a central goal is reproducing and expanding the type
of practices and ideologies that it articulates and supports. Those practices and ideologies vary, and in the case of EH-BHS, the focus is on anti-poverty work and individual and community development, minus a critique of capital. In order to sustain the reproduction of these practices and ideologies, a stable set of school workers who are committed to continuing mission-focused work are needed. For EH-BHS, collaborative leadership and leadership development amongst the school workers are important pieces of infrastructure to foster institutional sustainability. As Rita notes:

Bueno pues tú sabes se pone más complicado el comprometido de que ya sabes me gustan las cosas bien hechas y una de las claves en este proceso sin fines de lucro y para la sociedad en general y ejercer el liderato de hacer las cosas, visión y proyección y yo creo que ir desarrollando el liderazgo para apoyar el trabajo que nos hemos puesto...”\(^7\) (Prats, 2013)

\(^7\) "Well you know the commitment that I know and like things well done and one of the keys in this process nonprofit and for society in general and exercise the leadership to do things, vision becomes more complicated and projection and I think developing my leadership to support the work we have set for ourselves..."
Here is recognition that sustainability is a key issue that nonprofits and all institutions must address in order to navigate shifting cultural political economies. This is particularly challenging as funding cuts and restructurings make it difficult for early childhood school workers to remain and make this a viable long-time, well-paying, career option for them (Whitebook, 2013; Whitebook & McLean, 2016). Part of the strategy for addressing these circumstances is having a leadership development plan. Sustainability work, in this instance, requires sharing of leadership skills and experiences that align with the mission and plans that the organization has set before itself.

Collaboration, or perhaps collaborative leadership, is also part of cultivating and sustaining the work at EH-BHS. Rita notes:

decidido que vamos hacer en nuestra planificación en nuestras y pues hace doce años quizá no estaba se han hecho muchas muchas cosas y el staff han asumido posiciones de liderato y eso fue fundamental para el éxito de las cosas, tenemos retos económicos o nosotros trabajamos más antes que teníamos más niños, no tenemos aumento de salarios en no sé cuanto tiempo, así que nos hemos dedicado a un operativo de cómo manejarlo y cómo hacer las cosas, la capacidad para desarrollar el
ladrado fueron asumidos con la responsabilidad del trabajo. (Prats, 2013)

Establishing and developing a collaborative leadership structure are fundamental supports as the head start has navigated this moment. There is a clear recognition of the challenges that have presented themselves in these times, and leadership development becomes a tool of sustainability and resilience. It helps to maintain the mission and make economic distress, while not acceptable, more manageable.

**Advocacy**

Certainly coalition work amongst early childcare centers exists. They have been pivotal actors in the struggles around budget cuts, for example. This advocacy work is often temporary and focused on protecting losses rather than demanding transformations. This stance is indicative of a collective position of resilience rather than resistance, and EH-BHS, for the most part appears to fit in this stance. Still, EH-BHS is doing survivance work that might be thought to be of the re-working type.

One example is Rita Prats’ involvement in the local Assemblyman’s education advisory committee. This committee is comprised of various local actors from different parts of the education sector, including education research, non-profit service providers, the teachers union, local charter schools,
and city youth agencies among others. According to Rita, the committee has been working to develop an agenda that is broad but focused on challenging inequity. She notes:

It's a very broad agenda because, as you know, that's the main discussion here in the country, in the nation, undocumented people what they're going to do? It's an agenda I have to go with at the white people are less numbers, have less numbers than us, so this is a question of power. Es muy complicada. (Prats, 2013)

By participating in committee work that extends beyond the day-to-day work, the power-laden issues that affect the day-to-day life of the Head Start become part of a broader conversation. This practice has the potential of inspiring and framing organizing and advocacy work, though there are no guarantees.

Moreover, the conversation is circular in direction, as there is a conscious effort to return knowledge and ideas discussed in these conversations back to communities. As Rita notes,

Well, in the academia, we have many great ideas of how can we change the world, how [it] can benefit our communities, but many times we forget to relate to them and to make them participate in part of the solution. (Prats, 2013)
By turning back to the head start's collaborative leadership and the school community, the ongoing discussion of conditions, pedagogy, and development work, there is increased inclusivity. This circularity of practice provides fertile ground for grounding critiques of conditions in material life, and for informing practical and transformative alternatives to current conditions. As such, Rita's participation provides an example of reworking and resistance practices institutions and organizations can use, and have used, in order to transform conditions more broadly.

**Critiques/limits of "the new way"**

Critiquing the persistence of deficit thinking in transformative work, so, how do we interrupt deficit thinking? While I want to keep the focus on thinking about elements of survivance, the work of the Head Start is certainly not perfect. It is important to remember that the Head Start, like most projects of the War on Poverty were firmly rooted in "culture of poverty" discourses that framed people living in poverty as deficient and in need of transformation. This discourse was central to a post-war racio-economic liberalism that focused on cultural and economic assimilation that valued abstract individual equality, white/hetero/male normativities, and capital accumulation. "Culture of poverty" discourses while shifting and adapting to rollbacks of Civil Rights
movement achievements, economic restructuring, and a braiding of terms of inclusion and post-racism to a capitalist framework, remain an element in the reproduction of a raced, classed, and gendered society.

In the conversation with Rita Prats, one of her greatest concerns about the population at the Head Start served is a "poverty mentality" that persists among current and former families of the Head Start. To her, this mentality is what has kept many families stuck in the difficult conditions they are living in, and the inadequate resources provided to these families by the city in the years following their time in the Head Start only further reproduced this. From this vantage point, the Head Start, while assets-oriented, still maintains a framework that defines individual subjects as in need of salvation and transformation. As such, the work of the Head Start can undermine a critique of structures that facilitate oppression, and reinforce cultural deficit thinking and the disposability of poor, people of Color.

This is perhaps a limitation of the vision of Head Start more broadly, and as such requires an ongoing interrogation of the framework of the work of Head Start. In Rita Prats, the work of the Head Start is intersectional in as much as there is recognition of cultural and economic forms of oppression, and this is an important point from which to further explore
how we all think about the mentalities and worldview that surround the Head Start.

Another potential limitation of what EH-BHS has opted to do as they navigate these conditions is a balance between internal change work and advocacy work done beyond the walls of the Head Start. Assuming a protective, more internal-focused, stance, for example, facilitated the creation of a refuge for the school community, but it can also lead to an isolationism that can undermine broader reworking and resistance work. The local advocacy work and involvement in other coalitions are key starting points, but it was less clear if there was an articulated advocacy plan within the Head Start community. There may be agreement on how much can, or should, be done which I was not privy to in my interview, but there are possible directions that can be taken to expand on this area of the work.

One example might be facilitating cross-institutional organizing conversations that are co-led by educators and parents, rather than administrators alone. Building on the collaborative leadership culture of the Head Start, developing shared analyses of what is happening, and articulating action and producing materials that counter those conditions can have a potential positive impact for all involved.
In addition, digital technologies as part of this work can be explored. While it was clear that websites and social media is not equitably accessible for the poor, and of Color, families of the Head Start, these digital tools can have both internal and external impact. By bringing greater attention to digital literacies for parents, digital inequities can be interrupted. More relevant to my point here, digital technologies can provide opportunities to deepen connections amongst institutions, and opportunities for promoting and sharing effective pedagogical and organizing practices, locally and beyond. The Head Start did have a few digital video segments available on YouTube, which had had some visits. Again, it was not clear if it was going to be further developed, or if they were solely promotional tools, but digital video could be a useful avenue to pursue.

Conclusion

In sum, the Head Start community will have ultimate say on advocacy strategies, but perhaps some of these ideas might be of use in expanding and evolving practices and visions of survivance. The prostrate society in which early childhood children are being educated is evident, and EH-BHS recognizes and experiences these difficult conditions. While their work is centered on poverty, there is a clear awareness of the changing cultural and economic landscape of this current era,
and how it has changed the work of the school and who they serve. Anchored in a community relevant and development-focused mission, EH-BHS has been navigating these troubled waters. The question, for me, is: How this might be scaled up and developed further?
CHAPTER VII

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE SCHOOL–COMMUNITY NEXUS

In this Chapter I “zoom out” to the level of local and citywide educational governance and public engagement within the school–community nexus. In his interview Mr. Nazario brings to light the entanglements between housing, poverty, and public schools in El Barrio. He notes:

Well, have you looked at the dynamics of East Harlem? We have the biggest NYCHA district, if you want to call it. If you look at every school, a block... You have a school, you have a block, you have a NYCHA site... These people at NYCHA are the people that have the schools next to them.

(Nazario, 2013)

Mr. Nazario’s comments provide a description of how schools are linked to neighborhood both metaphorically and physically in the urban landscape. His comments are reminiscent of the dominance of “liquor stores and churches” in the spatial landscape of El Barrio (Logan & Molotch, 2007), marking the dearth of social service and employment opportunities in the community.

More, these geospatial entanglements are a reminder that living conditions, more broadly, are also learning conditions experienced and reproduced inside the school. As Mr. Nazario notes,
What people don't understand is that this is what the community is dealing with, and from 8:20 to 2:40 the community [is] inside the schools...those are the problems we have... for, example District 4 has a high free lunch [population]...that let's you know in a nutshell what the community is enduring.

Here then is an illustration of the connective tissue of the school-community nexus. Moreover, within the conditions of poverty and structural racism, the relationship between the school and the community in Latino core communities is one always, already, under duress. As one of the few remaining local social services, schools are, and have been, critical anchors to poor communities. Even though schools in El Barrio, and specifically the specialized programming of the small schools and bilingual education programs were without geographic zones the schools continued to serve as a shelter and nurturer of young people and EL Barrio. And as the struggles over community control in the late 1960s, and the efforts of District 4 during decentralization, would show us, the schools and local school districts were critical sites where political questions were fought out.

Early in the interview, Mr. Nazario (2013) and I were discussing the cultural significance of El Barrio to Latinos and New York City, and he comments:
The history, the historicalness of East Harlem is diminishing for the simple reason of the push that's coming into our community on the development level. Schools are under siege regarding low test scores. It could go on forever.

As I showed in chapter four, racial neoliberal urbanism, and a focus on antistate statism, drove the cultural and material remaking of El Barrio. Because schools and communities are entangled, it is only logical to conclude that the schools have also experienced a process of remaking. The question then becomes what and how school-community relationships were remade as the grammar of racial neoliberal urbanism evolved and circulated through across El Barrio and the school system, first during decentralization, and more so during mayoral control.

The number of reforms that were circulated across the school system and the speed at which they occurred when mayoral control began in 2002, makes the task of documenting all of the changes beyond the scope of this chapter, but I will focus on three dimensions of this process that were of particular relevance to El Barrio. First, I look at “cultural framings” as a strategy of vilifying the poor and the past as a way to authorize policy change. I then examine the remaking of governance and school space as examples of these cultural strategies and consider the cultural, political and material
effects on social relationships. Ultimately this chapter is a discussion of how racial neoliberal urbanism would circulate through educational governance and space in order to maintain political and cultural power. I argue that the subordinate positions of El Barrio was partially maintained by the state’s hollowing out of governance and governmental accountability, and metaphorically and spatially dismembering people from each other and from their history of resistance.

Similar to the previous two chapters, I then look at some of the strategies of survivance employed by individuals, groups and institutions connected to education. I argue that overall El Barrio was dealt a limited hand within the context of racial neoliberal urbanism and people engaged in what they understood as viable agentic could take in response to these conditions. As a result many, though not all, of the recent survivance strategies used have remained individualized or school-specific rather than coalitional. Ultimately this maintains the prostrated position of the neighborhood, at least within education.

Cultural Frames

The schools of East Harlem have not been immune to the intractable effects of poverty and racism. In chapter four I suggested that conditions forged through poverty and structural racism made “failure and deficiency” the prevailing
narrative of the neighborhood, even as the history of activism El Barrio suggests otherwise. In this section I want to pay attention to how, much like in neighborhood remaking, the practice of deficit-oriented framings, or “failure framing” has been a key cultural strategy to moving educational change forward. I pay particular attention to the framing of the schools system and people who have taken part in the school-community nexus as failing, incapable of self-governance, and thus in need of a profound, rough, makeover.

Before going into discussions of the mayoral control era, I think it is important to recollect school community engagement during decentralization and the cultural frames that were attached to that era. As I noted in the historical chapter, in order for the district to succeed in their attempt to transform the schools, Superintendent Alvarado, the local school board, and those that worked with them, enacted a theory of change premised on innovation, autonomy and choice. Having to combat being framed as a failing district, during the 1970s East Harlem used terms like “alternative,” “innovation” and “renaissance” to articulate a vision for creating and providing viable alternatives for families to choose from that had not existed in the past.

