

An Emerging Reactive Ethnicity Among Latinxs in Tennessee

James Chaney¹

Middle Tennessee State University, USA

Abstract: The burgeoning Latinx communities in the U.S. South provide rich case studies for examining the identity formation and group consciousness of children of Latin American immigrants. This paper explores the identities and sense of belonging of 1.5- and second-generation Latinxs who have come of age in Tennessee, a Southern state that has experienced a surge in immigration from Latin America in recent decades. In-depth interviews with Latinxs who have grown up in Tennessee reveal how these individuals contemplate their identities in relation to questions of belonging to (and within) U.S. society. A shift toward developing a reactive ethnicity is evident as Latinxs convey how perceived interpersonal discrimination coupled with recent national and local anti-immigrant policies drive ethnic group solidarity. These factors influence individual life choices and encourage participation in social and political activism. Such reactions will have long-term ramifications for local Southern societies.

Keywords: integration, identity, Latinx, U.S. South.

Long referred to as the “sleeping giant” in U.S. politics, the Latinx² electorate flexed its political muscle in 2020 during both state and national elections. An estimated 16.6 million Latinxs went to the polls for the presidential election—an increase in turnout of almost 31 percent as compared to the 2016 election (Domínguez-Villegas et al., 2021). Latinx voters overwhelmingly supported presidential candidate Joe Biden. In states such as California, New York, New Mexico, and Arizona, Latinxs broke three-to-one for Biden over the Republican incumbent, Donald Trump. In other states with a sizable Latinx population, like Texas and Florida, the advantage for Biden was two-to-one in most counties.

Perhaps one of the most notable outcomes of Latinx participation in the 2020 election took place in Georgia, the Southern state where a Democratic presidential candidate had not won since 1992. Biden was victorious by a very thin margin of roughly 12,000 votes. Nevertheless, his success in Georgia was significant because it may be a harbinger of a new political landscape developing across the U.S. South, a region with the fastest growth rate of persons of Latin American heritage (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2020). The result of Georgia’s 2020 presidential election (and special election for two U.S. Senate seats) is unquestionably due to both the demographic change in the state—particularly in the Atlanta metropolitan area—and a collective effort among grassroots organizations to mobilize ethnic and racial minorities to vote (Hatzipanagos, 2021). The most

¹ Corresponding Author: An Associate Professor in the Department of Global Studies and Human Geography at Middle Tennessee State University. E-mail: james.chaney@mtsu.edu

² While I use pan-ethnic terms “Hispanic,” “Latino,” and “Latinx” interchangeably in this paper, I primarily employ the identifier “Latinx” to be gender-inclusive. “Latinx” was coined in the 1990s to address inclusivity for queer and/or non-gender conforming persons of Latin American descent living in the United States. More recently, the term has gained currency in academic forums (see Vidal-Ortiz and Martínez, 2018). However, only three participants in this study used the term to refer to themselves or their community. More commonly, participants self-identified as either “Hispanic” or “Latino” or by national origin (or a combination of all terms).

salient narrative from Georgia regarding the recent elections has centered on the sizable turnout of non-Latinx Black voters³. Certainly, Biden could not have won the state without the support of this demographic; however, the media's attention on non-Latinx Black voter turnout obscures the surge in Latinx participation and their electoral impact. Georgians of Latin American heritage number over one million, accounting for almost ten percent of the state's population (U.S. Census, 2021). Exit polling shows that two-thirds of Georgian Latinxs statewide supported Biden's candidacy. Gwinnett County, just north of Atlanta, is home to a large, diverse Latinx population, and 75 percent of Latinx voters there voted for Biden. Thus, Biden's victory in Georgia was the result of a coalition of people of color in which those of Latin American heritage played a significant role.

If the emergence of a Latinx electorate in Georgia is a sign of things to come in other Southern states, then questions arise regarding the composition of these growing constituencies, how Latinx individuals see their place in society, and what issues politically galvanize them. This study explores these questions through a qualitative analysis of Latinxs in Tennessee, a Southern state that has experienced substantial growth in its population of individuals of Latin American heritage. A case study of Tennessee's Latinx electorate is compelling for several reasons. First, Tennessee has been one of the nation's leading states in terms of Latinx population growth since the 1990s, rising from 32,741 in 1990 to 479,187 in 2019—a 1,100 percent increase. While Tennessee's Latinx population is not as large as Georgia's in absolute terms, it is young and growing. Between 2010 and 2017, the number of Latinx children in the state increased by 267 percent, from 39,300 to over 144,000 (Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, 2018). Of these children, 87 percent were U.S. citizens, and, therefore, they will be eligible to vote. Second, although Tennessee's Latinx population has increased exponentially over the past three decades, voter participation among the state's Latinx residents has been minimal as Tennessee has one of the lowest shares of eligible voters among its Latinx population (Igielnik & Budiman, 2020). Nevertheless, the number of eligible voters in the state has risen. Between 2010 and 2018, the number of Latinxs in Tennessee who can vote grew from 41,000 to 125,000—a threefold increase. Furthermore, since 2016, the percentage of Latinx Tennesseans eligible to vote has jumped from 28 to 33⁴. Third, as in other states in the U.S. South, Tennessee's state and local government policy responses to the upturn in immigration over the past two decades have often been restrictive, exclusionary, and even hostile—particularly towards members of immigrant communities. These policies aimed at alienating arriving immigrants and creating an unwelcoming environment are linked to the growth of Latin American immigrant populations in Southern communities with little or no history of large-scale immigration (Commins & Wills, 2020). Yet, these measures have not stemmed the arrival of new immigrants to Southern states, nor have they provoked any notable number of Latinxs to relocate out of the region. Rather, young Latinx adults (in particular, the 1.5⁵ and second generations) exhibit strong senses of place and belonging to the Southern locations where they have grown up and are determined to shape their communities' sociopolitical futures (Chaney & Clark, 2020).

³ Individuals of Latin American ancestry can be of any "race." Thus, the ethnic labels "Hispanic," "Latino," or "Latinx" are accessible to a variety of people of different or mixed racial backgrounds. For this reason, self-identification is used for categorical purposes in the United States for voter registration, census forms, and exit polling (See Gómez 2020, p. 133–166).

⁴ No exit polling data were available on how Latinxs in Tennessee voted in the 2020 elections.

⁵ The term "1.5 generation" refers to individuals who immigrated as children but still possess memories and characteristics of their country of birth. Unlike the second generation who hold birthright citizenship, 1.5-generation immigrants sometimes experience irregular residential status, which may affect both their reception by and integration into a host society (Abrego, 2011).

