

PROCESSES OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION IN EAST SOMERVILLE

by

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others in our class towards it. The work we have produced will ultimately be the most thorough and complete because it was so dynamic and collaborative an initiative.

In conclusion, I want to thank Deborah Pacini Hernandez for driving this research project and pushing each of us out of our comfort zones. Her flexible and open encouragement allowed our fieldwork to flourish under our own directions and inspirations. The things I have learned this semester have caused me to look more closely at the complexity of each city, neighborhood, block and business.

PREFACE

Before beginning my analysis, it seems important to explain my role as the subjective researcher for this project. I am an undergraduate student at Tufts University majoring in Anthropology and minoring in Child Development. I am a white woman, English-speaking with some proficiency in Spanish, American, twenty years old. It is impossible to tell concretely how my presence as a woman, as a native-born American, as white, and as a college student has affected the content of the stories that have been shared with me or the style of the interactions I have had, but it is suffice to say that they have. It is as simple as the need for a translator, inhibiting both parties' abilities to have a direct back-and-forth conversation, that changes the style of an interview or as complex as the associations with my being a woman or a native-born American.

It is also clear that my particular lens, politically left raised by a feminist physician mother and a Marxist-economist musician father of Indian descent and visage, is the filter through which I have processed the information I gathered this semester. I do

not mean to suggest that this de-validates my research or that I sought out what I already believed to be true. I simply wish to express that we each have a lens through which we intake information so I share with you mine in order that you can further contextualize my findings.

It is also important to note the constraints of the research we have conducted this semester in Urban Borderlands. While we have done some fifty interviews between the whole of us in the Urban Borderlands course, I myself have only conducted six and have only had four months to compile research. While certain restaurant owners that we have spoken with may air grievances about Somerville city government or community organizations in their neighborhood, this cannot be taken as a representative voice for the whole population of immigrant-owned businesses.

Within these constraints and within the frameworks of each of our perspectives, our research has been compiled to the best of our ability and presented in a way we believe closely aligns with the truths we have been told by our numbered narrators.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper I will explore processes of inclusion and exclusion in East Somerville. I have found that these processes occur both intentionally and unintentionally, though my main focus will be on unintentional acts of exclusion. I have explored these happenings from three different levels of experience – personal, community organizational, and governmental. How have individuals in East Somerville formed their communities; who is included in these communities; and under what

constraints have they formed? How have community organizations worked to include or exclude immigrant owned businesses in East Somerville? How have governmental initiatives included or excluded immigrants in East Somerville?

I will explore these queries throughout this paper by offering a selection of ideas and also a new host of questions. I will begin with an overview of methodology and a history of Somerville and immigration. This will include the large-scale picture of immigration policy in the United States in order to contextualize the intimate community of Somerville within a broader system. I will then explore the specific traits of the East Somerville neighborhood that make it a complex and eclectic space for the confluence of processes of inclusion and exclusion. This will include a brief photo essay. Finally, I will delve into each of three levels of experience, personal, community organizational, and governmental, and their impacts on and relationships with the immigrant restaurant owner in East Somerville. Within these chapters I will include an analysis of American stories of fear and explore the nature and prevalence of institutionalized prejudices. I will conclude with anecdotes of kindness and empowerment.

In this paper I will forward three central ideas. The first is that there appears to be a disconnect between the services that city government and community organizations believe that they are providing and the understanding that immigrant restaurant owners seem to have of these same initiatives. The second is that there appears to be a lack of collective immigrant voice that in many ways voids the community of a space for dialogue that might help to reduce this disconnect. This apparent voiceless-ness happens on two fronts. Foreign-born residents seem to have very little presence as directors or board members for community organizations and likewise a small presence in city

government. There also seems to be a general lack of collective grassroots voice come out of immigrant communities even over shared grievances like the unavailability of liquor licenses or parking spaces. Finally, I will make the central argument that the system in the United States is set up in such a way that resources tend to flow along an institutionalized power gradient. Initiatives that are targeted towards the total population, but without specific provisions for impacting immigrant groups, may not positively benefit immigrants or immigrant-owned businesses in East Somerville and ultimately may widen the resource distribution gap. I argue that the nature of our system decrees that most initiatives that do not actively empower immigrants, or any group that has not been systemically privileged, have the potential to passively dis-empower them.

METHODOLOGY

Between the months of September and December 2011, my classmates and I have been conducting research about immigrant-owned restaurants in Somerville, Massachusetts. Our research is based on interviews and, to a certain extent, participant observation. Before the start of the semester each student in class got their CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) certification, a brief online class that certified us to work with “human subjects.”

I have been focusing my research on East Somerville and throughout the semester have spoken to a number of restaurants in the area. It is always challenging to set up an interview. It is hard to catch the restaurant owner when they are in the store and can be

even more difficult to find a time when they have a half an hour to an hour free to sit down and talk.

Each interview I conducted this semester was about thirty minutes long. In two interviews I needed translators to help with Portuguese and one interview was conducted mostly Spanish. Before each interview I prepared a list of questions that related to my research topic and that connected specifically to the individual I was interviewing. I recorded the interviews and typed up a transcript and an in depth analytical report for each. Over the semester I interviewed restaurant owners Jacilene Silva of Pastelaria Victoria Broadway, Jose Mario Morales of El Caffeten Salvadoreno, and Gladimir Pacheco of the Rodizio Brazilian Steakhouse. I also interviewed former Welcome Project employee and current Shape Up Somerville coordinator Rachael Plitch and Adam Duchesneau and Sarah Spicer of the Somerville city government Planning and Zoning department.

As previously mentioned, Urban Borderlands partnered with the non-profit community organization the Welcome Project. A central part of our process this year, and an important element of our ability to “give back” to the community in which we have been working, is our participation in the Welcome Project’s YUM blog, “A Taste of Immigrant City.” Each of us wrote a food blog for at least two of the restaurants we visited this semester. Through this work we aim to increase the restaurant’s visibility and, for many restaurants, who largely advertise on the radio or by word-of-mouth, help restaurants to expand into new venues of promotion if they are interested.

THE HISTORY OF SOMERVILLE AND THE BIRTH OF AN “IMMIGRANT CITY”

Within the Context of National US Immigration Policy

Somerville has been called an “immigrant city,” most notably in the Welcome Project’s YUM blog, because it has truly been a city of immigrants since its birth. Warren Goldstein-Gelb, the director of the Welcome Project explains that one of their initiatives, called “Immigrant City: Then and Now,” aims to look at the differences between generations of immigrants. In the past, this “immigrant city” was composed of Italian and Irish immigrants and more recently has become layered with immigrants from Latin America (Williams, interview with Goldstein-Gelb, 2011). Somerville was founded by British settlers, at times forgotten to be immigrant themselves, on land ceded to them in exchange for peace by a female American Indian chief (Smith 2, 2011). The city of Somerville, as defined today, was established in 1842 (population 1,103) (Smith 2, 2011).

Somerville has a long history of immigration, movement and growth. By the early 1900s, Somerville’s rapid industrialization and booming railroad industry had attracted waves of immigrants, primarily from Canada, the United Kingdom, and Ireland who then made up 28% of the overall population (Smith 3, 2011). Beginning in the 1930s, the earliest immigrants to Somerville were joined by a wave of Italians (Smith 3, 2011). Somerville was a particularly attractive destination for immigrants because of the availability of work in its flourishing industrial sector (Chatterjee, interview with Spicer, 2011). A number of Latin Americans, largely from the Caribbean, began to populate the Boston Area in the 1950s and 1960s followed by an increasing number of Central Americans in the 1970s and 1980s (Smith 4, 2011). In 1987 Somerville was declared a

Sanctuary City whose “2,000 to 4,000 illegal immigrants... were entitled to some of the same basic rights and privileges as regular city residents.” (Nicholson et al 9, 2004). This resolution included a stipulation that residents had no obligation to report un-documented statuses and that immigration status was not to be a basis for discrimination (Nicholson et al 9, 2004). Largely because of this, Somerville was an attractive city for the influx of Latin American immigrants that came in the 1960s and 1970s. This influx, which changed the population dynamic of Somerville, was caused by a selection of large historical events. The rapid increase in the number of immigrants from Latin America that appeared in the Somerville area had in large part to do with two central national/global processes.

Until 1965, the US government worked to entirely and systematically prevent non-European immigrants from entering the United States. The U.S. department of State explains the nature of their Immigration Act of 1924, “In all of its parts the most basic purpose of the Immigration Act of 1924 was to preserve the ideal of American homogeneity” (U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian). This act aimed to maintain American homogeneity by setting an immigration quota that offered a number of visas equal to 2% of the total population of each nationality already living in the United States. This act increased the number of visas available to immigrants coming from England and areas in Western Europe while effectively excluding the Global South (U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian). In fact, the Immigration Act of 1924 initially explicitly prevented the entry of immigrants from almost the entirety of Asia (U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian). This act was not lifted until the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 abolished the immigration quota system (U.S.