Part of this approach was premised on identifying educators both outside and inside the neighborhood who had
innovative ideas for new schools. These innovators also needed to feel they had the freedom, or autonomy to create without the pressures of the bureaucracy or the teachers union becoming too pronounced of an obstacle. And spatially, the district also needed to support transformation by creating physical spaces for innovation to take place. Importantly, these changes were made possible by the local district leadership’s capacity to engage different actors within the school system and the community, as well as their savvy in making their own executive decisions when needed. Embedded into this approach was an underlying recognition of the lack of autonomy teachers and schools within the heavily centralized bureaucracy (i.e. centralization was a failure). In this era, decentralization was thus taken as an opportunity for CSD4 to articulate alternative cultural frames.

I describe the period of decentralization as “arrested democracy,” which has both positive and negative cultural frames tied to it. One pattern of policy behavior present in this era was the district’s creation of a “failing other.” During decentralization “the other” were the traditional neighborhood schools that were bounded by geography (zones) and bureaucracy. By focusing on inviting in new voices to the district and envisioning alternative schools, the neighborhood schools were framed as places that had failed at improving
education for district students. This logic provided a rationale for creating alternatives, pushed the district to initiate a school choice system where parents could feel that they had primary control over their children’s options (Schneider & Teske, 2000), and put pressure on the neighborhood schools to change or face further political (and thus material) marginalization.

While the struggles of these traditional schools were often accurate, defining them as failures was reductive and unsalvageable. Missing from this discourse were the bilingual programs, as well as some of the traditional schools that were performing relatively well, such as PS 171, the Patrick Henry School. Instead, the schools outside of the alternative programs were seen in the public eye as failing places where doing salvaging work might not help.

Similarly the strategy of co-locating the new small schools, which were actually described as programs rather than schools, within the neighborhood schools, also perpetuated a process of “othering.” Observations and interviews indicated that for many years, if not decades, individuals outside of the school of choice system referred to the alternative schools as “boutique schools,” using the term as a mark of derision and an articulation of the inferior position the traditional schools felt they systematically were located in.
In sum, divisions amongst schools were either created or grew more deeply through these reforms.

Alvarado and district leaders were savvy about recognizing the culturally inscribed needs and views of both schools and the surrounding communities. As Deborah Meier (2013), a co-founder of Central Park East I (CPE1) noted, some of the interests and views of the local political actors would often frustrate her and the school. In response, Alvarado told her to focus on the school while he addressed them. While not explicitly stated, what appeared evident in Meier’s comments was a negative framing of the local political actors, but Alvarado was adept at recognizing these cultural framings and opted to address these groups separately to better massage these relationships.

Without straying too far from my point here, it is also important to note that what I am talking about here is the district, rather than specific schools. On a school level, the alternative schools held the general community and more so the families of the neighborhood and those that came from outside the district, in high regard. Meier noted that over the years CPE1, in particular, focused heavily on integrating the history and people of the neighborhood into the curriculum. They had also built up relationships with community organizations like East Harlem Tutorial, which was and
continues to be an influential educational organization in the community over the last six decades. So on the school-level, positive framings and relationships were part of what made the renaissance a success.

Still, the institutionalization of this renaissance was a daunting task, and became untenable when success was scrutinized, and cultural divisions were created or exacerbated, rather than resolved. Lewis (Lewis, 2013) argued that decentralization was a model that was compromised from the very beginning. With the economic crisis the city faced, and news of corruption and over spending in districts across the city, the public condemnation of decentralization and the school system as a whole was only further fueled. District 4’s transformation relied heavily on a “creative noncompliance” with system regulations and a liberal pushing of the constraints of the budget. While these practices brought numerous accolades and improved the educational experiences of many students in East Harlem, it also brought increased scrutiny from the Board of Education and media critics. Critics legitimately would argue that the District 4 transformation only benefitted a third of the district’s student population, leaving the other two thirds in schools that were failing to improve (Kirp, 1992). By the 1990s achievement scores were beginning to level off, and coupled
with the district’s flexible budgetary practices, calls for greater accountability were made.

**You deserve a makeover?**

More specific to CSD4, the call for a systematic makeover was supported by the mixture of underutilization and overcrowding occurring across the district. There are a number of potential factors that can be considered regarding the observable changes in student enrollment, but I want to make explicit note of how cultural framings contribute to the spatial formation of the district before and during the Bloomberg era.

Briefly, while the overall population of East Harlem underwent a steady decline between the late 1960s and the 1990s, the transformation of District 4 had made the various new schools in the district appealing to families both inside and outside the district (Kirp, 1992). By the 1990s there were roughly 14,000 children attending District 4 schools. At the same time the schools that were not of choice were struggling to keep students in their classrooms.

Growth in the 1990s might be attributed to the growing reputation of progress that had grown from renaissance of the previous decades, and the expansion of programs and opportunities that were made available, though it was not evenly distributed to students and families across the
district. This was in spite of the fact that the percentage of students meeting state reading and math performance levels was already declining, and student performance levels were much higher in the schools of choice compared to the traditional schools (Kirp, 1992).

What this intimates is that during decentralization there were two images of El Barrio schools. One was the face of progressive education, innovation and thus exceptional success. The other was a face of traditionalism and failure. By 2000 there were 17,000 students (Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York, Inc., 2013a), which suggests that there was success achieved through this bifurcated context. But after 2000, the numbers began to gradually decline and by 2010 the number was down to a little over 14,000 again. Thinking about the different processes at play during mayoral control Mr. Nazario (2013) comments, “East Harlem is a little different [from other districts] . . .we’re failing grade system wise but we[‘re] underutilized. . .So create space to come in regardless.” Other districts were failing and overcrowded, but CSD4’s presumed failure and subsequent underutilization made it much like neighborhoods with swaths of abandoned and destroyed buildings—ripe for land (building) takeovers and redistributions by the state (the DOE) to public and private interests.
Additional statistical data needs to be gathered to make a more definitive claim here, but the departure of students that began to occur in the early 2000s and into the mayoral control era could be partially attributed to the overall image of failure (and lack of safety) that the bifurcated district seemed to be unable to get out from under both culturally and materially. In short, there was a re-ascendancy of the image of district-wide failure that contributed to the framing of the decentralization era as a failure when mayoral control seeks to gain traction. I turn my attention to this point next.

Cultural frames now

Framing El Barrio and the schools as failing reoccurred during the mayoral control era, but with changed inflections and accents. Like the previous era, the Bloomberg era employed a “failure-innovation alternative” binary as a key strategy. Mayoral control brought to the fore different notions of success, accountability and individual consumerism. If anyone did comply or adapt to this logic there was presumption of failure.

I asked Mr. Nazario about the restructuring of the district since Mayor Bloomberg took over the school system, he points to accountability and space as metrics for framing failure. There are two connected meanings of accountability within education policy that I point to here. Accountability
with respect to student performance as demonstrated by standardized testing outcome is one meaning. Second, and the focus here, is accountability in school governance as it relates to individual school autonomy. Throughout the Bloomberg administration’s various changes in policies, a constant was student performance as the primary indicator of progress. But the regime’s theory of change was advanced by framing past structures as failing on a school and district-scale and meriting of restructuring.

The district’s lack of internal and external accountability and the divisions that were never fully reconciled became part of the groundwork for again framing the district as failing. As I noted in chapter three, by the early 1990s the activist district leadership in East Harlem schools had moved on, and attempts by progressives to get in front of the discourse around accountability were undermined by Mayor Giuliani and Chancellor Rudy Crew (Meier, 2013). What this all meant was a loss in power at the local level, making it difficult for the district to mount any form of strong resistance. Once a national darling, District 4 was a shadow of itself, and the collective memory of the revolution began to increasingly fade. As Johnny Rivera, the last CSD4 school board president would note, “the district needed a tremendous change,” (Rivera, 2013) and to him mayoral control was a viable and necessary alternative.
In 2002 Bloomberg, then New York Governor George Pataki, and other elected officials stood in Patrick Henry School, a high performing public school in El Barrio. They were convening to announce the signing of the new state law that would give the Mayor primary control of the public school system. The Mayor was optimistic that day and noted that in the near future he hoped to be able to show everyone “a system that is getting better and working and that will give the mayor and the city an awful lot more muscle in getting the changes that we think are necessary to continue the progress” (Steinhauer, 2002).

Bloomberg’s commentary was indicative of the administrations use of a “failure-innovation alternative” discourse that mirrored Alvarado’s approach in CSD4. To the Bloomberg administration, decentralization was ineffective because it maintained a bureaucracy that was corrupt and inefficient. As such it obstructed the mayor, or “they who know best,” from exercising the kind of political muscle needed to create actual change in the education system. The school system was ungovernable as was, and required a profound makeover, or transformation. This appealed to those in power and exploited the dispossessed’s deep hunger for better alternatives for their children.

While the general messaging from the Mayor’s office depended on highlighting the inefficiencies, redundancies, and
corruption of the educational bureaucracy, the rationale for mayoral control also carried with it a cultural transcript that framed poor communities as incapable of governing themselves. Because they were unable to govern themselves, districts like East Harlem were framed as meriting restructuring.

**Hollowing Governance**

Those in favor of mayoral control, as I have shown, used a racialized framing of decentralization as ineffective with the ungovernable in order to appeal to those in power and exploit the dispossessed’s deep hunger for better alternatives for their children. In response, Bloomberg proposed a reorganization model of the school system under his direction that was premised on strong accountability measures and autonomy. This constellation of innovations promised to be more effective and a plain “common sense” approach that could only be achieved by seizing control of the failing system and “cleaning up shop.” The Bloomberg era attempted to strike a balance between accountability and autonomy that would, at the same time, hollow out its own center. In doing so, I argue that the restructuring of CSD4 during mayoral control becomes a clear example of the effects of racial neoliberal urbanism. It facilitated a hollowing out of power in education that concentrated power in the Mayor and the DOE and outsourced accountability of services and community engagement.
Bloomberg’s 2002 announcement of mayoral control might best be understood as the reorganizing of educational governance on an axis that elided between accountability and autonomy (Hill, 2011; Kelleher, 2014a). To Bloomberg and Joel Klein, who served as Chancellor between 2002 and 2010, improvement to education would require holding schools accountable at the same time that school leaders felt autonomy in their work. While there were varying views on how to strike a balance between accountability and autonomy, there was a consensus around thinning out bureaucracy so as to bring the “streamlined” city leadership in closer proximity to school leaders and parents. Here I want to highlight some of the governance changes that are of particular relevance to what would happen in El Barrio under mayoral control. Mayoral control, I argue, is a form of hollowed centrality where political power is centralized in the state and democratic structures and relationships are evacuated.

At what felt like a “turbo capitalist” (Nixon, 2011) pace Bloomberg would dissolve the citywide school board and make the school system and its bureaucracy a city department. In addition, the 32 local community school districts of the decentralization era, including District 4, were reorganized. The city collapsed the districts into 10 administrative regions, then a few years later moved to 11 School Support Organizations (SSOs), and then in 2010 the schools were reorganized once more.
into sixty voluntary school support networks called Children’s First Networks (CFNs) (Hill, 2011).

CFNs were voluntary only in that school administrations, which were required to be part of a CFN could self-affiliate with a CFN. CFNs were also required to be comprised of schools from more than one borough (Chaz, 2015). In theory the CFN was supposed to function as a self-directed, small group of people under the direction of a network leader to help support schools and help shape school-level policy, hiring and budgetary decisions. The CFN service providers were empowered to solve problems for schools and be accountable to each principal they worked with (New York City Department of Education, 2010). As such schools in El Barrio affiliated with schools across the city.

**Community education councils & superintendents**

The community school district boards and superintendents did not disappear but instead were rebranded and defanged. State law required that some kind of body was needed to oversee elementary and middle schools in each of the old 32 school district and one for high schools and one for special education (Total of 34), so in 2003 New York state instituted Community Education Councils (CEC) (J. R. Henig, Gold, Orr, Silander, & Simon, 2010) as the local bodies who would be in charge of “approving school zoning lines, holding hearings on the capital
plan, evaluating community superintendents, and providing input on other important policy issues” (J. R. Henig et al., 2010, p. 42). The positions on the CEC were to be filled by parents of children in the local district whose positions on the council would be determined by vote amongst the CEC members.

CECs were uneven at best in their effectiveness. One newspaper report found that in 2009 two of the 34 CECs we non-functional (Noted in (J. R. Henig et al., 2010). Furthermore a 2009 report by then city comptroller, William Thompson (2009), found that the DOE rarely consulted with local CECs on local policy issues (like school closures, colocations, etc.), or provide them high quality training to serve on the council, which are both required by state law.