This research aims to elucidate the sociopolitical contexts that are spurring civic engagement and political interest among younger Latinxs in Tennessee. By employing in-depth interviews with 1.5- and second-generation Latinxs and community activists, this study demonstrates how anti-immigrant politics and perceived discrimination in everyday local encounters have emboldened younger generations of Latinxs in Tennessee to embrace an ethnic identity and to work towards making themselves more socially and politically visible in their local communities. This reactive ethnicity has enabled Latinxs to take a unified stand against local and national political issues that they see as negatively impacting their families, friends, and communities. Likewise, their sensed distinctiveness as “Southern” Latinxs in new(er) immigrant destinations with notable histories of racism and marginalization towards non-White denizens has created opportunities for Latinxs to organize locally with non-Latinx minorities and immigrant groups in order to counter discriminatory policies that similarly affect those populations. The potential impact of a reactive ethnicity among Tennessee Latinxs, however, goes beyond contemporary politics and civic engagement. Questions regarding their long-term integration into (and relationship with) mainstream societies in Southern communities should also be considered as Latinxs who do not feel fully included may form adversarial viewpoints towards conventional local politics and institutions. Thus, understanding the perspectives, concerns, and identity(ies) of this growing demographic should be of value to policymakers, public servants, and community organizers in Southern communities where growing Latinx populations will become a more prevalent sociopolitical force.

Anti-Immigrant Measures in the “Nuevo” South

The unprecedented geographical expansion of Latinx immigrant communities across the U.S. South that began in the late twentieth century challenged the region’s established racial and political boundaries (Guerrero, 2017). Both state and local community reactions were mixed as mostly male laborers arrived to fill jobs mainly in construction and the service industry. Often, these laborers’ families followed as they began to lay down roots, especially as low-wage jobs in manufacturing and food processing became more available in the region. While their labor and economic impact was generally welcomed, the public response in many Southern communities to newcomers who spoke a different language and did not fit within the region’s traditional racial binary was often the opposite. Lacy and Odem (2009) point out that in the 1990s, the attitudes about Latinx laborers “tended to be positive...depicting the newcomers as potentially transient workers who benefited that area” (p. 144). However, in the 2000s, opinions about Latinx immigrants began to change. As economic conditions weakened nationally following September 11, 2001 and concerns about lasting cultural impact and integration of immigrants became more common, attitudes toward Latinx newcomers seemed to sour among many non-Latinx locals in Southern states. These anxieties manifested in different ways, but most saliently through political, institutional, and law enforcement policies. Commin and Willis (2020) determine, since 2005, Southern state governments were more likely to pass restrictive policies aimed at immigrants in comparison to other U.S. regions. According to their analysis, Tennessee ranks as one of the top five states with restrictive policies. Legislative activities in Southern states targeting immigrants are often directed at laws related to I.D. and driver’s licenses, voting access, access to education, employment, and law enforcement. Perhaps the state law that has most exemplified anti-immigrant measures in the U.S. South occurred in Alabama when its legislature passed HB 56, which, in effect, was an assemblage of restrictive policies wrapped up into one bill. HB 56 targeted undocumented Latinxs by prohibiting undocumented immigrants from receiving state and local

benefits, as well as attending public and private universities, requiring K-12 schools to identify and report undocumented students, forbidding landlords from renting to undocumented immigrants, requiring employers to verify employment eligibility of employees, and requiring law enforcement officials to check the legal status of individuals they suspect as being in the United States unlawfully. HB 56 was quickly criticized for its racially and ethnically discriminatory undertones, particularly for its draconian tactics and how it seemed to cast all Latin American immigrants as undocumented. As such, much of HB 56 has been dismantled or blocked through the courts.

A rise in anti-Latinx sentiments is observable through another—and conceivably more concerning—metric. The Southern Law Poverty Center noted that of the 292 recognized hate groups operating in the U.S. South in the early 2000s, almost all emphasized an anti-immigrant stance (Ordoñez, 2007). This negative perception of Latinxs in the U.S. South is at least partially the result of the racialization of immigrants through local news media, which tends to focus on the perceived criminal tendencies of Mexican and Central American immigrants through the implicitly racially coded language that is also frequently applied to Black criminality. Brown et al. (2018) found in their study of news media in four Southern states that local news outfits often portray Latinxs as dangerous outsiders by overrepresenting the proportion of crimes they are accused of committing while emphasizing their unauthorized presence when applicable to a news story.

Latinxs have reacted to the political hostilities in Southern states in several ways. By the early 2000s, immigrant advocacy groups had materialized throughout the region to facilitate integration for the new, burgeoning demographic as well as to advocate for social and economic justice (Smith & Winders, 2008). Indeed, the growing visibility of Latinx communities in the U.S. South was on display during the spring of 2006 as Latinx organizations, churches, and media outlets organized demonstrations across the country in response to U.S. House Bill 4417, which essentially aimed to make unauthorized immigration a felony (Silber Mohamed, 2017). Though the largest demonstrations were in major urban areas, such as Los Angeles, Dallas, and Chicago, a surprising number of protests took place in large, mid-sized, and small cities in Southern states, including Tennessee’s four major metropolitan areas: Nashville, Memphis, Knoxville, and Chattanooga. In Nashville, Latinxs filled the plaza and surrounding streets in front of the state capital waving national flags representing Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala. “*Las Marchas*” of 2006 represented a wide cross section of contemporary U.S. society and the participation of Southern Latinxs underscored the diversifying demographic composition of the southeastern United States. Likewise, it demonstrated that Latinxs of different national backgrounds could mobilize in significant numbers in new immigrant destinations. Collective action against anti-immigrant legislation continued at the state level across the region. In 2012, Latinxs occupied the streets of downtown Atlanta in opposition to Georgia House Bill 67, which targeted undocumented immigrants. Yet, demonstrators were not all Latinxs. Rather, non-Latinx immigrants, civil rights organizers, religious leaders, local politicians, and businesspersons also participated, showing an assortment of pro-Latinx allies who were concerned about the social and economic impact anti-immigrant policies could have on Georgia’s expanding multicultural society as well as its competitiveness in the global economy. These types of cross-ethnic/racial coalitions that work with non-immigrant populations are seen as crucial in pushing for inclusive social policies that affect not only Latinxs but also other immigrant and minority groups. Although ethnic and racial diversity is growing in the U.S. South, these groups by themselves rarely have the population numbers or political capital to shift the political winds in their local communities. At the local level, coalitions made up of different immigrant and interest groups have proven effective in making an impact in state and local policies in Southern urban areas, especially when the local business community is involved (see McDaniel, 2021). In Nashville, the Latinx community realized early on the political

advantages of collaborating with other immigrant and refugee groups, which, in turn, has increased the visibility of the city's international community (Winders, 2013).

Much of the scholarly attention examining anti-immigrant policies in the U.S. South has focused on the reception of first-generation immigrants. However, more than a generation has passed since the initial large-scale settlement of Latin American immigrants in Southern states, and, as these Latinxs put down roots in these new destinations, their communities have grown, not only through continual immigration, but also through having children. Yet, there is a dearth of research on Latinxs who have grown up in the U.S. South, particularly in the context of how discriminatory policies and hostilities have impacted their lives and engagement in society. Noting this, Marrow (2020) has called for more scholars to analyze the effects that hostile receptions have had on second-generation Latinxs in this region. Chaney and Clark's (2020) research on the identity formation of 1.5- and second-generation Latinxs in Nashville demonstrates how discrimination and marginalization influence how Southern Latinxs construct their sense of belonging in local communities. Their findings reveal that these individuals foster a strong emotional attachment to the locations they grow up in as well as develop a unique sense of community that is situated between the immigrant community of their parents and Nashville's mainstream community. Latinxs in their study convey that their identities are fluid and layered. How they self-identify is situational; however, many reports that when viewed by members of the local mainstream society, they are seen not as locals, but rather as "outsiders." This form of "othering" complicates their notion of self and, in turn, how they see their place in the society they have grown up in. Since these individuals cannot elude being differentiated from the local "White" population, they embrace their ethnic, bicultural identity as a way to carve out their own space(s) and position in local society. Building upon Chaney and Clark's findings, this study explores how perceived discrimination coupled with recent national and local anti-immigrant policies drive group solidarity and lead to social and political activism among members of Tennessee's fastest growing ethnic group.