Department of State, Office of the Historian). This allowed for an increase in the legal flow of immigrants from Latin America into the United States. Although the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was a major, if late in coming, step forward, the policies regarding immigration that the US government has enacted since then have been largely exclusionary and even overtly hostile (for an overview of US immigration policy following the 1965 Act see Table 1). Marvia Landaverdes, an immigrant and the Youth Programs Coordinator at the Welcome Project, explains how discriminatory immigrant policies passed in some southern states in the US affect her even here in East Somerville “I felt free before, but now, you know, I really don’t know. And I have documents, and I speak English” (Carlisle, 2010).

Table 1: History of US Immigration Policy beginning in the 1980s, in Brief (Chavez 7-9, 2008)

Year	Name of Legislation	Description
1986	Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986	Stipulated consequences for employers who hired undocumented immigrants; established an amnesty program for over a million undocumented immigrants.
1990	The Immigration Act of 1990	Increased the number of legal immigrants allowed into the United States from 500,000 to 700,000.
1996	The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act	Toughened requirements for un-documented immigrants to gain legal documentation; made accessibility to public benefits more difficult for legal immigrants; expanded the number of deportable offenses; increased border enforcement.

2005	Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act (passed through the House of Representatives but was not ultimately signed into law)	Aimed to increase penalties for hiring undocumented immigrants, criminalize those who assisted illegal immigrants, and make living in the country as an undocumented immigrant a felony.
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While it is beyond the breadth of this paper to delve into specifics, it is necessary to state that a second process that contributed to the marked increase of Latin American immigrants in the 1970s and accelerating into the 1980s was the enormous civil unrest that spread throughout Central America. In the 1970s leftist leaders came into power throughout Central America only to be violently overthrown by US-backed military coups (Smith 5, 2011). Under the mental construct of the “domino theory,” an anti-communism Cold War rhetoric, the US helped fuel many of the military regimes that threw Central America into a state of emergency. Refugees flooded the Boston area from Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala (Smith 5, 2011). This history is a complicated and conflicted one and clearly warrants an extended analysis far deeper than that presented here. For now, we can keep this brief, contextual history in mind as we continue to openly explore and challenge the processes of inclusion and exclusion that have occurred on a national scale and locally in Somerville.

In conclusion, there has been a long and complex history of immigration in the United States and in the more nuclear setting of Somerville. It is clear from the description of the Immigration Act of 1924 and the policies laid out in Table 1, that the United States has created, in many ways, an atmosphere of hostility towards immigrants, both documented and undocumented. It is also clear that the United States has had an

enormous impact on the conditions that have caused individuals, in this case from Central America, to flee their own nations for refuge in the US. These national and global processes, while they seem distant, have an enormous impact on the behaviors, realities, fears and hopes of every state, city and community and each individual within it.

In the remainder of this paper, I will explore how these processes of exclusion and inclusion, which occur on a global and national scale, have come to play in the daily, lived experiences of immigrant restaurant owners, governmental workers, and community organizers in East Somerville.

EAST SOMERVILLE

This paper will focus on those living and working in East Somerville. East Somerville is a neighborhood separate from the rest of Somerville for a variety of reasons. East Somerville is connected to the rest of Boston through Sullivan Station on the Orange Line but it is spatially isolated by the rushing McGrath Highway. McGrath intersects Broadway directly before the entrance to East Somerville and requires walkers to cross six lanes of highway traffic. McGrath and I-93 essentially encircle East Somerville.

East Somerville also has an old history of being socially isolated. Many consider the neighborhood to be unsafe, which dates back to middle class anxieties over the working class. Today, many of the anxieties seem to center around the high concentration of immigrants in the area and notorious cases of violence or theft or accusations of gang activity. A blogger on Yelp looking to purchase property near Boston asks fellow

internet-browsers about the safety of East Somerville. A real estate agent responds to her query and replies, “You know, I am a real estate agent and.... East Somerville is the one part of this city I wouldn’t live in” (Yelp, Talk Somerville). Data does show that East Somerville has a higher crime rate than certain parts in West Somerville, although crime is also clustered around Davis Square (Trulia, 2011). We can also see that compared to the average in the United States (278.6/100,000), East Somerville has a lower crime rate (242.1/100,000) (City-Data, 2009). If we expand our lens we see that Cambridge, including areas around Harvard, has a similarly concentrated crime rate to East Somerville (for graphs, see Appendix 1) (Trulia, 2011). Each of these neighborhoods are community centers easily accessible by the subway system. It seems however, as will be explored further in the paper, that there are levels of social dynamic contributing to the heightened sense of fear focused on East Somerville.

Economic and demographic statistical realities also show distinctions between other parts of Somerville and East Somerville. Residents in East Somerville earn on average \$12,000 less per year than those in the rest of Somerville. About 1/3 of all residents in East Somerville are reported to not have high school degrees. 1/3 of the total Somerville population was not born in the United States; in East Somerville, nearly 1/2 of all residents were not born in this country (City-Data, 2011). Finally, immigrant-owned businesses make up 42% of the businesses on Broadway Avenue in East Somerville (McCabe Enterprises for East Somerville Main Streets, 2010).

In the following section we will look into East Somerville as if we were taking a walk down Broadway Avenue. It is important to keep the details of what we notice in

mind as we continue through the paper and always to remember that these are real and fluidly complex communities.

WELCOME TO EAST SOMERVILLE A Photo Essay

In this section, I aim to offer the visual sensations of a walk along Broadway into East Somerville. What's new and different about this area? What does it mean to have to cross McGrath Highway to enter your own neighborhood? What does it mean to always see the towers and turbines of an industrial park in the distance? Who is walking down the street or waiting for the bus? What businesses are here and what services are offered? Who is living and working in East Somerville?



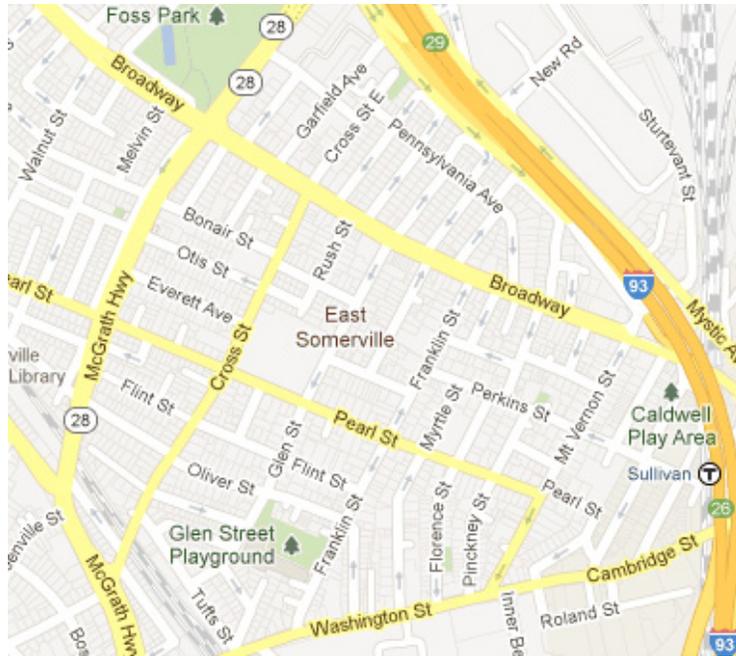
A street sign reads "Broadway Ave." Walking East along Broadway brings you first through Ball Square with the renowned breakfast-place, Sound Bytes. Few Somerville residents and even fewer students from Tufts University make it past this point. If you continue you will see Magoun Square, an under-represented community that intersects Broadway, and then the infamous Winter Hill neighborhood (home to predominantly Irish Winter Hill Gang later taken over by Whitey Bulger).



As you are passing through the edge of the Winter Hill neighborhood and nearing East Somerville, you will see the tips of the industrial plants straddling East Somerville and Charlestown.



You press on and finally you find yourself at the rushing McGrath Highway and on the other side of it you see East Somerville. The “Welcome to East Somerville” sign is directly across the street, behind the black SUV, although you cannot actually see it from here because it is hidden by a white sign indicating a median. A biker crosses the street in the sidewalk and if you stay to watch you will see the young and old waiting to scurry across the highway before the accelerating traffic is given a green light.

