*DESENVOLVIMEN*TO (SENSE MAKING):

A CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY ON 2ND GENERATION DOMINICAN-AMERICAN

PROFESSIONALS AND THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH THE GENTRIFICATION OF

WASHINGTON HEIGHTS, NEW YORK

By

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Kathe Newman, PhD.

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Abstract of the Dissertation

*Desenvolvimen*to (Sense Making):

A Critical Ethnography on 2nd Generation Dominican-American Professionals

and their experiences with the gentrification of Washington Heights, New York

By
Miguelina Rodriguez

Written under the direction of

Kathe Newman

This dissertation investigates how 25 2nd generation Dominican-Americans with high

socio-economic status experience the gentrification of the ethnic enclave of Washington

Heights. It describes their lived experiences, the connection between Washington

Heights and their transnational hyphenated identities, and what it means when the place

that was the source of that identity changes. For these individuals, Washington Heights is

not only a place; it is also the reality of being Dominican-American in the United States.

Their hyphenated identity cannot be experienced in the Dominican Republic, nor in the

integrated spaces they navigate as individuals from a higher socio-economic status

(institutions of higher learning, places of work, travels, etc.), but only in the enclave of

Washington Heights. If the places and people that make Washington Heights home

change through gentrification, this 2nd generation group experiences more than nostalgic

loss, it experiences a sense of cultural displacement.

The cultures that make up both sides of their hyphenated identity are not discrete

social positions; they overlap to create a complex intersection of a synthesized

hyphenated identity (Itzigsohn, 2009; Wolf, 2002). It is through this identity that they make sense of gentrification, which then leads them to feel torn between appreciating the changes in the area while perceiving the same changes as a threat to their community, and in turn to their identity. These conflicting feelings are established by multiple and heterogeneous understandings and meanings of what it means to be Dominican, American, and mainly Dominican-American (Wolf, 2002). This dissertation describes how 25 2nd generation Dominican-Americans experience the gentrification processes that are unfolding in Washington Heights and how their responses are related to their transnational hyphenated identities.

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Dedication

For:

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&

For people, like my parents, who never made it to middle school. Who were farmers, and

literally toiled the fields in the campos of Magua, the Domincian Republic. Then

migrated to New York City to toil in the industrial sweatshops and blazing hot kitchens

of the service economy. Working sun up to sun down, never having the luxury to

'unpack' social ills affecting our folk. Griselda and I are here, doing just that, because of

you- I honor your legacy and dedicate this dissertation to you. There were (and are), I

know, many scholars and thinkers in my lineage who never had a chance to make it out

of the campo, or the developing country, or the block, or the 'hood...this is for you. *Pa La

Cultura…*For the Culture!

In memory of my ancestral Spirits:

My father, Francisco Ramon Rodriguez (I hope you are proud Papi!)

Mama Cilila, Dinora, Mingo, Tia Vieja,

Irene Moore (Mrs. Moore-your DECA girls

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Maps

Chapter 1

Introduction

> *Where were these changes in the 80s and 90s and beginning of the 2000s? Where were they? Why was it that I didn't get it, do I don't deserve it? Am I not the right type of person? Where was it when I was younger and why couldn't we have this back then? These changes would've never have happened in the 90s. On one side it's like: Do I not deserve it? On the other side, why didn't we take care of our neighborhood then? (Ethnographic Interview, 2014)*

The opening quote is from Gia whom I sat down to interview during the summer of 2014; we met at a cafe located on the west side of the neighborhood. The cafe is tucked away on a bend, and from the inside there are views overlooking Inwood Park and the Spuyten Duyvil Creek. The park is well kept, with new pedestrian paths, dog runs and sprinklers for children to play. That particular day the water was glistening under the hot July sun, giving it a more alluring vibe; it is a gorgeous view that transports you out of New York City, even if for a few minutes.

On the east side of the neighborhood, Highbridge Park offers a sharp contrast. The park's main entrance is located on Amsterdam Avenue, a busy two-way street; there are no cafes near the park, just an abundant number of food trucks selling Dominican street foods. On any given summer day, you can experience street vendors, merengue blaring from car stereos, a row of middle-aged Dominican women playing Bingo on one side of the sidewalk, and middle-aged Dominican men playing dominoes on the other. The body of water on the east side of the neighborhood is not a natural creek, it is an Olympic-size pool located inside the park (which several participants warned me to stay away from, even if the park has been 'cleaned up'). This is Washington Heights in a

nutshell: a world of contrasts and contradictions. It is home to the 25   2nd generation

Dominican-American immigrants I interviewed for this study.

This study is a critical ethnography centering on the experiences of 25

transnational 2nd generation Dominican-Americans with high socio-economic status

(S.E.S.) in gentrifying Washington Heights. For these 2nd generation Dominican-

Americans, Washington Heights (the Heights from here in) is not just a physical place to

live, it is a place where their hyphenated identities are formed and are fully experienced.

This identity cannot be experienced in the Dominican Republic, nor in the integrated

spaces they navigate as individuals with higher S.E.S. (institutions of higher learning,

places of work, travels, etc.), but has emerged from the enclave the Heights. Being that

their identity is so embedded in the Heights, what these 2nd generation Dominican-

Americans experience as their neighborhood changes is more than just nostalgia, but

feelings of symbolic and cultural displacement as well. If the places and people that make

the Heights home are no longer there, this group loses some connection to their

hyphenated identity. For them, gentrification surfaces feelings of alienation, almost as if

these individuals were being removed from their homeland. As a result, they navigate the

contradictions of feeling torn between appreciating the changes, but also fear that those

same changes are erasing their community, and in turn their identity.

The first section of this chapter provides a simple breakdown of the major

variables that arose from the fieldwork and the literature. Each term is defined in the

context of this dissertation and includes: 2nd generation immigrant, integrated 2nd

generation Dominican, Washington Heights, ethnic enclave, and transnationalism.

Subsequent chapters engage with each variable in a more thorough manner. The research

design follows; here I lay out the critical ethnographic method used for this dissertation and introduce the reader to the subjects in this study. An introduction to the Statement of the Problem will precede the significance of the study.

Definition of Terms

2nd generation immigrant: The literature refers to the 'classic 2nd generation' as individuals born and raised in the U.S. Individuals who arrived before the age of 12 and attended school here are considered the '1.5 generation'. For this study I include both groups as '2nd generation immigrants': those born in the U.S. to at least one immigrant parent and/or those who arrived before the age of 12 and were raised in the U.S. (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf & Waters, 2002; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Integrated 2nd generation Dominican: The term 'Integrated' is partially derived from Belanger and Verkuyten (2010). The authors created a four-part classification system of identity that includes: assimilation, separation, marginalization and integration. The fourth classification, *Integration,* is when the individual has a balanced contact with both their native culture (Dominican in this case) and the mainstream one (the U.S.). This classification usually pertains to individuals of higher S.E.S., like those in this dissertation (Berry, 1998; Berry & Sam, 1996, p. 297). For this study, the individual's S.E.S is related to their level of education. All of the individuals in this study have post-secondary schooling, varying from first-year college students and college graduates, to those with advanced Law, Masters and Doctoral/Medical degrees. Their education facilitates contact with these integrated spaces like: predominately White educational institutions, work, and travel.

Washington Heights: I define 'Washington Heights' as both the Washington Heights and Inwood areas of Northern Manhattan because these adjacent neighborhoods historically have held the highest concentrations of Dominicans in the United States (and outside of the Dominican Republic) (Duany, 2008; Ricourt, 2015). The neighborhoods extend from 155th to 220th street in Manhattan and include Community District 12 and City Council Districts 7 and 10.

Enclave: Although entrepreneurship was one of the main components in the original definition of 'ethnic enclave', for this study I chose to view it more as a source of socio-economic support for its residents (Portes, 1981; Portes & Manning, 1986). I chose to use the following definition of an ethnic enclave: "An immigrant neighborhood and a community with social structures and relationships bounded by ethnicity" (Zhou & Bankston, 2016, p. 99). Because my focus is on individuals who are from a neighborhood that is changing, I distinguish between the terms 'ethnic community' and 'ethnic enclave.' While they are often used interchangeably, the latter is defined by physical, geographic location and will therefore be used for this study.

Transnationalism: I use Linda Basch et. al's (2005) definition of Transnationalism:

> The process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. Immigrants take actions, make decisions, and develop subjectivities and identities embedded in networks of relationships that connect them simultaneously to two or more nations (p. 7).

2nd generation groups, like the one in this study, can experience a transnationalism that is not only symbolic but practical, and one that becomes a central part of their identity. This

practical transnationalism is accomplished via: remittances, traveling to and from the D.R., as well as business and political interest in the D.R. (Itzigsohn et al., 1999; Louie, 2006). I also include Smith's (2006) contribution to the transnational definition: "transnational life is also embodied in identities and social structures that help form the life world of immigrants and their children" (p.6). The Dominican Republic's close proximity to New York City, their parents' transnational practices and the mode of incorporation in the U.S., leads 2nd generation Dominican-Americans like those in this study, to choose a transnational, hyphenated identity (Hernandez & Sezgin, 2010; Itzigsohn, 2009; Kasinitz, Mollenkopf & Waters, 2004; Smith, 2006).

Now that I have provided a definition for each term, I will now lay out the research design used for this dissertation.

Research Design

The study has been guided by and is anchored within the following overarching question:

> How do 2nd generation Dominican-Americans with higher S.E.S. from Washington Heights experience the enclave's gentrification?

To answer this question, I developed a qualitative research design that includes: one-on-one, prearranged 1-2 hour semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and a review of the pertinent literature. Interviews with twenty-five transnational 2nd generation Dominican-Americans with high S.E.S. are the main focus. Individuals had to meet the following criteria in order to participate in this study: be at least 18 years-old, 2nd generation Dominican, some level of college education, and currently living in the Heights and/or raised there-having left less than 10 years before the interview phase of

this study, which was in 2014. When I say *'from the Heights'* I am referring to individuals who currently live in the neighborhood, as well as those who, although they do not currently reside there, have emotional and physical ties to the community and still consider the Heights home.

My data and analysis consisted of two components: documenting notes in a journal during the interviews and fieldwork, as well as conducting, transcribing and analyzing the interviews. I conducted fieldwork in the Heights during the summer of 2014; this included participant observation via Go-Alongs, as well as unobtrusive observation and recorded field notes in the journal (Kusenbach, 2003). Using the notes from the journal, I developed self-reflective memos on my understanding of what I was learning throughout the research process. I used these memos to sum up my thoughts and feelings about the fieldwork and interview processes, and included notes about what I felt I was doing well and what needed to improve for the next interview or Go Along. I used a digital recorder during each interview session and later transcribed and coded each interview; after about the fourth interview I started noticing a set of themes and subthemes that began to emerge from within the data. By the end of this phase of my data analysis, I had a file with interviewee thoughts that fit within three themes: Torn; The Divide along Broadway Avenue; and Displacement.

Now that I have laid out the Research Design developed for this study, I will discuss the literature I used to frame this dissertation and to gain a better understanding of the development of the participants' hyphenated Dominican-American identity.

On the Hyphen

The participants in this study identify as Dominican-American. Similar to the individuals in Hernandez and Sezgin's (2010) work, they see themselves "as a certain kind of American, the ethnic second generation, Latino, non-White kind" (p.66). But as individuals with higher S.E.S., they are also different from 2nd generation Dominican-Americans from other social classes. The intersection of race, class and ethnicity leads this particular group of Dominican-Americans to experience multiple and sometimes confusing messages when making sense of gentrification; this is because the cultures that make up their hyphenated identity are not mutually exclusive, but overlap and create their complex, hyphenated identity (Itzigsohn, 2009; Wolf, 2002). I used the acculturation and transnationalism literatures in order to understand the ways in which these hyphenated identities were formed (Berry, 2002; Belanger & Verkuyten, 2010; Smith, 2006; Zhou & Bankston, 2016).

Most versions of the classic assimilation (or straight-line assimilation) theory have proven inadequate and, some would argue problematic, when trying to understand the mode of incorporation and identity formation of this particular group (Gans, 1979; Greeley, 1974; Glazer & Moynihan, 1963; Portes and Zhou, 1993; Yancey, et al., 1976; Zhou & Bankston, 2016). The main limitation of these theories is the assumption that upward mobility is limited to assimilation into a White middle-class, and that this is inevitable for all immigrant groups (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Suárez-Orozco, 2009). As a result of these limitations, new theories on 2nd generation identity formation were introduced, for example: segmented assimilation, transnationalism and acculturation (Belanger & Verkuyten, 2010; Smith, 2006; Portes & Zhou, 1993). These newer

perspectives account for the complexities associated with this latest wave of immigrants, mainly those of color.

Authors like Belanger and Verkuyten (2010) and Berry (2002, 1998) believe that questions related to acculturation, not assimilation, should be the central ones to any study on the incorporation of immigrants of color. This is because, as Berry (2002, 1998) tells us, acculturation refers to the ways in which individuals respond to stress-inducing cultural contexts like racism and discrimination (Berry 2002, 1998). Some scholarly work demonstrates that, in an attempt to live meaningful lives and buffer the blow of structural discrimination, immigrants and their children develop transnational identities (Itzigsohn, 2009; Louie, 2006; Smith, 2006; Zhou & Bankston, 2016). As a result, 2nd generation immigrants like those in this study, maintain stronger transnational ties to their parental homeland when they face racial discrimination in the U.S. For instance, in his work on Dominicans in Rhode Island, Itzigsohn (2009) demonstrates how 1st and 2nd generation Dominicans who encounter discrimination in the U.S. are likely to turn to their country of origin as a means of developing a more positive self-identity. The nuance added here is that individuals with higher S.E.S., such as the participants in this study, are part of integrated spaces, and this: "Causes this class to become more aware of their marginality within the structures of society. Increased contact with Whites gives rise to encounters with racism and heightens, in a way that would seem to defy expectations, racial consciousness among [the] middle-class" (Taylor, 2002, p. 75). For the 2nd Dominican-Americans in this study, this awareness causes their particular neighborhood, the enclave of the Heights in this case, to take on a new meaning. Home and community are important to every individual and for a myriad of reasons; for this group, the community

can serve as a buffer for the racial biases mentioned above. The enclave is therefore vital for this group, but not only for the symbolic reasons argued within the transnational and acculturation literatures. The transnational literature tells us that hyphenated identities are sometimes developed from a connection to emotional or ideological homes, those that transcend physical brick and mortar ones (Basch et al., 2005, Itzigsohn et al., 1999, Wolf, 2002). This is because the transnational literature often times includes the concept of 'home', as being part of a continuum that does not rely so much on the physical location of home, but on an emotional and even spiritual connection. This consists of social interactions that are not limited to political and geographic boundaries of one specific country (Itzigsohn et al., 1999). Yet for the 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study, the physical geographic location of home *does* play a major role in their identification. They do have strong socio-spatial connections to the physical enclave of the Heights. Therefore, being Dominican was not only a socio/emotional part of their world, but was played out in their transnational social field that consisted of the physical ethnic enclave of the Heights as well. Never feeling 'Dominican' enough in the Dominican-Republic, nor fully 'American' in the integrated spaces they navigated on a regular as individual with higher S.E.S., the Heights offered these individuals a space to feel seen, heard and to be fully themselves (Anzaldua, 1987; Gil & Vazquez, 2014). As a result, the 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study live in the 'realm of the hyphen'.

The following interview excerpt is from Jorge, one of the study participants; here he offers us insight into the way his hyphenated identity was formed. We mainly sense

his feelings of frustration and confusion in trying to make sense of two seemingly

separate worlds that would eventually make up his one identity:

> *At 5 years old I go to school and it's the first time I'm hearing all out English all day, in kindergarten with a Black teacher. Ok? American. That fucks you up. In addition, I'm now cognizant of American television because remember, Latinos aren't popular, we don't exist in 1979. All we had was us, the small little group of people, 'tu ere de tal y tal campo?'* (<u>are you from such and such small town in the DR?).</u> *'Tu ere primo de fulanito?' (are you so-and-so's cousin?). And my parents they embraced that. The disconnect started with me when I got to school. I couldn't say 'you from that* campo*?'. What* campo*?! I'm here!! The disconnect evolves or strengthens as I get older and my parents get older. Now all I want to do is watch American movies. I'm not watching no fucking* Chapulin *or* Chespirito *or I'll take it back to the old school or sit with my grandmother and watch Tre* Patine *[*<u>all are popular variety shows from across Latin America from the 70s and 80s</u>*]. I don't want to do that shit. I want to watch Richard Pryor, Eddie Murphy and Bruce Wills. I wanna watch whatever was out then, that's what I want. So now my Americanism starts kicking in, my Dominicanism is there out of joy and the pleasantries that I love. There's where my mind starts to fucking split.*

Jorge's comments above illustrate his feelings about being part of two seemingly

different worlds. Many participants shared stories similar to Jorge, where they had one

'world' at home and another, sometimes different world outside: in school, their

educational institutions and their jobs. This identity provides this group with a dual frame

of reference, informed by both Dominican and American orientations. They use this dual

frame of reference when making sense of aspects of the gentrification of their home.

Living 'on the hyphen' is one of the major reasons for the emergence of one of the main

themes in this study: 'torn'. All of the participants in this study shared their feelings of

being conflicted about the current changes to the Heights: while they enjoyed some of the

gentrified spaces they felt torn because they feared that their families would be displaced

and that the place they call home is changing. There is equally a perceived threat of

cultural displacement and real threat of direct displacement via landlord harassment of

the 1st generation.

The acculturation and transnationalism literatures have contributed to our understanding of the identify formation of immigrants in the U.S. Where the literature is thin is in teasing out the questions related to the ways in which 2nd generation immigrants use this dual frame of reference to understand the gentrification of their ethnic enclave, and then in turn how these changes to the enclave affect this particular group.

Statement of the Problem

Now that we have more White people coming in from the hospital: nurses, doctors, now my whole building is changing; we have an entire new front. After being there for 24 years nothing was ever done, nothing was ever remodeled, our walls weren't painted, our doors. We finally have new mailboxes, new security systems. We just now got security cameras, we never had them before.
(Ethnographic Interview, 2014)

It's hard because you really can't pinpoint it. It's like you went to sleep and the 'hood was this way and you woke up the next morning and it's like OH MY GOODNESS! It's like every time I turn the corner something new is happening in the hood…This would've never happened in 1990.
(Ethnographic Interview, 2014).

The majority of work that focuses on the gentrification of ethnic enclaves and its effect on the immigrant populations mainly focus on the 1st generation (Huang, 2010; Mirabal, 2009; Murdie & Teixeira, 2011; Stabrowski, 2014). The literature has helped us understand the ways in which ethnic enclaves have benefited the 1st generation, mainly in facilitating their transition from their home country into U.S. neighborhoods (Portes, & Bach, 1985; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou, 2009). Although we do know the role of the enclave in the lives of the 2nd generation, scholarly work on the ways in which 2nd generation Dominican-Americans interact with their communities, although available, is

still thin (Falicove, 2005; Itzigsohn, 2009; Taylor, 2002; Waters et al., 2010). In their

work, Portes and his colleagues have given attention to the neighborhood, yet these are

mostly sociological studies about individuals and social groups, and not on the role of the

neighborhood as it pertains to the individual's identity (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes

and Zhou, 1993). In Zhou and Bankston's (2016) *The Rise of the New Second*

Generation, a book that contributed to the study of 2nd generation immigrants, there is

only a small portion of chapter 6 that is dedicated to the role of community within the

identity formation of the 2nd generation population in general.

The gap in knowledge regards the intersection of class, race and ethnicity within

the conversation of gentrification. Questions that need to be asked are: What happens

when these neighborhoods begin to change as a result of gentrification? How will the

physical and symbolic changes affect this relatively 'mobile' group with a higher S.E.S.?

Should we worry about cultural displacement and what that means for individuals who

may have already left the enclave? This group, as Taylor (2002) argues, should not be

dismissed too quickly or characterized as one-dimensional, mobile and/or privileged.

Yes, they may be more privileged and have more access than the 1st generation who may

not speak the language or lack certain skill sets, and yes, this group may also have more

privileges and flexibility than the 2nd generation from different social classes. Yet this

group still has a relationship with the enclave, albeit for different reasons that we may not

yet fully comprehend.

Significance of the Study

It is estimated that in less than 30 years, by 2045, the U.S. will become what the

Brookings Institute calls "minority White"; where White individuals will make up less than 50% of the population, while Latinx groups, at almost 25% of the population, will comprise the largest ethnic group (Frey, 2018). Approximately fifty years after the Hart-Celler immigration Act in the 1960s, which spurred the largest influx of immigrants from Latin-American to the U.S., Latinx immigrants, across the 1st, 2nd, and even 3rd generations, have contributed to over half of the country's population growth (Pew Hispanic, 2015). In 2016 the Latinx population reached almost 58 million people, and by 2065 this group will be responsible for almost 90% of the population growth in the U.S.; many attributing this growth to the increase in the 2nd generation (Flores, 2017; López, Bialik & Radford, 2018). As it relates to Dominicans, Hernandez and Steven-Acevedo (2011) tell us: "The rise of [the] 2nd generation Dominican population is a pattern that we anticipate will continue in the coming decades. The growth of a substantial 2nd generation should be clearly one of the priorities in the agenda of both academic researchers and policy-makers in the United States" (p. 487).

This study gives life to the numbers presented above; as Taylor (2002) tell us: "Statistics alone fall short on illuminating the subtle complexities these changes hold for the formation of identity" (p. x). It is therefore vital to capture the nuances within their stories, via qualitative work, before they become a majority; as the 2nd generation continues to grow, their decisions will increasingly shape every realm of our society, mainly our cities. Their stories may provide insight for policy makers and academics looking to understand settlement patterns of one of the largest groups in the country. This study's focus on 2nd generation Dominican-Americans with higher S.E.S. adds an important nuance to the way we understand gentrification and its effects on immigrant

groups of color across class lines, particularly those who associate and participate with the physical enclave in ways that have not yet been captured within the literature.

Overview of Dissertation Chapters

This dissertations contains seven chapters. The next chapter draws on the major bodies of literature I used to frame the story of the 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in the Heights, mainly acculturation, transnationalism and gentrification. Chapter three reviews the critical ethnography methodology used to collect and analyze the data for this study. Chapter four describes the ethnic enclave of the Heights. It pays special attention to the way the disinvestment of New York City during the 70s, 80s, and 90s informs the participants' stories today. Chapters five and six, the two subsequent empirical chapters, discuss the experiences of 2nd generation Dominican-Americans with gentrification, as told by the participants. Chapter five (the first empirical chapter) focuses on the notion of the participants feeling 'torn' between appreciating the changes in the area, while simultaneously feeling threatened by those same changes. This causes a perceived threat of cultural displacement that the area of the Heights will change, affecting their identity as a result. This feeling of being torn is established by the nuanced understandings and meanings brought about as a result of their hyphenated identity. Chapter six (the second empirical chapter) pays attention to the stories around the actual threat of gentrification-induced displacement, mainly the different tactics employed by the area's landlords towards 1st generation Dominican residents in rent-regulated units. The conclusion to this dissertation, Chapter seven, provides the study's implications, policy recommendations as well as recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter reviews the major bodies of literature that I used to frame the story of 2nd generation Dominican-Americans and their experiences with the gentrification of Washington Heights. Section I, *Straight Line Assimilation*, begins with an overview of the different theories used to understand immigrant incorporation in the United States, mainly: Classic Assimilation, Neo-Classic and Segmented Assimilation. Section II, *Acculturation,* explores major research emphasizing the role of acculturation in the identity-formation of 2nd generation immigrants, mainly those of color. Section III: *Transnationalism,* reviews the literature needed to help the reader understand the definition and implications of transnationalism for groups like the 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study. The final Section, *Gentrification and the Enclave,* explores literature pertaining to the role of the ethnic enclave for both 1st and 2nd generation immigrants, mainly the implication of the neighborhood's gentrification on each respective group.