Reactive Ethnicity vis-à-vis Mainstream Society

Integration into a society's mainstream has long been the touchstone for social scientists, policymakers, as well as the general public to discern if the first and subsequent generations of an immigrant group are assimilating into the larger local populace. How exactly a group's (or individual's) integration is evaluated comes in different forms, such as the acculturation of a host society's language and cultural norms, socioeconomic achievements, intergroup marriage, residential patterns and political participation (see Kasinitz et al., 2008). However, the "mainstream" is rarely defined, and the rise of multicultural, diverse communities in the United States muddies the water when identifying clear dominant cultures, activities, and/or beliefs that are recognized (and broadly accepted) by the general public. The recent increased flows in global migration, particularly to Western countries, have prompted some scholars to suggest that ethnic diversity is now so commonplace in many developed countries that it has become the norm rather than the exception (Meisner, 2015). For example, Kaplan and Recoquillon (2016) exhibit how everyday cross-ethnic socioeconomic interactions among different immigrant groups in Paris' multiethnic corridors alter how immigrants economically and culturally integrate into urban host societies compared to past notions of assimilation theory. This superdiversity, as Vertovec (2007) labels it, potentially challenges conventional ways of thinking about how subsequent generations of immigrant stock are incorporated into the mainstream.

While increasing diversity and cross-ethnic quotidian interactions may certainly play into how new immigrants strategize their incorporation into a host society, Alba and Duyvendak (2019) argue that underlying sociocultural forces still predominate in immigrant recipient societies, pushing new groups to accept and conform to established societal norms. For example, pointing to North America and Western Europe where continual and diverse flows of immigration have taken place since the mid-twentieth century, they illustrate that even in increasingly multiethnic societies, the native majority (albeit shrinking) still dictates mainstream criteria, values, and expectations through formal societal institutions that form the pillars of a society's education, media, economy, and government apparatus. Likewise, the subjective interpretations of mainstream membership that individuals of a native majority hold (no matter their social status) in relation to ethnic and racial minorities can catalyze an informal understanding of who is fully recognized as belonging. For that reason, the culture, ethnicity, origin, and even phenotypes of members of minority groups can play into how much a part of an established mainstream society they are considered by a native majority. Minority immigrant and ethnic groups, however, do engage, operate in, and even become part of mainstream society. And, depending on a group's demographic size and level of engagement with members of the mainstream, a minority group can modify what is considered mainstream—especially in immigrant-recipient, multicultural societies, such as the United States (Kasinitz et al., 2008). Yet, while immigrants who ethnically and racially differ from a native majority may eventually be recognized as part of that mainstream society, they are often still identified by or differentiated from members of the native majority by their ethnic distinctiveness and/or racial background. As Golash-Boza (2006) points out, U.S. citizens of European (i.e., “White”) descent are identified simply as “American,” while U.S. citizens of non-European ancestry are frequently designated with preceding ethnic, national, or regional identifiers (sometimes hyphenated), such as Mexican American or African American.

Ethnic or national identification labels often continue to be assigned to the descendants of non-European immigrants in the United States whether they wish to be identified by them or not. Therefore, no matter how assimilated an individual of immigrant stock is, their ethnic/racial identification is a reminder of how they are seen by the native majority. For these reasons, classical assimilation theory, which assumes that the subsequent generations of immigrants will completely blend into mainstream society, is not applicable for understanding the incorporation trajectories of non-European immigrants. Duany (1998) asserts that regardless of how well acculturated the children of non-European immigrants are, their ethnocultural and racial differences to those of members of a mainstream society dominated by groups of European origin will always expose them to discrimination and structural racism. As such, some scholars have turned to segmented assimilation theory as an alternative for understanding the incorporation trajectories of Latin American immigrants in the United States (Castro et al., 2010; Samson, 2014). In contrast to classical assimilation theory—which states that immigrants and their children follow a simple, deterministic linear path towards full assimilation—segmented assimilation theory holds that a multitude of sociopolitical and economic factors influence the trajectory of assimilation for immigrant groups, resulting in different incorporation outcomes, particularly for the second generation. Portes and Zhou (1993) contend that among the different trajectories observed through segmented assimilation, second-generation non-European immigrants who face high levels of discrimination from the majority-White mainstream are more prone to developing an adversarial stance towards mainstream society and risk downward social mobility. Hence, the racialization of immigrant groups can affect an individual's path into (and position within) a mainstream society. Telles and Ortiz' (2008) research supports this notion as it demonstrates how racial stereotypes follow the descendants of Mexican immigrants in their multigenerational longitudinal research of

Mexican American communities in Los Angeles and San Antonio, stating that while second-generation immigrants make educational progress, educational and occupational advancements can stagnate in the third and fourth generations. In their study, they conclude that even though the subsequent generations had assimilated into U.S. society, the racialization of these individuals continues to affect their self-perception, status, and position within the larger mainstream society.

Considering that a variety of contextual factors influence how non-European immigrants and their descendants engage with, assimilate into, and/or are seen by the larger established society, it is not surprising that the identity formation of members of immigrant communities can vary, particularly for those who experience discrimination or a hostile reception. Interestingly, though, perceived hostility and exclusion from an adversarial mainstream often increase (rather than erode) ethnic self-awareness among ethnic minorities. Pointing to the ethnic solidarity and activism that materialized in California's Mexican youth following the passage of Proposition 187 by the state's legislature, Portes and Rumbault (2001) argue that members of immigrant minority groups formulate a defensive identity to unify around to counter marginalization and discriminatory policies. They refer to this phenomenon as "reactive ethnicity" (Portes & Rumbault, 2001, p. 146). Politically, the emergence of a reactive ethnicity has implications for localities which are home to large immigrant populations. Following the controversial 1980 Mariel boatlift, members of Miami's established Cuban community suddenly faced a surge of xenophobia and discriminatory policies, such as an anti-bilingual referendum. Yet, instead of discouraging Miami Cubans from embracing their ethnicity, these xenophobic politics thickened the ethnic self-awareness of Cuban Americans and prompted local political organizing (Portes & Stepik, 1993).

