“Not the America We Dreamed Of:”

Latinx Immigrants in a Trumpian Suburbia

An Honors Thesis for the Department of Sociology

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION **2**

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW **10**

CITIZENSHIP, LEGALITY, AND BELONGING 10

Criminalization & Crimmigration: A 21st Century Moral Panic Among White Americans *12*

IDENTITY POLITICS: LATINX IDENTITIES 17

The Ethno-Racialization of the "American" Identity *20*

Passing with Stigmatized Identities *23*

"Bad Hombres:" Being Latinx in America During the Trump Administration *25*

SOCIAL CONTROL 26

The U.S. Legal Code and System as Social Control *27*

Identity Criminalization as Social Control *28*

Social Control of the Self and Others *31*

RESEARCH ON THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND TRUMP'S AMERICA 32

CHAPTER 3: LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK **34**

LONG ISLAND: A SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL HISTORY 38

CENTRAL AMERICAN MIGRATION TO LONG ISLAND 40

Economic Engagement and Employment Opportunities *42*

THE CHURCH COMMUNITY 43

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY **45**

RESEARCH PROCESS 45

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS 49

RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY 50

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS **52**

THE PEOPLE V. THE POLITICIAN 52

RETHINKING CITIZENSHIP AND BELONGING 56
Not the Nation, Not the Country, but the President *56*
Pride, Identification, and "Americanness" *57*
LIVING DAY-TO-DAY IN TRUMP'S AMERICA 61
Mobility and Visibility *61*
Driving *63*
Threats to Immigration Status *66*
Safety *68*
Guardianship and Childhood: Shifts from the Obama Era *70*
Changes in Overt White Racism and Discrimination *73*
MAKING THE AMERICAN DREAM "GREAT" AGAIN: THE FUTURE 77
Affect for America *81*
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION 84
REFLECTING ON FINDINGS SECTION 84
The People v. The Politician: Electoral Responsibility and the Political Climate *84*
Rethinking Citizenship and Belonging *85*
Living Day-to-Day in Trump's America *87*
Making the American Dream "Great" Again: The Future *90*
CONNECTING IDEAS AND MOVING FORWARD 92
APPENDICES 94
APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE 94
APPENDIX 2: INFORMED CONSENT FORM 99
BIBLIOGRAPHY 101

"(America never was America to me.)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed—
Let it be that great strong land of love
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me.)"

- Langston Hughes, *Let America Be America Again*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"I was just told I was coming to the American dream. The American dream, it is like paradise, you know? So I was expecting, I'm gonna make some money, I'm gonna send it to my mom, she's gonna be fine and then happily ever after. I feel the way that at this point, we are going backwards. Instead of going forward, you know? Instead of really making America a great nation, let me tell you, I'm so ashamed to say, America is not the America we all dreamed for. Unfortunately, it's the most sad part in this way now, because he's the worst President, 45th President of America, you know. He's making America look terrible… In my case, I did ask most of the people I knew that were able to vote to please not vote for this President. But unfortunately, something went wrong. And here we are… But, like I said, if we put Trump away, it's going to be a great, really a great country again. That's the way I feel, honestly" (Naomi, Group 1).

The rise of Donald Trump and his administration have been life-changing for Latinx immigrants across the country. Naomi's quote above details the emotion, stress, and potential for hope in an America that is run by Trump. Naomi came to the United States to make money for her family but discovered that the country was not how she dreamed it would be. She expressed that since Trump took office, he has made America look bad and feel horrible to live in – a nightmare for Latinx immigrants.

In this project, I aimed to explore the phenomenon described by Naomi and ask a variety of research questions, including: How has Donald Trump's

presidency impacted the day-to-day lives of Latinx immigrants living in America? How does the political climate shape social control over this suburban community and its members? What role does citizenship or documentation play in protecting Latinx immigrants from Trump's policies? How have Latinx immigrants' perceptions of America and Americans been impacted by Trump's policies and rhetoric? I aim to detail and understand the Latinx immigrant experience on Long Island at this particular moment by uplifting and centering the lives of the participants to best understand negotiations of identity, citizenship, safety, hope, and control through formal and informal means. By applying a theoretical framework which outlines the construction of citizenship throughout U.S. history and various forms of social control, I find that in the current political climate, Trump's presidency has made citizenship simultaneously more important for Latinx immigrants, and yet disappointingly insufficient. This is a product of policies and racialized conceptions of American identity that make undocumented immigrants' security and prospects more precarious, and a rhetoric that renders all Latinx lives suspect. Moreover, I paint a picture of a Latinx community that is surveilled, discriminated against, and fearful of the reality they are living in.

When I explain the topic of my thesis to classmates and professors, they often ask me why I was interested in studying Latinx (gender neutral form of Latino/Latina) immigrants or how I gained access to this group of participants. I then launch into an attempt to articulate my relationship to Naomi. However, it boils down to this: Naomi has been employed by my family as a domestic worker since before I was born. She is like a second mother to me and is truly a member

of my family and will be for the rest of her life; there are no words to do justice to the amount of love, appreciation, and care I have for her.

My relationship with Naomi comes from a place of privilege, on a variety of levels, including race-ethnicity, education level, and class. Regardless of our bond, our relationship has an underlying power imbalance due to the context in which it exists. Our relationship rests on the fact that she is paid by my family. Throughout my life, I have possessed a level of wealth and resources that have exceeded those she has had access to. My financial security has allowed me to have freedom and flexibility in my life that Naomi does not necessarily have.

Naomi lived with us until I was five-years-old and work as our nanny and housekeeper. Every morning when I woke up, I would climb out of my bed and toddle into her room, just across the hallway. Clad in footie pajamas, I would crawl onto the foot Naomi's bed, inch towards her pillow, and lovingly lay on top of her. I would then proceed to open her eyelids with my tiny fingers, as I believed this was the best way to wake someone up. Always smiling, Naomi would greet me with "*mí Niña bonita!,*" carry me downstairs, and begin to make a cup of strong black coffee. As I got older, Naomi moved and lived in a house in a nearby neighborhood. In the evening, my mother or father would drive Naomi to the train station. From that point onward, every train that I saw was Naomi's train. Later, when she would drive to and from her house, I became lovingly attached to her car, Blackie. Years later, I remember holding her hand and standing in the driveway of my home, both of us crying, as a broken-down Blackie was taken by a tow truck to the junkyard.

I have spent a significant amount of time during the last five years interrogating my relationship with Naomi; the context in which our relationship exists is filled with complexities and nuances that I have only begun to unpack as I have delved further into my studies of sociology, including the history of our suburban towns, the racial dynamics of a Latina nanny working for a white family, and the ways in which white domestic spaces can be unwelcoming to women of color. My exposure to critical theory and sociological theory has acted as a vehicle for me to "think myself away" from life as I knew and understood it; I was encouraged to question what was familiar, normal, and quotidian as a resident of Long Island, a citizen of the United States, and a white child who was nannied by a Guatemalan woman (Mills 1959). As a child, I knew that Naomi was from Guatemala, as I loved to chat on the phone with her mother in my youthful limited knowledge of Spanish. I knew that Naomi was trying to become a citizen because we studied together – her for her citizenship exam, and me for U.S. history class. But, I never questioned why Naomi needed to take a train home, why she worked for my family, why she could not drive until a certain point in her life until I developed a sociological imagination that helped me do so. Establishing and cultivating my sociological imagination made this project, in which I attempt to shed light on the ethno-racial inequalities and experiences during the time of Trump, possible.

In the context of immigrant domestic workers, these realities are unspoken. I am not Latinx, I am not an immigrant. I come to this sociological inquiry from a place of racial and class power and gendered perspectives — I am

a white woman from an upper-middle-class family born and raised in Syosset in New York on the North Shore of Long Island. The white communities of Long Island may hire Latinx individuals as workers and pass them by on the streets, but these white employers remain separate from the socio-political realities of the Latinx community that lives just a few miles away.

It is important to note the class disparities between myself compared to the Latinx community I studied. I come from a higher socio-economic background than this community and have had the ability and means to attend an elite private university that has afforded me opportunities to enter and work within spaces that my respondents do not have access to. As a researcher, having more wealth and access to resources than the community I was researching shaped my sociological ability to understand their lived experiences. I cannot understand what it is like to struggle with housing security or be threatened with eviction or to need to work three jobs to get by. While this reality limits the extent to which I can truly understand my respondents' experiences, I did my best to listen to their stories and center them in my research.

Now, during a political administration that is especially strife with desires to return to white supremacist extremism in the form of hatred, social control, racist nativism, and anti-Latinx sentiment in particular, I am struggling to understand my relationship to Naomi and her community even more. Just a short car ride away from my quintessential white-picket fence suburban town lives communities of Latinx immigrants whose realities and identities are being

redefined and renegotiated, targeted by the government, discriminated against, and who want their stories to be told.

While research on Latinx immigration assimilation, integration, and identity in the United States is rich, these experiences are extremely context-dependent. Moreover, research relating to day-to-day life for members of marginalized communities since the 2016 Presidential election have been mainly journalistic. There remain important stories to be told and analyzed about what life is like for Latinx immigrants, both documented and undocumented, living in America with Donald Trump as their President. There are new obstacles, unique experiences, and perspectives from this community of individuals that deserve to be studied in their geographic and socio-political context. There has yet to be academic research that tells the stories of Latinx immigrants under the Trump administration, and for that reason, this is an important project as it will document and communicate their lived experiences.

This work sets out to tell the stories and understand the experiences of members of a community of Latinx immigrants living on Long Island, New York in the midst of Donald Trump's presidency. The research ties together the stories, thoughts, and reflections of fifteen Latinx immigrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Ecuador to depict their experiences in this political moment while also addressing various questions about political context, identity, and belonging. It provides a sociological understanding of members of a community that, although well studied, are experiencing a different type of reality under Trump (Almaguer 2012; Chomsky 2014; Chabram-Dernersesian 2003; De Genova 2002;

Ellis & Chen 2013; Gjelten 2015; Itzigsohn 2004; Itzigsohn 2000; Lavariega Monforti 2014; Longazel 2013; Mahler 1995; Massey & Sanchez R. 2010; Román 2013; Romero 2006; Scranton et al. 2016; Silber Mohamed 2014; Stumpf 2006; Tirman 2015; Wilson et al. 2012).

The fifteen participants from whom this project stems are members of the same church community on Long Island, New York. 1/3 of the participants contributed to the focus group conversations in English and the other 2/3 utilized a translator, answering questions in Spanish. While this research is specific to the participants I spoke with, the themes and patterns that emerged through this project shed light on overarching ideas relevant to Latinx immigrant communities in other suburban areas. Moreover, my approach of this issue through the lens of suburbia is novel as academic work on immigrants living in suburban areas is sparse despite the large numbers of working-class and middle-class immigrants in the suburbs of many large cities.

Chapter 2 consists of a literature review in which I review theories of identity and the current state of immigration and citizenship literature. I frame the construction of American citizenship during the 20th and 21st centuries as an exclusionary, ethno-racialized category, and examine the ways in which social control and social identity are codified and upheld by institutions. In Chapter 3, I set a backdrop by detailing the history of suburbia on Long Island, paying attention to the racialized formation of residential communities after World War II and how this set a precedent for the Island's current hyper racial segregation. I also examine patterns of Central American migration to this region and look

specifically at the larger community where the focus group participants lived. Chapter 4 details the methodological approach of this project. In Chapter 5, I connect the stories, experiences, and opinions of the participants to detail the project's findings. Finally, chapter 6 summarizes the findings, conclusions, and potential future expansions on this research.

Inspired by my own personal connections to and concerns for the Latinx communities on Long Island, I decided to more deeply explore the lives of these community members. Through that exploration, I came upon rich narratives that shed light on the singularity of this political moment. The Trump Era has had a significant impact on many groups, including women, Muslims, Latinx immigrants, Haitian immigrants, and more. The Latinx immigrants on Long Island are faced with challenges of identity negotiation, understanding what it means to be American, and planning for their futures in a hostile political climate.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study and analysis, I examine the day-to-day identity-based experiences of Latinx individuals in the months since President Donald Trump's inauguration. My findings are based on sociological ideas of identity, moral panic, and social control. I examine life during a time when Donald Trump's rhetoric during and since the 2016 U.S. presidential election fueled a moral panic among white Americans, subsequently facilitating increased state-sanctioned and citizen-led social control of Latinx immigrants.

Citizenship, Legality, and Belonging

The United States prides itself on "an inclusive and welcoming ethos, ironically engraved on the tablet of Lady Liberty" that acts as a façade to hide a deep history of racialized ideas of citizenship in the United States (Román 2013:3). For the context of this thesis, citizenship will be defined as "the boundaries of the nation-state and its sense of identity," meaning that a citizen is an individual that is legally recognized as a member by its nation-state (Masuoka & Junn 2013:42). Dating back to the near founding of America, the Naturalization Act of 1790 limited U.S. citizenship to free white persons of good moral character (Masuoka & Junn 2013:44). This excluded all non-white residents of the country and set the basis for a history of racialized exclusion from citizenship.

Citizenship also includes recognition by other members of one's national and local community (Selod 2015:81). Although racialized exclusion of certain

groups from citizenship can no longer legally be explicitly defined, individuals who enter the U.S. without authorization are labeled as "illegal" – non-citizens – by their national and often local communities. In recent years, it has become common for non-Latinx Americans to readily assume that Latinx-appearing people are not citizens or are undocumented (Román 2013). So, regardless of whether or not an individual is a citizen, the link between Latinx appearance and illegality has placed a stigmatized label on all individuals perceived to fit into this category (De Genova 2002; Goffman 1986).

The "vision of American citizenship as exclusive, prestigious, and virtuous drives the enforcement of restrictive immigration policies" (Masuoka & Junn 2013:58). Through the interaction of laws, society, and culture, the binary of legality/illegality is constructed. As Tirman (2015) writes:

> "All the references to legality are culturally and socially formed. Laws are not given by a deity or somehow inscribed in our DNA. They are human-made…always fabricated to meet the exigencies of particular times and to respond to specific configurations of power. In this sense, legal norms and cultural and social norms" (156).

The more that immigrants are socially "marked" as illegal, the more they are prevented from integrating into U.S. society through more formalized and structural means (Jones-Correa & de Graauw 2013:191). The categorical boundary between undocumented or documented immigrant and citizen is seemingly nearly impermeable, and the structure of U.S. citizenship and the social boundaries upon which it depends prevent many from gaining citizenship.

Criminalization & Crimmigration: A 21st Century Moral Panic Among White Americans

From 1942 to 1964, Latinx immigrants, specifically Mexicans, were recognized as temporary migrant workers under the Bracero Program, an agreement between the U.S. and Mexico that brought migrant workers into America seasonally to perform agricultural labor, and therefore were not viewed as "immigrants" in the legal or social realms (Chomsky 2014:10). While the Bracero Program ended in 1964 due to the poor treatment of workers, the now-informal economic structure dependent on migrant Mexican workers continues, albeit illegally (Chomsky 2014:11). After 1964, Mexicans were viewed by the U.S. government as eligible immigrants rather than migrant workers. However, after 1965, with national quotas in place for migrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries that previously did not exist, these migrant workers who did not enter the U.S. through the formal immigration process were categorized as "illegal" immigrants. According to Chomsky, this shift is a result of economics, globalization, and racialization/racism.

The modern idea of illegality in relation to immigration became codified by law after the passing of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Celler Act. "The generation [of immigration laws] after the passage of Hart-Celler would thus see the start of new state and federal attempts to gain control of immigration," including the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), which significantly increased the government's control over

undocumented populations, mainly through employer sanctions for knowingly hiring undocumented workers (Schrag 2010:164-166).

