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“AND SOME, I ASSUME, ARE GOOD PEOPLE:” EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF
DONALD TRUMP’S PRESIDENCY ON THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF LATINX TEENS

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Abstract

“When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. [...] They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people” (*Time Magazine* 2015). This quote from Donald Trump has become emblematic of the President’s attitude towards immigrants. Since the 2016 campaign trail, Trump has spread harmful narratives about Latinx immigrants, and his words have tangible impacts on local communities. In this thesis, I use the framework of triadic right-wing populism to analyze how President Trump characterizes Latinx immigrants as a dangerous out-group to gain political power. Then, I examine what it means to live as part of this out-group, using data I collected in a 2019 activist ethnographic study of Latinx teens from immigrant families in Apopka, Florida. I describe how native-born teens are empowered by Trump’s rhetoric to discriminate against their Latinx peers, and how in doing so, they become instruments of governmentality, teaching Latinx teens they must silence and separate themselves or face the consequences. Finally, I analyze the negative effects Latinx teens experience because of this hostile environment and suggest ways to mitigate them.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Last summer, I spoke to “Carla¹,” a Latinx teen who had just graduated from high school. When I asked her how students at her school responded to President Trump’s election, Carla told me how her white peers reacted:

They would be all like, ‘here comes the wall!’ And they would say it like joking around and thinking it was funny, but it wasn’t. Because [Trump’s] actually trying [to build the wall]. He wants all immigrants, all Mexicans, Hispanics, [...] as well as Blacks, or Asians, or anybody that so called ‘doesn’t belong here,’ he wants them all gone. And we’re the so-called land of the free, but it’s not that free.

Carla and her peers are keenly aware of what Donald Trump thinks about them and their immigrant parents. They are reminded of it every day, as their peers echo the President’s rhetoric and they are forced to confront racism and xenophobia at school. The trend of native-born teens using President Trump’s rhetoric is more than isolated incidents of

¹ To protect the privacy of participants, all names used here are pseudonyms.

bullying or discrimination. The phenomenon is widespread and turns school settings into a hostile environment for Latinx teens, where they must adapt in order to survive. To shelter themselves from their peers' vitriol, Latinx teens learn to self-govern and socially silence themselves, which negatively affects their subjectivities. The impacts of this rhetoric are deep-seated and long-lasting, influencing every aspect of Latinx teens' lives.

This thesis examines how President Trump's rhetoric trickles down to school settings and disrupts the lived experiences of Latinx through both overt and subtle forms of racism. This project is the product of two years of activist collaborative research that I conducted with Dr. Nolan Kline in conjunction with the Farmworker Association of Florida and Hope Community Center, two immigrant-serving non-profit organizations in Apopka, Florida. As an activist researcher, I aligned my personal agenda with that of my participants and ensured my work was mutually beneficial by working with leaders at the partner organizations through every step of the research process. Both organizations reported concerns about the teenagers they serve, as they saw that the teens were deeply affected by Donald Trump's presidency. By focusing our research on this issue, we can provide empirical evidence documenting the impact of Trump's presidency on these youth, which can help the organizations to better serve them.

Based on the concerns of these organizations, I developed a research agenda to explore the following questions: 1) How does routine racism manifest in unique ways for high school aged immigrants and children of immigrants? 2) How do high school aged immigrants and children of immigrants resist routine racism? And 3) How do these impacts affect this population's subjectivities and future plans? To answer these questions, I completed eight weeks of field research during the summer of 2019, using

participant observation, focus groups, and interviews. The data I collected during the summer is the backbone of this thesis, which responds to the broader question: How does Donald Trump's use of anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies impact the lived experiences of teens from Latinx immigrant families in Central Florida?

I answer this question by breaking down the component parts. The first half of the thesis analyzes how and why Trump characterizes Latinx immigrants as an out-group in society, and the second half analyzes how being a part of that out-group impacts the lived experiences of Latinx youth. Throughout, I argue that although Trump's anti-immigrant policies have precedent in US history, his presidency is uniquely challenging for the immigrant community because of his openly racist and xenophobic rhetoric. His rhetoric infiltrates everyday spaces like schools, because his supporters feel empowered to share their anti-immigrant sentiments. This creates a hostile environment for Latinx youth and impacts their subjectivities.

In Chapter One, I use the framework of triadic right-wing populism (Judis 2016) to explain how characterizing Latinx immigrants as a dangerous out-group helps Trump gain and maintain power. In Chapter Two, I provide a brief history of US immigration law to demonstrate that US citizenship has always been linked to whiteness, and while this has been removed from the letter of the law, it has not been removed from its spirit. This historical overview serves to explain why Donald Trump has targeted Latinx immigrants in the way he has: it is an extension of existing US policy, not a reinvention.

In Chapter Three, I provide a review of Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies, analyzed through the lens of triadic populism. I examine how Trump racializes and subsequently criminalizes Latinx immigrants in order to reinforce their position in

the out-group and how this bolsters his own political power. Additionally, I argue that while Trump's actions have precedent, his bald-faced anti-immigrant rhetoric has created a uniquely challenging moment for Latinx immigrants and their families, as this has emboldened the public to share their latent racist and xenophobic ideas, a phenomenon known as the Trump Effect (Crandall, Miller, and White 2018).

In Chapter Four, I outline the methods I used in my fieldwork, describe the data collection methods, and highlight my participant observation experience. I also explain what activist anthropology is and why it is crucial to this work. Chapter Five contains the results from my fieldwork. Using participant quotes, I demonstrate how President Trump's rhetoric infiltrates schools, as it is echoed by his young supporters and used to belittle Latinx teens. In this hostile environment, Latinx teens learn to self-govern and behave as members of the out-group by socially silencing and separating themselves to escape racist taunts. In this way, native-born teens become agents of governmentality by teaching their Latinx peers to self-govern and reinforce their position in the out-group. Finally, I describe how living in this hostile environment negatively affects Latinx teens' subjectivities.

Chapter Six serves as a discussion and conclusion. I describe how the organizations I collaborate with are working to combat the negative impacts of Trump's presidency by empowering Latinx youth and engaging in political activism. I also detail the limitations of this research and potential next steps. Finally, I summarize my findings, which describe how President Trump's rhetoric infiltrates school settings and disrupts Latinx teens' lives through both overt and subtle expressions of racism, and how this phenomenon results in new, harmful types of self-governing and social silencing.

Theoretical Framework

The ethnographic toolkit is uniquely suited to address the impact of policies and political rhetoric on local communities. Political and legal anthropologists use ethnography to analyze how the state interacts with local communities and how policies are experienced by individuals. Ethnography provides a more comprehensive understanding of the local impacts of policy than political science can (Wedel et al. 2005). Anthropologists recognize that they are well poised to analyze the impact that Trump has on local communities. In early 2017, the journal *Anthropology Now* began a series entitled “Trump Watch, “ to “harness the power of ethnography and point it directly at the presidency of Donald Trump” (Higgins 2017, 48). The editors of the journal felt Trump’s presidency would have a profound impact on those living in the US and that ethnography is the best tool to expose and analyze the effects of his presidency. The geographically broad and historically deep nature of anthropological study, along with the human focus of ethnography, makes anthropologists well suited to address how Trump’s presidency impacts vulnerable communities.

When analyzing the local impact of a political movement, it is essential to understand the theory behind this movement. I have chosen to ground my analysis of President Trump in the theory of populism, specifically right-wing triadic populism. Populism does not denote an ideology but rather a political framework through which individuals and parties gain political power. What counts as a populist movement and what does not is ambiguous and not clearly defined (Norris 2020). Broadly, a populist movement is one that pushes a message of “power to the people,” and challenges the hegemonic leadership of the elite. There are modern examples of both left-wing and

right-wing populist movements. Bernie Sanders is an example of a left-wing populist leader whose message is “power to the people,” and whose platform is liberal. Donald Trump, on the other hand, is a right-wing populist leader, who is challenging the “liberal elite” and promising to return the power to hands of everyday people, thereby making America great again.

Political analysts such as John B. Judis (2016) have noted that there is a fundamental difference in the structure between left-wing populist movements and right-wing populist movements. Many populist movements are dyadic: they present a narrative of “the people” versus “the elite.” Who falls into these two groups varies between movements, but the relationship the struggle for power remains dyadic. On the other hand, Judis (2016) notes that some populist movements, such as that lead by Donald Trump, are triadic. The struggle for power between “the people” and “the elite” is still present, but there is also a third group: “the out-group.” In triadic right-wing populist movements, the out-group is presented as a threat to “the people” that is coddled by “the elite.” By establishing the out-group and characterizing it as dangerous, right-wing populist leaders gain power. They foment fear about a group and then promote the narrative that only they will address the threat with appropriate force and protect the people. It provides a compelling reason for why the elite must be challenged, which helps the leader gain political power.

As a right-wing populist leader, Donald Trump has chosen several groups to occupy the out-group position, including Muslims, the media, and Latinx immigrants. In this thesis, I focus on why he has chosen Latinx immigrants to occupy this group, how he reinforces their position there, and how this affects the people living as part of the out-

group. Although triadic populism is a political concept, it is of great anthropological value. I am utilizing the ethnographic toolkit to investigate how membership in this out-group impacts the lived experiences of individuals. Anthropologists like Adam Hodges (2019) have found this political framework useful for analyzing how Trump's presidency affects lived experiences. Analyzing the political context of how and why Trump otherizes immigrants allows for a deeper and more complex understanding of how his presidency impacts individual immigrant lives.

To understand how Trump's rhetoric impacts the daily lives of immigrants, I use Michel Foucault's theory of governmentality. Governmentality refers to the power the government has to influence the populace's behavior. In the same way that governments wield power by controlling knowledge via institutions like prisons and schools, the government also wields power through governmentality, which teaches the public how they should act. Governmentality is the "conduct of conduct;" it teaches the population to self-govern in a way that benefits the government (Foucault 1991, 48). The Trump administration's strict immigration enforcement policies cause immigrants to self-govern and isolate themselves from the rest of society, increasing their vulnerability. However, President Trump's racist rhetoric also controls the conduct of immigrants. Data from my field research indicates that Latinx youth socially silence and separate themselves from their native-born peers to avoid racist abuse. This is a form of governmentality.

For decades, Latinx immigrants have been racialized as "criminal others" through political rhetoric and punitive policies (Dowling and Inda 2013). By classifying Hispanics as "other" and distancing them from their whiteness, they can be categorized as the subordinate racial group defined by Foucault. As criminalized, racialized others, undocumented immigrants

are blamed for societal ills like overcrowded education and health care systems (Calavita 1996). In other words, people notice societal problems and blame them on immigrants, which further justifies their mistreatment (Valdez 2016) and creates forms of publicly policing immigrants, reinforcing their position as an out-group. Trump supports narratives that racialize and criminalize immigrants because this solidifies their position in the out-group and reinforces the idea that they are threat in the minds of his supporters, thereby granting Trump more political power.

Chapter Two: Nothing New Under the Sun: A Legacy of Exclusionary Policy

Like so many other children, I grew up watching *School House Rock* both at home and at school. The short songs, illustrated by simple cartoons, taught my sister and I about all sorts of concepts in social studies, science, and math. One of our favorite songs was *The Great American Melting Pot*, which tells the story of 19th century immigrants coming to America and exalts the beauty of the United States as a country of people with diverse heritages. In the song, the sweet-voiced singer proclaims, “It doesn't matter what your skin/It doesn't matter where you're from/Or your religion, you jump right in/To the great American melting pot” (Ahrens 2017). This simple song for children illustrates a broader myth about 19th century America: that it was a utopia, where people who wanted to make their own way could come and work their way up, regardless of where they came from. Of course, this idea is almost entirely fiction, which was a jarring realization for me as a young adult.

Donald Trump’s characterization of immigrants as an out-group is not a new idea. Contrary to what *School House Rock* taught me as a child, immigrants have occupied an out-group in various ways since the inception of the United States. They have always been the scapegoat to pin societal ills on. And further, immigrants have always been racialized in order to

reinforce their position as the “other.” Donald Trump has returned to these ideas for his own political gain. The goal of his anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric is to “build a wall” around Latinx immigrants, to classify them as dangerous out-group, while still allowing them to live and work in the country to benefit the US economy. These ideas all have precedent in US history, but they have no place in the modern world.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the history of immigration in the US, to demonstrate the legacy of racial discrimination in immigration law, and to show that the benefits of citizenship have always been tied to whiteness. I analyze how current immigration laws are still discriminatory and work to diffuse the border into society and build metaphorical walls around immigrants. This provides the background to Chapter Three, which highlights Trump’s anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies. A rich, historical background demonstrates why Trump has been able to successfully mount an attack against Latinx immigrants and successfully characterize them as the out-group. Trump’s ideas about immigrants are deep-seated in US policy, but he has drawn them to the forefront, exposing the latent racist structure of immigration policy. Additionally, a historical background highlights how Trump’s policies are uniquely aggressive when compared to modern policies, and that they echo early 20th century ideas, when eugenicists lead the conversation on immigration. This helps explain why Trump’s aggressive immigration policies and racist rhetoric are out of place in the 21st century and have created an even more challenging environment for Latinx immigrants. While Trump’s anti-immigrant stance is not without precedent, it is exceptional in the modern age.