Straight-Line Assimilation

The classic assimilation perspective (or straight line assimilation) developed during the early 20th century and was the dominant way of looking at, and thinking about, the ways in which immigrant groups incorporated into U.S. culture. The assimilation experiences of the 'old' 2nd generation were considered success stories and were used to understand assimilation into the mainstream U.S. culture (Gordon, 1964; Park, 1928; Spiro, 1955; Warner & Srole, 1945). The literature refers to as the 'old' second

generation as those individuals whose parents arrived mainly from European countries

during the early 1900s (Alba & Nee, 2003; Zhou & Bankston, 2016). The contributors to

this perspective agreed that, in the case of the United States, there was a single

mainstream that was dominated by one White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) majority,

and that taking on characteristics of this group was essential for upward social mobility

(Park, 1928). Park (1928) was one of the best-known exponents of this perspective and he

believed that assimilation was a micro-level shift from individuals identifying with their

particular immigrant group, to identifying with the macro WASP culture. Successful

assimilation meant loosening the ties that were used to bind individuals to different

immigrant groups, and as a result, these individuals would then join the U.S. mainstream.

The members of the 'old' 2nd generation would spend some time living between either

cultures, or what Park (1928) called being a 'marginal man'. The individual would

eventually give up the customs, traditions and language of their country of origin and

become fully absorbed into the unified, WASP middle-class culture (Park, 1928;

Stonequiest, 1937). The main goal of assimilation, according to Park (1928), was for

immigrants to eventually acquire an unhyphenated American identity. In his book

Assimilation in America, Milton M. Gordon (1964) argued that assimilation was a seven-

stage process for the 'old' 2nd generation, with the end goal ultimately being assimilation

into a WASP middle class, or what the author called 'Anglo-conformity' (p.84).

Although it sometimes took these groups decades, assimilation into the

mainstream WASP culture, as per Park (1928) and Gordon (1964), in their view, was

inevitable. The literature tell us that-although there were some exceptions-the lack of

technology, the distance to their native countries and policy makers' and educators' push

to 'Americanize' immigrants in schools located in areas with a large immigrant population, often caused this phase to be short lived for many 'old' immigrants trying to retain their native ethnic identities (Bankston & Caldas, 2009; Zhou & Bankston, 2016).

When thinking about the heterogeneous, 'new' 2nd generation, mainly those of color, most versions of the classic assimilation theory that helped us understand the 'old' 2nd generation have proven inadequate and, some would argue, problematic (Gans, 1979; Greeley, 1974; Glazer & Moynihan, 1963; Yancey, et al., 1976; Portes and Zhou, 1993; Zhou & Bankston, 2016; Zhou & Xiong, 2007). From this argument, and after the second great wave of immigration following the Hart-Celler act of 1965, a neo-classic perspective emerged.

Neo-Classic Perspective

The neo-Classic perspective keeps some aspects of the straight-line assimilation theories, mainly those that scholars believe remain important to the 'new' 2nd generation. Gans (1979) is one of the main contributors to this revisionist view of assimilation and his main argument is that elements of cultural pluralism can be merged with elements of assimilation, and that combination can help us understand the incorporation of both the 'old' and 'new' 2nd generations. Gans (1979) believed that the main way to accomplish this is to distinguish between assimilation (full absorption of individuals into the mainstream) and acculturation (the acquisition of specific cultural traits while maintaining ties to their country of origin). Although this new perspective focused on a stronger attachment to ethnic identity, Gans (1979) believed that ethnicity would become less about the immigrant's lived experiences and more about nostalgia and symbolism, or

what he calls "symbolic ethnicity" (p.1). He argued: "Symbolic ethnicity can be expressed in a myriad of ways, but above all, I suspect, it is characterized by a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love for and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior" (p.9). Similar to Gans (1979), other proponents of this theory argue that although complete assimilation for the 'new' 2nd generation will be more gradual than for the 'old' 2nd generation, complete assimilation is still inevitable (Gans, 1979; Kivisto & Nefzger 1993).

Alba and Nee (2003) are some of the strongest defenders of the neo-classic assimilation theory; they believe that although the 'new' 2nd generation will eventually assimilate, it will not be in the single direction towards the WASP core, as the classic theory predicts. This new theoretical framework was used to explain how immigrants of color began assimilating into the mainstream culture, yet at different paces and pulling from different methods to help them throughout this process. Zhou and Xiong (2005) are critical of Alba and Nee's (2003) theory though, mainly arguing that it overlooks the fact that race continues to be a major factor when studying the identity formation of the 'new' 2nd generation. This is because, as per the authors, Alba and Nee's (2003) idea of 'success' still refers to immigrants incorporating into a White middle-class core, not a lower-class White core, nor a truly multi-cultural core. What is needed for the 'new' 2nd generation, according to Zhou and Xiong (2005), is a less broadly defined U.S. mainstream as well as a new definition that focuses on how the U.S. mainstream is still shaped by systems of racial and class stratification.

One of the main limitations of the theories mentioned above is that scholars of straight-line and neo-classic assimilation theories failed to fully capture the reality of the immigrant experience for the 'old' second generation; they also did not take into account segregation and racism in the U.S. These frameworks prove inadequate for the 'new' 2nd generation who are growing up in a climate that is simultaneously more sympathetic to ethnic identification and multiculturalism, but also where racial and class discrimination continue to exist (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Suarez-Orozco, 1997; Zhou & Bankston, 2016). Scholars believe that the 'new' 2nd generation is too complex and varied (in terms of race, class and level of education) to be explained by one single linear process of gradually assimilating into the mainstream, society (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993). To account for this diversity, the segmented assimilation theory was introduced.

Segmented Assimilation

Portes and Zhou (1993) introduced the segmented-assimilation theory, which is built on the idea that a changing receiving context complicates the process of straight-line assimilation for some 2nd generation groups. It rejects the classic assimilation vision of one unified (mainly White) middle-class core into which all immigrants, regardless of class or race, assimilate into. It places the processes of assimilation within the context of U.S. culture which consist of segregated and unequal segments, hence the name: segmented assimilation.

The primary question that this theory asks is: into what segment of U.S. society will the 2nd generation assimilate into (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001)? The authors argue that for the 2nd generation, mobility depends on structural factors including: ethnicity, race,

mode of incorporation into the U.S., neighborhood immigrants reside in, and social and cultural capital within their ethnic community (Portes, 1996; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Rumbaut, 1998; Zhou, 1997; Zhou & Bankston, 1997; 2016). The three main patterns of adaptation among the 2nd generation are: *upward assimilation* into a White middle-class; *downward assimilation* towards a lower class of color; and *selective acculturation* into aspects of the mainstream culture, yet with persistent biculturalism (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Rosenblum & Tichenor, 2012). *Selective acculturation* is the pattern that most relates to the participants in this study and is related to socioeconomic integration into the mainstream culture, yet while the individuals consciously preserve their immigrant values (Portes & Zhou, 1993, p. 82). This, according to various scholars, is done to buffer the blows of racial discrimination and is what separates this theory from the former assimilation perspectives (Itzigsohn, 2002; Smith, 2006; Louie, 2006, Zhou & Bankston, 2016; Waters, et al., 2010). Immigration scholars use this lens to explore how the 'new' 2nd generation, mainly those of color, resists older, outdated notions of assimilation. It then looks at how, in response to different forms of racial discrimination, they often create new identities and images of their own (Itzigsohn, 2009; Kasinitz, et al., 2008; Levitt & Waters, 2002; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Water, 1990; Zhou & Bankston, 2016; Waters, et al., 2010).

Although this form of ethnic identification may appear as an individual characteristic for the 'new' 2nd generation, in reality, it is a trait that belongs to the dominant culture. This is because, as Zhou and Bankston (2016) argue, one of the main challenges that this group faces is subtle (and overt) forms of racial discrimination. This holds especially true for the participants in this study, who Nesteruk et al. (2015) call

'visible minorities'. Their lives are complicated by the ways in which their group is perceived by society. This can then lead to racially motivated obstacles that then affect how the 'new' 2nd generation chooses to identify (Louie, 2006; Zhou & Bankston, 2016).

Structural racism and discrimination often impede this group from easily reducing their identity to the 'symbolic ethnicity' offered by Gans (1979) (Gans, 1979; Kivisto & Nefzger, 1993). For the 'old' 2nd generation, as per Waters (1990), symbolic identity doesn't always interfere with their daily life, and if needed, can be easily given up. Unlike most of the 'old' 2nd generation, who are the descendants of earlier European immigrants, the ethnic identities of most of the 'new' 2nd generation are not voluntary or mainly experienced as a personal choice. Kasinitz et al.'s (2004) study on 2nd generation New Yorkers tells us that for the 'new' 2nd generation, identity is often times a reaction to how society perceives them, and usually not one they chose themselves. The authors of that study argue that the ways in which this group chooses to identify may be influenced by the ways in which the larger society perceives their physical characteristics, mainly the color of their skin. This literature tells us that because of racial discrimination, young immigrants of color tend to choose a reactive ethnic identification with U.S.-born people of color and a rejection of mainstream, mainly White middle-class, values (Foner, 2000; Itzigsohn, 2009; Kasinitz, et al., 2004; Louie, 2006; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Smith, 2006; Waters, 1999). Therefore, according to Belanger and Verkuyten (2010), we must not treat people's reactionary ethnicities solely as a reflection of their mental states, but must look at the larger political-economic structure within which this identity formation is taking place.

Although the focus on racism and class discrimination is important, the context does not always have to be tainted by negativity like racism and bigotry (Belanger and Verkuyten, 2010). Unlike the 'old' 2nd generation who were coming of age in an era where schools were pushing assimilation towards the White mainstream, the 'new' 2nd generation was brought up in an era where multiculturalism, at least in theory, was part of the core curriculum within the New York City Department of Education (DOE) (Bybee & Henderson, 2014, Tyack & Cuban, 1995). In 1992, when the average participant in this study was in grade school, the DOE developed "Children of the Rainbow", a curriculum to educate children about cultural difference in an effort to fight discrimination. It was used to promote multicultural education, and it was a way to introduce grade school-aged children to different cultures in order to promote respect for racial and gender differences (Lee Meyers, 1992). These seemingly bi-polar factors of discrimination and multiculturalism played a major role in the formation of new hyphenated identities created by this group of 2nd generation immigrants of color. As a result of this new push to maintain diversity while still becoming 'American', Belanger and Verkuyten (2010) believe that questions related to acculturation, not assimilation, should be the central ones to any study on the incorporation of immigrants of color. I now focus on the work of acculturation and immigrant identity to further understand the development of the participants' Dominican-American identity (Berry, 2002; Belanger & Verkuyten, 2010; Zhou & Bankston, 2016).

Acculturation

Berry (2002) tells us that acculturation is the different cultural and psychological changes that individual experiences when they come into contact with a group that is different from their own; and it refers to the ways in which individuals respond to stress-inducing cultural contexts like racism (p.698). This theory uses a bi-dimensional framework to understand identity formation among immigrants of color: cultural maintenance of their country of origin (Dominican in this case) and social contact with the dominant group (White U.S. in this case) (Belanger & Verkuyten, 2010; Berry, 2002, 2005). Berry and Sam (1997) created a four-part classification system that includes: assimilation, separation, marginalization and integration. *Assimilation* is when the individual has constant contact with the dominant group, yet little to no contact with their country of origin, or what the authors call 'low cultural maintenance'. The opposite holds true for the *Separation* classification; here the individual has a close connection to their country of origin, yet little to no contact with the mainstream, White culture (Berry & Sam, 1996, p. 297). *Marginalization* is when the individual disconnects culturally and psychologically from both cultures. The fourth classification, *Integration,* is when the individual has a balanced contact with both worlds; this usually pertains to individuals of higher S.E.S., like those in this study (Berry, 1998; Berry & Sam, 1996). Itzigsohn's (2009) work on Dominicans in Providence can help us understand why 2nd generation Dominican-Americans with higher S.E.S. fit the Integration classification versus the other 3 listed above (Assimilation; Separation; Marginalization). The author argues that although 2nd generation immigrants from different S.E.S. experience racism and discrimination, it is the members with higher S.E.S. who are more likely to be aware of and report experiences of discrimination. His results determined that because individual

with higher S.E.S. tend to be exposed to more integrated spaces these individuals are then: "more likely to report incidents of discrimination. The reason for this pattern is that incidents of discrimination are more likely in [these] spaces" (p.111). The findings reported in Itzigsohn's (2009) study coincided with Kasinitz et al.'s (2004) longitudinal study on 2nd generation immigrants in New York City; the authors of this study concluded that "the more integrated one's life, the more likely one is to experience discrimination in a number of spheres" (p. 327). The authors go on to argue that 2nd generation Latinx groups with higher S.E.S tend to be part of more segregated spheres in their earlier years (mainly primary schools and neighborhoods), and that is it not until college, or after getting a full-time job, that "they finally have enough contact with other groups, particularly with Whites, to have much opportunity to be discriminated against" (p.328).

Monique Taylor's (2002) work on integrated African-American residents living in Harlem helps make this pattern of differential experiences of discrimination a bit clearer. The author tells us that: "Integration causes this class to become more aware of their marginality within the structures of society. Increased contact with Whites gives rise to encounters with racism and heightens, in a way that would seem to defy expectations, racial consciousness among middle-class Blacks" (p. 75). The author argues that there are sometimes hostile boundaries erected by White individuals and groups to keep people of color separated within these spaces, making clear that members of the latter group "do not belong" (Taylor, 2002, p. 74). Therefore, integration actually exposes individuals like those in this study to more possibilities of encountering discrimination and this then heightens their awareness to be able to pick up on even microforms of racial aggression.

This awareness, according to some scholarly work, leads groups like those in this study, to choose a transnational identity in order to buffer the blow of discrimination (Itzigsohn, 2009; Kasinitz et al., 2004; Louis, 2006; Smith, 2006). This then leads the creation of a specific, transnational hyphenated identity.

The next section of this review will highlight the literature that was used to understand the ways in which transnationalism has been used as a buffer against this racial discrimination towards the 2nd generation.

Transnationalism

Basch et al. (1994) and Duany (2008) argue that transnationalism tends to occur most when there is economic insecurity, social exclusion and racism within a society. The various forms of racial discrimination in integrated spaces (either blatant or via micro-aggressions) encourages the 2nd generation to want to maintain connections to their country of origin, similar to the reactionary ethnicity discussed in previous pages (Basch et al., 1994; Belanger and Verkuyten, 2010; Foner, 2000; Duany, 2008; Itzigsohn, 2009; Kasinitz, et al., 2004; Louie, 2006; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Smith, 2006; Waters, 1999, Zhou and Bankston, 2016).

In his work on the transnational lives of Mexican immigrants, Smith (2006) argues that the 'new' 2nd generation's transnational ties are stronger when they face racial discrimination in the U.S. Transnational life, according to the author, emerges when the 1st and 2nd generations attempt to feel respected and seen within the context of migration on one hand and acculturation on the other (Smith, 2006). The 2nd generation prefers to remain close to their family's country (or countries) of origin where they may be part of

the majority and do not feel discriminated against (Foner, 2000; Kasinitz, et al., 2004, 2008; Levitt & Waters, 2002; Louie, 2006; Smith 2006; Zhou & Bankston, 1997, 2016). As we saw in Itzigsohn (2009)'s work on Dominicans in Rhode Island, 2nd generation Dominicans who encounter discrimination in the U.S. are likely to turn to their country of origin as a way to buffer the psychological impact of these encounters. The positive self-identity derived from these networks can help the 2nd generation resist racism in the U.S. and in turn become healthier, more productive members of society (Itzigsohn, 2009; Smith, 2006; Zhou & Bankston, 2016).Yet transnationalism and acculturation are not mutually exclusive—transnationalism is only one of many factors that can be used to assist in the incorporation of this group (Smith, 2006). The following is an in-depth look at the definition, and evolution, of the term *transnationalism.*

Defining Transnationalism

In terms of the literature that focuses on the identity formation of immigration groups, the transnational perspective was initially used in response to the gaps in the dominant assimilation theories addressed above (Park, 1928; Gordon, 1964). It explains close ties between immigrants and their home country and it also challenges long held beliefs of one-directional immigration (Gordon, 1964). Basch et al. (2005) provide the definition of transnationalism was used for this study:

> The process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. Immigrants take actions, make decisions, and develop subjectivities and identities embedded in networks of relationships that connect them simultaneously to two or more nations (p. 7).

Transnational theory has three elements that derive from Basch, et al.'s (2005) work: first it contests the argument that severing ties with your native country is inevitable and happens in two to three generations. The 1st and 2nd generation immigrants remain connected to their native countries as a coping mechanism used to deal with racial discrimination in the U.S. Second, that capitalism has created a global market where migration has increased and has superseded the nation-state: the local now takes precedence. Finally, transnationalism created a 'third way' where immigrants are now able to maintain loyalties to multiple identities. The individual can create a new life using aspects from the multiple settings within which they find themselves; they can simultaneously become familiar with aspects of the mainstream U.S. culture while still being able to keep their memberships to different political and social associations from their country of origin (Basch et al., 2005; Smith, 2006).

International relations scholars introduced the term transnational in the 1970s and it was used mainly to describe institutions that were acting across different geographic borderers. This process was called 'transnational' versus international because scholars wanted to distinguish between activities that transcended national borders and those that took place within physical boundaries (Keohane & Nye, 1971). Anthropologists then began using the term to describe the process we know today, one where individual immigrants maintain ties and loyalties to their native country and to the U.S. (Basch, et al., 2005). Examples of transnational activities that allow immigrants to maintain dense and immediate connections with their home country, include: calling home, sending remittances, reading national newspapers from their country of origin, visiting relatives

back home and participating in political activities like voting in their home country's presidential elections from abroad (Duany, 2008; Kasinitz et al., 2004).

It is important to note that although the transnational perspective emerged in the 1970s, transnational activities are not new; as early as 1916 Bourne (1916) argued that the U.S. might have to "accept dual citizenship as well as free and mobile passage of the immigrant between America and his native land" (p. 105). Instead of 'transnationalism', concepts of 'melting pot', 'pluralism', and 'assimilation' dominated the discussion around immigration (Kallen, 1915; Park, 1928). Although all three concepts have many differences among them, all three had one thing in common and that is that they presumed unidirectional migration flows (Le Espiritu & Tran, 2002; Park, 1928). Goldberg (1992) argues that the concept of transnationalism was sidelined because many in the U.S. felt it "posed too much of a challenge to the 'myth story' of the U.S. as a beacon of hope and the land of opportunity" (p. 112). In the earlier era when the 'old' 2nd generation was coming of age, the media and schools emphasized assimilation as the only way to achieve socio-economic success; therefore, views of the nation and state were very territorial (Eckstein, 2002). Despite this push towards complete, straight-assimilation, there were immigrants who were able to hold on to their ethnic identity longer than others (Foner, 2005). Italians who arrived during the early 20th century, for example, retained close ties with their home country. Unfortunately, several factors kept them from maintaining transnational ties between the U.S. and Italy, for example: the long distance from the U.S. to their homeland, the lack of technological innovations during the early 20th century and the emphasis on assimilation in the mainstream U.S. (Levitt & Waters, 2002; Waldinger & Fitzgerald 2004). Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt

(1999) argue that: "Transnationalism did not proliferate among earlier immigrants because the technological conditions of the time did not make communications across national borders rapid or easy…The ready availability of air transport, long-distance telephone, facsimile communication, and electronic mail provides the technological basis for the emergence of transnationalism on a mass scale" (p.223) .Yet and still we should not assume that the vast majority of these earlier immigrants gave up homeland ties willingly or cheerfully.

Kasinitz et al. (2004) argue that even though some of the connections we now call transnational were present for the 'old' 2nd generation in the mid-20th century, the ability of the 'new' 2nd generation to sustain transnational connections is incomparable. Ease of transportation and communication technology has facilitated transnationalism for all immigrants, but according to Zhou & Bankston (2016), especially among those with a higher S.E.S., as they can afford the plane tickets and technology needed to maintain connections with the home country; things like cellular phones and computers which facilitate travel and telecommunication become more accessible. While it is true that across nationalities those with higher S.E.S. tend to have more transnational practices, Dominicans across all class lines partake in transnational activities, making their group a special case within the study of transnationalism (Louie, 2006; Zhou & Bankston, 2006). The next section delves deeper into this concept of *Dominican Transnationalism.*

Dominican Transnationalism

One of the largest projects that has been carried out on the 2nd generation is the Immigrant 2nd generation Metropolitan New York (ISGMNY) study (Kasinitz et al.,

2004). This project consisted of three stages: telephone surveys with approximately four hundred 18-32-year old New Yorkers from each of the five largest 2nd generation groups in New York City: Dominicans, Chinese, Russian Jews, West Indians and a category of South Americans including Colombians, Ecuadorians, and Peruvians. Ten percent of the survey respondents were then randomly chosen to participate in semi-structured, in-depth interviews; a series of ethnographic studies comprised the third stage. The study concluded that for every transnational activity—remittances by the 1st and the 2nd generations, interest as well as involvement in politics from their home-country, use of media from their home-country and visits to their parent's homeland—2nd generation Dominicans showed the highest level of transnationalism when compared to all other groups in the study (Kasinitz, et al., 2004). According to Kasinitz et al. (2004), this then proves that transnational practices play a central role in the lives of 2nd generation Dominicans. Scholars have gone as far to say that Dominicans are a textbook example of transnationalism and have "served as theoretical basis for the development and refinement of transnationalism as a theoretical construct" (Sagas & Molina, 2004, p. 4).

Twenty-two percent of Dominicans in Kasinitz, et al.'s (2004) study had visited the D.R. more than ten times in their lifetime. This was in sharp contrast to the 10% of the Chinese participants and the .03% of the Russian Jews. Distance from New York City to the Dominican Republic, and cost of travel played a major role in this pattern (Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt, 1999; Louie, 2006). A basic search for a round-trip ticket from New York City to Santo Domingo and New York City to Beijing, The Dominican Republic's and China's respective capital cities during the Department of Education's Spring Recess (April19-26th, 2019) produced the following results: a 3-hour direct flight to Santo

Domingo averages $550, while a 13-hour direct flight to Beijing averages $1,100

(www.Kayak.com).

The considerably shorter distance to the Dominican Republic and the lower ticket

price then makes transnationalism more of a reality in the lives to 2nd generation

Dominican-Americans, than other immigrant groups; this then affects how the 2nd

generation Dominican-American population chooses to identify. Yet and still ethnic self-

identification for the 2nd generation of higher S.E.S. tends to be more complex and it

often means pulling from competing allegiances and attachments, as Portes and

Rumbaut's (2001) argue in *Legacies*. Not only are they situated in two different cultural

worlds, and often speak two different languages, but as we saw in the previous section,

they must also define themselves in relation to the ways the larger U.S. society perceives

them (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). This leads to the development of a transnational,

hyphenated Dominican-American identity; which is the topic of the next section in this

chapter.

Dominican-York

Hernandez & Sezgin (2010) conducted an empirical study on 2nd generation

Dominican university-educated professionals in New York. Almost all of the 600

respondents of their survey chose a hyphenated Dominican-American identity when

given the option to only choose one way to identify. This was comprised of being a

specific type of Dominican (different from Dominicans on the island) and a different type

of American (not like a 5th generation Irish-American). The authors of this study

hypothesized that their respondents 'selection of this hyphenated identity:

Derived from a concrete situation in which, on the one hand, they have been socialized in a household and a neighborhood where Dominican cultural and historical symbols were amply displayed everywhere in everyday practices and beliefs; and on the other, they were born and raised in the U.S., have gone through many years of formal schooling where they have been subjected to American social practices and beliefs, and have experienced the building of their own personal legacy in the U.S. (p. 66)

Regarding individuals with this hyphenated identity, or what she calls the 'borderland', Anzaldua (1987) says: "We don't identify with Anglo-American cultural values and we don't totally identify with the Mexican cultural values. We are a synergy of two cultures within various degrees of Mexicanness and Angloness" (p. 85). Yet it is not necessary a 'dual' identity comprised of separate parts, but is in fact one full, transnational hyphenated identity.