My observations of the District 4 CEC (CEC4) meetings reinforced the image of dysfunctionality and ineffectiveness of the CEC model. I attended meetings at various points during my year in the field, and two of my interviewees, Mr. Nazario and Mr. Rivera, were leaders of the CEC. Still, three meetings at the start of the school year were particularly illustrative. During those meetings the almost entirely new group of CEC members were tasked with electing members to specific positions on the council including president, vice president and treasurer. Over the course of three meetings the group, which was all women of Color (four Latina, mostly Spanish speaking,
and three Black, English-speaking), struggled to select from the pool of candidates because of diverging views and insufficient votes to reach quorum. Because they were unable to fill positions, decisions could not be made, only discussed. At the end of the meetings, someone commented that “they’re [the CEC4 group] not gonna do anything,” (Fieldnotes, 2013) suggesting that the group was incapable of resolving these issues and moving forward in their tasks.

This previous comments about the CEC is illustrative of the ongoing framing of people in the community as incapable of self-governance, at the same time that it obfuscates how people have been systematically prevented from engaging in self-governance. The anecdote below captures some of the difficulties and frustrations that CECs across the city have experienced as they have sought to engage:

More broadly, CEC officers indicated they are frustrated and discouraged because they have been prevented from fulfilling their statutory role to establish educational policies and objectives and to “provide input” as they “deem necessary, to the Chancellor” and the Panel for Educational Policy. The widely held recognition that CECs are powerless is making it increasingly difficult to interest parents in serving on a CEC.” (Thompson, Jr., 2009, p. 2)
What becomes clear is that the CECs were designed to fulfill legal statutes and maintain the pretenses of democracy. All the while the community was stripped of policy and budget decision-making powers from the district.

Connected to the CEC was the reconstruction of the role of community superintendents, which had strong implications for El Barrio. District level bureaucracies, for the most part, no longer existed, so the superintendents were left with very small staffs. Their role included conducting evaluative visits at local elementary and middle schools, convening with the local principals once a month, and providing reports on the district to the CEC. A particularly public role they had was to preside over public forums to discuss school level policy changes, such as the colocation of multiple schools in a building or the closing of a school.

In CSD4, the change in the local superintendents role also translated into loss of power. Again the 2009 Comptroller’s report found that DOE had reassigned “the superintendents to primarily work on non-statutory duties outside of their home districts,” (Thompson, Jr. 2009, p.2), making it difficult for CECs to collaborate with them. The report also found that superintendents had often failed to prepare state required annual district capacity plans that the CEC would then organize a hearing for. In trying to do follow up on what are supposed to
be meetings available to the public, it was often difficult to verify if these kinds of hearing were held at any time in the district. Both in the case of the superintendent and the CEC it was difficult to arrange meetings, and there were no functioning websites that could provide this information either. Much like the CEC, the superintendent had become a supervisory position that had very little power. In a district whose transformation was dependent on savvy, committed district leaders, this devolution was particularly striking for CEC4.

The formation of the hollow state

In sum, the reorganization of local school governance during this era was effective in centralizing power at the top, thinning the bureaucracy, and giving more individual autonomy to the principals. This approach is reflective of ‘hollow state’ governance with racial neoliberal urbanism. Milward and Provan (2000) describe the hollow state as “any joint production situation where a governmental agency relies on others (firms, nonprofits, or other government agencies) to jointly deliver public services” (p. 362). In New York City and El Barrio, mayoral control autonomy over budgets and networking was outsourced to individual schools and principals while definitions of performance standards and political power were kept centralized. In this structure, opportunities to make grievances or to better attune the community and the schools
beyond confronting an individual principal was limited, if not completely eliminated. There was thus an elimination of any way for families and communities to keep the system accountable beyond the principal.

Mayoral control exchanged the stability of bureaucracies with the flexibility of principal driven networks. The Children First Networks (CFN), for example, was a prototypical racial neoliberal strategy in that they were designed to replace the presence of bureaucratic mechanisms where school leaders “find themselves involved in arranging networks that may enable them to gain the advantages of scope and scale without the negatives associated with bureaucracy (i.e., redundancy and rising costs)” (Milward & Provan, 2000, p. 363).

Moves to thin the bureaucracy have had positive effects. One benefit was cutting cost for support services for schools, which enabled schools to keep more of their funding focused on internal needs (Kelleher, 2014b). Perhaps most importantly, many school leaders felt because they were able to self affiliate, 

8 It should be noted that during mayoral control a District Family Advocate (DFA) position was created, but as the 2009 comptroller report notes, because the DFA reported to the “Office of Family Engagement and Advocacy and not to the district superintendent, they lack[ed] the direct authority needed to resolve issues” (Thompson, Jr., 2009, p. 3).
they were able to find networks that were more responsive to them, supported cross school collaborations, and facilitated pushes for innovation that addressed the specific needs of their schools (Kelleher, 2014b). There were also downsides to hollowing out the state.

**Downsides of the hollow state**

Hollowing governance, as I have demonstrated had multiple positive outcomes for the schools system, but I will point to two downsides. First are the challenges raised by placing so much of the burden for change on school leaders. As Koyama (Koyama, 2011) notes, “in the era of No Child Left Behind principals have faced increased responsibility, explicit accountability for academic progress, and publicized district evaluations” (p. 27). In the city’s accountability-autonomy model principals have become powerful policy actors, but the range of expectations and individuals for whom principals are held accountable make the job extremely stressful. Adding networks leaves principals with additional managerial problems that include coordinating and monitoring the CFN. Coordination across schools that are not all geographically close is another complex task. Accountability within networks is also not as clear as it would seem, as the network service providers were not the formal principal supervisors, and principals could also change networks if they didn’t agree with recommendations from
the network. As such, the network model provided flexibility for school leaders but that also meant additional work for the principal and instability within networks.

Another way to think about the changing formation of the state within racial neoliberal urbanism is to think of “community voice.” Voice in this context refers to the ways in which parents, youth, school-based people, and other members of the neighborhood, who are invested in the direction of the public school system, are or are not able to shape the work of individual schools and the larger school system. Another term to think about here is public engagement, as voice is set up in relation to the state and other social actors. Arguably, all of the dimensions of racial neoliberal urbanism that I have discussed here intersect with this notion of voice. The racialized framing in policy renders the people and schools of El Barrio incapable of governing themselves and as such their voices are rendered illegitimate. These cultural frames become a tool for silencing those who are already disposed. Hollowing the state on the district level was a way of silencing and containing voice.

For Mr. Nazario, voice, and specifically parental voice, is about systematic control and individual consumerism in the school community nexus. Without mincing words, Mr. Nazario states,
parent voice... is controlled. It's controlled, and I mean
controlled...I see families that have been dead on, on their
kids and seen underhanded tactics by ACS. Limited
access...because you're a parent, you're voicing your
rights and you might be 100 percent right. Schools don't
want that to get out so I'll stay in control.

Here Mr. Nazario is looking at the intersection of families and
the state by referring to the city’s Administration of
Children’s Services (ACS). For the poor people of El Barrio,
both in the past and the present, relationships with arms of the
state, like ACS, are fraught with surveillance and fear. When a
parent is well informed and seeks to voice their opinion, Mr.
Nazario asserts that ACS and schools seek to keep their voices
outside of public view, with the theme of control underpinning
the state action.

This practice of silencing and control was also more
directly evident at the school level, as school and district
level leadership sought to curtail dissenting voices whenever
school changes, like colocations, were being proposed. As I
discussed earlier in this chapter co-location was a strategy
used often during the decentralization era in El Barrio. During
mayoral control co-location was a key strategy for dismantling
most of the large comprehensive high schools (Ancess & Allen,
2006; Hemphill, Nauer, Zelon, & Jacobs, 2009), as well as the
creation of space for many of the charter schools throughout the city. In El Barrio, most co-locations were based on the “phase-out” of a school, or the identification of a school as underutilized.

What is most relevant to my argument here are the public hearings concerning educational policy changes. Following the 2009 reauthorization of the state law that instituted mayoral control, the DOE was required to provide public forums or hearings at school sites where co-locations were proposed. Public hearings are powerful example of what Smith et al (2004) described as political spectacle. Drawing from the work of Edelman, Smith et al argue that education political processes can be seen as theatrical public display where theatrical strategies like symbolic language, casting actors in different roles (leaders, heroes, villains, etc.), and creating illusions of participation are used to advance social arrangements that tangibly benefiting the few and at most symbolically benefit the many. As such, an analysis of public hearings in El Barrio demonstrates how democracy and the voices of those already racial and economically marginalized were paid lip service to (symbolic benefits) as a means to preserve power.

A key dimension to the city’s practices was their control over information distribution and quality of content. Between 2010 and 2013 I attended a handful of public hearings across the
city, including three in El Barrio. In each of these cases announcements about hearings and what the focus of discussion would be at the hearing was often done only a day or two prior to the actual hearing. Mr. Nazario (2013) echoes my observations, stating:

They'll have a hearing and they'll send out a flyer that Friday before you go on vacation. So they already know what are the odds of you remembering coming back from vacation, oh I got to go to this hearing, you now understand? So it's done real, real sneaky. It's really done real sneaky when it comes to the community input.

At one of the first hearings I attended, the original occupant of a school site where two other schools were also co-located, was requesting to expand by adding a middle school program for students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). The original occupant was a grades 3-6 school, while the other schools were a K-2 dual immersion school, and one of the small alternative schools established during the decentralization era.

Just as Mr. Nazario had noted, in this situation an announcement about the request was made public on the Thursday or Friday before the hearing was to be held on the following Monday. All of the schools involved scrambled to assemble parents and staff to attend the meeting. It is debatable as to whether or not the timing of information distribution was
intentional, but the limited time prevented schools from sufficiently informing its constituents, or for the schools to speak to one another prior to the public hearing. The effects of control over information would become apparent during the actual hearing.

The school-based and city-wide public hearings were not only examples of political spectacles (G. L. Anderson, 2007; M. L. Smith & Miller-Kahn, 2004) that were indicative of the state’s disdain for engaging with the populace. At this particular hearing, the small auditorium (for about 250 people) was quite full with families from the three different schools, as well as representatives from the local district and the DOE. The hearing got off to a rough start when it turned out that the audio-listening devices for Spanish translation of the meeting were not functioning, forcing those who needed translation (mostly Spanish-speaking mothers) into a corner in the back of the auditorium so the city’s translator could stand right next to them and translate.

Once the meeting began, things would get increasingly troubling for community participants. The hearing began with the distribution of a theatrical prop, an environmental impact statement (EIS, “modeled after the environmental impact statements required under the State Environmental Quality Review Act” which was to include information on the current school
population, the impact of spatial changes, and proposed spatial changes (de Blasio & Alliance of Quality Education, 2010, p. 10). Then community members were allowed to speak for up to two minutes to express their views on the proposed co-location.

The distribution of the EIS at the start of the meeting was the first time many in the audience were introduced to the actual changes being proposed. In their 2010 parental engagement study, de Blasio and AQE found that,

While the EIS was designed to give parents information about the Department’s plans, a little less than half (44.8 percent) of parents at schools that are being co-located with another school in the fall were even aware of the EIS and only about a quarter of respondents (25 percent) reported having seen the EIS for their child’s school.

The EIS document was read aloud to the audience, but the content was vague about specifics. Unless you were a person familiar with the EIS document and had the literacy skills to both understand and analyze the document it would be of little value to the general audience member.

The public commentary portion of the meeting was also instructive in thinking about these hearings. At the hearing, some parents expressed concerns about having middle schoolers with autism in an elementary school setting, some referring to threats of inappropriate sexual behavior. Other parents and
staff expressed concerns about loss of physical space to the other schools. As the public speaking segmented continued, city and district education officials that conducted the meeting spent most of the time focused on recording the comments. The hearing ended with little to no change in the proposal.

While posting the EIS document and having a public commentary segment holds up pretenses of democratic practice, they ultimately had limited impact on policy decisions and fueled internal community divisions. Marie Winfield (2013), an East Harlem resident whose child attended one of the small alternative schools, captures some of the outcomes of these contradictory processes when she describes how the DOE handled a struggle over space between schools in her child’s school building:

The Department of Education had been the main issue where there was no transparency, no notice, no information about when all these changes were happening which would have given all of the interested parties time to respond. Because the DOE didn’t do that, then you had this divisive atmosphere of each groups...often trying to focus on what is the best for their children instead of all the children in the neighborhood. (Winfield 2013)

Ms. Winfield’s comments echoes the views of other parents and community activists in education who “viewed this process more
as a procedural hoop than as an opportunity for meaningful engagement to revise and improve the proposals” (de Blasio & Alliance of Quality Education, 2010, p. 20). Furthermore, by closing off community actors from legitimate opportunities for engagement and “responsibleizing,” parents and families for holding them responsible, the DOE redefined engagement as an individual act. Individualizing engagement allowed the DOE to polarize community members and to absolve them from paying attention to the ongoing economic and social struggles that were shaping a neighborhood and its schools. As such, hearings actually functioned more as information sessions, rather than meaningful discussion. This reinforced the hollowed organization of educational governance during this period, legitimizing the veiled dismantling of democratic structures.