Discriminatory policies aimed at minority and ethnic groups, however, are not the only catalyst for a reactive ethnicity. Çelik's (2015) study of 1.5- and second-generation male Turkish youth enrolled in vocational education programs in Germany demonstrates how perceived discrimination and denigration of ethnic culture by members of the dominant society during day-to-day encounters bring about a reactive ethnicity that over time can develop into an oppositional identity. Focusing on interaction taking place in school settings, Çelik finds that German teachers regularly attempt to highlight the differences in behavior and culture of students based on ethnicity, often casting Turkish culture in a negative light. Likewise, Turkish students report they regularly observe favoritism towards non-Turkish students, which further distinguishes them as outsiders. Such perceptions cultivate adversarial sentiments and foster a sense of resistance to mainstream German culture that lingers into adulthood. Similarly, Herda (2018) illustrates in his study of Muslim Americans that negative interpersonal interactions with, and anticipated discrimination from, members of U.S. mainstream society decrease positive views of U.S. society and reduce interest in self-identifying as simply "American." These perceptions of ethnic prejudice can cause members of minority groups to question their sense of belonging in a society and alter how they engage with members of the mainstream.

The formation of reactive ethnicity does not necessarily equate to the rejection of mainstream society. Rather, a reactive ethnicity can serve as an identity to rally around for a particular group in their struggle for inclusion and full societal belonging (Remennick & Prashizky, 2019). This is certainly evident in the considerable sociopolitical and economic recognition gained by Cuban Americans within the U.S. polity since the 1980s. Therefore, as members of an immigrant minority embrace their ethnicity to overcome marginalization by native majority members, they cannot only challenge the idea of who belongs to a mainstream society, but also who wields significant influence in it. Inasmuch as individuals of Latin American ancestry now constitute nearly a fifth of the United States' population, Martínez and Gonzalez (2021) suggest that the pan-ethnic "Hispanic-Latino" identity serves as a better way to unite individuals of various

racial backgrounds and national origins to gain political leverage at all governmental levels. It is within this pan-ethnic space that group solidarity emerges from such a diverse demographic population. Yet, different racial, linguistic, and cultural factors (and experiences) can influence who chooses to rally under this pan-ethnic banner. Individuals of Latin American heritage who feel a “shared sense of difference apart from the American mainstream,” often due to racial differences, are more likely to assert the pan-ethnic label, while those of Latin American heritage who can pass as “White” and do not feel excluded in mainstream U.S. society are more inclined to use a non-ethnic “American” identifier (Martínez & Gonzalez, 2021, p. 612). For this reason, they posit that a reactive pan-ethnicity may best be observed through a segmented assimilation theoretical lens.

Methodology

This study draws from in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted between August of 2018 and July of 2021 with 33 1.5- and second-generation Latinxs who have lived in Tennessee since adolescence. I recruited potential interview participants through immigrant advocacy organizations in Tennessee that work with Latinx communities and Latinx student organizations at universities in the greater Nashville area. I selected participants based on their age at arrival to the United States (if not U.S. born) and residency in Tennessee. Interviews with participants who arrived in Tennessee after the age of 14 were excluded from this analysis. Only four second-generation participants were born outside of Tennessee. At the time of interviews, 26 participants lived in the Greater Nashville Area, four in Knoxville, and one each in the towns of Sevierville, Shelbyville, and Cookeville. Although 1.5-generation Latinxs were not asked about their immigration status, five participants identified themselves as recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). The age of participants ranged between 18 and 34 years. Twenty-two (including four DACA recipients) were enrolled in or had graduated from institutions of higher education. Fieldwork for this research also included conversations with community activists and organizations that advocate for Latinxs (and other immigrant/ethnic groups) in Tennessee, such as Tennessee Immigrants and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC), the Peruvian Association of Tennessee, and Conexión Américas.

Interview questions were open-ended and focused on themes regarding identity, sense of community belonging, social and political issues affecting Latinxs, and perceptions about inclusivity/exclusivity in local mainstream society. All interviews were conducted in person and recorded. The interview sessions lasted between 30 minutes and two hours and were transcribed after completion. I employed a grounded theory approach to inductively identify similar experiences, perceptions, and concerns from transcriptions through open coding. While the personal experiences shared by participants did vary and their interpretation of similar experiences were nuanced, comparable accounts about participants’ lives were discernible.

This research has some methodological limitations. First, the educational attainment of participants is higher than the national average for this demographic. Second, a disproportionate number of participants were from the Nashville area, creating an uneven geographic representation of Tennessee Latinxs. Third, only seven participants identified as male and one as nonbinary; thus, views of female participants in the study are represented in higher proportion. Although the characteristics of participants are not entirely representative of the state’s general Latinx population, the views, anecdotes, and sentiments shared by this cohort provides rich information about the lives and experiences of Latinxs in Tennessee.

Findings

I present the findings from this analysis by synthesizing the personal narratives of participants into a core narrative that is thematically organized to give a thick description of how 1.5- and second-generation Latinxs in Tennessee see their relationship with, and acceptance in, mainstream society; how they respond to perceived discrimination and anti-immigrant policies; and what actions they take for social and political change. I utilized verbatim quotes to give voice to Latinx participants; however, they are only identified with pseudonyms.

Never a Local/Always an Outsider

I was at the library the other day reading a poster on the wall that was in English, and this old White guy randomly walked up and said, “Hey, if you don’t know English, there is one over there in Spanish.” I was dumbfounded because, yeah, I look Latina, but I was wearing my military hat. Why would he think I don’t speak English? (Claudia 26)

This was Claudia’s, a second-generation Latinx, immediate response when I asked her if she could give me some examples of why she does not believe she will ever be viewed as a “local” by non-Latinxs in Tennessee. Claudia recently returned from her tour in Afghanistan and had originally believed her service in the military would demonstrate that she was “just as American as everyone else.” I followed up by asking her if she had been made to feel as an outsider before she left the military, and she replied:

I was married to a White guy, and they used to tell him to ‘Have a great day!’ when we left Walmart but stopped me to see my receipts. It happens all the time. It’s racism. I’m always seen by skin color first. (Claudia 26)

These types of day-to-day, informal encounters with non-Latinxs shared by Claudia were echoed by all participants, though the frequency and perceived intention (i.e., hostile or benign) varied. Thirty-one participants, however, reported that they had experienced hostile encounters where they felt threatened by a non-Latinx based on their ethnicity or skin tone. Flores-González (2017) contends that U.S. born Latinxs frequently experience different forms of exclusion and marginalization in public White spaces. They are identified first by any sign (language, skin tone, etc.) of Latin American heritage. These encounters have an adverse effect on U.S. born Latinxs’ notions of belonging as full members of mainstream society. Although some Latinxs in the United States (including several in this study) identify as both “White” and “Latinx,” Flores-González argues that most Latinxs see their hierarchical placement in U.S. society in a “racial middle.” As such, Latinxs often look for ways to overcome both direct and indirect forms of “Othering” in their day-to-day interactions with non-Latinx members of their local communities. While Pedro, a 22-year-old second-generation Latinx explained how he learned to navigate these types of encounters, Yessenia, a 20-year-old second-generation Mexican born in Shelbyville conveys the challenges of being Latinx and belonging in rural Tennessee:

I grew up in Murfreesboro, but I'm never considered from here. I'm brown, not black, not white. I always get comments and jokes about being Mexican. It used to bother me, but then you're like "what can I do about it?" You have to own it. (Pedro 22)