While the 1965 laws introduced the idea of illegality, it was not until the 1990s that this illegality was formally linked to Latinx immigrants. This codification brought increased patrol staffing on the U.S.-Mexico border, advanced monitoring technology, and fences– all of which contributed to the modern criminalization of Latinx individuals (Ibid 173). In the early 2000s, similar laws followed, such as state laws that necessitated racial-ethnic profiling, required proof of citizenship to obtain a driver's license, and criminalized the transport of undocumented immigrants. The inclusion of ideas of Latinx criminality in law were paralleled with similar social beliefs.

Since the 1990s, "political and popular rhetoric in the contemporary United States has virtually synonymized the terms 'immigrant' and 'criminal'… based in large part on assumptions of entrenched immigrant criminality" (Longazel 2013:87). Some scholars date this link back to racist tropes of Latinx "bandidos," or revolutionary social bandits (Romero 2001:1089).

Together, the legal and social links between being a Latinx immigrant and being "illegal" led to the development of "crimmigration" – the intersections between criminal law and immigration law (Chomsky 2014; Hernández 2015; Romero 2001:1097). This term refers to the expansion of crimes that can lead to the removal of undocumented and documented immigrants in the United States and has been accompanied by increased overlap between the two areas of law, the convergence of immigration and criminal law enforcement, such as through

violent policing, and deportations of Latinx migrants based on criminal records (Hernández 2015:2; Stumpf 2006). According to Stumpf (2006), the two legal areas fit together well since both centralize the inclusion/exclusion binary (380).

This pattern of monitoring and criminalizing Latinx individuals is a result of moral panic among white Americans, which began to grow in the 1970s and sharply increased during and since the 1990s. According to Stanley Cohen's (1987) research, "moral panics" refer to instances in which a "person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests" (9). These ideas travel through mass media, politicians, and right-thinking individuals (Ibid. 1987:9). Utilizing Cohen's definition of moral panic, one can examine the relationship between U.S. society and immigration from Mexico, Central America, and Latin America in which Latinx immigrants are framed as a threat to hegemonic U.S. society.

Historically, white American citizens have created moral panics based on racialized fears to uphold power and the hegemonic white structure of society. White Americans largely view Latinx immigrants as a danger to the hegemonic white culture of the U.S., and thus, increased immigration in recent decades has fueled a moral panic among white Americans. Moreover, social identities and social boundaries are co-created to label and prevent movement between identity groups; the defining boundaries of citizenship and the identity of Latinx immigrant are co-created and reinforce one another (Lamont & Molnár 2002:183; McCall 1966:26).

Nativism and xenophobia are not unfamiliar to American consciousness, but rather, are embedded in the very formation of the modern nation. There is a "deeply-embedded American habit of suspicion and fear" that is utilized to uphold the structure of white America (Tirman 2015:10). In the 1880s, an uptick in nativist and xenophobic rhetoric followed industrialization, when Americans began to blame social problems on the "thousands of newcomers in their communities" – immigrants (Schrag 2010:7). In the early 20th century, these ideas were "backed" by social Darwinism and eugenics, which further contributed to the social hierarchy. The 1924 Johnson-Reed Immigration Act introduced race-based immigration quotas that set a precedent for U.S. immigration policy. The nativist perspective on America is translated into general anti-immigrant sentiment (Román 2013:6). As Schrag (2010) writes,

> "To anyone who's followed the latter-day arguments against immigration or the characterization of the hazard that immigrants, legal and illegal, pose to the nation's economy, culture, social stability, and system of government… the warnings of the immigration restrictionists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have to be eerily familiar. The nation is being 'flooded' – another old metaphor – by people from backwards places that make them culturally or politically unfit for assimilation… In recent years, the use of the word as a noun has itself carried overtones of – even become a synonym for – *Mexican"* (11).

History has demonstrated that white American policies include rhetoric about the outsider that are embedded in the politics and economics of that time period. The Trump Era has simply introduced a new crisis of white supremacy wearing a different mask. One can look to the times during and since the 2016 presidential election campaigns, when xenophobic, racist rhetoric was prevalent

in public opinion circles and mainstream discourse. In the June 16, 2015 speech in which Donald Trump announced his candidacy, he stated:

> "When Mexico sends its people [to the U.S.], they're not sending their best… They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems… They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people… It's coming from more than Mexico. It's coming from all over South and Latin America…" (TIME 2015).

President Trump's claims were not unfamiliar to his voter base. The aforementioned historical context of immigration and the Latinx identity communicates the ways in which panic arises from pre-existing sentiment, as demonstrated through Trump's reliance on historically-rooted stereotypes and xenophobia (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994 as cited in Pottie-Sherman 2008:21).

According to Román (2013), in the years since 2012, anti-immigrant rhetoric has increasingly infiltrated mainstream media, thus fueling the moral panic among white Americans that has been rapidly increasing since the 1990s (33). Citing a 2008 Anti-Defamation League report, Román outlines the most common negative characterizations of immigrants now used in mainstream conversation, which includes descriptions of Latinx immigrants as invaders, criminals, rapists, and places blame on Latinxs for the breakdown of hegemonic American culture. This sentiment is echoed and upheld by President Trump's characterizations of Latinx immigrants.

During the 2016 presidential election, many Republican candidates included these descriptions and characterizations in their conversations about immigration. Whether talking about building a U.S.-Mexico border or depending on ethno-racial stereotypes to make political arguments, Trump's violent

discourse seems to have been publicized more than similar rhetoric by candidates for public office in the past and in many ways, has fueled the current moral panic surrounding immigration. The aforementioned model set forth by Goode & Ben-Yehuda necessitates "everyday talk about 'who belongs' within the U.S." and the idea of America as an imagined community; it seems that Trump has successfully facilitated this infiltration into everyday conversation (Pottie-Sherman 2008: 22). Once Trump was elected, this rhetoric transformed into harmful policy. This anti-immigrant rhetoric, its pervasiveness, and its consistency has a direct impact on the day-to-day lives of Latinx individuals, which I aim to explore in this project (Román 2013).

Identity Politics: Latinx Identities

Social science research on immigration is vast and dates back to early analyses in the field. A wide breadth of this research focuses on race, migration patterns, and social movements. In general, the Latinx American immigrant identity is well-researched in academia, particularly sociology. For the purposes of this paper, I define immigrants as "individuals who were born outside of the United States or U.S. territories to parents who were not U.S. citizens" but later came to the U.S. (Pew Research Center 2017:2).

Identity formation is an ongoing process that is influenced by an interaction of the self and the social world (Ellis & Chen 2013; McCall 1966; Mead 1934). For many Latinx individuals, identity formation is the process of negotiation between both one's country of origin's culture and American culture.

This ongoing process can often lead to the formation of transnational identities. Itzigsohn (2000) defines transnationalism as the creation of "social and political linkages with their country of origin, establishing institutions that transcend the political boundaries of the sending and receiving countries" (1127). This connection between cultures results from identity negotiation processes within immigrant communities, including Latinx immigrant communities.

In more recent years, a pan-ethnic "Latinx" identity has entered the political and social arena. Although the creation of the Latinx pan-ethnic collective identity is a result of the racialization of diverse national and ethnic groups, the label has been "[adopted] and [used by Latinx people] … to construct their own personal and collective identities and projects" (Itzigsohn 2004 197). Therefore, Latinx is an umbrella term that is multi-racial and multi-ethnic, best conceptualized as *Latinidad* (Chabram-Dernersesian 2003; Itzigsohn 2004; Lavariega Monforti 2014:51). This "generalization… among ethnic subgroups or nationalities" is important to examine because it facilitates solidarity and the "creation of boundaries that bring together diverse individuals" (Itzigsohn 2004:197; Lavariega Monforti 2014:53).

As immigrants, Latinx individuals face unique barriers to assimilation compared to their Jewish, Italian, and Irish predecessors. Immigrant groups from Europe who were physically white could eventually shift into the white racial category. This is not the case for immigrants of color, who face racialized challenges of integrating into U.S. culture, detailed in the theory of segmented assimilation, which explains how second generation non-white immigrants "may

not even have the opportunity of gaining access to middle-class white society, no matter how acculturated they become" (Portes & Zhou 1993).

It is important to note that although the 2016 election brought an onslaught of racialization and criminalization of Latinx identities, social attacks on Latinx immigrants are not new by any means. As Massey and Sanchez R. argue (2010), the economic, social, and political conditions of the United States have shifted since the 1980s in a way that "[hardened] categorical divisions between immigrants and natives" (58). The social conditions that they explain involve the characterization of the "Latino threat narrative" through criminalization of Latinx immigrants, media coverage of immigration, and public rhetoric (Leo Chavez, as cited in Massey & Sanchez R. 2010:68). Since the 1980s, this particular narrative became cemented in U.S. public discourse. In the 1980s, President Ronald Regan "framed immigration as a question of 'national security'" (Massey & Sanchez R. 2010:69). In the late 1990s, these ideas were codified through law, such as the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (AEDPA), which required mandatory detention for non-citizens convicted of a range of both serious and minor criminal offenses, and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, which expanded the criminal offenses for which one could be deported and detained ("Analysis of Immigration Detention Policies").

In the 2000s and 2010s, the American public and politicians became increasingly more publicly resistant to immigration. Conservative scholar Samuel Huntington introduced "the Hispanic Challenge" – the "modern-day influx of Latino immigrants [which] threatens such key aspects of American society and

culture" – as the modern crisis of American culture (Silber Mohamed 2014:32). Right-leaning America views Latinx identities as a threat to "the 'Anglo-Protestant culture that has been central to American identity for three centuries'" (Huntington as cited in Schrag 2010:12). In spite of these perceptions by white Americans, I more am intrigued by the particular impacts of more overt, public anti-Latinx sentiment on Latinx self-perceptions of identity and meaning-making demonstrated by President Donald Trump, his rhetoric, and his immigration policies.

The Ethno-Racialization of the "American" Identity

In the United States, "whiteness" and "Americanness" are essentially synonymous; as Masuoka & Junn (2013) describe, whites "reside in the 'default category' of Americanness" (59). This stands in opposition to the Latinx identity, characterized as outsiders to American society, demonstrated by the mainstream lexicon of "*alien* immigrant." If one is not white, he or she is "othered," racialized, and consequently out of place in U.S. society.

As demonstrated by many scholars, Latinx individuals in the United States are racialized beings (Romero 2006; Almaguer in Poblete 2003). Racialization is "the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship or group" and is upheld by the continuous recreation and reification of white supremacy (Omi and Winant 1986 as cited in Almaguer 2003; Leonardo 2004). For Latinxs, the process of racialization is based in ideas of colonialism Central and South America and interactions with colonizing white cultures; historical patterns of colonization factor "centrally in the complex re-racialization of the

Latinx population in the contemporary United States" (Almaguer in Poblete 2003:209). This process is not limited to skin tone, "but other cultural factors such as language, clothing, and beliefs" (Selod 2015:79). It is important to note that, as suggested by Selod's discussion of Muslim and Arab identities, "there is a problem in talking about a universal…experience with race because some [people of color] … pass and enjoy privileges of whiteness, while others do not;" the same is true for the experiences of Latinxs (Ibid. 79).

National inclusion, national identity, and citizenship are fluid phenomena that shift based on political order (Itzigsohn & vom Hau 2006:193). Upholding the boundaries of citizenship is a process that involves both state elite and citizens. The political elite and those who are in power construct hegemonic national discourses, thus impacting the ways that the social world within a particular nation-state is organized (Ibid. 194; Selod 2015:81). At the same time, it is through citizens' upholding of these state-led ideas that the ideas become hegemonic (Selod 2015:81).

President Trump's administration maintains a national discourse that excludes both documented and undocumented Latinx immigrants from its imagined national identity. Itzigsohn & vom Hau propose that this type of exclusion facilitates "alterative visions of the nation [among Latinx immigrants] that… expand its internal boundaries" (2006:196). This is demonstrated through my participants' narratives about nationality, belonging, and being "part" of America. Moreover, according to Itzigsohn and vom Hau (2006), a blocked transformation of national identity is one in which "state elites reject alternative

national narratives that envision the expansion of national inclusion" (199). This is the approach that the Trump administration takes towards Latinx immigrant integration into U.S. society and American national identity as a whole, as it rejects key tenants of diversity and tolerance.

The formation of the Latinx ethnic-racial category was facilitated by the perceived threat of immigrant illegality by American society during the mid-to-late 20th century. In constructing the illegal identity, "…the traits that characterize a desirable American are framed normatively by whiteness and implicitly associated with that group" (Masuoka & Junn 2013:88). During the start of the 20th century, Southern and Eastern Europeans were targeted by immigration policies since they were viewed as a "threat to American culture" (Tirman 2015:2). "What was once an obsession with Freemasons or Communists or Jews or Blacks is now visited upon Latinos," fueled by demographic shifts resulting from migrant-labor dependent economic systems and changes in conceptions of racial categories that have led to the perceived threat of Latinx individuals to "American" culture (Ibid.).

Over time, as society has consistently upheld the link between being white and being an American citizen, Latinx individuals have been racialized in a way that constructs their identities as criminals, suspects, and "illegals" (Koulish 2010). Perceptions of illegality or lack of belonging based on ethno-racial appearance and regardless of citizenship status exclude many Latinx individuals who are American citizens from embracing the American national identity and social membership to this category. There is an underlying social assumption that

Latinx immigrants are not true Americans, as Selod (2015) suggests is the case with Muslims (79). Citizenship in and of itself is not enough to secure one's inclusion in the national identity as citizenship can coexist with symbolic and social exclusion (Itzigsohn & vom Hau 2006: 196). In other words, a Latinx individual who is a U.S. citizen is assumed to be illegal and stereotyped as such despite their citizenship status.

De Genova (2002) argued that sociopolitical and sociohistorical contexts, like the current political climate, are vital to understanding constructions of illegality and migration. There is value to examining how these ideas are shaping the social world of Latinx immigrants in American in 2017, yet at the same time, deportation and other threats to documentation, like immigration raids, have been a day-to-day threat in the United States since its formation as a nation, with people of color historically targeted by naturism and xenophobia. "As we look back at [the history of immigration] after more than 130 years, of unevenly conceived restrictions, we see the ebb and flow of immigration law and enforcement as shaped by racial and ethnic prejudice, class distinctions, and economic exigencies" (Tirman 2015:1).

Passing with Stigmatized Identities

In recent years, scholarly research on immigration has focused on undocumented individuals – that is, people who come to a country and live there without formal legal recognition from said country. Undocumented individuals in America are physically and socially engaged in society, but lack formal legal recognition as U.S. citizens (Tirman 2015:152). Though not granted citizenship,

undocumented individuals are entitled to the same constitutional rights (on paper) as "formally-recognized" citizens, including the right to due process and a hearing prior to deportation (Tirman 2015:154).

Undocumented immigrants make use of a variety of identity negotiation techniques to ensure their own safety. Identity negotiation is defined as the process through which the self and "outside" individuals come to agreements about the identity of the self (Swann 2007). Several researchers have examined the idea of "passing" within the undocumented community, which is often central to one's identity as an undocumented immigrant (De Genova 2002; Ellis & Chen 2013; Scranton et al. 2016). According to Goffman, passing is when individuals with stigmatized identities work to be perceived as possessing non-stigmatized identities (Goffman 1963). Scranton et al. (2016) examine passing and analyze the communicative labor – the active effort of "communicating" identification with a particular social group - that comes into play when undocumented individuals are actively using strategies to "pass" as documented. Scranton et al. also highlight a phenomenon they refer to as "avoiding," which consists of avoiding certain locations or interactions that could threaten their safety. As theorized by Goffman (1986), individuals with de-valued or stigmatized identities may avoid spaces, such as hospitals and banks, where they are required to pass - the emotional and communicative labor is simply too much. This occurs both on an individual level and in a social network setting (Scranton et al. 2016). However, as anti-immigrant rhetoric has become increasingly more overt in the United States, individuals who "appear" to be Latinx are often assumed to be

undocumented (Román 2013). Because of this, passing as documented is not always a successful technique of protection for members of the Latinx community, particularly in this political moment.