The Great American Melting Pot: Early American Immigration Policy

Since the inception of our nation, citizenship has been inextricably linked to whiteness. The standard of who counts as white and who does not has shifted throughout the last two

hundred years, but the message has been consistent: white people deserve citizenship and the rights that accompany it by virtue of their whiteness, while non-white people must either prove their worthiness, if they are lucky enough to have the chance, or be excluded from naturalization entirely. US immigration policy has been crafted to exploit immigrant labor, while only granting the benefits of citizenship to those immigrants deemed by society to be worthy. As Ruth Gomberg-Munoz (2017) points out in her ethnography *Becoming Legal*, immigration policy did not suddenly “break” in recent years; instead it continues to function as it was always intended to: to exploit and exclude those deemed undesirable by mainstream society.

The first piece of immigration legislation passed by the United States was The Naturalization Act of 1790, which restricted naturalization to “free white men of good moral character” (Gomberg-Muñoz 2017, 21). While there were no restrictions on immigration at that time, the benefits of citizenship were only afforded to that elite group. That is not exactly a melting pot, where people can “jump right in,” regardless of their race or religion. Although immigration remained relatively unfettered throughout the first part of the 19th century, citizenship remained only an option for white men. After the Civil War, the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the 14th Amendment, granted the right of naturalization to former enslaved persons and their children. The 14th Amendment also established birthright citizenship, meaning that everyone born in the United States, or to American citizen parents outside of the US, was automatically a citizen. Native Americans were excluded from both laws, since their tribal lands were considered to be foreign states.

These slightly more inclusive citizenship laws were short-lived, as the Naturalization Act of 1870 passed just two years later. This law extended eligibility for naturalization to people from Africa and their descendants, not just former enslaved people (“Naturalization Act of 1870”

2019). However, it also revoked citizenship for immigrants from China and their children. This was followed by the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which barred all Chinese immigrants from entering the United States (Calavita 2000). While other measures had heretofore focused on restricting citizenship, the Chinese Exclusion Act refused entry and residency to people from China. During the California Gold Rush of the 1840s, men came from China to work on the railroads. Nativist rhetoric surrounding Chinese immigrants grew over the following forty years, as local people believed Chinese immigrants would work harder for lower wages than the other workers, and they were seen as not being willing or able to assimilate to American values (Kil 2012). This anti-Chinese rhetoric eventually led to the Exclusion Act of 1882, which completely barred entry from China until after World War II (Bankston and Hidalgo 2006).

Although immigration laws in the 19th century were overall less restrictive than the century to follow, citizenship was still exclusive. Given that slavery was legal until the mid-1800s, it should not be surprising that civil rights were determined by race, and that people of color were denied basic rights. It is harmful to reduce this period in American history to simply one of “the great melting pot,” where everyone had equal opportunity to make a life in the New World, as that was simply not the case. Sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva says that people of color were the “wood to produce the fire for the [melting] pot” (Adelman and Smith 2003). It was a melting pot for Western Europeans, and a challenging frontier rife with racial prejudice for everyone else.

Scientific Racism: Early to Mid-20th Century Immigration Policy

In early 20th century America, a person had to prove to the court that they were either white or Black to be eligible for citizenship. In 1922, Takao Ozawa, a Japanese immigrant, made history by applying for citizenship on the claim that not only was his skin as white as a

Caucasian man's, but that his race should not factor into his eligibility for citizenship (Adelman and Smith 2003). Ozawa was a successful businessman who dressed, acted, and spoke like a Westerner, and he considered himself proudly American, which he believed should qualify him for naturalization. In 1922, the Supreme Court decided the Ozawa, and all people of Japanese descent, were scientifically "Mongoloid," not Caucasian, and denied his claim for citizenship (Ozawa v. United States, 260 U.S. 178 1922). During this period, experts could not decide whether to determine race socially or scientifically.

At the beginning of the 20th century, scientific racism and the eugenics movement were on the rise in the US (Bankston and Hidalgo 2006). Eugenicists saw different races as distinct species, and promoted the sterilization of the People of Color, for fear that greater numbers of non-white people would pollute the country and its values (Wolcott et al. 1914). This racial pseudo-science had a significant impact on immigration policy, as certain races and ethnicities were deemed desirable, and others dangerous. Many groups of people who would now be considered white were excluded from the elite desired group. Prominent eugenicist and biologist Charles Davenport warned against letting too many Southeastern Europeans into the country, as they would cause Americans overall to become shorter and darker skinned, as well as increasing rates of "larceny, kidnapping, assault, murder, rape and sexual immorality" (Adelman and Smith 2003). Despite the lack of evidence behind these claims, they were widely accepted and impacted immigration policy.

Once these groups were deemed dangerous and undesirable, the question became how to keep them from entering the country. Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge proposed a literacy test as a condition for entry into the United States to bar immigrants from what he felt were inferior origins (Bankston and Hidalgo 2006). Lodge and his contemporaries thought

British, Scandinavian, and German immigrants had more pioneering spirits, and would be more likely to travel out to the West, fully embodying American values, while immigrants from Italy, Russia, Greece, and Asia would settle in city slums. The idea of a literacy test was initially met with resistance, but as xenophobic tensions rose during World War I, congress passed the policy as part of the Immigration Act of 1917, overriding the President Woodrow Wilson's veto (Bankston and Hidalgo 2006). While the law ultimately proved ineffective in deterring immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, the intention behind the policy was clear: people from certain ethnic backgrounds are welcome in the United States, and others are not.

After Cabot's literacy test failed to keep out immigrants from undesirable countries, politicians continued to look for ways to restrict legal immigration. One of the ways they did this was to enforce quotas, allowing specific numbers of immigrants from different countries to legally immigrate. Quotas allowed for more immigrants from desirable places like Western Europe, and significantly fewer from the rest of the world. Notably, congress refused to limit immigration from Mexico, citing a need for labor in Texas and California (Bankston and Hidalgo 2006). The history of the restrictive immigration policies and the eugenics movement are deeply intertwined. One of the biggest proponents of strict immigration quotas was Congressman Albert Johnson, who was also president of the Eugenics Research Association of America (Gomberg-Muñoz 2017; Bankston and Hidalgo 2006). He pushed legislators to make immigration quotas permanent, even though they had been adopted as a temporary emergency measure. He was successful, and the Immigration Act of 1924 made the quotas permanent. The law also lowered quotas for Southern European immigration and barred all Asian immigrants. It would remain in effect until 1965 (Bankston and Hidalgo 2006).

After World War II, legislators were forced to distance themselves from the eugenics movement, and there was less distinction between those of Eastern and Western European descent. However, the dichotomy of desirable versus undesirable immigrants remained. Fears about communism stoked anti-immigrant sentiment, and in the 1950s, Senator Patrick McCarran warned that letting in too many undesirable (non-European) immigrants would lead to the US, and therefore the final bastion of Western civilization, being “overrun, perverted, contaminated, or destroyed” (qtd in Bankston and Hidalgo 2006, 359).

Substantial immigration reform finally occurred in the 1960s. In the middle of the Civil Rights Movement, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 passed. While the quota system was kept, it was adapted to allow the same number of non-European immigrants as Europeans and lifted the ban on Asian immigration. It also allowed for highly skilled people and family members of citizens to be exempt from quotas (Bankston and Hidalgo 2006). While the law was not perfect, it was significantly less problematic than previous immigration laws. From this point, immigration law prioritized an immigrant’s ability to add value to the country over their race, at least on paper. This idea was reinforced by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 and the Immigration Act of 1990. However, because of the skills deemed desirable by these laws, there are still more de facto barriers to entry for people from poorer nations. The explicit racist language was removed from immigration law, but the effect of these laws still places more burden on People of Color.

Mexican and Central American Immigration

The purpose of US immigration law is and always has been to meet US labor demands by exploiting immigrants, while only granting the rights of citizenship to a select few. US immigration law has not simply kept out all immigrants deemed as undesirable. Instead, it is

designed to let in a limited number of people from these groups deemed undesirable in order to fulfill labor needs. Almost always, these laws allow people to live and work in the US without granting them the benefits of citizenship. Mexicans and Central Americans have often met US labor needs while being denied a pathway to citizenship.

When the Immigration Act of 1921 instituted quotas, congress refused to limit Mexican immigration, as Mexican migrants were providing essential labor in Texas and California (Bankston and Hidalgo 2006). This did not signal an acceptance of this group as worthy of citizenship, as Mexicans were marked as unable to “assimilate satisfactorily” throughout the 20th century (Gomberg-Muñoz 2017, 30). However, the need for Mexican labor continued. During World War II, the US faced a dramatic shortage of labor. Farmers demanded help, and the US government developed The Bracero Program in 1942. This program established a way for Mexicans to come to the US to work for specific farmers, with the guarantee of a fair wage and safe employer-provided housing. It was also a short-term program, so individuals could only stay a few years and then return home to Mexico. The Bracero program was purely labor focused, and in no way allowed people to live in the US long-term (Horton 2017).

While in theory the program guaranteed worker’s rights, the reality was far from fair. There was little oversight on the farms, and farmers found they could treat their workers as they pleased. The program removed workers from the labor market, so they had no choice but to accept the conditions at the farm where they were sent or return to Mexico. Additionally, the Bracero program did not provide enough jobs to meet the needs of Mexican jobseekers or American farmers, so many men entered the US without authorization looking for work. Farmers soon found they could pay undocumented workers significantly less than the standard rate and

began employing them (Horton 2017). The US benefited greatly from this labor, as agricultural workers were sorely needed during the War.

In the early 1950s, the first mass deportation of Hispanic migrants began. The labor shortage was less severe after the war and the country was experiencing an economic downturn. Undocumented Mexican migrants became the scapegoat for this problem, as they were seen as undercutting wages and taking jobs that should go to US citizens (Bankston and Hidalgo 2006). The rhetoric echoed that preceding the Chinese Exclusion Act, where Chinese immigrant labor on the railroad was valuable until it was perceived as taking jobs from US citizens. The Eisenhower administration created Operation Wetback and deported over 100,000 people to Mexico over a period of just three months (Bankston and Hidalgo 2006). The government insisted that farmers should continue using the limited Bracero program, even though the allotments could not meet their labor needs. Operation Wetback (a name which comes from a derogatory term for those who have crossed the US-Mexico border without authorization and more broadly, all Mexicans) did nothing to address the need for labor in the US and the need for jobs in Mexico. Subsequently, people continued to cross into the US and worked without authorization, for extremely low wages.

The treatment of Mexican immigrants over the 20th century demonstrates the US government's attitudes towards Latinx immigrants. Mexicans were viewed as unable to assimilate to American values, yet the US facilitated Mexican migration to the US to meet labor demands. Mexican immigrants have always been valued for their labor but excluded from citizenship and civil society. Contemporary immigration policy also reflects this unfortunate reality, by allowing the US to benefit off of exploitative immigrant labor while simultaneously keeping Latinx immigrants in the out-group of society.

Contemporary Immigration Policy: The Spirit of the Law

After the Bracero program ended in 1964, the federal government continued to exploit immigrant labor while denying them the ability to participate in civil society. Instead of focusing on limiting immigration from undesirable nations, the purported purpose of immigration policy has shifted to limiting “illegal” immigration. However, as many anthropologists have pointed out, due to the concerted effort to conflate Latin American immigration and illegal immigration, along with policies that leave few legal options for migration to the US from Mexico and Central America, the racial implications of these laws remain (Gomberg-Munoz 2017, De León 2015, Kline 2019). While the letter of the law may not include specifications on race, there are still some immigrants deemed desirable and others deemed dangerous, and this is reinforced at every step by US immigration law.

The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) made it explicitly illegal to employ undocumented people. However, the law did nothing to address labor demands for farmers, who continued to hire undocumented people, pay them poorly, and create hazardous work environments. To have plausible deniability, many employers only hired immigrant workers through contractors. This created another layer of exploitation, as undocumented people were exploited by both contractors and employers and could do nothing about it, for fear of deportation (Stuesse 2016; Horton 2017). IRCA did not keep employers from hiring undocumented people, and they continued to work to support the US economy. It simply made undocumented people more afraid and pushed them further into the shadows, under a complex web of vulnerability. Ten years later, congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, or IIRAIRA. This law made it impossible for undocumented people to adjust their status except in extremely specific circumstances. Without a pathway to

citizenship, undocumented people are trapped in a perpetual state of vulnerability, with little ability to plan for the future. IIRAIRA also facilitated deportations of people with permanent legal residence status (Gomberg-Munoz 2017). It marked an important shift towards increasingly aggressive deportation efforts. Today, there is no viable pathway to citizenship for most undocumented people living in the US. Laws like IRCA and IIRAIRA show the ultimate intention of US immigration law is to allow undocumented people to work without having to provide them the protections, benefits, or rights that accompany citizenship.

