

# Eleven

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*"The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways;  
the point, however, is to change it."*

—Karl Marx, "XI" from "Theses on Feuerbach"

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## EDITORS' NOTE

We are proud to present the tenth volume of *Eleven: The Undergraduate Journal of Sociology*. This volume would not have been possible without the hard work of the featured authors and our dedicated Editorial and PR teams, as well as the support of the wonderful staff and faculty of the University of California, Berkeley Department of Sociology. By making these works available to the public, we intend to inspire not only further academic research but also social and political action that bases itself in the careful consideration of facts and theoretical analysis.

Our tenth volume deals with some of the most salient issues of the past decade in the US: racial politics, religious rhetoric, and the immigrant experience. By providing thorough analyses of these phenomena, our featured authors offer new insights into our current social and political reality.

In “Rearticulated Racism”, Christian Correa analyzes the campaign strategies of Barry Goldwater, George Wallace, and Richard Nixon to chronicle the rise of what he terms the “New Right”. By examining how each candidate takes advantage of the cultural zeitgeist and uses coded language to push a racist agenda in the post-Civil Rights era, Correa reveals a coherent and insidious political strategy that resonates with certain aspects of our political landscape today. In “Narrative Memory and Cultural Trauma: Religious Interpretations of 9/11,” Emma Tamplin asks how social knowledge evolves, through her examination of collective memory. She performs a content analysis of Protestant sermons addressing the events of September 11, 2001, coding for specific language through which she identifies the tropes that characterize ever-shifting narratives about cultural trauma and their social implications. Finally, in “Not the America We Dreamed Of: Latinx Immigrants in a Trumpian Suburbia,” Sophie Pearlman delves into the lived experiences of Latinx immigrants in Long Island, New York, who find themselves struggling to cope with their all-too-often criminalized political identities under the Trump administration. Pearlman explores the ways in which, despite the hardships they experience in this unique political period, Latinx immigrants commonly persevere by reconstructing the American Dream, albeit distorted by their “Trumpian” realities.

We hope you will read this issue with an open mind and an eye towards future action, as always, in the spirit of Karl Marx’s Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach, “The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it,” from which *Eleven* takes our mission statement.

Laurel Bard and Julia Matthews  
*Eleven* Editors-in-Chief

# **Rearticulated Racism: How the New Right Used Coded Racial Appeals in American National Elections, 1960 – 1972**

**Christian John Correa**

*University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

## **Abstract**

The New Right is an American right-wing political movement that formed in the 1960s in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement. Existing American critical race theory scholarship often references the New Right movement when theorizing about how the Civil Rights Movement changed racism in America, but there has yet to be an in-depth convergence of historical scholarship with sociological theory. I situate the New Right within racial formation theory and utilize a structural theoretical apparatus to analyze three presidential candidacies, Barry Goldwater, George Wallace, and Richard Nixon. By fusing sociological theory with historical analysis, I am able to show how New Right politicians were forced to “rearticulate” their racism using “code words” in order to embroil racial anxieties without challenging popular perceptions of equality and justice.

## **Keywords**

*racism, New Right, Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon, George Wallace*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The New Right emerged as a political movement that mobilized white resentment in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement and exacerbated racial tensions in the United States. Following the death of president John F. Kennedy, Democrats began to realign themselves with racially liberal policies. This emergent perspective was diametrically opposed to the racial conservatism of the Southern Democrats, also known as Dixiecrats. Following the transition, Democrats left a vacuum of racial anxiety towards blacks that the New Right was able to galvanize. This paper uses a structural theoretical approach to argue that the New Right pioneered a new covert form of racism in the 1960s in order to gain electoral favor among whites.

There is little academic consensus on a substantive definition of the American “New Right.” This disagreement centers on the demographic makeup of the political movement; the critical actors involved; and the organizing principles, beliefs, values, or ideologies that connected these actors and New Right participants. Some scholars attribute the lack of agreement in extant literature to the overshadowing of the New Right by a much more sensationalist and simultaneously occurring New Left Movement (Brinkley 1994). One such disagreement resides in the debate over the founding principles of the New Right movement. Several scholars recognize the racially charged origins of the New Right’s emergence (Carter 2008; Phillips 1969; Mason 2004; Edsall 2006; Frederickson 2001; Omi and Winant 2015; Lowndes 2008), while others either ignore race or repudiate the racial approach, arguing that class dimensions were the organizing factor following the New Deal (Black and Black 2002; Cowie 2012). Through the historical analysis of three presidential candidacies conducted in this paper, it is clear that conservative politicians mobilized the New Right principally, though not solely, through coded appeals to racial resentment.

## **THE NEW RIGHT’S COMPOSITION**

Mike McCollum (2016) offers a comprehensive – though not exhaustive – definition of the New Right: “Christian evangelists, secular free marketers, libertarians, right-wing internationalists and right-wing isolationists, blue-collar workers, and Sunbelt suburbanites among others under the Republican Party banner.” The sheer variety in the component groups of the New Right underscores two points. First, it demonstrates that the New Right is a political and social construct, making any empirical demographic categorization exceedingly difficult (McCollum 2016). It further indicates that the New Right’s emergence may be rooted in the

South, but the movement quickly transformed into a national phenomenon not bound by any universally common class or regional economic interest.

While most scholars agree that the New Right originated in the 1960s, many different actors are attributed a primary role in the emergence of the movement. Some scholars focus their work on conservative politicians at the time (Carter 1996), while others center religious institutions (Dochuk 2010), corporate interests (McCartin 2013), or think tanks (Edsall 2006). While I do not refute the aforementioned claims, it is beyond the scope of this paper to detail the role of every actor in the New Right movement. This study focuses on three politicians who played a crucial part in the New Right's development: Barry Goldwater, George Wallace, and Richard Nixon. These actors best demonstrate the racially-oriented work of New Right discourse due to their national visibility and the well-documented nature of their political strategy. Additionally, it is not difficult to extrapolate the role of other actors from an analysis of these men. Politicians are inextricably linked to religious institutions, think tanks, and corporate interests in a different way than those entities are related to each other.

Studies of the New Right often do not attempt to define the group, or choose to utilize the vague concept of "The Right" when referencing the movement (Carter 1996; Lowndes 2008). Gillian Peele (1984)'s definition of the New Right as "a loose Movement of conservative politicians and a collection of general-purpose political organizations which have developed independently of the political parties" (p. 52) is also a popular definition, however its vagueness exemplifies the aforementioned concern about the difficulty of defining the group, and even this definition is not wholly adequate. Although many scholars utilize this definition, in practice they describe the New Right primarily as a movement within the Republican Party, which contradicts the movement's supposed independence from formal political parties (Omi and Winant 2015). Due to the lack of an adequate substantive definition within New Right literature, this paper will use the following working definition: The New Right should be considered a loosely bound coalition represented by conservative elites and intellectuals who utilize racism for electoral gain primarily within the Republican Party. This definition is pertinent and useful to future studies on race within New Right literature because it both encompasses the inextricable racial origins of the movement and does not omit the inherently partisan nature of the New Right movement.

## THEORETICAL APPARATUS

The existing literature on race in the New Right lacks a sound theoretical framework to interpret political and historical findings. This paper will

analyze the New Right using the theoretical apparatus developed by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva in *Rethinking Racism: Towards a Structural Interpretation* (1997). Elements of Michael Omi and Howard Winant's (2015) theory of racial formation will also be incorporated, as their work was foundational to Bonilla-Silva's, and there are distinct concepts and processes that each of the works develop that are crucial to understanding the New Right's racial practices. This paper utilizes their respective conceptualizations of racism in the context of a larger racial society, as opposed to the alternative argument that racism is solely an individual construct (Schuman 1985; Sniderman and Piazza 1993). In addition, this paper argues a bimodal approach, in which racism exists both structurally and individualistically.

The view that racism is solely an individual phenomenon disregards the numerous racist social structures that exist separate from individuals, and as such concludes that the way to solve racism is through individual, rather than structural, action. This leads to studies that declare that racism is declining because individuals give "less racist" responses (Wilson 1978). However, these approaches do not accurately portray reality—racism is not a static phenomenon, and the racism of yesterday is not the racism of today. The dynamic nature of racism is central to a sociological analysis of the New Right. The New Right engaged in more rearticulation of racism than lessening it, and utilizing a static framework to analyze their words and actions would disguise those rearticulations as disappearances (Bonilla-Silva 1997). While Omi and Winant (2015) coined the terminology of "rearticulation" in a racial context, they never provided a conceptual definition. I will define it as the reformation of words or actions to give the perception of abiding by mainstream virtues of equality and justice while still evoking underlying racial bias.

Bonilla-Silva's (1997) theoretical apparatus begins with the process of racialization, which is "the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group" (p. 469). This application of racial meaning stems initially from the interests of powerful actors in the social system, but after these racial categories are used to organize social relations, race becomes an independent element of the operation of the social system (Stone 1985). The act of racialization leads to racial societies, which are "societies in which economic, political, social, and ideological levels are partially structured by the placement of actors in racial categories or races." From this racial society, racism emerges as "the segment of the ideological structure of a social system that crystallizes racial notions and stereotypes. Racism provides the rationalizations for social, political, and economic interactions between the races" (Bobo 1988:85-114).

Bonilla-Silva (1997) refrains from using the term "racial project," an

idea that Omi and Winant (2015) define as “simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial identities and meanings, and an effort to organize and distribute resources (economic, political, cultural) along particular racial lines” (p. 125). Bonilla-Silva critiques Omi and Winant in this regard, maintaining that the authors put undue responsibility on “racial projects” functioning as causal factors in shaping the racial society, which obscures the segments of the racial society that act independently of individual actors. Although viewing racial societies in solely individualistic terms is problematic, focusing purely on the structural elements of a racial society reduces the agency of political actors and suggests they are merely at the will of surrounding social forces, which this historical analysis of Goldwater’s, Wallace’s, and Nixon’s candidacies fundamentally disproves. These actors made individual, calculated decisions that shaped racial discourse. This analysis exemplifies why a bimodal approach is necessary, as both structural and individual forces are at work to uphold and maintain the racial society.

### HOW THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT CHANGED RACIAL POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES

To contextualize the New Right’s rearticulation of its political messaging, it is first necessary to understand the racial society before the Civil Rights Movement. Racial formation theory describes America’s racial politics as a trajectory, with the state shifting throughout history along a continuum containing racial despotism on one end and post-racialism on the other, racial despotism being referred to as “a familiar series of state practices: deprivation of life, liberty, or land; dispossession, violence, confinement, coerced labor, exclusion, and denial of rights or due process” (Omi and Winant 2015:139). By no means is this paper insinuating that the Civil Rights Movement ushered in a “post-racial society,” which is defined by Berkeley Law scholar Ian Haney López (2014) as a society in which “race no longer correlates with privilege or discrimination, and so carries no meanings tied to established hierarchies” (p. 25). On the contrary, rhetoric espousing “color-blindness” and a supposed post-racial America is a key component in the shifting American racial discourse and the continuous rearticulation of racism. However, the Civil Rights Movement did create a new racial state and society, one based on racial hegemony rather than racial domination (Omi and Winant 2015).

Racial politics are not bound solely to the state; but rather they involve a complicated interlinking of sociological phenomena such as political

socialization, race consciousness, and group boundary formation (Barth 1969). For most of the United States’ history, civil society existed in a space on the continuum represented as “racial domination,” characterized by racial projects such as slavery and lynching. Omi and Winant (2015) offer a compelling theory for the shifting of U.S. racial politics from “racial domination” to “racial hegemony.” They define two “breaks” in the trajectory of United States racial politics – the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement (Omi and Winant 2015). These breaks are referred to as Great Transformations. A Great Transformation is an expansion of democracy that challenges some of the pillars of despotism in the United States (Omi and Winant 2015). At its climax, the Civil Rights Movement democratized the racial state by fusing direct mass action with institutional and electoral politics.