Further, while democracy was being erased, the hearings also reinforced social divisions within the school and the community. Not having an opportunity to be fully informed about the proposal and proposal rationale, parents and staff had fragments of information to articulate their positions on the issue. There was a lot of misinformation about the proposal and what impact it would have on the various communities sharing the building. Unless a person was personally familiar with the actors, one is not aware that there has been a history of division amongst already-co-located schools, or that the schools
have been getting along very well.

What all of this misinformation the public commentary at hearings became more about posturing than engaging in well informed dialogue. Comments at the hearing were volleyed both toward hearing administrators and other families that framed community members from the other schools and youth in racialized, pejorative terms. Instead of finding opportunities to build relationships and resist having policies stuffed down their throat, the representatives of schools (actors) found themselves pitted against one another, jockeying for positions in order to protect their respective school communities.

Another distinguishing aspect of the remaking of engagement and voice during the Mayoral control era was its use of data and its definition of engagement around data. While Mr. Nazario was critical of the Bloomberg era, he did concede one positive:

I really can't give him [Bloomberg] too much but I can give him credit on this. When Bloomberg got involved on the parent piece, there's probably more information out there than it's ever been, like the web site, the ARIS website that you can check out your student's scores and stuff like that.

(Nazario, 2013)

ARIS, or Achievement Reporting and Innovation System, "provides educators with a consolidated view of student achievement data and collaborative instructional resources, all
on the same platform” (New York City Department of Education, 2014). With an initial cost of $80 million ARIS became a signature dimension to linking parents and educators in the digital age. ARIS was underused and ineffective in improving student outcomes, and it would eventually be absorbed into a federally funded statewide system (Colvin and Zimmer 2012). Regardless of effectiveness, the investment reflected the state’s conception of data and data users/consumers. ARIS data primarily referred to attendance records and test scores for families, while educators were also supposed to be provided resources to improve data-driven instruction. While parents welcomed having this information, as Mr. Nazario suggested, I argue that privileging test and attendance data reinforces and advances narrow views of education and youth development within the public sphere.

ARIS suggests that engagement in education is about individualism, surveillance, and unidirectional communication. By collecting and disseminating data on individual students, and only inviting educators to collaborate around this data to drive instruction, ARIS serves as a way for parents to “keep tabs” on their children with limited information on the broader school community. This reinforces a form of surveillance of youth that fails to ensure that engagement around the data between youth, their families and educators, will take place. Moreover, while
each school had websites that have the potential of providing more holistic “data pictures” website development had been left up to individual schools to do, leading to uneven results in investment website development and effectiveness. School communities and district communities that have been more adept at digital communications have avoided DOE-provided systems, instead opting for proprietary and open source applications including Google applications and Facebook to name a few.

While the DOE often welcomes this kind of individual innovation, it created a narrow understanding of the practices of using, reading, analyzing and sharing data. ARIS represents a unidirectional conception of cultural practices around data, where data is disseminated and consumed rather than examined and contested. Certainly it can be argued that ARIS was not designed to operate in isolation of face-to-face conversations amongst parents and educators, but it is indicative of the underdeveloped understanding the varied ways that data is engaged, ignored, or internalized in social life. In sum, these narrowed views of data and cultural practices with data allow the state to distance itself from the populace while appearing to be accessible, thus providing another example of the hollowed centrality of the state.

In sum, at the district level of the school-community nexus it becomes evident that the material and cultural forces of
racial neoliberal urbanism has had devastating effects on El Barrio. Bloomberg’s accountability-autonomy rubric was fueled by racio-cultural framings of urban poor communities of Color, dismantling and remaking school governance and schools, and a control and erasure of the political voices and the community voice. Our study was conducted in the final year of the Bloomberg era, and Pedro Pedraza noted in a conversation “after 20 years of fighting (the Giuliani and Bloomberg eras combined) you get fatigued” (Field notes, 2013). The work of resistance in El Barrio and El Barrio schools for the last two decades might best be described as Sisyphean in character. Still, the fact that the people of El Barrio continued to navigate against and with the tides of dominance must be recognized and learned from.

**Survivance**

I turn my attention to the strategies used by people in El Barrio to navigate, survive and overcome the conditions shaped by the grammar of racial neoliberal urbanism. The broader the scale, the more varied educational goals are, but our research suggests that the provision of a high quality educational experience for all students of the neighborhood is a persistent shared goal. Where there was variation was in how this goal would be achieved. Throughout I have alluded to a number of survivance strategies that the people of El Barrio used, but I
want to reflect on three here: protective compliance, “army of one” activism, and coalition building.

**Protective compliance, or “playing the hand you’re dealt”**

Much like the Bilingual Head Start (BHS), the neighborhoods efforts at surviving changing conditions has been focused on recognizing current social conditions and doing the best they could with the hand that was dealt to them. Another way to think about “playing the hand you’re dealt,” is to engage in acts of protective compliance. Protective compliance that protects that which people feel must be defended. In the BHS case the goal was to protect the school’s mission and community members. Over the years the shared mission of doing right by and for all students was not as clearly articulated on the district level as it might have been at the BHS or an individual school. So whether it was to protect oneself or to protect a larger mission the practice of complying with mandates or with the logic that underpins the mandates was a strategy that was often used.

One way that district-level actors complied was by trying to be forerunners in education policy. Mr. Rivera, the last leader of the community school board, for example, was one of the few school board leaders that welcomed the shift to Mayoral control. When discussing the ways that people try to
explain the failure of the schools in the district, Mr. Rivera noted that

There was always something external to the school system, and in some level of great concern and anxiety, I embraced Bloomberg’s idea of accountability. Never fully... at the beginning of anything you never know exactly what it means over time, but certainly I embraced it and I was one of the few school board leaders in this city that came out in support of it (Rivera, 2013).

Mayor Bloomberg’s call for accountability resonated greatly for Mr. Rivera, though he was not without some skepticism. But regardless of how skeptical he was Mr. Rivera was publically supportive of the reforms as a way of getting in front of policy change. To be in support of these changes meant encouraging reform of the school system that complies with what was expected.

While Mr. Rivera was supportive of the mayor’s calls for reform, Mr. Nazario was very critical, and that did not keep him and others he worked with from not trying to comply creatively. Two examples of protective “creative” compliance that I noted earlier in this chapter were encouraging the reorganization of elementary and middle schools as K-8 schools, and supporting dual language programs. Mr. Nazario notes:
Well, like I said before, before the Mayor even came on, the DOE was already getting rid of the bilingual [programs]. They were already in motion...So first thing we did was we got proactive and we created our district K to 8, that's another way of stating that it started in East Harlem before it even went anywhere else...to counteract this place [having to] give [a] charter, to give whoever. So we went K to 8, ...to secure our space.

Getting in front of it, meant being proactive with implementing, supporting, and creating innovative ideas. Mr. Nazario’s recollections suggest that while this approach was about innovating within the dominant grammar, the initiation of conversations and projects amongst community actors and school leaders, at the very least, mitigated the explicit ignoring of the needs and views of local community schools district. In also doing they were able to protect some form of agency in the midst of dominance.

**Rebranding**

Another form of protective compliance was re/branding. The branding or rebranding that occurred during this period was not so much a novel approach to the work of schools, but rather an assimilation of marketing practices to appeal to consumers. The Bloomberg framework was effective in pushing schools to market their school in order to be competitive in a choice oriented
framework. The primary reasons for the emphasis on rebranding were make appeals for funding and to recruit students.

Charter schools in the district primarily engaged in rebranding work to appeal for funds. As charter schools who depend on private philanthropy that organizations that manage them include fundraising work as part of their annual budgets which goes into creating fundraising campaigns, recruiting students, and supporting charter school advocacy events. From what I have observed in the fieldwork, the materials that were produced were professionally done and quite compelling. Prior to my interview with Mr. Rivera at the offices of Harlem RBI, for example, a number of beautiful pamphlets were displayed by the front desk, that focused on the new complex that was to include Dream Charter School and affordable housing (Mays, 2013a).

While not having fundraising or marketing within their initial designs, public schools and the schools of choice from the decentralization era also began deploying marketing strategies to help them remain competitive in recruiting students. At one of the Community Education Council Four (CEC4) meetings, for example, a principal at a traditional school that was making significant improvements and was developing a Spanish English dual language program, he focused on using a discourse that had mass appeal. He noted, for example that “we’re very focused on parental engagement, and we are not talking about
involvement, we are talking about engagement” (Field Notes). His words and tone intimated that their bold approach was not just a rehashing of the old approaches to parental involvement of the past. As he spoke the principal passed out pencils, pens and other souvenirs emblazoned with the schools logos. What became immediately apparent was the focus the principal had placed in managing and promoting his school’s brand in order to make the case that they were deserving of additional support.

Branding, or rebranding, is a strategy that recognizes and counters deficit framings of the schools and community, but there are dangers here. Most obvious was the reproduction of failure framing of others, or of the past, in order to create distinctions. This was apparent when looking at recruitment material for some of the older alternative small schools and more recent homegrown charter schools in the area. In one document for prospective parents by one of the older alternative schools, the school suggested that historically, “progressive education” was a very unstructured (and thus ineffective) approach to teaching, but that their version of “progressive education” would be much more defined and focused on student performance. This discourse was a strategic appeal to local parents that fit into a consumer oriented marketing while allowing the schools to have some voice in the narrative of their school.
Army of one

If we think of survivance strategies as operating on a spectrum that runs along an axis that compares how complicit or resistant the strategy is in relation to dominance the protective strategies that I have discussed in this chapter and the previous one would be located closer to complicity side of the spectrum. In a neighborhood with a long history of “resistant” strategies, I went into this project looking for traces of those resistance strategies within the Bloomberg era, and examples like the coalition work that the Head Start participated suggested some openings. Looking on the level of governance, one of the prominent strategies has been individual or small group political advocacy work, or what I describe as an “army of one” advocacy.

Mr. Nazario was a particularly firm believer in this approach to social change. One of the issues that the schools in the district have faced is deteriorating conditions of the schoolyards. As a member of the CEC and more recently as the leader of the Community Board 11 youth development committee, Mr. Nazario was very active in working with schools to gather financial resources and school district support to improve conditions. He explains what his approach has been in doing this work:
What I have done as a parent advocate, I just want to make this clear, that you do show strength in numbers but guess what, even the [armed] services have a special force, five, six people that can impact like a hundred. Me and maybe some of my council members in the past. If you go around ... For example you go to PS XYZ that schoolyard, one-man army, me, finding where to get the money...

Calling the Knicks to get the basketball courts there and then once again, it wasn't 50 of us. It was two of us that had a drive. We went out. We took pictures of all prison yards and then we show these people that we were asking them for money for it like pathetic... People need to understand that if you have a passion, a hunger for something, people will get on board with you, you understand?

Reminiscent of Margret Mead’s notion that we should “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world,” (Institute for Intercultural Studies, 2009), the strategy of being “your own army” has been an effective way of advocating for schools and ultimately the students. It is also an approach that relies on passionate individuals who have a political acumen and have developed relational trust with the schools that the individuals advocate for. This kind of
political leadership is also reminiscent of the school district leadership of Anthony Alvarado during the decentralization era, as he and the small group of collaborators in the district offices pushed forward reform.

Another aspect of an army of one strategy that makes it effective is its alignment with the primacy of the individual within this conjuncture. Even when the goals of individual change makers run in contradiction to the state’s desires, it is a more palatable to the state’s interests. It is more palatable, I argue, because the possibility of controlling individual actors or leadership within a hierarchical structure is greater than is controlling collective, more horizontal social movements. In the case of El Barrio, individualized asks of, or demands on, the state have been appeased so long as it does not interrupt the overall function of the state. As such the solitary approach is a dual edged sword of both possibility and limitations.

Connected to an army of one discourse are individual schools or institutional forms of advocacy work. By this I mean when an individual school or institution is engaging in policy level work in response to issues that are affecting their school, the school system, or the surrounding community more generally. Across both the decentralization and mayoral control eras the call for innovative ideas, and alternatives where there
were no alternatives, inspired the birth of a range of educational experiments.