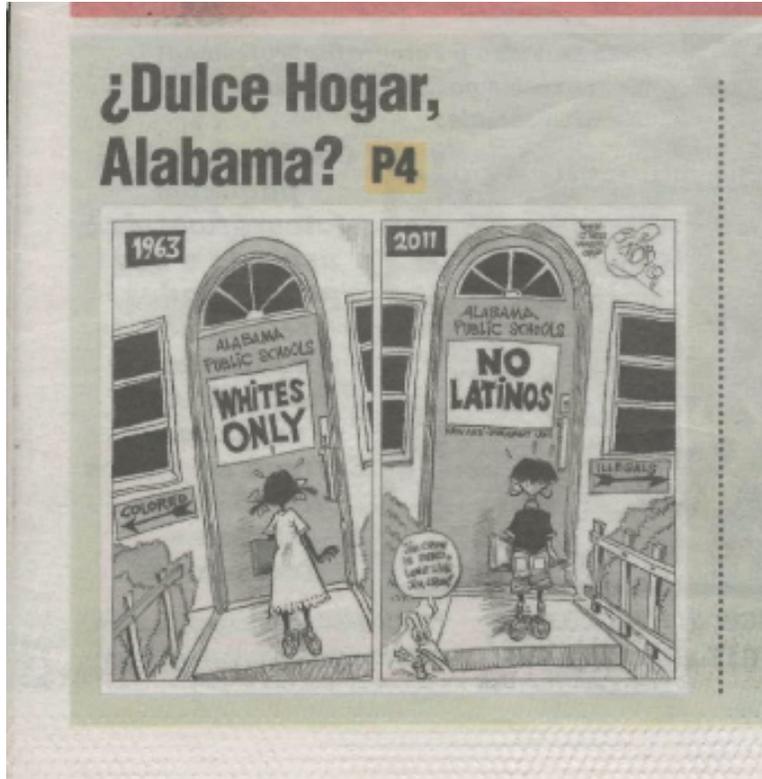


If you withdraw momentarily from your walk to imagine a bird's eye view, you can get a better sense of the space you are walking in. Take note of this map of East Somerville. The above image was of the intersection of McGrath Highway and Broadway Avenue, near Foss Park, and directly before the entrance into East Somerville. As you look at the map, consider both McGrath and I-93's relationship to East Somerville.



Returning to the physical space, further down East Broadway Avenue, a woman and child stand next to a young boy and an older man while they all wait for the bus. The store behind them is battened down and locked.

LA SEMANA, 10/06/11, a newspaper I picked up at El Montecristo



Along the way, you duck into El Monteristo (not pictured here) to have a traditional Salvadorian pupusa. Inside you pick up a newspaper to read while you eat. This clip is from La Semana, a Spanish Newspaper that was available to read in each restaurant I visited. The heading says “Dulce Hogar, Alabama?” (Sweet Home, Alabama?) and in the article it refers to immigration policy in the South. But the comic has serious wider implications. Below the “NO LATINOS” sign on the door, it says, “New Anti-Immigrant Laws” and a sign points to the right that says “ILLEGALS.” A crow in the corner says, “Jim Crow is dead, long live Jim Crow!” When you see this comic and you consider that it might be one of the first things this neighborhood sees when they picks up their local newspaper, do you wonder if the sentiment expressed in it is true? Anti-immigrant legislation appears to make it feel true in Alabama. Is it true in the United States more generally? Are there elements of truth to it even in East Somerville?



Continuing down Broadway, you will find a number of shops, markets and restaurants. East Somerville has a bustling business space, with a selection of interesting businesses that illuminate the city's population distribution. As previously mentioned, immigrant-owned businesses account for 42% of the businesses on Broadway Ave in East Somerville and immigrants make up nearly half of its residents. Businesses along Broadway reflect and cater to this reality (McCabe Enterprises for East Somerville Main Streets, 2011). Above, on the right, you will see a TPS ("TPS Aqui" - Temporary Protected Status, Here) office.

TPS is a temporary status granted to refugees who cannot safely return to their native countries because of "on-going armed conflict, an environmental disaster or epidemic, or other extraordinary or temporary conditions." This status allows for legal residence in the United States and grants a working permit to individuals who qualify. Immigrants from El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras, among others, could potentially qualify for TPS (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services). Its presence on the street is noticeable because it reflects the needs of some of the population living in the East Somerville area.

So we know the demographics of the population and we see that they are reflected in the use of space in East Somerville. But who is living and working in these neighborhoods?

OUR NARRATORS: RESTAURANT OWNERS IN THE EAST SOMERVILLE
NEIGHBORHOOD



To the right of the young boys you will see La Pastelaria Victoria Broadway, a Brazilian restaurant managed by Jacilene Silva.

JACILENE SILVA, La Pastelaria Victoria Broadway

Jacilene was born in São Paulo Brazil in 1980. She moved to the United States in November of 2007, after leaving Brazil and briefly living in Portugal. She was “twenty six or twenty seven”. She came to the States with her son who was born in Portugal and nine months old at the time of their move. She came because her parents (her father is a pastor) were already living here. Her two sisters also live here, her brother lives in Portugal, and she has some family (cousins and a grandfather) still living in Brazil. She initially moved to Florida but could not find work there and when the owner of La Pastelaria, who was a friend of her father’s, offered her work in his restaurant in Somerville Massachusetts, she accepted.

In Brazil Jacilene worked as a medical secretary and in Portugal she worked as a waitress and chef. Since beginning work at La Pastelaria, Jacilene has been promoted to manager and runs the restaurant for the owner who still lives in Florida. She was promoted because, she explains, she’s “been here for a long time and he [the owner] likes how she works.” She manages administrative tasks, cooking and maintenance, and customer service while the owner is away.



A little further down Broadway you will come across the Rodizio Brazilian Steakhouse, above, with a green awning. It has both a Brazilian and an American flag hanging in the front window. Gladimir Pacheco (right) is the owner.

GLADIMIR PACHECO, Rodizio Brazilian Steakhouse

Gladimir Pacheco was born in the south of Brazil and moved to Somerville, Massachusetts five years ago. He chose Somerville because he had a cousin with American citizenship who lived in the area. He came by himself first and then brought his wife and oldest daughter with him. He has two other children, in their late twenties/early thirties, still living in Brazil. Gladimir now lives in Malden, which is about a twenty minutes drive from the Brazilian Rodizio Steakhouse.

Gladimir worked in Brazil as a salesman. He sold cosmetics and dietary and nutritional supplements. When he came to the United States he initially worked in construction, then as a driver, and finally was hired as the restaurant manager of Rodizio. When the owner of the restaurant moved to Boston to manage another restaurant he had there, Gladimir bought the Rodizio Brazilian Steakhouse. They have not changed the menu since the previous owner but his wife now does all of the cooking. When asked how he got into the food business after being a salesman in Brazil, Gladimir simply said "it happened."



Finally, if you take a left off of Broadway and walk through the neighborhoods to Mystic Avenue, you will find El Caffeten Salvadoreno. El Caffeten looks out onto I-93.



Jose Mario Morales, the owner of El Caffeten Salvadoreno is sitting inside the restaurant with the landlord of the property, an Irish immigrant and Mario's good friend of twenty years. They watch a telenovela together on TV, although the landlord does not speak Spanish.

Jose Mario Morales is the owner of El Caffeten Salvadoreno. He was born in San Vicente, El Salvador in 1964. He came to the United States when he was twenty-three years old with his wife and his three daughters. All of his sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins still live at home in El Salvador. Before Mario came to the United States he worked for a government-run telephone company. When he came to the US he moved first to California, where he worked in a restaurant, before finally settling in Somerville.

When asked why he picked Somerville, Mario simply explained that oh, well, here he came and now he is not leaving.

Mario decided to open a restaurant in Somerville because, he explained, he realized that there were many people in the area who wanted Salvadorian food but had nowhere to go. His wife is an excellent cook so in 1993 they decided to open a restaurant. Before they found a location for El Caffeten Salvadoreno the Morales family ran their restaurant out of the kitchen of their house.

Thus far we've seen the history of Somerville and U.S. immigration policy.

We've explored the population and economic trends in East Somerville. A photo essay gave us a visual sense of the neighborhood and concluded with a brief introduction to the complex lives of our narrators. The striking comic, the images of highways, the stories of immigrant business owners, and the statistical economic and demographic realities in East Somerville call into question the processes of inclusion and exclusion experienced in the daily lives of restaurant owners in this neighborhood. How have immigrants in East Somerville been included in or excluded from interpersonal communities? From community organizations in Somerville? By the policies and initiatives of the Somerville city government? The remainder of the paper will present an exploration of these questions and few, if any, definitive answers.