The Great Transformation did not extract race from politics. In fact, if we refer back to the trajectory of racial politics, the change was negligible in comparison to the hopes of early civil rights leaders who aspired to create a society no longer governed by racial hegemony. However, it did shake the paradigm enough to force a rebranding of racial projects, first through the emergence of the New Right, and later under the banner of neoconservatism and “color-blindness” (Omi and Winant 2015:175). The New Right’s emergence in the 1960s was a reaction to the shock that normative racial politics felt at the hands of the Great Transformation. Under this new racial hegemony, racism was enacted in more covert ways in order to maintain the social and economic benefits whites held without engaging in an explicit ‘domination’ of blacks. As Bonilla-Silva (1997) stated, “As much as Jim Crow racism served as the clue for defending a brutal and overt system of racial oppression in the pre-Civil Rights era, color-blind racism serves today as the ideological armor for a covert and institutionalized system in the post-Civil Rights era.” (p. 3).

Walter Dean Burnham encapsulated the reactionary nature of American political thought and subsequent public policy when he argued that the pressures of “modernization” lead to changes in the politics of foundational culture, and that all right movements have both incorporated explicitly reactionary agendas and associated themselves politically with other reactionary movements (Burnham 1983). Even Jerry Falwell, an ultraconservative pastor and one of the early political entrepreneurs of the New Right, admitted that “in any assessment of what is happening in the so-called New Right... it is important to remember that what is being observed is a ‘reaction’ to the ‘action’ begun by the liberals as they sought to dismantle our moral heritage” (Ansoll 1997:49). However, characterizing the

New Right solely as a reaction doesn't ascribe the necessary responsibility to the political actors involved. Framing reactionary racial projects in such a way implies that racism is in some way natural or primordial. The New Right's rearticulated racism was a strategic political effort in which the actors involved had agency, acknowledged their agency, and were not simply subjected to some imposed racial reaction.

The Civil Rights Movement had moralized race as a political issue, and engaging in overt racial discrimination like that of pre-Civil Rights Movement conservatives would be politically shortsighted. The New Right's effort to keep the traditional racial society intact required an immense overhaul of right-wing rhetoric and policy. Evolving social attitudes and understandings of racism forced the New Right to rearticulate their campaign for racial hegemony through racial projects, such as "code words." Code words are defined as "phrases and symbols that imply or refer indirectly to racial themes, but do not directly challenge popular Democratic or egalitarian ideals such as justice and equal opportunity" (Omi and Winant 2015:192). Essentially, code words are euphemisms used to make racist policies and rhetoric more easily digestible to the general public. Political actors in the United States have engaged in the practice in one way or another since the founding of the country, but it became increasingly popular during and after the Civil Rights Movement, when explicit racism was no longer a viable tool for electoral success (Omi and Winant 2015). Whites had to rearticulate their racism, as the social upheavals of the Civil Rights Movement ruled out legally enforced segregation and arguments that black people were biologically inferior (Omi and Winant 2015). The New Right politicians pioneered and popularized the practice of rearticulation as a cornerstone of their political ideology.

Codified language can be seen in a vast number of conservative perspectives on civil rights issues. For example, busing and school integration was rhetorically framed not as an overt maintenance of segregation, but rather a defense against attacks on "the family" and "the community." Similarly, the New Right opposed housing integration initiatives on the basis of a "freedom to choose" on the part of the landowner, rather than an open call for residential segregation (Omi and Winant 2015:193). The New Right's rhetoric began utilizing the same framework as the Civil Rights Movement, defensively arguing for the protection of supposed marginalized groups, like families and landowners, rather than openly embracing racist ideology. Their arguments would lay the groundwork for later cultural battles, such as the neoconservative fight against affirmative action. This codified language would be used for decades, as long time Nixon aide John Ehrlichman acknowledged, to present positions in such a way that a voter

could "avoid admitting to himself that he was attracted by a racist appeal" (Ehrlichmann 1982:223).

## HUNTING WHERE THE DUCKS ARE

The New Right's racial project of rearticulation and code words has its origins in the Barry Goldwater presidential campaign of 1964. This rearticulation was part of a larger scheme known as the Southern Strategy, a campaign that was described as having "the objective of repositioning white supremacism as a mainstream political initiative in the aftermath of the civil rights reforms" (Perlstein 2009; Phillips 1969). While many scholars pinpoint the 1968 Nixon presidential campaign as the birth of the Southern Strategy, the 1964 Goldwater presidential bid laid the fundamental groundwork of the movement, and those roots merit investigation.

In 1960, Arizona senator Barry Goldwater ran for President in the Republican primary. Although he was never expected to win, his campaign and segregationist agenda received surprising support from Southern states like South Carolina and Texas. As John F. Kennedy worked to shift the Democratic party away from segregationist appeals, a vacuum of white resentment in the South opened, and leaders of the Republican party quickly realized the political capital they could reap from advocating for racial hegemony in this space. Soon after, the Republican National Party began heavily funding Operation Dixie, an organization that fielded and supported heavily segregationist Republican candidates (Lowndes 2008). By 1964, Southern white voters were enamored with the New Right's racially coded segregationist platform that swore its commitment was to the Constitution and individual rights, not white supremacy (Lowndes 2008).

The New Right's fight for the South was undeniably racist. Barry Goldwater himself said "We're not going to get the Negro vote as a bloc in 1964 or 1968, so we ought to go hunting where the ducks are," referring to his strategy to court the white vote while virtually ignoring African American and Latino outreach (Haney López 2014:18). Likewise, after attending a meeting of the Republican National Committee in Denver during the summer of 1963, conservative journalist Robert Novak reported that "a good many, perhaps a majority of the party's leadership envisioned substantial political gold to be mined in the racial crisis by becoming in fact, though not in name, the White Man's Party" (Haney Lopez 2014:18). The New Right's rearticulation was not an accident. It was political strategy, referred to by Ian Haney López (2014) as strategic racism, "the use of racial appeals to generate economic, social, or political capital" (p.18). Clifton White, a

Republican political strategist, also acknowledged the ‘political realities’ that promoting segregationist candidates was the best strategic option (Lowndes 2008). Thus began a new era of experimental strategic racism that would test the boundaries of white resentment and racial complacency in the United States.

William Rusher, a writer for the National Review, the most influential conservative paper at the time, wrote that after the 1962 midterm elections, “Goldwater and Goldwater alone [could] carry enough Southern and Border states to offset the inevitable Kennedy conquest in the big industrial states of the North and still stand a chance of winning the election” (Lowndes 2008:67). Goldwater’s campaign became the early flag-bearer of New Rightism. Goldwater’s role was solidified by his vote against the groundbreaking Civil Rights Act of 1964, where he gave a floor speech, not arguing in favor of segregation, but in opposition to tyrannical federal powers. He declared that this was not an issue of race, but one of “states’ rights” and “freedom of association,” deftly sidestepping the prevailing issue at the time: whether a state had the right to discriminate against black people (Haney López 2014:19). By fusing segregation with code words like “states’ rights” as two sides of the same coin, the New Right strategically framed conservative ideology as compatible with racial resentment, which led to inroads in Southern electorates and began to corrode the previously stalwart Dixiecrat hold on the South.

The vote on the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was also notable for its regional divide: 90 percent of non-Southern senators supported the act, and 95 percent of Southern senators opposed it (Lowndes 2008). This divide reinforced the need for conservatives to “go where the ducks are,” as Kennedy was breaking strong ground in the North. What began as a simple colloquialism soon transformed into a full-fledged political campaign. The moderate Republican New York Senator, Jacob Javits, was one of the first people to refer to this “Southern Strategy.” Javits argued that Goldwater’s approach was wrecking the Republican party by appealing to the worst of Southern racial resentment (Lowndes 2008). Even if the conservative movement had not yet officially endorsed a Southern Strategy, the fundamental makeup of the campaign was laid out and executed during the Goldwater’s presidential campaign.

Goldwater, a western Republican, actually shared few similarities with the Southern constituency. For example, the constituency supported the New Deal, which characteristically aided Southern whites whose economic livelihood was decimated by the Great Depression. This presented a problem for Goldwater, as he was vehemently opposed to the New Deal

on a free-market platform. His affiliation with the Republican Party presented a problem, as there was still generational resentment among white Southerners who remembered the GOP as the party that caused the Civil War and mandated Northern rule during Reconstruction. Thus, the Southern Strategy was created to craft a coalition built around racial anxieties that were strong enough to overcome these obstacles. Race was not some competing factor that would decide who the South would support, but the single most salient issue of the time, which Goldwater used to maneuver ideological roadblocks.

At the Republican National Convention of 1964, the pro-civil rights plank was meager, and shouted down by attendees. Strum Thurmgood, the famous former Southern Dixiecrat, switched parties and supported Goldwater solely because of his opposition to civil rights; and cigars were even manufactured in promotion of Goldwater’s campaign, in which a quote on the box told smokers to give a cigar to a “negro” to let them know they aren’t welcome (Lowndes 2008). Clifton White, who was working to elect Goldwater at the time, produced a movie called *Choice* (1964) that explicitly called on voters to support Goldwater “to stop rioting and violent blacks.” However, Goldwater was walking a political tightrope: he would only stoke these racial sentiments in coded appeals, and the movie was so blatantly racist that it was never released.

In the South, Goldwater’s efforts were successful. He won five states in the deep South, where whites had never supported a Republican prior to his candidacy (Haney López 2014:21). Goldwater’s Southern success proved the viability of the Southern Strategy, and that whites in the aggregate were willing to lay down their party loyalties and economic liberalism to uphold white hegemony. The general election was a landslide defeat for Goldwater, but there is little to indicate that the New Right’s implicitly racist rhetoric was the cause. Lyndon Johnson was the incumbent, following in the footsteps of the martyred John F. Kennedy. Furthermore, Goldwater’s hawkish foreign policy during a tumultuous war in Vietnam was not well-received (Polls Tell Us No More Than Where We Are; Vietnam War Opinion 1998), nor was his advocacy for dismantling the New Deal. The Goldwater campaign taught the New Right how to practice racism without being labeled open racists. It was now his successors’ task to turn this success from a Southern phenomenon into a national one.

## THE WHOLE UNITED STATES IS SOUTHERN

While Barry Goldwater was navigating national politics, George Wallace, then governor of Alabama, was engaging in his own racial campaign.

Through Wallace's inaugural speech citing his support for segregation and his infamous fight against the integration of two black students into the University of Alabama in 1963 (Carter 1996:4), Wallace's racial projects crowned him as a darling of the New Right. While there are several accounts of George Wallace's casual racism in private (Carter 1996:7), John Kohn, an advisor to Wallace in the 60s, claimed that Wallace's racial projects were an electoral tool (Carter 1996:9). He was cited as one of the most racially equitable judges in Alabama, and when he originally ran for governor in 1958, the NAACP actually endorsed him, while the Ku Klux Klan endorsed his opponent (Class 1990). His previous history reinforces that racism by the New Right, while reactionary, was also strategic.

A year before the Civil Rights Act, after being elected as the governor of Alabama, Wallace declared in his inaugural address "Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever." Only after he began to move towards national politics and realized the power of covert racial projects did he recant, recalling that he actually meant state's rights, not segregation specifically. Wallace's backtracking reveals the delicacy of the New Right's platform, which could only stoke racial resentment on a national level through coded appeals. With this knowledge, Wallace adapted and was able to see the power of codified strategic racism after justifying his attempt to block two qualified black applicants from entering a school building. He disavowed the encroachment of the "central government" and the usurpation of "state's rights." Wallace received thousands of letters about the incident, over half from outside the South, and 95 percent in support of him (Carter 1996:6). He was emboldened by these racial projects and their substantial political dividends. Douglas Kiker (1968) of NBC stated that "[Wallace] had looked out upon those white Americans north of Alabama and suddenly been awakened by a blinding vision: 'They all hate black people, all of them. They're all afraid, all of them. Great God! That's it! They're all Southern. The whole United States is Southern!'"