"Bad Hombres:" Being Latinx in America During the Trump Administration

Pew Research Center gathered data from Latinx individuals prior to Trump's inauguration and found they were divided about their "place" in America and the situation of their people within the country. 41% of Latinx individuals surveyed shared that they had "serious concerns about their place in America," with this number at 55% for non-citizens and non-residents (Pew Research Center 2017:4). It is important to note that the Obama administration was not necessarily favored by Latinx immigrants. Although there was widespread support for Obama among Latinx voters during the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections, his failure to follow-through on immigration reform led to disappointment within the Latinx voter based (Pew Research Center 2017; Wallace 2012).

With about half of the Latinx individuals surveyed reporting concerns about deportation of either themselves of someone close to them in February 2017, one must question the ways that Trump's administration and his immigration policies have impacted this perceived lack of safety. Interestingly, Trump's first year in office has led to smaller-than-expected differences in deportation rates for immigrants from Latin American, as observed through statistics comparing Obama and Trump's deportation rates between 2016 and 2017. Official reports published by ICE state that in 2016, under Obama, 22,940 immigrants from Guatemala were deported compared to 2017, where 33,570

immigrants from Guatemala were deported. Additionally, in 2016, ICE deported 1,099 immigrants from Ecuador while in 2017, they deported 1,152. For Guatemala and especially Ecuador, there were minute changes in deportation numbers between the two fiscal years. The most significant difference for the countries that the participants were born in was deportations to El Salvador, which decreased from 20,538 in 2016 to 18,838 in 2017 (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement 2018). According to Burnett (2018), "fewer people, mainly from Latin America, were trying to cross the southwest border," hence why the overall deportation rate has decreased since Trump took office.

According to Pew Research Center, 27.3 million Latinxs were eligible to vote in the 2016 election and made up 12% of all eligible voters (Khalid 2016; Krogstad 2016). Latinx voting behavior in the 2016 election was did not necessarily go as one would expect based on Trump's attacks on Latinxs on the campaign trail. Official exit polls from the 2016 presidential election found that 29% of Latinxs who participated in the election voted for Trump, although this percentage is disputed. For frame of reference, this percentage was about the same for the Latinx vote for 2012 presidential Republican candidate, Mitt Romney (Khalid 2016).

Social Control

Often, moral panics are addressed by reformulating and reorganizing pre-existing forms of social control (Hier and Greenberg 2002:140 as cited in Pottie-Sherman 2008:20). Social control is the "process by which people define and

respond to deviant behavior" (Black 1984:1). It contributes to social order and can be upheld by formal or informal forms of punishment. For example, whether through detention in the carceral system or social ostracization, deviation from norms of citizenship has severe consequences for the social individual.

In the case of immigration, the aforementioned norm of American whiteness is perceived as being violated. Give the U.S. social structure, immigrants who enter the country without formal legal documentation are seen by many white Americans as directly challenging this norm. Yet at the same time, "by creating a necessarily subordinate workforce without legal status, [America maintains] a system of legalized inequality" (Compsky 2014:14). I will examine social control of Latinx immigrants through three forms which will be demonstrated through interviews with participants detailed in the findings section: law, criminalization, and self-enforcement.

The U.S. Legal Code and System as Social Control

Black (1984) recognizes law, which includes the legal construction of the "illegal immigrant," as a form of government-based social control (2). Immigration law is simply an extension of the underlying social desire of white Americans to uphold and reinforce what they perceive as standard American values. This is demonstrated through the purposeful targeting of particular individuals, such as through racial profiling and overt violation of civil rights (Jones-Correa & de Graauw 2013: 190). As law is a mechanism used by those with higher social statuses against/to control those with lower social statuses, it is appropriate to examine immigration through this lens. This idea has been

furthered by the connection between immigration and foreign invasion. (Román 2013). Immigrants are increasingly framed as aliens by the federal government and its legal code, which influences public perception of the same ideas (Jones-Correa & de Graauw 2013:187).

Marginalized groups are often "treated as if they are unworthy of the universal protections afforded by American citizenship" (Selod 2015:78). In the same ways that Muslims were viewed as a monolithic, threatening group in the U.S. after 9/11, Latinx immigrants under the Trump administration are being generalized into the category of assumed illegal criminal. This is not a new phenomenon, as demonstrated in an earlier section, since Latinx immigrants have historically been targeted and controlled by the U.S. legal system since 1965. Yet, the current moment is different for a combination of reasons that will be examined throughout the next three chapters, including identity criminalization, political climate, and perhaps most importantly, the impacts of Donald Trump on U.S. society.

Identity Criminalization as Social Control

The criminalization of particular identities within America is tied to aforementioned structural ideas of race and citizenship. As Romero explains, when immigration officials create a "landscape of suspicion," they reify and uphold selective access to public space along racial, ethnic, and citizenship lines (Romero 2006:452). In doing so, Latinxs are forced further into the shadows of American society.

The process of identity criminalization is deeply intertwined with neoliberal thought and approaches to immigration as a threat to national security and the economy (Koulish 2010; Román 2013:2). According to Koulish (2010), there are two main ways that criminalization occurs: shifts in legal labels and changes in the application of laws (40). First, over time, certain activities that were previously legally codified as civil have been transformed into criminal activities. Often, this shift occurs with a particular intention, such as exclusion of a particular social group. For example, this occurred when the Bracero Program was shut down in 1964, yet the economic systems that required and exploited migrant workers from Mexico were still in place. Though the labor of these individuals is still necessary, their work has been marked as criminal by the legal system. Second, laws are applied in new ways as they evolve. During particular political climates, laws may be enforced in ways that differ from previous approaches. In other words, legal norms are:

> "…shaped and subverted and reborn through social and cultural forces and political opportunism, are malleable, enormously elastic even if laws don't change" (Tirman 2015:159).

For example, in 1848, after the end of the U.S.-Mexico War, Mexicans who were in annexed regions were given U.S. citizenship and deemed "honorably white." Additionally, until the 1920s, the U.S. Census Bureau considered Latinx and Hispanic individuals to fit into the white racial category. However, in 1930, "Mexican" became a racial category on the census. Just ten years later, the census shifted again to recognize Mexican-born individuals as white. Then, in the 1970s, the term "Hispanic" was adopted by the U.S. Census to give an overarching title

to the shared ethnic background that ran common among Latinx immigrants. Since the 2000 census, when Latinxs became the largest non-white racial-ethnic population in the country, U.S. perceptions of Latinx individuals shifted; non-Hispanic Americans began to categorize Latinx individuals as members of its own racial group (Almageur 2012:147). This example highlights the fluid and constructed nature of these legal categories.

Many of the ways that immigration laws are applied to people are selective and enforced along boundaries that target people with marginalized identities, particularly brown and black individuals. Prior to the 1970s, deportation was rare (Koulish 2010:40). One need not look further than the trends of this time period for an explanation for why deportation is now a commonality. With increased economic conflict and political crises and decreased opportunities in many Latin American countries during the decades before the 1990s, as well as economic expansion in the U.S. during this time, Latinx immigration to the U.S. increased in the 1990s. According to Pew Research Center,

> "From the early 1990s through the middle of the decade, slightly more than 1.1 million migrants came to the United States every year on average. In the peak years of 1999 and 2000, the annual inflow was about 35% higher, topping 1.5 million. By 2002 and 2003, the number coming to the country was back around the 1.1 million mark" (2005).

Increased immigration during the 1990s fueled white America to respond to this moral panic with policy, such as the AEDPA and IIRAIRA of 1996, which increased the number of crimes for which immigrants could be detained and deported. (Guskin 2007:121; Jones-Correa & de Graauw 2013:188; Provine et

al. 2016:34). After implementation, the number of immigrants deported increased from 69,680 to 202,842 in less than ten years (Guskin 2007:121).

Immigration raids are an increasingly more common method of immigration law enforcement during which passing can be unimportant to the decision to detain or deport someone. In these interactions with immigration officials, particularly in instances of raids, Latinx individuals are racialized by these officials, and in the process, whiteness as a value of American citizenship is upheld through the reinforcement of social boundaries (Romero 2006; Selod 2015:91).

Social Control of the Self and Others

The construction of self that results from navigating, redefining, and constructing what it means to be a Latinx immigrant living in America under Donald Trump's presidency acts as a form of social control against oneself. In his 1934 book *Mind, Self & Society,* George H. Mead lays out the theoretical basis of symbolic interactionism. As he puts it:

> "The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process" (135).

As applied to Latinxs, the Latinx identity results from a process of social interacts involving both the individual and their experiences with the world around them.

The idea of social control of the self is relevant to those with so-called lower social statuses or stigmatized identities, such as Latinx immigrants. For example, according to Jones-Correa & de Graauw (2013), the mere threat of

deportation often discourages undocumented immigrants from exercising the rights to which they are entitled, such as fair pay; they issue social control over themselves to protect themselves. As demonstrated through my findings, this avoidance of fighting for one's rights extends to documented Latinxs, too.

Social control also occurs from one citizen to another through the means of social citizenship. Through interactions with private citizens, social citizenship is constructed to "[validate] certain ascriptive attributes associated with nationality such as race, religion, ethnicity, and gender" (Selod 2015:81). Social citizenship consists of nationality, standing (social status), and allegiance to one's nation (Glenn 2002 as cited in Selod 2015:81). Through Latinx individuals' interactions with white U.S. citizens, Latinx communities are excluded from American national identity and social identity, as well.

I aim to highlight these interactions, focusing on the interplay between the sociopolitical world, legal structures of the United States, and Latinx individuals to illuminate the ways in which the process of identity negotiation in this political moment functions as various forms of social control.

Research on the 2016 Presidential Election and Trump's America

I drew inspiration from academic work about the socio-political context-specific experiences of Muslim Americans after 9/11, such as Selod's work, which found that "9/11 changed the ways in which [Muslims] were questioned" and treated in their day-to-day interactions with other Americans (2015:83). My project tells an important story about Latinx immigrants living in the suburbs

during the current political moment. Moreover, in depicting the historical continuity of white supremacy and attacks on Latinx individuals, I aim to center "the objective experience of the oppressed in order to understand the dynamics of structural power relations" (141) and scrutinize common understandings of the American dream and citizenship.

Because of how recent Trump's election was, there is a minimal amount of scholarly work on the impacts of the political climate created by his administration. One example by Nguyen & Kebede (2017) examined potential implications of Trump's administration on immigrants' educational experiences. Using acculturation theory as their basis, Nguyen and Kebede set forth a model for contextualizing research in Trump's America and examining it's impacts on groups with shared marginalized identities. The February 2017 report by Pew Research Center has valuable data collected prior to Trump's inauguration. However, Pew has not yet conducted a survey to examine and analyze the lives of Latinxs in America during the first year of Trump's administration. This data would be extremely valuable and answer the important research questions I ask about the day-to-day experiences of Latinx immigrants living under Trump, the role of citizenship, and the functions of social control, which until now, have been unanswered.

CHAPTER 3: LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK

Cultural Anthropologist Sarah Mahler spent years studying and analyzing the lives of immigrants in the Greater New York Area. Her work, focusing on Salvadoran immigrants living on Long Island, provides detailed information on Long Island's transnational immigrant communities that has seldom been documented by other scholars. Mahler's ethnographic research on this population in its geographic setting is unique and groundbreaking. At the same time, though, her data is from the 1990s and thus is outdated. For this reason, I will theoretically base this subsection on her work while also incorporating more recent statistics and approaches to studying immigrants in suburbia. My research expands on and moves past Mahler's work, focusing on sociopolitical context and the ways in which it interacts with immigrant identity in suburban locales. I will first provide a brief history of Long Island, paying specific attention to its racially-segregated suburbanization after World War II. Then, I will turn to the migration patterns of Latinx immigrants to Long Island and examine the draw of this geographic region. Finally, I will discuss the importance of church communities to Central American immigrants living on Long Island as well as my place as a researcher in this community.

Long Island, New York is a suburban area east of Manhattan that is made up of Nassau County and Suffolk County as well as Kings and Queens County. From this point onward, however, the term Long Island will be used only to refer to Nassau and Suffolk counties. Long Island is best described as "a sea of white middle-class bedroom communities dotted by a smattering of 'minority pockets'"

(Mahler 1995:192). The majority of Long Island consists of single-family homes in neighborhoods that were built with white upper-middle-class and middle-class occupants in mind.

Currently, Long Island is home to almost 3 million inhabitants. A racial-ethnic breakdown of Long Island according to the 2010 Census is provided below:

Table 1: Racial breakdown of Nassau and Suffolk counties based on data from the 2010 Census.

Racial-Ethnic Population Breakdown of Long Island, New York (2010 Census)	
Race	***Average percentage of Nassau and Suffolk county populations***
White	76.9 %
Hispanic	15.55%
Black	9.25%
Asian	5.5%
Other	5.9%
Mixed Race	2.4%

Long Island, New York is over three-quarters white – nearly 77% of its population. Many of these white individuals are of Jewish, Italian, Irish, German, and Polish descent. At one point or another, these ethnic groups were immigrants to the U.S. who were considered non-white until later in the 20th century when they eventually were categorized as white.

Moreover, 15.55% of Long Island's population identifies as Hispanic or Latinx. The countries of origin with the top immigrants who are residents of Long Island include Puerto Rico and El Salvador. A detailed country of origin

breakdown of Hispanics and Latinxs on Long Island, New York is provided below:

Table 2: The 2010 Census, which is the most recent full Census on record, documents the Hispanic or Latinx population on Long Island. These calculations include estimations for undocumented individuals.

Hispanic or Latino Population on Long Island, New York (2010 Census)				
Subject	**Suffolk County**	**Nassau County**	**Total Number**	**% of Total Hispanic/Latino on Long Island**
LONG ISLAND DEMOGRAPHICS				
Total population	1,493,350	1,339,532	2,832,882	-
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	246,239	195,355	441,594	-
HISPANIC OR LATINO BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN				
North American	100,237	66,146	166,383	37.68%
Mexican	15,663	10,535	26,198	5.93%
Puerto Rican	58,549	29,965	88,514	20.04%
Cuban	4,310	5,430	9,740	2.21%
Dominican	21,751	20,216	41,967	9.50%
Central American	77,117	69,816	146,933	33.27%
Costa Rican	1,656	992	2,648	0.60%
Guatemalan	11,229	7,853	19,082	4.32%
Honduran	9,563	11,051	20,614	4.67%
Nicaraguan	683	925	1,608	0.36%
Panamanian	1,203	1,360	2,563	0.58%
Salvadoran	52,315	47,180	99,495	22.53%
Other Central American	468	455	923	0.21%
South American	44,731	38,719	83,450	18.90%
Argentinean	2260	2,533	4793	1.09%
Bolivian	565	696	1,261	0.29%
Chilean	1,507	2,945	4,452	1.01%
Colombian	13,846	13,257	27,103	6.14%
Ecuadorian	17,638	9,239	26,877	6.09%
Paraguayan	282	406	688	0.16%
Peruvian	6,962	7,853	14,815	3.35%
Uruguayan	474	628	1,102	0.25%
Venezuelan	919	825	1,744	0.39%

Other South American	278	337	615	0.14%
Other Hispanic or Latino	24,118	20,674	44,792	10.14%
Spaniard	3,876	3,372	7,248	1.64%
Spanish	3,212	2,081	5,293	1.20%
Spanish American	212	231	443	0.10%
All other Hispanic or Latino	16,818	14,990	31,808	7.20%

Nassau and Suffolk Counties have some small demographic differences according to recent estimations by the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey collected from 2012-2016. Suffolk County is 9.7% more white and 2.2% more Hispanic/Latinx than Nassau County; Suffolk County's median household income is $90,128 compared to that of Nassau County, which is $102,044; while Suffolk county consists of 15.4% foreign born individuals, Nassau County has 21.8% foreign born individuals. My research took place in a town in Suffolk County, with 36.7% Hispanic/Latino and 64% white residents (U.S. Census Bureau). The median household income of this town is $75,579 as of 2016, nearly $15,000 less than the median household income for the rest of the country (U.S. Census Bureau).