The literature acknowledges that this transnational identity is sometimes made up of codes and symbols that transcend the physical locations of 'home', and include those that are ideological and emotional homes as well (Wolf, 2002). The nuance that is added here is that, for 2nd generation Dominican-Americans like those in this study, the geographic location of home *does* play a major role in their ethnic identification. Therefore, similarly to the way their identity is not the 'symbolic ethnicity' mentioned above, being transnational Dominican-Americans was not only an emotional and symbolic part of their world. Their allegiances and ties to their neighborhoods were not only connected to memories and desires to go back to the 'old country', but played out in

their day-to-day lives as they navigated what it means to be Dominican-American within the container of the ethnic enclave of the Heights (Gans, 1979).

Being that the enclave plays such a major role in the identity formation of this particular group, its gentrification has a direct effect on these individuals. The next section in this Literature Review will do two things: it will focus on the role that the ethnic enclave has played in the identity formation of this subset of 2nd generation Dominican-Americans, and as a result, how the area's gentrification can have detrimental effects on this particular group. Yet before this conversation is introduced, I will first discuss some of the literature that will help the reader understand the relationship between 1st generation immigrants and the ethnic enclave.

Gentrification and the Enclave

> *"I'm not surprised we're one of the fastest-growing Latino groups," Vargas said. "We are very extended-family oriented. We might learn all that rugged individualism in [the U.S.] but for us, taking care of our families is very important" (Guadalupe, 2018).*

There has been some back and forth within the literature as it pertains to the role of the ethnic enclave in the lives of 1st generation immigrants. The classic assimilation theory argues that enclaves are temporary settling grounds that can be traps that segregate immigrants from the mainstream culture (Gordon, 1964; Park, 1928; Spiro, 1955 Warner & Srole, 1945). Proponents of the classic model believe that enclaves hinder immigrants by discouraging them from learning to speak English, from becoming familiar with 'American' ways and 'trapping' them in permanent isolation. It is believed that enclaves were temporary aspects in society and they would eventually decline and disappear. This would then result in immigrants assimilating into mainstream White culture, and/or fewer

of their fellow country people arriving to replenish and support the enclave (Gordon, 1964; Park, 1928; Spiro, 1955 Warner & Srole, 1945).

Regarding the role of the enclave for the 2nd generation, segmented assimilation scholars offer various theories. Zhou (2009) argued that because the new 2nd generation varies by race, income and nationality, "these distinct characteristics imply that today's enclaves cannot easily be dichotomized as either a springboard or a trap" (p. 1156). This literature argues that the value of the enclave depends on the immediate environment in which the new 2nd generation finds itself (Portes, & Bach, 1985; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou, 2009). The enclave takes on a critically positive role in the lives of those, like the participants in this study, whose immediate social environment was severely underprivileged (as New York City was during the tumultuous decades of the 80s and 90s—the topic of Chapter 4 in this dissertation) (Snyder, 2014; Hernandez, 2002; Zhou & Bankston, 2016).

The enclave then takes on vital meanings/purposes for both generations, albeit for different ways/reasons. The next section will focus on the role of the ethnic enclave, like the Heights, in the lives of 1st generation immigrants.

The Enclave and the 1st generation

According to the literature, ethnic enclaves help new immigrants adjust to the new culture they have arrived to; things like affordable housing, family reunification and employment are often facilitated via the connections found within the community (Logan et al., 2002). It was Gans' (1962) work on Italian-American immigrants in Boston that marked the birth of a different academic perspective of the ethnic enclave. In *The Urban*

Villagers Gans (1962) focused on the positive aspects that the enclave offered its residents. The author portrayed the healthy, positive relationship in the West-End community and argued that although impoverished Italian-American immigrants had problems, very few of them were due to living in an ethnic enclave. On the contrary, Gans (1962) argued that the enclave created a social climate that was stable, and therefore more desirable than the mainstream society for newly arrived immigrants. Throughout the years, other scholars have echoed Gans (1962) to state that enclaves also assist with the social incorporation into a foreign country (Logan, et al., 2002; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990; Zhou & Logan, 1991). Newly arrived immigrants tend to cluster in ethnic neighborhoods with their fellow country people and this is mainly due to protect themselves from economic barriers and racism from established New Yorkers; yet it is also because they are seeking security, comfort and the support of their social network, mainly as it pertains to being around family and friends (Foner, 2000, 2014; Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991; Lin 2011; Rumbaut, 1998; Portes & Zhou, 1992). These places are not only physical locations, they offer tangible advantages and opportunities that immigrants would otherwise lack (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

On a basic level enclaves can help newly arrived immigrants with day-to-day activities that the native population may take for granted. They can help new immigrants learn the ways of the receiving country, at least enough to help them become adjusted to the written and unwritten rules and regulations of the new culture. Things like public transportation and shopping, often taken for granted by non-immigrants, can be very challenging for newcomers. This is important to understand because, even for the most prepared and motivated individual, migration can still have deep psychological

consequences. The literature has shown us that one of the best ways to deal with the challenges of immigration is within the ethnic enclave; here immigrants can create a life that is as close to the places they left behind (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Mazumdar, 2005; Portes & Bach, 1985). Unfortunately, some immigrant groups in New York, who already grappled with the feelings of displacement and alienation that arise from migrating to a new country, are now potentially threatened by gentrification-induced displacement from those same enclaves that helped them navigate the new country (Stabrowski, 2014).

Double-Displacement and the 1ˢᵗ generation

Just as displacement from an immigrant's native country should not be underestimated, neither should displacement from their enclaves. The changes in a neighborhood, even if buildings aren't destroyed, could demolish vital social systems which are helping immigrants settle in a new area and eventually become productive members of a global system that needs them in order to sustain itself (Atkinson, 2105; Marris, 1986; Mazumdar, 2002; Hernandez, 2002). Having already suffered the psychological angst induced by migration, gentrification now threatens to further disrupt these individuals' mental state (Fullilove, 2004; Marris, 1986; Mazumdar, 2002; Stabrowski, 2014). Displacement can be especially harmful to those immigrants who, due to the migration to a new country, may now be contending with serious socio-economic pressures and even mental issues (Gans, 1962; Fullilove, 2004; Stabrowski, 2014; Tenhula, 1991). Based on their unique reliance on place, low-income immigrants of color are particularly affected by displacement. This group's livelihood is often times

dependent on their communities and, as a consequence, displacement can now disconnect this vulnerable and needy population from place-based supports that are crucial for their survival (Betancur, 2011; Harvey, 1995; Savage et al., 2005; Stabrowski, 2014). Newman & Wyly (2006) argue that those who are forced to leave their home lose important cultural social and economic networks, and these same networks are often times vital for groups like the 1st generation. In his study on the gentrification of the Polish immigrant enclave in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, Stabrowski (2014) examines the effects of gentrification-induced displacement on Polish immigrants residing in the Polish enclave of Greenpoint. He calls the displacement from home and enclave 'double displacement' and argues that, "for Polish tenants who have come to depend on immigrant neighborhoods they have helped produce, this constitutes a particularly acute form of displacement" (p. 797).

We understand how displacement affects the most vulnerable in a community, and in the Heights that would be most of the 1st generation population. The literature on the effects of direct displacement is vast (Atkinson, 2007; Betancur, 2007; Cahill, 2007; Clay, 1979; Curran, 2004; Freeman, 2006; Newman & Wyly, 2006; Smith, 2009; Stabrowski, 2014; Valli, 2015). The information in this literature is crucial to this story because the immigrant networks found in enclaves can offer mutual economic assistance and social-psychological supports for the 1st *and* 2nd generations. The social relations that the 1st generation created and cultivated enabled the 2nd generation to bypass many of the social problems that plagued the 1st generation, as well as those faced by 2nd generation immigrants growing up in disadvantaged, non-enclave areas (Portes & Jensen, 1987; Portes & Zhou, 1992; Zhou, 1992; Zhou & Bankston, 1997; 2016). If the 1st generation

is displaced, then where does that leave the 2nd generation? A 2nd generation population whose identity is intricately tied to every being and building within this community? These are some of the questions answered in the last part of this chapter. It is important to address these issues because the literature shows us that while it is within their family structure where 2nd generation immigrants first get a sense of who they are, their neighborhoods also play a role in their identity formation (Louie, 2006). What follows then is a discussion of the role of the gentrifying enclaves in the lives of the 2nd generation.

The Enclave and 2nd generation

The social capital provided in the enclave can shield the 2nd generation from downward assimilation and serves as a buffer from the daily discrimination faced as members of the integrated spaces discussed above (Kazinitz et al., 2004; Levitt, 2009; Louie, 2006; Smith, 2006; Zhou & Bankston, 2016). Yet the benefits are not only limited to social capital; even their mental health is positively affected by living in an enclave. Falicov (2005) argues that the rapid assimilation that was advocated for the 'old' 2nd generation created more symptoms of depression and of anxiety; he felt that the validation that transnationalism individuals receive (in the form social and cultural capital) creates more of a sense of personal satisfaction (p.405). Becoming integrated into the mainstream, while simultaneously maintaining ethnic differences with the U.S., will therefore help the 2nd generation become successful, happier members of society (Waters et al., 2010). Therefore, when framing the stories of a group with higher S.E.S., who are also reliant on the physical community, it is important to note how the enclave informs

both sides of their hyphenated identities. Being members of the enclave provides these individuals with the opportunity to maintain ties with their country of origin. These connections then serve as the buffer that is needed in order to remain in the integrated spaces that make up the other half of their identity; this is called place attachment (Cahill, 2007; Itzigsohn, 2009; Low & Atlman, 1992; Proshansky et al., 1983; Smith, 2006; Zhou & Bankston, 2016). In her study on Latina women of color and their experiences with the gentrification of the Lower East Side, Cahill (2007) tells us that, "Place attachment describes a sense of ongoing security and the significance of place for social connections. This is especially true for places where one is immersed for a long time and where one might learn new social roles, such as when growing up" (p.219). For the participants in this study, the attachment is more than just nostalgic but is tied to their transnational hyphenated identity. Therefore, by focusing on the way an individual's sense of place-identity is threatened, mainly by sudden changes and/or disruptions in the places they call home, one may be able to understand the ways in which this group makes sense of the gentrification in their ethnic enclave (Breakwell, 2015; Fried, 1963; Cahill, 2007). The next section will therefore review the literature on place-identity.

Place Identity

The concept of place-identity, argue Proshansky et al. (1983), is similar to gender, class and race, in that it makes up part of your entire self-identity. According to the authors, place-identity consists of our perceptions about the physical world that we use to represent ideas, values, memories and feelings that are then used to make sense of the physical world that we encounter on a day-to-day basis (Proshansky et al, 1983). The

main assumption that this theory makes is that through personal attachment to physical places, individuals gain a sense of purpose and belonging; this then gives meaning to their life which then informs the person's behaviors and their attitudes about other places like work and school (Proshansky et al, 1983; Qazimi, 2014).

There is an aspect of the theory which states that only when a person's sense of self is threatened, by sudden changes and/or disruptions, like gentrification, does the individual become aware of their place identity (Breakwell, 2015; Fried, 1963; Gans, 1962). This is clear in Fried's (1963) discussion around the concept of grieving the loss of a home. He argues that when things are relatively peaceful, the individual does not consciously reflect on what home means to them. It isn't until the individual feels that their home is under siege, via disruption like natural disasters or war, that strong feelings towards place emerge (Fried, 1963). Eriksen (2001) provides the following metaphor: "A fish knows nothing of water as long as it is surrounded by it, but the moment it is pulled out into the air, it develops an intense interest in the water and nostalgia for it. Indeed, it could be said that the fish discovers the water only at the moment it is removed from it" (https://www.opendemocracy.net/). Feelings of exclusion, like those that may be experienced in predominately White integrated spaces, tend to strengthen place-identities for individuals like those in this study (Breakwell, 2015; Eriksen, 2001; Fried, 1963; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Taylor, 2002.

Another way in which a place can be under siege, and a fish is out of water, is when a neighborhood's cultural fabric is disturbed, as a result of gentrification. Because their transnational hyphenated identities are directly tied to place, the participants in this study have a strong attachment to the physical neighborhood of the Heights; therefore, its

gentrification can feel as if their identity (not just their home) is under siege. This group

then feels a strong need to advocate for some members of the 1st generation; a group who

helps form a part of their identity and who the participants described as dealing with

various forms of landlord harassment. This exchange is an example of what Carling

(2008) calls the 'moral currency', and is found within transnational immigrant

communities (p. 1459). This currency is earned when the members of the 1st generation

feel a sense of entitlement to support from their 2nd generation relatives, what Gowricharn

(2004), calls 'moral capital' (p.608). This all constitutes the moral dimension of

transnationalism and is what the literature calls the "moral economy". Their participation

in this economy then solidifies the 2nd generation's place-identity to the ethnic enclave,

mainly as it relates to threat brought about by displacement.

The literature on this Moral Economy will be covered in the next section of this

chapter.

Moral Economy

The term 'moral economy' was first used as a reaction to the economic

explanation for food riots that were occurring in England during the late 18th century

(Thompson, 1971). Today the term is used to discuss some non-economic aspects within

immigrant communities, like morality and values (Carling, 2008). Although most of the

literature on the moral economy is pertaining to the relationship between migrants who

arrive to a new country, and non-migrants who stay behind in the home country, some of

it can still be used to frame the dynamics between 1st generation immigrants and their 2nd

generation offspring within the same, physical transnational ethnic enclave like the Heights (Akesson, 2004; Carling, 2008; Gowricharn, 2002; Hage, 2002).

The extended family within transnational communities is both highly valued and honored, this is because a "transnational moral economy often involves putting family first" (Levitt, 2009, p. 1228). Immigrant parents instill in their children a sense of communality: to always be grateful and pay back the many favors that family members and friends did for them when they first arrived to the U.S. (Ballard 200l; Fog Olwig 2002; Schmalzbauer, 2004). Carling (2008) argues: "Repaying the gift of communality is a central element in the moral framework of transnationalism" (p.6). Repayments, according to Hage (2002), are made through lifetime participation in your community. This repayment comes in a variety of forms, but mainly by visiting family and/or attending community events (p. 203). The moral capital shows up in a number of different ways, and for this sub-set of 2nd generation Dominican-Americans it was the way they served as their community's cultural brokers, mainly as it pertains to landlord harassment towards the 1st generation.

Two important aspects of the moral economy that must be noted, as they relate to the participants in this study, is that the 2nd generation is not driven to participate in the transnational moral economy via guilt but by a desire to 'repay the gift of communality', the central element mentioned above (Carling, 2008, p. 1458). Second, one does not need to live in the enclave to participate in its moral economy; immigrants can continue to offer support even after they physically leave the enclave (Gans, 2007). Gans (2007) tell us that, "Continued loyalty to immigrant culture and society is probably better explained by related social obligations than by mobility" (p. 160). You can arguably be more rooted

in a place and not be physically present than if you lived and/worked in a space that you had no socio-economic connection to it (Gans, 2007). Moral capital then, according to Gowricharn (2004), "is an accepted obligation or commitment between people who consider themselves socially close to each other" (p.618).

This moral economy is then essential in transnational communities as it helps form the connections that play a vital role in the cultural fabric of the enclave (Carling, 2008; Gans, 2007).

These connections are then vital not only for the 1st generation population, but the 2nd one as well. Kasinitz, et al. (2004) demonstrated that, for all their transnational ties, integrated 2nd generation Dominicans with higher S.E.S. tend to be more local than the non-immigrants in their study. In what he calls rooted cosmopolitanism, Dwyer (2009) argues: "we possess multiple identities so that ethnicity, gender, geographic location, family status, and occupation will always complicate who we are and how we react. Nevertheless, we are also very much creatures of our local communities" (p. 127). Therefore, the neighborhood is more salient for this group whose identity is directly connected to their ethnic enclave. It is for this reason that the transnational hyphenated identities of this 2nd generation Dominican-American group cannot be understood apart from the physical situations in which they find themselves (Duany, 2008; Grasmuck & Guarnizo, 1994; Kasinitz, et al., 2004; Levitt, 2001; Pessar, 1987;).

Similarly, displacement for this group cannot be understood only as a loss of community, but as a loss of their culture, and arguably of their sense of self (Cahill, 2007; Garcia, 2018). Therefore, the literature that takes a more holistic approach to gentrification are used in the next section of the review; works that focus on place

attachment and place identity, as well as loss of culture, support systems and even psychological well-being will be the main focus (Atkinson, 2015; Cahill, 2007; Garcia, 2018; Hyra, 2014; Louie, 2006; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Valli, 2016; Zhou & Bankston, 2016; Zukin, 2010).

Cultural Displacement and the 2nd generation

> *That's my main concern with this, aside from losing the culture identity as a community, not that diversity is a problem, but it's a cycle, it happens. Before Dominicans moved into the Heights it was Greek and Irish, so the change is inevitable. But it's just the way it's changing. When the Latino community moved into the Heights a lot of White people moved out but the reason they moved out was to not be near the Latinos, they weren't forced out where now we are being forced out due to higher pricing.*
> *(Ethnographic Interview, 2014).*

Byrne (2003) limits the effects of displacement to the lack of affordable housing. Yet, according to Newman and Wyly (2006) displacement can occur in various ways; buildings can be demolished, evictions occur, landlords harass tenants, properties transfer, and the cost of housing increases. Davidson (2009) warns that displacement does not only affect those who are vulnerable, in terms of their economic inability to stay in the area. At times those who can remain and benefit from the changes are also working through their own feelings of displacement. Those who avoid being directly displaced may benefit from the improvements to the neighborhood but may also suffer because the cultural fabric of the community is dismantled (Davidson, 2009). Displacement is not only about the number of people who are physically leaving the area, but can occur when the processes of gentrification bring about feelings of isolation and alienation. If we only

focus on those who have to leave their community, according to Cahill (2007), we have

lost sight of another dimension of the negative effects of gentrification: cultural

displacement. When we do not focus on other forms of displacement, mainly cultural, we

"ignore feelings of injustice, anger, resentment and of being supplanted even while in

place" (Atkinson, 2015, p. 376). All of which were feelings that were shared by the

participants in this study.

Cultural displacement is the sense of alienation that longer-term residents begin to

feel when the norms and behaviors of new incoming residents begin to dominate over

theirs (Zukin, 2010; Hyra, 2014). Hyra (2014) adds "with cultural displacement long-

term residents may find their community does not resemble the place they once knew and

may no longer identify with their neighborhood" (p.2). This is an important argument to

focus on because this study is about a population who is not only more mobile than the 1st

generation, but some participants no longer live in the Heights. Yet, despite no longer

physically living in the enclave, they may still feel a moral obligation to the 1st generation

there. Cahill (2007) explains that any "study of cultural displacement involves

considerations of what it means to witness the transformation of one's neighborhood",

and sometimes this is regardless of whether they still live in the neighborhood (p.218).

Most understandings of displacement, according to Davidson (2009) "reduces a socio-

spatial phenomena to a purely spatial event. This leaves us with a number of problematic

implicit assumptions, including the notion that spatial relocation equals (a sense) of

displacement and that the absence of spatial relocation equates to the non-occurrence of

displacement" (p. 223). The author argues that people can still feel a sense of

displacement because "the threat of physical relocation are therefore only part of the

displacement process. The loss of place threatened by commodifying actions…almost promises to unravel the socio-spatial relations that shape those subjects enacted in the dialectic" (p.232). The participants in this study, like those in Davidson's (2009) work on Sedgwick Avenue in the Bronx, are shaped by the physical places they live in; therefore, any changes, or commodifying actions, to the place, unravels their connection to the Heights.

Yet sometimes the change is not all negative; in his piece for the Cityscape Symposium on the causes, consequences and policy needs of gentrification, Hyra (2016) mentions that not all change in the norms are negative, some can be beneficial such as a stronger police presence, as well as adequate health care provisions (p. 173). Yet the author goes on to ask a very vital question: "do the new norms and incoming amenities in gentrifying neighborhoods sufficiently cater to the preferences of low-income people or do they predominately represent newcomers' tastes and preferences?" (p. 173). We must take this question a step further and ask if they cater to the preferences of higher-income people of color like the participants in this study? Even if they are able to stay and can afford the changes, will they want to participate in the gentrifying spaces?

In his most recent book on the redevelopment in mixed-income and mixed-race communities, Hyra (2017) visited several commercial establishments and public spaces in the Shaw/U Street section of Washington D.C., noting which ones were segregated and which were not. He witnessed the ways in which cultural displacement tends to breed resentment among long-time residents and tends to result in micro level segregation with new incoming residents (Hyra, 2017, p.19). In what he calls *diversity segregation*, Hyra (2017) details stories of White and Black residents living next door to one another and

not having any interactions with each other. This is a form of micro segregation where

divisions between race and class demonstrate that cross-race relationships in gentrifying

neighborhoods are usually limited (Hyra, 2017). Therefore, while social mixing might be

perceived as beneficial to reduce issues around race and class, it can also cause stress

among residents of color who may be already marginalized and discriminated against in

general, regardless of class (Drew, 2012; Itzigsohn, 2009; Valentine, 2008; Valli, 2016).

A number of studies have concluded that this 'social mixing' argument is not producing

expected results; meaningful interactions between lower class and middle–class residents,

as well as between White residents and those of color, are less frequent (Curley, 2009,

2010; Davidson, 2019; Hyra, 2016, 2017; Murdie & Teixeira, 2010). Instead of being

used as a tool to reduce the assumed "negative consequences of spatially embedded

disadvantage", gentrification can actualize difference and trigger conflict (Murdie &

Teixeira, 2010, p.77). This is because when formerly isolated groups, like Dominicans in

the Heights, are integrated into shared spaces, like housing, inequalities between both

groups are made more visible, especially for integrated groups like the participants in this

study. Eriksen (2014) believes that: "you do not envy your neighbor if you are unaware

of his existence" (p.159). Gentrification now places Dominican and White residents in

closer proximity to each other and sheds light on their economic and political differences,

which can then cause deep resentment, mainly from the disenfranchised group.

Participants in this study shared their sentiments about this supposed 'envy', and their

stories resonated with those shared by the African-American residents in Drew's (2011)

study in Portland Oregon. The following quote is from an African American resident who,

during a community board meeting with older Black and newer White ones, was

responding to a question regarding her opinion on what has been most upsetting about the gentrification of her community:

> You know, I always knew white folks got things you didn't deserve and better treatment than we do. But when you were miles away from me, I only had to see your privilege at the job, on the news, or out in public. I knew you were living well because of racism, but it was something I just knew and did not see in my personal life. But once you moved into the neighborhood, our neighborhood, it gets shoved right in my face, right under my nose. Now I have to see it all day at work, and on nights and weekends at home. Now I'm not free anywhere from experiencing your racism. (p. 9)

Social mixing within urban areas doesn't always lead to positive interactions that deepen the respect for anyone who is different from you. Similar to Valli's (2016) study in Bushwick, this study looked at how relatively privileged populations are introduced into a neighborhood that has historically been disinvested and now, via gentrification, this new population highlights and emphasizes social differences, even for integrated individuals.

Conclusion

In this chapter I explained the theoretical framework which this study was built on. It highlighted the studies that were used to provide the invaluable foundation needed to assist in the creation of this work. It was also able to discuss the holes within the literature, which explain the significance of this particular study.

Next Chapter

The next chapter in this dissertation will discuss the qualitative methods used to answer the research question for this study: How do transnational 2nd generation Dominican-Americans with higher S.E.S. from Washington Heights experience the enclave's gentrification?