With the fervor of white resentment propelling Wallace, he charged into the 1968 presidential race. What differentiated Wallace from Goldwater was that Wallace presented himself as a populist. While Goldwater was a member of the Republican establishment, Wallace ran against that same establishment, arguing that both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party were too liberal (Carter 1996). The political landscape was ripe for his run as an independent candidate. Many voters had their political identity shaken by the social upheaval of racial politics and a realignment of the political parties along the axis of civil rights legislation. Their anxieties were exemplified in the growing trend of American "independents" (Pew

Research Center 2015). Whites were looking for normalcy in the face of great change, and it came in the form of Wallace's symbolic depiction of himself as being just like them. Wallace's populism allowed him to expand his racial project past the South and appeal to white men of any region. He did so by linking "traditionalist conservatism to an earthy language that voiced powerful cultural beliefs and symbols with a much broader appeal to millions of Americans" (Carter 1996:12). He imbued conservative policy with a blasé speaking style, voicing racial anxieties through coded language that whites could resonate with.

This expansion past the South required further rearticulation, as the code words that Goldwater used in the South were not readily translatable to the racial anxieties of white northerners. In the North, racial anxieties manifested in the form of busing and housing integration, rather than segregation in public spaces. Wallace also shifted to using racial code-words that were understood by whites from every region, such as calls for "law and order," "property rights," and a fusion of the Civil Rights Movement with allegations of communism. He did this by linking all of these issues with larger issues of democracy and freedom. Wallace's argument was not about whether blacks could go to the same schools as whites, but whether The United States would become an Orwellian state with no individual rights.

Wallace's campaign was largely centered on images of violence. Following several race riots in cities across the United States, and subsequent growing racial anxieties among whites, Wallace promised to enforce zero-tolerance adherence to law and order (Lowndes 2008). In the face of political and social turmoil, Wallace relied on the code phrase "law and order" to signify to whites that he was on their side. In doing so, Wallace painted a picture of the disorderly "Other" – criminals, welfare recipients, anti-war demonstrators, and the liberal elites who support them. But the social disorder occurring was not spontaneous; it was a result of tense racial strife. Wallace's voters understood that the Other was black. One protestor at a Wallace rally held up a poster that read "Law and Order – Wallace Style" with an outline of a Klansman holding a noose underneath (Carter 1996:20). To be clear, law and order as a code phrase did not originate with Wallace, and is rooted in the continual subjugation of black people after the Civil War. When the Southern economy ceased to be able to exploit blacks through slavery, whites utilized a loophole in the constitution that allowed de facto slavery through the prison industrial complex in a practice known as "convict leasing." For more discussion on the nuances of convict leasing, see Mancini's *One Dies, Get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South* (1996). Under the former system of racial domination, whites used

overt racial projects to socially control and economically exploit blacks. Even then, their racial projects had to be rearticulated with the changes in the racial society, exemplified in the move from slavery to convict leasing.

“Law and order” is one of the most powerful tools that has endured the test of time in continual efforts to socially control black populations. While Richard Nixon was competing in the Republican primary with Wallace, he was pressed rightward to accommodate Wallace’s populist campaign, and would use similar tactics. Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton were also infamous for their “tough on crime” stances, and the reverberation of these coded racial projects are still felt by blacks today (Jaynes and Williams 1989).

In the 1960s, covert racial code words such as “law and order” were used as a similar mechanism. The impact of such code language is undeniable. Beginning in the 1960s, arrest and incarceration rates among blacks skyrocketed (Jaynes and Williams 1989) and police violence against blacks also rose (Sherman 1980:71-100). These disparities are attributed to legislative changes in the penal code as well as the iron fist “law and order” attitude politicians and law enforcement took in response to white fear of black crime (Hagan and Peterson 1995; Williams-Myers 1995). These figures all underscore that the rhetorically covert nature of the New Right’s racial projects do not make them any less damaging. The tangible impact political rhetoric has on black lives reinforces how viewing racism theoretically as a static phenomenon is inadequate. A white person in the early 1900s might have been opposed to slavery but in favor of convict leasing, much like a white person in the 1960s might have been opposed to convict leasing but in favor of zero-tolerance crime policies. These discrepancies would not be visible if the same standard of what qualifies as racism was used in each case.

During Wallace’s rally in Madison Square Garden in 1968, his most-attended rally to date, one demonstrator shouted through a bullhorn “Wallace talks about law-and-order! Ask him what state has the highest murder rate! The most rapes! The most armed robberies!” (Carter 1996:20). Wallace’s “law and order” rhetoric was framed in nonracial terms as an anti-violence policy. But Wallace never addressed violence in his home state. In fact, Wallace often embraced violence. His platform supported state-sanctioned violence against Civil Rights protestors, and he once said if protestors laid in front of his limousine like they did to Johnson, he would steamroll over them (Carter 1996). Further, Bill Jones, the national campaign director of Wallace’s 1964 presidential bid, admitted that they would often book venues for campaign events that they knew to be too small, so unruly crowds would form outside, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy in which disruptive protests

would bring positive press to Wallace’s campaign and legitimize his call for social control (Lowndes 2008). Not only was Wallace uniquely violent, but his supporters were as well. Fights during his rallies were common, and in Newark, Illinois, a band of far-right supporters organized into an armed white supremacist militia (Lowndes 2008). The core factor that determined Wallace’s support or opposition of a violent act was not the presence of violence itself, but the race of the perpetrator. This delineation exemplifies the racism intrinsic in Wallace’s calls for “law and order.”

Wallace used code words that were understood nationally, but also found geographic, ethnic, and class specific code words that he could pedal outside of the South. When in the North, Wallace racialized blacks through code language in terms of integrated housing and declining employment opportunities. When speaking to blue-collar workers, he told them that integrating unions would threaten job security and lead to a loss of their seniority rights, as hypothetical employers would clamor to obey diversity quotas. Many of the blue-collar workers he spoke to were Eastern European immigrants, eager to assimilate into whiteness (Litwack 1961; Roediger 1991; Williams-Myers 1995). Wallace embraced them, embroiling their anxieties about the influx of blacks into their neighborhoods and jobs. While Eastern European immigrants haven’t always been accepted in conservative politics, Wallace’s primary target was black people, and any whites that shared his fears were admitted into his tent as racial victims of the “Other” (Lowndes 2008). Wallace also fear-mongered middle class suburbanites, warning that housing integration would force homeowners to sell to anyone, “even if it’s a man with green eyes and blue teeth” (Lowndes 2008:85). Of course, this was more subversive, coded language, as there was no reasonable fear of a man with green eyes and blue teeth moving in next door— that terror was reserved for black people.

Wallace performed better than anyone expected in the 1968 presidential race. He received 10 million votes and won five states in the deep South. Pollsters were also surprised by clusters of support found in Northern industrial cities (Ross 1976), a testament to the effectiveness of his racial appeals to the Eastern European working class. Social scientists at the time struggled to understand how Wallace’s racial campaign was so successful. Due to the prior theoretical framing of racism as an individual rather than societal problem, many attributed Wallace’s successes to the uneducated nature of working class people. An analysis of the Wisconsin primary, however, showed many of his supporters were from middle class backgrounds (Ross 1976). Wallace demonstrated how racism exists among all demographics of whites, a fact that became clear when he polled higher

than both Richard Nixon and the democratic candidate Hubert Humphrey among young white men of all classes and regions up until as late as three weeks before the election (The Gallup Opinion Index 1972). Understanding the national implications of the pervasive effect of racism was key to Nixon's campaign and presidency.

## THE SILENT MAJORITY

Goldwater was the frontiersman in covert racial politics. He tapped into a pool of white resentment that would be extracted and mobilized for decades to come. However, in the process of doing so, he was branded a racist and extremist. Wallace learned from Goldwater to an extent, crafting a populist campaign centered around what the 'people' feel. He was able to articulate his racism using a more colloquial tongue and transmit code words across regional divisions. However, Wallace's campaign was divisive, angry, and too fringe to lead to success. Ultimately, both Goldwater and Wallace worked as pioneers to forge the path for Richard Nixon, their poised and polished successor.

Gearing up for the 1968 presidential race, Richard Nixon was a decisive centrist. Goldwater's defeat taught Nixon that if he was to appeal to racial sentiments as Goldwater had, he would have to be more subtle. Nixon made liberal compromises early in the race –

supporting civil rights and the welfare state to a certain extent (Lowndes 2008). However, Nixon did not entirely turn his back on the whites who supported Wallace and Goldwater. The two years prior to the election were a zig-zag of rhetoric and policy proposals in an effort to appease both moderate Republicans and Southern segregationists and lay the groundwork for a coalition he would come to refer to by many names, but most famously as "the silent majority."

The GOP did extremely well in the 1966 midterm elections due to a myriad of factors, principally an intensification of urban disorder, alleged spike in crime rates, and increased presence of blacks in the workforce (Lowndes 2008). All of these factors led to the racial anxiety that Goldwater and Wallace were able to mobilize and reproduce through their rearticulated racism. This is consistent with Bonilla-Silva's (1997) theory that upward economic mobility of racial minorities can actually increase racial contestation, as whites become more concerned with an increasing visibility of minorities near them. Republicans did especially well in the South, causing the national party to gift more delegates to Southern states for the upcoming presidential election. Their electoral success intensified Nixon's

need to lock arms with Southern white constituents.

In order to maintain his illusion of centrism, Nixon engaged in multiple rearticulations of Wallace's and Goldwater's already rearticulated racial projects, even further removing issues from their racial origins and implications. On the issue of segregation, Nixon would not even advocate for it under the banner of "state's rights," as he saw this to be a downfall in Goldwater's campaign (Lowndes 2008:111). For example, when Southern school systems were foot-dragging on integration efforts, he did not use the "freedom to choose" code phrase, but rather made a more nuanced constitutional approach, further rearticulating that the issue was actually the Supreme Court decision's phrase "with all deliberate speed." To this end, he agreed to halt funding for openly segregationist schools, but was incredibly relaxed in his interpretation of the speed with which these schools needed to be integrated. When questioned on busing initiatives, he once again rearticulated Wallace's argument of a usurpation of parental choice, debating not that the initiatives were ideologically wrong, but rather that they are simply counterproductive to the advancement of blacks (Carter 1993). Finally, put in a sticky situation in which Wallace was pushing Nixon to be more racially conservative, rather than engaging in Wallace's level of racist rhetoric, he argued a different dimension. Nixon flipped the race on its head, declaring that a vote for Wallace was actually a vote for Hubert Humphrey, as an electoral split would defer the election to the Democratically-controlled House of Representatives (Carter 1996). These examples all show how Nixon performed the calculus necessary to be able to strategically court Southern segregationists without succumbing to the same fate as his predecessors.

However, not all code words needed to be rearticulated. 'Law and order' proved to be a staple of Nixon's campaign, as race riots raged across the United States (Meyers 1997) and whites felt a growing need for stability and comfort from the state. Nixon was more cautious in his usage, even acknowledging growing discontentment and speaking directly to critics, "to those who say that law and order is a code word for racism, here is a reply: our goal is justice – justice for every American" (Lowndes 2008:114). However, Nixon's campaign outreach to black communities was virtually nonexistent. He was not speaking to blacks, or to "every American," but to his white supporters. Articulating that "law and order" wasn't racist assuaged white voters' cognitive dissonance while still invoking a need for the social control of blacks. Interestingly, after viewing his own campaign television ad attacking the United States' supposed decline in social order, Nixon casually responded, "It's all about law and order and the damn Negro-Puerto Rican

groups out there" (Zeitz 2016). The dichotomy between his public and private dialogue reveals the true nature of his strategic racism.