Nassau and Suffolk counties are extremely segregated by race and ethnicity. A study published in 2011 examined the top 50 metro regions with the largest black and Hispanic populations to look at racial segregation throughout the United States. According to this study, Nassau and Suffolk counties' latest calculated rate of segregation is 69.2% for black-white segregation, making in the 10th most segregated metro region in this category, and 48.5% for Hispanic-white segregation, making it the 19th most segregated metro region in this category (Logan & Stults 2011).

Long Island boasts a middle class for every racial-ethnic group that lives there. Although the specific Latinx community where my fieldwork was done generally has a lower income than the average for their racial-ethnic group across the Island, there is also a notable Latinx middle class on the Island exemplified by the average household income for Hispanic or Latino households on Long Island below in Table 3, which is $74,499 annually.

Table 3: Data from the American Community Survey 2016, courtesy of Social Explorer.

Median Household Income by Race			
Race-Ethnicity	***Nassau County***	***Suffolk County***	***Average for Long Island***
White	$106,345	$92,633	$98,321
Hispanic or Latino	$76,371	$73,091	$74,499
Black or African American	$85,781	$70,550	$77,900
American Indian and Alaska Native	$68,250	$49,259	$63,961
Asian	$122,869	$105,468	$116,641
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	$82,250	$120,893	$102,179
Other Race	$63,829	$63,379	$63,552
Two or More Races	$74,736	$73,235	$73,900

Long Island: A Suburban Residential History

The idea of the "modern suburb" came into fruition after the end of World War II. Millions of young soldiers returning back to the U.S. were in need of housing for themselves and their families. One veteran, William

Levitt, capitalized on this need by transforming the plot of land owned by his family on Long Island, New York into housing for WWII veterans, and so went the production of the country's model white suburban community. As the Levittown Historical Society writes:

> "…former soldiers were running into trouble in their search to find suitable shelter for their new families. The war had created a shortage of construction materials and the housing industry had fallen off rapidly… [William Levitt] proposed to his father and brother that Levitt & Sons [the family company] divide the former potato field into small lots and build simple, inexpensive mass-produced homes for veterans and their families. These returning servicemen were entitled to low-interest, insured 'GI Loans,' which would make the new Levitt homes easily affordable and, therefore, highly attractive'" (Levittown Historical Society).

Non-white citizens were barred from living in Levittown. Low-interest GI Loans were afforded only to white veterans and although African Americans were employed to build the Levitt homes, they were explicitly excluded from living in the communities they built (Thrasher 2016). Clause 25 of the leases for each Levitt house stated that "the home could not 'be used or occupied by any person other than members of the Caucasian race'" until 1948, when the Supreme Court outlawed such policies (Lambert 1997). However, Levittown continued its racist housing policies despite the ruling and set a precedent for the future racial structure of Long Island and the ideals of the white suburbs. The legacy of this original suburb still reigns supreme - even as recently as 1990, the Levittown population was over 97% white (Lambert 1997).

When African Americans moved to Long Island, they were excluded from such communities and as a result, racially and ethnically distinct neighborhoods developed on the South Shore and in Suffolk County (Lambert 1997; Mahler

1995:192). These neighborhoods, which were originally mainly made up of African Americans, remain intact and are now home to many other racial and ethnic minority communities. This is partially due to discriminatory redlining, defined as banks and loan companies refusing to lend to residents of minority-heavy locations, and block-busting, defined as real estate professionals pushing property owners to sell their homes due to a fear that the neighborhood is becoming increasingly inhabited by racial and ethnic minorities.

Central American Migration to Long Island

In the 1980s and 1990s on Long Island, two simultaneous demographic shifts occurred. First, baby boomers who grew up on Long Island and were the children of WWII veterans moved east towards Suffolk County because real estate prices in their hometowns were too expensive for them to buy homes in, and second, migration from Central America countries, specifically El Salvador, increased (Mahler - Salvadorans in Suburbia: Symbiosis and Conflict 1995:62). As a result, jobs opened up in the "low-pay, low-skill end of the labor market because there were few young workers to take them and more senior citizens who needed inexpensive services… [which] provided employment opportunities for Salvadorans and other immigrants" (Ibid. 62-63).

For Salvadorians, immigration to Long Island picked up its pace in the years before and during the civil war in El Salvador, which began in 1979. As increased numbers of Salvadorans moved to America during the 1970s and 1980s, Long Island became one of the main destinations for Salvadoran migrants,

specifically those from the rural eastern parts of El Salvador (Mahler 2001:111). An equivalent examination of immigrants from other Latin American countries, such as Guatemala and Ecuador, coming to Long Island has yet to be comprehensively compiled.

In her ethnographic study of Salvadorian immigrants on Long Island, Mahler (1995) notes the irony of the fact that "…Long Island, with its image of classic white suburbia, [attracts] such a large, diverse group of immigrants" (14). For a variety of reasons, Latinx immigrants on Long Island "live their lives transnationally… they nurture a variety of ties to their communities of origin even as their day-to-day existence is largely focused on events and activities specific to Long Island" (Mahler 2001:110).

Generally, Latin American immigrant communities develop in particular areas of the United States as a result of family reunification through migrant networks; this is the case for Long Island. Family reunification occurs through extensive networks of family and friends and was popularized as a method of immigration after 1965 immigration legislation was passed (Mahler 1995:20). The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 prioritized family reunification, allotting 74% of all visas for immediate family members of citizens and permanent residents of the U.S (Pew Research Center Hispanic Trends 2015). This component of the 1965 Act was the result of a push by Representative Michael Feighan, a conservative Democrat from Ohio who believed such an approach would help maintain the white majority racial makeup of the U.S. citizenry (Gjelten 2015). While the family reunification policy approach did not

result in the intended maintenance of white hegemony of the U.S. population, the policy is rooted in intertwined racism and anti-immigrant sentiment.

While New York City is a sanctuary city, meaning that it intentionally limits its cooperation with federal agencies in enforcing immigration law, Nassau and Suffolk county government officials have actively opposed labeling Long Island as such. Because of this, any arrest on the Island can lead to possible detention or deportation, regardless of the charge. Moreover, since February 2018, local nonprofits, including the Central American Refugee Center, have filed lawsuits stating that police officers are making arrests without warrants and without reasonable cause, leading to unconstitutional detentions and deportations (Robbins 2017). Moreover, the presence of Salvadorans on the Island and their assumed affiliation to MS-13, as well as various violence incidents perpetrated by MS-13 members in the two counties, have led to a cloud of police surveillance over Latinx communities on Long Island. Youth who are assumed to be members of MS-13 are commonly suspended from school, pushed into the county jail system, and deported, a phenomenon that is now being called the school-to-deportation pipeline.

Economic Engagement and Employment Opportunities

Despite historical conditions, why does Long Island boast a significant immigrant population? As one participant I interviewed said, it's all about the "*ching ching*" - employment opportunities. Long Island's economic context provided a niche for many immigrants to engage with the economy. Mahler summarizes it best when she writes:

> “Long Island’s manufacturing industries flourished in the 1970s and 1980s… native-born (and largely white) workers obtained higher wage and union jobs while Salvadorans, other Latin American migrants (including large numbers of Puerto Ricans), and African Americans were relegated to minimum wage and dead-end jobs. Long Island’s service industries expanded during these decades as well, raising demand for low-wage service workers in areas as diverse as child care, restaurants, and landscaping. Changing local demographics also opened employment opportunities. A drop in the birthrate in the 1970s and 1980s led to a decline in the availability of young native-born workers to take low-wage jobs at the same time that the number of elderly and two-parent working families had risen. This change escalated demand for low-cost service and factory labor…” (2001:112).

Many immigrants prefer to live in more expensive areas with job opportunities, such as Long Island, than to live in areas where housing is cheap, but jobs are limited. As Mahler found in the 1990s, many immigrants from Central American find work on Long Island as service or domestic workers for affluent or middle class white families of the Island (Salvadorans in Suburbia: Symbiosis and Conflict 1995:56). The same remains true for the group of participants I interviewed – all of those who were employed either worked in the service industry or provided direct services to white families.

The Church Community

All of the participants I spoke with were members of the same Catholic church. This church plays a vital role in the lives of the participants and their communities. Whether celebrating baby showers, cooking weekly meals on Sundays, or attending services, the Latinx immigrant community in this particular town centers around the Church – it is both a spiritual and social anchor of the community (Mahler, Salvadorans in Suburbia: Symbiosis and Conflict 1995:100).

My participants' Church has two distinct entities within it, as is common among churches with members who are part of ethnic enclaves – first, an English-speaking, largely white community and second, a Spanish-speaking immigrant community. Though all the individuals within these two communities belong to the same Church, there are stark distinctions between them. For example, on Sundays, there is an English mass and then a separate Spanish mass, the Bible study groups are held separately. The Reverend is a white man who is fluent in Spanish and is help in high regard by the Latinx church members. The distinctions within the larger church community are reminiscent of Portes and Zhou's theory of segmented assimilation, specifically the idea of selective acculturation. This type of acculturation within the church community facilitates preservation of and engagement with Latinx culture, language, and worship style in a way that strengthens their racial-ethnic community.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

Research Process

All of the participants were members of the same church community and had been born in El Salvador (6 participants), Guatemala (7 participants), or Ecuador (2 participants). I conducted 3 interview-style focus groups with 5 individuals in each group; I had a total of 15 participants. In the focus groups, I made use of semi-structured interview questions. I decided to collect qualitative data because I aimed to center my analysis on the anecdotes and opinions of my participants and believed a qualitative approach was the best way to do so. Qualitative data collection allowed for a fluid research framework that was actively changed and molded by the conversations with participants. Moreover, because the interviews were opened ended and I could easily ask follow-up questions, I was able to gain a deep understanding of the larger picture as well as detailed knowledge about individuals' experiences, perceptions, and emotions.

The only requirement for participants was that they were over the age of 18. Of those who shared information about their number of years in the U.S., the mean number of years living in America was 18.89 years. The mean age of the 13 participants who shared their ages was 38.7 years. The overall participant group consisted of 9 women and 6 men. A detailed overview of each participant is included in Table 4 at the end of this subsection.

My initial contact was Naomi, who put me in touch with members of her bible study group, which is made up entirely of Latinx immigrants. I was connected to the participants through a snowball sampling process. After getting

permission from the church priest via a written letter, I began to attend the Wednesday night meetings of this group. Though some members of the church community have known me since I was an infant, I was introduced to many new individuals, too. I also was able to sit-in on their weekly bible studies.

The leader of the church group, Isabella, explained my project to a group of about 40 people ranging from age 79 to infancy. Isabella spoke of my research question, jokingly (but also quite seriously) noting to the group that I did not work for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and would ensure that their identities would remain anonymous. She asked interested participants to raise their hands, and I then provided them with a letter translated into Spanish that explained the purpose of my research, what their role would be, and how the information they share with me will be protected. Recruitment took place after the group had gotten to know me better. During recruitment, at no time was the actual name of any participant collected. From the moment a participant expressed interest, he or she was given a pseudonym. Also, at this point, I got verbal confirmation of informed consent from all participants.

I entered the focus groups with a set of prepared questions, but the questions that ended up being addressed in each group were slightly different based on the flow of conversation. However, there was a set of core questions that I made sure to ask every group. The focus group questions were organized into five categories: migration history, occupation and family, community, identity, and 2016 presidential election. The final category took up the majority of the focus groups' discussion times. An interview guide is included in

Appendix 1. The focus groups took place in one of the church's classrooms in groups of 5 participants. The first group's participants all spoke English and the second two groups did not. In the latter two, Naomi acted as a translator – I would ask a question in English, she would relay it in Spanish, and as the participants answered in Spanish, Naomi would translate their responses out loud to me in English. Each focus group interview lasted between one and two hours and was digitally recorded and then transcribed. The recordings were stored in Tufts Box and deleted immediately upon transcription. The transcription documents were also stored in Tufts Box and no identifying information was stored with this data. After transcription, I uploaded the interview transcripts into Dedoose, where I used an open-source coding method to identify themes, patterns, and connections between the participants.

Table 4: Overviews of 15 participants.

Summary of Interview Participants				
Pseudonym	***Age***	***Origin Country***	***# Years in the U.S.***	***Background information***
Amanda	45	El Salvador	Unknown	Came to U.S. when she was 16 years old; owns a deli.
Kimberly	35	Guatemala	14 years	Came to U.S. when she was 23 years old (2003); works as a waitress; has 18-year-old son in Guatemala; married to Manuel.
Augusto	Unknown	Guatemala	28 years	Came to U.S. when he was 14 years old (1989); works in landscaping and owns his own company

Fernando	Unknown	Guatemala	23 years	Came to U.S. when he was 19 years old (1994); works as a carpenter; married and has three children.
Naomi	55	Guatemala	34 years	Came to U.S. when she was 19 years old (1983).
Dominic	29	Guatemala	11 years	Came to the U.S. when he was 19 (2006).
Manuel	40	El Salvador	17 years	Came to the U.S. when he was 22 years old (2000); married to Kimberly.
Lina	37	Ecuador	11 years	Came to the U.S. when she was 25 (2006); married to Santiago and they have a five-year-old daughter together who was born in the U.S.
Santiago	47	Ecuador	14 years	Came to the U.S. when he was 32 years old (2003); married to Lina and they have five-year-old daughter born in U.S.; has additional children in Ecuador.
Sofia	40	Guatemala	18 years	Came to the U.S. when she was 21 years old (1999).
Melanie	37	El Salvador	Unknown	Was pregnant at the time of the interview.
Daniel	27	Guatemala	Unknown	Does not have any children.
Luisa	41	El Salvador	Unknown	Has a twelve-year-old son and a young baby.
Camila	30	El Salvador	Unknown	N/a.
Ana	40	El Salvador	Unknown	Has a twelve-year-old son.

Some of the focus group conversations were more robust than others. For example, the first group, which included Amanda, Kimberly, Augusto, Fernando, and Naomi, had a fast-paced and emotive discussion that lasted for nearly two hours. All five of the participants in this group spoke English, so this allowed for

more information to be covered at a quicker pace and therefore, the focus group was more conversational. Because of this, I gathered more detailed information about these five participants than most of the others. Moreover, participants in the first group seemed more willing to share as they had been in the U.S. for notably longer than the participants I spoke with in the latter two groups. Perhaps they were more comfortable speaking with me because they felt more secure in their membership to the community.