For many undocumented people living in the US, there is no feasible path to citizenship. And for many who want to come to the US, there is no way to do so legally. Many people who criticize undocumented immigrants say they should, “wait in line.” However, the reality is most people do not have a line they can get in. Those who meet specific requirements can theoretically “get in line,” which could cost thousands of dollars, take years, and be dangerous (Gomberg-Munoz 2017). But for the majority of people, who are not the top of their field or able to establish that they are fleeing a well-founded fear of persecution based on their identity, there is no way to come to the United States legally. Undocumented people already in the US have equally limited options. They can theoretically apply to adjust their status through a US citizen spouse, but this is an expensive and arduous process with often disappointing results (Gomberg-Munoz 2017). Outside of this, there is virtually no way for an undocumented person living in the US to become a citizen, or even obtain legal permanent resident status. The complex and ever-changing web of immigration laws is purposeful. Immigration code is a not a bureaucratic nightmare full of dead ends for no reason. By trapping undocumented people into a perpetual state of liminality, they are legally categorized as an out-group, forced to live outside of the law. This makes their bodies easy to exploit and their needs easy to ignore.

During the 1990s, the US began to militarize the US-Mexico border at unprecedented levels. Physical barriers were constructed, new surveillance technology was implemented, and the number of Border Patrol agents deployed in the area increased (Castañeda 2019). Programs like Operation Blockade, which began in Texas in 1993, focused on increasing immigration enforcement in cities along the border in order to force people to cross through dangerous desert terrain. These measures characterized immigrants crossing the US-Mexican border as a serious threat to national security, and conflated undocumented immigration with Mexican immigration. A militarized border served to otherize and criminalize Latinx immigrants in the US, regardless of status. Jason De León (2015) analyzes the impact of Operation Blockade and similar policies in his ethnography *The Land of Open Graves*. He describes how the government described the purpose of these policies as “Prevention through Deterrence,” believing that if they made it dangerous enough to cross, people would not try to come to the United States. However, this betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of the reasons people cross the border. People continue to cross, despite how dangerous the US government has made it, because they often must do so for a chance of survival. Policies that militarize the border do not stop undocumented immigration from happening; instead, they increase migrant death (De León 2015). Treating Latinx immigrants as a security threat and punishing them with potential death if they try to cross the border furthers the narrative that they are dangerous criminals who must be stopped. This harms Latinx immigrants already living in the United States and characterizes them as criminal others.

The purpose of a militarized border is not just to stop unauthorized crossings or to keep people from exercising their right to seek asylum. By militarizing the US-Mexico border, the US government has effectively conflated “illegal” immigration with Mexican immigration in the

eyes of the American public. Although only about 75% of undocumented immigrants are from Latin America, they represent more than 90% of deportees since 2000 (Gomberg-Muñoz 2017). Despite ICE's claims that they do not racially profile, substantive evidence demonstrates that Latino men are disproportionately targeted by ICE officers, often being stopped for minor (or non-existent) traffic violations so that the officer can check their immigration status (Gomberg-Muñoz 2017). While race has been removed from the letter of immigration law, it has not been removed from the spirit of the law, or how it is enforced. The focus on "illegal" immigration is thinly veiled language that expressly targets non-white immigrants, specifically those from Latin America (Kline 2019). These policies impact not only undocumented people, but all Latinx people, as their ethnic identity has been conflated with illegality.

This targeted enforcement extends beyond the US-Mexico border and into communities in the interior. Federal laws like 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act and Secure Communities make it easier for immigration officials to detain and deport undocumented people who are charged with crimes, including minor traffic violations, such as not stopping long enough at a stop sign (Kline 2019). This interacts with other laws to magnify the vulnerability and fear experienced by undocumented people. For example, in all except twelve states, undocumented people are not permitted to obtain a driver's license ("States Offering Driver's Licenses to Immigrants" 2016). Therefore, police officers are incentivized to pull over anyone who looks like they may be driving without a license, and therefore may also be undocumented. Because of the racialization of "illegality," police officers are encouraged to pull over people who look Hispanic. This further reinforces Latinx immigrants as the out-group in society.

For undocumented people and their families, the border is not contained to the physical demarcation between the United States and Mexico. Instead, the border is a mobile technology

that controls every aspect of life, even hundreds of miles from the physical border (Dowling and Inda 2013). By governing immigration through crime, the US government effectively pushes immigrant communities into the shadows, increasing their vulnerability by hiding it (Coleman 2007). Because of the focus on “illegal” immigration in US law, one might assume that these impacts are experienced only by undocumented people. However, these impacts extended beyond undocumented people, partly because of mixed-status families, all of whom are impacted by the undocumented status of their family members (Castañeda 2019). Additionally, targeting “illegal” immigration is a thinly veiled excuse to target Latinx communities in general.

Even policies that are heralded as “pro-immigrant” reinforce immigrants’ position in the out-group. For example, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was enacted in 2012 under President Obama and was widely regarded by immigration advocates and the general public as a pro-immigrant policy. The law provided benefits to undocumented young people who were brought to the United States as children. It did not provide a pathway to citizenship for these individuals, but it provided them with the ability to work legally, obtain a driver’s license, and receive social services. DACA changed the lives of many people for the better, but it was incomplete. It was temporary and subject to continual renewal, which is a far cry from providing a pathway to citizenship (Kline 2019). Additionally, DACA plays into dangerous stereotypes about immigrants by characterizing DACA recipients as “innocent,” and therefore implying that their parents are criminals for bringing them here and being undocumented. This generates unjust narratives of “good” immigrants who deserve basic rights and “bad” immigrants who do not, which fails to recognize the complex reasons why people migrate, sometimes without authorization. Deferred Actions for Parents of Americans or DAPA would have extended DACA benefits to its recipients’ parents, but this stalled under Obama and was killed under Trump.

The impact of all of these discriminatory and needlessly punitive policies is multifold and comprehensive; there is no facet of immigrant life left untouched by these laws. One such impact is the continual reminder that Latinx immigrants are members of an out-group. It is unsurprising that Donald Trump chose immigrants as one of the demographics to place in the out-group, as their position there is essentially codified by US law. Immigration law racializes and criminalizes Latinx immigrants and subsequently divides them from the rest of society, impeding their access not only to legally recognized citizenship but to social services and basic civil rights

Chapter Three: The Trump Era: Bad Hombres

President Donald Trump's political success depends upon his ability to characterize immigrants as a dangerous out-group that is a threat to American society. In this chapter, I analyze Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies through two lenses: triadic populism and border diffusion. He pushes both of these narratives by first racializing and subsequently criminalizing Latinx immigrants, and which has a significant impact on the lived experiences of immigrants and their families living in the United States. Trump uses bombastic rhetoric to paint Latinx immigrants, especially undocumented people, as dangerous to US society, and his punitive and xenophobic policies reinforce this fiction. Perpetuating the narrative that Latinx immigrants are a threat to the American way of life grants Trump political power. By manufacturing a threat and then purporting to address it, he gains glory and import in the eyes of his supporters. This manner of gaining and maintaining power is a key feature of triadic right-wing populism.

Keeping the threat of migrants alive in the minds of the American people is essential to Trump's political power. In addition to his use of triadic populism, Trump is diffusing the border, and expanding enforcement into every corner of immigrant life (Dowling and Inda

2013). Not only are increases in ICE funding, bans on sanctuary cities, and other measures literally expanding immigration enforcement, his rhetoric causes immigrants to self-govern. Since many undocumented people must stay in the US or face death from violence or poverty in their home countries, they stay and continue to live and work here. When faced with presidential vitriol and a host of harmful policies, undocumented people and their families choose to self-govern and isolate themselves from mainstream society. Because of this, the US economy can benefit from the cheap labor of undocumented people without having to grant them rights. The abuses they suffer are hidden from the public (De León 2015). By echoing racially charged immigration narratives from the past, and inciting division among racial lines, Trump is able to gain political power while ensuring that the US economy will continue to benefit from exploitative labor of undocumented people.

Echoes of the Past: Parallels in Rhetoric

On June 16, 2015, Donald Trump announced his candidacy for president. In his speech, he said, “When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re not sending you. They’re not sending you. They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people (*Time Magazine* 2015).” This quote set the tone for how Trump would treat Latinx immigrants first on the campaign trail and then in the White House. It is so emblematic of his overall attitude and agenda that I included part of it in the title of this thesis. It demonstrates how he characterizes Latinx immigrants as dangerous out-group while inducing fear in his supporters.

During his 2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump began reciting a poem titled “The Snake” at his rallies. The poem consists of the lyrics to a song written in 1963 by Black activist

Oscar Brown Jr and popularized by soul singer Al Wilson. The song is based on Aesop's fable, "The Farmer and the Viper." The daughters of the late Brown Jr. have publicly stated the song was intended to act as a warning that cruel people can take advantage of those who help them, and that kind-hearted people should be careful when they help someone they know to be dangerous (Vales 2018). Trump has twisted the poem to advocate against immigration, to the Brown sisters' dismay. On February 10th, 2020, at a rally in Manchester, New Hampshire, President Trump announced he was going to read "The Snake," to wild applause and cheers (*Fox 10 Pheonix* 2020). It has become a mainstay among his supporters. Trump wrongly said the song was written in the 1950s by Al Green, and then said, "This is about immigration" before reciting the poem:

On her way to work one morning

Down the path alongside the lake

A tender-hearted woman saw a poor half-frozen snake

His pretty colored skin had been all frosted with the dew

"Oh well," she cried, "I'll take you in and I'll take care of you"

"Take me in oh tender woman

Take me in, for heaven's sake

Take me in oh tender woman," sighed the snake

She wrapped him up all cozy in a curvature of silk

And then laid him by the fireside with some honey and some milk

Now she hurried home from work that night as soon as she arrived

She found that pretty snake she'd taken in had been revived

"Take me in, oh tender woman

Take me in, for heaven's sake

Take me in oh tender woman,” sighed the snake

Now she clutched him to her bosom, “You're so beautiful,” she cried

“But if I hadn't brought you in by now you might have died”

Now she stroked his pretty skin and then she kissed and held him tight

But instead of saying thanks, that snake gave her a vicious bite

“Take me in, oh tender woman

Take me in, for heaven's sake

Take me in oh tender woman,” sighed the snake

“I saved you,” cried that woman

“And you've bit me even, why?

You know your bite is poisonous and now I'm going to die”

“Oh shut up, silly woman,” said the reptile with a grin

“You knew damn well I was a snake before you took me in

”Take me in, oh tender woman

Take me in, for heaven's sake

Take me in oh tender woman,“ sighed the snake

Throughout Trump’s recitation, his supporters clapped and cheered. When he finished, they erupted into whoops and shouts, waving their MAGA hats and their Trump 2020 signs. Trump waited for them to quiet, then congratulated his administration for cracking down on illegal immigration. He said, “In this region of the country alone, last year, ICE officers -- we love our ICE officers.” He paused to allow the raucous cheers of the crowd subside before saying, “Last year alone, they arrested over 2,000 criminal aliens charged or convicted of dangerous offenses, including robbery, rape, and murder, over 2,000 accused of murder” (*Fox 10 Pheonix* 2020). President Trump failed to mention that overwhelming evidence shows

immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than US citizens are (Washington Post Editorial Board 2019).

Right-wing triadic populism explains Trump's continued use of the poem "The Snake." In right-wing populism, the public believe that the establishment is coddling an "out-group" to the detriment of the state as a whole. The tender-hearted woman in the poem is the liberal establishment, the snake represents immigrants, and the implied audience of the poem is Trump's populist base. In Trump's narrative, the liberal elite have coddled immigrants, allowing them into the United States and given them undue aid. This has compromised the safety of United States citizens and will ultimately lead to the downfall of the state if not corrected. By connecting the snake, who kills the woman who saves it, to immigrants, Trump's message is abundantly clear: immigrants are dangerous and helping them will lead to our downfall. It is a powerful and chilling rhetorical device that succinctly reinforces all three groups present in triadic populism.

President Trump's rhetoric echoes that of anti-immigration eugenicists of the early 20th century. Eugenicist Charles Davenport warned that increased numbers of Southern Europeans would result in more "assault, murder, [and] rape;" Trump has painted an eerily similar picture of Latinx immigrants (Bankston and Hidalgo 2006). In that speech announcing his candidacy, he called those coming from Mexico "rapists" (*Time Magazine* 2015). Three years later, at a 2018 rally in Pennsylvania, Trump doubled down on this claim, referencing that now infamous quote and saying it turned out to be "peanuts" compared to what is actually true (*C-SPAN* 2018). What he meant by this is unclear, although he seemed to be referring to the sexual violence experienced by many women as they journey through Central America to reach the United States. At the same rally, Trump then criticized the visa lottery system by acting out an imagined

visa lottery drawing, to the cheers of blonde-haired little girls and teenage boys in MAGA hats standing behind him. "Ladies and gentlemen," President Trump said, "our first lottery winner. He has seven convictions for death! He has killed nine people and we are getting him the hell out of our country and giving them to the stupid politicians that have been running the United States" (*C-SPAN* 2018). Like Davenport, Trump is spreading fear that Latinx immigrants are going to murder and rape United States citizens. This rhetoric not only paints Latinx immigrants as dangerous, it asserts that the liberal establishment is not taking this supposed threat seriously. He uses rhetoric like this to gain political power, because he promotes the narrative that only he will respond with appropriate force to the threat of Latinx migration. Promoting the narrative that the establishment coddles the out-group is an important facet of triadic populism.