Once Nixon won the election, he enjoyed a brief two-year period of relatively liberal racial policy. He introduced the Family Assistance Plan, a remodel of the welfare program with a specific intent in increasing black wealth, income, and employment. Similarly, he also introduced the Philadelphia Plan, a mandate that required federal contractors to present timetables and reports on how they planned to diversify their workforce. Neither of these proposals were popular among conservatives, but they were part of Nixon's early seemingly disorganized attempts to appeal to more racially liberal constituents.

As a president rather than a candidate, Nixon was able to use alternative avenues to appeal to Southern voters without appearing too fringe. He allowed his Vice President and political appointees to verbalize racism that his electoral goals barred him from saying himself. Nixon's Vice President was Spiro Agnew, a border state governor of Maryland who rose to fame after scolding a group of black civil rights leaders (Carter 1996). Nixon let Agnew campaign in Southern states and take a hardline approach on the likes of criminals and welfare cheats, while Nixon engaged in less divisive political discourse. Nixon also appointed Daniel Moynihan, a Democrat, as his advisor on urban affairs. Moynihan was a liberal, but one who engaged in what Bonilla-Silva (1997) refers to as "cultural racism," or the ascription of cultural differences as the cause of discrepancies in social and economic outcomes between races (p. 72). Moynihan situated the matriarchal family structure in black communities as the cause for persistent black poverty. Nixon also appointed two segregationist Supreme Court nominations, knowing they would never pass a vote in the Senate, as a symbolic gesture to his continual support of white Southerners (Carter 1996). Nixon's usage of his political appointees and his Vice President were newly invented further rearticulations, as now Nixon could engage in racism without even saying a word.

Nixon's relatively centrist tenure was short-lived. Two prevailing publications would mark the Nixon presidency's shift towards racial conservatism in the early 1970s. Up until then, there was little consensus on who made up Nixon's "silent majority." Most conclusions led to a negative definition – they were the non-rioters, the non-protestors, the non-shouters (Lowndes 2008). However, in 1969, the young but supremely qualified Nixon strategist Kevin Phillips published *The Emerging Republican Majority*. He analyzed electoral data from the 1960s and came up with a thesis that, to his credit, was correct. He argued "ethnic and cultural division has so often

shaped American politics that, given the immense midcentury impact of Negro enfranchisement and integration, reaction to this change almost inevitably has to result in political realignment" (Phillips 1969:22). He saw the new emerging "silent majority" as composed primarily of suburban middle class folks who the New Right leaders could mobilize electorally using structural racism. Using my earlier definition of the New Right, we can now see that the "silent majority" Nixon referred to was the coalition that the New Right elites and intellectuals represented.

Phillips openly advocated for the use of coded racial politics (Omi and Winant 2015), and argued in favor of the enfranchisement of blacks because it would inflame the racial resentment whites held and speed up their transition from Democrat to Republican (Carter 1996). Democratic pollsters Richard Scammon and Ben Wattenberg published a similar report, *The Real Majority*, in 1970, arguing that the solution to the race issue was for the Democratic Party to "temper its pro-black stance" (Haney López 2014:25). Following these reports, Harry Dent, an advisor to Nixon, said the Republican Party should "follow Phillips' plan," but "disavow it publicly" (Carter 1996:44). Phillips' plan was clear in its usage of racism, but Nixon's commitment to more subversive racial tactics restricted him from open support.

After the publication of Phillips' and Scammon's reports, Nixon all but abandoned his more moderate policies, like the Family Assistance Plan. He fired key civil rights enforcement officials, forced resignations from liberal cabinet members, and pursued a much more racially conservative agenda (Carter 1996). This shift once again exemplifies how calculated and strategic the New Right's inflammation of white supremacy and racial resentment was. Nixon would go on to adhere to Phillips' advice and engage in implicit racism on the national stage until his resignation in 1974, and the collective force of actors such as Goldwater, Wallace, and Nixon, would entrench implicit racism in American politics for decades to come.

## DISCUSSION

Using a theoretical framework derived from Bonilla-Silva, Michael Omi, and Howard Winant, I situate the rise and subsequent popularity of the New Right in the context of the larger racial society. This paper argues that the New Right Movement was a result of, among other factors, conservative political entrepreneurs realizing and subsequently capitalizing on deeply held racist beliefs by whites that were brought to the surface during the Civil Rights Movement. The leaders of the New Right—Barry Goldwater,

George Wallace, and Richard Nixon—spent a collective decade politically maneuvering the unsteady terrain of racist rhetoric to find a balance that allowed whites to engage in racism without feeling racist. This came in the form of rearticulated racism, the usage of implicit racial projects such as code words.

My research contributes to the existing body of literature in a few ways. First, I provide a substantive definition of the New Right that encompasses the inextricably linked racial motives and partisan nature of the movement. I further explore Wallace's double standard on the issue of violence, and conceptualize Nixon's political appointments as a form of rearticulated racism. Finally, I consolidate existing literature on the primary actors of the New Right, and situate it within a theoretical framework. The critical race theories utilized in my research mention the New Right in passing, but do not sufficiently extrapolate the details and nuances of the movement and its relation to the United States' racial society (Omi 2015; Bonilla-Silva 1997). Likewise, the historical and political scholarship from which I pull much of the paper's evidence does not provide a sound theoretical apparatus to interpret the motives and actions of the New Right. By combining these two fields, my work makes for easier interpretation and understanding of the New Right movement, assigns agency to the political leaders at the time, and builds a theoretical and historical foundation from which future research can extrapolate.

This paper proves relevant and timely, as I outline and explain many of the same racial projects that are being utilized by politicians today. Understanding the theoretical and historical context of their actions is necessary to navigate the current political climate and combat implicit racism. Clear parallels can be drawn between the 1960s New Right and current conservative politicians, the most glaring example being the election of Donald Trump, a president who has unabashedly utilized racial epithets (Leonhardt and Prasad Philbrick 2018), advocated for violence against his protestors in a similar manner as Wallace (Diamond 2016), and consistently uses code words such as "law and order" (The White House 2017). This paper suggests that Trump's election was in part a reaction to the shift in the racial paradigm that was brought upon by the election of the first black man as President of the United States of America.

There are an infinite number of topics within New Right literature that merit further investigation, such as the intersection of gender and class, how the New Right has impacted races and ethnicities other than blacks, and which racial projects are still being used today. These issues and more should be expanded upon in future studies, as they hold both historical and

contemporary value in understanding how implicit racism is employed in public discourse. Historical and sociological analysis of racism is infinitely pertinent to uprooting the underlying motives of rearticulated racial projects both then and now.

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# Narrative Memory and Cultural Trauma: Religious Interpretations of 9/11

Emma Tamplin  
Belmont University

## Abstract

Collective memory is inscribed into narratives and transmitted through various cultural objects such as political speeches, commemorations, history textbooks, and cultural scripts. As these narratives are interpreted in the ongoing present, memories are revisited and revised. It is the concern of the cultural analyst within memory studies to understand how and why these narratives create, constrict, and contest social knowledge. Narrative memory emerges through the interplay of structural forces and individual agency. While research adequately tracks the structural factors involved in the transmission of narratives and the rhetorical devices used in individual interpretations of the past, research has yet to show how understandings—as they are transmitted through various interpretive frameworks—shapes narrative memory. Ascertaining the operative narrative frameworks, and the instances in which these frameworks diverge and converge, is essential to map the evolution of narrative memory and its effect on social relations, organization, and redress. Through content analysis of Protestant sermons addressing the cultural trauma of September 11, 2001, I ask how social knowledge evolves as “it moves between different social contexts and is appropriated by different social actors” (Jovchelovitch et al. 2008: 431). Findings show the use of biblical and national metanarratives of romantic progress, individualism, and victory. Themes vary in significant ways by drawing on the distinct genres of Tragedy and Dualism, suggesting implications for group relations and civic (dis)engagement.

## Keywords

collective memory, genre, dualism, tragedy, theodicies

## INTRODUCTION

While consisting solely of immaterial symbols of an imaginary past, narrative memory enables and determines the future trajectories of individuals and groups (Alexander 2004; Olick and Robbins 1998; Pickering and Keightley 2006). Narrative frameworks are the sense-making mechanisms we use to understand our world and establish continuity within it: individuals construct their identity, communities establish character, and collective memories emerge through intersubjective narration of the past. Rhetorical Genres and strategies characterize national *and* autobiographical narrative memory, connecting the individual to their social group (Degloma 2010; Griswold 1987; Keightley 2010; Lauger 2014; Olick and Robbins 1998; Schudson 1989; Tavory 2014). This is because narrative:

is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; indeed narrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative; all classes, all human groups, have their stories [...] Like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural. (Barthes and Duisit: 1975)

National metanarratives, for example, connect narrative memories found in various cultural objects such as political speeches, commemorations, history textbooks, and cultural scripts that are transmitted throughout the public sphere (Alphen and Carretero 2015; Hewer and Roberts 2012; Onwuachi-Wiig 2016). What and how we remember; therefore, is significant because “the past, as well as that which we feel, perceive, think and talk about in the present, can only come into being through the stories we choose to remember and the manner in which we tell them” (Jovchelovitch 2012:442). Memory studies seek to understand how narratives of the past are (re)interpreted by individuals in the ongoing present.

Social ruptures and traumatic events provide observable circumstances in which autobiographical and collective memory intersect. The events of September 11, 2001, for example, marked a rupture in the continuity of a national narrative. The question *where were you on 9/11* has been appropriated as an icebreaker prompt by which people from across the country align themselves with one another in sharing their own particular memory of that day. The narrative of 9/11 constitutes a turning and reference point for both national consequences and individual identity construction. The collective memory of 9/11 is rooted in experiential memory and subsequent (re)narrations of the event and is therefore not static. Consider current college students, for example, who have a limited memory of the event, or no memory of it at all. Having been likely under the age of five,

we do not remember much before the event and at the time were not privy to the political conditions and ramifications of the attack. Instead, we rely on family accounts, documentaries, schools, and churches to supplement our personally limited memory of that day. My own understanding of 9/11 relies on a collection of dissonant and collated memories, revived and revised every time I am subject to an airport pat-down or an intercom message reminding me to report any “suspicious behavior.” These memories include, for example, a panicking mother glued to the news channel in 2001, a Sunday school prayer for President Bush’s wisdom in war two years later, and a pastor proclaiming that while we are called to love our enemies, we should also remember and be thankful for the divine precision of the Seal Team 6 sniper. As memories are (re)narrated in the ongoing present, they take different forms over time and across contexts.

As narratives are both institutionalized and internalized by individuals, their disparate interpretations influence worldviews and in turn affect social relations, organization, and redress (Griffin and Bollen 2009; Jovchelovitch 2012; Prager 2015). It is therefore a concern of the cultural sociologist to understand how and why narrative memory is constructed, contested, and changed. Personal and national sociality participate in an intimate dialectic. Michael Schudson (1989) stresses the interplay of both forces: “The study of culture is the study of what meanings are available for use in a given society from the wider range of possible meanings; the study of culture is equally the study of what meanings people choose and use from available meanings” (p.156). As various groups with distinct and perhaps conflicting interests mediate narrative memory, they imbue it with polyphasic complexity. In order to understand the rhetorical processes by which narrative memory is constructed, contested, and changed over time and across contexts, this study asks how the narrative memory of 9/11 has been dialectically mediated by Protestant Christian institutions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Trauma, Social Rupture, and Theodicy

The events of September 11, 2001 represent an abrupt disruption to social organization and narrative continuity. Societal ruptures such as 9/11 function similarly to trauma, and often follow what can be characterized as traumatic events (Alexander 2004). According to Psychoanalyst Jeffrey Prager (2011), trauma is inscribed into the individual when “an event or series of events are remembered as so dangerous as to be impossible to preserve an equilibrating belief in a world that presumes our presence” (p. 429). In order to reorient and restore equilibrium, individuals who have

undergone trauma must find new security and recognition in the world (Alexander 2004; Prager 2015). In this way, a traumatic event consists of an emotional experience, and an interpretive reaction that takes place within an intersubjective discursive field (Eyerman 2013:43). Both societal rupture and traumatic events call for a present (re)interpretation of the disrupting event in order to successfully continue in the future. This in-between space of interpretation in the present is “the domain through which we continually mediate between subjective needs and desires and an external reality of limits and constraints” (Prager 2011:443). (Re)interpretation is both individual and collective because one cannot achieve recognition outside of the social context, and the social context cannot establish a new understanding of the past without the interpretive performances of individuals (Glaeser 2014). The validation of an adequate memorial form of the societal rupture and/or traumatic event—the success of the (re)interpretation to restore continuity—requires some degree of interpersonal recognition, and is therefore inherently social.