The chapter will help the reader understand the steps that led to the selection of the critical ethnographic methodology, versus other forms of qualitative methods. It will then walk the reader through the interview process: from selecting gatekeepers, informing participants on the purpose of the study to the spaces where the interviews were conducted. The studies limitations, reliability and validity will also be addressed in that chapter.

Chapter 3

Methods

I chose to use a critical ethnographic study to understand the ways in which 2nd generation Dominican-Americans with higher socio-economic status (S.E.S. from here in) from Washington Heights make sense of the gentrification of the neighborhood. I chose this method because it allows me to capture the stories of a group whose voice is not yet prominent in the literature. The combination of their class, race and ethnicity add a nuance to understanding the implications of neighborhood change. By telling the story of this particular group, I make visible the nature of the relationship between race, ethnicity and place, and fill a gap in the gentrification and immigration literatures.

In order to qualify for the study, each individual had to meet the following criteria: they had to be a 2nd generation Dominican, have some level of college education, and currently live in the Heights and/or been raised-having left less than 10 years prior to 2014. As a result, when I say 'from the Heights' I am referring to individuals who currently live in the neighborhood, as well as those who, although they do not currently reside there, still have emotional and physical ties to the community, and who still consider the Heights home.

Research Question

In this study, I draw on interviews with 25 transnational 2nd generation Dominican-Americans with higher S.E.S. who grew up and/or are from Washington Heights (the Heights from here in). This research has been guided by the following question:

- How do transnational 2nd generation Dominican-Americans with higher S.E.S. from Washington Heights experience the enclave's gentrification?

I conducted fieldwork in the neighborhood to explore the ways the community is physically changing. The latter involved participant observation through Go-Alongs, and unobtrusive observation recorded in field notes (Kusenbach, 2003). Go-Alongs are more structured versions of simply 'hanging out' and it is where the researcher accompanies the participant in order to explore the role of place in their everyday lived experiences (Kusenback, 2003, p.154). Angrosino (1989) tells us that by focusing on the interpretation of the role of place in the everyday lived experiences of the participants, these methods help us make sense of their social system. This was an important addition to a study on the changing nature of place, but relied primarily on interviews. Most of the Go-Alongs were on foot, yet one of them was conducted via a car ride with the participant. I did my best to be discrete as I collected data during each outing. I jotted down quick notes in my journal and typed up notes (handwritten and/or mental) after each Go along. Sometimes I recorded a Voice Note immediately after the Go along; that way the information was fresh in my mind. I would then transcribe the voice note and/or journal entry when I got home.

Critical Ethnography

As a researcher using a critical ethnography methodology, I am expected to use the privileges and resources afforded to me in order to bring forth the voices of a group whose stories are restrained or out of reach (Madison, 2011). We do not know much about how this particular group of Dominican-Americans makes sense of gentrification. Drew (2012) and Niedt (2006) both argue that researchers tend to reduce residents in

gentrifying neighborhoods into two groups: people who drive gentrification and people who respond (or not) to the changes brought about by gentrification (usually low-income renters of color). When people of color are researched, they are often times depicted as voiceless victims of White gentrifiers (Boyd, 2008). Drew (2012) believes that this "leaves little room for people of color to have a voice and power as long-time residents" (p.6). The participants in this study do not fall into either category and as a result, they tend to be overlooked within the literature. There is substantial work on the role of the enclave for the 1st generation, particularly how this group needs the enclave in order to survive. Yet, the role of the enclave of the Heights for 2nd generation Dominican-Americans with higher S.E.S., has not been extensively covered in the literature; a critical ethnography was therefore the preferred method used to capture these nuanced stories.

Ethnography is a methodology where the researcher takes an in-depth look at a particular phenomenon and studies a cultural group in their "natural" setting in order to gain a better understanding of that particular culture (Creswell, 2012). In a critical ethnography, the study does not end with just exploring the participants' meanings and understandings of the world. Because participants function within a political-economic environment and are not outside of structural factors, a critical ethnography stays alert to these structural elements and how they influence the participants and their responses (Harvey, 2012). The participants' stories provide a window to understand the daily lives and thoughts of a small group of 2nd generation Dominican-Americans from the Heights, yet a critical ethnography may reveal that their actions and understandings of what they experience are mediated by larger structural concerns, like immigration and racism.

The following section describes the research design I used to address the research question: How do transnational 2nd generation Dominican-Americans with higher S.E.S. from the Heights experience gentrification? The design includes: fieldwork, description of the participants chosen, the interview process, role of the researcher and the study limitations.

Research Design

The two main strategies used to document the stories from 2nd generation Dominican-Americans were semi-structured interviews and fieldwork. The main focus are the interviews with 25 transnational 2nd generation Dominican-Americans (2nd generation Dominican-American from here in) with high S.E.S.

Fieldwork

My interest in studying the Heights began in 2010 during my time as a Housing Scholar for the Dominican Studies Institute (DSI) at City College. It was during that summer that I began talking with colleagues and friends about the topic and began conversations in different Facebook groups that I was a part of. I began reading online material regarding the neighborhood, most of which was obtained from the *New York Times*, DNAinfo.com (an online New York City based neighborhood new source) and a local online magazine, *Uptown Collective*. Along with these online sources, I was also able to sit with the chief Librarian at the DSI, who provided me with a list of Dominican-centered and Washington Heights-centered books which helped me with the preliminary stages of my research.

I began my fieldwork in 2014 when I temporarily moved from Brooklyn into an apartment in Central Harlem so that I could be close to my research site and fully immerse myself in the culture of the Heights. Between May and September of 2014, I conducted interviews and spent my days, and sometimes nights, conducting fieldwork in the area. I walked up and down the streets of the Heights, sometimes dipping in and out of local stores. I purchased food from street vendors and sat by the window at one of the three Starbucks or small Dominican bakeries in the area. During the cooler summer days I would walk to and from Central Harlem, where I lived, to my next interview in the Heights. I used my cell phone to jot down notes as it related to what I saw during my walks to and from these interviews. One of the features that I found most useful was the Voice Note option on my cellular phone. I recorded voice notes during my fieldwork that I later transcribed.

An example of something that I noted during my fieldwork were the changes as I walked along Broadway Avenue, mainly once I passed Columbia Presbyterian Hospital on 168th street. During their interviews, participants told me that the east of Broadway had more of a 'Dominican' feel and, according to them, was slower to gentrify than the west. They mentioned that the east side had more street vendors, loitering and unkempt streets. The area west of Broadway, as per my participants, felt Whiter and was gentrifying more quickly than the east side. Participants mentioned that the west side felt safer, cleaner and had more new businesses. As I walked along Broadway, I paid close attention to these details and noticed things like the awnings hanging outside of the businesses. The awnings on the east side were mainly in Spanish, the designs were not uniform and they seemed a bit outdated; some were even ripped or lacked adequate

lighting. I also made note of the closed businesses and the 'For Sale/ For Rent' signs on that side of the Avenue. On the west side, especially as I approached Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, I noted a few things: first the awnings were more modern and uniform. On one particular two-block strip near the hospital, the businesses shared the same burgundy colored awning with white lettering, giving that area a more uniform and sanitized feel. Second, a lot of the awnings along that side of Broadway were in English. Lastly, I noted that there were more franchise/big name businesses found on that side of the avenue; some of these include: Starbucks, Bank of America and Chipotle, to name a few.

Another component of my fieldwork were Go Alongs with some of the participants. This is a hybrid between a qualitative interview and participant observation and, similar to interviews, they are also an outcome-focused manner of collecting data (Kusenbach, 2003). The participant and I would walk or drive around the area as they pointed out some of the ways their neighborhood was changing: a new, White-owned coffee shop opening up; the new Starbucks on Broadway, or a small Dominican Bodega that had been in Inwood for over 3 decades, now closing, etc. Although most Go Alongs took place before or after an interview, I did also meet up with participants outside of the interview process for dinner or brunch in the area and at local cafes and bars.

Having reviewed the fieldwork strategy used for this study, I will now turn to a discussion of my main strategy, the semi-structured interviews.

Sample

In total 25 participants were interviewed: 52 percent of the participants were female and 48 percent were male; 65 percent live in the Heights and 35 percent no longer live in the area (See Table 1). To collect firsthand information from these 2nd generation Dominican-Americans, I first established selection criteria: the participants needed to be over 18 years of age, with some level of college education, had to be 2nd generation Dominicans and had to have grown up in the Heights.

Once the sampling criteria were established I was ready to recruit participants. Creswell (2012) informs us that a vital step in the data collection process is to establish rapport with potential interviewees, and this often involves the use of gatekeepers. In his handbook, *Ethnography: Step by Step*, Fetterman (2010) defines gatekeepers as those who provide access to the research site, and steer the researcher towards potential participants (p. 60). For this study the gatekeepers were pulled from a number of professional and personal resources. My time as a Housing Scholar for the DSI offered me the opportunity to forge relationships with key members of the Heights community, who would later serve as gatekeepers. I also made connections with potential gatekeepers during the summer of 2011, when I was invited to take part in a panel discussion on the notion of Dominican racial identity. A local Dominican artist organized the panel that took place in a local art center in the community. As a member of the panel I was introduced as a Housing Scholar, and I talked a bit about my future work in the area. After the event I was approached by a number of local residents who were interested in talking about the changes they were witnessing in their community. This allowed me to make professional connections with a handful of individuals who I would later contact in order to assist with the research for this study.

Once the gatekeepers connected me with individuals who were interested in the study, I then used two sampling strategies in order to select participants: purposive and snowball sampling. I did not use probability sampling because this study is not trying to make statistical inference as is done in quantitative research (Creswell, 2012). As a way to ensure diversity by gender, age, residency (in either Washington Heights or Inwood) and current or former residents, some potential participants were selected using the stratified purposeful sample method (Patton, 2002). Then using snowball sampling I asked this initial group of participants to put me in contact with other 2nd generation Dominicans from the Heights.

The final sample size was determined by saturation, which is when there is little or no new information being gathered by adding new subjects to the study (Creswell, 2012). This is a common criterion used by qualitative researchers; they stop adding new subjects at the point in a study when they begin to hear the same information and no substantially new data is found (Creswell, 2012; Seidman, 2006).

Participant	Gender	Age	Lives in Washington Heights
Adanyca	F	35-45	Yes
Alba	F	26-34	Yes
Ally	F	26-34	Yes
Anthony	M	26-34	Yes
Ericka	F	26-34	No
Frank	M	35-45	No
Gia	F	35-45	Yes
Grace	F	18-25	Yes
Hector	M	26-34	No
Jesus	M	26-34	Yes
Jorge	M	35-45	Yes
Margaret	F	26-34	Yes
Mario	M	35-45	Yes
Ramon	M	26-34	Yes
Rose	F	18-24	Yes
Sam	M	35-45	No
Selene	F	26-34	No
Tasha	F	26-34	No
Victoria	F	35-45	No
Vivianna	F	18-24	Yes
Walter	M	35-45	Yes
Wendy	F	35-45	No
Wilson	M	18-24	Yes

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Rapport

Gaining access is a fundamental yet sensitive component within the qualitative research process. This was an important step in my data collection because I felt I had a responsibility to capture as much of each participant's story as possible. I was also aware

that in a few years the neighborhood might not look the way it did during my fieldwork, and I had to record these stories during that particular moment in time.

I am aware that some of my participants may have viewed me as a 'reporter' of sorts and that toting official IRB documents and a tape recorder may have caused some of them to feel less relaxed. In order to allow for richer responses, I ensured that participants felt as comfortable as possible. To do so I began establishing rapport prior to meeting each participant. This was done during our initial communication via email, phone/text or in person. I made sure to send participants a written description of the study so that they could become familiar with the research prior to their interview. With the exception of one interview, which took place in my temporary home in Central Harlem, I arrived at the interview location before the participant. I made sure to greet participants with a smile, and most of the time with a kiss on the cheek, customary in the Dominican culture. Although all of the participants were fluent English speakers, my interactions with them (pre-interview and during) were conducted in a mixture of Spanglish (Spanish and English), Ebonics and New York City slang (Baugh, 2000). This made for a more casual setting, and I believed it helped the participants feel comfortable and freer to express themselves.

After we greeted each other I made sure not to jump straight into the interview and opted to engage in small talk about the extremely hot weather that summer, the National Basketball Association (NBA) Finals which were taking place during part of my fieldwork, or other current events at the moment. I was also pleasantly surprised at how at times I did not have to initiate small talk, many participants had questions for me. Some of them were curious to know why a Dominican from Brooklyn, was interested in

the Heights. Some also wanted to know what I was discovering; if I did share some of my current findings, I made sure to do so without discussing any revealing information (participant name, where they lived, etc.).

To reduce insecurities and anxieties with regard to confidentiality, each participant was assured, in writing, that neither their names nor other personal identifying information was to be disclosed. Each participant was provided with a written consent form that was approved by the Rutgers Internal Review Board (IRB). They each went home with a signed copy of the form while I kept the other copy for my records. Once the tone was set I made sure to read this consent form, verbatim, and then asked if they had any questions.

Each interview session lasted approximately one hour and a half and the majority were conducted in different locations across the Heights: from a local Dominican-owned restaurant that has been in the Heights for decades, to a new, White-owned coffee shop on in the neighborhood. Today that coffee shop stands in the same spot where a local *Botanica* stood for almost three decades. I also met with 5 participants in or around their places of work in Midtown and Downtown Manhattan; 2 interviews were conducted with small business owners inside of their establishments. One participant was interviewed in my temporary home in Central Harlem and others in the offices of the Dominican Studies Institute at City College, from which some of the participants were referred. I used a tape–recorder for every session, and once done I transcribed and analyzed all 25 interviews.

Interviews

For this dissertation I decided to go with informal semi-structured interviews, rather than creating a scripted interview guide. Because one of my major goals was to capture the stories of one specific social group, I considered that using static, pre-set interview guides would be a setback to a nuanced research project like this one. Semi-structured interviews are like everyday conversations, and as the interviewer I did not ask each participant the same exact questions (Fetterman, 2010; Harrowing, et al., 2010; Thomas, 1993). Thomas (1993) believes that the flexible and adaptable nature of interviews for critical ethnographies is crucial. He warns us that if the researcher decides to begin an interview with a list of predetermined questions, the list can become a crutch to the researcher in pursuing answers to their research questions.

While I did have a list of questions that were topic-oriented, I didn't always read straight from the list; I did my best to cover some major questions during my discussions, without reading directly off of the list. These questions were mainly regarding some of the themes that were surfacing from the interview data: the east and west side of Broadway; whether participants wanted the Heights to retain its Dominican presence, and questions regarding landlord buyouts etc. If I did use the guide I would often times go out of order to follow the flow of conversation and I also asked questions that were not in the guide but followed the themes of the guide. In order to ensure that I covered all the issues that I wanted to have my participants address, I found myself referring back to the list more often towards the end of the study. In the end, the guide was not the same for each interview, but was present in all.

Because ethnography is an iterative process, my questions evolved through time and were modified in the research setting (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Thomas, 1993). My

ability to adapt after each interview allowed for the emergence of important questions that were not considered prior to the fieldwork. An example of one such question pertained to the "east versus west of Broadway" conversation. This stemmed from the idea that, in the Heights, east of Broadway tends to be deemed more '*hood*, Dominican and dangerous and therefore, according to participants, slower to gentrify. West of Broadway, conversely, was almost always described as being safer, cleaner and therefore, according to most participants, Whiter and more gentrified. It was not until about the fourth or fifth interview that I realized how important this question was for my larger thesis. It was then that I decided to include questions pertaining to this divide.

A number of other events and experiences inspired fundamental questions that eventually became important, but not static, features for the interviews. Sources of new questions included: preliminary field work in the Heights between 2011 and 2013, existing literature on issues relating to ethnic enclaves as well as immigrant communities of color experiencing gentrification, and various current events occurring during the summer of 2014. Some of these events were the local political elections in the Heights, a shooting at La Marina, and the new Starbucks opening up in Inwood just weeks before I started the interviews. Although I was aware of the need to remain flexible enough to realize new questions that would emerge, I was also aware of the need to recognize overarching themes that would appear in almost all of the interviews. Some of these themes included: my interviewees feeling torn about the gentrification occurring in their neighborhood; their upbringing in pre-gentrified the Heights; their issues around displacement and questions around their willingness to stay in the area.

Data Analysis

My analysis of the in-depth interviews took two forms: one was a journal I kept during my fieldwork and during each interview, and the second was conducting, transcribing and analyzing the interviews myself. In the journal I wrote down comments that came up during each interview and I also typed up self-reflective memos on my understanding of what I was learning throughout the research process. In these memos I summed up my thoughts and feelings about the interview process with a particular participant: what I felt I did well and what to improve on for the next interview. I also included any notes to myself to take with me to the next interview. These included what follow up questions I should start asking in order to keep in line with the themes that were beginning to emerge within the study.

In order to capture as much detail within each participant's stories I used a digital recorder during each session and then later transcribed each interview myself. I transcribed after every session, and after about the fourth interview I started noticing a set of themes and subthemes that began to emerge from within the data. I needed to start catching those themes as they came up during the transcription process and setting them aside on a separate file. Out of this emerged a document titled "THEMES". Prior to every interview I read over this document as well as previous journal entries in order to keep the themes fresh in my head.

Once I had a list of my frequent themes and participant profiles, I wrote up a short report with the preliminary findings. I shared this report with members of my dissertation committee and scholars in the fields of Urban and Immigration Studies. Their feedback helped me further organize my data into more meaningful thematic categories. By the end

of this particular phase of my data analysis I had a new file relating to three broader

categories/themes: (1) Torn/Resentful: the participant feeling torn between appreciating

the changes occurring in the area and fearing that the area's culture may be completely

wiped out. They had had a question regarding the timing of the changes: why was the

area 'improving' now and not when the Heights was a predominately working-class

Dominican enclave?   (2) The Divide: the east versus west of Broadway debate, the

morphology of the Heights, including pre-gentrification and today. (3) Displacement:

discussion of the gentrification-induced displacement occurring in the area. After drafting

up this new file, I went back and reviewed the transcripts, and classified quotes as

relevant to one or another of these themes.

Now that I have outlined my approach to data collection and analysis, I will end

this chapter by discussing possible shortcomings of the study, my position as an 'Insider',

the limitations of the study, and issues relating to the reliability and validity of my

findings.

Ethics and Researcher's Stance

Many scholars argue that there is no value-free science (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012;

Lincoln, 1997; Vidich & Lyman, 1994). They argue that objectivity within academic

research is an illusion and that qualitative researchers do not need to be warned about the

impossibility of being objective. Although qualitative methods seem to offer access to a

window that allows us to take a glimpse into the inner life of our subjects, there is still no

"clear window because any gaze of society from within will somehow always be filtered

through the lenses of gender, social class, race and ethnicity. There are no objective

observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of-and between-the

observer and the observed" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012, p. 22). This holds true especially

for this study; just because I am a 2nd generation Dominican-American myself, and

therefore a possible "Insider" within the study, this does not mean that these filters do not

apply to me.

Insider/Outsider Issues

Insider research refers to studies where the participant and the researcher share the

same culture (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Although it is not possible to be fully aware of

ones' biases and subjectivities, before starting this study I did my best to note where

some personal biases may show up. I recognize that my position is not that of a detached,

disinterested observer; given this, I used reflective analysis to systematically understand

how I was carrying out my research for this project and how my role as researcher

influenced the results. Yet my insider position proved beneficial in the sense that it

allowed me to make what Mears (2013) calls "pre-reflective connections." As a full-time

graduate student and part-time model, Mears (2013) interviewed fellow models for her

dissertation research. The author tells us that during the interviews she rarely needed to

explain herself, and as I collected my data for this study I understood what Mears was

saying. The author claimed that she could interview her participants as: "both student and

model, asking them to describe situations [she] had known firsthand" (p.28). For this

study I found myself interviewing participants as both an integrated 2nd generation

Dominican-American, and as a person of color who grew up in an impoverished New

York City neighborhood that was now gentrifying. As someone who shares a similar

background with the participants, I was most likely able to understand their interview responses in a way that, perhaps, someone who is not a 2nd generation Dominican-American from New York City could not.

Yet being an integrated 2nd generation Dominican-American didn't always mean that I was a complete insider; at times I did experience shifts in my insider position. I was an insider as a 2nd generation Dominican-American who was born and raised in New York City, yet being from Brooklyn sometimes shifted my position back to an outsider. Growing up in a predominately African-American and Puerto Rican community in Brooklyn, where Dominicans were a minority, had different implications than if I had been raised in the Heights. Yet even if I were raised in a predominately Dominican community that was not the Heights, there are still specific landmarks and experiences that are particular to the Heights that cannot be found elsewhere. Overall, my position as an insider was fluid (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

Although being an insider can produce rich data, there are risks within this position. Brannick and Coghlan (2007) argue that the researcher's perception may be clouded by their own experiences as an insider, and this has the potential to influence the data analysis. This may lead the researcher to deemphasize factors that they may not agree with, or believe may cause their particular group to look bad in the eyes of those who are deemed outsiders. I must admit that this was something I grappled with as I began my fieldwork for this study, and was also one of the main reasons it took me a long time to embrace this particular research topic. I felt a weight to represent this group in a particularly positive light; I felt a responsibility to my Dominican community yet I also felt a responsibility to the academic one as well. Despite this I remained opened to all

possibilities, allowing the participants to speak from the heart, and tell me exactly how they felt. I also made sure to stay true to my commitment to reporting sound research that was honest and as unfiltered as possible.

Limitations

The study is designed to help gain a deeper understand of 2nd generation Dominican-Americans from the Heights, and the results may not be generalizable (Yin, 2003). The first limitation of this study is the uniqueness of interviewing 25 individuals from one neighborhood in New York City. Their experiences, although informative and likely to add to the gentrification and immigration literature, cannot be seen as representative of all 2nd generation Dominicans in the U.S, nor to all gentrifying areas in the country. Therefore, readers must keep in mind that although data that results from this study can add to the literature, the findings are limited to the participants and the neighborhood represented in this study. It is also both regionally and racially specific, therefore the data reflect their specific voices. Their personal experiences should not be seen as the experiences of all 2nd generation immigrants who may, among other things, have a different perspective on gentrification.

Another limitation was the amount of time spent conducting the study. I collected data over the course of five months as opposed to a full year, and I also only interviewed participants once. This prevented me from seeing any change in the disposition of the participants over an extended period of time. However, the period of time during which I observed and interviewed them did provide me with sufficient access to record the participants' perceptions of their experiences with gentrification.

Additionally the snowball sampling procedure that was used, and the relativity small number of participants interviewed, limits the results; however, these limitations will not prevent readers from asking new questions and considering ways in which new voices can be introduced into the literature. Nonetheless, the findings do provide a start for efforts to understand how 2nd generation immigrants experience the gentrification of their neighborhood.

Reliability/Validity

This study is valid because it has measured what it said it would measure: the lived experiences of 2nd generation Dominican-Americans with the gentrification of the Heights. Although semi structured interviewing is the best method to capture the stories of this population, Willie (2003) argues that there is a reliability-validity trade-off when conducting semi-structured interviews. The informality of the interview technique allows the researcher to ask clarifying questions; this also means that if another researcher interviewed the same group of participants, there is a possibility that the results would differ, resulting in lower reliability. Overall, the validity of this study is strengthened by recognizing that the meanings being made throughout the interview process were as much a result of the participants' reconstruction and reflection of their experience, as it was, in some way, a product of the interaction between the participant and me, the researcher.

<div align="center">

Conclusion

</div>

This chapter helped to explain the research design that was used to understand the lived experienced of 2nd generation Dominican-Americans with the gentrification of the

Heights. Key concepts that relate to ethnography in general, but critical ethnography in particular, were outlined and addressed. The chapter provided a rationale for participant selection. There was an explanation of the role of the researcher within the study, particularly as it pertains to the Insider/Outsider debate.