A story within the study that I intend to devote more time to in a separate project, but is a salient example here, is the contestation over space amongst charter schools, the small schools, and the traditional public schools during the mayoral control era. During the first year of the study, I observed and spoke with people connected to schools involved in a fight over the space available at the Jackie Robinson Education Complex.

The building was originally occupied by Junior High School 13 (JHS 13) that was being phased-out beginning in the 2012-13 school year. At the time, it had already been co-located with Central Park East I, Central Park East Secondary School, and East Harlem Scholars Academy I, the first charter school operated by East Harlem tutorial. With the phase out the DOE had decided to allocate the former JHS 13 space to East Harlem Scholars so that they could open a second academy. What ensued were very two very volatile hearings.

What the dynamics surrounding this story indicated was the strong organizing that was taking place within each school. There was enormous turnout at the meetings from school community members, each lobbying for their particular view on the issue. Each school provided a formidable response to the DOE’s mandates, and it is in these impassioned and well-organized
responses that the power of one school becomes particularly evident. They were able to garner public attention, which slowed down the DOE’s movements, though these efforts did not ultimately stop them.

Not being able to stop the DOE sheds light on the limitations of movements driven solely by one school. Across both decentralization and mayoral control, the focus has often been individual school development. A key distinction across the two eras, however, was the systems of support, with geographically determined bureaucratic district structures during decentralization, and the network approach during mayoral control. In this fight over space at JHS 13, it became evident how divided the schools co-located in the building were with respect to one another. While geographically in close proximity, each of the schools had their attentions turned to creating their own networks and their own internal improvements.

I contend that the racial neoliberal focus on the individual school over a more systematic approach drew individual school attention away from focusing on shared problems that were brought about by policy. In this case, co-location, choice, and charters were policy structures that had converged in places like the Jackie Robinson complex. By 2013 the DOE had finally placed more emphasis on having school building councils where each co-located school would have
representation on, but in many locations those councils were fraught with problems, so schools were hard pressed to try to address these policy issues.

What this all lead to was a decreased capacity for addressing the divisive relationships that were fostered by the DOE's limited willingness to recognize these divisions. I cannot claim that this was intentional on the part of the DOE, but the outcomes of those divisions helped the DOE curb the growth of resistance actions that cut across schools.

**Conclusion**

Toward the end of our interview with Mr. Nazario (2013), he noted quite glumly that:

The only school that might stay around would be 171 because they're in the uprise. Other schools are in the decline and people understand a failing school is a failing school. You can't get it back off the ground two years, three years from now. So the last time I looked we had about 13 schools on the SURR⁹ list so eventually they're going to crumble, reinvent themselves. They already know that the reinventing is called charter. In the future ... Be like, 'I remember when this school was junior high school 45 and now it might be charter blah,

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⁹ School Under Registration Review
The dominant narrative education reform in El Barrio during mayoral control was one of failure and remaking within the grammar of racial neoliberal urbanism. Framing failure as a product of individual decisions, failure was used as a rationale for transforming governance and the broader school system to fit the racial neoliberal mode.

Discursively and materially, the brand of racial neoliberal urbanism that took hold in El Barrio schools, and across the city, during mayoral control often borrowed from the same discursive well that motivated the progressive movements within decentralization, even though it lead to different outcomes concerning the varied depth of understanding of thin versus thick democratic forms. Ultimately, the machinations have lead to a thin government that divides in order to maintain control. It is in short a prostrated society that the people of El Barrio live in, and the question thus becomes, what it is to be done? In asking that question I invite all of us to think about it as I turn to the next chapter.
CHAPTER VIII

LESSONS FROM #BARRIOEDPROJ

What I hope has become clear is that the cultural and material grammar that is racial neoliberal urbanism employs a multitude of strategies to manage, adapt and secure a social order based on inequity and oppression. The bulk of this project has focused, as I said from the outset, on mapping dominance and survivance. Through each case I have presented the remaking of East Harlem and its education on a circuitry of division, dispossession, co-optation and exploitation. The experiences of loss that participants in the study expressed are, I argue, evidence of the cultural and material effects produced by the root shocks, or trauma, of racial neoliberal urbanism, leaving individuals and communities vulnerable to the continuation of state sanctioned violence and premature deaths.

It is this last point on expanding our networks that I think returns us to a politics of re-membering. Fullilove (2005) poignantly notes that all people—live in an emotional ecosystem that attaches us to the environment, not just as our individual selves, but as beings caught in a single, universal net of consciousness anchored in small niches we call
neighborhoods or hamlets or villages. (Fullilove, 2005 Chap 1, para 16).

As much as racial neoliberal urbanism depends on material and political dismemberment, it also depends heavily on dismemberments within the emotional ecosystem that make up most neighborhoods, including El Barrio. I use the term dismemberment here intentionally, to capture the psychologically, culturally and materially violence of this process. The circulation of the logic and actions of racial neoliberal urbanism is a key way that people are dismembered, or detached, from each other, from places, from culture and from history. This interconnection is thus as much about the material as it is about the cultural and the affective.

At the same time that the project has centered on mapping dominance, so too has there been attention paid to mapping survivance. Individuals and local institutions have enacted various modes of navigation, survival and survivance that include acts of complicity, forms of creative compliance, and engaging in varying forms of resistance and organizing in hopes of disrupting dominance and imagining an otherwise. In reflecting on this research process, what began to emerge in my thinking was that the project became an example of what Eng and Kazajian (2002) describe as a politics of mourning. As I was coming to these ideas about the politics of the project, I
was also contemplating what impact, if any, the PAR process has on the co-researchers, the participants and the broader social world?

In this chapter I reflect on the design of the project and contend with the notion of impact. I am thinking here as an educator first, seeking to understand the pedagogical and political impact of the project. In what follows I consider how the critical pedagogical design of #BarrioEdProj would serve as a way to engage in what Eng and Kazanjian (2002) describe as a politics of mourning. More, as a project engaged in this form of politics I suggest that the project serves as a contributor to challenging and abolishing racial neoliberal urbanism. To support my argument about the process, I then turn to the question of pedagogical impact as a braided construct that pays attention to both catalytic validity and impact validity. In short, I argue the project had an impact within emotional, intellectual and political dimensions. #BarrioEdProj served as a vehicle for paying attention to what remains in the wake of devastating urbanisms, being awake to structural oppression, sharpening analysis, and encouraging nuanced ways to re-member ourselves to what is lost and to each other.
While presenting on parts of this study to a group of graduate students, one of them commented, “really, your story is one of defeat.” What struck me about this comment was its accuracy. After a half-century or more of cycles of remaking, East Harlem’s story can be understood as one of defeat. But, in retrospect, the intention of #BarrioEdProj was not to present a totalizing narrative of the past, nor was it to lament all that had been lost. Rather the focus was to engage in a participatory “politics of mourning” (Eng & Kazajian, 2001) where the intention is to “induce actively a tension between the past and the present, between the dead and the living” (p. 1). Mourning in this way is a generative process where the past is in dialogue with the present. To mourn, in other terms, is a process of re-membering, which is a process of paying close attention to frayed, if not tattered, connective tissues that link histories, individuals, groups, and places to each other. In re-membering we can begin to re-member our collective selves. To dialogically re-member, or reconnect, ourselves to history, to place, and to each other, creates this powerful opportunity to enliven analyses and possibilities for a more just futurity.

From the perspective of an educator, to incite this kind of politics requires clarity in the goals and design of this
work. In other words, the politics of a D+CPAR project is materialized through an instructional dynamic (Ball and Forzani, 2007) that enacts a critical pedagogy. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) remind us that critical pedagogy is “an approach to education that is rooted in the existential experiences of marginalized peoples; that is centered in a critique of structural, economic, and racial oppression; that is focused on dialogue instead of a one-way transmission of knowledge; and that is structured to empower individuals and collectives as agents of social change” (p. 1). More, this project describes dialogue as an instructional dynamic that is constituted by “teaching and learning as teachers and students interpret one another and their environments over time” (Ball & Forzani, 2007, p. 531). In this case, the effort was to premise the educational experience of doing this work in a critical pedagogy that sought to center the neighborhood and its schools as objects of study, catalyzing a critical consciousness through study, and facilitating social action.

Reflecting on the design of the project then becomes an instructional guide that helps us to evaluate the effectiveness or impact of the project. At the same time when one pays attention to the project design we can begin to parse out what contributes to making this model an iteration of the politics of mourning. Here I want highlight some keys ways the
project accomplishes, or begins to accomplish, a politics of mourning.

**Paying attention to who and what remains**

First, #BarrioEdProj sought to pay attention to what and who remains in the wake of racial neoliberal urbanism. As I’ve mentioned in other portions of this study, I was interested in working with local young people in mapping dominance and understanding the production of loss. What became evident as we came together as a research group, and more so when we began conducting archival and interview research, was that our understandings would come from looking at what remained physically, culturally and politically. As Eng and Kazanjian (2001) posit, 'when the question ‘what is lost?’ is posed, it invariably slips into the question ‘what remains?’ That is, loss is inseparable from what remains, for what is lost is known only by what remains of it, by how these remains are produced, read, and sustained” (p. 2). To mourn is thus not only a process of recognizing and remembering the lost, it is also asking what AND who remains? Then asking what can we learn from engaging with the people and materials that remain?

In this project the process of mourning proceeded as a braiding of archival documents, secondary source readings, and working with project participants. The collection of photos, flyers and reports that we found at the archives of the Center
for Puerto Rican Studies (Centro), the New York Public Library and the Municipal Archives, were a treasure trove. There were community study reports on education or local environmental conditions, while other boxes were collections included letters written to local government leaders, such as those by activist social worker Ellen Lurie and Puerto Rican Activists Antonia Pantoja. As we worked with the archives, we also read secondary sources on the themes of education, such as Barrio Dreams, where scholar Arlene Davila looks at gentrification and cultural exploitation in the remaking of East Harlem a decade ago. The secondary source readings and discussions we had as group gave us background knowledge on East Harlem and how it had been framed overtime. More, by creatively putting the past in tension with secondary resources we began to develop a shared language for analyzing and understanding the data we would gather from our interviews.

**Bearing witness & models of survivance**

Our interviewees and youth co-researchers can be understood as part of who remains, but it is critical to also understand their roles as active witnesses. The participants in this project remain, for the most part, either living in the neighborhood or affiliated to the neighborhood through family, friends, work colleagues and local schools and organizations. Moreover, most of the interviewees have been
actively involved in work that engages structural issues that were affecting the community and the larger city. And by participating in this project the co-researchers were also actively engaging people and ideas connected to social change. As they have been actively participating in this work, they have also bore witness to the changes in the neighborhood and the schools.

Their individual stories and memories are tied to the narratives of the neighborhood. Marina Ortiz, a project interviewee and director of East Harlem Preservation, for example, was born and raised in East Harlem, though her family was pushed out of the neighborhood during the building fires of the 1970s and 80s. She returned in 2004 and through all of the change Ms. Ortiz notes, “my connection to East Harlem never ended. That’s part of the reason that I came back because I saw that there were changes going on in communities, like East Harlem throughout the city and even where I lived in The Bronx in terms of people being displaced and people struggling around gentrification.” (Ortiz, 2013). Ms. Ortiz trajectory is a reflection of the narratives of El Barrio, and we see this repeatedly in the interviewees’ stories across ages. The voices of the interviewees are powerful additions to the gathering of memories of what has been lost and how it was lost.
Moreover, the interviewees and even more so the youth co-researchers, can be understood as witnesses to the trauma, or root shock, of racial neoliberal urbanism. As witnesses, interviewees told stories of disappearance and loss over and over. As one participant in her early twenties, who grew up in the neighborhood, left the city for undergraduate studies, and had recently returned, noted:

I think the neighborhood has changed ... I see a lot of people that I grew up with leaving the city completely and leaving the neighborhood and not being able to afford to live in the neighborhood anymore. A lot of my friends moved to Jersey City or other parts of New Jersey or maybe into the Bronx or up state or even to the south, like Florida or North Carolina and stuff like that. I think I see less of this whole community kind of relationships and stuff like that where people were here for generations and they kind of built on those relationships and now we’re kind of losing that social capital, I think. I kind of feel less connected I think. (X. Pedraza, 2013)

Participants across age groups echoed feelings of displacement and disconnection that we see in Ms. Pedraza’s observations. While some interviewees referenced terms like gentrification and displacement, and others did not, there was a shared intellectual and affective recognition that the neighborhood
was “taking hits.” And there was a shared feeling of the effects of these root shocks on their community and their own communal relationships.