Traumatic events achieve recognition through intersubjective interpretation, enabled and determined by the use of shared narrative frameworks that serve as our sense-making mechanisms (White 1978; Jovchelovitch 2008; Barthes; Griswold 1989; Swidler 1986). In the case of societal rupture, a theodicy framework is employed to make sense of traumatic events. Theodicies, in the words of Christina Simko (2012), “represent attempts to articulate meaning under the most difficult conditions, when expectations about how the world ought to operate are deeply threatened” (p. 885). Through a rhetorical analysis of political speeches and commemorations following 9/11, Simko’s research illuminates the social significance of the specific theodicy genres employed by political carrier groups to make sense of the traumatic event. The societal rupture following the events of September 11, 2001 presented the United States, and specifically the government, with the difficult task of employing theodicies to interpret the event within a national metanarrative upon which to base future action. Simko found *Dualism* to be the primary genre that the Bush administration used to define the event. The dualistic genre defines individual tragedies as one instance in which evil has defeated good within the greater fight of Good versus Evil. *Dualism* stresses binaries such as Good and Evil, victim vs villain, victory and defeat, while stressing themes such as heroism and sacrifice. Simko’s (2012) work suggests that “From the *dualistic* perspective, the appropriate response to September 11 was to wage war—indeed, to wage war not only against a particular delimited enemy, a clear perpetrator, but against ‘terror’ even ‘evil,’ writ large” (p. 897). In the

dualistic frame, *Good* is always the eventual victor over *Evil*. The genre is characterized by the distinct boundaries it constructs between suffering victims and unjust villains.

### Carrier Groups and Genre

In addition to justifying political action, a theodicy genre can be employed to contest justifications by forging distinct interpretations of the same event. As Jeffrey Olick and Joyce Robbins (1998) explain, institutionalized memories “highlight not the simplicity or unity of national narratives, but the fact that they are essentially contested: memory sites and memory practices are central loci for ongoing struggles over identity” (p. 127). In addition to *Dualism*, for example, Simko identified the use of *Tragedy* in 9/11 commemorations. *Tragedy* is a genre distinct from dualism in that it utilizes literature and other cultural texts, avoids making explicit claims, and stresses themes of grief and loss. Ambiguity and complexity are thematized within the tragic framework, inviting individual introspection and interpretation. Because societal ruptures are characterized by debilitating disruption and discontinuity, they demand immediate attention on all levels of society through active interpretation, narration, and recognition. If the collective narrative was homogenous and effective throughout all institutions and individuals, continuity would be secured, sense maintained, and trauma nonexistent. The discontinuity “generated by” or “that characterizes” societal rupture requires collectivities to dialectically make sense of a traumatic event, engendering the emergence of multiple understandings (Fine and Corte 2014; Glaeser 2014; Tavory 2014; Wuthnow 2012b). While all theodicies are employed to answer the questions of *what/how/why/who* and *what now* in the wake of a societal rupture, answers and implied reactions differ according to the genre employed.

In the wake of a societal rupture, political carrier groups struggle to achieve recognition and a specific (re)interpretation by institutionalizing national narratives consistent with the carrier group’s interests, whether they be proactive military action or reparative domestic commemoration. The process by which theodicies make sense of societal ruptures doubles as the process by which traumatic events become *cultural* traumas, which “are not things, but processes of meaning making and attribution, a contentious contest in which various individuals and groups struggle to define a situation and to manage and control it” (Eyerman 2013:43). This is illustrated by the formal elements characterizing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. After the Vietnam War, the government was faced with the task of publicly commemorating a divisive event. To accommodate the multitude

of conflicting associations, opinions, and meanings about the Vietnam War operative in the public sphere, the memorial was designed to emphasize aspects of the event that bound *all* Americans together as opposed to those aspects that might call attention to the contentious nature of the war itself. The effect of the surface’s reflective texture inscribed with the names of those lost, alongside the title “Vietnam *Veterans* Memorial” (my emphasis), shifts the focus from the political ramifications of war to the remembered lost and remembering citizen (Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1991).

It is important to note, however, that narrative memories—even those embedded in institutionalized commemorations—are involved in an ever-changing process as collectivities construct and reconstruct understandings according to changing historical/political contexts (Alexander 2004; Molotch, Freudenburg, and Pausen 2000; Schudson 1989). As we have shown, carrier groups with “both ideal and material interests” and “particular discursive talents for articulating their claims—for what might be ‘meaning-making’—in the public sphere” (Alexander 2004:11), align themselves with and against already-established narratives as they are transmitted through institutions. A longitudinal study of the vast changes made in the May 4th commemorations at Kent State, for example, demonstrates the ways in which the narrative is contested and changed to accommodate conflicting understandings of the event according to emerging group interests (Steidl 2013). As understandings are transmitted throughout in a public sphere made up of ever-changing conditions of validation, narrative memories—even those embedded in institutionalized commemorations—are subject to ongoing contestation.

### Public Sphere and Cultural Scripts

In setting out to understand how a carrier group’s narrative is validated, cultural sociologists have identified mediating social forces comprising the public sphere, such as the media and everyday conversation, that co-determine the efficacy of a narrative (Onwuachi-Wiig 2016; Steidl 2013; Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1991). In addition to interpersonal recognition, narrative *resonance* characterizes the efficacy of a carrier group narrative, or the degree to which it is successful in establishing continuity in the direction of the specific and implied end (Fine and Corte 2014; Glaeser 2014; Tavory 2014; Wuthnow 2012b). Take for example the narrative surrounding the Emmett Till verdict, which constitutes an integral chapter in the narrative memory of the Civil Rights movement and influences political views even today (Griffin and Bowlen 2009). Angela Onwuachi’s (2016) analysis of Till’s

death and its aftermath suggests that the murder, far from being a traumatic event gruesome enough to engender societal rupture and demand reform, represented the everyday trauma experienced routinely by marginalized people. Onwuachi's (2016) argues that this profound resonance with *routine* trauma made the narrative effective in catalyzing the Civil Rights movement. In addition to harnessing widespread media attention, carrier groups such as the NAACP were able to forward a narrative with a resonance that invited active (re)interpretation and subsequent validation for the Civil Rights movement in the public sphere.

The degree to which a cultural trauma resonates in the public sphere determines the amount and variety of influence a particular narrative will have on orientations towards self and others, shaping social (re)organization and relations as a result (Jovchelovitch 2012; Pickering and Keightley 2006; Prager 2015). In the same way that different carrier groups employ genres suited to their distinct interests in narrating an event, cultural traumas are disparately adopted in the public sphere as they are transmitted and (re)interpreted over time and across contexts. In a rhetorical analysis of culturally significant debates, Jeffrey Guhin identifies two different interpretations of and reactions to the supposed "Death of Irony" in America, especially in the wake of 9/11. Some ("boosters") criticized its death, arguing that irony was good for American progress, while others ("knockers") believed irony was an impediment to American progress. In addition to identifying the ways understandings *diverge* as they are (re)interpreted in the public sphere, Guhin's research exemplifies the significance of the ways in which the diverging interpretations *converge*. While there was a clear divergence in knockers and boosters, the two converge in their shared desire to preserve a metanarrative of romantic progress that "could easily become another narrative and which must be protected as a result [...] a story Americans are constantly discussing, rewriting, reimagining, and striving to make true" (Guhin 2013:33). Differing interpretations are involved in the same conversation and dialectically construct boundaries of exclusion and inclusion, what is good and what is evil, and delineations of "us" and "them."

As narratives are transmitted through the public sphere and (re)interpreted by individuals, they shape collective *and* autobiographical memory. Subjected to the same intersubjective process of recognition and resonance, autobiographical pasts are (re)interpreted and (re)narrated through frameworks provided by the social group to which one belongs. As Hayden White (1978) contends, the individual's attempt to make sense of the past necessarily reflects community affiliations and interests, "by virtue

of his participation in the specific processes of sense-making which identify him as a member of one cultural endowment rather than another" (p. 481). The function of theodicy genres to support group interests by affording certain reactions while inhibiting others is reflected in the conversational strategies used to reconstruct autobiographical pasts through the use of cultural scripts. One such strategy identified across the literature is the temporally-divided self, or the rhetorical separation and disaffiliation with one's dissonant past in order to achieve recognition and secure future continuity through the acquisition of values consistent with the community in the present (DeGloma 2010; Meanwell 2013). In the same way theodicies secure future continuity through (re)interpretation and (re)narration of past events in the ongoing present, available cultural scripts are used to justify individual past behavior, establish present belonging, and preserve future continuity (Fine and Corte 2014; Glaeser 2014; Lauger 2014). Consistent with the effects of carrier group narratives, the strategic uses of cultural scripts in interpersonal conversation reflect perceptions of self, others, and broader social issues as they shape the conditions and possibilities of validation (DeGloma 2010; Fallin Hunzaker 2014; Glaeser 2014; Prager 2015; Tavory 2014).

### **Religious Interpretations and Mediations**

Narrative memory is enabled and determined by social conditions and interpersonal recognition as people (re)interpret the past with available sense-making mechanisms (Alphen and Carretero 2015; Degloma 2010; Fallin Hunzaker 2014; Griffin and Bollen 2009; Jovchelovitch 2008; Onwuachi-Wig 2016; Lauger 2014; Meanwell 2013; Tavory 2014). The ongoing (re)interpretation of events can account for the malleability of memory, which is both the result of varying group interests and "an inevitable consequence of the fact that we interpret the world—including the past—on the basis of our own experience and within cultural frameworks" (Olick 1998:128). Narrative frameworks and cultural scripts are the limitations and tools by which individuals construct identities, align with communities, and respond to narratives transmitted throughout the public sphere (Fine 2010; Griswold 1989; Swidler 1986). While research tracks the structural forces involved in the transmission of narratives and the rhetorical strategies used in the ongoing (re)interpretation of the past, research has yet to consider how narratives—as they are transmitted through *multiple* frameworks—reshape narrative memory.

On the Sunday following September 11, 2001, Church leaders had the difficult task of making theological sense of a traumatic event for their

communities (Alexander 2004; Smelser 2004). In order for a group to secure continuity in the wake of societal ruptures that “prevail and displace the group’s center of gravity,” Maurice Halbwachs (1992) argues that “readaptation is required so that the various tendencies of all the institutions constituting the common way of life are adjusted to each other” (p. 86). For Protestant Christianity, this entails reconciling human suffering with a sovereign God by narrating current events and mediating political narratives through an interpretation of the Bible’s lessons, commandments, and promises. As it situates itself—using its own terminology—*in* though not *of* the world, Christianity defines itself as *a part of* though distinctly *apart from* normative culture. As such, Church leaders are charged with the dynamic and ongoing task of acknowledging, defining, and instilling interpretations of social ruptures and events in the public sphere as an institution both distinct from and operating in relation to culture. In his theoretical contribution to the study of collective memory, Halbwachs (1992) further explains, “Just as the religious group, while opposed to profane society, nevertheless remains implicated with it, so the theology of each period is inspired by a dialectic which is partially that of the time” (p.117). Conversations conducted by the State, religious groups, and the public sphere are not constructions of entirely disparate narratives, but are each engaged in the ongoing dialectic that constructs, contests, and changes collective memory at large.