PERSONAL COMMUNITY FORMATION: MARIO, GLADIMIR, AND JACILENE

Each of the narrators I interviewed had different stories to tell about their most important personal communities. Mario, the owner of El Caffeten Salvadoreno, explained that he had formed a community in the space of his restaurant. He said that people came to his restaurant from everywhere: Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Venezuela, Columbia and Puerto Rico. He also explained that he knew most of the

immigrant-owned businesses in the area and felt accepted by the native-born American community as well, “*todo el mundo me conocen,*” (everyone knows me) he said. On a return visit to El Caffeten Salvadoreno, I met Mario’s restaurant’s landlord, an Irish immigrant. Mario and the landlord were watching a Spanish telenovela even though the landlord does not speak Spanish. Mario, on the other hand, speaks only limited English but he explained that he and the landlord had been friends since he opened the restaurant, for about twenty years. For Mario, personal community seemed to center in a major way around his restaurant. In the evenings locals gather, have dinner and watch a show on the TV. The woman who has been working as a waitress, one of four employees and one of the two who is not in Mario’s immediate family, sits with the diners and watches the show. Mario’s relationship with his landlord and with his community shows an ability to bridge barriers, like a language divide, and the importance of a restaurant as a social space for Mario and those who live around him.

Gladimir, the owner of the Rodizio Brazilian Steakhouse, has a slightly different relationship with his restaurant and his community. For Gladimir, it appeared that his community was less centralized around his restaurant. However, unlike Mario who has lived in the United States since 1987 and has been running his restaurant since 1993, Gladimir has only lived in Massachusetts for five years. While Mario knew most restaurants in the community, Gladimir was only vaguely familiar with them. One of Gladimir’s central aims was procuring a liquor license, which he believed would draw significantly more Americans to his restaurant and allow him to achieve his goals of expanding Rodizio. When I asked Mario about where he hoped to go with his restaurant in the future, on the other hand, he said he eventually wanted to sell it. “*Descansar un*

poco”, rest a little. For Mario, the restaurant was a central space for community. For Gladimir, the restaurant was more centrally a business.

Gladimir and I also talked about Rodizio’s customer base and Gladimir’s relationship with the Brazilian, native-born American, and other Latin American communities around him. When asked about the English-speaking American customers who come through his shop, Gladimir said that they were good customers and that they really enjoyed the Brazilian food. He said his customers were Brazilian, “Spanish”, American and Haitian. He explained that he did not know most of his customers by name but that many of them came through almost every day so he recognized them. Another interesting point to note is Gladimir’s word choice in identifying non-Brazilian Latin Americans as “Spanish.” Mario, of course, does not identify as “Spanish” but Salvadorian. Gladimir’s word choice suggested to me that the Spanish-Portuguese language barrier might cause some fragmentation among immigrant-owned businesses in East Somerville. The atomization of certain immigrant groups and by extension many of the immigrant-owned restaurants in East Somerville, is an important issue that I will explore more thoroughly later in a survey of the roles of community organizations.

Jacilene, the manager of La Pastelaria Victoria Broadway, located herself foremost in a community distinct from her restaurant, her church. Jacilene’s father is a pastor and she explained that although she recognizes most of her customers and her co-workers have been at La Pastelaria for years, her most important community is the church. Jacilene goes to Assembly of God in Medford and says that most of those who attend the services are also Brazilian. For the most part, Jacilene believes that she is accepted by the American community at large in East Somerville. She lived in Portugal

before she moved to the United States, a foreign nation but without the additional challenges of a language barrier, and said that she felt equally as accepted in the United States as she had there.

Despite the general feeling of good will these narrators have towards the larger English-speaking community, it is clear that the language barrier plays a significant role in the ability of immigrant communities to build relationships with English-speaking Americans. Jacilene, towards the end of our interview, brought up a powerful point about the language barrier (the following excerpt was translated by Rachael Plitch). “Alicia Chatterjee: So does she feel accepted by the non-Brazilian community here? Rachael Plitch: By some, yeah.” ... “AC: So when she says that by some Americans she doesn’t feel accepted, what does she mean? RP: “She says mostly they do. It’s only really when she speaks that she feels a little bit like that.” It seems a somewhat obvious point, but the inability to speak English (or any language) in a way that feels representative of intended meaning can make it enormously difficult to relate to other English speaking members of the community. There is always uncertainty about whether or not one has spoken clearly and whether or not one has understood correctly. It cuts conversations short, especially among strangers, and the added element of embarrassment and discomfort can make the conversation on a whole worth avoiding. Although Jacilene speaks some English, she did not feel comfortable conducting an interview in it and she also indicated that she does not always feel comfortable conversing with non-Portuguese speaking community members. This language divide clearly limits her ability to feel a part of the greater Somerville community. Even if she feels generally welcomed by the American community in East Somerville, it is an enormous barrier to feel uncomfortable every time one tries to speak.

The personal communities described by Mario, Gladimir, and Jacilene are fluid but they also operate within certain constraints. Although Gladimir and Jacilene say that they personally feel accepted by the native-born American community, neither speaks English and neither ultimately locates the crux of their community outside of the large Brazilian one in East Somerville. The possibility of constraints being placed on immigrant community formation is further suggested both by the persistently challenging economic and physical realities of East Somerville and by the (at times) quiet but pervasive sense of fear surrounding the East Somerville neighborhood.

These narrators operate within the barriers of language differences and also, I will argue, labor under the weight of both local and national discrimination and fear. I argue that beyond language differences, the processes of nationally and governmentally sanctioned prejudices, both big and small, contribute to an atomized community in East Somerville. Personal communities are fluid and interactive and should not, of course, be essentialized under a single process; Mario's close relationship with his Irish, non-Spanish speaking landlord is the perfect example of an inclusive relationship and two individuals' ability to overcome both a language barrier and a potential for misunderstanding or prejudice. However, I will argue that there are certain overarching constraints placed on immigrant community formation in East Somerville, especially those reproduced by a normalized sense of prejudice and fear in the American worldview.

BARRIERS TO COMMUNITY FORMATION AND THE PRODUCTION OF
IMMIGRANT EXCLUSION: PREJUDICE AND THE MENTAL CONSTRUCT OF
THE "ILLEGAL"

A feeling of prejudice and fear surrounding East Somerville and a conflated sense of gang activity and “illegals,” can contribute to a sense of community isolation among the immigrant population and immigrant-owned businesses in East Somerville. I will explore these processes in the following paragraphs most significantly with a survey of blog-postings. A woman looking for a house near Boston says of East Somerville, specifically the Foss Park region, “We've heard about some gang activity and illegal immigrants congregating and causing problems in that area” [(Yelp, Talk Somerville, 2008). This is the first website that comes up when you search “East Somerville”]. Another blogger on City-Data says, “I visited and I noticed that the area seemed dominated by a Portuguese population, which doesn't bother me at all, as long as it is safe.” This blogger makes a point to say that the “Portuguese population,” notably an inaccurate identification, does not bother him as long as the area is safe. The central issue that these blogs illuminate is that there appears to be a major conflation between immigrants, “illegals,” non-white residents and gang activity or violence. The very use of the words “illegal” and “alien,” common lexicon in American journalism and political jargon, simplifies and de-humanizes the immigrant population in the United States. These words tap into an under-lying sense of fear towards the “illegal” that contributes to the sense of isolation experienced by East Somerville and by some of the immigrants and businesses within it. The conflation of violence and immigrant populations relates to many levels of current and historical processes.

There is a profound interplay of fears relating to immigrants at work, which connect to both racism and classism, around the United States and more specifically in East Somerville. We see first the old and complex American anxieties surrounding the

working class. When we see disparities and inequalities in the health, wealth and educational attainment of different communities and individuals in the United States, the American dream tells us that those who are poor did not pull themselves up by their bootstraps (see Horatio Algiers, 1868). As previously mentioned, East Somerville, as compared to the rest of Somerville is a traditionally working-class neighborhood. It is possible that this history still contributes to some of the fears surrounding East Somerville today. This age-old distaste for and fear of the working-class and the poor combines with the newer fear of the Latino immigrant and the “illegal,” and the persistent processes of racism.

Racism in the United States also comes to intersect with classism in East Somerville. The director of Advocacy at the Community Action Agency of Somerville, Melissa McWhinney, is quoted in a previous Urban Borderlands report discussing potentially discriminatory gang-ordinances in East Somerville’s Foss Park that prevented the congregation of individuals expected to be involved in gang activity. She makes a powerful point for her belief that the community outcry and resultant ordinance was based in a deep-seeded racism.

“was directed at the Latino gangs. This has never come up when the Winter Hill Gang was terrorizing people in the past, nothing like this had been proposed when the white Notre Dame Gang had been terrorizing black people. It wasn’t until the people who were the supposed victims of the gang were white, and the gang itself was of color, that this kind of stuff came about” (Nicholson et al, 2004). The above quote argues that public outcry and city government did not call for a gang ordinance until the suspected perpetrators of the gang activity were non-white. It appears that some people in Somerville, and arguably at times the city government of Somerville itself, a concept to be explored more later in the paper, have shown what activist and professor Angela Davis calls the “tendency to impute crime to color” (a concept initially

articulated as far back as Fredrick Douglas) (Davis, 2003). In this case, the community did not call for action until violence was suspected to have been committed by non-white residents; a second level of Davis' concept is that crime, without provocation, is associated with or expected of non-white populations.