In addition to echoing eugenicist Charles Davenport, President Trump's rhetoric reflects that of conservative opposition to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. The act could have allowed for more immigration from non-European countries, but conservatives thought this would lead the US being invaded and overrun by undesirable immigrants. Conservative Senator Patrick McCarran warned that if more lax immigration laws were passed, the country would be "overrun [and] contaminated" by non-European immigrants (Bankston and Hidalgo 2006). When discussing the caravan of migrant families travelling together to seek asylum at the US-Mexico border in 2018, Trump said, "It's like an invasion. They have violently overrun the Mexican border...They've overrun the Mexican police, and they've overrun and hurt badly Mexican soldiers" (Trump 2018). While there was a report of some members of one of the caravans travelling through Mexico throwing rocks and sticks at Mexican soldiers to make their way through the country, no soldiers were reported as being badly injured. Additionally, because the

caravan intended to come to the US border to seek asylum, there would be no reason for them to act violently towards US officials or civilians (Valverde 2018).

Trump's clear goal was to stoke fear about the caravan, by using words like "invasion" and "overrun." In October 2018 he tweeted, "Many Gang Members and some very bad people are mixed into the Caravan heading to our Southern Border. [...] This is an invasion of our Country and our Military is waiting for you!" (Fabian 2018). His characterization of the migrant caravan, which was made up mostly of women and children, is an illustrative example of his rhetoric towards immigrants as a group. Throughout his campaign and presidency, he has characterized non-European immigrants as dangerous threats to US citizens' safety (Ye Hee Lee 2015; Washington Post Editorial Board 2019). This helps him characterize immigrants as an out-group, which promotes his right-wing populist narrative and subsequently brings him power.

President Trump has also echoed his predecessors by making it abundantly clear that immigrants from some places are desirable and others are not, simply by virtue of their country of origin. In January 2018, during a meeting with lawmakers, Trump asked why we let in more immigrants from "shithole" countries, instead of places like Norway. In the same conversation, he also reportedly asked, "Why do we want people from Haiti here?" (Davis, Stolberg, and Kaplan 2018). Trump's comments are unequivocal: people from white, rich nations like Norway are desirable and benefit the US when they immigrate here; immigrants from lower-income, Black nations like Haiti are undesirable and add no value to the US. In 1917, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge argued only Germans, Britons, and Scandinavians should be allowed to immigrate to the US because their pioneering spirits would settle the west, while everyone else would just stay in city slums. One hundred years later, President Trump said that Norwegian immigrants add value to the country and Haitian immigrants do not. Trump's comments caused nationwide

shock and outrage, but his ideas are not new; they are firmly rooted in the United States' legacy of racism and exclusion. However, Trump takes the racist ideas that have always latently guided US policy and brings them to the forefront, exclaiming them loudly and clearly, in a way that shocks the modern collective conscience. Trump's open racism spurs those who share his ideas to spread anti-immigrant rhetoric, creating a hostile environment for Latinx immigrants and their families.

Trump has capitalized on the racial nature of US immigration policy. He employs rhetoric that echoes eugenicists because it grants him power and pushes immigrants deeper into the shadows. Davenport and his contemporaries felt that those from "inferior" (non-Western European) ethnicities were a significant and concrete threat to their way of life. By echoing their rhetoric, Trump perpetuates the narrative that immigrants who are not from rich, white countries like Norway are a threat to the average American's way of life. Politicians have used rhetoric to stoke fear along racial, ethnic, and national divisions for centuries. Trump, like his predecessors, uses it to gain power. In addition to using rhetoric to push immigrants into the shadows, he uses it to create a dragon which his supporters believe only he can slay. But his scheme does not end there: the harm Trump inflicts on immigrants extends beyond rhetoric and into policies.

Beyond Rhetoric: Harmful Policies

A primary feature of Trump's 2016 campaign was his promise to "build the wall" along the US-Mexico border. The wall has become a symbol of Trump and his supporters' attitudes towards immigration, and by extension, immigrants themselves. While Trump insists that a full-length border wall is paramount to national security, experts have determined that a wall will not be effective in stopping people from crossing the border without authorization. The wall's lack of utility, along with its exorbitant cost, make it clear that it is a metaphor that symbolizes

Trump's "tough" stance on immigration more than it is a pragmatic security measure. The wall's symbolic significance is highlighted by Trump's exaggerated, cartoony design ideas. At various times, Trump has suggested adding a moat filled with snakes and alligators as well as topping the wall with "piercing" spikes, among other features. In various moments, he has both confirmed and denied requesting these additions (Crowley 2019). The wall is just one of Trump's immigration policies that has worked to criminalize, endanger, and uproot immigrant communities in the US. Since his first days in the White House, Trump has rolled back protections for immigrants, created a laundry list of punitive immigration policies, and limited existing legal immigration pathways. Like the border wall, all of Trump's immigration policies serve primarily as symbols to criminalize Latinx immigrants, and their efficacy is questioned by experts.

One of the Trump administration's most high-profile anti-immigrant campaigns is family separation. Similar to Prevention through Deterrence, this implicit purpose of this policy is to make conditions so horrible for migrants that it keeps people from coming in the first place. The administration's official explanation was that they were attempting to abide by the Clinton-era Flores Settlement, which prohibits the long-term detention of children. The Trump administration took the children of asylum-seekers and sent them to the Office of Refugee Resettlement, while their parents remained in detention (Hirschfeld and Shear 2018). However, the Flores Settlement does not call for separating children from their parents, especially young children (Chanda 2018). This practice has caused immense amounts of emotional trauma for both the children and adults involved. It also projected a message clearly to the world: those exercising the right to seek asylum, which is granted under international law, are not welcome here, and those who attempt to come here will be brutally separated from their children, who will

be held in cages without basic necessities like soap and blankets (Montoya-Glavez 2019). Like the border wall, this semiotics of this policy are important. By treating migrant families as if they are criminals (despite the fact that seeking asylum is not illegal) and by showing that even small children and infants will not be spared punishment, the Trump administration reifies Latinx migrants as a dangerous criminal out-group.

The Trump administration has also capped the number of asylees accepted into the United States at historic lows and made it much more difficult for Central Americans to even attempt to seek asylum in the US. In July 2019, the administration passed a policy saying that asylum seekers who pass through a country before reaching the United States must first apply for asylum in that country and be denied before applying for asylum in the US (United States Department of Homeland Security 2019). This policy was intended to target Central Americans who have to pass through Mexico to reach the US border. It has strained Mexico's already backlogged system and kept people waiting in Mexico for months while their applications are processed. A similar policy, The Migrant Protection Protocol or the "remain in Mexico" policy, forces asylum seekers to wait in Mexico while their US asylum cases are being processed, even if they are not from Mexico. In the first few months of the policy alone, more than 8,000 people were forced to wait indefinitely in the city of Juarez (Moore 2019). Juarez is a dangerous city, especially for those with no connections there. The intent of both of these policies is to make it as difficult as possible for people to exercise their international right to seek asylum. It sends a clear message to Latinx immigrants already living in the states: people like them are not wanted here.

In addition to instilling fear into the immigrant community through draconian border enforcement policies, the Trump administration has used uncertainty to increase immigrant

vulnerability. The administration has reversed Temporary Protected Status for people from several countries, including Haiti, El Salvador, and Nicaragua (Cohn, Passel, and Bialik 2019). This means that people who have lived legally in the United States under TPS for many years, in some cases over a decade, must now return to their home countries. By uprooting immigrant families who live and work legally in the US, the Trump administration sends a clear message: you do not belong here. It furthers the narrative that those from what Trump calls “shithole countries,” like Haiti, do not belong in the United States, even if they are here legally.

Trump’s White House has also suspended DACA, attempting to end the program entirely. As of writing, the program is closed to new applicants, but its current beneficiaries can continue to renew their status. The Supreme Court is expected to rule later this year on whether President Trump can end the program entirely. This state of uncertainty leaves all 700,000 current recipients of DACA and their families unable to plan for the future (Gonzales 2018). While the Supreme Court deliberates, the lives of hundreds of thousands of people hang in the balance. Until recently, DACA had been relatively non-partisan, as there was general public support for a program that would allow those brought to the US as children to stay and work legally. In 2012, 63% of American adults approved of DACA (Lopez and Krogstad 2014). In 2018, 74% of Americans, including 50% of Republicans, favored permanent legal residence for undocumented people brought to the US as children, which is more protection than DACA offers (Tyson 2018).

The Trump administration targeting DACA-recipients despite widespread support for the program is deliberate; it spreads fear and uncertainty throughout the immigrant community. Closing DACA to new applicants bars undocumented young people from the opportunities available to legal residents, like the ability to work legally. It pushes young people to the

shadows, keeping them vulnerable, and condemning them to a life of potentially exploitative, under-the-table employment. Like repealing TPS, ending DACA shows that Latinx immigrants are not welcome in the United States, that they are not seen as valuable to American society.

The Trump Effect and Internalized Racism

The impacts of Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies extend beyond the immediate effects of causing fear and uncertainty. Social psychologists have shown that Trump's rhetoric has increased acceptance of prejudice towards the groups that he targets, including Latinx immigrants (Crandall, Miller, and White 2018). Trump's rhetoric and open disdain towards immigrants has emboldened people who share his ideas to voice their prejudice. In my 2018 fieldwork, participants described an increase in incidents of routine racism in everyday spaces like schools, churches, and grocery stores since President Trump's election. The stories that were most troubling were related to us by parents about their children's experiences of racism at school. One mother shared that her son's classmates told him, "It was nice knowing you," after President Trump was elected. Another woman told me her younger brother was taunted by peers who said, "I can't wait 'til Donald Trump deport[s] you."

Young people are aware that President Trump's election changed the way their peers speak to and about them. In a recent study, Latinx teens reported that they feel President Trump is emboldening their peers to openly discriminate against them (Wray-Lake et al. 2018). Constantly facing routine racism from peers negatively impacts Latinx teens lives in many ways, as the results section of the thesis will explore. One of the negative effects constant racist abuse can cause is internalized racism. As young people are continually exposed to negative ideas about people like them, they can begin to internalize these beliefs, which not only impacts individuals' sense of self but can fracture the Latinx community (Monzó 2016). When Trump-

supporting, native-born teens repeat anti-immigrant rhetoric, they are doing more than hurting the feelings of their Latinx peers. They are having a tangible negative impact on Latinx teens' lived experiences and acting as agents of governmentality. Analyzing this phenomenon and how it impacts Latinx youth is crucial for the short-term protection of Latinx youth and the long-term protection of immigrant rights.

Chapter Four: Activist and Engaged Methodologies

Sources of Data

This thesis builds on ethnographic data I collected in Apopka over the last two years through the Student Faculty Collaborative Scholarship program (SFCS) with Dr. Nolan Kline. In the summer of 2018, I investigated changes in challenges faced by the Latinx immigrant population in Apopka since President Trump's election. I conducted participant observation, focus groups, interviews, and surveys with Dr. Kline. This project functioned largely as a pilot study and informed the following year's research. One of the main themes that came out of the 2018 research was immigrant experiences of routine racism. I decided to focus on this issue in my summer 2019 SFCS project with Dr. Kline, as our community partners were particularly interested in investigating this phenomenon. In this second summer of research, which was also conducted in Apopka, I focused explicitly on experiences of routine racism among high-school aged immigrants and children of immigrants. In this thesis, I use the data from the 2019 fieldwork as evidence of the local impacts of President Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric. The data from 2018 influenced the 2019 work but is not directly referenced in this thesis. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the data sources.



Figure 1

Based on my findings from 2018 and the interests of our community partners, I chose to focus on the experiences of teenagers from immigrant families during the summer of 2019. High schoolers from immigrant families occupy a unique position as they have extended contact with their native-born, non-Hispanic peers at school every day. Their parents interact mostly with other immigrants at work and in their neighborhoods, which can shield them from anti-immigrant rhetoric. Latinx youth, on the other hand, can experience routine racism every day at school. Investigating how Trump’s rhetoric turns high schools into hostile environments for Latinx youth is an urgent need.

Community Partners

Since the beginning of this project, I have worked with two immigrant-serving organizations in Apopka to collect data: Hope Community Center (HCC) and the Farmworker Association of Florida (FWAF). Both were established over thirty years ago and are integral parts of the local community. The two organizations, while technically unaffiliated, complement each other and often work in tandem.

HCC was founded in the 1970s by three nuns from the Sisters of Notre Dame de Nemur (Hope CommUnity Center 2019), and FWAF was established in 1983 by as a grassroots agricultural labor organizing network (Farmworker Association of Florida 2018). HCC is funded by large corporate donors, including Disney, whereas FWAF is completely grassroots. Both organizations are committed to serving the immigrant community of Apopka through various services. FWAF largely focuses on labor activism, and they work to protect farmworkers from heatstroke, pesticide exposure, and employer abuse. They also assist with wage theft cases, applications for Food Stamps and Medicaid, and other day-to-day concerns. HCC teaches citizenship and English classes and has groups for parents, teens, and others. While they also focus on immigrant rights broadly, one of their top priorities is community building, and the organization runs a service-learning program to educate university and high school students about immigration issues. Both organizations employ Latinx immigrants from the communities they serve and develop programs based on community-identified needs. People who seek services at FWAF and HCC, and those who are involved in their activities, deeply trust the organizations and their staff. For this reason, we partnered with both organizations for our research.