Methodological Limitations

My analysis would be strengthened if I had participants who were all born in the same country rather than participants from three separate countries of origin. In my methodological approach of examining the experiences of immigrants from Ecuador, El Salvador, and Guatemala, I run the risk of generalizing and racializing several ethnicities and nationalities' experiences as Latinx immigrants (Selod 2015:92). I acknowledge this possibility and aim to combat this in my research by centering the voices of the participants and grounding my research in theories of segmented assimilation, linked fate, and collective identity.

My research, particularly my interviews, would likely have been more productive if I was fluent in Spanish. This was a significant limitation and although I used a translator, I can assume that some rhetoric, language, and details of the participants' interviews were altered or lost in translation. Speaking Spanish and being able to spend more time with the participants outside of the

focus group setting would have given me a richer understanding of their lives. However, due to time and resource constraints, I was limited to interactions only in the contexts of the Bible study group and focus groups.

Researcher Reflexivity

As Leonardo (2004) writes, "we live in a condition where racism thrives absent of racists… in general, whites recreate their own racial supremacy despite good intentions" (144). For this reason, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which my identity as a white educated woman shaped this project. The context of my relationship with Naomi, as well as my social location, facilitated my ability to take part in this research and access the church community. It is these realities that impacted my research and analysis process.

It is likely that the research process was influenced by my identity as a white education woman. My presence in the focus group conversations inevitably impacted the discourse of the conversations due to the power relations between myself and the research participants. Perhaps participants were more hesitant to share their thoughts and experiences with me due to my race, education level, gender, or native language; perhaps participants felt inclined to share information with me out of respect to Naomi and her close relationship to me.

Often, when participants were discussing white Americans, they would follow up their statements about negative white behavior or treatment towards themselves with phrases such as "not all white people, not you" and "this is only some white people, you are not like this." I too felt this way in the aftermath of

the election, creating an internal distinction between myself and other white people who voted for Trump or harassed Latinx individuals on the street – yet, to do so is dangerous. I must acknowledge I am inseparable from other members of my racial category, the privilege that comes with our skin color, and the violence that we enact on others.

<u>CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS</u>

This chapter is organized into four main sections that highlight the themes of the focus group conversations. The first section, The People v. The Politician, explores participants' perceptions of the U.S. voter base and of the President himself. The second section, Rethinking Citizenship and Belonging, delves into the participants' complex relationship to citizenship and pride in America, while analyzing the role of race-ethnicity in American identity. The third section, Living Day-to-Day in Trump's American, provides descriptions of the participants' experiences with mobility, safety, racism, discrimination, guardianship, and community during this particular political moment. Finally, the fourth section, Looking Forward, investigates the Trumpian American Dream and the futures of the participants.

The People v. The Politician: Electoral Responsibility and the Political Climate

Overall, the participants I interviewed removed general blame for the negative repercussions of the election from the American voter base and the country itself. Seven of the participants explicitly expressed that they viewed American voters in a forgiving manner. For Amanda, a 45-year-old woman from El Salvador who runs a local deli, removing this responsibility from voting citizens gave her hope:

> "Nobody voted for what [Trump] wanted. The people are still very strong and there's a hope there. Because everybody has to work, everybody has to prove it… just because he's the President doesn't mean he can do this. It doesn't work that way" (Amanda, Group 1, page 13).

In this quote, Amanda is expressing her view that voters do not support Trump's actions. While we know that citizens did vote for what Trump and his policies, a fact reflected by the voting statistics of the election, it is nevertheless important to examine how, despite the actual recorded number of Americans who voted for Trump, Amanda still removes these Americans from the responsibility of electing him.

For context, between the counties on Long Island, Trump received a higher percentage of the popular vote in Suffolk County than in Nassau County. In Nassau County, 51.3% of voters selected Hilary Clinton and 45.9% voted for Donald Trump; in Suffolk County, 52.5% of the population selected Trump and 44.3% voted for Clinton ("2016 New York Presidential Election Results"). This can be compared to national percentages of the popular vote, which favored Clinton with an estimated 48% compared to Trump's estimated 46% ("Presidential Election Results 2016").

Two respondents dissented with this opinion and instead held American voters accountable for the outcome of the 2016 election. These respondents supported their opinions by stating that voters supported Trump for racial and economic reasons, citing Trump voters' general dislike of historically marginalized populations. One of these respondents was Dominic, a 29-year-old man born in Guatemala. When asked how he felt towards Trump supporters and voters, Dominic explained that he believed the majority of Trump supporters are racist and that Trump wanted to capitalize on this:

> “Most of the people who voted for [Trump] are racist. So [he] wanted a chance to increase that. Deport all the immigrants and stuff” (Dominic, Group 2, page 8).

In a similar vein, Kimberly, a 35-year-old female born in Guatemala, perceived voters’ motivations for supporting Trump as economic-based, prioritizing money over compassion for fellow people living in America.

> “People who follow him, it's like they are really against everybody…They only care about money, I guess. That's how I feel about Trump. That's his main thing” (Kimberly, Group 1, page 17).

Although voters were brought up when discussing the 2016 election, the participants focused on discussing Trump’s accountability for the post-election state of the country. Trump himself was unsurprisingly highlighted in all three focus groups as the main issue plaguing this population of Latin American immigrants. Even participants who dissented with the overall trend of not holding voters accountable seemed to place more blame on Trump than on voters. As Santiago, a 47-year-old man from Ecuador, stated, “It’s not America, it’s the President, it’s immigration law” (Santiago, Group 2 page 9). I will re-visit this idea in the later section on rethinking citizenship and belonging. Santiago’s sentiment holds true for many of the others with whom I spoke. This demonstrates that the participants do not blame America itself for the aftermath of the election; rather, they blame President Trump and his immigration policies for their panic and frustration.

When the focus group members discussed Trump, they repeatedly brought up his rhetoric and style of speaking. For Manuel, a 40-year-old man from El Salvador, Trump’s outspoken nature and ineloquence was anxiety-inducing.

Manuel came to Long Island in 2000 following his uncle and two brothers in search of a job. He currently works as an electrician and is married to Kimberly, who is a waitress at a local restaurant. Manuel explained his perception of Trump's public persona and his failure to think before speaking:

> "Like [Trump] doesn't think. First he has to think, he has to think what to say and then say it. But he just say it. He just spills it out" (Manuel, Group 2, page 3).

In this quote, Manuel is explaining his perception of Donald Trump as someone who does not think before speaking; Manuel posits that instead of thinking through what he wants to say, Trump just expresses himself and says whatever is on his mind.

Participants echoed this sentiment and expressed general discomfort and fear about the unpredictable nature of Trump and his administration, including Naomi and Camila. Camila, a 30-year-old female from El Salvador, came to America to help support her family. For her, the fear stemming from Trump results from a lack of knowing what new policies he may propose, particularly as they relate to deportations and familial separation. She said, "We don't know the next step, how he's going to react" (Camila, Group 3, page 1). Other participants expressed concerns directly related to their identities as Latinx immigrants, such as the possibilities of stricter immigration law enforcement.

For some, Trump was discussed in humorous ways. At times, the groups took the opportunity to laugh at and joke about the country's commander-in-chief. It seemed that at points in our conversations, the only way to relieve the stress and anxiety stemming from discussing the impacts of Trump's policies was to laugh at

him. Manuel entertained one of the focus groups by poking fun at the news coverage of Trump viewing a solar eclipse:

> "For example, the day of the solar eclipse (laughs), everybody was saying 'Don't watch the eclipse with plain eyes.' And you see the President, Mr. President, ay! I mean, he is the master chief of this country. It's like when you see a cop on the phone driving. What do you think? Right? So stuff like that makes you think" (Manuel, Group 2, page 4).

Manuel's playful description of Trump viewing a solar eclipse from a balcony of the White House while looking directly at the sun without protective sunglasses depicts Manuel's perception of the President. In Manuel's eyes, Trump is hypocritical and fails to listen to others' recommendations, which is humorous to the group - Manuel's comment bred hysterical laughter into the room.

Rethinking Citizenship and Belonging

Not the Nation, Not the Country, but the President

Similar to the discussion above about perceived distance between the voter base and the repercussions of the 2016 election, participants made a deep distinction between Trump as an individual and America as a country. By emphasizing patriotism and placing the blame for the anti-immigrant climate on one individual, Trump, the participants found ways to create glimmers of hope during a grim time. During one of the focus groups, Santiago and Manuel were conversing about their patriotism, specifying that their pride is in the country itself, not the president. Manuel explained how he feels there is a distinction between Trump and America, which allows him to still feel proud to live in the U.S.:

> "I think, I feel proud living in this country but [Trump's] another thing, you know? I don't know... I don't... I don't think the President has something to do with this great nation" (Manuel, Group 2, page 7).

To which Santiago replied:

> "That's completely the way I'm feeling…. This is a great nation. I'm so proud to be here. But the main problem is not the nation, not the country, but the president" (Santiago, Group 2, page 7).

Here, Santiago explained that he still believes America is a great country and that the country is being tainted by the President. Manuel and Santiago's exchange provides insight into what they view as the contents that make up the country and nation. Their discussion depicts the differences between social citizenship, national boundaries, and patriotism (Selod 2015:81). The two men recognize that they do not necessarily view themselves as Americans, however, they are still part of America; the nation, in their eyes, is not defined by citizenship, but rather, pride and dedication. This phenomenon is explored in more detail in the next subsection.

Pride, Identification, and "Americanness"

In many ways, the participants have unwavering pride in America as a nation. Even if their identities are increasingly targeted in this political climate, they are still proud and thankful for the opportunity to live their lives, even if temporarily, in the United States. Across the board, every participant stated that they are proud to live in America even under Trump's presidential administration. One such example is Naomi, who is 55-years-old and arrived in the United States from Guatemala when she was just 16-years-old. She moved to the U.S. seeking a job that would allow her to make enough money to send to her family to help

increase their economic security. When asked about her thoughts on the current state of America, Naomi shared that she holds Trump responsible for the current climate in the country, indicating that once he is no longer in office, the U.S. will return to normalcy:

> "[Being here] is our way to help others, our families, or people that needs us. But, like I said, if we put Trump away, it's going to be a great, really a great country again. That's the way I feel, honestly" (Naomi, Group 1, page 18).

Many of the participants echoed Naomi's sentiment, communicating that continuing to live their lives in the United States was their only option to provide for their families. Whether it was to send money home to a sick relative or provide better opportunities for their children, the participants could not make enough money to live adequate lives in their countries of origin due to conditions in those countries. As previously documented by many immigration scholars, all 15 of the participants migrated to American because the political economies of their countries of origin were in crisis, whether through conflict, economic recessions, gang violence, or for other reasons (Neckerman et al. 1999; Mahler 1995; Mahler 2001; Massey & Sanchez R. 2010).

In my minds of the informants, American citizenship is conceptualized in two conflicting ways – first, as "membership" in a country that is welcoming to all individuals in search of homes, and second, as an exclusive right that is only granted to some (mainly white) individuals (Masuoka & Junn 2013; Román 2013). The former was expressed by some interviewees, including Amanda, who stated,

> "America is everybody…All the people that come here. All different countries. That's the way we're supposed to be" (Amanda, Group 1, page 6).

According to Amanda, America is made up of people from a variety of countries of origin. While this may be "how America is supposed to be," other participants expressed that their lived experiences did not necessarily reflect this idealistic vision.

As the focus groups delved into citizenship, their characterizations recognized the view of American citizenship as exclusive and only afforded to some. Many participants experienced reinforcement of this idea from white individuals they interacted with, who would look at them, make comments based on their race-ethnicity, and remind them that they were not part of the U.S.:

> "I mean, sometimes when you go to some places like the supermarket, well, you see people that look at you different because of the color of your skin. Um. And sometimes, you hear [white] people saying, 'Go back to your country!' Or stuff like that" (Manuel, Group 2, page 2).

For participants, the label "American" is connected to citizenship and whiteness and thus, the identities of the participants deny them the privileges that come with citizenship for white Americans (Selod 2015). Throughout the focus group, participants repeatedly used the term "American" to refer to private citizens they had interactions with. I asked the group members who was included in their usage of the label "American," and the following conversation ensued:

> AMANDA: For a lot of people, Americans are the ones that have blue eyes, light hair, you know. We have a dark color.
> AUGUSTO: The gringos!
> (Everybody laughs)
> FERNANDO: Gringo! You know though, everybody's coming from different countries.

> NAOMI: I don't want to be offensive, but if I call "gringo," it's like not respect them. So I say American.
> AMANDA: But "gringo" is nasty!
> PI: Okay, but you are talking about white people?
> EVERYONE: Yeah.
> NAOMI: Yeah, gringo.
> PI: We are talking about white people who...
> FERNANDO: Who think they own the country
> AMANDA: They think differently.
> NAOMI: Not you!
> FERNANDO: Not everybody. It's not like everybody.
> KIMBERLY: There are a lot of nice people (Group 1, page 6).

In this quote, the participants were discussing that for many people, the term "American" is used to refer to gringos, a term that means white people. While some participants, such as Fernando, said that Americans come from a variety of countries, there was a simultaneous noting of white citizens in the U.S. who "think they own the country." Yet, this was followed up with clarification that this is not true of all white citizens, as the informants explicitly separating me and other "nice people" from the aforementioned group of white citizens.

Of the interviewees involved in the above conversation, just one, Naomi, was an American citizen. Naomi alludes to, what is in her mind, the interchangeability of the terms "gringo" and "American." She excludes herself from the category of American even though she is a legal, fully naturalized citizen. Returning to Itzigsohn & vom Hau's (2006) conception of alternative national narratives, Naomi demonstrates the ways in which she, along with her community, sets forth a version of American national identity that differs from the ideologies of state elites. As a member of the Latinx immigrant community, Naomi expressed the emotional experience that comes with the Latinx collective identity and how it shapes her views of her own identity and her hopes for

freedom for all living in America. Below, she details how although she may technically be American according to legal documents, she does not feel American because of the fear and pain felt by her undocumented friends:

> "In my case, even though I became an American citizen, I don't feel close this time to really saying oh yes I am an American. Because it's like, I'm not, in my heart. I feel the pain of my brothers and my sisters. So cannot be saying oh, I'm American, no big deal. No, it is a big deal to me. Even though I became an American citizen, it doesn't change the way I feel about my people…I have a dream that my friends will be free. That's my dream for everyone. Even they are… not all of them are in this room, ones that are here, there are ones in different places. That would really be freedom. It would really be a great country again. I want to be fair. I'm really hoping for freedom in this country. Not because of the title, not because of the way you look, or where you came from... rights for everybody. That's my dream, for real" (Naomi, Group 1, pages 14, 19).

The ethno-racial exclusion of Latinx from America, which is explained by Naomi and conceptualized by many Latinx identity scholars, introduces the idea of linked fate. Dawson (1994) conceptualizes linked fate and the salience of race-ethnicity in one's identification with particular communities, detailing that "the social category 'black' in American society cuts across multiple boundaries" (76). The same goes for Latinxs, among which there is a sense of group consciousness that stems from social identification, shared language, and culture, and which also suggests a linked fate tied to race-ethnicity and citizenship (Dawson 1994; Simien 2005).

Living Day-to-Day in Trump's America

<u>*Mobility and Visibility*</u>

The new political climate has significantly impacted the day-to-day life of many ethno-racial groups throughout the country, particularly undocumented

immigrants. Rhetoric about "living in the shadows" is commonly discussed in academia regarding undocumented individuals (De Genova 2002; Ellis & Chen 2013; Scranton et al. 2016). My findings support this phenomenon, as undocumented individuals are limiting their mobility to decrease their visibility in society. One participant, Camila explained that she leaves her house only when she must, opting to only leave her home when absolutely necessary:

> "[We're] just trying to do what we need to do – not travel long distances and not really go around. Only to get the stuff we need and then run back to home" (Camila, Group 3, page 4).