You'll never fit in here in the U.S. Especially in the South where you have these people who can trace back their roots for generations saying "oh my parents married this family and this family." You'll never be part of that culture; you're always an outsider. (Yessenia 20)

Twenty-two participants expressed that they feel they must work harder to prove themselves as intellectual and/or moral equals to non-Latinxs of mainstream society. Seven participants mentioned feeling as though they are continuously having to disprove stereotypes when engaging with non-Latinxs, especially non-Latinx Whites. Olivia, 26 years old, said: "When I interview for jobs, I always emphasize that I'm hardworking and punctual. I know that's normal to say, but I feel I need to double-down on it, so they know I'm just as dependable as everyone else." Others echoed her perspective:

I graduated from college here, but I still feel like people see me as an immigrant. People ask me where I'm from. I know what they mean, but I say Nashville. They're like "oh ok, you speak good English." I'm like, "yeah, cause I'm from here, damnit". (José 24)

Sometimes it feels like you're not doing enough...Like at work, I am one of two Hispanics. At first, it seemed like people were not welcoming. So, I have to prove myself, and I wonder if I'm always going to have to prove myself...I feel I have to do double the work to get recognition. (Sandra 21)

For undocumented Latinxs, pejorative stereotypes can have damaging psychological consequences. Abrego (2011) has noted that undocumented Latinxs who were brought to the United States as children grapple with dehumanizing feelings of being "inferior" because of their status. For those whose only memory is life in the United States, even having authorized status under DACA is a reminder of their exclusion, particularly when trying to access higher education opportunities (Silver, 2018). DACA recipients in this study all reported that their status weighs heavily on their self-esteem and negatively impacts their sense of connectedness to the larger non-Latinx society. Ernesto (21) shared his disillusion with DACA, discussing how its liminal status has truncated opportunities in his adult life and caused him anxiety:

DACA said to me that this country wanted me; we're going to give you this status. You can get a driver's license. You're basically one of us, but not all the way. Then I get to college and they say, "you have to pay out-of-state tuition." It was crushing. I realized that maybe I'm not like everyone else. So, I stepped back and tweaked my goals. I've missed opportunities in other things because of my status like jobs. I wanted to tutor for ETSU, and they wouldn't hire me because I wasn't documented. I try to serve as a waiter, and I can't get my ABC license...what can I do? I get so many "noes;" am I supposed to be empowered by that one "yes"?" (Ernesto 21)

Maria, a 22-year-old DACA recipient who disclosed that she did not receive her status until she was 18 recounted an experience with her high school counselor that devastated her and was the “wake-up call” to start preparing for a complicated life in Tennessee:

She was a negative role model, but because of her I am here (in university) because I wanted to prove her wrong. My senior year she asked me what I planned to do, and I told her I wanted to go to college. She said, “I know you’re not from here, and I know that you are undocumented and the only way you’re going to be able to go to school is to go back to your country.” That was the first time that I had ever heard that concept from anybody from school. And, I thought, “why are you telling a 17-year-old that?” I was in tears afterwards. That put some type of anger in me and motivation and made me want to prove her wrong. (Maria 22)

The marginalization of Latinxs through racialization and the negative stereotyping of immigrants directly influence how individuals of Latin American heritage perceive their positionality in Southern communities. Interviews with Tennessee Latinxs reveal that their feelings of exclusion from mainstream society occur regularly during informal encounters. Their anecdotes demonstrate that they see their socioeconomic mobility hindered by being Latinx, which, in turn, has bearings on their notions of belonging in local societies.

Catalysts for Reactive Ethnicity

Interpersonal discrimination toward ethnic and racial minorities impacts an individual’s sense of self and mental health. The cumulative weight of these negative encounters can lead to feelings of disenfranchisement and anger on a personal level. However, the collective emergence of a reactive ethnicity as characterized by Portes and Rumbault (2001) is triggered by events and politics that accentuate a specific group’s differences from the mainstream. Perceived hostilities from a hegemonic majority group in the form of policies and public actions (e.g., speeches, political rallies) aimed at a minority ethnic group based on those differences can have the effect of heightening group consciousness and strengthening ethnic solidarity, leading to political mobilization to protect and to advocate for group members and interests.

During interviews, Latinxs were asked when they became interested in politics (either local or national). Younger participants (below the age of 23) often stated that their interest in politics began in high school or college. Although specific events and dates varied by participants, eighteen Latinxs mentioned a timeframe beginning during the 2016 presidential campaign to within a year following the election. Nine participants (all over the age of 23) identified political events before this timeframe that prompted them to become interested in politics. Three Latinxs interviewed expressed that their interest in politics began during the 2020 presidential race, and three Latinxs could not pinpoint a timeframe or event that brought about this interest. In all interviews, the general determinant that precipitated political interests in Latinxs was the real or perceived threat of policies that would discriminate against Latin American immigrants or members of the Latinx community. Unlike interpersonal discrimination, participants realized these were social and political structural changes that would be detrimental to their communities.

Ofelia, a 33-year-old Mexican Latinx who migrated at the age of 13, describes how “things got real” for her when asked what spurred her interest in politics. She explained that after she learned English in high school, she could tell if someone was discriminating against her because

she was Mexican. She mentioned that her mother, who had a lower English proficiency, could rarely determine if she was being discriminated against in public. Thus, she felt she had to be on guard constantly to protect her. Nevertheless, Ofelia added that before 2016, “I thought discrimination was rare and that most [White] people liked Hispanics,” and that she paid little attention to politics. Her interest was piqued following then-candidate Trump’s derogatory remarks about the types of immigrants coming from Mexico. She continued, “I thought, ‘Wow! No one is going to vote for this guy.’” Following Trump’s electoral victory, Ofelia said she was devastated, and that is when she really began to see the true colors of many non-Latinxs around her:

I was working for this big flooring company, and I knew that most people there were conservative. But they had always been nice to me. I was one of three Hispanics. When Trump won, you could tell something changed. People looked at me different. They’d be talking to themselves and get quiet when I walked up. People were suddenly blunter about politics and their views on immigrants. ...It’s like they suddenly had a free pass to be racists. We [Latinx employees] all noticed it. I left that job. (Ofelia 33)

Ofelia said that Trump’s bombastic comments and the noticeable change in behavior of her non-Latinx colleagues upset her, but that it was the policies that arose during the early years of his presidency which prompted her to get political. The Trump Administration’s plan to phase out DACA incensed her because her younger brother was a DACA recipient. This led her to attend protests in Nashville and pay more attention to state politics: “I never really paid attention to what was going on in Tennessee until Trump. Then suddenly I started watching local politics, going to marches, and trying to be visible as a Latina” (Ofelia 33).

Similarly, Claudia commented that she ignored the negative comments about Latin American immigrants during the 2016 presidential race, assuming that was “just politics.” Yet, the videos of Central American children being detained and separated from their families that she watched while deployed in Afghanistan disconcerted and demoralized her: “I couldn’t believe what I was seeing, and suddenly, I knew I had to do something.” For Claudia, those images are what prompted her to become politically engaged.