Next Chapter

The next chapter, Context, describes the ethnic enclave of the Heights, the case study in this dissertation. It pays special attention to the way the disinvestment of New York City during the 70s, 80s and 90s informs the participants' stories today. It provides the political and economic context needed to help frame the participant's stories, mainly regarding the timing of the changes brought about by gentrification. The chapter achieves this goal by delving deeper into the disinvestment in the past, mainly the fiscal crisis of the late 70s. This chapter does so because it is within that same political-economic arena within which the gentrification of the Heights is taking place today: the past offers insight into the present.

Chapter 4

Context

> *The Disturboios of Kiko and the police brutality was like really out there. They started burning* goma, (car tires), *and it was really bad and we couldn't go out. I remember I was in middle school and we had no school for like a whole week, it was gun shots, police everywhere.* Los Disturbios de *Washington Heights, that's what made Washington Heights known. Now it's different.*
> *(Ethnographic interview, 2014),*

On Saturday July 4th, 1992, the streets on the east side of Washington Heights were ablaze; and not in the figurative sense as one would expect during this usually jubilant time of the summer. No. Audubon and Amsterdam avenues were *literally* on fire. On the night before, a 22 year-old Dominican man named Jose Kiko Garcia was shot to death by a White police-officer, Michael O'Keefe, in the lobby of a building on the east side of the neighborhood (Hevesi, 1992). The police said that Garcia, high on cocaine, was carrying a loaded revolver and was followed into his building by O'Keefe (Gonzalez, D & Fritsch, 1992). The community said that Kiko was unarmed when he was followed into his building, hit on the head with a walkie talkie and then shot in the back three times (Hevesi, 1992). Immediately after Kiko's death, riots broke out between residents and the police, and, over the next seven days, crowds looted stores, smashed windows, overturned trashcans, and threw bottles and rocks at police cars. The Heights was literally burning, and, at the end of the riots, the east side of Broadway looked more like a war zone than a city neighborhood (Gonzalez & Fritsch, 1992). In Washington Heights, this period came to be known as *Los Disturbios* (the Unrest).

As interview participants shared their concerns about the changes in their community, they juxtaposed the current gentrification with the earlier disinvestment, mainly the period of *Los Disturbios*. While many appreciate the current changes, they also mentioned feeling resentment that now that new White residents are moving into the neighborhood, mainly its east side, the Heights is now improving. Many participants questioned the timing of these moves: Why were these individuals moving to the area now (mainly its east side)? And why was the Heights being invested in today and not during the era of *Los Disturbios,* when the area, mainly its east side, was made up predominately of working-class Dominican residents?

This chapter is about the community of the Heights and it explores the context within which *Los Disturbios* took place (Greenberg, 2009; Taylor, 2002). This chapter opens with a section on immigration changes and population flows in New York City, focusing on the push and pull factors that spurred Dominican migration. This section demonstrates that, just like disinvestment and gentrification, the mass migration of Dominicans to New York City after the 1960s was no coincidence, but a consequence of larger global restructuring. The next section discusses the Fiscal Crisis of the 70s, mainly how it affected the city and community that these newly arrived immigrants were arriving to. The last section addresses the affordable housing crisis in the Heights today and rent-regulated apartments in the area. The historical events discussed in this chapter helped shaped the participants' current perception of gentrification.

Dominican Migration: Push and Pull Factors

> *I was looking for a 2 bedroom apartment on the west of Broadway and the cheapest I can find was $2,400. Tiny*

*apartments. The ones that were ok were about $3,000. I was
only looking west of Broadway, I couldn't live east, it's too
loud and too dangerous. You can't walk on Amsterdam and
Audubon at night, those are scary. In my building I can walk
in at any time I feel safe, doesn't matter what time I come in or
out, I feel safe. And my daughter she can sleep, there's no
noise. I would never live east of Broadway. I would move to
Riverdale. I'd move to Brooklyn, I'd move anywhere before
east of Broadway. My building is safe, the area's nice, it's
central. I can take the A train on 181st street and on 34th
street in 17 minutes. I know because I went to High School in
Chelsea and my parents would time me (laughs).
(Ethnographic Interview, 2014)*

The Heights is situated on the northern tip of Manhattan. It runs from West 155th

street to West 220th street, and was the last area of undeveloped farmland in the borough.

It is named after General George Washington, who lived in the area during the

Revolutionary War (Ricourt, 2015). Today the Heights is organized as Community

District 12 and City Council Districts 7 and 10, all of which encompass the

neighborhoods of Washington Heights and Inwood; in 2014 they were home to 79

percent of Manhattan's Dominican population (Aparicio, 2006; Hoffnung-Garskof, 2010)

(See Map 1).

Map 1 Data: © 2017 Google

The neighborhood is home to a large immigrant community that includes many 1st and 2nd generation Dominicans; an ethnic enclave emerged in the 70s and 80s as the Dominican population in New York City grew (Reynoso, 2003). In the 1960 Census there were only 9,223 Dominicans counted in New York, placing Dominicans 26th among the immigrant population in the city. By the 1980s the population had grown to 125,380: a 165% increased that was unmatched by any other major ethnic group in the city (Hernandez & Rivera-Batiz, 1997). In 1990, they were the fourth largest immigrant group in New York City, and fourteenth among all immigrant groups in the U.S. (Gonzalez & Fritsch, 1992; Hernandez & Torres Saillant, 1998). By 2014, Dominicans were the largest immigrant group in the city (See Table 2) (Bergad, 2014).

Table 2: Dominican Population Residing in New York City, 1980-2015

Year	Official Census Population Count
1980	125,380
1990	332,713
2000	547,379
2010	605,840
2014	747,473

Source: U.S. Census, CUNY Center for Latin American,
Caribbean & Latino Studies; CUNY Dominican Studies Institute

Dominicans started migrating to New York City as early as the 17th century, when Juan Rodriguez, the first man of African ancestry, arrived on the island of Manhattan in 1613 (Stevens-Acevedo, et al., 2013). Several other Dominicans would follow Rodriguez, with the majority entering the U.S. after the 1960s (Duany, 2008). Massive migration from the D.R. to the U.S. began in the 1960s because of political push factors in the D.R. and pull factors in the U.S. But how did the 1st generation get here? Why did they arrive in large numbers after the 60s and not before? Some of this is explained by looking at the restructuring of the global and local economies.

***Empuje*: Push Factors in the Dominican Republic**

Although migration from the D.R. to the U.S. is fairly recent, its causes can arguably be traced back to the early 1900s. Levitt (2001) notes: "U.S. economic, political and cultural quasi-colonization of the Republic throughout its history and the patterns of land tenure, commercial agriculture, and industrial development that ensued sowed the seeds of large-scale migration long before it began" (p.31). The U.S. government has played a role in Dominican politics since the late 1800s, and its role intensified during the mid-1900s (Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991; Levitt, 2001). Before the Hart-Celler Act of 1965, the restrictive emigration policies of the U.S.-sponsored dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo made it very difficult for Dominicans to leave the island. Trujillo feared that if he facilitated movement outside of the country (via visas) his opponents would organize against him from abroad (Gutierrez, 2004). Trujillo's brutal 31-year dictatorship came to an end when he was assassinated on May 30th, 1961. Dominicans subsequently democratically elected a progressive and an independent, Juan Bosch, as president of the Republic. A mere seven months later, a military *coup d'état* brought Bosch's government to an abrupt end when it forcefully removed him from office (Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991; Hernandez & Stevens, 2011; Torres Saillant & Hernandez 1998). The *coup* created more unrest on the island, and President Lyndon B. Johnson sent 42,000 U.S. Marines to the D.R. to protect U.S. interests in the country (Torres-Saillant & Hernandez, 1998). In June 1966 a new presidential election was held and Joaquin Balaguer, a favorite of the U.S., won. Yet his election further flamed political unrest. In order to ease tensions on the island this time, the U.S. employed a new tactic: the emigration of prominent Dominican

leaders who opposed Balaguer's administration. The U.S. first granted visas to Dominican 'troublemakers' who could protest U.S interest in the D.R. These individuals made up the first major wave of immigrants to the United States (Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991; Gutierrez, 2004; Hernandez, 2002; Mitchell, 1992). Granting these visas developed an infrastructure that would later facilitate the massive migration of people from the D.R. to the U.S. (Georges, 1990; Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991; Hoffnung-Garskof, 2010; Levitt, 2000).

U.S. and Dominican government economic development strategies further encouraged migration to the U.S. Balaguer granted the U.S. easy entrance to the D.R.; his administration set up a model that focused on industrial production, trade and finance, but all of this came at a cost to the agricultural sector (Hernandez, 2002; Torres-Saillaint & Hernandez, 1998). Both countries did not modernize agriculture on the island and they continued to exclude labor from this increased industrialization, which created a growing, unemployed and frustrated middle class (Gutierrez 2004; Grasmuck & Pessar, 1992). "Because most of the industrial growth occurred in the sectors requiring more capital than labor, there were too few jobs for those who migrated from rural areas to the capital city. An estimated 20 percent of Santo Domingo's labor force was unemployed in 1973" (Levitt, 2001, p. 43). Migration, argue Grasmuck & Pessar (1991), provided a needed complement to Balaguer's policies; without it more unrest would've taken over the twice occupied Caribbean island. As a consequence of these economic policies, the 2nd wave of Dominican migrants who entered the U.S were low-skilled peasants who formerly would have entered the rural-to-urban migration flow within the D.R. (Waldinger, 1989, p. 317).

The influx of Dominicans to the U.S. was not only due to the combination of U.S. foreign policy on the island and the D.R.'s economic policies during the Balaguer era; the economic restructuring that was changing New York City beginning in the mid-20th century also created factors that encouraged this migration (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Waldinger 1989).

Hale: Pull Factors to New York City

During the 1970s, just as New York City was undergoing an intense period of economic restructuring with severe disinvestment and a shift from manufacturing to service, it was also receiving an inflow of Dominican immigrants, many with little formal education, few technical skills and a language barrier (Hernandez, 2002; Pessar, 1987; Sassen, 1988). How and why was this possible? How was it that as the labor market was shifting and requiring more skills, the city saw an influx of relatively uneducated, poor, unskilled immigrants? Waldinger (1989) provides an answer to this question: "immigration is part and parcel of a fundamental process of urban economic restructuring in which the growth of services breeds a demand for both high *and* low skilled labor" (p.220, emphasis in original). There was now a bifurcated labor market made up of highly skilled, well-paid service jobs on one end and low-skilled, low-wage jobs on the other- Dominicans were recruited to fulfill the latter (DeFilippis, 2004; Hernandez, 2002; Sassen, 1988; Waldinger, 1989).The shifting economy was creating global cities like New York that were now home to both corporate firms, and to poor people of color whose exploitation was needed for the new economy to succeed (Cahill, 2006, p. 337).

While the economy was experiencing this shift and the city was receiving an influx of Dominican immigrants, the White population in New York decreased by 1.3 million in the 1970's and by about half a million in the 1980's; much of this loss was due to White Flight to the suburbs (Foner, 2000; Hernandez, 2002). Meanwhile, the formerly available supply of 'low-value' workers that remained (mainly women, African-Americans and Puerto Ricans) began to decrease; this population was now politicized, more empowered, and no longer willing to take highly undesirable jobs with little to no job security (Hernandez, 2002). It was no coincidence that just as employers in the city saw a need for people to work in low-skilled, low-paying jobs, it was gaining a new pool of immigrants. Sassen (1988) explores the relative shortage of labor within host countries and how this largely explains the demand for immigrant workers and their subsequent move into global cities like New York. She argues that not only are these workers vital to a society that is facing a relative shortage of cheap labor, they are important to employers because of their lack of negotiating power (Sassen, 1988). This group makes up a part of the labor supply that is "characterized by a particular form of powerlessness associated with formal or attributed foreign status, that meets the requirements of types of work organization based on direct rather than structural control over the workforce" (p. 36). Dominicans found their niche in blue-collar jobs on the lower end of the bifurcated service economy. These jobs were generated by the consumption patterns of individuals on the higher end of the service economy such as errand running, repair, cleaning, baby-sitting, maids, parking attendants and retail salespersons (Hernandez, 2002).

Quisqueya on the Hudson

There is a divide, the East side is changing slowly, very very slowly. But what makes me think the West side is changing, it's always been there according to what my neighbors tell me. That Irish pub has been there 30-40 years.
(Ethnographic Interview, 2014)

When Dominicans began arriving in large numbers, housing in the Heights was older and more dilapidated on the east side of the neighborhood and younger and sturdier on the west (Ricourt, 2015; Snyder, 2014). Dominicans mainly began settling in the older tenement buildings on the east side of the neighborhood between 150th and 190th streets. These were the same apartments that, during the early 20th century, provided Irish and some Jewish families with an opportunity to improve their standard of living as they fled the dense immigrant communities of Five Points and the Lower East Side (Hoffnung-Garskof, 2010).

The layout of the housing stock in the Heights (older housing on the east side and younger housing on the west) was the result of two major housing booms that took place in the early 20th century: one on the east side of the neighborhood during the early 1900s and on one the west side in the early 1930s (Snyder, 2014; Lawson & Naison, 1986). The arrival of the Interborough Rapid Transit Company (IRT) in 1906, and the Independent Subway system in 1936, coupled with the expanded housing stock, made the Heights a destination to many who were mainly fleeing the Lower East Side, and other crowded New York City neighborhoods.

The Heights would not see another housing boom in that century; this would later have major implications as the neighborhood began to experience reinvestment in the form of gentrification. First, because approximately 75% of the housing units were built

prior to 1947, the Heights is the neighborhood with one of the most rent-control

apartments in New York City (see Table 3); this makes the neighborhood a prime target

for landlord harassment as there is more money to be made in the second most

gentrifying neighborhood in New York City (Hernandez, Sezgin & Marrara, 2018). The

second implication pertains to the new rezoning plan aimed for the Inwood section

(Mays, 2018).

Table 3: Total Housing Units Built

	Total	Percentage
Total Housing Units	**78,591**	**100%**
Built 2010 or later	270	0.3%
Built 2000 to 2009	739	0.9%
Built 1990 or 1999	920	1.2%
Built 1980 or 1999	1,225	1.6%
Built 1970 or 1979	2,784	3.5%
Built 1960 to 1969	5,477	7.0%
Built 1950 or 1959	7,596	9.7%
Built 1940 or 1949	8,629	11.%
Built 1930 or earlier	50,951	64.8%

Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey

By the 1930s, the Irish lived mainly on the east side of Broadway while Jewish

residents settled in the middle class areas west of Broadway (Snyder, 2014). Yet by the

1950s, the population began to shift; between the 1950s and 1980s the size of the Jewish

community in the Heights fell by 50 percent and the proportion of African Americans and

Latinx grew (Lowenstein, 1989; Ricourt 2002).

African Americans and Puerto Ricans began moving into the Heights during and

after World War II; they were mainly fleeing the overcrowded apartments in Central and

East Harlem and looking for a better life in the Heights (Hoffnung-Garskof, 2010;

Katznelson, 1981). These families were financially better off and could therefore afford

the move to the Heights. Many of these families believed that moving to the

neighborhood was an improvement in their social status mainly because the Heights

offered them better housing and schools, and less crime (Katznelson, 1981; Hoffnung-

Garskof, 2010). By 1946, in the southeast section of the Heights (east of Jackie Robinson

Park), nearly 50 percent of residents were African-American (See Map 2).
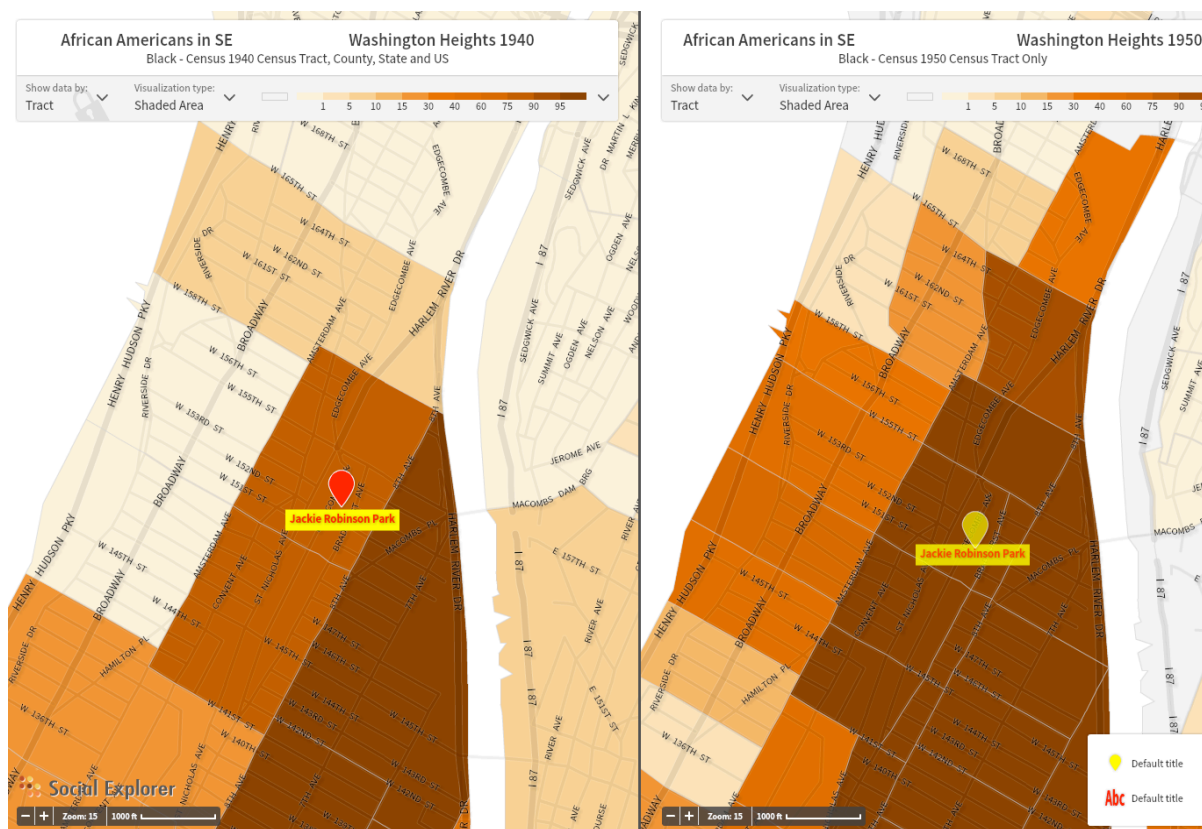
Map 2: African-Americans in southeast Washington Heights, 1940-1950.
Source: African-Americans in SE Washington Heights [Map]. In SocialExplorer.com. U.S. Census Data (1940, 1950).
Retrieved January, 2017, from https://www.socialexplorer.com

Although the Heights did not feel the effects of White Flight in the way that other

neighborhoods in the city did, mainly through depopulation, what the neighborhood did

experience was a shift in the location of White residents within the area (Chronopoulos,

2017; Hoffnung-Garskof, 2010; Snyder, 2014). Snyder (2014) tells us that the Jewish

residents of the Heights moved North and West into the central Heights and the relatively

secluded section of Fort Washington Hill, separated by the parkland and far away from

the people of color who were moving into the South and East. By 1970 the western

Heights, from the George Washington Bridge to Fort Tryon Park, had the most Jewish

residents and the fewest Black and Latinx residents of all northern Manhattan, plus a

large percentage of elderly and longtime residents (Snyder, 2014). Fairview Avenue, on

the Northern tip of Manhattan, had the area's highest proportion of Irish residents and a

low number of Latinx residents. Sections with older and more prosperous residents

maintained their Irish and Jewish presence to the West, while this new group of

Dominican immigrants began moving into less stable and less affluent sections in the

southern and Eastern Heights (See Map 3). (Snyder, 2014).
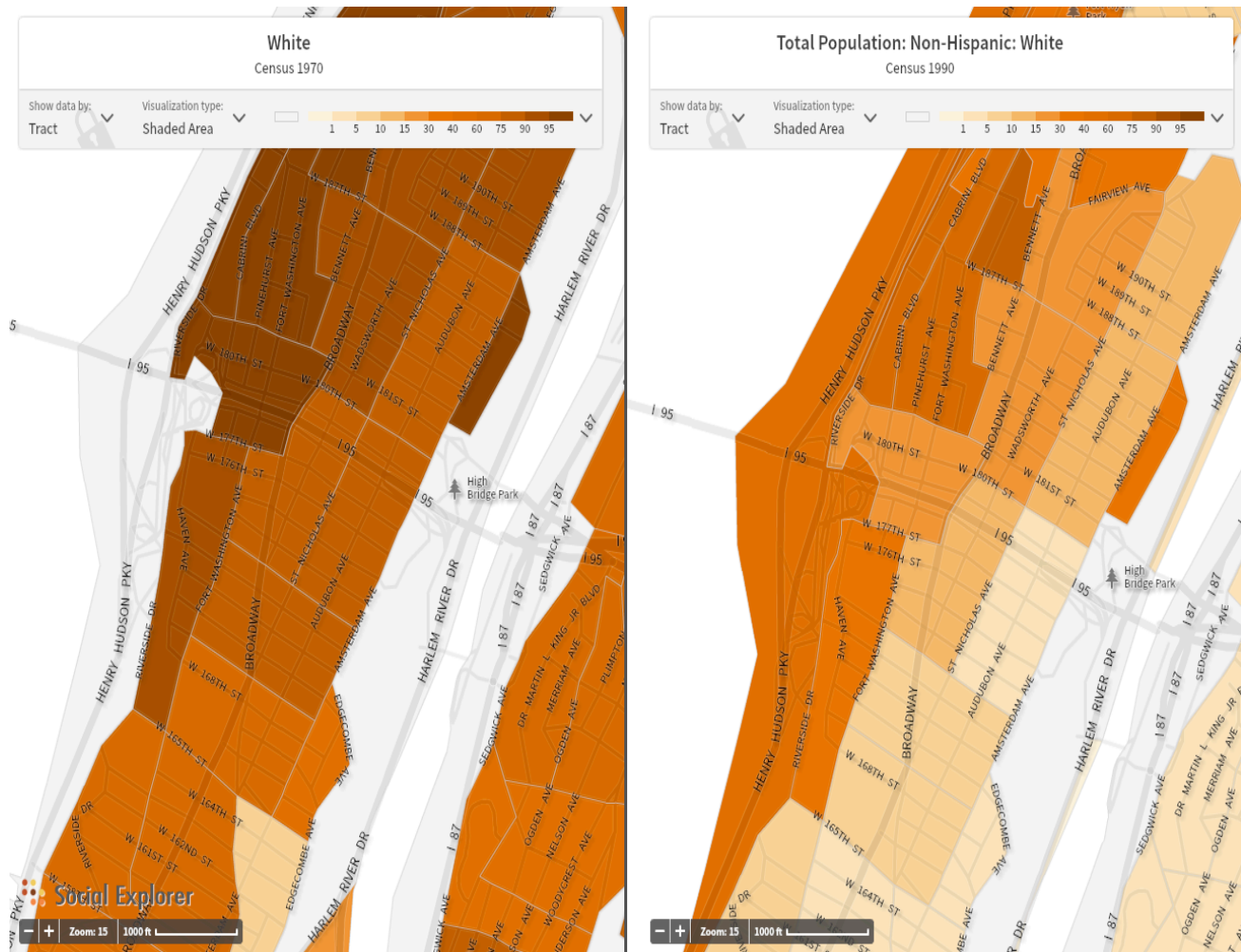
Map 3: White population in Washington Heights by Census Tract 1970 and 1990
Source: White population in Washington Heights by Census Tract 1970 and 1990 [Map]. In SocialExplorer.com. U.S. Census Data
(1970, 1990). Retrieved January, 2017, from https://www.socialexplorer.com

The Heights' historically strong White presence was a vital component that other

communities were lacking, mainly as it relates to political-economic power (See Map 3).