The field site, Apopka, is an agricultural exurb of Orlando that is quickly transforming as highways and housing developments replace former orange groves. The community is diverse: native-born Caucasians and African Americans, as well as Latinx and Haitian immigrants are all well-represented in the town of about 50,000 people. The economic diversity in Apopka is also starkly visible, as neighborhoods of new, large homes are flanked by crowded trailer parks. The Hispanic community in Apopka is vibrant, which makes it a useful field site to study the impacts of immigration policy.

Activist Anthropology

For this project, I used the lens of engaged ethnography and activist anthropology to guide my fieldwork. An important part of this methodology is the partnership with the community organizations described above. Reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationships between researchers and community organizations are the crux of activist anthropology and engaged research. In this methodology, researchers join their participants in working for a common goal, such as race, class, or gender equality (Hale 2008). For this project, I joined the Farmworker Association and Hope CommUnity Center in their fight for immigrant rights. I worked with leaders at both organizations to design this project, so that it would benefit them as much as possible. By demonstrating my genuine commitment to this cause, I was able to form closer bonds to participants and build rapport.

When working with vulnerable groups, it is nearly impossible to collect ethnographic data if the group does not know the researcher supports their cause. If I had not demonstrated my commitment to immigrant rights, through participant observation and close consultation with the organizations' staff, potential participants would not have trusted me enough to share personal information about themselves and their families. If an undocumented individual, or someone with undocumented parents, shares too much information with the wrong person, it could lead to deportation or family separation. Participants shared this tangible fear with me, saying they carefully choose who they talk to about personal matters. Therefore, it was essential that I proved to participants they could trust me to not report them to ICE, as well as to protect their personal details so no one else could misuse their information. As I demonstrated to the staff at HCC and FWAF that I was trustworthy and committed to their cause, they showed research participants, all of whom were recipients of the organizations' services and/or members of one of their

groups, that they could trust me. Without this rapport created through our partnership, it would have been impossible to collect fruitful data over eight weeks.

In addition to being necessary for data collection, activist anthropology also has important and timely ethical implications. Activist anthropologists bring their biases, positionalities, and sympathies towards their participants' cause to the forefront. Engaged researcher Shannon Speed (2006) argues that trying to suppress one's perspective is futile and often morally untenable. It is impossible to eliminate bias in anthropology the way one can in the hard sciences, so anthropologists like Speed maintain it is better to acknowledge how the researcher's experiences, identities, and beliefs shape their point of view, instead of fruitlessly trying to suppress this reality. Activist anthropology is crucial because it brings ethnographic research into the 21st century. The days in which researchers observed their "subjects" from afar are long gone. Engaged anthropology attempts to reduce the power disparity between the research and participant by involving the community in every step of the research process, from project design to publication. It is morally unacceptable to profit off of data provided by a vulnerable group without making a concerted effort to contribute to their fight for equality (Speed 2006; Hale 2001). Activist anthropology provides the tools to collect data in a responsible way that benefits the community and can contribute to systemic change. Under President Trump, more groups are made vulnerable and silenced. There is an urgent need for engaged, activist scholarship to uncover hidden injustices, elevate vulnerable voices, and combat harmful policies.

Positionality

During a meeting with FWAF's youth group, the staff member in charge suggested we play a game. She told the teens there to guess where I was from. Everyone started yelling out

guesses. “Mexico! Honduras! Colombia! Argentina!” They guessed country after country, until someone guessed the United States. Then Elisabeta said, “But what state is she from?” and the deluge of guesses began once again. “Texas! New Mexico! California!” Finally, someone guessed Florida. The teens, bewildered, asked me the question I have been asked many times in Apopka, “But where are your *parents* from?” When I told them I am not Hispanic, and that my family has been in the US for generations, they were shocked.

For my whole life, people have thought that I am Hispanic. I have dark brown hair, dark eyes, and although my skin is fair it is olive-toned. As my Spanish-speaking skills improved, this assumption became more common. When I started working in Apopka two years ago, I was shocked by how often people asked me if I am Latina. When I say that I am not, I can see people trying to figure out why I am here, working with this population. My physical features and my language abilities allow people to assume that I am either Hispanic or non-Hispanic white. Normally, only People of Color ask me what my race is; white people assume that I am white. I believe my positionality allows me to work more easily with Latinx people, as they may be more comfortable with me than with someone who is unambiguously not Hispanic. Multiple participants have told me that they do not trust white people in general, so I feel that my ethnic ambiguity may make them feel more comfortable with me when we first meet. Once we get to know each other, they will know I am not Hispanic, but they will also know that I am committed to their cause, which will build trust and rapport. It makes me uneasy to be perceived as something I am not, and I do not want anyone to think that I am trying to look or act Hispanic to gain access to this population. However, the fact remains that my features and Spanish-speaking ability cause some people to perceive me as Hispanic, which may put some participants at ease.

My identity as a college-aged female also facilitates my research. In general, people do not perceive me as threatening or dangerous. I was only a few years older than some of my participants this summer, and this helped them to trust me. If I were older, it would have been more difficult to build rapport with them. My positionality as an activist was also critical to my work. I am passionate about human rights and immigrant justice, and participants understood this. If I had not shown my commitment to this community, building rapport would have been nearly impossible.

Data Collection

Over an eight-week data collection period in the summer of 2019, I conducted six interviews and two focus groups, one with fourteen participants, the other with six. I also completed twenty to thirty hours of participant observation per week. I conducted my research alongside a fellow student, Silvana Montañola, who was working on a separate ethnographic research project with the same partner organizations. Staff at both organizations were extremely helpful as they recruited participants, provided input on research questions and interview guides, and assisted with logistics by providing space and, in some cases, transportation for participants. In return, I made every effort to have the research meet the needs of the community. They use the data as evidence when applying for grants, as it provides valid proof of something they already know, or suspect, is occurring.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is crucial in understanding the broader challenges facing a community and in building trust and rapport with participants. For this project, I spent twenty to thirty hours per week working at the Farmworker Association and Hope Community Center.

Because the Farmworker Association is a grassroots organization, they always need extra hands. I sat at the front desk in the mornings until the receptionist got there at one in the afternoon. I would check clients and volunteers in, answer the phone, send faxes, and give people forms to fill out. I also helped people apply for SNAP (food stamps or *estampías*) and Medicaid. Most people who come to FWAFA are immigrants from Latin America, but they also serve Haitian, African American, and native-born white community members. Helping people with government assistance applications was often difficult, as I had to navigate a series of detailed forms and usually had to overcome a language barrier. However, it was extremely enlightening, as I saw firsthand the challenges faced by mixed-status families, where some household members are citizens and others may be undocumented.

During my first summer of research at the Farmworker Association in 2018, participant observation helped me understand how the organization functions, as well as allowing me to build relationships with the staff. Having this background made my work the following summer much easier, as the staff was eager to have me back and everyone was excited to help however they could with my research. Understanding the organization and community made it much easier for me to plan and execute my project during the 2019 field season. Even though I was not interacting with teenagers on a day-to-day basis when I was working at the front desk, this time was still valuable. By showing up every day, I demonstrated that I was truly committed to the fight for immigrant justice. This long-term commitment is essential in engaged research and helped me maintain a good relationship with staff members.

In addition to working the front desk and aiding in filling out government assistance applications, I also helped with the Farmworker Association's new youth group. The group is small; only eight to twelve students showed up each Friday night. The woman running the youth

group did not have time to organize it on top of her other responsibilities, so she said that if Silvana and I were willing to plan and run the group, then the students could meet. We designed activities and lesson plans, organized donations from local restaurants so we could feed the kids dinner, and then ran the youth group. The staff member asked us to focus on topics like the 2020 census, voting, and civic engagement. Preparing for and running these meetings was not easy, as the ages in the group ranged from eight to eighteen, and some of the children did not speak English, while others did not like to speak in Spanish. Despite the challenges we faced, it was worth it in the end, and the students seemed to enjoy that Silvana and I were there. The trust I built with the teens encouraged them to participate in our research and allowed us to conduct a focus group during one of the youth group nights.

Hope Community Center, while similar to the Farmworker Association in its mission, has very different needs from its volunteers. Since they have more funding, they have a full staff to cover all of their administrative work. Because of this, I was able to work directly with the teens who are involved with the organization. HCC has a well-established youth group with over a hundred students. However, since we conducted this research in the summer, they were not having their regular weekly meetings. Instead, I helped with the summer activities, by serving food at a graduation ceremony they held for the seniors in the youth group and teaching theater games to some teens who were running a summer camp for young kids. During my field work, the youth group's leadership team, made up of about thirty of its most involved members, went on a retreat to Immokalee. The staff member in charge of the youth group, Miss Nilka, invited me to attend this retreat as a chaperone and small group leader. During this week, I established rapport with many of the students who would eventually participate in the focus groups and interviews.

In Immokalee, people who could have just been participants became friends. By spending time together outside the context of a focus group, I was able to get to know them as individuals. We did the dishes together, prayed together before meals, played silly games, and developed inside jokes. Not only did I enjoy this, it was also invaluable to my research. The students understood that I truly care about using my research to protect immigrant rights. A few weeks after the retreat, when I conducted a focus group, over a dozen students were eager to participate, and others sought me out for interviews. Just as important as me getting to know the teens was them getting to know me, so that they could trust me with some of their most vulnerable feelings and experiences.

To an outsider, it may be difficult to understand how serving food at a graduation ceremony or sending faxes to government agencies or sorting food pantry donations relates to the research questions. But from the inside, these actions could not be more relevant. By showing that I care enough to go out of my way to help with whatever is needed, I not only got to know people and build rapport, I demonstrated that I am not here to use this community just to gather data and move on. Activist anthropology and engaged research depend on the researcher making their participants' agenda their own. Sometimes this looks like attending rallies, and sometimes it looks like staying late after an event to help clean up. Through the deeply personal and political nature of this work, I have taken on immigrant justice as my own agenda, and that does not end when my field work does. In the fall of 2018, I held an UndocuAlly Training at Rollins to educate students on how to be better allies to their undocumented peers. I taught an English class at Hope Community Center throughout the 2019-2020 school year, unrelated to my research. I call my representatives to urge them to protect immigrants with policy and I attend rallies. I recognize the privilege I have that my participants do not; I could walk away from this fight at

any time. But I have chosen, though this activist anthropology methodology, to intertwine my personal agenda with that of my participants. What I have learned through participant observation and my general involvement with this cause has been invaluable both for my research and for my own personal development.

Interviews and Focus Groups

In addition to participant observation, I conducted six semi-structured interviews and two focus groups, one with fourteen participants and the other with six, with Dr. Kline during the eight-week summer field season. The inclusion criteria for participating in interviews and focus groups were that participants had to be between the ages of thirteen and twenty-five, from a Latinx immigrant family², and currently attend or have graduated from high school in the US. Additionally, they had to be willing to participate and receive parental permission if they were under eighteen years old. Minors signed an informed assent form and obtained written or oral consent from their parents. Those over eighteen were read an informed consent form and verbally consented to participate. All names of participants have been changed to protect their identity. I recruited participants through their involvement with the youth groups at Hope Community Center and the Farmworker Association. All of the focus group participants were current members of one of the two groups, as were three of the six interview participants. Two interview participants were recent graduates from Hope Community Center's group, and one was an AmeriCorps volunteer who graduated from and then worked at a local high school who now works with the youth group.

² One participant is not Latinx or from an immigrant family. However, he was eager to participate and provided valuable insight on the Black-Latinx relations at his school.

I created interview and focus group instruments based on the research questions. I audio recorded both focus groups and all but one interview³, so that I could more actively listen to participants and take notes after the fact. Organizing participants for focus groups and interviews is always complicated but working with teenagers added another layer of difficulty. Many participants could not drive themselves, and several had undocumented parents who were also unable to provide transportation. Because it was summer vacation, some potential participants had to stay home with their younger siblings. These extenuating circumstances led to several last-minute cancelations, despite our best efforts to be flexible and provide transportation. However, with the help of the community partner organizations, we were able to meet our goal of at least five interviews and two robust focus groups.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data we collected, I transcribed the audio from all of the interviews and focus groups. These were conducted English, with only occasional switches into Spanish, so it took me about four hours to transcribe each hour of audio. Each focus group was about an hour long, and each interview was about forty-five minutes. In the fall of 2019, I pre-coded the data, looking for major themes that jumped out. Then, in the beginning of the spring 2020 semester, I formally coded using *Nvivo* software. I created nodes based on my pre-coding and added more nodes as I noticed new themes. I coded all of the data in *Nvivo* before printing out each of the individual nodes for pile sorting. I annotated a hard copy of each node, before pile sorting them into sub-themes and creating connections between each group. Organizing the data in this way allowed me to easily construct the results portion of my thesis in a cohesive manner.