While disparaging language and policies towards Latin American immigrants during and immediately following the 2016 presidential election were often brought up by participants as a reason for cultivating ethnic solidarity, fifteen of the Latinxs interviewed pointed to an array of state and local politics aimed at immigrant communities since the mid-2000s as what provoked them to see that their distinctiveness as Latinx meant it was necessary to recognize their ethnicity, unify around it, and advocate for their local community. In the 1990s, Tennessee, like much of the U.S. South, could be described as welcoming to immigrants. In 2001, Tennessee began allowing individuals without social security numbers to obtain a driver’s license. Yet, nativist voices both in and outside Tennessee soon argued for the need to rescind the state’s progressive driver’s license policy stating that it raised domestic security concerns and promoted irregular immigration. Pro-immigrant groups, such as TIRRC, advocated aggressively in the state legislature to maintain the policy. As a compromise, Tennessee launched a special driving certificate program in 2004 that allowed undocumented residents to legally drive while restricting the certificate’s use as an official identification document. Nevertheless, the certificate program continued to be criticized for attracting undocumented immigration. In 2006, the program was suspended, but the attention it generated seemed to spur new anti-immigrant and nativist policies at both the state and local level. In 2008, Tennessee implemented the Illegal Alien Employment Act, which prohibits employers in

the state from knowingly hiring undocumented immigrants, and, in 2018, the state government enacted HB 2315, an anti-sanctuary law, that built upon a similar law passed in 2009 requiring local law enforcement to cooperate with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE). Local governments also intensified anti-immigrant measures around the same time. In 2007, the Davidson County Sheriff's Office began participating in the controversial 287(g) program which required local law enforcement officers in Nashville (which is located in Davidson County) and across the county to collaborate with ICE to identify and remove undocumented immigrants. The city's participation in the program garnered international attention in 2008 when officers arrested Juana Villegas, an undocumented nine-month pregnant Latinx, for not having a driver's license after being stopped over a traffic violation. Juana was on her way to a doctor's office when she was pulled over, and gave birth two days after being detained. Although this incident received negative media coverage internationally, other major counties in Tennessee, such as Knox and Rutherford, later joined the 287(g) program. Advocacy groups, like TIRRC, have had some success in organizing Tennessee Latinx and non-Latinx immigrants' groups to convince local law enforcement agencies to abandon the 287(g) program. Davidson County left the 287(g) program in 2012. While this move was heralded as a victory for local immigrant groups, the county's five years of participation in the program significantly strained the relationship and trust between local law enforcement and Nashville's Latinx community (Chaney & Clark, 2020).

The city's Latinx community also felt targeted by a 2009 proposal submitted by Nashville Metropolitan Council members to direct almost all county governmental services to be conducted solely in English. If approved, the "English-Only" measure would have negatively impacted non-English speakers' access to many local governmental services. Many local leaders saw the measure as anti-immigrant and Nashville voters rejected the proposal in a referendum. Nevertheless, the fact that it was ever proposed further raised fears among local Latinxs about nativist sentiments stirring in their communities. Irma, a 29-year-old second-generation Latinx who grew up in Nashville, expressed her frustration with the proposal:

It was like an attack on my parents; their English wasn't good. It's like they were trying to make everything hard for us. Did they really think that would be better for everyone? I was in high school then and can remember everyone talking about it. I think a lot of Hispanics started paying attention because that affected us all. (Irma 29)

Latinxs in Tennessee's rural communities have also come under increased scrutiny by both local and federal law enforcement. ICE raids in rural communities have long struck fear in local Latinx residents. Perhaps the most infamous ICE raid in Tennessee took place on April 5th, 2018, at Southeastern Provision, a slaughterhouse in the East Tennessee community of Bean Station. ICE arrested 97 undocumented workers, mostly from Guatemala and Mexico. The raid sent shock waves through both the local Latinx and non-Latinx communities. Immigrant advocacy groups from all over the state, such as TIRRC, quickly arrived in Bean Station to help keep arrestees from being deported. Nancy Quiñones, a TIRRC employee who moved to the Bean Station area for two months to help coordinate legal aid for arrestees and their families, remarked that, "the raid was so disruptive not only to the workers, but also their children who had nowhere to go when their parents were arrested and scheduled to be deported." Nancy, a first-generation Latinx, expressed that Latinx communities throughout the state were stunned by the size and scope of the raid, adding that her organization noted afterwards that Latinxs in Tennessee became very concerned about the

extent and long-term ramifications of the Trump administration's immigration and deportation policies.

While the Bean Station raid was mentioned by five participants as an event that unified Latinxs in Tennessee, issues surrounding DACA at both the federal and state level were the most common and prominent concerns cited in this study as something that elicited a strong sense of ethnic unity among Latinxs vis-à-vis the larger mainstream society. Twenty-two participants viewed legislation attacking DACA (federal and state) as hostile to all Latinxs, regardless of status. Predictably, all DACA-recipient participants stated DACA legislation as their most urgent political concern. However, 15 second-generation Latinxs mentioned DACA as an issue that raised the need to rally around a Latinx identity and to become more visible in their local societies. As Martín, a 21-year-old college student, rhetorically asked, "if we don't step up, who will?" His remark was in response to a question about why he, as a second-generation Tennessee-born Latinx, became involved in the push to give DACA recipients access to in-state tuition. Currently, Tennessee is one of 28 states that does not offer in-state tuition to undocumented students. Since the establishment of DACA in 2012, Tennessee's state legislature has considered bills that would allow recipients to pay in-state tuition. In 2015, the state's first bill to grant in-state tuition passed in the Senate and was supported by then-governor Bill Haslam, a Republican, but it lost by one vote in the House. In 2018, a second measure to do the same failed in the Senate.

The defeat of measures to provide in-state tuition to the nearly 7,000 current DACA recipients in Tennessee was a blow to the Latinx community. Yet, it also served as a catalyst for energizing and organizing Tennessee's younger Latinx population (Conley & Shefner, 2020). Jazmin Ramírez, an organizer for TIRRC and a DACA recipient, noted in an interview that interest in political and social issues among second-generation Latinxs has grown across the state in response to DACA policies. Jazmin explained that almost everyone (Latinx) either has a family member or friend holding DACA status; thus, it becomes personal to them. Indeed, this point was underscored by Miguel, 22-year-old second-generation Latinx, who said, "we all have a brother, sister, friend or cousin or someone struggling because of this DACA limbo, and Tennessee keeps making it harder for them. I think it's something we're all tired of, and we want to do something about it."

While participants in this study shared similar concerns and experiences in interviews, it would be erroneous to say that the political opinions of Tennessee's Latinxs are homogenous. Rather, several participants in this study stated that some of the most contentious discussions they have about current politics, immigration, and even DACA were with members of their own family. Four Latinxs communicated that disagreements with some family members about recent divisive political issues pertaining to the Trump administration had ended in caustic arguments. One participant made known that she had all but stopped talking to two siblings because of the 2020 election. Another female Latinx stated that she was "perplexed" that her brother supported Trump even though he emigrated from Mexico and some of his friends were undocumented. In her opinion, these political differences underscored why it is just as important that Latinxs engage in conversations about politics and common interests within their own community as with the larger non-Latinx mainstream.