At the same time that displacement has gone on, the interviewees have recognized the challenges that families and community organizations have navigated in the midst of the ongoing remaking of public school-community relationships and the changes within schools. In this study, I have sought to demonstrate that over the 40+ years since the community control struggle reached its most volatile period, political divisions have been a constant presence even as the dividing lines have repeatedly been redrawn in response to cultural political economic change.

Historical documents demonstrate that the school renaissance of the late 1970s and 1980s required an activist district administration that was able to work between divisions driven by clashing political agendas. While what came out of that era was neither perfect nor evenly distributed, our interviewees recognized the decline of the system. Interviewees pointed to the displacement of families tied to rising living costs and the departure of families for better educational opportunities, as well as the corruption and ineffectiveness of the local school management mechanisms. Interviewees note that by the time Bloomberg came into power,
divisions have been redrawn to turn focus away from parent and community appeals to district administration toward family choice and an expansion of charter options that were both local and city-level projects. Bearing witness to these changes in education made evident how the grammar of racial neoliberal urbanism would work its way through public education in the neighborhood and would push community leaders and parents to use strategies that worked with and against this grammar. What was witnessed then was the creation of a zero-sum game of competition over space and family consumers that creates islands of educational exceptionalism for a numerical minority of community families, and leaves the majority of students, families and schools struggling to survive.

In retrospect, #BarrioEdProj was an engagement in a politics of mourning that was creative and political in its design. Paying attention to what remains and braiding voices as witnesses to loss and models of survivance is a way of making loss function as a generative space rather than one solely of despair. It is an opportunity to connect, reflect and create new actions. I turn now to thinking about what actual impact the project had on the various lives we crossed paths with over the course of the first years of the project.
The Impact of #BarrioEdProj

As I suggested earlier in this chapter, the impact of #BarrioEdProj centers on the instructional dynamics (Ball and Forzani 2007) of community-focused, participatory action research. It is the interactions between co-researchers, educators, community members, data, and the social context that marks where and how we can assess impact. With this in mind, I am holding up both how PAR work moves people through teaching and learning, as well as how PAR projects affect the shaping and implementation of policy to ultimately improve social conditions. Conceptually it is a conscientious linking of the more external questions of impact validity and the more internal questions of catalytic validity. In recognizing this inseparability and the importance of the instructional dynamic, I want to introduce the idea of pedagogical impact as a framework for honoring, and thinking through, both the catalytic and impact validity of a project.

As I mention in an earlier chapter, Massey and Barreras (2013) state that impact validity is “the extent to which research has the potential to play an effective role in some form of social and political change, or is useful as a tool for advocacy or activism” (p. 616). From this vantage point, the more external dimensions of impact revolve around how #BarrioEdProj might have contributed to social change in the
community. Did the project, for example, have any impact on educational issues that the neighborhood was addressing during this period of the study? Or another question we had was: how did the project contribute to extending or supporting community-based advocacy in education and other issues? This is a question I attend to later in this chapter, but what is important to note here is the externality of the notion of impact validity. Impact validity, is concerned primarily “with the potential usefulness of research as a tool for advocacy” (Massey and Barreras, 2013 p. 617).

For #BarrioEdProj questions of external impact validity are inextricably bound to the internal, catalytic impact of the work being done within the project. Patti Lather argues, “catalytic validity represents the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it, a process Freire (1970) terms conscientization” (p. 272). For #BarrioEdProj the questions here revolved around how the co-researchers, interviewees, and viewers of data that we posted on our social media platforms, were affected by the process of putting together the project and its implementation? I contend that as a place-based form of participatory action research these internal questions could not be completely separated out from the more external questions of impact.
Impact on the co-researchers as we did the work

At the center of this project are our two youth co-researchers Mariely and Honory, and as such the impact of the project on them is perhaps more important than anything. As a project underpinned by critical pedagogy, the intention was to engage the co-researchers in a process of conscientization. Specifically, my intention was to give them opportunities to be more aware of social, structural, issues connected to the neighborhood, to be able to analyze these conditions, and to have opportunities to take actions in response to those conditions. At the same time the project sought to provide them with resources and opportunities to develop concrete skills as researchers and digital media makers. Their responses and ideas over the course of the first year of the project suggest that project had a positive impact on their emerging critical consciousness and their skill development.

During the early months of the project much of our work revolved around balancing between doing digital tool training, interview methods, and reading material about social science work on East Harlem, political economy, urban education. The digital skill building and qualitative research training revolved, largely, around conducting and producing video and audio-recorded interviews. From this more practical angle, the co-researchers felt like they had had an opportunity to learn
by being able to put these skills in to practice almost immediately. Mariely and Honory both discussed their skill development during their mid-year reflection. Honory’s comments are particularly indicative of what she and Mariely were experiencing:

I also feel like I have learned a great deal about my interviewing skills and how I need to work more on improving that. I was only able to see that by actually conducting the interview and going back to them and listening to myself. It’s definitely more difficult than I thought. (Peña, 2014)

I feel like I’ve been learning a lot on how to talk to people specially when introducing the project. It has also helped me improve on my socialization skills because I have always tend to stand back and watch rather than push myself to be more social. I have met a lot of important people and I hope to keep in contact with them just for future references. (Peña, 2014)

In Honory’s comments what is evident is that she is recognizing her own evolving understanding of what it is to be a skilled qualitative researcher. Honory’s attendance to the social qualities of qualitative research speak to her growing awareness that participatory research requires a willingness to reach out to others and navigate asymmetrical power relations (Young,
1997). More, her comments indicate that one way engaged research centers and honors community voice is by being attuned to research-participant reciprocity (Galetta, 2013). Patti Lather asserts that reciprocity is that “give and take, a mutual negotiation of meaning and power’ (p. 267)” (As quoted in Galetta, 2013, p. 77). During our team meetings we would begin with reflections on current work we were doing for the project. I often noted that Honory, and to a lesser extent Mariely, were reflecting on their interviewing experiences and looking to listen carefully to their interviewees and modifying their questions and approaches as time went on. The researchers, of course, not solely feel the impact work centered on reciprocity, as I will discuss later in this chapter. What I want to turn my attention to is thinking about the catalytic impact of centering the histories and voices of our own communities in research.

The impact of El Barrio as the curriculum

Earlier I discussed how #BarrioEdProj functioned within the traditions of critical pedagogy, but I have not devoted much time to discussing curricular dimensions of the project. As Wright (2015) reminds us YPAR project are “adult-supported learning contexts that promote young people’s involvement in project decision-making, planning and design entail providing a curriculum and skill-building instruction to student researchers” (p. 25). Briefly I want to discuss the curriculum
of the project and then turn to thinking about the question of impact of this curriculum.

In short, curriculum can be defined as the series of things a group of people must do and experience in order to unfold the development of some dimension of individual and collective capacities (I refer readers to Flinders & Thornton, 2004 among other sources on curriculum). The design, construction, implementation, and evaluation of these ‘series of things’ is a far more complex set of questions to confront than I have space for, but here I refer to Beyer and Apple (1998) to highlight some key categories of curricular questions that I had as the curriculum of the project emerged:

- Epistemological: What is knowledge? and What should count as knowledge?,
- Ideological: Whose knowledge is this? And Whose knowledge counts more?,
- Political: who shall control the selection and distribution of knowledge?; and
- Economic: How is the knowledge linked to the existing and unequal distribution of power, goods, and services in society?

The intention of #BarrioEdProj was to put the histories, politics, voices, people, and futurities of El Barrio at the center. Part of the authority that undergirds racial neoliberal
urbanism is the dominance of outsider views on a community. Taking responsibility for designing the curricular framework for the youth co-researchers the question for me as the designer of the framework for this project was: What happens if we try to flip the script here? I designed a curriculum that was inquiry-based, grounded in local voices, along with our attention to research skill development. As such, I prioritized the reading reports generated by the neighborhood, collected writings about the neighborhood that were written by scholars and writers who had connections to the neighborhood like Arlene Davila’s *Barrio Dreams* (2004) and Ernesto Quiñones’ *Bodega Dreams* (2000), identified local community events for us to attend, and built relationships with exploring local archives like the Center for Puerto Rican Studies.

As a research group, we would take our new learning into interviews, where the group would hear from a cadre of multigenerational, community stakeholders, who had been active during the historical moments we had been studying. Upon returning to our group meetings we would engage in a reflective process, where we would make sense of what we observed in the interviews in relation to our readings, archival work, and their lived experience. In these discussions the voices of generations of East Harlem education community members enlivened the very complicated situations residents dealt with, as they faced
displacement from home, urban restructuring, and disconnections from levers of power within the education state apparatus.

Having been members of the East Harlem community for most if not all of their lives, Honory and Mariely, our youth co-researchers, were being exposed to East Harlem-focused social science and archival information for the first time. This elicited feelings of surprise, dissatisfaction and some anger. They were pleased to learn about the rich history of the neighborhood, but at the same time they were disappointed by the way these histories were denied to them over the course of their educational careers. As they began to read through the archives about the work of organizations like Aspíra or United Bronx Parents, and individuals like Antonia Pantoja and Evelina Antonetty, their pride was observable. Still, the fact that this material was not part of school curriculum for many people, including themselves, led them to express feelings of missing out and asserting that Latinos were somehow seen as less. On top of all these feeling, there was also a growing anger as they began to think more about the devastating impact gentrification and education reform were having on their lives, and the lives of others in the neighborhood.

Our research gave them background information on the past as well as a language to talk about what they had been seeing and experiencing. Having looked at the archives, one of the co-
researchers commented, “East Harlem has been poor for so long” (Mayorga, 2014b) and they saw the waves of efforts made to improve the neighborhood including different attempts to market the neighborhood to gain more government and economic support. In speaking of gentrification the researchers’ concern was centered around how gentrification was displacing them and their neighbors. In one discussion a co-researcher notes, “to me gentrification is negative, they’re being sneaky with it, they are targeting people who have no idea what to do and what’s going on (Mayorga, 2013). Concerns over gentrification and the overall remaking of the neighborhood echoed those of our interviewees. As Mariely noted, “but it does not look like El Barrio any more...this is my neighborhood, what East Harlem really is” (Mayorga, 2013)

They also began to think about the relationships between gentrification and public education. In our discussion they pointed to the increase in school closures and charter school openings. Similar to my analysis in previous chapters, the co-researchers suggested that the closings were more about space than education, while the charter schools were more about branding than higher quality education. As one of co-researcher mentioned, “the reasons charter schools are being called charters and not public schools [is] because they are not appealing” (Meeting Notes). To the co-researchers, the
distinctions between the charter schools and traditional public schools did not have to be as stark as many people including media and families made it out to be. Still, the co-researchers had an understanding of the difficult choices families face in this educational policyscape. For our co-researcher, Honory, for example, seeing a parent discuss struggles over education led her to think about the complexities families face, and the necessary work parents must do in order to provide high quality education for all children [http://vimeo.com/79645960].

Still while their analyses were honest and often with a recognition of despair, engaging in this research also inspired guides to action and the inspiration to act. The work fostered a conscientization, or critical consciousness, in the co-researchers. Mariely’s comments about this are particularly stunning. She notes,

My whole perspective of my own community has changed a lot, especially because I feel like when I was younger I didn't really pay too much attention. Or at least, me, mentally, I wasn't worried about anyone else, but myself and what I had to do. Now with the project, it's more like every day no matter what when I walk out of my house and I'm around East Harlem, I'm always consciously thinking about what's going on. (Mena, 2014)
Mariely’s comments are a return to a politics of mourning. In coming to a critical consciousness, the co-researchers were inspired to pay much greater attention to what remains in the neighborhood, and to put what they observed in tension with the past (archival materials). In doing so our shared research, teaching and action was engaged in a politics that was “active rather than reactive, prescient rather than nostalgic, abundant rather than lacking, social rather than solipsistic, militant rather than reactionary” (Eng and Kazajian, 2001, p. 2).

Being active rather than reactive is one final point to consider about the impact of the project on the co-researchers. In the midst of our research, one of the questions we often asked ourselves was fundamentally one about taking action: The community is in trouble, so how can we help people realize what’s going on? We drew from all aspects of our projects as we wrestled with this question, including the archives. When reflecting on examining the archives from ASPIRA and our interviews, for example, Honory asks, “A lot of the interviewees have been talking about parent involvement, how can we spread what ASPIRA is doing into the community?” (Peña, 2014). In this question Honory was engaging in her own process of re-membering herself to the history, and strategies, of struggle that ASPIRA represents. At the same time, she was connecting the past to contemporary struggles and was looking to the past as a guide to
action for #BarrioEdProj to follow. The question that Honory posed here became an essential question that continues to animate the work of the project in the present.