This old, persistent racism combines with the equally ancient fear of poorer communities and intersects with newer concepts like that of the immigrant threat. Chavez explains the potential for fear of the immigrant and identifies it more specifically through the lens of the "Latino threat," to American culture and identity (Chavez, 2008). A look into the "Latino threat" narrative exposes the idea that the immigrant in the United States will insidiously disrupt and ultimately dismantle American ways of life. In 1996, David M. Kennedy, an acclaimed historian speaks about immigrants, specifically Mexican-Americans, and expresses the idea of the "Latino threat". He warns listeners,

"They can challenge the existing cultural, political, legal, commercial and educational systems to change fundamentally not only the language but also the very institutions in which they do business... In the process, Americans could be pitched into a soul-searching redefinition of fundamental ideas"
(Chavez 33, 2008).

The depth and complexity of these fears and prejudices, tracing back to age-old racism and policies like the 1924 immigrant quota aimed to preserve the homogeneity of American people, normalize them and make them difficult to identify and dismantle, even in those who consciously act without malice.

It is important to note that these processes of classism, racism, and fear do not just present themselves in overt forms of prejudice but at varying levels of engagement. They act not just in individuals but also in the very systems in which we engage. They come into play in the prejudiced blogs cited earlier written through a lens of personal safety and one with even a self-conscious statement that the non-white population was not a

problem as long as they were safe. In the most harmless case, it is apparent in the general reluctance of YUM participants to visit East Somerville's restaurants after dark (Plitch, personal interview, 2011) and helps explain the general lack of awareness and interest nearby Tufts University students have for the East Somerville neighborhood. I am not suggesting that the Tufts student body is prejudiced; I am arguing, however, that the system we operate in is. Even though East Somerville is much closer to Tufts than Park Street in Boston, it is harder to get to (let us pause and ask, why?). Although issues of access certainly play a role, it is also worth noting that even though Block 11, a sister café to the trendy Diesel in Davis Square, is in Union Square and equally as hard to get to as East Somerville, people at Tufts know of it and go there. This could be in part because no one talks about East Somerville or promotes it in the Tufts community (but again, why?). I do not mean to suggest that prejudice is intentionally at play here. But the systemic realities of institutionalized power dynamics are such that East Somerville remains, in many ways, isolated from other more well-to-do areas in Somerville.

While these power dynamics can manifest in a somewhat benign way, prejudice can also become as intense as one man's comment on a Somerville News Blog that extends undocumented immigrant presence to terrorism, "The illegals bring in the crime, drugs and terrorism and we need to round them up and ship them back home" (Somerville News Blog, 2008). These fears allow a bill like Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act, declaring living undocumented in the United States a felony, to pass through the House of Representatives in 2005. While it seems phenomenal that a reader of a local Somerville newspaper would so offensively conflate undocumented immigrants with terrorism, we can see that the exact same

connection is drawn in the title of a federal bill. These stories of threat and fear are pervasive. Individuals carry these fears, to varying degrees, and they bring them, intentionally or not, into their personal interactions, their workplaces, and their political leanings. These big ideas filter down into small choices and affect the lives and livelihoods of immigrants and immigrant-owned businesses in East Somerville.

The East Somerville community and the success of East Somerville's businesses are impacted by these complex systems of prejudice. A clear example of the impact of prejudice, and a not so subtle one at that, is the following review of El Caffeten Salvadoreno on Yelp, a widely read food blog. One of the six reviews available for El Caffeten says "I would imagine this is the actual definition of authentic. No one speaks English, Spanish music videos on the television, super dirty, and all the cups, plates, and silverware salvaged from dumpsters" (Yelp, 2007). This statement, equating "authentic" Salvadorian food and atmosphere with dirt and trash, connects to these processes of fear, prejudice, and racism. Dirt and the potential for health hazards in restaurants is a central concern of any restaurant go-er. This blog, if one believes what is said, is a serious disincentive to anyone who might be curious about trying out El Caffeten. El Caffeten Salvadoreno has passed all of its inspections and I would argue, from my own experiences eating there, that this blog tells a mistruth. I do not doubt, however, that the blogger looked at his dishes and genuinely believed them to be dirty. The mental constructs explored earlier are the central perpetrators of this type of harmful, if unintentional, speech. These constructs affect the success of immigrant-owned businesses in East Somerville and can work to inhibit the inclusion of immigrants into the greater community.

These prejudices, explored in the American community at large, come to play in the formation of personal communities. They place constraints on the ability of some immigrants in East Somerville, even those who are documented and successfully running businesses, to form communities with the greater Somerville population. They are abstractions yet, for many, they play a concrete role in community formation and interaction. They affect the woman who is afraid to leave her house after dark in East Somerville because she imagines gangs of “illegal aliens” and they affect the immigrant who, after hearing about the discriminatory legislation regarding immigrants passed in Arizona, is increasingly afraid to call the police or go to the hospital in East Somerville (The Somerville News, 2010). They keep these two individuals from interacting in a meaningful way and allow the fears of both to reproduce. These normalized stories are also carried with the person who holds them into all levels of impact, including those on the organizational and governmental level, to be explored further in the remainder of this paper.

EAST SOMERVILLE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

The community organization has an important role to play in the potential for inclusion or exclusion of immigrants and immigrant-owned businesses. In East Somerville, there are a variety of organizations that influence the dynamics of the community. In this section I will touch on two community organizations and one government-funded community initiative, each of which has an impact on immigrants and immigrant-owned restaurants in East Somerville. East Somerville Main Streets is a

non-profit organization that aims to revitalize East Somerville and help to make the neighborhood a “vibrant destination” (East Somerville Main Streets). The Welcome Project is a community initiative based out of the Mystic Public Housing Development that works to empower Somerville immigrants to “participate in and shape community decisions” (The Welcome Project). The final initiative, one based out of the Health Department in City Hall but with a strong community feel, is called Shape Up Somerville and aims to improve the overall health, focusing on healthy eating and physical activity, of the Somerville community.

An interview with Rachael Plitch, the new coordinator of Shape Up Somerville and previously an employee of the Welcome Project, provided an illuminating picture of community work in Somerville. The aim of my interview with Rachael and Shape Up Somerville was to learn more about the role of the community organization (and government offshoot organizations) in the lives of immigrants, especially in East Somerville. The restaurant owners I have spoken with have expressed some significant barriers, from language differences to difficulties with permit approval to basic information gaps, to their success and that of their restaurants. Given this reality, I was curious to see how much of a role the mitigation of these barriers played in initiatives for the greater Somerville community. I was also curious to see which barriers community organizations and government officials identified as most significant as compared with those most readily expressed by the immigrant communities themselves.

Rachael told me that the initiatives championed by the city were largely in line with immigrant needs. She told me that they tried to partner with insider organizations like the Welcome Project giving them an insiders lens into the communities they wanted

to work with. She explained that they had gotten rid of faulty (discriminatory) policies like not accepting EBT at farmer's markets and that they had translation services. She also believed that promotional activities like the East Somerville Main Streets' foodie crawl, a festive and ticketed walk along Broadway of 1,000 people that sampled restaurants in the area, managed a respectful form of promotion for immigrant restaurants that did not essentialize immigrant cultures or emanate the sense that immigrant restaurants were something to be toured.

Nonetheless, it appears that there is some disconnect between immigrant populations and the initiatives of the city and of community organizations. The Foodie Crawl, for example, was organized without the help of the restaurants themselves. East Somerville Main Streets, who organized the crawl, has a board of directors pulling from the more high-end East Somerville organizations (Mudflat Pottery and Thalia Tringo Real Estate, among others). They also funded the Foodie Crawl with help from a bank, an insurance agency, a real estate broker (Thalia Tringo) and two architectural firms (East Somerville Main Streets). The demographic of people that attended the crawl, and to whom the crawl was marketed (Yelp was the exclusive media sponsor [Wicked Local, 2011]), was different than the demographic that lives in the East Somerville neighborhood. I do not mean to suggest that East Somerville Main Streets did not have immigrant restaurant interests in mind as well, or that the promotional activity does not have the potential to benefit these restaurants, but it is worth exploring and the nature and interests of the higher-end community organizations and noting the lack of immigrant input in the planning and execution of initiatives that have such a large effect on them.