Identifying mediating frameworks, and the ways they diverge and converge, is essential to map the narrative memory of traumatic events and their effects on social relations, organization, and redress. Research shows social conditions that enable the validation of national narratives and the rhetorical strategies used to (re)interpret individual autobiographical pasts. Narrative memory;however, is enabled and determined by the dialectical *interplay* of structural forces and interpersonal (re)interpretation (Alexander 2004:10). A theoretical perspective that reflects the dialectical process of individual and collective memory must consider the interpretive frameworks used as narratives are transmitted through various social groups (Griswold 1907; Hewer and Roberts 2012; Jovchelovitch 2001; Schudson 1989). As Griswold (1907) notes, “it must be remembered that every element on the explanatory side of the heuristic is linked to or separated from its neighbors via social institutions. Flows of influence are not automatic but are channeled and mediated” (p. 25). This suggests a need to track the rhetorical processes by which genres and rhetorical strategies mediate the national and autobiographical dialectic as they are transmitted throughout various groups with distinct and perhaps conflicting interests. As Sandra Jovchelovitch (2012) explains:

it is pertinent to ask how different voices and social groups, holding different interests and powers have featured in these narratives and shaped this mythological core [...] with particular attention to how the narrative architecture of social representations articulates the ways in which communities deal with the historical past. (p. 441)

In setting out to understand the construction, contestation, and change of narrative memory, one must consider how ongoing (re)interpretations of autobiographical carrier groups, such as religious institutions, mediate national narratives.

## METHODS

This study aims to expand research on the cultural impact of 9/11 through a rhetorical analysis of Protestant sermons delivered immediately after 9/11 and commemorating the event in following years. Drawing upon and extending Simko’s research approach, this study aims to identify the theodicies employed by a religious carrier group with the specific interest of providing a *religious* interpretation of national events. In so doing, I code for and compare genres, national (meta)narratives, and various rhetorical strategies across Protestant Christian interpretations. Building on Simko and Guhin’s findings, this analysis seeks to understand how these mediated narratives—distinct in their goal of reconciling human suffering with *divine sovereignty*—diverge and converge from political commemorations, the American ideal of romantic progress, and the themes emerging across Protestant sermons.

## Data and Measurements

The sermons and commentaries I collected are from Protestant congregations with a average weekly attendances of 2,000-10,000 in areas across the United States. These include Presbyterian, Baptist, and non-denominational churches in New York City, New York; Washington, DC; Minneapolis, MN; Dallas, TX; Louisville, KY; and Los Angeles, CA. I chose to limit my data to Protestant denominations in order to avoid any major variations in doctrinal tradition that might render a comparative analysis invalid, maintaining this study’s commitment to understanding how distinct carrier groups with specific interests diverge and converge from national metanarratives.

Given that these congregations and pastors have a relatively high influence in their region and even nationally, many of the sermons were already transcribed and published online. I collected the remainder of the

sermons from audio/video archives online and subsequently transcribed them. While the majority of the messages I gathered were sermons, a handful of the pastors also have other media outlets where they address 9/11, such as radio shows and blogs. For this reason, the data size (in terms of word count) varies for each source.

While my research design attempts to provide a thorough analysis of data from a *geographically* representative sample, the scope of this study limits the generalizability of its findings. The primary goal of this research is to explore and broaden a framework for identifying how narrative memory is constructed, contested, and changed through a rhetorical analysis of mediated narratives in specific contexts and over time. The import of the findings is primarily theoretical in nature, sharpening analytical tools conducive to a rhetorical approach to a study of narrative memory within cultural sociology.

### Coding Scheme

In my analysis, I coded the narrative frameworks used to structure the theodicean explanation of the event. Consistent with the *Temporally-Divided* framework, each sermon interprets loss in the liminal present in order to explain how this event occurred, why it occurred, and what that means for our present. Within this framework, the liminal present is defined through an “awakening” narrative in which the disrupting event clarifies the past and preserves future security (DeGloma 2010; Meanwell 2013). During the first phase of coding, I take note of when and how the interpretations draw on the Bible to narrate an *explanation* for suffering, provide *instructions* for how to proceed in the present, and secure the future fulfillment of God’s *promises*. As each sermon identifies with the cultural trauma by following the *Temporally-Divided* framework, each narrative is connected by a biblical and national metanarrative emphasizing romantic progress, individualism, and the victory of Good over Evil. Table 1 provides a example of this analysis.

After initially coding for explanations of the past, instructions for the present, and promises of the future, I took note of how each is delivered by coding for *identifiers*, *references*, and *metaphors*. The words used to *identify* the cause and nature of the event characterize the qualitative import of each distinct interpretation. Similarly, biblical scripture, other cultural texts, related historical events, and/or personal anecdotes, are *referenced* to make sense of the event and frame a particular narrative. Additionally, the *metaphors* employed to substantiate a particular interpretation characterize the degree of authority the sources *referenced* have in narrating the event, drawing boundaries between Christianity and the public sphere, and mobilizing

individual responses. The manner and degree to which certain sources are *referenced* and *identifiers* are used characterizes the way the interpretations diverge and converge with other narratives.

As has been shown in previous research, the *Temporally-Divided* framework is not specific to religious interpretations. Similarly, *identifiers*, *references*, and *metaphors* determine and are determined by the genres employed in political as well as religious theodicies. Specific to a religious carrier group, however, is the dialectic it must constantly mediate between *temporal* and *spiritual* worlds. Halbwachs (1992) expounds on this aspect of the religious construction of narrative memory:

although religious memory attempts to isolate itself from temporal society, it obeys the same laws as every collective memory: it does not preserve the past but reconstructs it with the aid of the material traces, rites, texts, and traditions left behind by the past, and with the aid moreover of recent psychological and social data, that is to say, with the present. (p. 119)

Formally, Protestant Christianity defines itself by distinguishing God’s rule from the State’s; substantively, the interpretations define themselves by delineating the extent to which what is spiritual and what is material relate to one another. For this reason, I coded instances in which the boundaries between temporal and spiritual realities are drawn, literally and thematically. Table 2 provides an example of this analysis.

Finally, I determined the genres employed by each narrative by coding the themes emerging from the *identifiers*, *references*, and *metaphors* used to interpret the event within the *Temporally-Divided* framework. The major themes emerging from explanations of the cause and nature of the event include *God’s Unknown Purposes*, *The Presence of Evil/Sin*, and *Islamic Ideology*. These explanations for the cause and nature of the event are the church’s foundation for instructing individuals in the present and its answer to the question, what now? Themes of the present include instructions to *Fight* (prevent forces of evil that defy Christianity), *Mend* (rebuild temporal communities and social relations), *Repent* (use the event as a reminder to individually secure one’s future), and *Hope/Trust in God Alone* (do not take comfort in the world but wait for salvation to come). Each of these interpretations and instructions are justified by the future victory of Good over Evil in store according to the Bible. Major themes of the promised future, emphasized in varying degrees, include *Resurrection/Restoration*, *Salvation*, and *Judgement/Justice*.

**Table 1**

What and How? <i>Explanations of the Past</i>	What Now? <i>Instructions in the Present</i>	Why? <i>Promises for the future</i>
The murder of the Galileans is clearly moral evil, a premeditated crime-just like the terrorist acts in New York and Washington. ... The falling tower in Siloam killed eighteen persons. The falling of the World Trade Center twin towers alone may have killed over 20,000 persons.	Jesus took the occasion of the tower's fall and turned it into a call for national and individual repentance. Given our assurance that God is in control, and working even in this unspeakable tragedy to accomplish His will, dare we not see the horrors in New York and Washington as an opportunity for America-and Americans-to repent as well? The parable of the fig tree makes the warning clear. The owner of the vineyard demands that his fig tree produce fruit, but there is no fruit. Cut it down, he orders. Why does it even take up space in my vineyard? The vineyard-keeper pleads for time to The vineyard-keeper pleads for time to tend the tree that it might bear fruit. ... According to Romans 13, earthly rulers have not only the right but the responsibility to protect their citizens from such murderous acts, to uphold justice, and to maintain law, authority and order. Justice should be swift and order must be restored. ... We live in a real world of real evil and our national leaders bear full responsibility to ensure that the murderers are punished and the threat removed.	God will judge all of us, and we will bear the full wrath of His judgment except we be found in Christ, covered by His own righteousness imputed to us by faith. Evil is real, not illusory, but evil will never have the last word. The righteous judgment of God will establish justice, and display His glory among the nations ...  This much we know, every day we live brings us one day closer to the Lord's return. Furthermore, we know that the Lord's return will bring the justice and righteousness for which we pray. In that light, we pray Maranatha, Lord come quickly.

**Table 2**

	What and How? <i>Explanations of the Past</i>	What Now? <i>Instructions in the Present</i>	Why? <i>Promises for the future</i>
<i>Identifiers</i>	Murder, crime, evil	Repent, opportunity, punish, protect, remove	Judgement, justice, glory, righteousness, return
<i>References</i>	Luke 13	Luke 13, Matthew 24	the Lord's return and final judgement and justice [i.e. Revelations]
<i>Metaphors</i>	Falling Tower of Siloam	Falling Tower of Siloam, Parable of the fig	Bearing good fruit, answered prayers

## FINDINGS

All the sermons agree on God's sovereign role in the event, as He is attributed with control over the affairs of the world according to the fulfillment of an eventual victory promised in the Bible. In this sense, it would appear that each sermon fits within the genre of *Dualism*. These interpretations and themes differ significantly; however, on the characteristics of God's sovereignty and its implications for individuals who, for example, fly planes into buildings or those who die seemingly senseless deaths. While drawn from the same sources within the same *Temporally-Divided* framework, answers to the questions how/why/who and what now forward different interpretations. The themes emerging from the various explanations provided, instructions given, and promises emphasized represent elements of both *Dualism* and *Tragedy*.

### Dualism

Those sermons which emphasized *Islamic Ideology*, tended to be more resolute about concrete public affairs which align with or contradict God's purposes according to Christian doctrine (Table 2). Across all of the sermons, this group constitutes 64 percent of the times the words "evil," "murder," "terror," or "rebellion" are used and just 16 percent of the instances in which the words "suffering," "tragedy," "death," and "injustice" are used to explain the event. This group is the most explicit and concrete on the cause of the temporal event and about what distinguishes the enemy from the Christian.

In his message delivered in Louisville, Kentucky, Albert Mohler (2001)

describes the events as an “Attack on US and God’s dignity, God’s creatures, God’s law, and God’s Glory.” John Macarthur (2001b) of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California argues the attack was “meant to kill people, cripple the nation, devastate the economy, damage the military.” He further explained, “The idea was to send America a message that there was a greater force than America, a greater power than the super power America. An extremist, Islamic, suicidal group of murderers were asserting themselves as more powerful than this great nation” (2001b).

In direct contrast the *Tragedy* genre, these sermons are explicit about the causes of the attack, God’s sovereign rule over all social institutions, organizations, and groups, and the Christian’s calling to act on God’s behalf within social affairs and relations. For example, the temporal government is understood to be biblically sanctioned to administer justice because “Any nation that would allow evildoers to go unpunished is an affront to God’s dignity” (Mohler 2001). With varying degrees of association, the ideology of Islam, moral relativism, secularism, pluralism, postmodernism, and academia are seen to be correlative of the evil which caused the event (MacArthur 2001; Mohler 2001, 2006, 2016). These ideologies are also suggestive of whom or what Christians should actively avoid, convert, or eradicate in the temporal present.

While these sermons emphasize the *Justice/Judgement* promised for the future, the primary focus is on the present Christian calling to identify Evil and *Fight* on behalf of Good in the liminal temporal present. Mohler (2001a) suggests, for example, that “Christians will face unprecedented opportunities to share the Gospel and tell sinners of salvation through Jesus Christ.” In the years following the event, the church was criticized because it “dropped the ball by not talking about evil and the demonic” of Islam, which is in direct opposition to Christianity because “No Muslim can be at peace until there is the rule of the Quran throughout the entire earth” (2006). Sermons commemorating the event continue to emphasize God’s sovereign rule over worldly affairs, attributing not only 9/11 but also subsequent wars, economic collapses, and natural disasters to God’s decisions (Busenitz 2011; MaArthur 2016; Mohler 2006, 2016).