During an interview at the end of the first year of the project, Honory, would also extend her thoughts on taking action based on our research into schools. Here she was speaking about how students are underserved by the education system, and how the work of the project might contribute to working against these conditions:

It's a battle because they're just used to that. I feel like maybe doing some of that kind of connection in the neighborhood, or even if it's not the school principal, someone whose involved, even if it's a parent. If they're involved, what do they see and getting their point of view. Not even just the interviewing in the neighborhood, but coming into these schools or into these programs or even just community spaces, it's like what's the scoop? What's happening? [Italics added] (Peña, 2014)

For months Honory had come to recognize that there are people very much involved in the struggle to create more just educational conditions, but the emphasis on the individual within racial neoliberal urbanism meant an ongoing decline in communication across silos. Part of her solution to interrupting that individualization was to further expand the reach of our
D+CPAR into the schools by sharing information for the purposes of inspiring conscientization.

In sum, as a curricular experience that was premised on a politics of mourning, #BarrioEdProj had a strong impact on all of us as participants. The work that would emerge over time initiated a process where the co-researchers, in particular, were engaged in a process of re-membering themselves to ideas, places, and histories that they had not realized they had been disconnected from. In going through this process of re-membering, they were going through a catalytic experience that was expanding their conscientization and moving them toward action.

Branching out: Impact beyond the co-researchers

Admittedly, the impact of this initial year of the project was felt most directly in the development of the co-researchers. Our more external work in social media sputtered, with even Mariely stating bluntly, “Edwin, this technology thing does not work in El Barrio” (Mayorga, 2015). Also our first public information sharing event was not very well attended, though attendees all commented that they were very delighted to see what our project was doing, and that they hoped to stay in touch (Mayorga, 2014b). With that said, there are some comments and activities that transpired between our project, our interviewees, and the larger public that I want
to take note of here. I want to argue that these comments and activity are indicative of the impact the project did have, and some of the potential impact that the project can have in the future. Specifically, I want to highlight the educational impact of the project, the extension of re-membering processes to others, and the ongoing participation of the project in efforts at social change in the neighborhood.

Education and re-membering

The educational impact of the project picks up on the notion of the project as a piece of curricula. For a number of our younger interviewees (between the ages of 18 and 21), for example, the topic of discussion was in and of itself an opportunity to more precisely name what they had been experiencing. This was most notable around the notion of gentrification.

Below is an example of this educational exchange. This is from our interview with Dio, who is 19 at the time of the interview, identifies as Dominican, and a resident of East Harlem.

Dio: I don't like using this word, but the term minorities we're just being pushed out the neighborhood. The ... what's it called? White people, they're just moving in. It's just ... it's being gent- how do you ... I can't say this word.

Interviewer: Gentrified?
Dio: Gentrific--

Interviewer: Gentrification?

Dio: Gent- there you go, that word. You see a lot more of white people moving in and then Hispanics and Blacks moving out. It's just nuts that come there. (Dio, transcript)

Here then Dio is searching for the term in order to give shape to what he has been observing. Moreover, as he continues in the interview he articulates what he sees as the material and behavioral effects of gentrification.

Cultural change? Not ... mainly gentrification going on in the neighborhood. As I grew up I saw people moving out. People that I knew were close to were just moving out away from the city, away from the country, or even out the neighborhood because they couldn't afford it.

I see a lot more white people moving in especially in my building; a lot more white people moving in. For some, not for some reason, I know that the manager is fixing it up just so it can look better, look more appealing which is like, ‘Hmm. I like it. I'm not complaining about it. Why didn't you do it before?’ (Dio, 2013)

Gentrification, was a notion that most interviewees were familiar with, but engaging in our interviews gave them an opportunity to put that language into discursive practice.
Moreover, this youngest group of participants appeared to find the opportunity to link their abstract notion of gentrification to their own lives, a positive experience.

While the impact on our younger interviewees was primarily educational, for participants in our 25-60 and 60+ age groups the project was an opportunity to remember. “I should have been a historian,” Mr. Nazario mentions at one point in his interview. Recurringly, Mr. Nazario reminds the listener to “look back at the history of things” as a means to construct a clearer understanding of how we current conditions came to be. In another example, our interviewee, Deborah Meier, notes that she recognizes the challenges teachers and communities face in education, but she felt as though there needed to continue to be sparks identified to keep change going. At the end of our interview with her, Ms. Meier noted, “I appreciate what you're doing so much. Both of you. Thank you both of you for keeping it going” (Meier, 2013).

Another, less developed, way that the project functioned as an educational tool was through our sharing of our archival materials and interviews. As it became evident that our use of social media tools was not gaining the traction I wanted it to for a number of factors (see Mayorga 2014a), we began thinking about alternative steps in our project design that were centered more on educational information sharing and dialogue. First, we
decided that we wanted to create newsletters to report our data, posting it in our digital platforms, and holding a public forum to share the newsletter. Second, we decided to slow down our social media efforts, and turn our attention to organizing and expanding our digital content, and doing more on-the-ground relationship building with various community stakeholders. And third, we have begun exploring how we can make our resources available as curricula to be used in classrooms.

The thinking behind these adjustments and new directions was that we wanted to find ways to scale up some of the transformative experiences that we had within our internal work. Our digital engagement goals needed stronger roots in the community, and better, more compelling, content, before it could gain traction in East Harlem, and beyond. Moreover, it the unevenness of access to digital media content in the neighborhood, and the variation in how educational digital content is used by individuals became evident.

As such, we decided that our D+CPAR framework would include a digital, participatory, archival component that would serve as a springboard for digital engagement. Digital, participatory, archiving is a growing area that is seen as scholarly, educational and political work (Caswell & Mallick, 2014; Povinelli, 2011). Activist archiving has been particularly important for humanities and social science, scholars who study
populations and histories that have been marginalized and rendered invisible to the public.

The impact of doing this kind of work has become increasingly evident as we have found that in the small number of viewers of our resources there are some users who are former residents of East Harlem. “I shared some of the videos with my mom,” noted one of our community collaborators in the social media end of our work. “It takes her back to her younger days, and reminded her of the struggles they’ve had in the schools in the district when she was younger” (Notes on Facebook site). Reflecting on the work and hearing these kinds of response has moved us to think about cobbling together some of our materials as classroom curricula. Like, one of our partner organizations, East Harlem Preservation, our goal was to not only document histories, but to use that history as a teaching tool to inform the public, bring people together, and incite change.

**Pedagogical impact, #BarrioEdProj as a guide to action**

At different convenings between 2009 and 2011, then president of the Puerto Rican Teachers Union (FMPR), Rafael Feliciano Hernandez, discussed the 30 years of struggle for workers’ rights and educational justice on the island of Puerto Rico. In the midst of his talks he has noted, “that the best way is often the long way” (Gonzalez, 2009). #BarrioEdProj has not made a profound impact on the
redistribution of resources or changes in urban policy in East Harlem, yet. I have argued in this chapter that this preliminary phase of the project has had a pedagogical impact, or effect, on those who crossed paths with the project. To think about pedagogical impact in this instance is a process of thinking through the catalytic and transformative effects of the project on the people who have worked to bring this project into being as well as those we seek to reach out to through our content and our on the ground political work. Thinking pedagogically, the project thus becomes an emerging “guide to action” (Le Blanc, 1996) against adaptive racial neoliberal urbanism. I have already noted the importance of paying attention to what remains, bearing witness to dominance, and educating others. To conclude this chapter I want to highlight three lessons.

**PAR Entremundos**

First, while this project began as a research endeavor, it quickly evolved into a form of what Torre and Ayala (2009) describe as “participatory action research entremundos.” From this vantage point the end goal of the project is not only systemic change, but also a quest for collective liberation. *Entremundos* draws from the work of the late Gloria Anzaldúa, referring to “in-between spaces of our own creation since we cannot fit neatly into categories made for us” (Torre and
Ayala, 2009, p. XX). Latino core communities and we, as Latino scholar-activists, live and struggle in the in-between, formed by multiple histories and futururities from the south and the north.

To do research from this in-between space is not merely intellectual work, but also political work. It is a means of educating ourselves and each other in order to move toward liberation by making community rooted research a tool for disrupting the trauma of racial neoliberal urbanism. I return to our co-researcher Honory’s description of research within our structure:

I definitely see research differently now and I do hope to one day do some research of my own. I’ve noticed that is more than just reading what’s already out there but is also about going straight to the sources themselves and make connections/research that way. All my life I’ve been told what is that I need to get done and what tasks I need to finish and that’s what I thought this experience was going to be like but it has actually taught me that I can bring my own ideas and it’s ok to brainstorm and talk about what I like to see be done and how my thoughts can be integrated into the project. (Peña, Reflection).

#BarrioEdProj thus serves as a valuable and, we hope, accessible model of research for others in the community to not only work
with, but to use in establishing their own work in other contexts. In this way the project is both education and social activism at the same time. One important aspect of research as a form of action is the documenting of survivance strategies. Keep documenting survivance and educating

With each interview we have asked participants to think about the future of East Harlem and its schools, and to varying degrees the outlook has not been a positive one. Mr. Nazario noting “a big dark cloud was coming,” and Ms. Ortiz fear that “we are going to live in a private nation” were among the chorus of despair. And yet the distinct ways each of the interviewees and the co-researchers remain engaged and hopeful must be admired, critiqued and ultimately learned from.

In the closing moments of our interview with Debora Meier we discussed what hopes she had for the immediate future for schools and East Harlem. She notes,

I keep remembering that we don’t know ahead of time exactly what small changes will order bigger ones... I think it’s always worth being up in the city. Any fire you start, even with very little, might spread. For some reason it appeals, it resonates. We’ve just got to keep looking for those places where things might resonate. Broaden the base of our work (Meier, interview).
The lesson I draw from Meier’s comment is the emphasis on continuing to document small changes. For me, small change refers to the day-to-day survivance practices that we documented, like engaging in the system as is, working as an army of one, or complying while not compromising. Some of these strategies, though not all, have the potential of being the spark to larger change, but they must be recognized and shared in order for them to have a broader effect.

**Nourish the network**

The research and sharing of survivance strategies must be in a dialectic relationship with organizing. Organizing relies on nourishing the tendrils of interconnection that racial neoliberal urbanism so often negates. As Lynch (2009) reminds us, humans are “deeply relational beings, part of a complex matrix of social and emotional relations that often give meaning and purpose to life, even though they can also constrain life’s options” (p. 4). Organizing depends on the necessity of relationships in human beings.

Although social media affords people the opportunity to cast a wider net of social relationships, the digital aspects of #BarrioEdProj were harder to get off the ground because people’s interconnections remain profoundly relational and affective in material ways. The historical and interview-based work that forced to be with people was the space where
trust amongst participants was built, and the purpose of the work was being more sharply defined.

We asked most of the interviewees if they had any suggestions regarding what could be done to transform current conditions, and a number of them returned to the importance of building and nourishing networks. One of our interviewees was Meibel Contreras, a parent of a child at Central Park East I, and an immigrant from Venezuela. In her interview she suggests that a key strategy in the fight for public schools is to think about ways to have the schools function as spaces for networking. She states:

Inventar una noche donde vamos a conocer a la comunidad, ‘tú quien eres?’ hacer tus links, que Nueva York funciona de networking, yo me entero porque tú me enteras, tengo algún contacto, ya hablaste con ella, así funciona Nueva York, otras ciudades no funcionan así, el hecho que andes caminando por la calle, sabes que aquí es —sabes que vi esto— sabes porque tu caminas, sabes porque estas en contacto con las personas, encuentras a personas en la calle, porque no crear esa esferas, porque las escuelas públicas no hacen esos eventos y pones comida para que vengan o invéntate algo, no sé, y que se cree el networking y que los profesores inviten a los padres y que no solo
Ms. Contreras comments suggest the importance of creating connective spaces within New York City schools as a particular place. As #BarrioEdProj evolves, it is my contention that the project can serve as a facilitator of networking space as it continues to serve in its role as an educational resource. In East Harlem that space is first and foremost something done in the person, but it does not mean we should reject digital social media. Instead, the on the ground trust building might best serve as the anchor for an expansive net that can reach the many that have either left or been pushed out over the years, as well as communities who are facing similar challenges. Building these connection are not solely social, but are also spaces to fuel action.

The challenge for us now is how to sustain these networks when on the ground work ends and we are left solely primarily with our digital platforms. Part of our strategy has been to connect our selves to other organizations and projects. Organizations like East Harlem Preservation, the gentrification-documentation project El Barrio Tours, La Casa Azul Bookstore, and the New York City Community Land Initiative (NYCCLI), have been some of organizations we have
connected with over the first year of the project. We have attended organizing meetings, promoted events, and provided support to efforts through online communications.