There is, in fact, a notable absence of immigrant-based initiatives in East Somerville. Despite making up such a large proportion of the total population, movements of immigrant collective action and advocacy appear all but non-existent. The Portuguese-Spanish divide breaks up some of the Latino immigrant businesses on Broadway, if only due to a language barrier, and may partially contribute to a lack of internal community organization. My interview with Gladimir illuminated to me that even with issues faced by the whole of the Broadway restaurant community, there is little conversation. Gladimir desperately wants a liquor license so he can make more money and expand his business. He says that no Brazilian or “Spanish” restaurant on Broadway has a liquor license and yet he has not spoken to them about what that means for their businesses. Gladimir would surely not be surprised to find that interviews with other restaurants in the area have churned up similar grievances and yet the community does not mobilize or seem to take a preliminary step by engaging in conversation. It is hard to guess what has prevented this mobilization. It is possible that a pervasive sense of fear has led immigrants in East Somerville to remain private even within the immigrant community. Perhaps, the eye of the government is perceived of as potentially dangerous for employees or family members that may not have documentation. It is also possible that the very idea of lobbying the Somerville government for an issue found to be collectively important is foreign. Ultimately, the reasons are unclear, but the lack of internal Latino community organization, and the lack of Latino presence in existing community organizations prevents the creation of a space for discourse and the development of a representative, multi-faceted community voice.

As was the case with East Somerville Main Streets, there are missing links in the initiatives laid out by the Shape Up Somerville program. When asked about how exactly Shape Up Somerville does its outreach and advertising of new walk routes, for example, to more marginalized communities, Rachael explained that

there's a lot community forums where there are meetings for people who are interested in that kind of thing. So there will be announcements in the local papers and websites. That's mostly the audience we reach and it tends to be the people who are already kind of looking for that. But it's pretty visible if you are someone who is moving around Somerville.

One of the simple, if somewhat unexpected, facts that I have found in my research this semester is that most of the immigrant-owned restaurants get their information from the radio or word-of-mouth. It seems possible that information disseminated over local Somerville websites or newspapers, especially if they are in English, would not necessarily reach most immigrant populations. This is a simple reality, easy to overlook, that likely has a major affect on the outreach potential of community initiatives to immigrant populations. Furthermore, Rachael says that the new paths and the Shape Up initiatives are visible in Somerville but that much of the adult population that they reach are those who are already looking for that kind of exercise to begin with. It is important to recognize and openly engage with the idea that even without malicious intent, even with a short glance towards actively positive intent, policies and initiatives aimed at the whole population can, once explored on the level of the immigrant in Somerville, be exclusionary.

The Welcome Project, on the other hand, has focused their initiatives specifically and carefully on immigrants and seems to provide crucially important services to the immigrant population in Somerville. According to Rachael, they are a well-known community organization with an "in" with the immigrant population of Somerville. They

have youth training programs, interpretation programs, English language learning classes, and parent's groups. Rachael says that the Welcome Project is a significant and positive presence for the immigrant community in Somerville. The stories I have heard in interviews have corroborated this notion. The Welcome Project was known and well received by each restaurant owner that I spoke with. The Welcome Project's initiatives, empowering youth, acting as a liaison between youth, parents, and Somerville Public Schools, and offering free language classes, among others, work to empower immigrant families at their base and help them to engage with the greater Somerville community (Chatterjee, interview with Plitch, 2011). Somerville offers immigrant residents a crucially inclusive invitation by establishing free and effective language courses that will help immigrants bridge an enormous communication gap. Of the restaurant owners I spoke with, Jacilene especially has found programs like those at the Welcome Project and SCALE, a program run through the Somerville public school system, to be an enormous resource for herself and for her employees.

I do not mean to suggest that, unlike the Welcome Project, Shape Up Somerville or East Somerville Main Streets in any way engage in prejudice action. In fact, quite the opposite, I believe both organizations include it as part of their overall action plans to mitigate disparities in the East Somerville community. What is easy, even for progressive organizations aimed at health betterment or community beautification, is an investigation that is not deep enough and initiatives that unintentionally exclude immigrant access and participation. This exclusion happens passively, for one reason or another (from language accessibility to advertising mediums), and although it does not actively harm the immigrant community it can widen existing disparities and enforce a lack of immigrant

participation. To avoid reproducing such a huge imagining as the American fear story and the accompanying prejudices and systemic layouts, I argue that community organizations need to move beyond immigrant-neutral action and consciously and continuously work to consider and engage the effects of initiatives on the immigrant community.

Our national, political and economic systems are not set up to benefit immigrant populations; in many ways, as we have seen, they have been set up to discourage them. Somerville, a liberal sanctuary city, feels in some ways differently encouraging and accepting of immigrants and yet I might suggest that remnants of these larger systems and mental constructs are still in place. The nature of this system means that most initiatives that do not actively empower immigrants, have the potential to passively disempower them. We saw the same activity occurring in the individual reproduction of systemic inequalities and we will see the same situation occurring in some of the practices and policies of Somerville City Government in the following section. Not all organizations can include immigrant empowerment as part of their overall initiative. However, to reiterate, in East Somerville nearly 50% of the residents are foreign-born (City-Data, 2011). A population strategy in East Somerville, if it is to be maximally effective and empowering, should include a careful investigation of how best to reach immigrant communities.

The Welcome Project shows an inspiring counter-example to the resultant exclusionary processes I have just described. As was the case with Mario's close friendship with his landlord, there are triumphant stories, and surely they are not so rare, where individuals empower one another and community organizations help to create sustainable and positive change in immigrant communities in Somerville. The Welcome

Project does this by engaging fully and openly with immigrant communities and by aiming to empower rather than simply to help. As Shape Up Somerville moves more of their initiatives towards immigrant communities in Somerville and East Somerville especially, they will be partnering with The Welcome Project. This shows a concerted effort to move towards targeting policies specifically and effectively towards immigrant populations by working with an experienced, successful, and well trusted community organization. Community organizations can, through both their action and inaction, exclude immigrant communities and maintain structures of inequality. They can also be enormously effective tools of inclusion, especially when they move to include immigrants in their initiatives if not empower them to create their own. Community organizations offer a chance for support and collective voice and action.

SOMERVILLE CITY GOVERNMENT

While city government is working to better East Somerville and help the restaurants there, as was the case with community organizations, I have seen that there are certain disconnects between the actions of city government and the realities of immigrant owned businesses. City government is more removed from the realities of East Somerville and less focused on the demographic population there than are East Somerville community organizations, causing some of their initiatives to seem even more disparate. As is the case for each of the three levels of interaction, personal, organizational, and governmental that are explored in this paper, it is crucial to remember that the focus is on East Somerville. The demographic, economic and structural realities combined with age-old stories of fear in East Somerville make it unique from the rest of

Somerville. A central historically mandated exclusionary reality that is, for example, specific to East Somerville, is the encircling of McGrath Highway and I-93. The grievances aired by restaurant owners, both the good intent and the disconnect apparent in conversations with officials in city government, and the exclusionary structural nature of the highway's placement in East Somerville, will be the focus in the remainder of this section.

The relationship between the immigrant owned restaurants in East Somerville and Somerville City Government appears a complex one. Many of the immigrant-owned restaurants my classmates and I interviewed responded to questions about city government with a mixture of uncertainty and abruptness. For some, the meaning of a “relationship with city government” was unclear and for others a question warranted the swift and simple response that they had all of their permits. This is apparent, for example, in an interview with Jacilene, the manager of La Pastelaria Victoria. “Alicia Chatterjee: Okay and has she worked with the city of Somerville at all? Jacilene Silva: No. AC: Um, like with the business not personally. JS: Sí (*yes*). AC: Like permits...? Rachel Plitch (translating): Yeah they have everything they need.” Jacilene initially said simply “no” and then when the question was clarified to business operations she offered a simple “yes.” When I pressed further she simply repeated that her business had all of its permits. There are a number of constraints that may have confounded this interaction with Jacilene, least of which my presence as a new and inquisitive face and more significantly our distinct languages. Nonetheless, this exchange suggests to me both a lack of certainty surrounding the idea of a relationship with city government and also potentially a sense of fear. It is possible that to some immigrants in East Somerville, city government is still

conceived more as a poorly understood fear than an ally. When city government is brought up in interviews, some restaurant owners seem to respond as though they need to defend themselves – “I have all my permits”, almost “I am not doing anything wrong.” A select few did not hold as much silence and expressed more concrete complaints.

Gladimir, the owner of the Rodizio Brazilian Steakhouse, had two central complaints, the lack of parking for customers and the impossibility of procuring a liquor license. His central focus was on the liquor license, which he believed would allow him to attract more American customers and greatly expand his business. He stresses to me that if his business were to expand it would benefit the city of Somerville because he could hire more employees, especially Americans. It is notable that Gladimir believes that the promise of hiring Americans is more likely to get him a liquor license than making a plea purely on behalf of his restaurant. In this Gladimir expresses the notion that his restaurant is of value to the city as a resource for Americans rather than being inherently valued as an immigrant-run enterprise. The fact is that there is a larger citywide struggle for an unlimited number of city-owned alcohol permits, a luxury that the comparable city of Cambridge enjoys. As it is currently, there are 435 places in Somerville that have food licenses and only 133 places, including liquor stores, licensed to provide alcohol (Wicked Local, 2011). The cap on liquor licenses has flustered the city of Somerville enough that in October the board of Aldermen approved a petition to Beacon Hill requesting unlimited permits. The news article on Wicked Local that covers this information mentions the Rodizio Brazilian Steakhouse as one of the restaurants that has repeatedly and unsuccessfully tried to get a liquor license. Although Gladimir may not feel like it, at least someone is noting his requests.