### **Tragedy**

The sermons that most explicitly utilize the genre of *Tragedy* eschew temporal explanations of the event, attributing the event to *God’s Unknown Purposes* and avoid attributing blame to any specific group (Table 2). Across all of the sermons, this group constitutes 38 percent of the times the words

“suffering,” “tragedy,” “death,” and “injustice” are used and just 5 percent of the instances in which the words “evil,” “murder,” “terror,” or “rebellion” are used. These messages are less concerned with providing explanations, and instead thematize the ambiguity of loss, draw on anecdotes and external texts (not including the bible), and turn the attention to the individual experience of suffering (Forbes 2001; Keller 2001, 2006)

While the event is interpreted with spiritual themes, the instructions given were the only ones that emphasized the importance of rebuilding community through temporal restoration. On the Sunday immediately following the events, Timothy Keller (2001) of Manhattan’s Redeemer Church repeatedly stresses the need to become “useful for our neighbors and city.” Similarly, Dr. James Forbes (2001) of Riverside Church addresses the city: “New York, our skyline has lost some teeth, but the body is strong, and either by natural process, or by implantation, there will be a smile again.” Ten years after the event, Forbes (2011) explains that the event must be “more than a memory. It has to reflect a new resolve to build community.” These messages were the only ones to explicitly instruct *against* distinguishing Christianity from other groups, internalizing a racial bias, and/or dissociating oneself from the temporal world.

In regard to the future, these sermons emphasize the *restoration* promised for the temporal world based on the promise of a *resurrection*. In a sermon given on the five-year anniversary of 9/11, Keller (2006) again stresses that “If the resurrection is true, then...everything sad is going to come untrue.” These interpretations associate death in particular with the general death that must preempt the *Resurrection* to come. The first group privileges *Tragedy* by remaining ambiguous about *God’s Purposes*, instructing individuals to *Mend* in the present, and emphasizing the *Resurrection and Restoration* in store for the future.

### **Tragic Dualism and Duralistic Tragedy**

Overall, the explanations and instructions are consistent with individualism and romantic progress. The effect of this premise is twofold. On the one hand, it eschews pointed fingers by emphasizing the general Evil in the world, the inevitability of death, and/or the limitations of our ability to understand God’s specific purposes. On the other hand, it turns the attention back to the individual, establishing a framework by which individuals are to orient themselves in the world according the calling to promote the victory of Good over evil forces in the present. The nuances of the liminal present are of specific interest to this study, as they have

implications for one's orientation towards social realities. While narratives distinguished themselves in their use of the genres *Dualism* and *Tragedy*, the dominant interpretation of the event was not particularly dualistic or tragic. The most frequent identifiers used to explain the event were "calling" or "reminder" and the most frequent instruction given in reaction to this calling was to "repent." It is for this reason that I propose to view *Tragedy* and *Dualism* on a spectrum connected by a biblical and national metanarrative. Through identifying the respective strategies used to create these differing interpretations, I have designated a hybrid genre that fits within a *Tragedy* and *Dualism* genre spectrum.

The hybrid group rests in between *Dualism* and *Tragedy* spectrum by attributing the event to *The Presence of Evil/Sin* in general, instructing individuals to *Hope/Trust in God Alone*. This group constitutes 45 percent of the times the identifiers "suffering," "tragedy," "death," and "injustice" and 64 percent of the instances in which the words "evil," "murder," "terror," or "rebellion" are used to describe the event. In one message delivered to Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, John Piper (2001a) attributes the events to the fact that "Terrorists rebelled against God and everything that God is." Less pointed is Todd Wagner (2001) of Watermark Church in Fort Worth, Texas, who described the event as "an example of the horrors that happen when he is absent from the hearts of men." In order to generalize the nature of the event to the *Absence of God* and *Presence of Sin* (table 2), 9/11 is analogized to other tragedies such as natural disasters and other acts of violence (Piper 2001a, 2001b, 2011; Wagner 2001; 2002). The breadth of adjectives and connotations in this case are used to recognize evil and suffering as an inevitable consequence of living in the temporal world.

While attributing the event to the inevitable *Presence of Evil/Sin* implies a distinct enemy, it turns the attention to the individual Christian. Across all of the sermons, this section constitutes 68 percent of the times the words "calling," "reminder," and "glory" are used to explain the event and 82 percent of the times the word "repent" is used to instruct individuals on how to respond. The event functions as a calling for Christians as it reminds them of the essential difference between Good and Evil. In the words of Mark Dever (2001) of Capitol Hill Baptist in Washington D.C., "The Lord has set apart the godly, we are set apart in Christ." Wagner (2001) explained that "Jesus came to present not peace but division, to present a choice" and admonishes his congregation to fear God "because you are a sinner who will meet God's Judgement, unless you deal with Him today." While these interpretations imply a battle between Good and Evil in the

world, they also focus on ensuring that individuals repent so that they do not receive the fate in store for those who die without belief in individual *Salvation* through Jesus. These sermons generalized the cause of the event, emphasized the future *Judgement* in store for everybody is emphasized in these sermons, and instructed individuals to *Trust and Hope in God Alone* because it is the only way to establish individual *Salvation* in the future.

## CONCLUSION

Narrative frameworks and rhetorical strategies imbue the past with a cultural, mythological, and traditional core that shapes narrative memory in the present. Narrative memory is mediated with multiple narrative frameworks as it is transmitted through groups, enabling a dialectical interplay of national and religious interests. From the polyphasic conversation emerges a complex narrative memory that shapes orientations to the present and directions for the future. Religious carrier groups situate the temporal present inside of a spiritual future by drawing on a biblical past to interpret current events. The explanations are provided within a national and biblical metanarrative that emphasizes the victory of Good over Evil. In this, metanarrative traumatic events, such as the attacks of September 11, 2001, are defined as temporary blips en route to the eventual victory of Good. The explanations provided serve to make the national event relevant to the individual within a Christian calling, emphasizing romantic progress and individualism.

The intention to make Christian doctrine relevant to the present and the present relevant to the individual, according to their Christian identity, requires the additional use of a national metanarrative. The congregation is the explicit audience, but the nation—to which the members of the congregation are also members—is the also the audience that must be implicitly identified and addressed (Alexander 2004:8). The narrative has to delineate at what point the interests of the church coincide with or diverge from political interests. Each sermon interprets the event as an unjust attack against America. In contradiction to other public evangelicals such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, however, each sermon implicitly if not explicitly suggests that these events were not a divine reaction to the wrongdoing of the individual victims or specific groups of people in the nation (Goodstein 2001). While the attack is understood to be an unjust attack against America and God's will, it is not interpreted as a punishment against Americans themselves. Each sermon and genre posit that God has sovereign control over everything with an invariable interest in the eventual victory of Good over Evil. Though the manifestations and characteristics of Good and Evil vary, God's sovereignty is always in the interests of Christians and the

nation (McRoberts 2004:194). God is capable of administering, and indeed promises, judgement and punishment for those who act against His will, but there is not a single instance in which the actual event is attributed to an act of God's anger against specific people *in* the nation. Still, the event has particular weight and relevance to the individuals as they are prompted to see the event as, at the very least, an event God allowed to happen for a specific purpose.

The metanarratives of future victory, romantic progress, and individualism connect the cultural trauma with Christian doctrine and Christian doctrine with national identity. Every message stresses the importance of combating, either by fighting against or simply dissociating from, evil forces manifest in current political and public affairs according to a promised future for those who individually believe and repent. The theodicy genres shape the specific instructions intended to guide the individual in the present as they fight on the side of victory. Mediations between a Christian calling and a national identity, religious doctrine and political interests, and a biblical past and temporal present shape understandings of the present and influence the way individuals will orient themselves to the present.

## Discussion

Religious interpretations of 9/11 explain the nature and cause of the attack, the role of the church in public affairs, and the way that Christians are to act in the present. The explanations are linked by a metanarrative of individualism and victory, the specifics of which are contested. While each interpretation places it within a *Temporally-Divided* framework, the use of various rhetorical strategies results in significant differences. Rhetorical strategies used to explain and interpret an event—such as referencing other events, delineating a temporal cause or enemy, emphasizing the return of Christ, and providing specific instructions—associate the nature of the event with theodicy genres that evoke different responses. The method and degree to which a sermon applies the sovereign will of God to temporal realities influences the way individuals (re)define self and other, (re)orient themselves to the world, and (re)act in the present. While Christianity is concerned with preserving tradition rooted in the past, the remembering occurs in the present. These religious interpretations, according to where they rest on the genre spectrum, have social implications specifically in regard to civic (dis)engagement and attitudes towards other groups of people, demarcated by ideology, religion, and/or race.

The sermons within the *Tragedy* genre stress universal acceptance and the need to rebuild community, but provide little to no conclusive

explanation of the event. The sermons which rest in the middle of the *Tragedy-Dualism* spectrum attribute the cause of the event to *General Evil* in the world and the people who reject God, and instruct its members to *Hope/Trust in God Alone*. This could result in a retreat from the temporal world as the Christian is called to wait in assurance of their salvation and the return of Christ. The sermons in the genre of *Dualism*, on the other hand, more readily apply the event to a specific ideology or group. In this case, *Islamic Ideology* is the primary cause and the enemy to which Christian's should dissociate from and combat in the present. This may have specific implications for social relations and divisions according to race and religion. Whereas the *Tragedy* sermons instruct their continuants to help *Mend* temporal society and the *Dualistic-Tragedy* sermons detach from the temporal world, the *Dualistic* sermons emphasize the divine right of the government and Christians to issue temporal punishment and justice. The degree to which the church members internalize and perpetuate these interpretations will directly correlate with the degree to which Christianity is involved State affairs. In the same way, the degree to which members internalize and perpetuate these instructions will shape the way that people from other groups are defined, regarded, and approached.

My goal with this research is to show the function of narrative frameworks and rhetorical strategies in the mediation of narratives in order to understand how collective memory is constructed, contested, and changed over time and across contexts. My hope is that future research will build upon this premise to map emerging cultural conversations surrounding topics with resonance in the collective imagination (abortion, suicide, euthanasia, war, etc). Future research should address the narrative interpretations and mediations of multiple religions and ascertain the degree to which these particular narratives reflect local interests and/or regional character (Molotch et al. 2000; Fine 2010; Wuthnow 2012a). Additionally, future research should continue to track the interpretations and mediations by asking how these themes are internalized by individuals, and perpetuated in religious interaction and discourse (McRoberts 2004). As Robert Wuthnow (2012) argues:

What we say, how we say it, and what we accomplish through discourse are important aspects of what it means to be human and thus of relevance to the human sciences [...] Studying religious discourse is a way to force that consideration to the surface. It necessitates asking again what we want to know about religion, why we want to know it, and how best to find out. (p. 15)

Recent ethnographic research has also shown the importance of situational and general aspects of culture in identity performance, leading one to ask how the interests of specific groups function to enable or inhibit different interpretations of an event (Fallin Hunzaker 2014; Fine and Corte 2014; Tavory 2014). Ascertaining the metanarratives rooted in tradition and group interest, and the rhetorical devices used to perpetuate them, can help us understand how and why conversations surrounding topics regarding the beginning and end of life are being conducted in the way that they are as well as their social implications.