Luisa, a 41-year-old woman from El Salvador agreed. She came to the U.S. as a single mother who wanted a better life for her children. She shared the ways in which her approach to daily life has changed since the election, such as how she tries not to leave her house due to her newly perceived risk of deportation that comes with being in spaces outside of her home:

> "Life has changed a lot. We used to go out, and now we are trying not to because we are afraid that even just on the corner of our house, someone could [spot] us and take us away…the 12-year-old understands and has agreed that he would rather [stay in the house] than have his parents taken away from him" (Lusia, Group 3, page 4).

Changes in the ability to move and be seen within society, as expressed by Camila and Luisa, demonstrate the process of identity negotiation through passing. As explored in Chapter 2 through Goffman's theorizing of identity, passing is when individuals with stigmatized identities, such as those who are undocumented, behave in a particular way to be perceived as members of non-stigmatized groups (Goffman 1963). In line with Goffman's thought, Luisa and Camila are limiting their own mobility so that they can avoid public spaces where

passing as documented is necessary, yet difficult Certain identities necessitate constant negotiation in public spaces where they are stigmatized; for those who are undocumented, nearly all public spaces can be risky and require passing. For example, to pass in a public space, such as a mall or supermarket, undocumented immigrants may make a concerted effort to speak English without an accent or decide not to speak at all because of their difficulty with the English language. By only leaving their homes when it is absolutely necessary, Luisa and Camila are decreasing their chances of interactions with immigration officials and asserting social control over themselves.

In this political climate, the criminalization of the Latinx ethno-racial group identity and the subsequent risk of deportation trumps class, color, status, and citizenship. Sentiment about limited mobility, which has been most common among undocumented immigrants, was expressed by many participants, including those with green cards and other visas. For my respondents, the phenomenon of passing has been extended to a variety of Latinx immigrants, regardless of their documentation status. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the community of Latinx immigrants that I spoke with were mainly working-class, and I posit that that passing is a social condition that impacts Latinx individuals regardless of class. Moreover, class shapes the immigrants' abilities to negotiate the impacts of passing on their day to day lives.

Driving

Navigating day-to-day safety in suburbia has added difficulties. Specifically, driving poses a risk to one's documentation status and safety that is

unique to the suburban landscape. Although the community where these individuals live is close to a train station that is connected to other towns on Long Island, many of their jobs necessitate travel by car. Often, the main fear behind "driving while undocumented" is interactions with the police. The unique threat of driving is a symptom of existence as a Latinx person of color in wealthy white suburbs who is assumed undocumented based on his or her race.

If pulled over by the police while driving, one is asked for his or her license and registration. I asked the focus groups about interactions with police after being pulled over prior to the election. According to participants, their interactions with police prior to the 2016 presidential election were stressful, but they often ended without legal consequence. Many of the interactions went as follows: participants were pulled over by police and were asked for their driver's licenses, yet because they lack documentation, they were forced to disclose to officials that they indeed were undocumented.

I followed up by asking about how interactions with police or expectations about such interactions had changed since Trump came into office. The participants noted increased anxiety about being pulled over and asked for a license by a police official. Participants also expressed fear that as Trump's presidency continues, police will be able to act as immigration officers and that these previously stressful, yet inconsequential license checks will lead to deportation. This concern has led some, such as Santiago, to come up with alternative methods of travel aside from driving himself:

> "Since I came [to America,] I was driving my own vehicle, even for work. I have a truck. But since all these new, uh, [laws], I'm scared to drive

> because I do not have a driver's license. I even hire somebody to drive for me. It's more expensive, but it's safer. But it's better than getting stopped by a police officer and getting in trouble" (Santiago, Group 2, page 4).

Since Trump took office, Santiago began to pay someone else to drive him to and from work, which is a significant expense. Yet, he feels it is worth the cost because he can avoid being pulled over by the police and being forced to disclose his documentation status, therefore protecting him from potential detention and/or deportation.

Others, particularly the women participants, expressed that they have ceased driving at all to minimize the risk of being pulled over, therefore significantly limiting their mobility. For example, Kimberly, whose husband has temporary residency, will only travel in a car if her husband is driving since he has documentation to show officers. Another participant, Naomi, said that when she is with her undocumented friends, she sometimes feels as if she does not have papers despite her citizenship. She compared feelings of safety regarding movement before and after Trump took office:

> "The other thing is that, for example, you know, thanks to the Lord I have papers. But most of my friends [don't]. But I still feel like I do not have my papers because I'm with them. When, before the elections, we were like kind of free to go places…You weren't concerned that police would stop you and automatically send you back to your country…" (Naomi, Group 1, page 11).

The concern of deportation forces many participants to greatly restrict their mobility. The threat of ICE fuels a fear that infringes on day-to-day movement and existence. Even in the absence of personal experiences with ICE officials, identity criminalization and those who enforce U.S. laws are asserting social control over Latinx individuals that prevents them from moving freely.

Threats to Immigration Status

Trump's negative rhetoric about Latinx individuals has been prevalent during both his campaign and administration. He often discusses illegal immigration as a dangerous threat to the country. The term "illegal," which relates to perceptions and ideas of citizenship and existence, has been constructed by American politicians to have particular meanings at certain political moments; the term has transformed over time to have connotations of criminality (Koulish 2010; Masuoka & Junn 2013). This perspective on illegality echoes Tirman's (2015) argument about the social, political, and historical fluidity of legal norms and ideas through which illegality is constructed and criminalized.

Manuel, who shared that he had temporary residency papers, explained his idea of the label of "illegality:"

> "They're just violating not having papers in this country. That's the only mistake. Little mistake" (Manuel, Group 2, page 6).

To Manuel, illegality means nothing more than a lack of official papers – he posits that undocumented immigrants are doing nothing wrong other than that. This sentiment was echoed by conversations with other participants. Yet at the same time, when referring to themselves, most of the undocumented individuals interviewed used the term "illegal" to speak of their own identities and statuses. One may view this as a reclamation of the term "illegal" or as an infiltration of media and political rhetoric into the participants' minds; it is impossible to know the participants'' motivation in using the term to refer to themselves.

Many participants who identified as undocumented expressed a perceived lack of choice and agency involving their ability to stay in the country. The most common sentiment communicated in the focus groups regarding threats to one's status was that the risk of being in the country is worth it as long as one can continue to work. As many stated when asked about their migration histories, economic opportunities motivated their immigration. In a similar way, their desire to remain in the country in the future is contingent on whether or not they can continue working. The following conversation with one group of participants details this phenomenon. When I asked one of the group at what point they would consider leaving the U.S., the individuals in the group explained that they would leave the country or have significant difficulty remaining in the country if they were unable to work:

> KIMBERLY: If it gets worse, I have to.
> PI: And what does getting worse look like to you?
> KIMBERLY: I'm not able to work. Like if in the restaurant they change everything and they're going to ask like for social security number and all that... because now I know that since the people [ICE] are coming, they're not accepting anyone without the papers. Because I told they... they had hired me with the IRS, but now if they change, I know they are trying to sell the restaurant, if the new owners change all the laws and... because there is no way... if I'm not working, what am I going to do here? Stay home? You know? So I just have to...
> NAOMI: Just win the lottery!
> (everyone laughs)
> AMANDA: The point of being here is the jobs.
> KIMBERLY: Exactly. Like I can live without like going out too much, but if I am able to work, I am fine. If I'm not working, I'm not be able to...
> AMANDA: We need the *ching ching* to be able to support the kids! (Group 1, page 14).

The administrative shift from Obama to Trump came with changes in federal immigration policies. I asked the participants to reflect on the differences

between the two administrations. According to one respondent, Daniel, under Obama, the threat of deportation was legitimate, and he was aware of this threat to his existence in the United States. However, under Trump, the threat has transformed and become extremely aggressive:

> "…since Trump, it's getting worse and worse. To the point where [ICE] just comes to your house, knock on the door, and it doesn't matter if you are the person they're looking for, if that person is there, or if you even have a bad record. They just take you away" (Daniel, Group 3, page 3).

In this quote, Daniel explained that under Trump, ICE is essentially deporting whomever it can find, regardless of criminal record. Moreover, other participants shared that, on the news, they had heard about instances of deportation in which Latinx individuals were deported despite having some form of a visa or permit. Participants perceived the deportation of Latinx immigrants without criminal records as less common under Obama. However, this is not the case. According to reports by the Department of Homeland Security, in FY 2012, the peak of Obama's deportation numbers, a total of 174,858 "criminal aliens" were arrested and deported (Simanski & Sapp 2013). In FY 2017, under Trump, ICE arrested and deported 105,736 "criminal aliens," making up 73.7% of their annual arrests (U.S. Immigrant and Customs Enforcement 2018). However, the statistics are less important than the perception of the threat of deportation; the truthfulness of participants' opinions as reflected through statistics do not have as much of an impact on participants than opinions themselves since these opinions inform the participants' behaviors and emotions.

Safety

Of the 15 participants who were asked whether or not they felt safe when they first came to the United States, 8 said yes, 0 said no, and 7 declined to answer. Regarding comments made by President Trump about the Latinx immigrant community, Amanda said, “We feel that nobody is safe anymore. Nobody” (Amanda, Group 1, page 11). This sentiment is generally shared by the other participants. When then asked if they still felt safe under President Trump, 6 said no, 2 said yes but less safe than they did before, and 7 declined to answer. Even those with forms of official documentation felt unsafe. It is important to note that the two individuals who stated they felt somewhat safe now were men from Guatemala and El Salvador. I asked one of these men, Manuel, to explain why he still felt safe, to which he responded that compared to his country of origin, the threat of death and theft in America is minimal.

Throughout the focus group conversations, participants expressed that Trump, particularly his rhetoric, contributed to their fear regarding their own safety. Dominic came to the United States from Guatemala in 2006. He migrated in search of a job so that he could send money home to help his family. He recalls feeling safe when he arrived in 2006, stating:

> “When I got here I felt safe... I feel safe but not like [how I felt when] I got here. Because all the things [Trump] is saying and doing, I don't know what to think now” (Dominic, Group 2, page 4).

In this quote, Dominic reasons that Trump’s rhetoric and actions are what has fueled the decrease in his perceived safety. Yet, despite this, he still says he feels safe.

Other participants, particularly the women, communicated that Trump makes them feel unsafe. This includes Camila, who said that although she never felt fully safe in the country, since Trump took office, she feels unsafe every day:

> "When we came, it felt like we were not 100% secure in this country. But, I didn't have the feeling I have today. Because of the new president, it's really, really scary for us every single day" (Camila, Group 3, page 3).

Lina communicated a similar sentiment. She is a 37-year-old woman originally from Ecuador who came to the United States in 2006, three years after her husband had moved to the U.S. to begin to establish economic roots. She stated:

> "When I came, I wasn't afraid. Since now, the new President, I now worry about [my safety]. Scared at some points" (Lina, Group 2, page 4).

Lina and Camila both express that they have been more fearful since Trump's election. This notes a change in perceived safety and protection.

Guardianship and Childhood: Shifts from the Obama Era

10 of the 15 participants had at least one child. Many of these children were born in the United States, making them naturalized citizens; all of the individuals with children were not themselves naturalized citizens. One of the most notable concerns expressed by parents in the focus groups was the threat of familial separation.

In the past, it has often been up to parents to communicate the potential threats and consequences of undocumented statuses to their children. However, this is not necessarily the case under Trump (Balderas et al. 2016). Children are hearing more on the news, from peers, and in school about the immigration debate in the U.S. This has extended familial conversations about deportation and

separation to many Latinx families, not just ones with undocumented individuals. Ana has a 12-year-old son who was born in the United States. Speaking about her son, Ana said:

> "[My son] is concerned about what happens if [ICE] takes mama or papa away. [These kids] know they have to go but they don't want to go as American kids. It's heartbreaking because we can get separated. Even though I have a permit to stay, my kid heard the news that [Trump] wants to take away these permits. So that means they're going to send people back to their countries because my status is going to be illegal. So [my son] comes and locks the door every time he comes into the house because he doesn't want police to get inside" (Ana, Group 3, pages 2, 4).

Here, Ana is saying that her son fears that his parents will be deported despite their documentation. Moreover, he receives much of his information on this topic from the news and his fear of the police and familial separation impacts his daily behavior.

Lina and Santiago, a married couple originally from Ecuador, reflected on their increased fear of familial separation under Trump. Their five-year-old daughter was born in the United States and they hoped to gain security through Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA), a plan which offered work permits and protection from deportation to undocumented individuals who have lived in the United States since 2010 and who are parents of American citizens or lawful permanent residents. In mid-June of 2017, two months before these focus groups were run, President Trump ended this program. Lina said:

> "For me, most of my fear is that we will be deported…The concern is, who is going to take care of our girl if we are sent back to our home country? For example, God forbid we could be just walking around street and the immigration department could stop us... who's going to take care of our little girl?" (Lina, Group 2, page 2).

As a mother, Lina is fearful of being deported and not knowing what will happened to her daughter, who would likely remain in the U.S. Previously, DAPA gave Lina peace of mind since she had a potential path towards documentation. Trump's policy shift, which eliminated DAPA, has emotional and mental consequences on Latinx people, exemplified by Lina's concern over her daughter's future should Lina and her husband be deported. Lina's concern over her daughter's future, in a situation where Lina and her husband were deported, reflects the mental and emotional consequences of Trump's policy shift that eliminated DAPA.

Participants reported that under Obama, there were more opportunities to apply for citizenship. Under the new administration, however, some participants expressed fear that their previous applications for citizenship would be used to track them down, detain them, and deport them. Manuel, who is married to Kimberly, a woman without documentation, expressed fear about his wife's past citizenship application that was begun prior to Trump taking office.

> "… sometimes, when you fill out an application [for papers], sometimes it ends up that they give you a deportation or something. [You send in the application] and then they find something and they say, "No, this person doesn't... not uh," how do you say? Sometimes they don't want to give it to you. Before, in the Obama administration, it wasn't that easy, too. I mean, it was hard to get it, but it was more like, you had more opportunities. Right now, it's more strict. They changing… I've seen a lot of cases on TV where people fill out an application and they end up being deported" (Manuel, Group 2, page 7).

In this quote, Manuel acknowledged that it was not necessarily easy to apply for and receive papers under the Obama administration. However, he believes that the process has become even more difficult and strict since Trump took office.

Additionally, although questionably enforced, many of Obama's immigration policies attempted to keep families together on paper. This is no longer the case under Trump, according to Melanie:

> "Yesterday, my husband went to the immigration department because his niece was detained by ICE, they got her. The immigration people told him that even if she has kids, they don't care – if they have to send her back, they're going to send her back regardless of if she has kids or not. So at this point, kids don't do anything in order to help us to stay. Under the last president, we were always having our families separated and people were being sent back to their countries. But there wasn't this huge event that Trump does, like at this point, every day he is separating families, deporting people, sending back huge amounts of people" (Melanie, Group 3, pages 2-3).

Here, Melanie told a story in which her husband was told by immigration officials that having a child is not a deterrent for deportation. She also recalled that even though familial separation was happening under Obama, it is far more common under Trump.