Nonetheless, Gladimir has found that one of the main issues he has encountered while trying to get the liquor license is the language barrier and lack of translation services at City Hall. Fernanda, our translator, explains, “He said that it is too bad that he doesn’t speak English because he would go there everyday and try to get the city to listen.” Gladimir echoes, “Everyday, everyday. Please, I need the license. Everyday.” When he goes to talk with the people at City Hall he has to bring an English-speaking friend. Gladimir does not know why the city will not give him a liquor license but chalks it up vaguely to “politics.” I asked him what he meant by that and he said he just simply does not know why the city will not give him a permit. According to Gladimir, none of the “Spanish” or Brazilian restaurants in the East Somerville area have alcohol permits. Gladimir explains, “because you know the immigrants in America, they don’t have the same things that Americans have, like the money.” Gladimir highlights the fact that the cost of the liquor license makes it nearly impossible for immigrants, many of whom may still be establishing themselves anew in the United States, to purchase licenses. Other American restaurants and stores, with more social and economic capital, may be able to gather the funds even if they are not readily available. It is also notable that Gladimir does not seem to know about the liquor license cap or understand why he has not been granted a liquor license by the city of Somerville beyond a nebulous concept of “politics.”

Orlando Adlana, the owner of Los Paisanos in East Somerville, had similar if not more intense, grievances to air with city of Somerville. Succinctly, Orlando says, “The city supports me? No.” (Williams, interview with Adlana, 2011) He goes on to explain that it took six months for Somerville City Government to approve a simple awning for

the front of his restaurant. They have also been preventing him from installing an air conditioner for his restaurant through unclear and strict regulation. “Yeah – the inspector. They have their office right there, with AC. And they don’t care about the customers, very hot. And I work in the kitchen and they don’t care.” He makes a valid point that is anecdotal of a larger problem, while the inspectors deny him his they certainly have air conditioning in their own buildings. He finds that they care neither for his comfort while he is working nor for the comfort of his customers. Why? He explains, “So I don’t think they care about East Somerville... Union Square and Davis Square, and Magoun Square, right there. But East Somerville - I think it’s because of the Hispanic businesses around here in East Somerville.” Orlando offers us a controversial explanation for the lack of city attention in East Somerville: it is because the businesses are Hispanic. This is obviously a highly contestable statement reflective of Orlando’s own opinion.

Nonetheless, there are, for reasons explored throughout this paper and certainly numbers more that I have been unable to touch upon, significant disparities between living conditions in East Somerville, densely immigrant populated, and living conditions in the rest of Somerville. While this structure does not appear, from conversations and research into city government, to be reproduced with any intentionality, it continues to exist nonetheless and I argue that neutral policies and a lack of attention help allow it do so.

EAST SOMERVILLE, THE ROLE OF ZONING AND PLANNING

An interview with Adam Duchesneau, a head planner with Somerville Planning and Zoning department, made it clear to me that the City Government of Somerville is doing their best to promote the local “mom and pop” business, including the immigrant-owned business, in East Somerville. They are doing so through a zoning ordinance, called

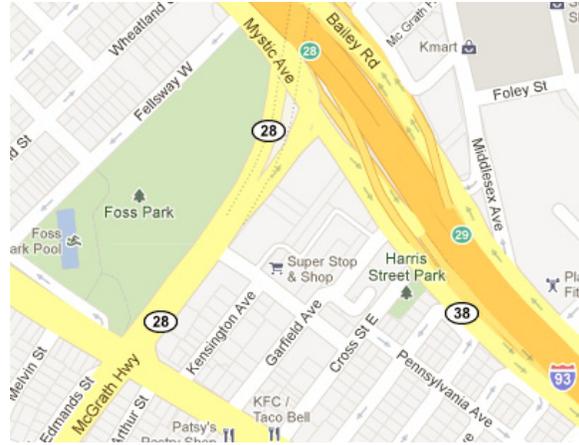
a Commercial Corridor District (CCD), that prevents the entry of big businesses and food chains on Broadway. They are also trying to make their plans transparent and accessible by putting planning initiatives and the details of permit processes, for confused potential restaurant owners, up online and by reaching out to business owners by phone and by email. They try to coordinate services within departments to get bilingual employees to help with translation for non-English speakers when possible. Somerville, especially under the Shape Up Somerville project, is also currently working on a major movement towards beautification and renovation. They are trying to increase bike paths, work on open spaces, improve city parks, and create tree canopies around the city. I asked Adam if they were focusing any resources specifically into East Somerville. After a pause he said the re-zoning initiative (to a CCD) has been important and that they are trying to re-design Harris Park and move it away from the highway.

Despite what are apparently the best of intentions in City Hall, I have noticed in my research this semester that there is a disconnect between the services that the City of Somerville's government thinks it is providing and the understanding that some immigrant restaurant owners have of official processes. As previously mentioned, many immigrant restaurant owners seem to get their information from the radio. Information disseminated through the Somerville City Government website, which furthermore is in English, will likely not be an effective resource for these individuals. This is also true of contact through email. The 311 Customer Service center (<http://www.somervillema.gov/departments/constituent-services>) for Somerville, while an interesting idea that provides more transparency and localizes information for interested or uncertain residents, is also in English. Gladimir, despite the guidance about

permit processes available online, did not know why he was not being granted a liquor license. Many of the restaurant owners I have spoken with also noted that the city of Somerville was unable to provide translation services to aid in conversation.

I also found it striking that Adam, when asked if his department geared services or initiatives any differently based on the population that they were interacting with, said that they were required to treat all applicants the same. Certainly, this is a policy aiming to prevent discrimination in city government but it also prevents personalized interaction. While city meetings are held in East Somerville to discuss proposed plans that will work to help “mom and pop” businesses or urban planning designs that will make East Somerville more attractive, the immigrant owned businesses seem to know little about them. These meetings appear not to be made accessible to many immigrant restaurant owners who view their interactions with city government mainly through the permit application process. Some immigrant restaurants seem to not know their local Alderman; they do not know why they are not being given a liquor license or why parking has to be so difficult for their customers (the city has reduced a barrier by not requiring new businesses to have a certain amount of parking before moving into a space, a provision in the CCD, but the restaurant owners complain that they could not find parking if they wanted to); they do not know about community development or beautification processes.

Finally, a more in depth look at the community beautification process, shows progress in East Somerville to be arguably small. When asked about specific initiatives forwarded by the city in East Somerville, Adam mentioned the re-design of Harris Park and the plan to shift it back from the highway.



Harris Street Park, 2011 (photo credit: East Somerville Main Streets)

The parks in East Somerville appear to leave something to be desired. We can see on the map above that Foss Park, the largest park in the East Somerville area, is almost entirely surrounded by highway: McGrath, I-93, and Fellsway West. My time spent in East Somerville also suggests to me that while Foss Park has a swimming pool with a mural and a small playground, there is often noticeably little activity in the area. Perhaps it is in part the surrounding highways, the investigations into gang activity in the area (Nicholson et al, 2004), or the rumors that undocumented workers are picked up there by contractors in the morning and dropped off at nights (Hassett, 2006) that help keep families out. While this is surely not always the case, on my last walk into East Somerville, on a warm night at 4 pm, there was only one mother and child in Foss Park. Harris Street Park, apparently more of a cement lot, is significantly smaller and butted directly up against I-93. While it is a step towards the creation of community space in East Somerville to renovate and shift the positioning of this park, it does not really begin to address the economic realities or the spatial layout of the surrounding highways that place constraints on the East Somerville neighborhood.

Sarah Spicer, in the Transportation and Infrastructure department, further illuminated the history of the highways in East Somerville. She began by explaining that

there is surely a connection between the highway and low land prices in the East Somerville area. She was, however, less willing to speak to the processes that may have placed the highway there to begin with, rather than through Davis Square or into Cambridge. Sarah explained that Somerville has always been a gateway city for immigrants, dating far back in its history to when it was an industrial city with a high demand for workers. When I pressed further she explained that this is true of all Somerville, but especially East Somerville.

McGrath was constructed in the 1920s with the addition of elevated structures in the 1950s. The elevated structures create dead spaces. Adam described one in Boston that used to prevent pedestrian traffic into the North End as a “walk under this interstate, which is kind of a lost space, so to speak, where it was just parking areas, and you know, trash strewn about.” Building for I-93 began in 1968 and was called to a halt by a highway moratorium in 1970 after an enormous public outcry. Sarah says,

“Sarah Spicer: It was all part of the sort of mitigation effort to stop the harmful effect of those highways, and unfortunately too late. Or rather, Somerville was unsuccessful in fighting to get that kind of mitigation and so 93 was put in.