The White presence in the Heights, mainly its west sides, prevented the area from

suffering the same fate as adjacent neighborhood like the South Bronx and Harlem

(Chronopoulos, 2017; Snyder, 2017). This racial geography influenced the ways in which

the fiscal crisis played out across the Heights, the topic of the next section in this chapter.

Dominicans immigrated to the city during the fiscal crisis in the late 1970s. They began establishing a Dominican community on the Northern tip of Manhattan: 12 miles from downtown, far away from many higher wage jobs and with one of the city's oldest housing stocks. The next section of this chapter will focus on the ways in which the fiscal crisis played out in the Heights, mainly affecting the area's housing stock and Highbridge Park, located on the east side of the Heights.

Fiscal Crisis

The city developed and implemented a policy called "planned shrinkage" as one strategy to respond to the fiscal crisis. Officials focused on managing the city's devastated budget and Roger Starr, the Housing and Development Administrator at the time, offered a 'plan' for the city. His proposal focused on 'selective scarcity' and it called for the city to cut services only in its neediest districts that were, according to Starr 'already dying' (Greenberg, 2009). His whole premise was that the declining image of the city was because of its excessive social welfare problem and public sector burden (Berman, 2007). Berman (2007) argues that: "Starr's idea for dealing with the fiscal crisis was to divide the city's population into a 'productive' majority that deserved to be saved and 'unproductive' minority that should be driven out" (p.22). Starr called for the systematic withdrawal of municipal services in areas suffering from extreme population decline and with a severely dilapidated housing stock (Chronopoulos, 2017). Starr wanted to shrink New York City's population by 2 million, mainly focusing on draining the city of its 'unproductive' residents; he is quoted as saying:

We should stop rural Puerto Ricans and Blacks from living in the city and reverse

the role of the city... it can no longer be the place of opportunity...our urban

system is based on the theory of taking the peasant and turning him into an

industrial worker. Now there are no industrial jobs. Why not keep him a peasant?

(Roger Starr quoted in Greenberg, 2009, p. 141).

Starr's rationale was that if major corporations eliminate unprofitable plants, why can't the city shift services from unprofitable neighborhoods that were already dying, and give them to areas that were better off and had a better chance of survival? Essentially it was a form of urban triage where public services, like sanitation, New York Police Department (NYPD), Fire Department of New York (FDNY), and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) were withdrawn from 'dying' communities so that the fiscal crisis would be less painful to middle-class New Yorkers (Aalbers, 2014; Chronopoulos, 2017; Fried, 1976; Greenberg, 2009; Gratz, 1989). During that era, according to Greenberg (2009), it was "fine to lay off public safety workers as long as you do it away from the financial centers, tourist destinations and media hot-spots of the urban core" (p.140). As a result, the majority of these lay-offs and police and fire station closings were in poor and working class neighborhoods; those located in the financial districts and middle-class, predominately White, neighborhoods were not nearly as affected as communities of color.

New York City Council members called Planned Shrinkage 'inhumane', 'racist' and 'genocidal' (Lambert, 2001). Starr ended up resigning, yet Planned Shrinkage would have major effects on housing and economic policy in New York City (Wallace & Wallace, 1998). Although it didn't produce actual population transfers, the number of

city inhabitants did shrink, yet it was the opposite of what Starr envisioned: instead of poor working class people of color leaving, most of the 1.3 million New Yorkers who left the city from 1970-1980 were working and middle-class White residents (Hernandez, 2002).

The city also cut municipal jobs and services but not all neighborhoods felt the effects in the same way (Greenberg, 2009; Berman, 2007). The next section provides a discussion on the implications that these cuts had on the Heights, mainly the area's housing. It will show how the area become divided between a wealthier, Whiter and safer west side and a poorer, crime-ridden east side that would become home to most new Dominican immigrants. This racial geography would be in factor for the way the fiscal crisis played out in the ethnic enclave.

Fiscal Crisis and Housing

 By the late 1970s, in parts of the city, landlords began to systematically disinvest their property. "In the 1970s, the Heights was in the grip of a citywide economic crisis that undermined its housing stock. Some landlords, faced with weak returns on rents, scrimped on maintenance or declined to pay taxes; others milked their buildings and then abandoned them" (Snyder, 2017, p.14). Yet although vulnerable to dilapidation, the housing stock in the Heights didn't experience the extent of building and commercial abandonment at the rate that housing across the river in the South Bronx did (Hoffnung-Garskof, 2010). This can be attributed to two reasons: long-time White community members' political and economic power (versus that of the newly arrived Dominican

immigrants) and because the neighborhood was a first stop community for Dominican immigrants.

The west side of the neighborhood also had one of the few hospitals left in the area. Between 1967 and 1983 five hospitals closed in the Heights: Mother Cabrini in 1967, Frances Delafield in 1975, Wadsworth in 1976, Saint Elizabeth's in 1981, and Jewish Memorial in 1983. Changes in Medicare and Medicaid funding, the flight of White doctors and patients to the suburbs, and a new medical economy whose main focus was research (and not necessarily caring for the urban poor) affected these closures (McCaughney, 2003; Rayner, 1982). By the mid-80s, Columbia Presbyterian, west of 168th street and Broadway, was the only hospital left in the neighborhood (Snyder, 2014). Like many families and businesses, Columbia debated on whether they should keep the hospital open or shut its doors like the other five that left the neighborhood (McCaughey, 2003; Snyder, 2014). In 1982, Columbia's Long-Range Planning Committee decided to keep the hospital in the Heights- a decision that would have major impacts on the neighborhood and its residents. Many residents, including participants in this study, believe that the medical center has a reputation as a powerful landlord, and the majority of participants attribute the current gentrification to Columbia's presence; partly how the west side of the avenue seems to be gentrifying quicker (Snyder, 2014).

With a newer and sturdier housing stock, as well as wealthier White residents, the west was already socio-economically divided from its eastern counterpart. Now Columbia's decision to keep the hospital in the Heights only served to reinforce the division (See Map 4).
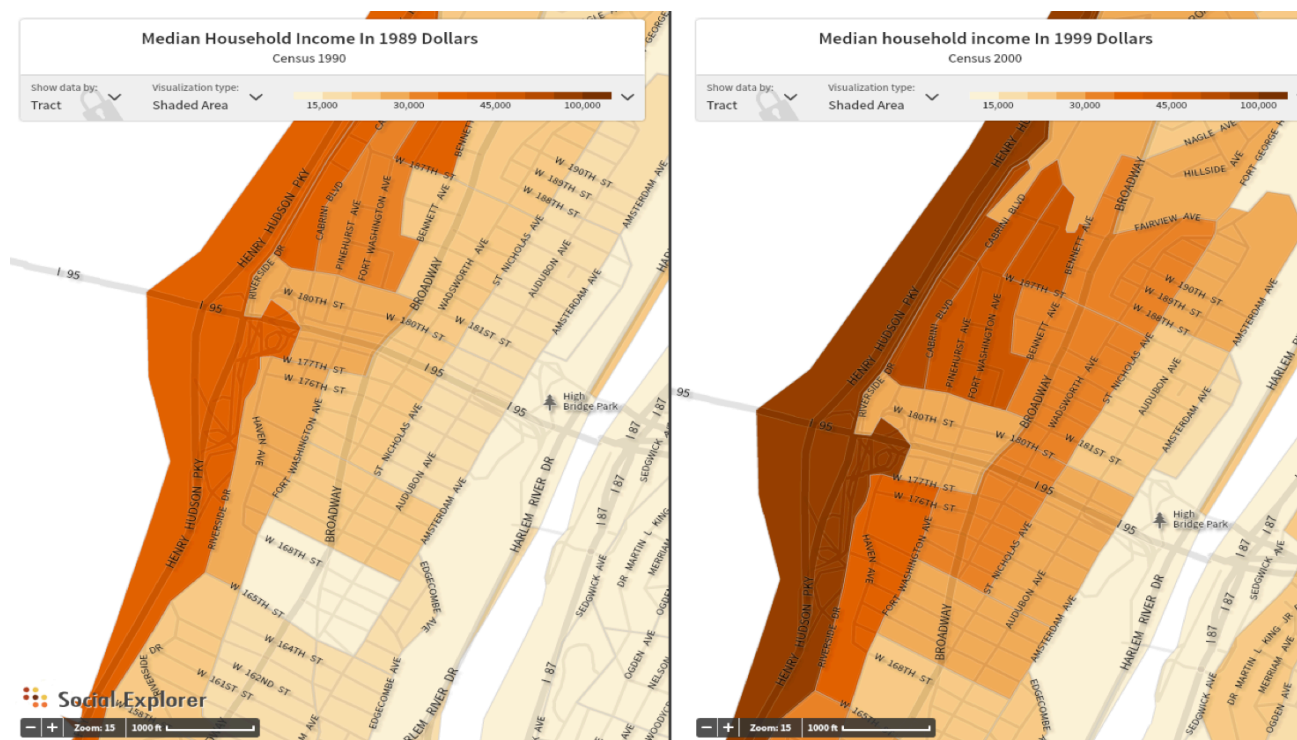
Map 4: *Median Housing Income by Census Tract Washington Heights 1990-2000*
Source: Median Housing Income by Census Tract Washington Heights 1990-2000 [Map]. In SocialExplorer.com. U.S. Census Data
(1990, 2000). Retrieved January, 2017, from https://www.socialexplorer.com

On the opposite end of the neighborhood there was a relatively new group of immigrants of color arriving to New York City just as it was experiencing one of its most severe periods of disinvestment. The newly arrived Dominicans took over jobs and homes that were formerly occupied by the White working class, yet many without the protection that their White counterparts benefited from: no unions, lack of English proficiency, and a lack of political power in the U.S. (Hernandez, 2002). In a local Dominican newspaper in 1979, Delancer (1979) wrote about the different economic and socio-political crises of the Heights at the time, mainly: dilapidated housing, racial and ethnic discrimination, a failing school system, and lack of adequate jobs. The author argued that increased local political involvement would be the only way to solve the problems facing their community (Delancer, 1979). This article is one example that

demonstrates that, in the late 70s, Dominicans did not yet have a strong political presence in the city. Their involvement in U.S. politics was very young, especially when compared to their White counterparts on the west side of the community. Guillermo Linares, the first Dominican-American to hold public office wasn't sworn into the New York City Council until 1991 (McKinley, 1991). As a result, it wasn't their direct political power that saved the housing stock, but Dominicans' inadvertently kept the housing stock on the east side of the community from crumbling via their day-to-day struggles for survival. Newly arrived immigrants tend to cluster in ethnic neighborhoods with their fellow country people and this is mainly due to economic barriers and racism, and because they are seeking security and comfort from family and friends (Foner, 2000, 2014; Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991; Portes & Zhou, 1992; Rumbaut, 2014; Smith, 2006). By living doubled and tripled-up, Dominicans arguably prevented the collapse of the housing stock on the east side of the neighborhood (Hoffnung-Garskof, 2010)*. In their report, *The Newest New Yorkers: 2014 Edition,* the City Planning commission referred to the same study from the early 90s where they argued that: "New York City continues to maintain its status as the nation's largest city because it is a mecca for immigrants. It has averted catastrophic population losses that have occurred other cities, especially in the northeast and Midwest. Immigrants have also buttressed the housing stock in many city's neighborhoods" (The Newest New Yorkers, 2014). Not only was this group repopulating a city that was losing its White residents by the hundred of thousands, but now they arguably saved neighborhoods from vanishing.

But it wasn't only the housing stock that was salvaged. In 1981, while schools in other parts of the city were being closed because of depopulation, schools in the Heights

were at 111% capacity. Instead of losing residents, the Heights was gaining a new immigrant population, whose children made up 53% of public school children in the community, leading to the need for new schools (Ivins, 1981). An overcrowded school may not be a good sign, yet in an era where the city was experiencing severe depopulation, an overcrowded school was actually a positive. It was an indication of a growing community with young, child-bearing people who created an ethnic enclave that ended up preserving the area's school system and housing stock (Newest New Yorkers, 2014).

Although the new Dominican immigrants were indirectly able to salvage the housing stock and the school system in the Heights, Highbridge Park would prove to be too massive (in many senses of the word) for this community to save from the damaging effects of the fiscal crisis. The next section in this chapter will highlight the ways the fiscal crisis disproportionately affected the Heights, mainly as it pertains to the area's east side. With one of the largest parks in New York City (Highbridge) the east side of the neighborhood did not have the political-economic power to save park, which in turn led to the social ills that were bred inside to spill over into the larger community.

Although all parks across the city were affected by the budget cuts (even Central Park's services declined), the effects were greater in lower income neighborhoods (Yarrow, 1990; Levine, 2013). By the time the fiscal crisis began to sweep across New York City, the Heights had a larger community of lower income Dominican immigrants; although the neighborhood did have more White residents than adjacent neighborhoods many were housed on the west side, far away from the park and the vice that its neglect undoubtedly brought to the community (Chronopoulos, 2017; Snyder, 2017). But it

wasn't always like this. The next section in this chapter will provide a discussion

regarding the way the fiscal crisis affected the Heights, mainly Highbridge Park located

in the enclave's east side.

Highbridge

Imperato (1978) tell us that during the fiscal crisis the budget cuts were

limited only to expenses in areas where the city had control. Costs like Public Assistance,

Medicaid health insurance and pension contributions are required by law (p. 277).

Therefore, in 1975, with access to only 26% of the entire expense budget (or $3.4 of the

$13 billion) the city then began slashing mainly municipal services. Considered one of

the less essential resources to city residents, the Department of Parks and Recreation

(DPR) was one of the more severely affected municipal agencies during this era (Corbett,

2016). Because it provided services that, according to many city officials, did not directly

affect the public health and safety, the DPR has historically appeared to be an easy target

for budget-cutters. "Unlike cuts to sanitation, water supply, police force, fire response

and education, the impacts of cutbacks on parks have not been life threatening" (Cohen,

Silva & Small, 2013, p. 1). During the fiscal crisis the DPR workforce was cut by 23%

while other city agencies only suffered an average reduction of 13% (Martin, 1994). By

March 1981, the workforce in the DPR had decreased to a record low of 2,900

employees, versus 30,000 DPR employees during the more prosperous LaGuardia/Moses

era. Not only did the number of employees decrease, but those that were left after the cuts

were mostly unskilled and/or temporarily employed (Landmarks Preservation

Commission, 2007, p.8). In an opening statement on his website, Mark Levine, the

current Chair of the City Council's Committee on Park's and Recreations, states that:

> In the 1960s the City devoted a healthy one-and-a-half percent of its budget to the
>
> Parks Department, but the financial crisis of the 1970s forced severe cutbacks in
>
> this funding. By 1986 parks had fallen to just 0.86% of the budget, and the
>
> resulting lack of maintenance and staffing turned city parks into places that many
>
> New Yorkers sought to avoid. (http://www.marklevine.nyc).

To add to this, in 1990, in order to hire more police officers to deal with the surge in

crime that took place in the late 80s and early 90s Mayor Dinkins ordered more cuts to

the department's budget (Yarrow, 1990). All of these decisions would have major

implications on the neighborhood adjacent to Highbridge, which is the third largest park

in Manhattan,

 Although Cohen et al. (2013) tell us that cuts to the DPR budget threatened

smaller and less prominent parks, spanning 119-acres, Highbridge was not a small park

by any measure. Yet the neighborhood's inconvenient location away from downtown,

and with a relatively new immigrant population of color as neighbors, Highbridge Park

did in fact feel the impact of these budget cuts.

Highbridge Park: The DPR and the Heights

Highbridge Park was designed in 1888 and spans 119-acres from 155th Street to

Dyckman Street, across the entire eastern side of the neighborhood (Landmarks

Preservation Commission, 2007). Today, the DPR and the New York Restoration Project

(NYRP), a non-profit organization whose initial goal was to revitalize 5 neglected parks

located in low-income communities including Highbridge, fund the park (Xu, 2017; New York Restoration Project, 2018).

With the help of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the LaGuardia administration added one of the city's largest pools to the park in 1936 (Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2007; Snyder, 2014). Less than 4 decades later, during the fiscal crisis, the park was an undeniable sign of the city's decline. In the 1980s, this same public project that 40 years prior made life in the Heights more attractive, was one of the reasons for the area's demise, particularly on the east side of the neighborhood. Highbridge Park would become a physical reflection of the ways in which policies implemented (or not) during the fiscal crisis had disproportionate effects on neighborhoods across the city (Freeman, 2001; Snyder, 2014).

By the late 1970s many WPA pools and public parks began to deteriorate, partially because of the disinvestment in the DPR. To address the need to fund parks, mainly to reduce the potential for crime, a number of private/public park-maintenance organizations were created such as Central Park Conservancy and the Prospect Park Alliance (both created in 1980). "While these private groups provided an excellent example for other parks across the city, not every public park had the financial and organizational resources available within its neighborhood to establish an organization with the resources of a Central Park Conservancy or a Prospect Park Alliance" (Cohen, Silva & Small, 2013, p. 8). The Heights did have financial and organizational resources available, but on the opposite end of the neighborhood. The park was located on the east side of the Heights, an area that housed recently arrived Dominican immigrants, mainly employed in the low-wage service jobs, who lacked the resources needed to conserve

Highbridge Park. Corbett (2016) tells us that as a result: "Urban parks in more affluent

areas were repaired, while urban parks within less affluent neighborhoods were left

untouched" (p.3). Highbridge Park would not receive aid from a private conservancy for

another 15 years when, in 1995, Bette Milder founded the New York Restoration Project

(NYRP) (Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2007; New York Restoration Project,

2018).

      The cuts in public funding, combined with the lack of private partnerships like

those formed for Central and Prospect parks, led to a level of neglect that attracted

vandalism, crime and other forms of vice. Highbridge Park had become so degraded that

during a cleanup of the park in 1986, people removed more than 200 tons of garbage and

25 wrecked cars; just a few days later, the same areas were once again littered (Hellman,

1999). According participants in this study, during this era the Heights was known for

being a dumping ground for stolen cars. The cars were driven to the Heights, stripped of

vital parts that could be re-sold; the parts (and/or the car) were either dumped in the park,

pushed off one of the many cliffs or just left double-parked near the entrance of

Highbridge; a practice locally known as 'chopping' (Blauner, 1986; Personal Interview,

2014). Here we have Mario, one of the older participants who was a young teen during

the late 80s and early 90s, and he lived across the street from the park. In this part of his

interview he recounted the times he was woken up by the sound of the power tools used

to 'chop' cars in the middle of the night:

> *We lived on 174th, Audubon and Amsterdam, and I remember in my teenage years
> and younger, like '92-'93, that was when cars were getting scooped up and
> brought over there. The awareness knowing there was a lot of drug dealers and
> car choppers… my memories, young, teens was that: Washington Heights,
> Dominican land, drugs, car chopping, danger. Stealing cars from Jersey bringing
> them to the Heights, putting them on blocks and chopping them up. I was*

witnessing that because I would literally see cars with Jersey license plates. I slept in the living room in my grandmother's house and I'm hearing chh chh chhh (imitates the sound of drills) *and I go the next morning and the car's on cinder blocks and I'm like what the heck? Over an extended period of time, beyond the weekend, you would see other cars and then the cops would come and they would tow it out. It was continuously like that. It didn't hit home until my uncle's car was stolen in Jersey. Then they had the movie Jersey Drive which pretty much was showing that.*

Mario relived the times when Highbridge Park was the epicenter of crime in the community. The topic of *'The'* Highbridge Park was one that came up often during the interview phase of this study. One would think that for a 10 year-old child (the average age of participants during *Los Disturbios*) an 119-acre park with a giant, 165-foot by 228-foot Olympic-sized, swimming pool would seem like a dream; yet for many participants it was a nightmare. Individuals shared stories of their families forbidding them from playing in the same park where today they see individuals leisurely sun bathing, going for a jog or walking their dogs. I was told stories of the sight of drug dealers, open air drug use, prostitution and/or hollowed out cars being the daily norm in the park during the late 80s and early 90s.

In what Hoffnung-Garskof (2010) calls 'accidental geography,' three bridges (Washington, Hamilton and the pedestrian High Bridge) crisscross the midpoint of Highbridge Park within seven blocks, making it one of the densest bridge massing in the city. This would later make the Heights extremely accessible during the city's crack-cocaine boom, and the bridge underpasses and hidden tunnels formed a secluded environment- perfect for illicit activities.

The global change in the division of labor (to a bifurcated service economy) and the simultaneous and very intertwined fiscal crisis, helped in the creation of a new informal economy that took shape across the city. This new economy consisted mainly of

labor done inside homes, such as: childcare, sewing, sweatshops and even crack-cocaine

dealing (Hernandez, 2002; Hoffnung-Garskof, 2010). The area's accidental geography,

the neglect of Highbridge, and the informal economy created the fertile ground needed to

make the Heights, mainly Highbridge, the epicenter of what would become the crack-

cocaine boom of the late 20th century.

The crack running along Broadway.

The enclave's 'accidental geography' allowed crack-cocaine to be provided to

consumers and dealers in the surrounding suburbs of New York, New Jersey and

Connecticut, as well as local communities like Harlem and the South Bronx (Hoffnung-

Garskof, 2010). Drug dealers clustered around the entrances of the three bridges that

crisscrossed the park, at the entrances of the George Washington Bridge, as well as near

Interstates 80, 95 and 87, the majority of which are located east of Broadway

(Kleinknecht, 1996; Hoffnung-Garskof, 2010). In addition, the park's natural rugged

terrain, its hidden tunnels and dark bridge underpasses made it so that some customers

did not need to go far to use the drugs they had just purchased (Hoffnung-Garskof, 2010).

The drug boom undoubtedly caused an increase in the crime rates across the city, yet

nothing like those in the Heights.

Crime in the Heights, even during the fiscal crisis of the late 1970s, was lower

than in other nearby neighborhoods (like Harlem and the South Bronx), but this changed

rapidly as the crack-cocaine epidemic took the area by storm (Kerr, 1986). By 1989, the

drug epidemic pushed the murder rate in the Heights, and the city, to unparalleled levels.

Prior to the 1980s, the highest murder rate in the city was at 7.6 per 100,000 people in the

early 1960s. These numbers paled in comparison to the rates in the 1980s: 24.9 per

100,000 from 1981 to 1985, and then 25.4 per 100,000 from 1986 to 1990 (Snyder, 2014,

Nix, 1987). On a per capita basis New York City was the most dangerous city in the

country, and with 119 killings in 1991, the Heights was labeled the most dangerous

community in the U.S., earning the neighborhood the stigma of the city's "most

murderous neighborhood" (Halbfinger; 1998; Nix, 1987). This surge in crime was

blamed on the introduction of drugs into the community, particularly crack-cocaine.

In the late 80s crack-cocaine became a central focus of the national media with

newspapers reporting that the Heights was one of the first neighborhoods deeply affected

by the epidemic (Lubasch, 1987). While many of the customers were White suburbanites

who took advantage of the area's 'accidental geography', when covering the drug

epidemic in the area, the media mainly focused on the Dominican drug dealers of color

and their dilapidated community (Hoffnung-Garskof, 2010). Before 1990, coverage of

Latinx news was generally left to the Spanish-langue media, but now the Heights was

garnering national attention from English-language media outlets as well (Bulletin, 1991;

Dao, 1992; Gonzalez & Fritsch, 1992). Hoffnung-Garskof (2010) tell us: "Readers living

outside of New York first heard that there was a predominantly Dominican neighborhood

in New York at the same time they learned that crack was a new urban epidemic"

(p.224). This is because the media sensationalizes incidents of deviance within

communities of color like the Heights, mainly by presenting the men in the community as

animals that need to be tamed, as beasts and as turf warlords (Smith, 2006). It is usually

men of color who are demonized and their so-called inherent social-cultural traits blamed

for the violence in their respective communities- what Wacquant et al. (2014) call

racialization through selective accentuation, or fictive projection (p.1274). It didn't help that on the sweltering summer night of July 3, 1992 when Kiko died, the neighborhood had reached its boiling point. *Los Disturbios* was the perfect platform to showcase a skewed image of the residents in the Heights.