³ One participant did not consent to having her interview audio recorded.

Chapter Five: Life in the Out-Group: Results

“I feel like after [election] day, I realized people’s true intentions and how they actually felt. ‘Cause that was the day when I realized everybody’s thoughts in a way. ‘Cause I mean like sometimes you just have to keep your thoughts to yourself. I didn’t realize that people thought of me that way, like, having illegal parents or whatever. So I realized, ‘Oh my gosh, you think of me that way?’ Like I was kinda in my own little world.” ----Alejandra

When I interviewed Alejandra, she was new to the leadership group as a rising high school sophomore. I was shocked when she told me how young she was; she seemed much older, already a leader among her peers. She and her older brother Diego both stood out as mature and poised even among the other members of the leadership group. Both Diego and Alejandra were born in the US, but their parents are undocumented. Alejandra was in middle school when President Trump was elected. For her, the 2016 election marked a transition in her life, after which she was suddenly cognizant of how people felt about her and her family. She expressed how she went from blissfully ignorant to painfully aware of the anti-immigrant views held by those around her. Her experience illustrates the effect of Trump’s election, and how his rise to power emboldened his supporters, creating a hostile environment for immigrants and their families.

In this chapter, I expand on Alejandra’s observation that President Trump’s election changed daily life for Latinx teenagers from immigrant families. I examine how Trump grants power to his supporters, and how they utilize this power to reinforce Latinx immigrants as an out-group. I highlight the racist social structure that has been in place

since before 2016 that laid the groundwork for Trump's success. I demonstrate how all of these factors converge to create a hostile environment for Latinx youth. Finally, I examine the negative effects this environment has on Latinx teens, as they socially silence themselves and self-govern to avoid racist encounters, while internalizing dangerous narratives of white superiority.

Trump Gives Power and He Takes it Away

Alejandra was not alone in recognizing Trump's election as a turning point. Another participant, Laura, who was in high school in 2016, echoed Alejandra's point in a separate interview. She said that after the election, she felt a "whole different vibe" at school. She elaborated:

All of the sudden, everybody was in their groups showing who they really were. You can feel, like, the tension it was. [...] So it was really like, scary just to walk around knowing that there was a lot of people that were against where you come from and who you are.

Alejandra and Laura's experiences both describe the hostile environment created by Trump's election. This is a form of power wielded by President Trump. His widespread support makes teens from Latinx immigrant families feel insecure and afraid. This fear is a powerful tool for reinforcing Latinx immigrants as a powerless out-group. In the environment created by Trump's election, Trump supporters have power, and the groups targeted by President Trump do not. The power imbalance is not simply an abstract concept that political analysts write about, it is a concrete reality that infiltrates the school environment, impacts teenagers' lives, and shapes their experiences.

Several participants used the word “power” to describe the dynamic they felt between themselves and Trump supporters. Laura, who described her high school as having a “whole different vibe” after the election, now attends a large, predominantly white, state university in Florida. I asked her how she felt when she saw fellow students wearing Trump shirts or MAGA hats. She replied, “I don’t know. I just always feel like they’re looking at me, like signaling to me, ‘Oh, this is why!’ They gotta be at the top, they gotta have the power. So it’s like, scary to walk next to them.” When I asked her later in the interview why people would want to openly support President Trump, she said, “I feel like so they can show the power. Like, ‘who has the power now? You guys lost, we’re winning. What are you guys gonna do?’ I feel like for me, it signals, like, ‘Oh, you have power over me.’”

Marta had a similar reaction when I asked her about Trump supporters. She said, “The thing I seem to see more after the election is that white people thought they had more power over us.” She said Trump supporters who wore MAGA hats at her school after the election “walked around [...] like they owned the place.” She imagined them thinking, “Oh, we’re gonna get you out. Y’all not gonna be here no more.” She continued, “That’s why I think they wear the hats, too. Because they thought they’re like able to do what they wanted to do. Like they own it, they own this state, so they think that they’re like [...] the shit, you know?”

The power described by Marta and Laura is not abstract political power, but instead a direct power that their peers wield over them, using both passive signalers of the President’s victory, like hats and shirts, as well as direct instances of racism. As Trump confers power onto white, native-born teens, those from immigrant families are left feeling powerless. Veronica, a participant in the smaller youth group I worked with, expressed how she feels increasingly

powerless in the face of Trump's base. When I asked her how she feels when she sees people supporting President Trump, she replied,

Personally, it makes me feel like, small, if you will. 'Cause when I first heard of Trump, I thought it was ridiculous. I mean, his ideas...who would follow him? And now, I guess, with every passing Trump sticker I see on cars, I'm just reminded of how big his following is and how bigger it's getting, and I guess it makes me feel small and afraid, that it's getting so out of hand.

When I asked another participant, Sara, the same question, she said, "[I feel] powerless. It's just the realization that we have no power."

As Trump supporters gain power, immigrant teens lose power. This feeling of powerlessness is associated with being in an out-group, unable to have the same influence as those in Trump's base. The experiences of these young women also highlight that teenagers understand the power disparity between themselves and their Trump-supporting, native-born peers. It actively shapes how they conceptualize their relationships with their classmates.

Latinx teens do not passively accept the power that Trump-supporting youth wield. Marta, who attends a majority minority school, says that the white students who wear MAGA hats are bullied. She explained, "People be bullying [the Trump supporters]. They be like, 'take that shit out.' [...] They be calling them all sorts of words, just because they support Trump and all that. Most people at school don't really support him, because of all the things he has done." This "bullying" may reinforce the Trump supporters' belief that they are being persecuted and reinforce in their minds that Latinx immigrants are a threat to the American way of life and belong in the out-group. Even as Latinx students speak out against Trump, they are inadvertently deepening the divisions that Trump is capitalizing on and confirming their position in the out-

group. In their attempt to reclaim power, they are reinforcing the very systems that subjugate them.

Trump-supporting youth gain power by passively supporting Trump, through wearing hats, shirts, and pins as described above. However, they also wield power over their Latinx peers from by invoking the name of President Trump and referencing his policies as they engage in racist taunts. Camila, the youngest participant at thirteen, said that even she remembers the change that happened after Trump's election. She told me, "I mean, there was like a lot of incidents [after the election]. [...] I heard this one, it was like these people, they were telling these kids to go back where they came from or stuff like that. And it was white people telling that to these Hispanic kids."

The theme of deportation is popular in these jabs. Laura told me that one of her friends was told at school the day after the election, "Oh, go back to your country." Another participant, Carla said her friend got a text following the election which read, "you're not gonna stay here, go back to Mexico." She remembered people saying things like, "He's gonna build the wall and you're gonna all have to leave." Carla elaborated, saying, "Like mostly white kids would say that, too. They would be all like, 'here comes the wall!' And they would say it like joking around and thinking it was funny, but it wasn't because [Trump's] actually trying [to build the wall]."

One participant, Greta, shared a particularly poignant story with me that made her senior year of high school difficult. Greta and her parents are undocumented, and she has two younger sisters, Marta and Camila, who are US citizens. I interviewed all three sisters. Greta said that during her senior of high school, before one of her classes, one particular student would regularly come in and talk to the teacher, because they were "friends." The student would bring in his laptop, which prominently displayed a "Trump 2020" sticker. He would sit "right in front of"

Greta and talk to the teacher, loudly proclaiming how much he loved Trump and saying “a whole bunch of stuff.” The teacher would admonish him and tell him to keep his opinions to himself, but the behavior continued throughout the semester. Greta was distraught by this young man’s behavior, and classmates told her that he would only do it on days when she was there, suggesting that he was doing it simply to bother her. Greta did not share exactly what the other student said, only that it was Trump-related and upsetting for her. She said,

It was hard [to deal with this]. Because my parents did not go through all that effort to bring me here for nothing. [...] They didn’t bring me here for [...] you to say things against me. [...] It got me mad sometimes, because like, you don’t even know what you’re talking about. [I was] also sad, because it was hard. Because you know my parents, they don’t have any papers. So they could be taken at any moment, and you saying that [...] makes me even sadder.

Greta’s comment highlights why this rhetoric is so painful for those who receive it: the fear of deportation and family separation is real and omnipresent for many Latinx teenagers in this community. When a peer makes a joke about deportation, it is striking to the core of many of these teens’ greatest fears. Greta’s mother was forced to return to Mexico the summer after this bullying occurred. When I interviewed Greta in the summer of 2019, it had been over a year since she had seen her mom. She cannot speak about her mother without tearing up. In one of the focus groups, eight students said they had undocumented parents. When one of the leaders of the group asked them how Trump’s words about undocumented people made them feel, several students began to cry and we had to take a break. Routine racism that centers around deportation is especially cruel, as it turns these young people’s biggest nightmare into a taunt.

Trump has magnified the threat of deportations through his rhetoric and policies. Many participants said they were more worried about their parents being deported now than they were before Trump's election. This helps him exercise power over immigrant communities, as the fear of deportation causes families to self-govern and isolate. However, Trump's harsh policies lend a certain form of power to his supporters as well. Trump's policies make teenagers from immigrant families fearful, and Trump-supporting teens can use this fear to mock them, therefore gaining power over them more easily.

The 2016 election marked a change for teens from Latinx immigrant families, and now they are keenly aware that their peers support Trump, which fills them with fear and makes them feel powerless. Latinx teens are cognizant of the power that Trump grants to his supporters, who exercise this power through both passively supporting the president and invoking his name and policies as they taunt their Latinx peers. This power imbalance further solidifies Latinx teens from immigrant families in the out-group and creates a hostile environment at school.

Trump Fuels the Fire: Trumped-Up Trickle-Down Rhetoric

Latinx teens are not only affected by hurtful words from their peers, but from their president, too. What President Trump says is tangible for these teenagers. They hear it over and over again, both from media and their peers, and internalize it. They are acutely aware of the anti-immigrant narratives spun by the current administration and accepted by a significant portion of the public. Carla pointedly said, “[Trump] wants all immigrants, all Mexicans, Hispanics, [...] as well as Blacks, or Asians, or anybody that so called ‘doesn’t belong here,’ he wants them all gone.” Carla and her peers know that President Trump does not like people “like them.”

In focus groups and interviews, I noticed that several participants continually referenced a specific quote from President Trump. It is the same quote I used in part for the title of this thesis and included in the literature review, from the speech announcing Trump's candidacy in 2015. In the quote, Trump refers to Mexicans immigrants as bringing "drugs" and "crime," and indiscriminately calls them "rapists." Multiple participants directly referenced this speech from 2015, emphasizing the importance of the president's words and the impact his rhetoric has on this population.

When Diego participated in my focus group, he had just graduated from high school. He and his younger sister Alejandra are citizens, but their parents are undocumented. He said the president's narrative about undocumented immigrants makes him angry "because it's not true. Because he calls undocumented immigrants drug cartel [members], rapists." He defended his parents, describing the long hours his father works in construction to provide for his family, and how his mother sacrificed a higher paying job to have a better chance at obtaining a green card. His voice tight with emotion, Diego said, "I don't think you can call that type of person a drug cartel [member] or rapist." Greta, who endured continual taunts from a classmate, similarly rushed to defend her undocumented parents. In reference to what President Trump says about Latinx immigrants, she said, "It's like what he says makes no sense at all whatsoever. [...] A lot of us, our parents brought us here for a better life, because they're not, like when [Trump] says, 'they're rapists,' they're not rapists at all. I mean, they have their own families. [...] Yes, there are bad Hispanics. But not everyone is like that."

Carla protested President Trump's unfair characterization of immigrants at large, still referencing that same 2015 speech. In a tone she herself would describe as "heated," Carla said, "Out here everybody has to say, 'Oh, they're taking everybody's jobs. They're drug cartel

[members], they're taking up our air.' Like it's ridiculous." Marta, too, disagreed with how President Trump talks about Hispanic people. She said, "They think we [Mexicans] are bad, but yet here [in the US], you see murder, you see rapists, you see drug dealers everywhere here [...] It's not only in Mexico, it's everywhere. And in the United States, too." In the interview, I made no reference to the quote from President Trump, but she listed the three things he did in his speech. This quote has become emblematic of how these teens believe their president sees them and all Latinx people: criminals, rapists, drug dealers. Latinx teens hear anti-immigrant rhetoric targeting people like them from their peers, but they also hear it directly from the President himself. This legitimizes their fears and their feelings of powerlessness, creating a hostile environment to which they must adapt in order to survive.

Foundations of a Hostile Environment

Sometimes, an incident of unprompted racism in a school setting can mark someone permanently. Sara graduated from an Apopka high school in 2011 and worked in that same school as an AmeriCorps volunteer during the 2018-2019 school year. Currently, she works with one of the youth groups that participated in this research. She recounted a moment in her life from her freshman year of high school, nearly a decade before Trump was elected. She said that she has never been able to forget this incident, and that it has marked her life.