Changes in Overt White Racism and Discrimination

Racism and discrimination were nothing new for the individuals interviewed; they recalled experiencing it from the moment they first came to the country and throughout many of their other interactions over time. However, as a whole, the participants communicated that explicit racism and discrimination from white Americans have worsened since Donald Trump was elected. As Lina said, "I feel like since the new president, racism has increased" (Lina, Group 2, page 2). Another participant, Manuel, similarly cites a shift from covert to overt racism, explaining that under Obama, racism was hidden and more internal, while

since the 2016 election, racist Americans gained power and became more overt in their expressions of racism:

> "Since Donald Trump won, I think, [more of these people –racists] have come out. Racist people, before, in the Obama administration, they were more retreated, you know? But now that [the president] is Donald Trump, they all came out. It's like they have more power" (Manuel, Group 2, page 2).

Daniel agreed, stating that Americans who had kept their racism to themselves under Obama felt Trump's election was an excuse to be more overt about their racism:

> "Most of us agree that during the campaign, it seemed like a joke. And then after he became the president, most of the racist people who were actually not showing their racism, now it's like an excuse to be racist. It got to the point where they really love [Trump] because they get the opportunity to be treating people a bad way" (Daniel, Group 3, page 2).

This sentiment was echoed by other participants, including Santiago, who expressed that he felt a nearly instantaneous change in the way he was treated by white Americans after the election.

> "I feel myself even at my own job, I feel like people are being really racist against me. Since, not even a week since Donald Trump became president, I started to feel changes in racism." (Santiago, Group 2, page 2).

For some participants, this increased racism and discrimination has manifested itself as another form of social control by non-ICE/police citizens. This idea will be expanded on in the subsequent discussion section. Participants shared that they have been approached by white citizens to whom they have no connection or relationship and interrogated about their citizenship status. Three participants told stories of instances since the election in which white Americans either asked if they had papers in a threatening context or threatened to call ICE.

For example, Kimberly recalled two separate instances since Trump got elected – one at the supermarket and one in her neighborhood - where she has had interactions with white American citizens that directly threatened her safety:

> "Like I had one experience. Like when I go to the supermarket, I always like to get the wine that they sell at that store. The wine that they sell in the store because I like some shrimp with white wine and garlic. And then I usually get it from that store. And then a few months ago I went to the store and they asked me for my license and I said I don't have a license, I better leave the wine. And [the white woman working at the store] was like 'Why are you –how you came here? Are you driving without driver's license?' And I said well, I don't need the wine, just take it away. It doesn't matter how I got here. Just, I don't need the wine. And she was questioning me…I kinda looked around like what is she going to do now? She makes me nervous. Now I know that I can't get wine from that store. Yeah, so I just ask my husband to get it if I need some. She was like so questioning and it never happened before. I always go to that supermarket and I never had a problem. And then, just, new. Something new. In fact, that is another thing. We have a neighbor… she doesn't like us to be not even a little bit in her spot, like in front of her house. And then every time, for everything, she says to us that she's going to call immigration" (Kimberly, Group 1, page 5).

Here, Kimberly recalls when her lack of a driver's license was questioned by a white supermarket cashier, as well as the fact that her neighbor has repeatedly threatened to call ICE on her family for small incidents, such as parking too close to her driveway. Kimberly's experiences interacting with white American citizens have involved either implied or direct threats to her immigration status. Even if their threats may be empty, these interactions involve the assertion of power dynamics and oppressive structures by the white American citizens. Others echoed her sentiment, sharing that the threat of deportation is used by employers as a method of bargaining to take advantage of Latinx immigrants, forcing them to accept lower wages, inconvenient hours, and poor working conditions.

When asked how they respond to direct questioning of their immigration statuses by non-government individuals, participants stated that they do not defend themselves. As Manuel expressed, "…if you start a fight... arguing with a person, you know you're going to lose because they're going to call the cops…" (Manuel, Group 2, page 2). The participants shared that the best thing they can do is remove themselves from the situation. Again, this is a form of social control of the self as they are actively navigating their choices to avoid punishment and stay in line with social order.

However, Amanda, who has papers, seems more comfortable pushing back against overt racism and discrimination than her undocumented peers. As the owner of a deli, Amanda employs many Spanish-speaking workers. Her customers are a variety of races. She explains a conflict between her workers and a customer in which the customer requested that the workers speak English instead of Spanish, and Amanda stood up for herself and her workers:

> "I own a deli. And I see that when [white people] come in. I have everybody in there – Spanish, and whatever, everybody comes. And my girls [workers] were talking Spanish and one of my customers said, "I would like to tell you to tell them not to speak Spanish." I said "why?" He said, "It's because I don't like it." I said "You don't has to like it, they don't talk about you. And they can speak whatever they want." So he said, "Yeah, but I'm the customer and you're going to lose me." I said "Go ahead and go. I don't need you. You have a bad attitude. We make the sandwich the way you want it. We treat the nice way. Now you want to tell me how to run the business? I said, "No, I don't need you. You're really bad." And he turns to my niece and he said "You talk too much in Spanish, I don't like that." So my niece said "I don't work for you! You don't pay me" (laughs). Now, they ["Americans" who openly discriminate] come out even more. You can feel it" (Amanda, Group 1, page 5).

Making the American Dream "Great" Again: The Future

When discussing their migration histories, many of the participants cited the American Dream as one of their reasons for coming to the United States. I asked the focus groups if the America Dream still existed for them under this administration. In the eyes of the participants, the American dream has persisted through the election, the first months of the Trump presidency, and is still at the forefront of their minds. Though still salient, the American Dream has transformed; it is now contingent on hopes of changes in the White House. For the immigrants I spoke with, the new American dream in this political climate is being "allowed" to stay in the country.

Remaining in the country and avoiding deportation is the utmost priority of "the Trumpian American Dream." This framing of the American Dream demonstrates how it has been redefined and reconstructed in this particular political moment in American history. For Manuel, his American dream is largely in-tact despite the political climate but is contingent on avoiding deportation. As he puts it:

> "There is hope (laughs). I think it's still the American dream. It's a little bit different… still, this a beautiful country to live [in]. As long as we don't see ICE cars in the street, that's fine" (Manuel, Group 2, pages 5-6).

As demonstrated through this quote, the American Dream still exists, but has shifted to have different meanings.

According to the participants, the source of this transformation is Donald Trump himself. Kimberly, who came to America in 2003 in search of better opportunities for herself and her newborn child, explained the transformation of

her personal American dream as a result of Trump. She expressed hope in maintaining her original perception of the dream if he were no longer in office:

> "[My idea of the American dream] is completely changed if the President is still [in office]. If he, like, if they can do something to get rid of him, that would be probably my hope. I think he is the worst President ever. Because nobody spoke the way he did, nobody's did the things that he's doing" (Kimberly, Group 1, page 13).

The same sentiment is echoed by Naomi, who holds Trump responsible for the gap between expectations and actual realities of the American Dream as it exists today. When Naomi came to America, she had expectations of what it would be like from community members, media, and general beliefs. Although her initial expectations of America were different from the reality she encountered in 1983, she expressed that expectation and reality had even more distance between them since Trump took office:

> "I was just told I was coming to the American dream. The American dream, it is like paradise, you know…Instead of really making America a great nation, let me tell you, I'm so ashamed to say, America is not the America we all dreamed for. Unfortunately, it's the most sad part in this way now, because he's the worst President, 45th President of America, you know. He's making America look terrible" (Naomi, Group 1, pages 10, 17)."

The Role of the Church Community in Maintenance of the American Dream

One of the main phenomena that helped the participants maintain and transform their visions of the America dream was religion, more specifically, being members of a Latinx church community. Their church bridges the gap between national boundaries and facilitates a Latinx immigrant community. Because of their lack of formal citizenship, and therefore increased barriers to civic engagement, many of the participants expressed feelings of helplessness and

inaction as they reflected on Trump's campaign and election. With few options of how to choose to behave due to a lack of formal legal recognition by America, participants turned to God, faith, and the church community for support in this difficult political climate. As Kimberly put it, "The only thing that we can do? We pray. Pray" (Kimberly, Group 1, page 19). Through religion, respondents were able to engage with the political climate indirectly via prayer and interactions with God.

Moreover, church is an environment where the participants do not need to actively pass as documented. Unlike a supermarket or the main street in one's town, the church does not necessitate that undocumented individuals perform communicative labor to pass as documented in order to protect themselves. Rather, it is a safe space in which they do not need to behave in a particular kind of way, police their behavior, or speak a certain way. They can let their guard down and trust God to protect and care for them.

Outside of the church community, life is stressful for many of the participants. Naomi credited her faith for helping her deal with the day-to-day threats and stress of living in Trump's America:

> "That's the only hope we have. We pray as a group, we pray as a family, we pray in order to ask the Lord to cover us. But it's the only thing we have… Through the prayers, we feel strong and we feel like not scared anymore." (Naomi, Group 1, pages 15-16).

As Naomi said, faith in God allows her to have hope and to overcome fear. Kimberly agreed, adding that by trusting God with power over her life, she knows she is in good hands:

> "I think our faith makes us stronger. Because in the morning, the first thing that I do is I like... I put myself in [God's] hands and He can just do whatever is better for me. He knows what's best, He knows what I need and what my family needs too. I just place myself in His hands and here we are. We're not scared until we see a cop!" (Kimberly, Group 1, pages 15-16).

According to the church members that I interviewed, when Trump first took office in January 2017, the church community was in disarray. The threat of social control through legal means was legitimate and realized. The church structure served an important role in educating and providing information to immigrants during this time. Kimberly recalls a question-and-answer panel with immigration lawyers that the church pastor organized:

> "They made something at church like to try to help people. We heard a lot of people discriminated against and they tried, they brought lawyers and all that to answer the questions. People were concerned about having their kids if they are illegal because what are they going to do after? If something happens, and all that, so the church, like the pastor, did something for, to help families" (Kimberly, Group 1, page 8).

Naomi recalled some of the services that the lawyers offered after the panel, particularly those involving guardianship:

> "One of the things that our church did, for example... like if I had a kid, and I'm illegal, who is going to be responsible for my kid in case they take me away? So they did like lawyers and papers saying in case I am deported, I want to leave my kid with this person, for example" (Naomi, Group 1, page 8).

As increased threats loom, the participants' church group has been vital to their protection and perseverance in their day-to-day lives. The church community has formed an unofficial warning network to protect one another from the threat of deportation. As the participants explained, when someone sees a potential ICE officer or car, he or she text a few members of the church

community. These members then text more individuals and so on, creating a chain of protection among their community network; similar patterns are reflected across the country. This warning network makes it safer for the participants to leave their homes. Naomi explained this warning network process, stating:

> "We spread the message to all our contacts because somebody knows somebody, especially the time, the place, the address where we are seeing ICE people walking around or taking people away. So we say, 'Hey, don't go to [this place] because ICE is there…' And one of the things we do is that if we see something, automatically, we send a message. Like, I call [Fernando] and give him a warning" (Naomi, Group 1, page 12).

Affect for America

Overall, when asked how they currently felt about America, the participants expressed negative affect. Many shared that before the election, they had positive affect towards America because they had hope for the future. While they still have hope, their goals have shifted from long-term to short-term – stay safe and stay in America. Participants with and without documentation expressed that at times during the 2016 campaign season, they considered leaving the U.S. However, the participants who considered have decided that they want to remain in the U.S. for as long as they can. Melanie explained thoughts on this topic:

> "Sometimes when I hear the news, I get disappointed because at the points, sometimes I think it could be better to go back. I think, but what should I do if I go back? Just to apply for a job [in the U.S.], [employers] are really looking for people who have status, who have papers. It is very hard to get a job without papers. So it's very disappointing. But I am still trying to stay as long as I can" (Melanie, Group 3, page 4).

In this quote, Melanie details her internal debate about whether or not to leave the country. Hearing news coverage of Trump and his policies sometimes make her

want to leave the U.S., but she has decided to try and remain in the country for as long as she can.

While the participants all expressed fear and/or discomfort with the current state of America, most of the participants who I interviewed that were not citizens at the time were either planning on applying for papers or in the process of doing so. Daniel shared that since Trump became President, Daniel become more motivated to get his papers:

> "My life has changed 100% to the point where I'm trying to get my papers... I'm working on that. I'm hoping that one day I will really get documents in order to be free in this country" (Daniel, Group 3, page 3).

Kimberly, who had initially applied for papers under Obama and hoped to benefit from DAPA, has experienced a complete stop of her application for documentation since Trump took office:

> "My hope was to get in... you know how Obama had the uh, family thing? They don't want to separate families. I had a hope that I was getting into the, uh, into this case. And then I signed up, we started everything with a lawyer, but now, with this administration, everything stopped. Yeah. Because [the lawyer] told me like, two years, probably a year. And now everything, it gets stopped" (Kimberly, Group 1, page 11).

Despite this setback, Kimberly stated that she has hope that once Trump is no longer in office, she will be able to continue her application. There is possibility for the restoration of hope linked directly to who is sitting in the Oval Office.

These findings help illustrate the realities of the Trump administration's impacts on Long Island's Latinx communities. The individuals I spoke with were fearful of the present, but hopeful for the future. They felt pride and appreciation for America, but not for its President. Moreover, these findings demonstrate how despite Trump's rhetorical focus on the documented-undocumented binary,

documentation does not guarantee safety and comfort. Due to Trump's policies and rhetoric, Latinx individuals' existences are generally suspect, insecure, and precarious. From this point, we can apply the theoretical approach outlined in the literature review to this case study to demonstrate the processes of navigating white structures in suburbia, examining the boundaries of citizenship, and problematizing the American Dream.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this research, I have examined the ways in which Latinx immigrants living in the suburbs on Long Island are creating meaning, negotiating identities, and understanding America during and since Donald Trump took office. In doing so, I have centered the voices of my participants, illustrating their lived experiences through their own stories, opinions, and identities.

Reflecting on Findings Section

The People v. The Politician: Electoral Responsibility and the Political Climate

By compartmentalizing and creating distinctions between the 2016 election and America as a country, participants maintained their feelings of patriotism and respect for America while also criticizing components of it that are particularly threatening to their identities. The participants' perspectives and thoughts on the 2016 U.S. presidential election provided insight into how they viewed the way that this election fit into the xenophobic and racist pattern of historical politics in America. In framing white voters as "not responsible" for Trump's election, the participants created boundaries between the white American population and the outcomes of the elections. The participants' placement of blame onto a singular person denies the racist and xenophobic reality of U.S. society and the reality of the white population that voted for Trump.

In the imaginary of my participants, the American population was viewed as white and as voters, which obscures the reality that the U.S. voting electorate is ethnically and racially diverse. This view speaks to the participants' navigation of

identity within a white supremacist, racist, xenophobic social structure; other ethnic and racial minorities and their role in voting during the 2016 election are less important than whiteness. In imagining America and voters as "whiteness," the participants have to directly confront the elements of their identities that are antagonistic within white spaces and structures.

Rethinking Citizenship and Belonging

This category of findings examined identity as it relates to patriotism, race-ethnicity, and "Americanness." The participants' conversations shed light on their perceptions of America as a nation. I propose that the participants' discourse around this topic creates a new meaning of America that is both exclusionary and inclusive; there is a stark distinction between being American and being *part* of America. The process of deciding who gets to be labeled as American is racialized and exclusionary in its nature as the label of "American citizen" is reserved for white people. However, being part of America is not limited to only the white population.

The main condition for being part of America is patriotism and dedication in the country, which was the ethos expressed by all 15 participants. This conceptualization of America and Americanness turns the modern conception of citizenship on its head, as being a legal citizen or permanent resident does not necessarily make someone American and being part of America does not necessarily make one a citizen. It encourages us to examine both the history behind and implications of the ways we conceptualize citizenship as a nation.