This era would have implications for the way in which the 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study were unpacking the gentrification that is currently taking over their community. The participants in this study were young children and adolescents who were coming of age in a neighborhood that was constantly portrayed as 'bad'; words like drugs, violence and poor became synonymous with the Heights. Yet, the Heights was home to the study participants, and it was where they were raised, attended schools and formed strong bonds that, ironically, grew stronger and tighter because of the overlap between the violence and the neglect.

While crack and cocaine were some of the area's hottest commodities, making the Heights a target for disinvestment, today it is the rent-regulated apartments that are the hot commodity. The Height's rent-regulated housing stock (both control and stabilized) has now made the area a target for gentrification-induced displacement. The data in chapter 6 reveals that landlords have taken serious, and sometimes extreme measures to remove the tenants occupying rent-controlled units in order to hike up the rent. One of these tactics was buyouts, mainly landlords offering their tenants money in exchange for their rent-regulated apartments. This next, and final section in this chapter will provide the context needed to understand how the history of the housing stock in the Heights, mainly its rent-regulated units, is causing the area to become a magnet for intense landlord harassment.

Housing as a Commodity

Rent-controlled apartments are located in buildings that were built prior to

February 1947 and need to be continuously occupied by a tenant since before July 1st,

1971. These units cannot easily exit the program, and unless the tenants die or voluntarily

gives up their apartments, landlords cannot legally evict them and place the apartment

back on the market (New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal,

2016). Rent-controlled units have more restrictions on the ways they may exit the

program than units that are rent-stabilized (Gaumer, 2015). Rent stabilization are

apartments that are located in buildings that contain six or more units and that were built

between February 1st, 1947 and December 21st, 1973 (Collins, 2016; Gaumer, 2015; New

York City Rent Guidelines Board). The basic law for rent stabilized units states that

landlords are not allowed to increase rents above a rate that is set by the city's' Rent

Guidelines Board (RGB). Increases in rent have ranged from 1% for one year leases and

2% for two-year leases; there was even a rent freeze to provide some temporary relief to

tenants from 2015-2016 (Moynihan, 2018; The New York City Rent Guidelines Board,

2018). On Tuesday, June 26th, 2018, the RGB voted to allow landlords to charge

increases of up to 1.5% for one-year leases and 2.5% for two-year leases (Moynihan,

2018). With approximately 75% of the housing units built prior to 1947 (see Table 3), the

Heights has one of the highest numbers rent-regulated units in New York City. In 2011,

with 56,173 units, the Heights had the most rent-regulated apartments in the city (both

controlled and stabilized): almost three-quarters of the housing units in the Heights were

rent-stabilized, with rent-controlled housing accounting for another 4 percent. Public housing projects accounting for 3 percent and only 11 percent are owner occupied (Furman Center Fact Brief, 2014). During the time of the interview portion for this study, there were 988,193, rent-regulated units in New York City, down from 1,030,000. Yet in 2017 there were only approximately 22,000 rent-controlled apartments in the entire city, down from 38,000 in 2014 (Gaumer, 2015; New York City Rent Guidelines Board: Housing Supply Report, 2018).

Between 2000 and 2015 the price of housing in the Heights increased six-fold, making it the second most gentrifying neighborhood in New York City (Hernandez, Sezgin & Marrara, 2018; NYU Furman Center State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods, 2017). Greenberg (2017) tells us that when gentrification begins in an area, landlords embark on a campaign to unlock value in their respective buildings. The author argues that this then becomes a consuming psychological torment for renters, as landlords try to reap the most profit from their units. The rent-regulated housing stock in the community is something that the participants constantly referred back to, mainly how tenants in these units seem to be a target for legal and illegal tactics that landlords are employing in order to evict these long-term tenants. Chapter 6 in this dissertation is dedicated to the participant's stories around direct displacement tactics that landlords employ to evict tenants in rent-regulated apartments. Participants also shared stories of their new neighbors in market-rate units, moving into completely gutted and renovated apartments, while Dominican tenants, mainly those in rent-regulated units, sometimes had to go to great lengths just to get a fresh coat of paint in their home, sometimes even going into their own pockets. The three main harassment tactics used by landlords

(harassment, buyouts and selectively enforcing rent laws) will be the focus of the following sections.

Landlord Harassment

Today tenants have less protection from the state and low income New Yorkers rely less and less on regulated housing. Mironova and Bach (2018) tell us that these residents in New York City are, "losing the rent and tenure protections provided in the regulated and subsidized housing sectors. They are increasingly vulnerable to sudden rent increases, do not have a right to a lease renewal, and are thus more susceptible to displacement, eviction, and homelessness" (Mironova and Bach, 2018). Today this has implications for the Heights, an area with an older, denser housing stock, and as a result, holds the highest number of rent-regulated units in all of New York City (see Table 3).

Similar to the way that Highbridge Park was the fertile ground for the drug epidemic in the 80s and 90s, the neighborhood's rent regulated stock has become an appealing investment which has created tensions for some long term tenants, mainly those in rent-regulated apartments. In areas like the Heights, where rents are rapidly rising and with one of the largest rent-stabilized housing units in the New York City, tenants are at a higher risk of landlord harassment and displacement (Stabilizing New York City Coalition, 2016).

Conclusion

Mozkowitz (2017) tells us that the fiscal crisis of the late 70s conveniently led to the implementation of new strategies that steered away from social programs that helped the poor, and focused on those that helped the rich-mainly subsidized redevelopment policies, and led New York to be the first city to employ gentrification as governance. By the time of the fiscal crisis, the city went from one dedicated to helping the underprivileged, to one dedicated to helping bankers (Mozkowitz, 2017, p. 105). This can begin to answer one of *the* main questions that the majority of the participants in this study asked: why now? Why is the Heights changing now and not during *Los Disturbios*? Just like their parents, the participants lived through one of the more precarious times in recent New York City history; yet many feel that now that they want to reap the benefits of the changes brought about by gentrification, they can't because they feel threatened by cultural displacement, or a sense of being out of place in the only place they've ever called home.

This chapter helps the reader understand what era the participants are mainly referring to as they make sense of the current changes affecting their community. It helps put the subsequent two chapters into proper context and allows the reader to understand a bit of the history of the Heights, as well as the major immigrant group that makes up the bulk of its population. It also provides background that is needed to understand the participant's stories and why they felt torn between appreciating and resenting the improvements in the area.

Next Chapter

The first empirical chapter of this dissertation follows; it will demonstrate how the participant's hyphenated Dominican-American identity are used to make sense of the gentrification in their community. Being transnational 2nd generation Dominican-Americans from higher S.E.S. leaves the participants feeling conflicted about the gentrification of the Heights. The multiple and sometimes-contradictory tugs that participants were working through led them to feel torn: they appreciate the changes and safety that is now present in the community, yet simultaneously perceive them to be a threat to the cultural fabric that makes the Heights home. Study participants fear that those same changes they are enjoying are causing cultural displacement which is leading to a change in their place identity. This chapter will mainly focus on how this population manages the contradictions in their interpretations of their experiences with the gentrification of the Heights.

Chapter 5

Culture

*Some people think I'm anti-White, I'm not,
I'm just anti-anybody who moves up here
and doesn't respect the neighborhood.
(Ethnographic Interview, 2014)*

Washington Heights: Cocaine Trade Thrives Cocaine Capital (Kerr, 1986)*;
Cocaine Capital Residents Live In Fear On 160th Street: The Worst Retail Drug Block In
New York City* (Kriegel, 1989); *Rise In Death Of Witnesses In Drug Case* (Perez-Peña,
1993). These are some newspaper headlines written about Washington Heights during
the crack-cocaine era of the 80s and 90s. Most people that were not from New York City
were first hearing about a Dominican enclave in Manhattan while they read about the
crack-cocaine epidemic that was poisoning the entire nation (Hoffnung-Garskof, 2010,
p.224). If we based our 'knowledge' about the area of Washington Heights (the Heights
from here in) solely on news coverage during that era, most people would assume that the
neighborhood was one big warzone, lacking unity or community. Although the crime in
the neighborhood was in fact record-breaking, and it did have lasting effects, the Heights
was also home to a strong-knit community; one that was doing its best to survive during
Los Disturbios, one of the harshest periods of disinvestment in recent New York City
history. The irony here is that the crime and poverty during that era actually led the
community to ban closer together, and to form place-based social networks that served to
protect each other and their families (Itzigsohn, 2009; Louie, 2006; Smith, 2006; Zhou &
Bankston, 2016). In the midst of the 'chaos' there *was* order- an entire community,
mainly of Dominican immigrants, who were navigating a new system in a foreign

country; they were going to work, paying bills and raising children-some of which are the focus of this dissertation.

During the period of *Los Disturbios* the majority of the individuals interviewed for this study were school-aged children and adolescents who came of age during this violent period; yet despite this reality, the Heights was and is still home to this group. Like the young women of color in Cahill's (2006) study of the Lower East Side, participants in this study have historically used the community of the Heights to buffer the feelings of marginalization as they weathered years of disinvestment. The enclave also served as shelter from the other forms of discrimination they've experienced as adult members of integrated spaces (Itzigsohn, 2009; Smith, 2006; Taylor, 2002). To the 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study, the Heights is more than just a geographic space, but is where their transnational hyphenated identities were formed and are fully experienced. The place of the Heights then takes on a socio-spatial dimension, and the community is now central to these individual's place-identity (Davidson, 2009; Proshansky et al., 1983).

Having lived through one of the Heights' (and the city's) most precarious time, now that the area is gentrifying, this group navigates the contradictions of feeling torn as it relates to the changes in the community, mainly because of the timing of it all. While they welcome the positive aspects of gentrification (lower crime rates, upscale commercial activity, bodegas accepting Debit cards with no minimum charge, Wi-Fi in local cafes, local cafes!) they simultaneously resent the changes, with many not questioning the changes, per say, but their timing. Where were these improvements when the Heights was still a predominately working-class Dominican community? Why are the

changes occurring now that there is an influx of new, mainly White residents? The 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study feel threatened with social exclusion from the very place they call home, and in turn feel a perceived threat to their place-identity. Therefore, for this group, the struggle against gentrification was not only about changes to their home but was also a struggle to preserve their own identity.

The Heights is a central component to the hyphenated identity of the participants in this study and this group therefore has a stronger emotional connection to the area. Yet for the new residents, who did not grow up in the Heights, and who may be moving to the area because the rent is cheaper, the enclave takes on new, perhaps less significant, meaning. Place then takes on a different meaning for the different residents in the area and as a result the perceived threat then is a result of competing spatial narratives of what the Heights means to each group.

The stories in this chapter focus on how the 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study manage the contradictions in their interpretations of their experience with the gentrification of their community. The next section highlights the participant's conversations around the timing of gentrification in the Heights.

Timing

> *It's a change and it depends on the person if it's a good change or a bad change*
> *(Ethnographic Interview, 2014)*

The meaning of place and space does not exist a vacuum but is socially constructed over time; the definition also isn't neutral but is informed by various factors like race, ethnicity and class (Mirabal, 2009; Perez, 2004). This definition of place and community are relative and can be very personal: if there is an emotional connection to a

place, like there is with the participants in this study, then the changes (even the more positive ones, like crime reduction) may be perceived as a threat. This is not because individuals in this study are afraid of change or against diversity, they are just wondering about the timing of the changes: why is the neighborhood changing now, and not during *Los Disturbios*, when the area was a predominately working class Dominican community?

The issue of timing surfaces because as Gustafson (2001) tells us, as they make sense of what these changes mean for them, study participants feel discouraged and sometimes threatened because of the memory of a place, and not necessarily the new residents moving in. It is what environmental and social psychologist call the 'environmental past'. At the core of an individual's place-identity is what is referred to as the environmental past; this past is made up of places and memories that have played an important role in an individual's psychological, social and cultural needs (Proshansky et al., 1983). It is argued that only when a person's sense of identity is threatened, by changes and/or disruptions in the places they call home (like gentrification), does the individual become aware of their place identity (Breakwell, 2015; Fried, 1963; Gans, 1962). When the individual feels that their home is under siege, they then refer to their environmental past to make sense of the current changes in their home, leading them to question not so much the timing, but the changes. This is why what may feel like an improvement to one group, may feel like a perceived threat to a group, like study participants, who are more emotionally attached to this place. Because every participant in this study came of age during *Los Disturbios,* they all asked questions regarding the timing of the changes.

Ericka was born and raised in the Inwood section of the community and recently

moved to the Bronx because she and her husband could no longer afford the rent in the

Heights. Like the majority of participants interviewed, Ericka is not questioning the

improvements but their timing. Ericka focused on the newer businesses in the area during

most of her interview.

> *I think, to be honest with you, personally, I think it's just opening up, giving people more options to see that there's more stuff out there besides the little icy guy that is standing in the corner, which I am not saying it's bad, because I like them. It's showing people there's frozen yogurt and salad bars so I think it's not bad. But now they want to make it seem like it's so fancy because there's like all these White people now moving into the area. Why couldn't you do it before it was just us? I was telling my cousin the other day like 'Dayum, now I move and we get all these spots!'. For us, because we are younger, some of the spots are good, like the new frozen yogurt spot on Dyckman. I don't mind it. I don't mind going once in a while, I don't mind going to the new, modern places.*

Ericka appreciates both the new frozen yogurt establishment, as well as the older

Dominican street vendor selling ice-cream, yet she is wondering why weren't

investments like the salad bar made in the neighborhood when the Heights was still a still

predominately working-class Dominican community, or as she stated: *'why couldn't you*

do it before it was just us'?. Ericka likes the new salad bar, yet is simultaneously

discouraged by the memory of what she wanted the Heights to be like in the past. Gia's

interview echoed Ericka's question regarding the timing of the changes:

> *You have the amenities, the subway is very close, buses galore. You are within walking distance of a Target in the Bronx and an Applebee's. You can't go wrong, but at the same time, where were these changes in the 80s and 90s and beginning of the 2000s? Where were they? Why was it that I didn't get it, do I don't deserve it? Am I not the right type of person? Where was it when I was younger and why couldn't we have this back then? These changes would've never have happened in the 90s!*

Both women highlighted the positive changes that they appreciate, but paused (as many

participants did) to question not the changes, but their timing.

The question of timing is one that was posed by every individual interviewed for

this study. Take for instance Francisco, the participant who has been exposed to

integrated, predominately White, environments longer than the others. From middle

school through college he attended predominately-White schools in lower Manhattan. For

the past decade Francisco has lived in a major European city but frequently visits the

Heights to see his elderly parents who still live in the same apartment where he was born

and raised on the east side of the Heights. Similar to Ericka and Gia, Francisco wondered

where the changes were in the past, when he desired certain goods that are now more

available in the neighborhood.

> *When I was a teenager I started going more downtown, New York, 'cause that's where my school was at and I was trying to fight everything where I lived because I was so embarrassed and so ashamed coming from such a poor place. But then in terms of how the city has changed now, and Washington Heights has changed, it's kind of scratched me a little. It's like a wound that gets scratched. In the 90s people would smoke weed right on our stoop, or on the floor upstairs. I'm like 10 years old getting high from the weed. Now, all of a sudden, there's a Christmas tree in the lobby for Christmas, they have like faux turkey posters and shit during Thanksgiving (laughs). And in a way this is always what I wanted. Now! Now is the life that I always wanted when I was a young kid.*
> *If you go to 181st you have new shops opening which is great. I also remember wanting to eat healthy and 5 years ago, across the street from me, I could barely find whole wheat bread. Why weren't those products there 5 years ago? There was no pesto, no cage free eggs, there was none of that. I'm serious! I'm talking about specific items. There was no granola, there was none of this in our 'hood and I'm so grateful for it now but I am questioning: where was this five years ago?*

Like Francisco, other individuals interviewed for this study were not against the changes,

they just felt a bit suspicious of the timing of it all, which leads them to feel threatened.

This perceived threat was partially because, as per the participants, the improvements

came about as the community began receiving more White residents, mainly to its east

side. In her work on woman of color in the Lower East Side, Cahill (2006) argues that in

gentrifying neighborhoods: "Whiteness is constructed as a threat of social and spatial

exclusion" (p. 340). Whiteness then becomes the face of gentrification in the Heights; but

is it not the new White residents who are threatening per say, but what they represent: a

change to the culture fabric of their community, in turn threatening the participant's place

identity.

Like Francisco, other individuals interviewed for this study discussed their

frustrations in wanting these changes in the past yet not having them until new White

residents began moving in. During the data analysis I began noting that some things as

'trivial' as a faux turkey poster, or a simple loaf of whole-wheat bread could trigger this

perceived threat, leading the participants to feel torn about the changes. Even a

neighbor's new refrigerator could do it, as we will see in Rose's vignette below.

Born and raised on the east side of the Heights, Rose has lived in the same

apartment her whole life. While her building has been predominately Dominican, there

has been an influx of new White residents moving in. Here Rose is telling me about her

interaction with a new White neighbor.

> *Once I met this White girl that leased the apartment above mine and she was from*
> *California. She invited me to her apartment and I got to see that 'I don't got that*
> *fridge, I don't got that oven, I don't have that counter top', I'm just saying.*

Even improvements to an apartment, as Rose's interview reveals, can trigger feelings of

resentment. It is not necessarily about the new appliances in her neighbor's apartment (or

the lack of it in hers), but the deeper significance of these material objects. The loaf of

bread and the refrigerator, to the participants in this study, are each a "symbol of a larger

cultural erasure and communal exclusion" (Mirabal, 2009, p. 23). These material things

are perceived as a threat because they are symptoms/signs of a larger process that is

threatening their community, and potentially their identity.

As it relates to the 'cultural erasure' mentioned in the Mirabal (2009) quote

above, the data also revealed that these feelings of resentment could also be triggered by

language. Later on in her interview Rose was talking about a local diner, which had been

around since the 1960s and was run by a Greek family. It was recently sold and the new

owners changed the name to "WaHi Diner":

> *The whole thing about the diner is that while now they have bright lights, before it*
> *was very dark. The older diner it was small, nothing fancy, good coffee, but it was*
> *ok. Now they have portraits telling you about the history. The menu has the*
> *George Washington Bridge on it and around it it says 'WaHi, the place where you*
> *wanna be' and I was like 'Oh my god!!'. For me, it was funny like 'Ok, NOW you*
> *notice us?!' (Laughs and rolls her eyes).*

The name of this new diner is important to note because WaHi is also the 'new' name

that developers have given to Washington Heights. It's not quite an acronym nor an

abbreviation, but is what the 99% Invisible Podcast calls an "acroname" for Washington

Heights. This process of renaming neighborhoods is what Currid (2009) calls the "Soho

Effect"; the author is referring to the way in which SoHo transformed from a

manufacturing hub to an outdoor shopping mall, going from being called South of

Houston to 'SoHo' (p.374). Mirabal (2009) tells us that space can be redefined simply by

changing the name of a place and that this change can be made in order to reflect the new

vision of the neighborhood, mainly the desired class or race of a certain place. Therefore,

as it pertains to Rose's point of now feeling 'noticed', one must ask: *Is* Rose part of this

new vision for WaHi? *Was* she kept in mind during the redefinition of this new diner? Is

WaHi (not only the diner, but this 'new' neighborhood) for all residents of the Heights?

Changing the diner's name symbolizes a shift to a restaurant that is for a different group

that may not include Rose; in turn calling the entire neighborhood WaHi can have the same effect.

Several other participants shared their frustrations with the acroname WaHi. Here we have Vivianna who just finished telling me that most people in her college know the area as WaHi.

> *Someone asked me in school where I live and I said Washington Heights and they were like ' you mean WaHi?' and I was like 'Nooo! that is so crazy. It's not a new area, it's the same old Washington Heights".*

Although WaHi may in fact be a 'new' area for incoming residents, for Vivianna, as well as the rest of the individuals in this study, the Heights is still '*the same old Washington Heights'.*

This new name has several implications for the gentrification of a neighborhood whose violent, and recent past is what most people remember. When people who are not familiar with the area hear the name "Washington Heights", at best, they may actually be hearing about this 'new' neighborhood for the first time. At worst: they may know the area *only* for its violent past, and nothing else, and headlines like those highlighted in the opening paragraph of this chapter may come to mind. The name "Washington Heights" may be synonymous with words like: crack, violence and chaos. Yet, all the while, amidst the crack there was love, in between the violence that was support, and in the middle of the chaos there was community. The name 'WaHi' simply cannot capture these nuances because the acroname itself implies that the area was once 'bad' or 'empty' of community.

What many new residents may fail to realize is that by referring to an area as 'bad', they are undoubtedly referring to its residents in the same manner, a comparison

that most residents were accustomed to. I heard many stories of participants telling me

how they were teased as kids because they lived in the Heights; or feeling embarrassed as

young adults because many people assumed that the Heights (and in turn being

Dominican) are only good for one thing: drug dealing. Below are four vignettes that all

discuss the ways in which the Heights, up until recently, was portrayed by residents who

knew very little about the community:

> *Francisco:*
> *In the 90s, about Washington Heights, White people would be like "How could you live up there with those loud ass people?" and "It's very dangerous" and "Poor you," were the kind of things I was told. I wouldn't tell my White friends that I was Dominican. Some of those same people are now living next door all of a sudden.*

> *Jorge:*
> *I ate and I swallowed the broken shards of glass from having to be teased that I lived here. 'You live in the Heights? All the way up there? God dam, who the fuck is up there?!'. A lot of people didn't know shit about Dominicans, it was not cool to be Dominican in the 80s. The only thing that people knew about Dominicans was that we sold drugs and lots of it and were super successful at it.*

> *Mario:*
> *The reputation of Washington Heights when I was first moved there, when I would tell people I lived up here they were like 'Oh, you know, Druuuugs?' Until recently, it was known for that because of what was going on in Washington Height in the '90s.*

> *Vivianna:*
> *I think the Heights just had a reputation for drugs, there's even a slogan : Washington Heights: Home of the Haze'* (Haze is a powerful strand of Marijuana*).*

While the new acroname may be a deliberate attempt to disconnect WaHi from its violent

(and less lucrative) past, what undoubtedly ends up happening is that similar to the

bulldozing that leveled areas like the South Bronx during the urban renewal era, these

'acronames' end up symbolically bulldozing through the Heights' *entire* history, not just

the so-called 'violent' or 'bad' one (Berman, 1988). The name WaHi pits gentrification

against these memories of chaos, loss and hardships; making the area feel new, safe, and

in turn more marketable for new residents seeking cheaper rents. Yet, it can also arguably

pit gentrification against memories of family, community and love. The name WaHi

overlooks the intricate social networks and place-based support systems that were put in

place despite of (and because of) the area's violent past. By referring to the Heights as

'WaHi' you erase the area's history, along with the people who make up this past,

including the study participants.

Similar to the frontier behavior, these acronames erase the social histories,

struggles and geographies that created the frontiers to begin with (Smith, 2006, p.

16).Changing the name of the neighborhood also makes the Heights feel like a frontier, a

'new area' to be explored and ultimately 'discovered'. The name WaHi is therefore part

of a problematic frontier narrative as it relates Neil Smith's (2006) 'New Urban Frontier'

theory.

The next section discusses this theory and highlights the essence of what most of

the participants told me when discussing the new White residents moving into the

Heights, mainly behaviors and practices that led the participants to feel threatened by this

new group's presence.