There were these two white guys in front of me in the lunch line. And they were talking about a topic I knew about. And you know, I'm in ninth grade [...] so I kind of mentioned the same thing they were talking about [to my friend]. I mentioned it loud enough, because [...] my kiddie-self wanted them to know that I knew about it [too]. So, literally after that, one of [the white guys] turned around

and was like, “Shut the heck up, we’re not talking to you, you stupid Mexican.”

I’ve never been able to forget that. Like, ever. [...] I’m not even Mexican.

Sara added later in the interview that the boy had used vulgar language she was not comfortable repeating. Her experience demonstrates that high schoolers using racist language towards their peers is not something that Trump started. Trump capitalized on these racist ideas; he did not create them. As the literature review shows, Trump has used the US’s deep history of racism to his benefit. His presidency has worsened expressions of racism towards immigrants by legitimizing open discrimination, a phenomenon described as the Trump Effect (Crandall, Miller, and White 2018). Sara said the violence she saw at the high school as an employee last year was much worse than anything she experienced there as a student, nearly a decade ago. By emboldening and empowering his supporters to share their racist sentiments, Trump capitalizes on a system that is already racist. Participants shared how hearing racist slurs and being treated differently for being Hispanic have always been part of their experience, but now those racist ideas are being legitimized by the President, making them more powerful and more harmful.

I asked Greta if she had ever heard someone use disparaging words towards Hispanics or Mexicans. She said she often heard words like “beaners, spics, or wetbacks” aimed at Hispanic students. I asked her to clarify: when did students use these words? Was it in anger, during a fight? She said no, these words were used “in conversation.” As she would be walking down the hallway, she would hear someone say, “Look at that beaner!” She added that these words were not usually directed at her. When I asked her how hearing slurs made her feel, she replied that she did not know “how to put a word to that [...] it’s like a mix of anger and sadness.”

Greta’s younger sister Marta said that racial slurs are “everywhere.” She said that Black students at her school are often called the N-word, sometimes by Hispanic students. But, she

says, “they’re used to it,” and she equated it to Hispanics being used to being called “wetbacks.” Marta continued, “I guess we used to it, them saying stuff to us like that [...] I really don’t care.” I asked if she would ever tell a teacher when she heard someone use a racial slur, and she said she would not. When I probed and asked why, she replied, “I let it go. ‘Cause like why am I gonna get someone in trouble if I don’t know if they know what that word means? Or how that word affects us.” This comment contradicted her earlier statement, where she said these words did not affect her, and that she did not care. I suspect her apathy masks a feeling of powerlessness to change her situation.

Diego, who graduated high school in May of 2019, said that racist comments were “commonplace” for him. He elaborated, saying, “I think it just goes through our heads [and we don’t notice it] because it’s just so engrained or we’re just used to it.” He emphasized that both Black and Hispanic students at his school were both constantly barraged with racial slurs, often from the other ethnic group. The other students in the focus group agreed with his statement. Marta says that racial slurs do not bother her, and Diego says they are so commonplace that they go in one ear and out the other. They have accepted this level of racism as a norm.

Sometimes, racism at school manifests itself in more subtle ways. One participant, Julieta, goes to a private Catholic school, where she says that she and her two cousins are “probably” the only Hispanic students there. When I asked her what her school was like, she said, “[My teachers] don’t really like to pick me to answer questions or anything, it’s really rare they pick on me.” When I asked how the other students at school treated her, she replied dejectedly, “[They] just act like you’re not there. Like you’re invisible. [...] They don’t talk to you; they just look at you funny. When you do group work [...] they don’t invite you to be in their group. [...] Usually I end up doing it by myself.” Later in the focus group, she shared an

experience she had in class. Julieta's classmates, none of whom are Hispanic, were having heated discussion about immigration, while she watched silently.

They were all speaking about [immigration] like they knew what was going on, what was happening, and how we would feel. But in reality, they don't know how people feel, or what's really going on. And they were talking to the point where I cried, but they didn't care that I cried. I just left the room, and they just all kept talking about it, and I came back and they acted like nothing happened, or they said nothing.

Julieta said no one ever mentioned the incident to her, including the teacher who watched her leave crying. Julieta begs her mother to transfer her back to the public school where there are other Hispanic students, but her scholarship and private education are too valuable for her family to give up. Both the explicit forms of racism, like the use of racial slurs, and more subtle instances like exclusion, are not inventions of President Trump. However, these racist incidents now carry more weight, as the President openly spouts anti-immigrant language, and thereby legitimizes it. Additionally, this existing environment of racial slurs and exclusion combines with the novel Trump-centric taunts mentioned in the previous section to create a hostile environment for Latinx teens.

Social Silencing and Self Governing to Survive a Hostile World

Social Silencing

Sara, the woman who was told to "shut up" and called a "stupid Mexican" by two white boys her freshman year of high school, said that moment marked her life. She explained,

That was the first time I really experienced direct racism [...] I used to be very extroverted, but that made me a huge introvert. Like ever since then, I became a huge introvert. [...] It marked my life in a big way. It changed in a big way.

Sara's experience models how just one experience of routine racism can shift a person's social behavior. Other participants called themselves introverted or anti-social, but they did not cite a specific inciting racist incident that caused them to act that way. However, these participants are clearly using anti-social behavior to protect themselves from routine racism at school. Many participants feel the best way to adapt to the hostile environment created by Trump's presidency is to choose to silence themselves, which is an example of governmentality. This is incredibly harmful, as it can limit youth's educational opportunities, impact their social relationships, and negatively affect their subjectivities. Whether it is a specific incident of racism or the general threat of racist abuse that "teaches" teens from Latinx immigrant families to be silent, the impacts are unquestionably harmful.

Latinx teens make a conscious decision to silence themselves in order to avoid racist abuse. For example, I asked Marta if she heard people saying racist things towards Hispanic people at school. She replied matter-of-factly, saying, "I mean, towards me? No. Cause like, I don't know. There's always racist comments. Like every day. [...] That's why I don't socialize with a lot of people, because I don't like being in drama and stuff like that. That's why, yeah." Laura, the participant who now attends a state university, used a similar measure in high school. Laura was in Advanced Placement classes and was often the only Hispanic student in the room. She said she felt uncomfortable among white students, and I asked her why this was. She said,

Because I just feel like, it's harder for [white students] to understand where you come from. I think at one point I tried to act not like myself because of them.

‘Cause I felt like, y’know, what if they say something about me or something like that. So I always kept to myself. I was always like that one quiet student in class that didn’t really talk or answer questions.

Laura used this technique throughout high school, and she is aware that it protected her from racist incidents. I asked her if she ever felt treated differently because she was Latina. She responded,

I mean, like I said, [...] I didn’t really say much when it came to being chosen [in class] and like doing this and that. I don’t know, I always just kept to myself [...] So [being treated differently] was never really a problem for me. I don’t know if my friends felt that, [...] but like for me, that was never the case. Because I would either not talk or just like observe. I was always just there.

While both Marta and Laura described escaping direct racism at school because they silence themselves, neither noted the adverse effects of being silenced. They both feel forced to silence themselves to avoid the racist comments of their peers, but neither talked about this reality as an injustice. Instead, they both feel they successfully avoid the racist abuse experienced by their bolder peers. They do not seem to realize that they too experience racism through their forced social silence. The subtlety of social silencing is troubling, as those like Laura and Marta may not realize the negative impact it has on their lives.

By creating a hostile environment in schools, xenophobic students who make racist comments have forced Latinx students to self-govern. Latinx teens witness others being taunted because of their race and decide to silence themselves to avoid attention, inadvertently reinforcing their position in the out-group. This display of governmentality serves as a microcosm for the United States as a whole (Foucault 1991). When native-born teens use racist

language against their Latinx peers, they become instruments of the state's governmentality by teaching Latinx teens they must accept their position in the out-group and socially silence themselves or face the consequences.

Suspicion and Social Separation

In addition to silencing themselves at school, Latinx youth regard those they do not know with suspicion and separate themselves from people they fear may be anti-immigrant. At her state university, Laura carefully chooses who she speaks to. Laura's parents are undocumented, and she is afraid of what will happen to them if she tells the wrong person about her family. Undocumented teens, or those with undocumented families members, suffer from denouncability, or the ever-present reality that anyone could report them to ICE and severely disrupt their lives (Castañeda 2019). This denouncability causes Latinx youth to be extremely cautious about who they share personal information with, because anyone who knows about their family's immigration status has an incredible amount of power over them. Laura explained the precautions she takes:

I don't ever speak about anything immigration-related outside of [the community organization]. [...] Like, anything [other people] know [...] about me and my family or anything can be held against me. I'd rather just stay by myself, with my family, my closest friends, and I'll be fine with that. And so far, it has worked for me. But you know, like, that transition to college. That's when everything was like, "I'm by myself now. What do I do? Who do I trust?"

Laura explained that her transition to college was difficult, as she left behind her social networks where she felt safe. Until she made three friends at school, two Latinas and a Filipina, she felt utterly alone. She said she felt able to trust these new friends because they were also ethnic

minorities like her. She explained, “They’re different, you’re different, you know, we’re the same because we’re different.” She knew that they were safe to talk to, because they could be in the same boat as her. Laura, like many others, chooses to avoid groups of white students because of her denouncability. The risk of her white peers being anti-immigrant is too great; she cannot risk giving them power over her and her family, so she reinforces her place in the out-group by avoiding those in the in-group.

Laura was not always as cautious as she is now. She traces this change in her attitude to the 2016 election, and other participants echoed this same point. After the election, Laura and those like her felt they had to evaluate who was with them and who was against them, so to speak. Trump’s election brought Laura’s and others’ denouncability to the forefront. Laura was in high school during the election, and she said who she could count on changed. She recognizes that Trump’s election has made her suspicious, especially of white people. She described how she walks across her college campus:

I walk across to my other class, and I’m like, “Are you a Trump supporter? Are you a Trump supporter?” I just keep walking. Unless I’ve been shown otherwise, I feel like you will be against me or something. And I feel really bad to even think about it, because you’re judging, right? But it’s just like, all the events coming up to where I am now have been like white people against us. So it’s kinda like a wall you’re building towards them. Because you know if something happens, let me just stay back here and protect myself away from you.

This suspicion, like social silencing and social separation, is a self-preservation measure that Latinx youth use to protect themselves. Instead of facing routine racism, or in more extreme cases, exposing their family to a heightened risk of deportation, Latinx youth are removing

themselves from these potential encounters altogether. Like social silencing, Latinx teens decide it is better to be separated and not face direct racism and/or put their family at risk for deportation. It is a form of governmentality that reinforces Latinx immigrants' position in the out-group and continues to subjugate this population.

Reshaping Subjectivities

Marta is sixteen years old and a US citizen by birth. Her older sister Greta is undocumented, as is their father, so Marta has a lot of responsibilities, including looking after her thirteen-year-old sister Camila. Since the girls' mother had to return to Mexico, and Greta and their father both work long hours, Marta has much more work to do at home than an average sixteen-year-old. Last year, Marta took an Advanced Placement class, and I asked her what sort of people were in her class. She said, "Well, like smart people. They were all really smart. They got good grades." Probing, I asked if people from all races were in this class. Marta quickly replied, "No, mostly white, yeah. They're like the smarter ones." She said this as if it was obvious, as if she was confused as to why I would even ask. She elaborated later in the interview, reinforcing that the other students in this class were very smart, and implying that she was not. At no point during the interview did she indicate that she might have struggled in the class because she does all the driving, cooking, and cleaning for her household, cares for a sibling, and is grieving separation from a parent. Instead, she saw her self-described sub-par performance in the class as a reflection of her intellectual inferiority and, subsequently, her white peers' superiority.

The hostile environment created by President Trump's rhetoric has deeply harmful effects on Latinx youth's subjectivities, or their senses of self. The internalized narrative of white superiority demonstrated by Marta seems pervasive among participants. Additionally, the

convergence of immigration policy, anti-immigrant rhetoric from the President, and routine racism from their peers leaves participants feeling despondent and powerless, emphasizing the importance of community organizations and their work with Latinx youth.

Marta is not alone in feeling inadequate at school among her white peers. Alejandra, a bright young woman who is already a leader in the youth group despite only being a sophomore, talked about how she felt when she was inducted into the National Honors Society at her school:

I'm in National Honors Society, and I'm new. And I don't know how to say this, like I'm not welcome [...] It was like me and my [three Hispanic] friends [...] and then everybody surrounding us. I don't know, I felt like they chose us just to like make the group diverse, in a sense.

Alejandra feels like she was only picked so the group could seem diverse. However, NHS has GPA and community service requirements that must be met before a student can join. Alejandra is as qualified to be in NHS as any of the other students there, but she does not feel that way. Like Marta, Alejandra is a US citizen with undocumented parents. She is constantly surrounded by rhetoric that says people like her parents are dangerous and unworthy of basic rights. These harmful narratives have left Alejandra feeling unintelligent and unworthy alongside her peers from native-born families. Even though Alejandra has as much right to be in NHS as her peers, she has internalized racist narratives that tell her she is undeserving. This could have an extremely detrimental effect on Alejandra's future, as a lack of self-confidence could limit her educational opportunities.