Our most powerful example of this work, thus far, is with Marie Winfield who one of our interviewees is a parent at CPE I, and an organizer with the Friends of Thomas Jefferson Park in East Harlem. For Marie, the key to change was opening up more lines of communication. She appreciated being able to share her ideas and views in the interview, but what was most compelling about our interactions with her is that they have continued to the present. In the months and years that followed our initial interview, Ms. Winfield started an organization to support the local park, persisted in being involved as a parent at her child’s school and the education council and the community board. As her work has evolved, she has stayed in close contact with our organization via social media and email. Through these media we discuss what is going on in the neighborhood and the schools, we have looked to each other to provide feedback on materials we are working on, writing letters of support, and introducing other committed community people to each other as a means to expanding our networks. This work, for me, has been the prime example of how #BarrioEdProj can function as a contributor to social change and our collective liberation.
A Note about D+CPAR

The first year of the #BarrioEdProj sheds light on some of the promises, and challenges, that public social science researchers must consider in the digital age. What became evident was that digital, critical, participatory action research (D+CPAR) provides opportunities to reimagine qualitative research methods, new perspectives on what and how data can be collected, and expands how data can be shared and discussed. It also brought attention to the importance of public engagement, as the nature of engagement is changing. In addition, old barriers, like relational trust, and new barriers, like broadband access and adoption in under resourced communities, present engaged scholars with challenges that can be addressed through collective, interdependent efforts, that are socio-politically and financially supported—all solutions, that existed long before the digital came into vogue. What is distinct about this era, and what I think researchers must be most vigilant about, is how the digital must explicitly be part of our understanding of the terrain of struggle. As Murthy (2008) notes,

the challenge for us is not only to adapt to new research methods, but also, as Saskia Sassen (2002: 365) stresses, to ‘develop analytic categories that allow us to capture the complex imbrications of technology and society’. Doing
these in tandem, with an eye to ethics and the digital divide, will be the benchmarks by which sociology’s engagement with new media technologies will be judged (p. 849)

As new critical participatory projects begin to take root, and digital technologies are integrated into projects, research collectives must continue to interrogate how the digital shapes the everyday, as the everyday shapes the digital. #BarrioEdProj looks to community-based projects like the Red Hook Initiative’s Digital Stewards [http://rhidigitalstewards.wordpress.com] program, and academic endeavors like JustPublics@365 [https://justpublics365.commons.gc.cuny.edu/], as examples of work that centers the imbrications of technology and society. We contend that by working through an analytical and activist framework, that sees the digital as part of the fabric of social inequity, and social justice, D+CPAR can contribute to the production of holistic research, that re-members us to our political past, in forms our work towards a more just and sustainable future.

What is to be done? A call for Latino race radicalism

What I hope the first year of the #BarrioEdProject has made clear is that the cultural and material grammar that is racial neoliberal urbanism is a ‘changing same,’ operating as a matrix
of strategies to manage, adapt and secure a White supremacist capitalist social order. And like other communities and neighborhoods of oppressed, people of Color urban Latino core communities like El Barrio have very much felt the devastation racial neoliberal urbanism. The question then is what is to be done?

When I described my cultural political economic framework in chapter two, I was also calling for Latino race radicalism in urban and urban education policy and politics. Drawing from the Black Radical Tradition, Melamed (2011) says this about her notion of a concatenated system of race radicalism:

I use the term to refer to antiracist thinking, struggle and politics that reckon precisely with those aspects of racialization that official liberal antiracisms screen off: the differential and racialized violences that inevitably follow from the insufficiency and nongeneralizability of human value under U.S.-led transnational capitalism and neoliberal globalization. Race radicalisms are materialist antiracisms that prioritize the unevenness of global capitalism as primary race matters (p. 47)

Following this line of thought, the form of Latino race radicalism I propose is a system of thought and action that trabaja en ambos, or works in both, the political economic and
the racial-cultural processes that shape urbanism and urban education. In a historical moment where racism and antiracism are framed as disappearing, and the strategy of aligning oneself with the cultural and economic logic of neoliberalism is key to saving yourself, race radicalism recognizes how racial capitalism persists and is adapted to advance a particular set of global, social arrangements.

In urban and urban education policy and politics, my evolving notion of a Latino race radicalism includes a number of components, of which I will only discuss a few here: maintaining a critically bifocal mode of analysis; an assets based perspective; a commitment to solidarity through difference; a practice of becoming through Latino histories of struggle; and policies and practices that center on “thick” participation.

First, as an approach born of struggle, Latino race radicalism continues to develop a cultural political economic framework that is critically bifocal in nature. Through each dimension of El Barrio’s school-community nexus that I explored I have sought to point to processes of dominance that produce cultural and material dismemberments. Division, dispossession, co-optation and exploitation are among a myriad of effects of dominance in the often invisible and misunderstood urban Latino core communities that cross the U.S. Left in the wake of racial neoliberal urbanism’s devastation many Latino communities have
been left experiencing different forms of loss that perhaps begin on the interpersonal level of seeing family and friends displaced, but that looking closely it becomes apparent that these displacements are products of systematic political, cultural and economic losses. This includes the loss of political voice, educators and school communities control over education, and disconnections from spatial memory of the barrio. Left in a dismembered state, individuals and communities are left vulnerable to the continuation of state sanctioned violence, and ultimately to premature deaths. As such, racial neoliberalism urbanism exacerbates the crises that U.S. Latinos face in education and in urban space generally.

Still, individuals and local institutions have carved various modes of navigation, survival and survivance that include acts of complicity, enacting forms of creative compliance to protect institutional goals, and applying varying forms of advocacy and activism to create change. Survivance is multifaceted and never outside of structures of dominance. The strategies individuals and groups employ are a reflection of the contact point between your politics and the “hand that you’ve been dealt.” What I have sought to point to through each case study chapter is a spectrum of survivance strategies that individual and collective actors have taken up to adapt to, confront, or refuse racial neoliberal urbanism. While I was not
always explicit, my process of mapping survivance strategies operated along a spectrum where I tried to locate a strategy within the range of “complicity” and “transformation.” Some actors in El Barrio centered their work on complicity as a means to survive if not thrive within the rubric of racial neoliberal urbanism. Others refused to comply and focused their work on transforming if not outright abolishing current structures. For the most part, though, the people of El Barrio would carve out middle grounds where they would be creatively compliant with the intention of preserving, protecting, or expanding “their people.”

A Latino race radical approach is assets-oriented. An assets-oriented approach looks to learn about what strategies have been used and seeks to make sense of both the possibilities and limits of these options. This approach is antithetical to scholarly and political approaches that focus on finding deficiencies. In this study, the “middle paths” we documented do in fact produce some level of protection for these individuals and projects, but collective transformations of social and educational conditions appear to be further away. I contend that opportunities for the articulation of collective demands are undermined, enabling the broad strokes of dismemberment to persist. Again, I say this not to speak negatively of the choices people have made, but to better understand the weight of
dominance in an already prostrated society. In taking this approach it is important to recognize the strengths of these efforts as an educational opportunity, where we can think about the effort and strategies necessary to envision and materialize systemic change.

Second, Latino race radicalism is committed to solidarity through difference and born out of struggle. In the Preface to the 2000 reprint of Black Marxism, Cedric Robinson notes, “the Black Radical Tradition is an accretion, over generations, of collective intelligence gathered from struggle” (p. xxx). To seek a similar radical tradition within a Latino/Hispanic construct is at once complicated but simple. Hispanic/Latino are, as I mentioned earlier in this dissertation, fragile, but still imposed constructs that portends to speak of a vast array of histories, geo-locations and perspectives. Some individuals and groups have not been very interested in identifying as Latinos when their own nationalities have primacy, or only claim a pan-Latino label when it is convenient for political or economic reasons. Moreover, when there is a call to use a pan-ethnic term it is often coupled to a call for unity. Anzaldúa recognized calls for unity as a problem and noted that it places a big burden on “an ethnic group that they should get their shit together and unite,” and that it “always privileges one voice, one group” (Keating, 2000, pp. 156–157).
In El Barrio struggles over the neighborhood and the schools, processes of dominance relied on divisions and placing the failures of previous reforms on the incapacities of not just Latinos, but all community members, to unify themselves in making reforms a reality. This political and cultural framing obfuscates the varied ways that pre-existing divisions were not addressed, and how these divisions became an advantage for maintaining dominance. Employing a “one man army” type of discourse as we saw in chapter seven thus becomes a much more palatable approach to those in power, while collective organizing practices withered on the vine.

A race radical approach works against notions of unity, or armies of one, by working toward solidarity. Returning to Anzaldúa, she suggests that “in solidarity,” or “en conocimiento” means that “everybody has their own space and can say their own thing and says their own thing, but there are connections, commonalities as well as difference” (Keating, 2000, p. 157). Solidarity is where difference is recognized rather than avoided, and connection is seen in our collective liberation. As Aboriginal activists groups of Queensland of the 1970s would articulate: “If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you come because your liberation is bound up in mine, then let us work together" (Lilla:
Solidarity is critical to forging a pan-Latino politics.

With over 50 million Latinos in the U.S., the majority of which comes through births rather than immigration, a focus on unity flattens a collective understanding of how different U.S. Latinos are with respect to nationality, race, citizenship status, and language, among other things. In this study I have been particularly concerned with living and contending with race as a master category and racism as a shared oppressive force on urban Latino communities. Latinos in the U.S. are racially diverse but they are also always already a racialized unit. A focus on solidarity, conversely, sees the complexities of Latinidades as an opportunity to disarticulate flattened, or reductive, concepts to then articulate a different politics—one that brings attention to specific intra-group and inter-group needs, as well as teases out shared desires for liberation and education.

In urban and urban educational struggle, the recentralization of power in a hollowed state apparatus in New York City has meant the thinning out of already arrested democratic practice to the point where people were left with individuals culturally and economically aligned with racial neoliberal urbanist visions. Disappeared were not only middle class and upper working class workers, but in our case so to
were the cultural and political heritage of El Barrio (except for when it was effective to exploit culture to improve material accumulation for the already economic elite).

Conversely, solidarity in urban and urban educational struggle, suggests thick forms of democracy and organizing to materialize community-defined forms of citizenship and governance. Thick democracy is a concept drawn from the efforts at popular governance enacted in Porto Alegre, Brazil (Gandin & Apple, 2002). There, popular administration and related Citizen Schools have encouraged “the creation of an active citizenry—one that learns from its own experiences and culture—not just for now, but also for future generations” (p. 113). While I am not saying that the formation of the citizen is not without problems in this case, it is important to recognize that the starting point here is the understanding that all people, regardless of Federal immigrant status, are see as legitimate participants in the formation of the neighborhood, city and its schools.

As such participatory forms of governance are needed on multiple levels and across sectors. Participatory budgeting or community land trusts, where members of the community or a residential building are all seen as legitimate voices in the formation of the neighborhood or a residential building, are two possibilities. Both of these approaches have been, to varying
degrees discussed and piloted in East Harlem. As I noted in Chapter 7, East Harlem is part of city councilwoman Melissa Mark Viverito’s district, which was one of the first group of districts that took part in the city’s recent experimentation with participatory budgeting. The district has expanded interest and participation in the budgeting process, which are promising signs. Still questions arise regarding the possibility of institutionalizing this process as a stand-alone process, let alone a more systematic transformation of budgetary decision making across the city. Transforming education through this participatory paradigm seems even more remote than changes in budgeting. Reorganizing under mayoral control was a death knell for the already weakened notion of decentralization in New York education.

Still, these conditions, I argue, should not deter those of us who are interested in race radical transformation from continuing to call for participatory life in education. Education, the multiple members, or participants in the community-school nexus have varying needs and views that shape what, why and how, work happens in schools. History has shown us that education has been a key site of community control in the past, but instead of taking these historical lessons as messages to curb efforts for justice, these lessons should be guideposts in our current work. In a thick, race radical approach,
collective political will must move districts and schools to couple these varied educational needs with a participatory, more just, vision of society. It also recognizes the limits and spaces for change within the state apparatus and devises strategies that will ultimately provide a buffer to fight, or challenge, the devastating effects of racial neoliberal urbanism. It is through both reclamation and reinvention of community control in education that new possibilities will begin to take shape from a policy perspective.

More discussion of what thick democracy will look like on all levels, from the classroom, to the district and to the city is warranted. Much more than I am willing to discuss presently; but I want focus here on the school-community contact zone. A participatory, race radical approach would mean a reorganization of the school and the classroom to focus first on holistic development of individuals and communities. This would push all of us to reframe the relationships between teachers, youth and the curriculum when people’s cultural and spatial histories are centered. This reframing work along with additional politically informed action can lead to the articulation of radical possibilities that when actualized can create an otherwise.
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