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# “Not the America We Dreamed Of”: Latinx Immigrants in a Trumpian Suburbia

Sophie Pearlman  
*Tufts University*

## Abstract

This research sheds light on the day-to-day sociopolitical experiences of these Latin American immigrants during and since Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential election to understand, explore, and tell the stories of Latin American immigrants living on Long Island, New York during this particular political moment. Focus group-style interviews were performed with a total of 15 participants. The results were as follows: First, by emphasizing the “welcoming ethos” of America and placing the blame for the anti-immigrant climate on one individual, Trump, the participants found ways to create glimpses of hope during a grim time. However, this led to the transformation of the American dream from one of success to one of mere existence within the country. Remaining in the country and avoiding deportation is the utmost priority and salient component of “the Trumpian American Dream.” Second, mobility and visibility has changed as all Latinx individuals, not just those without documents, have been forced into the shadows of society to limit their visibility in society even more than before. Third, the abilities to enforce immigration policies of the Trump administration have been unofficially extended to white American citizens, who actively threaten the participants of this study.

## Keywords

*Latinx immigrants, Trump administration, American dream, criminalization, Long Island, New York*

## 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 presidential administration has 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.

While research on the assimilation, integration, and identities of Latinx immigrants in the United States is rich, research relating specifically to day-to-day life for members of marginalized communities since the 2016 presidential election have been mainly journalistic. This project aims 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. My 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, is experiencing a different type of reality under Trump (Almaguer 2012; Chomsky 2014; Chabram-Dernersesian 2003; De Genova

2002; Ellis and Chen 2013; Gjelten 2015; Itzigsohn 2004; Itzigsohn 2000; Lavariega Monforti 2014; Longazel 2013; Mahler 1995; Massey and Sanchez R. 2010; Román 2013; Romero 2006; Scranton, T. Afifi, W. Afifi, Gangi 2016; Silber Mohamed 2014; Stumpf 2006; Tirman 2015; Wilson, Shelton, and Vallejo 2012).

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 as they plan for their futures in a hostile political climate.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 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 who is legally recognized as a member by its nation-state (Masuoka and 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 and 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 be legally defined, individuals who enter the U.S. without authorization are labeled as "illegal"—non-citizens—by their national and local communities. For example, 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). As demonstrated by this assumption, the link between Latinx appearance and illegality has placed a stigmatized label on all individuals perceived to fit into this category regardless of whether or not an individual

is a citizen (De Genova 2002; Goffman 1986).

The "vision of American citizenship as exclusive, prestigious, and virtuous drives the enforcement of restrictive immigration policies" (Masuoka and Junn 2013:58). Through the interaction of laws, society, and culture, the binary of legality/illegality is constructed. 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 and de Graauw 2013:191). The categorical boundary between undocumented or documented immigrant and citizen is seemingly impermeable, and the structure of U.S. citizenship and the social boundaries upon which it depends prevent many from gaining citizenship.

Patterns 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" (p. 9). These ideas travel through mass media, politicians, and right-thinking individuals (Cohen 1987:9). Utilizing Cohen's (1987) 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.

History has demonstrated that white American policies include rhetoric about the outsider that are embedded in the politics and economics of that time period. One can look to the times during and since the 2016 presidential election campaigns, when xenophobic and 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. This kind of panic arises from pre-existing sentiment, as demonstrated through Trump's reliance on historically-rooted stereotypes and xenophobia (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994; Pottie-Sherman 2008:21). The Trump Era has simply introduced a new crisis of white supremacy wearing a different mask.

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 and Ben-Yehuda (1994) 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.

### **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).

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

In the United States, "whiteness" and "Americanness" are essentially synonymous; as Masuoka and Junn (2013) describe, whites "reside in the 'default category' of Americanness" (p. 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.

National inclusion, national identity, and citizenship are fluid phenomena that shift based on political order (Itzigsohn and 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 (Itzigsohn and vom Hau 2006:194; 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 and vom Hau 2006 propose that this type of exclusion facilitates "alternative visions of the nation [among Latinx immigrants] that . . . expand its internal boundaries" (p. 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" (p. 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 tenets of diversity and tolerance.

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. 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 and 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) argues that sociopolitical and sociohistorical contexts, like the current political climate, are key to understanding constructions of illegality and migration. There is value in examining how these ideas are shaping the social world of Latinx immigrants in America 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 nativism 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*

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 and Chen 2013; Scranton et al. 2016). According to Goffman (1963), passing is when individuals with stigmatized identities work to be perceived as possessing non-stigmatized identities. Scranton and others (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, as well as “avoiding,” which consists of avoiding certain locations or interactions that could threaten their safety. 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. 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 base (Pew Research Center 2017; Wallace 2012).

With about half of the Latinx individuals surveyed reporting concerns about deportation of either themselves or 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.

#### Social Control

Often, moral panics are addressed by reformulating and reorganizing pre-existing forms of social control (Hier and Greenberg 2002:140; 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. I will examine social control of Latinx immigrants through three forms: law, criminalization, and self-enforcement.

Black (1984) recognizes law, which includes the legal construction of the “illegal immigrant,” as a form of government-based social control (p. 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 and de Graauw 2013:190).

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 (p. 40). First, over time, certain activities that were previously legally codified as civil have been transformed into criminal activities. 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.<sup>1</sup>

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 from the U.S. 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, 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.

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. 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 and 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 Latinx, too.

Social control also occurs between citizens 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; 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.

## LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK

My research expands on and moves past cultural anthropologist Sarah

<sup>1</sup>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.

Mahler's (1995) work, focusing on sociopolitical context and the ways in which it interacts with immigrant identity in suburban locales. I will first provide an overview of the migration patterns of Latinx immigrants to Long Island and examine the draw of this geographic region. Then, I will discuss the importance of church communities to Central American immigrants living on Long Island. Having grown up in this community, I felt it was appropriate to use it as the area of focus for this project.

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. However, from this point onward, 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’” that deeply impact the ways in which minority populations have experienced the socio-political world, particularly under the Trump administration (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.

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

Nassau and Suffolk counties are 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 it 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 and Stults 2011).

## Central Americans on Long Island

In the 1980s and 1990s, two simultaneous demographic shifts occurred in Long Island. First, baby boomers from Long Island who 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. Secondly, migration from countries in Central America increased, specifically from El Salvador (Mahler 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” (Mahler 1995:62-63).

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 violent incidents perpetrated by members of MS-13 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.

### 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 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 held in high regard by the Latinx church members. The distinctions within the larger church community are reminiscent of Portes and Zhou’s (1993) 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.

### METHODOLOGY

The fifteen participants from whom this project stems are members of the same church community on Long Island, New York. One-third of the participants contributed to the focus group conversations in English and the other two-thirds 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.

The participants born in El Salvador (6 participants), Guatemala (7 participants), or Ecuador (2 participants). I conducted three 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. 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 1 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 group’s weekly meetings. 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 in participating in the study, he or she was given a pseudonym.

The focus groups took place in one of the church’s classrooms in groups of 5 participants. The first groups’ 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.

**Table 1: 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 sixteen years old; owns a deli.
Kimberly	35	Guatemala	14 years	Came to U.S. when she was twenty-three years old (2003); works as a waitress; has an eighteen-year-old son in Guatemala; married to Manuel.
Augusto	Unknown	Guatemala	28 years	Came to U.S. when he was fourteen years old (1989); works in landscaping and owns his own company.
Fernando	Unknown	Guatemala	23 years	Came to U.S. when he was nineteen years old (1994); works as a carpenter; married and has three children.
Naomi	55	Guatemala	34 years	Came to U.S. when she was nineteen years old (1983).
Dominic	29	Guatemala	11 years	Came to the U.S. when he was nineteen years old (2006).
Manuel	40	El Salvador	17 years	Came to the U.S. when he was twenty-two years old (2000); married to Kimberly.
Lina	37	Ecuador	11 years	Came to the U.S. when she was twenty-five years old (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 thirty-two years old (2003); married to Lina and they have a 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 twenty-one 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.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS				
Pseudonym	Age	Origin Country	# Years in the U.S.	Background information
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.

## FINDINGS

The findings are 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 forty-five-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 . . . just because he's the president doesn't mean he can do this. It doesn't work that way. (Amanda, Group 1, p. 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 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 Hillary Clinton and 45.9% voted for Donald Trump; in Suffolk County, 52.5% of the population selected Trump and 44.3% voted for Clinton (New York Presidential Election Results 2016). 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 twenty-nine-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, p.8)

In a similar vein, Kimberly, a thirty-five-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, p.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 forty-seven-year-old man from Ecuador, stated, "It's not America, it's the president, it's immigration law" (Santiago, Group 2 p. 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 forty-year-old man from El Salvador, Trump's outspoken nature and in-eloquence 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, p. 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 thirty-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, p. 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, p. 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, p. 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, p. 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 fifty-five-years-old and arrived in the United States from Guatemala when she was just sixteen-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. (Naomi, Group 1, p. 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 America because the political economies of their countries of origin were in crisis, whether because of conflict, economic recessions, gang violence, or other reasons (Neckerman, Carter and Lee 1999; Mahler 1995; Mahler 2001; Massey and Sanchez R. 2010).

In the minds of my 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 and 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, p. 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.:

... sometimes when you go to some places, you see people that look at you different because of the color of your skin. And sometimes, you hear [white] people saying, ‘Go back to your country!’ Or stuff like that. (Manuel, Group 2, p. 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.

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, p. 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 separated 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 and 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. That would really be freedom. It would really be a great country again. 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, p. 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" (p. 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**

### *Mobility and Visibility*

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 and 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, p. 4)

Luisa, a forty-one-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 twelve-year-old understands and has agreed that he would rather [stay in the house] than have his parents taken away from him. (Luisa, Group 3, p. 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." 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. 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 interaction 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 themselves:

Since I came [to America,] I was driving my own vehicle, even for work. 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 . . . it's better than getting stopped by a police officer and getting in trouble. (Santiago, Group 2, p. 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:

. . . 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, p. 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 and 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, p. 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 . . .

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, p. 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, p. 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 and 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, p. 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, p. 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, p. 3)

Lina communicated a similar sentiment. She is a thirty-seven-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, p. 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, Delgado-Romero, and Singh 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 twelve-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, p. 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, p. 2)

As a mother, Lina is fearful of being deported and not knowing what will happen 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. I've seen a lot of cases on TV where people fill out an application and they end up being deported. (Manuel, Group 2, p. 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. 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, p. 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, p. 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, p. 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, p. 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, p. 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:

... when I go to the supermarket, I always like to get the wine that they sell at 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 always go to that supermarket and I never had a problem. And then, just, new. Something new. 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, p. 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, p. 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 have 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 . . . 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, p.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 American 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 remains 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 intact 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, p. 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, p. 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, p. 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 American 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, p. 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, p. 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, p. 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, p. 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, p. 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, p. 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 . . . 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, p. 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 became 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, p. 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, p. 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.

## 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 (p. 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 and 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 immigrants 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 and 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 concludes with the proposal that “The United States stands at a historical crossroads with respect to Latin American immigration” (Massey and Sánchez R. 2010:245). 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.

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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Christian Correa** is a current Junior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, studying Political Science and Sociology. He currently holds a 3.89 GPA and enjoys writing about sociological theory pertaining to race, gender, and sexuality. He has conducted research on LGBT+ political representation with the LGBTQ+ and Rights Research Initiative, as well as research on racial disparities in policing with the Department of Political Science. On campus, he holds several positions within Student Government, Chairs a committee of the Gender-Inclusive Honors Fraternity, and teaches English to refugee and immigrant students. His current favorite podcast is 'The Daily' from the New York Times.

**Sophie Pearlman** graduated summa cum laude from Tufts University in 2018 with a degree in Sociology and Peace & Justice Studies. While at Tufts, she also minored in Columbian Studies and was a member of Honos Civicus, Phi Beta Kappa, and Alpha Kappa Delta honors societies. Sophie now lives in Washington, DC and works as a research assistant for Public International Law & Policy Group, a pro-bono law firm focused on peace negotiations, post-conflict transitional justice mechanisms, and rule of law.

**Emma Tamplin** is a student of Sociology and English Literature at Belmont University in Nashville, TN.

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*"The cost of liberty is less than the price of repression."*

- W.E.B. Du Bois, John Brown