Troublingly, this white superiority narrative seems pervasive throughout the teens I talked to. In the larger of the two focus groups I conducted, we were discussing the fights that happen at the three public high schools represented. I asked who was fighting whom: were these

groups fighting along racial lines, or was race not a factor? Diego, Alejandra's older brother, explained that the Black and Hispanic students are the ones who fight, and added off-handedly, "Nobody really has beef with the white people [...] They're smart enough to stay in their own lane." No one in the large group objected to this or even batted an eye; some students nodded. In their minds, white students were above fighting. They do not seem to understand, or least they did not acknowledge, the underlying factors that may cause more violence in Black and Brown communities. These pervasive narratives of white superiority are extremely dangerous and demonstrate the need for Latinx youth empowerment.

In addition to internalizing damaging narratives, Latinx teens experience despondency and hopelessness because of the hostile environment they live in. They feel powerless to change the current situation and do not process the hurt they experience. I asked the group if they ever talk to anyone when they hear racist comments at school. One student, Lola, said no, she never tells anyone. "I just try not to think about it. I listen to music. Cause I feel like my parents already have a lot of things going on, so I don't want to go and tell them. [...] It's hard." Other participants echoed this sentiment: they do not want to bother their parents by talking to them about what they experience at school. Diego and Alejandra were the exception, who said they always talked about what they experienced with their parents. In a later interview, Greta said, "I don't feel like I'm that close to my parents, so I usually didn't tell them [about school], I don't really talk to anyone. I mostly keep to myself." I asked her if she talked to her two sisters, Marta and Camila, about anything like this, and she shook her head no. "We're not that close. We live in the same house, but I'm very antisocial [...] I really don't like talking to other people. Cause like, I'm a crybaby, as you can see. It sucks." Greta's answer mystified me, as I had seen the sisters together and they seemed very close. I assume Greta meant it is difficult for her to share

these harder emotional truths with her family. These participants' responses reveal that they are overwhelmed by the environment they must function in, and they deal with it by suppressing their emotions instead of processing them. In the long term, this could prove harmful.

In addition to not talking to their support systems about experiencing routine racism, participants seemed to feel there was little they could do to change the way things are. I asked Marta how she felt when she heard people say something negative about Hispanic people. She responded, "It gets me mad, but like at the same time, I can't do nothing about it." Her sister Greta, in a separate interview, said she would never go to a teacher about a classmate saying something racist. "I just didn't feel comfortable at all, cause like, everybody's talking about it. [Trump is] in everybody's mouth, and that's what everybody's talking about, and if I try to talk to someone about it, I felt like maybe they would say something bad to me." To these young people, Trump's influence seems absolute, and they are powerless to change it. They internalize narratives of Trump's power and their own powerlessness. This is a form of governmentality, as these narratives teach young people it is futile to exercise their right to organize and vote, as this will do nothing to change the current power structure. The majority of the participants involved in this research are US citizens, yet they feel they have no ability to change the way things are. This disillusionment is dangerous and beneficial to the power structures that want to continue subjugating Latinx people. These data in particular demonstrate a desperate need for youth involvement in political activism, which is an important component of both youth groups I partnered with.

Chapter Six: Collateral Damage: Discussion and Conclusion

In Trump's America, Latinx lives are collateral damage. In order to gain and maintain political power, Trump must characterize Latinx immigrants as a dangerous out-group, which

has profound consequences on the lived experiences of immigrants and their families. President Trump has plainly shown that he cares more about his own career than he does the lives of Latinx immigrants and their US citizen family members. The data presented here demonstrates how Trump's presidency has created a hostile environment for Latinx youth.

The teens who participated in this work are constantly surrounded by racist narratives that characterize Latinx immigrants as a threat to US society. In addition to hearing open vitriol about themselves and their families from the highest office in the nation, they hear it repeated by their peers, day in and day out. While native-born teens have always taunted those from immigrant families, as Sara's story from nearly a decade ago shows, native-born teens can now invoke the name of the president in their taunts, granting them power and taking it away from their Latinx peers. By engaging in these racist taunts, native-born teens become instruments of governmentality, teaching Latinx youth that they must socially silence and separate themselves or face racist vitriol. Latinx teens internalize narratives of white superiority and feel powerless against Trump and his base. This is what it looks like to live as a member of the out-group.

When the President of the United States says someone belongs to an out-group, it has consequences. The racism and xenophobia already faced by these young people has been compounded by Trump's presidency. The power of the office of the President matters. When President Trump calls Mexicans rapists and drug dealers, or when he conflates immigrants with dangerous snakes that will kill the American people, or when he says the border wall needs to be topped with spikes, people listen. Latinx teens listen and feel insulted, powerless, and small. Teens from native-born families listen and feel emboldened, powerful, and confirmed in their anti-immigrant convictions. Trump gains political power by characterizing Latinx immigrants as a dangerous out-group, and this has tangible negative impacts on the lives of Latinx youth.

The data demonstrates that Trump's rhetoric and policies do more than simply make Latinx teens feel bad. Trump's presidency has created a hostile world for Latinx youth, one in which they feel they must always protect themselves. They silence themselves in school, preferring to go unnoticed to avoid racist ire. Students also segregate themselves from non-Hispanic students who they believe could be anti-immigrant, and they treat those they do not know with suspicion. They "build a wall," as Laura said, to protect themselves from routine racism. By defending themselves from the racist comments of their peers, they further solidify their position in the out-group.

Living in this hostile environment impacts Latinx teens' lived experiences in more ways than the immediate effects of social silencing and separation. There are latent insidious effects that are extremely troubling. The students in this study have internalized narratives of white superiority. These types of narratives can not only fracture the Latinx community but deeply harm individuals' senses of self. Additionally, many teenagers feel despondent and that they have no power to change the way things are. The majority of students involved in this project are US citizens, who have access to federal financial aid for college and the ability to vote. However, they feel like nothing can change, and that Trump and his supporters have all the power. Hopelessness can gravely impact individuals' mental health and can lead to poor educational outcomes, behavioral problems, and even ideation or suicide (Castañeda 2019). These impacts cannot be left unaddressed.

Activist responses

Both organizations I partnered with for this research, Hope Community Center and the Farmworker Association, are taking steps to mitigate the negative impact Trump's presidency has on the teenagers they serve. In an ideal world, these problems could be eliminated or reduced

by having the President not propagate racist narratives about immigrants and instead pass laws protecting immigrant rights. However, since that is not possible at this time, community organizations must do what they can to mitigate the damage caused. Both organizations engage their youth groups in political activism, which combats the feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness. FWAF's youth group talks about the importance of voting and the 2020 census when they meet. They have taken teens to Tallahassee and DC in the past, to lobby for various immigration-related bills. HCC has also taken teenagers to lobby at the capitol, and they are engaged in local demonstrations as well. They have a sub-group of their youth program that is focused solely on engaging teens in social justice. It is essential that Latinx teenagers understand the power they can have in social change. Political activism combats the despondency and disillusionment propagated by Trump's presidency. Teens engaged in activism realize the power they have to change their communities, despite the structural disadvantages they face.

Many of the teenagers interviewed for this thesis are US citizens who will be able to vote when they turn eighteen. It is in President Trump's best interest to make them feel hopeless and like nothing can change. Immigrants rights' organizations must focus on Latinx youth empowerment, so that those who are US citizens can exercise their right to vote, and so that both citizens and non-citizens can exercise their right to organize. Additionally, this will make the teenagers more resilient in the face of anti-immigrant rhetoric and combat feelings of despondency and powerlessness. Although they are facing great prejudice and inequity, these teenagers have political power, and they must be supported in their use of it.

Limitations and Next Steps

Due to the scope and scale of this project, it faces significant limitations. First, the majority of participants were women and girls. All interview participants were female, and only

a few males participated in the focus groups. Of those young men, only three made significant, on-topic contributions. This is partly due to the fact that more girls are involved in both youth groups than boys. Additionally, young women might have been more comfortable sharing vulnerable emotions with me, another young woman, and therefore agreed to the interview process. Young men might have felt less comfortable in this setting and therefore avoided it. Additionally, all participants were recruited through their involvement with the youth groups at the two partner organizations. Teenagers involved in these groups may have different viewpoints and experiences than their peers who are not involved with community organizations.

Another major limitation of this research is the abbreviated fieldwork. Due to the constraints of the Student Faculty Collaborative Scholarship program, I had to collect data during an eight-week period over the summer. Both youth groups meet more regularly during the school year, so I would have had access to more potential participants had the field season been during the semester. Additionally, I was unable to observe the students in a school setting. In an ideal world, it would have been beneficial to visit the high schools these students attend to observe what they experience first-hand. At the very least, it would have been helpful to attend a soccer game or a similar after-hours event to observe how the Latinx teens interact with their native-born peers. Talking to teachers and staff members at these schools would have provided an interesting perspective that is missing from this work. Similarly, if I were able to talk to students from native-born families about their views on Trump and their attitudes towards their Latinx peers, I would have a more complete picture of how Trump's rhetoric is utilized by his young supporters. As an activist anthropologist, I am grappling with how to gain access to these groups that have different views than I do.

When our community partners asked me to focus my research on youth, they were worried about the teenagers' stress levels. They also wanted us to work with younger children, which I did not feel qualified to do. In the future, I believe a stress study would be incredibly valuable, to show the physiological impacts of rhetoric on this population. Medical anthropologists and social psychologists could perform a stress study using cortisol levels and psychological questionnaires. I agreed with our community partners that both psychological data and data on younger children would be useful, but I felt unqualified to conduct this research.

Moving forward, I will provide the data from this project to staff members at Hope Community Center and the Farmworker Association. They have already been provided with preliminary reports. I am interested in further investigating the relationships between white, African American, and Latinx teens in high schools. We heard recurring themes of institutional racism at school, discrimination by teachers, and underfunded ESOL programs, all of which were troubling but did not fit into this project. I am intrigued by the anthropology of education and am interested in studying how racist ideas can be erased or reinforced within the education system.

Another potential avenue for future study could be the impact of immigration status on how teens respond to Latinx immigration. In this study, I did not formally measure which participants were citizens, which had legal residence, and which were undocumented, nor did I formally inquire about the status of their parents. This often came up in conversations, but it was not part of the interview or focus group instruments. At the time, I did not feel this was integral to the research questions, and did not want to intimidate participants by explicitly asking them about their own or their family's status. However, based on this research, I believe that status might affect how deeply rhetoric impacts students. For example, a student with undocumented

parents might exhibit more social silencing than someone whose parents have legal status. A future study could formally track this correlation, as long as students felt comfortable and secure in revealing this vulnerable information.

The Land of the Free

I opened this thesis with a quote from Carla, a young woman who never minces words. She said, “And we’re the so-called land of the free, but it’s not that free.” For Carla, this land is not free. Nor is it for Greta, who is undocumented and had to endure taunts about Trump throughout high school. And it is not free for Marta, who thinks she is less smart than the white kids in her advanced classes. It is not free for Veronica, who feels smaller and more afraid each time she sees a Trump bumper sticker. This land is not free for Laura, who feels utterly alone at her university, afraid to open up to anyone because of her family’s undocumented status. It is not free for Alejandra, who thinks she does not deserve to be in National Honors Society with her white classmates. And this land is not free for Diego, whose voice shook with indignation as he explained to me why his undocumented parents are nothing like the rapists and drug dealers Trump says they are.

Despite what *Schoolhouse Rock!* or “The Star-Spangled Banner” would have us believe, the United States has never been the land of the free for Latinx immigrants. They have always been racialized, criminalized, and described as the cause of all societal ills, a dangerous out-group, a threat to the so-called American way of life. Today, President Trump uses these narratives to bolster his political power. By painting Latinx immigrants as a threat that only he can address, he gains power. Because he must continue to make this group seem dangerous to keep his power, he is constantly spreading more racist vitriol. The president’s anti-immigrant rhetoric trickles down through his supporters and has tangible negative impacts on the lives on

young Latinx people. And when President Trump is no longer in office, this problem will persist, because his supporters will still be here. Those of us in positions of privilege can choose to be silent and thereby complicit in this active attack on young people, or we can use our privilege to work against President Trump's harmful rhetoric and empower Latinx youth.

Anthropologists must continue to direct the power of ethnography towards President Trump and engage in activist research to expose the insidious effects of this administration's policies. Without anthropologists recording and analyzing the impact of these policies on local communities, there would be no way to hold Donald Trump accountable for the harm he causes. Outside of academia, we must all support community organizations in their mission to protect and empower those most severely impacted by Trump's policies, with our time, talent, and resources. This work is exhausting and frustrating; it often it feels as if there is no way to change the way things are. As I was working on this thesis, my parents asked me, "How do you do this work?" They worry that I am driving myself crazy, working against seemingly immutable power structures. To me, the answer to their question is crystal clear. After getting to know the people of Apopka, hearing what I have heard about their lives, and witnessing the injustice they face: how could I *not* this work? To divorce myself from the struggle of this community would be a grave misuse of the information they have entrusted to me and the resources I have been granted. In times as unusual as these, complacency is complicity. We must all continue to fight against those who misuse their power to harm the vulnerable by using our power to protect them.

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