Alicia Chatterjee: Or East Somerville specifically, right? Does 93 affect the rest of Somerville that much? SS: Mostly East Somerville.”

It seems that I-93 has little bearing on the safety, health, or environment of the rest of Somerville. In fact, when it was proposed that the highway extend into the rest of Somerville, into Union Square, there was a huge outcry (Chatterjee, interview with Spicer, 201). The truth of the matter is, no one wants a highway built around their home. Something happened whereby the voices of East Somerville, unlike those in Union Square and Cambridge, did not unite in dissent or were not heard. Remember again East Somerville’s population make up, traditionally working class with a burgeoning number, though certainly still smaller than today, of foreign-born immigrants and refugees in the

1960s and 1970s. I ask again, how did this happen? On whose neighborhoods do we build our highways? Whose voices, when those of Cambridge or other parts of Somerville's are heeded, do we not hear?

Even today, Sarah says that the main voice coming out of East Somerville that protests the surrounding highway and calls for other forms of transportation and environmental justice is the community organization STEP (Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership). Although STEP does advocate for East Somerville, the immigrant community themselves appear to have little to no voice within STEP or independently of it. They do not engage in dialogue with the city about the beautification processes of the East Somerville community (Chatterjee, interview with Spicer, 2011) nor do they seem to form collective advocacy groups to calls for better language services or a larger allotment of liquor licenses (Chatterjee, interview with Pacheco, 2011).

In conclusion, it is clear that something is missing. I believe a disconnect, that is reinforced by a lack of inter-group conversation and intensified by national systems of uneven resource distribution, allow even supportive government initiatives to be both misunderstood by immigrant communities and have unintended exclusionary effects in them. Again, I by no means intend to suggest, although Orlando Adlana or Melissa McWhinney might, that Somerville's city government is operating under prejudiced, racist, or classist constructs. What I do aim to reiterate is that our social structure is set up in such a way that resources naturally flow in certain directions, often along the lines of a power gradient. Immigrant communities, where quiet racism, classism, and fears of "alien" identity intersect, are especially unlikely to benefit from neutral, un-targeted initiatives. If Shape Up Somerville creates pathways along the Mystic River for use by

the total population, but they are not visible or accessibly advertised to the immigrant community in East Somerville, they will not benefit from these changes. It is important that initiatives, especially those operating in the demographic population of East Somerville, consider how to best affect the immigrant population. These changes can be small. Shape Up Somerville is beginning to do this by partnering with the well-trusted Welcome Project. I argue that organizations and government initiatives could improve further by more readily focusing efforts on the inclusion of foreign-born populations in existing structures (government and community organization) and by facilitating (as do organizations like the Welcome Project) an economic, social, and physical space in which they can establish their own collective and multi-faceted initiatives.

LOOKING FORWARD and STORIES OF EMPOWERMENT

Immigrant restaurant owners and immigrant groups in East Somerville are not without agency. Their lives are not without kind acts of sharing with other or of others (native-born American and otherwise) with them. Every day processes of inclusion, be they on the individual or systemic level, occur. Mario is a good friend of his white, English-speaking landlord. Each restaurant owner, after I interviewed and spent time with them, offered me food and refused payment. Gladimir has called me in from the street while I was walking by Rodizio to say hello and Mario has invited me to stay a while at the restaurant and watch a telenovela. Mario will sit with his employees and watch TV with customers and Gladimir will let his employee Fernanda, in the tenth grade, speak for him in an interview without translating to him without getting upset but instead asking

good-naturedly, “What? What?” A central goal of Jacilene’s for the restaurant is an English-accessible atmosphere and an English-speaking staff but she will not let go any of her employees who have worked long and hard at La Pastelaria. These individuals empower themselves and one another everyday and do so in countless other ways.

Likewise, do governmental workers and community organizations. City Hall works together inter-departmentally and attempts to work inclusively and non-discriminatorily with Somerville’s diverse population. Mario explains that he is helped to feel engaged in the community because Somerville High School will sometimes buy food from El Caffeten Salvadoreno for school events. Some immigrant-owned restaurants know well and love the face of Carrie Dancey, the director of East Somerville Main Streets, and almost all of those we have spoken with know and appreciate the Welcome Project. These acts are no paltry detail and should not be lost or discounted in an exploration of large, sometimes seemingly amorphous exclusionary systems.

And yet, these processes, if we look closely enough, do exist. Why does East Somerville earn more than \$10,000 less/year on average than the rest of Somerville (City-Data, 2011)? Why do so many people believe that East Somerville is unsafe? Why do we use words like “illegals” or “aliens” or create federal documents that conflate undocumented immigrant presence with terrorist activity? Why is there a highway (McGrath and I-93) surrounding the East Somerville neighborhood but not the wealthier, largely non-immigrant Davis Square? Why are the parks perceived unsafe by some, prohibitive of community gathering (recall the gang ordinance in Foss Park), bordering highways, or non-existent? Why is there so little immigrant presence in community organizations even though they make up nearly half of the population? Why is there so

little non-white or female presence in city government? Why are some immigrants still afraid of a city that calls itself a sanctuary and why is the city still, in some ways, afraid of them?

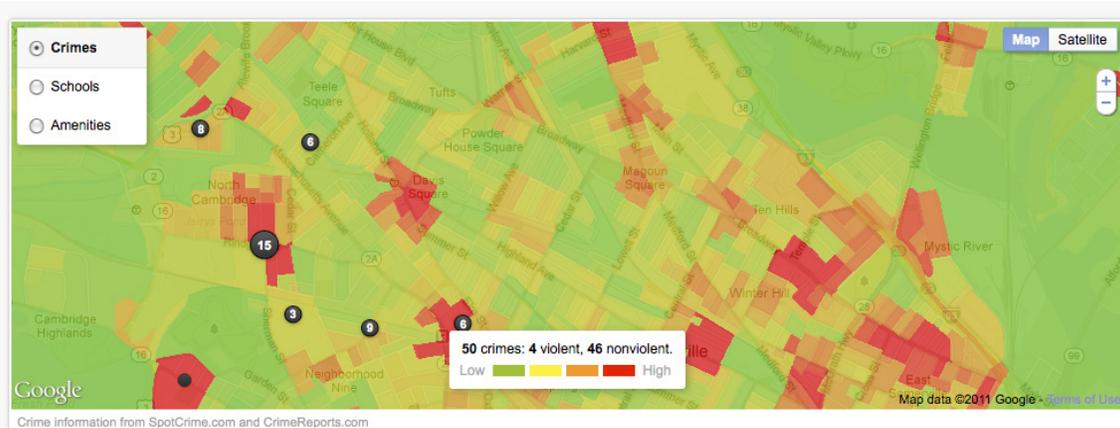
This paper meant to both pose these questions, in many ways unanswerable, and explore the roots of their rising. In conclusion the exclusionary processes explored in this paper are systemic. I end with the thought that our responsibility within a system is to carefully engage both ourselves, as products and producers of our environments, and the systems within which we are acting.

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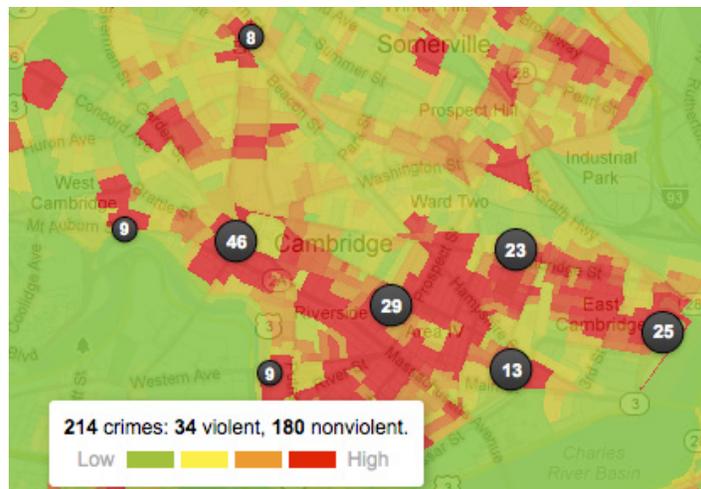
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EAST SOMERVILLE CRIME MAPS (Trulia, 2011)



The high density cluster on the right of the map is East Somerville (you can see a faint “East”). A little further west down Broadway, the next cluster of high density crime is Winter Hill. In West Somerville we see an equally dense crime rate around Davis Square.



If we expand our lens we see that Cambridge, including areas around Harvard, has a similarly concentrated crime rate, though spatially broader.