The participants' patriotism was intertwined with their beliefs in and dedication to obtaining their idea of the American Dream. Though the specific reasons varied, all of the participants' pride was associated with perceptions of opportunity and the chance for a better life in America, which they believed would persist despite Trump. The participants remained hopeful for political change in the upcoming elections that would allow them to remain in the country, participate in the economy, eventually obtain documentation, and become eligible to vote.

My participants were reluctant to label themselves as American. Moreover, at no point during the focus groups did the participants refer to other Latinx groups from countries of origin in Central and South America. The conversations around defining who "gets to be" American were limited to comparisons between white people and the participants' own community. Previous research by Massey and Sánchez R. (2010) found that 62% of their Latinx immigrant participants rejected labeling themselves with an American identity (205). In attempting to understand why this is the case in both Massey and Sánchez R. and my own research, one can look to the impacts of racism from white people. Two of my participants explicitly stated that white American identity was intertwined with racism; many other participants implied a connection between white American identity and racist beliefs and behaviors. If a Latinx person is perceiving American identities as actively anti-Latinx, he or she will not identify with this label regardless of his or her actual legal status.

If one can possess formal legal documentation and still not feel American, as Naomi does, we must question the social and symbolic dimensions of citizenship that are excluded from its common definition. Mainstream conceptualizations of citizenship are limited to the legal recognition of one's membership in a country. If America wishes to truly live up to its perception of itself as a welcoming country for all immigrants, U.S. society must shift its understanding of citizenship to acknowledge and analyze the racialized nature of U.S. citizenship. When attempting to embrace immigrants who are new legal citizens and ensure that these individuals feel they are indeed American, U.S. society must expand its understanding of citizenship to recognize the social and symbolic dimensions as well as its legal and structural components.

Living Day-to-Day in Trump's America

My findings support previous research findings about undocumented individuals' experiences "living in the shadows" of society (De Genova 2002; Ellis & Chen 2013; Goffman 1986; Scranton et al. 2016). However, my project also expands on this by detailing the ways that Latinx individuals with temporary statuses or citizenship limit themselves; no longer is passing limited to undocumented individuals. Regardless of documentation status, country of origin, age, class, etc., participants managed their identities in interactions with public and private surveillance by whites on Long Island through avoidance. Participants were selective about which public locations they would go to, and many participants expressed that they consciously chose to leave their homes only when absolutely necessary. Participants' social control over themselves is

demonstrated through daily practices of regulating their own behavior depending on where they were and who they were with. For example, when eating as a group in a restaurant in a largely white neighborhood, the participants shared that they spoke English at their table. But, if they were eating in a restaurant in a largely Latinx neighborhood, they spoke Spanish at their table.

Trump's threatening language used to discuss the Latinx community and immigration shaped the participants' fear and perceptions of safety. While many of the participants expressed that they felt increased threats to their immigration statuses and believed Trump was deporting more "non-criminal" immigrants than Obama, statistics from the Department of Homeland Security indicate that this is not necessarily the case. This demonstrates how Trump's language and style of speaking about immigrants and its dissemination through the media acts as a form of systematic social control, functioning on various levels. This gap between perception and reality is significant, though, as it communicates the significant impact of Donald Trump. Although national statistics indicate that deportation of non-criminal immigrations decreased during Trump's first year in office, this fact is not as important to my participants' understanding of themselves and how they fit into the current state of U.S. society. Rather, perception is key in shaping participants' senses of safety and belonging. These findings cannot necessarily be extrapolated to other Latinx communities, particularly since the Latinx communities on Long Island are actively surveilled and are victims of racialized policing practices but are important nonetheless.

Long Island's history of racial segregation and white control over space has entered a new phase of domination under the Trump administration. My participants, and likely other ethno-racial minority communities on Long Island, are constantly forced to negotiate and navigate these new forms of power relations. The participants expressed that racism and discrimination by white Americans on Long Island noticeably became more overt after Trump's election. Reflections on participants' interactions with white non-Latinx American citizens provide insight into the expansion of unofficial policing as well as changes in overt racism and discrimination on the Island. Participants recalled interactions since Trump was elected in which white non-Latinx citizens questioned their citizenship statuses, threatened to call ICE, and asserted power over the participants and their communities.

In this new phase of domination enabled by the Trump administration, white people on Long Island exert control over Latinx immigrants by constructing and imposing a particular meaning of social citizenship. This control is enacted through racism, discrimination, and anti-Latinx behavior by whites. Regardless of participants' formal documentation statuses, they are deprived of social citizenship and the power that accompanies it through these interactions with white citizens in public space (Selod 2015:82). This is likely fueled by a moral panic partially stemming from Trump's inflammatory language surrounding immigration restriction. Yet, it is a part of the fabric of white domination in the suburbs of Long Island that was historically created to bolster and shelter the

white middle class and segregate black, Latinx, and Asian communities. The Trump administration simply marks a new era of these practices.

Making the American Dream "Great" Again: The Future

In framing and understanding the American Dream in this context, we must view it as a myth for non-white individuals, particularly immigrants. The American Dream is a false idea that is intertwined with the exclusive nature of U.S. social citizenship, which is "for whites only." Along this line of thinking, if suburbanization and entry into the middle class are used as proxies for achieving the American Dream, this dream can be unattainable for Latinx immigrants, who will likely encounter segmented assimilation and stagnancy in their attempts for economic and social mobility (Portes & Zhou 1993). If individuals, such as my participants, are living in white spaces that exclude people of color through formal and informal housing and economic discrimination practices, this proxy for success in reaching the American Dream is unattainable as these spaces set them up to fail to reach these goals. When non-white immigrants are living under hegemonic white structures, it is difficult to make strides towards these markers of American Dream success.

The political, social, and economic landscape of Long Island contributes to the unattainability of middle-class status of the American Dream and leads to segmented assimilation for ethno-racial minorities. As a suburban region with a history of racism and classism that continues to persist, Long Island is rife with structural and systematic racism that prevent social and economic mobility for immigrants. One need not look further than the relationship between geography

and economic opportunity to understand this phenomenon. All of the participants that I interviewed either worked directly for white families or provided services to populations in largely white neighborhoods. The participants live in an area with a dense population of Latinx/Hispanic individuals, and serve the white communities around them in Nassau and Suffolk Counties; the participants' economic livelihoods result from low-skill, low-pay jobs in these white communities. Yet, while they may work in the white towns and communities surrounding their town, their pay and the statuses of their jobs prevents the accumulation of capital that could eventually lead them to move to the neighborhoods they work in.

New immigrants who come to the United States buy into this false American Dream, eventually realizing that their lives can become a nightmare depending on who holds office. With white conservatives currently in power and resultant policies and rhetoric that actively target many immigrants of color, my participants realized that in many ways, the American Dream as they had originally defined it was impossible to attain, at least for now. Stemming from the ideas set forth by my participants, I present a new idea that I call "the Trumpian American Dream." The Trumpian American Dream is being "allowed" to stay in the U.S. and avoiding deportation, as well as hoping and praying for a change in the immigration policies and perspectives of the next presidential administration. The Trumpian American Dream is temporal, short term, stagnant – stay safe and stay in America – and is maintained through faith in God and reliance on the church community. It encourages us to interrogate the American

Dream as we know it, allowing us to pick apart the nuances and fragility of this idea. So, the American Dream endures, but has a new definition, form, and understanding. This framing of the American Dream demonstrates the construction of this phenomenon, as well as its context-dependent nature.

Connecting Ideas and Moving Forward

Brokered Boundaries (2010) concludes with the proposal that "The United States stands at a historical crossroads with respect to Latin American immigration" (Massey & Sánchez R. 245). This is even more true now, in 2018, as we anticipate nearly three more years of the Trump presidency and the 2020 presidential election.

The picture of day-to-day life created by my participants' descriptions is one that provides insight into the dynamics of Latinx communities in white suburbia and illustrates the important experiences, thoughts, and opinions of my participants. While the realities of this political moment may be difficult, it presents ongoing opportunities for academic research and community engagement. My project could be expanded upon in the future in a variety of ways. For example, how are the experiences of Latinx immigrants different in urban spaces, specifically sanctuary cities during this political moment? Though a variety of examinations of urban Latinx communities exist (Longazel 2013; Román 2013; Wilson et al. 2012). An examination such as this would likely uncover interested differences regarding policing practices, economic opportunities, and more. One could compare day-to-day life for Latinx

immigrants from different countries of origin or those of different races to examine differences. While these suggestions only begin to scratch the surface of understanding and telling this story from a sociological viewpoint, this project provides important insight into the suburban lives of Latinx immigrants under the Trump administration.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Pseudonym ____

Gender M / F

Age: ________

Country of Origin: _______

--

Interview Date ____________________________

Interview Location:

City/Town ____________________________________

Interviewer Script:

Thank you for participating in my study. I appreciate you taking the time out of your day to speak with me.

This interview asks you to reflect on your experience as an immigrant in the United States since the 2016 presidential election of Donald Trump. I want to learn more about your life, how the election has affected you and your identities, and your views of America.

I want to assure you that your responses are confidential. Any information that identifies you will not be linked to this recording to interview. I will not share the information with anyone.

Thank you for agreeing to participate.

[If in group interview] Additionally, I want to remind you that we cannot control the actions of others once they leave this group. I encourage you to share your opinions and thoughts, but if you are concerned with others in the room knowing this information, please do not disclose it.

Migration History
I will start with some questions about you and your immigration history.

1. Please tell me about yourself and how you arrived in the United States. Where were you born, how did you get here, etc.?
2. Where did you live before coming here?
3. How old are you now?
4. How old were you when you first came to the U.S.?
    a. What year was that?
5. Why did you decide to come to the United States?
6. Tell me a bit about the process of your migration.
    a. When did you decide that you wanted to come to the U.S.?
    b. Did anyone help you get here?
    c. Did you come alone?
    d. Did you have to pay money to get here?
        i. How much?
        ii. To whom?
7. What made you decide to come to Long Island?

Occupation/Family

I'm going to ask you some questions about your current and past jobs.

8. If employed, what is your occupation currently in America?
    a. What do you like and dislike about this job?
9. Have you ever been treated a certain way at work because of your heritage/immigration status?
    a. How did this make you feel?
    b. Have you felt a change in treatment since the 2016 election of President Donald Trump?
10. Do you have children?
    a. Have you changed the way you've raised your children since the election?
    b. What is your plan for the future involving your children?

Community/Living Situation/Social Network

I have some questions about the community you live in.

11. Are there many people who speak Spanish in your community?
12. Are you comfortable speaking Spanish in your city/town?
13. How was Donald Trump's presidential campaign discussed in your community?
14. Has your community changed since the 2016 presidential election?
    a. If so, how?

Do you wish to continue this interview?

Identities
I am going to ask a few questions about your identities, such as religion, race, etc.

15. How did you define yourself in terms of race, skin color, or ethnicity in HOME COUNTRY?
16. Do you think skin color is important in the U.S.?
    a. Did your definition of yourself change once you came to America?
    b. What do you think Americans think you are in terms of race and ethnicity?
17. How have your religious practices and beliefs changed since coming to America?
18. Have you ever been discriminated against here?
    a. What was it like?
    b. How did this make you feel?
    c. Has the discrimination you experience changed since President Trump came into power?

2016 Presidential Election
Now, I would like to ask you about your experience during and since the 2016 presidential election.

19. How did you feel in the months leading up to the 2016 election?
20. Are you aware of the comments made by President Trump prior to his election about Latin American immigrant communities?
    a. How did they make you feel?
    b. How were these incidents discussed in your community?

21. Did you participate in any protests or rallies surrounding any of the election candidates?
    a. If so, what motivated you?
22. Did you actively follow the news during the election season?
    a. What news sources did you use?
23. What has changed in the U.S. since you first came here?
24. Do you think that Latin American immigrants have changed the way they think about themselves since the election?
25. Did you feel safe in America before the election?
    a. What about after?
    b. Has your perceived safety influenced your plans for the future?
26. Do you think that the 2016 election has changed the way other Americans treat you or view you? How? Why?
27. Did you feel welcome when you first came to America?
    a. Do you currently (still) feel welcome? Why or why not?
28. Describe your experiences with government officials prior to the election (ie: police officers).
29. How has your life on Long Island changed since Trump's election?
30. In what ways has your life not changed since the election?
31. How have you felt the real-life implications of Donald Trump's actions and policies?
32. How would you describe the state of American in the world today?
    a. Do you feel positively or negatively about America? Why?
33. Have your interactions with government officials changed since the election? How?
34. What are your fears for the future?
35. Do you intend to stay in the U.S.?
36. Are you proud to live in America, even under Donald Trump's presidency?

37. Great, thank you so much for your time. I like to conclude an interview by asking: is anything else I haven't asked you that you think is important or want people to know about?

Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form

A copy of this form was given to each participant in Spanish prior to their decision to participate in the research.

Informed Consent Form

Please consider this information carefully before deciding whether or not to participate in this research.

Purpose of the research:
You are invited to take part in a research study investigating the experiences of Latin American immigrants living in America under Donald Trump's presidency, including how they understand their identities and how they felt after the 2016 presidential election. The main goals of this study are to understand participants' migration histories, explore participants' identities in American society, and learn about their hopes and fears for the future.

Time required:
Participation will take approximately 1 hour to 1.5 hours.

What you will do in this research:
I will meet you at St. Hugh's church to interview you. You will either participate in an individual interview or a small group interview – it is up to you. If you choose to participate in a small group interview, the group will include no more than 5 individuals. I will ask that you think about your experience as an immigrant to the United States and what it means to have this identity in a country that is run by Donald Trump. You will be asked to discuss your immigration history and your feelings surrounding the current state of America. With your permission, I will record this interview so that I can transcribe and learn from your responses. The purpose of transcription is to ensure that I can accurately recall your words and stories.

Note: If you choose not to permit recording of the interview, I am still interested in hearing about your experiences, though I may be unable to fully remember or understand the details of your experiences. If you do not wish to permit recording, then the interview will be conducted with pen and paper note taking without any audio recording.

Your participant rights:

a. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled
b. You are free to ask questions at any time.
c. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

Reasonably foreseeable risks:
There are no physical or economic risks involved with participating in this study. You may, however, experience emotional or social stress due to the sensitivity of the issues we are discussing. Please note that there will be a translator present during the interviews. The translator will be a member of the church community and has signed a confidentiality agreement. There is the potential for loss of your own confidentiality by participating in this study; however, every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality of your information. You may refuse to answer any of the questions at any time. You may also take a break at any time during the study. You may stop your participation at any time during or after the study without consequence.

Benefit:
There is no direct benefit to you from being a participant in this study. However, I hope that your participation will give you the opportunity to talk about your experiences as an immigrant to America who is living under the Trump presidency and share your stories.

Compensation:
There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Protecting your identity and confidentiality:
I promise that I will protect your identity to the best of my ability. Please note that if you choose to participate in a small group interview, the other individuals in your group will hear the information you disclose. If you are concerned about others knowing this information, please do not disclose it. The recording of this interview will be stored on my password-protected file and shared with no one except for myself and my research advisor. After the project, the recordings will be destroyed. I may use information from the interview to write my senior thesis paper, but I will never use your real name or any personal identifiers, nor will I note the name of your church or town in any reports, presentations, or publications. I will take every step possible to avoid your identification.

Contact:

a. If you have any questions about this research, you should contact Sophie Pearlman at sophie.pearlman@tufts.edu.
b. For questions about your rights, concerns, suggestions, complaints, or research-related harm, please contact the Institutional Review Board: Social, Behavioral, and Educational Research, 20 Professors Row Medford MA 02155. Phone: (617) 627-3417 Email: sber@tufts.edu

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