Advocacy for Change

Although there is no collective agenda among the Latinxs in this study to challenge the perceived discrimination described in interviews, 28 participants conveyed that discriminatory policies at the state and federal levels directed towards immigrant communities have influenced their career choices and/or decision to participate in some form of sociopolitical activism. Four participants had decided to pursue degrees in social work to help the Latinx community. Citing policies such as DACA, 287(g), and the detention of unaccompanied immigrant children at the U.S.-Mexican border, these participants explained that although they had initially wanted to study for careers they believed were more lucrative, such as nursing, recent events that affected Latinx communities either in Tennessee or nationally provoked them to seek professions where they could immediately protect and support those in their communities who were most vulnerable to discriminatory policies and social marginalization. Claudia recounted how her “calling” to become a social worker happened while deployed in Afghanistan as she watched the news about the family separation policy under the Trump administration. “I was shocked,” Claudia explained, “I couldn’t believe that was happening in America. All I wanted to do was help those kids.”

While some participants, like Claudia, were interested in careers where they could care for vulnerable Latinxs who may be suffering from problems related to their ethnicity or immigration status, seven participants expressed that they had chosen careers they felt could make political or structural differences. Maria, whose high school counselor had discouraged her from higher education, was studying as an undergraduate in a social justice program with the goal of going on to law school afterward. Two other participants were majoring in history with the same goal as Maria. All three mentioned that their objective was to practice immigration law. Two other participants were already working for non-profits that advocated for immigrant communities. Both believed that grassroot approaches were the most expedient method to generate pro-Latinx policies in Tennessee.

Indeed, the immediate impact of grassroots organizing was something several participants—regardless of their career paths—mentioned as why getting involved in political demonstrations or working with immigrant advocacy groups was important. Twenty-four participants had participated in some form of activism in their life. Most stated their participation occurring since 2015. TIRRC organizer Jazmin Ramírez, indicated that her organization recorded an uptick in Latinx volunteers and donors following Trump’s election. Referring to TIIRC’s sister organization, TIRRC Votes, Jazmin pointed out a surge in first- and second-generation Latinx immigrants between the ages of 18 and 25 who volunteered in their 2018 midterm election strategy as canvassers tasked with knocking on doors, making phone calls, and sending text messages on behalf of pro-immigrant candidates. The following year, these volunteer canvassers were successful in local Nashville elections by helping 21 of the 25 TIRRC Vote-endorsed candidates win, including Sandra Sepulveda, the first “Latina” council member elected to Nashville’s consolidated city-county governing council.

Regarding local elections, five participants expressed the need for more Latinx politicians to give their community more exposure across the state. Sarita, an affable, extroverted 29-year-old Latinx from Nashville who had studied international relations at a local university, bluntly explained to me that, “if you want to make changes, you have to have a seat at the table.” Sarita had interned for lobbying organizations as a student. As a result, she intimated that she had met a lot of influential people in state politics, several of whom had begun suggesting that she consider entering politics. Sarita had become interested in politics because of Latinx issues. She asserted

that Tennessee was ready for more diverse candidates who reflect the state's changing demographics. She believed now was the time someone like her could win in local elections.

Conclusion

Latinxs are currently the main driving force behind the United States' ever-diversifying demography (Krogstad & Noe-Bustamante, 2021). This phenomenon is perhaps most evident in the U.S. South where just a few decades ago individuals of Latin American heritage were rarely visible across the region. Today, Latinxs are the fastest growing demographic in Southern states. Furthermore, like in the rest of the United States, much of this group's growth is not from immigration but instead from U.S.-born Latinxs. This fact has implications for Southern communities as Latinxs who have grown up in the region make decisions (social, political, economic) regarding how they interact and participate in mainstream society. This research examines how 1.5- and second-generation Latinxs in Tennessee understand their identity and social positionality in the local societies they grew up in. Interviews reveal that while perceived animosity from non-Latinxs shape their relationship with local mainstream society, politics (local, state, and national) considered hostile to the larger Latinx community drive their ethnic solidarity and resistance to discriminatory policymaking. This reactive ethnicity plays a direct role in the political engagement and career choices of many Latinxs in Tennessee. These findings lay bare that the incorporation trajectory of Tennessee Latinxs is very complex and not easy to predict. Yet, to determine if their assimilation path is segmented a longitudinal examination would be required. For this reason, the economic and educational outcomes of this demographic warrant further scholarly inquiry, as does an analysis of their prolonged participation in politics. Moreover, questions regarding the continued maintenance and use of a pan-ethnic identity also merit examination since individuals of Latin American ancestry will certainly become a more salient part of Tennessee's population. If Latinxs in Tennessee begin to recognize themselves as members of mainstream society, for example, will their pan-ethnic identity begin to recede?

While the interviews from this research help to create a general narrative around the experiences, sentiments, and sociopolitical reactions of Latinxs in Tennessee, this study's findings are not indicative of all Latinx viewpoints in the state. For instance, though participants were not asked their political affiliation or leanings, it was apparent in interviews that most supported social policies promoted by the Democratic Party. Indeed, this trend is evident nationally (see Huddy et al., 2016). However, several participants conveyed that some of their most acrimonious political discussions have been with Latinx family members (i.e., siblings or cousins) who favored the Trump Campaign in 2020. These anecdotes demonstrate that Latinxs are not politically monolithic and that additional research is needed to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the relationship between politics and ethnicity among Latinxs in the U.S. South.

In closing, Southern Latinxs are coming of age in communities to which their parents immigrated a generation ago. As a result, many Latinxs are not immigrants but locally-born denizens in the cities and towns they inhabit. How they perceive their recognition in local Southern societies will have both short- and long-term sociopolitical ramifications for years to come. As a result, local politicians and governments should view this demographic phenomenon as an opportunity to create more inclusive communities that are representative of constituents of all racial and ethnic backgrounds.

References

- Abrego, L. (2011). Legal consciousness of undocumented Latinos: Fear and stigma as barriers to claims-making for first- and 1.5-generation immigrants. *Law & Society Review*, 45(2), 337–369. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23012045>
- Alba, R., & Duyvendak, J. (2019). What about the mainstream? Assimilation in super-diverse times. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42(1), 105–124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1406127>
- Brown, H., Jones, J., & Becker, A. (2018). The racialization of Latino immigrants in new destinations: Criminality, ascription, and countermobilization. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(5), 118–140. <https://doi.org/10.7758/rsf.2018.4.5.06>
- Castro, F., Marsiglia, F., Kulis, S., & Kellison, J. (2010). Lifetime segmented assimilation trajectories and health outcomes in Latino and other community residents. *American Journal of Public Health*, 100(4), 669–676. <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2009.167999>
- Çelik, Ç. (2015) Having a German passport will not make me German’: Reactive ethnicity and oppositional identity among disadvantaged male Turkish second-generation youth in Germany. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 38(9), 1646–1662. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2015.1018298>
- Chaney, J., & Clark, L. (2020). We're from here, too: Identity and belonging among 1.5- and second-generation Latinxs in Nashville, Tennessee. *The Latin Americanist*, 64(3), 208–304. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/764888>
- Commins, M. M., & Wills J. B. (2020). Restrictive immigrant policies in New South legislatures: Understanding regional variations in state-level policymaking. *The Latin Americanist*, 64(2), 200–222. <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/757676>
- Conley, M., & Stefner, J. (2020). Infrastructures of repression and resistance: How Tennesseans respond to the immigration enforcement regime. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 43(1), 161–179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2019.1667513>
- Domínguez-Villegas, R., Gonzalez, N., Gutierrez, A., Hernández, K., Herndon, M., Rios, M., Roman, M., Rush, T., & Vera, D. (2021). Vote choice of Latino voters in the 2020 Presidential election. *UCLA: Latino Policy & Politics Initiative*. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4062x8zx>
- Duany, J. (1998). Reconstructing racial identity: Ethnicity, color, and class among Dominicans in the United States and Puerto Rico. *Latin American Perspectives*, 25, 147–172. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X9802500308>
- Flores-González, N. (2017). *Citizens but not Americans: Race and belonging among Latino millennials*. NYU Press.
- Golash-Boza, T. (2006). Dropping the hyphen? Becoming Latino(a)-American through racialized assimilation. *Social Forces*, 85(1), 27–55. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3844404>
- Gómez, L. E. (2020) *Inventing Latinos: A new story of American racism*. The New Press.
- Guerrero, P. (2017). *Nuevo South: Latinas/os, Asians, and the remaking of place*. University of Nebraska Press.
- Hatzipanagos, R. (2021, February 3). How grass-roots efforts by Georgia’s Latinos helped tip the Senate races. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/02/03/how-grassroots-efforts-by-georgias-latinos-helped-tip-senate-races/>

- Herda, D. (2018). Reactive ethnicity and anticipated discrimination among American Muslims in Southeastern Michigan. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 38(3), 372–39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2018.1524136>
- Huddy, L., Mason, L., & Horwitz, N. S. (2016). Political identity convergence: On being Latino, becoming a democrat, and getting active. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(3), 205–228. <https://doi.org/10.7758/rsf.2016.2.3.11>
- Igielnik, R., & Budiman, A. (2020, September 23). *The changing racial and ethnic composition of the U.S. electorate*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/2020/09/23/the-changing-racial-and-ethnic-composition-of-the-u-s-electorate/>
- Kaplan, D., & Recoquillon, C. (2016). Multiethnic economic activity along three immigrant corridors in Paris. *The Professional Geographer*, 68(1), 82–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00330124.2015.1032962>
- Kasinitz, P., Mollenkopf, J., Waters, M., & Holdaway, J. (2008). *Inheriting the city: The children of immigrants come of age*. Russel Sage Foundation.
- Krogstad, J., & Noe–Bustamante, L. (2021). *Key facts about U.S. Latinos for national Hispanic heritage month*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/09/09/key-facts-about-u-s-latinos-for-national-hispanic-heritage-month/>
- Lacy, E., & Odem, M. (2019) Popular attitudes and public policies: Southern responses to Latin immigration. In M. Odem & E. Lacy (Eds.), *Latino immigrants and the transformation of the U.S. South* (pp. 143–164). University of Georgia Press.
- Marrow, H. (2020). Hope turned sour: Second–generation incorporation and mobility in U.S. new immigrant destinations. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 43(1), 99–118. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2019.1667505>
- Martínez, D. E., & Gonzalez, K. E. (2021) Pan-ethnicity as a reactive identity: Primary pan-ethnic identification among Latino-Hispanics in the United States, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 44(4), 595–617. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2020.1752392>
- McDaniel, P. (2021). Twenty-first century migration, integration, and receptivity: Prospects and pathways in metropolitan areas of the Southeastern United States. *Southeastern Geographer*, 61(4), 381–404. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sgo.2021.0021>
- Meisner, F. (2015). Migration in migration–related diversity? The nexus between superdiversity and migration studies. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 38(4), 556–567. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2015.970209>
- Noe–Bustamante, L., López, M. H., & Krogstad, J. (2020, July 7) *U.S. Hispanic population surpassed 60 million in 2019, but growth has slowed*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/07/07/u-s-hispanic-population-surpassed-60-million-in-2019-but-growth-has-slowed/>
- Ordoñez, F. (2007, September 10). Surprising and troubling resurgence: Immigration furor boosts Klan chapters in Carolinas. *Charlotte Observer*.
- Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. (2001). *Legacies: The story of the immigrant second generation*. University of California Press.
- Portes, A., & Stepik, A. (1993). *City on the edge: The transformation of Miami*. University of California Press.
- Portes, A., & Zhou, M. (1993). The new second generation: Segmented assimilation and its variants. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 530(1), 74–96. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1047678>

- Portes, A., & Zhou, M. (1993). The new second generation: Segmented assimilation and its variants. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 530(1), 74–96. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1047678>
- Remennick, L., & Prashizky, A. (2019). Subversive identity and cultural production by the Russian–Israeli Generation 1.5. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 22(5–6), 925–941. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549418810091>
- Samson, F. (2014). Segmented political assimilation: Perceptions of racialized opportunities and Latino immigrants' partisan identification. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 37(3), 467–495. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2013.783222>
- Silber Mohamed, H. (2017). *The new Americans? Immigration, protest, and the politics of Latino identity*. University Press of Kansas.
- Silver, A (2018). *Shifting boundaries: Immigrant youth negotiating national, state, and small-town politics*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Smith, B., & Winders, J. (2008). 'We're here to stay': Economic restructuring, Latino migration and place-making in the U.S. South. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33(1), 60–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2013.783222>
- Telles, E., & Ortiz, V. (2008). *Generations of exclusion: Mexican–Americans, assimilation, and race*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. (2018, March). *KIDS COUNT: The State of the Child in Tennessee Policy and Issue Guide*. <https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/tccy/programs0/kc/kc-pubs-nav1/tccy-kcsoc19.html>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). *QuickFacts: Georgia*. U.S Department of Commerce. Retrieved September 30, 2021 from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/GA,US>
- Vertovec, S. (2007). Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30(6), 1024–1054. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870701599465>
- Vidal–Ortiz, S., & Martínez, J. (2018). Latinx thoughts: Latinidad with an X. *Latino Studies*, 16(3), 384–395. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41276-018-0137-8>
- Winders, J. (2013). *Nashville in the new millennium: Immigrant settlement, urban transformation, and social belonging*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Notes on Contribution

James Chaney is an Associate Professor in the Department of Global Studies and Human Geography at Middle Tennessee State University. His research focuses on Latin America, migration, refugee resettlement, and ethnic geographies. James has conducted extensive fieldwork in Mexico, Honduras, and Nicaragua examining the mobility and economic strategies of transnational migrant communities. He has published several articles on the resettlement and integration of immigrants and refugees in the U.S. South, and his coauthored book *Hispanic and Latino New Orleans: Immigration and Identity since the Eighteenth Century* was the recipient of the John Brinckerhoff Jackson Book Prize in 2016.