The Wild Wild Washington Heights

> *I don't like White people taking over, but*
> *again I am enjoying the amenities. I feel*
> *conflicted. I mean, come on! Wi-Fi at the*
> *new coffee shop? Yes! But then I'm like*
> *'ugh, another blanquito [*White Person*]' but*
> *at the same time I love that kind of space.*
> *(Ethnographic Interview, 2014).*

*Increased consumer demand for real estate
in former or gentrifying ghettoes such as
East Harlem is comparable to the discovery
of 'gold' on Native American reservations.
(Quiñones, 2004, Chango's Fire)*

The frontier idea, or that a new group of people have "discovered" an area, is one
that is historically rooted in the gentrification experience. Neil Smith (1996) introduced
the New Urban Frontier concept to argue that gentrification mirrors the westward
expansion in the U.S.; today it is where the White middle-class 'invades' communities
that are home to existing residents, who may be lower income and recently,
disproportionality people of color (Smith, 1996). In the case of the Heights, a frontier
approach is arguably necessary to 'tame' an area with such a violent past that is located
far from the financial districts in midtown and downtown, and with a predominately
working-class Latinx population. This frontier idea makes it so that today, with fewer
choices for affordable housing, new residents, as per the participants, are behaving as if
they are 'discovering' a neighborhood that has been there for decades.

While Smith (1996) compared gentrification to the land grabbing during the
country's west ward expansion, today it is not only about physically taking land, but
symbolically as well. Simply changing the Heights' name to WaHi can erase the
neighborhood's past, making the area more attractive to a new wealthier group. This
New Urban frontier, according to Safransky (2014), depends on this erasure, and is
achieved by presenting areas as empty, 'bad' and in need of improvement from outside
members of the community, not from those already within. What happens then is that
since the area's entire history is erased, these outsiders who are to move in and 'improve'
the Heights do so with little to no knowledge of the area's past. Therefore, place-based

support systems that were created in order to buffer the violence during *Los Disturbios,* as well as those created to ease the emotional and mental toll of immigration, may be perceived as disorderly or threatening to new residents. The result is then competing spatial narratives between the individuals in this study whose 'environmental past' cannot let them forget, and the new White residents who cannot understand this past, and who are being kept from it via new ovens and acronames. Similar to the faux turkey poster in Francisco's vignette, the presence of new White residents then becomes a symbol for gentrification and in turn, a symptom of a larger phenomenon that is threatening the participant with feelings of exclusion (especially their presence in spaces deemed intimate, 'Dominican' ones).

This threat of social and spatial exclusion was felt deeply when some study participants began seeing newer White residents in spaces that were culturally deemed exclusively 'Dominican'. There were several stories of participants sharing that, when it came to gentrification, they knew it had already taken over the Heights when they began seeing new White residents in these sacred spaces, mainly on its east side.

As we saw in Chapter 4, the Heights has a unique racial geography because, unlike adjacent neighborhoods like the South Bronx and Harlem, the area has had a historically White presence, mainly on its west side (Snyder, 2004; 2017). Yet interactions between these older White residents and Dominican residents, as per the participants, have historically been limited; the shock for study participants today then wasn't necessarily seeing White residents in the Heights, it was when they began seeing White residents in spaces that were deemed to be intimate 'Dominican' ones, mainly on the east side. I was told many stories about the first time the participants 'knew' the area

was gentrifying, and the majority of these stories involved participant's recounting the first time they saw White residents in spaces they hadn't in the past. I was told of an influx of White residents in their day-to-day lives, like: at the local gym, local 'Dominican' establishments, even on their daily subway commute.

Like the scene in the 1984 science fiction film, *Brother From Another Planet,* which depicts the changes taking place in Harlem, I heard stories of how on the A train most White commuters wouldn't stay pass 59th Street station. Alba was one the participants who mentioned this in her interview:

> *Thinking back to High School and taking the train, I would commute all the way downtown, you would see the White people getting on and off on different stops. Once you start getting into the Heights area, past 59th Street on the A express you started seeing less and less Whites. But now, especially early in the morning, you start seeing all the White people going down to work, or coming back up home. Take the A train at around 6pm and see how many [White people] come off the train,* to' eto blanquito *(all these White people). That's like one of the things that, to me, shows the changes that are happening in our community.*

Although the Heights is serviced by the Blue line (A and C trains) and red line (1 train), the former has had a stronger 'Dominican' presence and less of a Whiter presence, than the 1 train. One of the main reasons is because the Blue line's last stop is in the Heights, while the 1 train continues uptown into the Bronx (Department of City Planning, *Community District Profiles, 2019*). A twist was added when I was being told stories of participants seeing White residents on their daily commute; it was not about seeing White commuters coming into the Heights, but about the times of the day in which participants began noticing an influx of White residents. Because Columbia Presbyterian Hospital is located on the west side of the Heights, participants shared stories of them being used to mainly seeing White train riders commuting into the Heights in the morning and leaving the Heights after their respective evening shifts. Yet, participants began to notice a shift

when White train riders were exiting the Blue line stations during 'off' hours and also

headed on the downtown A and C training during their morning commute. This is

captured in Alba's vignette when she says: "*But now, especially early in the morning, you

start seeing all the White people going down to work, or coming back up home*".

Mario shared his story depicting the exact moment when he began seeing a

stronger White presence, mainly in spaces frequented by a Dominican majority:

> *If I had to think about how, from my perspective, the area was changing it was at
> the gym. I was going to a gym on the east side, it was a Dominican gym. White
> owner now but it used to be Dominican-owned for a while. For the first few years
> it was all Latinos but in like '07, it changed. When I was going to the gym and
> White people were there I was like 'what the fuck is this?'. I think that is where
> you start noticing things in your daily life. You have a Gristedes on 170th and it
> will have White people going there and it's cool but when you're going to the gym
> or going to some local spot and there's White people, that's when you see the
> changes.*

The participants in this study are concerned that now that new White residents are

frequenting spaces that are intimate, and some would say sacred, the Heights is becoming

more visible; this in turns leads some to worry that, via displacement, the culture will

start to change, and in turn their identity.

Sharing intimate spaces with Whiter residents would normally be ok to a

population that is used to sharing a neighborhood with White neighbors, as well as being

part of integrated spaces where Whites are a majority, yet, study participants are

concerned that given how gentrification has played out across other neighborhoods in

New York city, that their community will be priced out, leading this group to feel

threatened. The behavior of some of the new residents can be due to an idea that Cahill

(2007) offers: "White newcomers are often ignorant about the changing status of the

neighborhood and its disinvested history, and may not be conscious of the impact of their

presence and related displacements" (p.209-210). Or what Flagg (2005) calls meta-

privilege: an individual's ignorance of their White privilege. Couple this meta-privilege,

with the New Urban frontier idea, and you now have 2nd generation Dominican-

Americans in this study who feel that some of the new White residents were behaving as

if they had 'discovered' the Heights. The following vignettes highlight how this tension is

playing out in among participants:

> *Inwood community group is like a complaint forum, people are always complaining and pointing things out. I call them trolls 'cause it's like people that don't really care about the neighborhood. They are complaining because it's, the whole 'Christopher Columbus' syndrome White people have. They move up here because we have cheap rents-cheap in their eyes-we have a park. I think that if I was White and I was moving up here you know what a gem this is? The price is cheap, your groceries are cheaper than downtown, your laundry is cheaper, there's things that are a gem up here. Even food, you can live off of $20 a day. But they move up here and they don't know what's in store for them.*

As per participants, the new White residents may not be as invested in the Heights as the

individuals in this study are. They may be moving to the area because of the cheap cost of

living and not necessarily for community. Rose mentioned something similar in her quote

below:

> *Once I met this White girl that leased the apartment above mine and she was from California so I asked her "How did you find out about this building?". And she was like "Oh I found a friend's number and she told me that there's this new area that I need to check out" and I thought to myself, "Wow, NEW area!?". And my neighbor said "Oh it's really nice here, how long have you lived here?" and I said "My whole life".*

The word 'new' in the vignette above has similar implications as calling the area WaHi:

It is failing to appreciate the fact that there was an entire community there long before

people moved there for more affordable housing. By labeling the Heights 'new', residents

like Rose's neighbor are unknowingly erasing the culture that existed there before. As

you erase the area's history, you also erase part of the participant's place identity. I argue

that this is what also led Rose's neighbor to ask her how long has she lived there? This

simple question may be loaded with assumptions that a well-established community

could not possibly exist in a 'new' area. Rose's vignette highlights competing spatial

narratives that exist between new residents moving to a 'new' area and long-term

residents who, like Rose told her neighbor, have lived in the Heights *'my whole life'*.

The competing spatial narratives also exist because these two parties live in the

Heights for different reasons. For the participants the Heights is more than home, but is

part of their place-identity. While for some of the newer White residents, as per the

participants, it's just a space that has cheaper rents (compared to other areas in New York

City). On this topic we have Francisco, whom we met earlier:

> *Shit has gotten so crazy, I don't even know if it can happen any faster, the*
> *changes. I feel like it's happening so quickly. When I go home now I'm*
> *like 'Oh my God!'. I don't want to say it, but it is also a race thing. When I*
> *go home now and I see so many of my White artsy friends living in*
> *Washington Heights I'm like 'What the Fuck?! When did you move up*
> *here?'. They would neeeeevverrr in a million years go up there, not even*
> *for a visit to the Cloisters. And now they chill right there on Audubon*
> *Avenue. I'm shocked a lot of times. And you know they don't want to live*
> *up there, they want nothing to do with Dominicans, but the rent is cheaper*
> *than downtown. And I also feel there's a sense of "Where else can we go*
> *in New York City? Let's go to Washington Heights because that's the last*
> *place that we can go and we can get cheap apartment deals".*

Place undoubtedly takes on a new, perhaps less significant meaning when a group is

attracted to the Heights due to the area being the *"last place [they] can go and get cheap*

apartment deals". When place means 'convenient' and 'affordable' a person may not be

as connected to it as someone who, like individuals in this study, the Heights means

'home' and 'place identity'. This leads residents like the study participants, and newer

White residents to have a completely different (and sometimes competing) relationship to the place of the Heights.

Several other participants shared stories about the ways in which they believe that some new White residents do not appreciate the Heights and are therefore not as invested in the community as they are. Later on in his interview, Francisco mentioned how another former classmate of his, and many others, are also boasting about the Heights as if it were a 'new' area to be discovered:

> *This guy that I know he's now a real estate person and he post [on Facebook] all this stuff about apartments in Washington Heights. He'll write, "Look at this glorified, beautiful, high ceiling, old war apartment". Then I see the comments that his friends write and they're like "Oh, is it safe to go up there now?", like half joking. He says "Oh, it's marvelous. You get a cheap apartment and it's only $2000". And they are like "That's kind of a good deal!" and I'm following all of this stuff and I'm like this is ludarcris, it's ludacris!*

Walter noted:

> *I was at a communal table and a White couple sits down and this older White man that I've seen around joins the conversation. He asked them "Are you new to the neighborhood?" and they say "No, we've been here around 8 years but never walk around". I was like What the fuck? A few years ago I started seeing people that move to the neighborhood that aren't invested in the neighborhood like I am. You are just moving up here because the rent is cheap and you treat Dominicans and the people that live here like they are invisible and I just have a problem with that. Some people think I'm anti-White, I'm not, I'm just anti-anybody who moves up here and doesn't respect the neighborhood.*

For people like Walter, who are invested in their neighborhood, they choose to live in the Heights because they want to, because it is his culture and part of his identity. As a result, he, like other participants, is committed not only to the people of the Heights, but also to the enclave that played a vital role in their hyphenated identity. Now the new residents

are moving in and, according to participants, not caring and this does not sit well with residents like Walter:

> *In Inwood there's a small community of White people , that don't really live here, you understand what I'm saying? They live here in terms of physically but they don't support anything. They live near 207, off the A train, on Seaman, Broadway or Cooper* [All west of Broadway]*, and don't go anywhere else, not even Dyckman. They go straight to the train and home. A small Inwood community, of mainly White parents, only deal with a handful of businesses. I'm tired of it. I've lived here all my life and I just find these White people very disrespectful. I don't understand the concept of moving somewhere and not getting to know your neighborhood. I mean even when I go on vacation I need to know where I'm at. I'm just naturally curious. I feel that a lot of White people that move up here aren't really about that. They just want to carve this new thing for themselves. They always have this agenda and shit like that.*

I heard many stories like Walter's where participants told me that White and Dominican residents live relatively separate lives in the Heights, mainly as it pertains to businesses that cater to predominately White patrons and those that cater to Dominicans patrons; or what Hyra (2017) calls 'diversity segregation'.

Yet, the opposite is also true: I heard complaints from participants arguing that the only form of 'interaction' that newer White residents had with Dominican residents was when new White residents were surveilling and policing cultural practices that have been occurring in the Heights for decades. The following section highlights vignettes that address the formal (and informal) surveillance taking hold now that White residents are moving into the neighborhood.

Surveillance

In her invaluable Oral History study on the Latinx community in San Francisco's Mission District, Mirabal (2009) demonstrates that when gentrification starts, the street is no longer used for sustaining the community, but as a profit-making commodity; Perez

(2004) tells us that gentrification is one of the clearest examples of the struggle between Place-exchange-value and use-value (p.41). As a result, study participants can no longer associate with some places and spaces that used to define their neighborhood, and in turn their identity; this can be a result of that space no longer being there physically, or the policing and surveillance of these spaces (and the community practices that manifest in these spaces).

Here we have Margaret sharing her stories about the racial tension within the building where she and her husband own an apartment. They are both active members in their community and are part of their building's Co-op board. The majority of her interview centered on Margaret's experiences as a board member, and about feeling torn about the changes within her own building. She told me that her building is mostly split between older African-American residents who have been living in the Heights for over 30 years, and younger White residents who have recently moved into the area. According to Margaret both parties are bumping heads regarding the future of their building, and of the Heights.

A big part of her interview was spent on Margaret talking about the actual board meetings in her building. To her, they were a microcosm of what was happening outside in the larger community. There was a tension between older residents of color, and new, younger White residents. Margaret shared an example of older African-American women talking out of turn in the meetings; while Margaret did admit that some of the older African-American women were sometimes overbearing and stuck in their ways, she felt that, like her, they too were just afraid that their neighborhood was being taken over. Margaret felt a sense of respect for the older African-American tenants and mentioned

feeling annoyed during board meetings when this group of elders was ignored or talked over by younger White residents. Margaret put herself in the position of the newer White residents and said the following:

> *I'm looking at it like this, I just feel like if I lived, I'm gonna say downtown, and I lived in their [White people] building, I don't know if they necessarily would try to have a conversation with me. If the tables were turned I just assumed that I would just be a little quiet if that was me in that situation, and I feel like the community is surprised that they [White residents] are just so outspoken.*

This idea of White residents being so outspoken, and coming into the community and imposing their values, can be tied back to Flagg's (2005) meta-privilege. I heard many stories of new, mainly White, residents, not always appreciating the communities that were already in place before their move to the Heights. This creates a tremendous tension because the new tenants may not be able to see the reality that came before them; this can then lead long-term residents like the participant's in this study to feel that the new residents may not respect the overall community of the Heights. The younger White tenants in Margaret's vignette may not even be aware of the way they are showing up, many may not know about the violent history of the Heights, or may be simply be in denial.

Similar to study participants, some new White residents also expressed some of their perceived threats. During his interview Walter brought up a social media community group that was started to share stories about living in the Heights. According to Walter, as well as other participants, it has turned into a complaint forum for some new residents to 'cyber bully' Dominican residents in the Heights. Below he shares his story about a White resident complaining on the forum:

> *The other day this woman puts up on the forum, she's like "I saw a group of young men congregated" like I guess in her corner. "I thought someone from the*

community board was gonna do something". These people are talking about what's been going on uptown for over 30 years. I just take stuff like that for code word 'Dominican'. I don't care I'll go on and curse people out on the forum. I don't give a fuck!

For the woman in Walter's vignette, the men may not represent community, but a symbol of the Height's violent past, one that she thought was no longer present. They may also disrupt what she envisioned the Heights to be, versus what is already there.

In her interview Margaret also talked about the White residents sharing their stories of feeling threatened by the younger residents of color who sit on the stoop and loiter in front of their building. The new White residents have propose hiring a doorman and putting up "No Sitting" signs in the building; yet the older African American residents do not see a need for one as they do not see anything wrong with sitting outside in front of the building. These competing spatial narratives occur because when an area gentrifies, elements of the built environment in a neighborhood also take on new meaning, depending on how these spaces are used and interpreted by different people. Stoops may just literally be a means to an end for one group, while for others (like those in this study) these stairs are part of their experiences in the community of the Heights, and therefore become part of their place-identity. This is more than just about hanging out in front of someone's building, but about how space is used to build and sustain community. The newcomers in Margaret's buildings, and well as many other newcomers across the enclave of the Heights, may not perceive stoops or street corners as social, community spaces. This may occur because as Misra (2018) argues, "Newcomers may see long-established neighborhood rituals not as ways the community connects with each other, but as sources of nuisance" (City Lab, 2018). I argue that this is because the newer

residents do not know the history of the Heights and therefore do not understand the

community practices, like sitting on the stoop in the front of a building

Margaret felt torn when this was proposed in her Co-op meeting: although she

wanted to see her building and neighborhood improve and feel safer, she also didn't think

there was anything problematic about the young residents sitting on the stoop. I asked her

how she felt about this, and here is Margaret's response:

> *I feel like, to be honest, it doesn't really bother me because when I moved into the building I knew what it was gonna be. A lot of people had these other kinds of expectations when they moved in here now that the community's changed. Like it's gonna be like where they used to live in Queens or maybe downtown. But no one is sitting on your car, they aren't doing anything wrong. The only thing I don't like it is if I'm coming up the stairs with groceries, those three steps, and people are in the way and they don't move, but that's usually the younger kids, afterschool. But you can't tell someone's kid not to hangout there. So they had this big thing at the meeting about the sign that they want to put up it said something like 'If you don't live here don't sit there'.*

While new residents may deem sitting in front on the building's stoop as loitering, the 2nd

generation Dominican-Americans see their home, their community. A lot of this conflict

over the definition of place also has to do with what Margaret mentioned in the vignette

when she says that '*when I moved into the building I knew what it was gonna be"*. Unlike

the woman in Walter's example above, Margaret didn't *envision* what the Heights would

be, as a long-term resident, she *knew* what was already there. The stoop is an element of

their childhood, with study participants sharing stories of the front of their buildings

being one of the few places they were allowed to play in.

This conversation about space and what it means for the community becomes

tricky when we highlight that the individuals in this study came of age in an era where

electronic devices were not the norm, while playing outside and going to the park were;

yet although the Heights is surrounded by Highbridge Park-the 3rd largest in the city- the

crime surge of the late 80s and early 90s led parents to be extra vigilant of their children,

especially as it related to the park (a topic covered in the previous chapter). Sadly

Francisco's story below is not unique to him, as other participants shared stories about

their exposure to the crime and crack epidemic in the area:

> *Growing up in Washington Heights, in the 80s was just like the crack boom of the Northeast, as far as I saw it and I didn't know anything different because this is just where I grew up. I remember playing with crack bottles and syringes. I remember when I was little they had these little crack bottles and the little tops were neon colors like electric blue and red. I remember that so so clearly.*

I was told stories of parents prohibiting their children from going into Highbridge Park,

and that any play time was usually limited to the front of their apartment buildings. These

were some of the few safe spaces where their parents, and other members of the

community, could watch over them. Even though today individuals like Margaret would

not sit in the front of their buildings, it is still a practice that means more to her than just

people loitering in front of someone's property, but is about community building.

What I also learned was that this competition for 'space' goes beyond the physical

built environment and moves into a conversation on noise pollution. Here we have Walter

sharing a story about the Facebook forum he mentioned above:

> *The other day somebody was there complaining about Mr. Softee being loud at 12pm and he was talking about calling 311. I left a comment like: "Make sure that you slap the cone out of the kid's hand!".*

The Mr. Softee ice cream truck forms part of the norms and customs found across several

New York City communities. While the simple tune playing out of an ice cream truck can

equal nostalgia for a group who factor the sound into their experience of what it means to

be in community; for others, with no emotional connection to the place of the Heights,

the same sound becomes a nuisance. In 2017 a recent Harlem transplant declared war Mr.

Softee's jingle, calling 311 and writing to her local representative to complain about

noise pollution caused by the ice cream truck's tune (Tempey, 2017). The same jingle

that is causing this resident to feel so disturbed that she had to take certain measures, may

serve as a sense of nostalgia for the individuals in this study. The participant's childhood

undoubtedly forms part of their place-identity, therefore, because their childhood was

lived out during one of the most violent eras in the community's history, even the small

elements that make them feel like children – the sound of Mr. Softee- are cherished and

may be protected at all cost.

On the topic of noise pollution, I heard many stories about newer, mainly White,

tenants complaining about the overall noise in the Heights. Although the majority of the

study participants didn't necessarily mind the noise, those that did shared that they rarely

felt the need to police the noisy individuals. This is because, as Wendy demonstrates in

her vignette below, there is a cultural understanding that is vital in any community.

> *I don't mind the noise. I remember one my neighbors was playing Bachata and it was like 11pm on like a Tuesday night or something like that. At that point I was like 'seriously my people? I'm trying to sleep. I know you just gotta listen to it, I know!' (laughs). I understood from a cultural perceptive, sometimes you just gotta just play your music. Sometimes you wanna dance* una bachatita *[a bachata song] in your living room (laughs), but I gotta work tomorrow and this shit is not cool! But I didn't complain to anybody either and I feel like if I weren't part of the community, if I weren't an insider per say I would've. I kind of like let it happen and I was like 'fuck it' I didn't write the community board and I didn't feel the need to ask to call the police or our super whatever. It's kind of like, whatever*

Wendy's line *"I understood from a cultural perspective, sometimes you just gotta play

your music'* fully embodies the tension playing out in the Heights today. Even though the

music is a disturbance on a weekday night, Wendy understands that playing music is a

cultural practice in the Dominican community. Although it may bother her, this cultural

understanding keeps her from complaining to her neighbor, or worse: calling 311 or 911.

The lack of cultural perspective it what perhaps allows new residents to police cultural

practices like a neighbor playing music on a weekday.

Even if many of the participants would not congregate in the corner themselves,

sit on the stoop anymore, nor play loud music from their apartments, most of them do

understand that these are cultural practices that make the Heights home; they also

understand that some of these cultural practices come with living in an ethnic enclave in

New York City. Challenging these practices challenges the very community of the

Heights, challenging their 'home', and in turn the participant's very identity.

Sometimes the surveillance went beyond policing aspects of New York city street

culture but seeped into cultural practices that the 1st generation brought over when they

migrated from the Dominican Republic. Here we have Selena sharing a story about the

policing of a cultural political practice that is common across the Caribbean:

> *I remember seeing an article on DNA.info, I think it was last election cycle or something, last summer, and they were trying to pull those campaign cars over because of the noise and I was like: See! That's what gentrification is! It stops the people who are just trying to campaign. But literally that's how you saw it in your home country. The White residents are commenting about the political trucks with the music and I'm like, "you do know where that originates? That's DR, that's how campaigns work". You're not gonna get elected if you don't do that, it's very visual, it's very audio based. And they are like "Oh my god! These trucks pass every hour with the music!" and I'm like, listen man! That's the only way we know how to get elected. Forget about us having like a $500-a-plate fundraiser somewhere. No! You're going to drive around the Heights and blast merengue to get people's attention, with your face plastered all around the truck. That's just how it is!*

Selena adds an important element to this conversation around policing when, during her

interview, she stated: *"you do know where that originates? That's DR, that's how*

campaigns work". These are practices that the 1st generation used to buffer the

psychology of immigration, as well as establish a political foundation in this city.

Individual candidates create an audio-visual component to their political campaign in

order to get Dominicans, mainly those of the 1st generation, to come out to the polls. As

Selena reminded me, *"You're not gonna get elected if you don't do that, it's very visual,*

it's very audio based". Beyond this, this cultural practice is one of the aspects that makes

the Heights 'home', mainly to the 1st generation, and by default the 2nd generation.

Even as individuals with higher S.E.S., this group is also part of the Dominican

culture in the Heights and they understand certain cultural nuances that are now being

deemed unacceptable, sometimes even unlawful. Because these practices make up

aspects of their identity, these individuals feel threatened as these practices are policed

and even more so when they are trying to be stopped all together. Again, it is changing

the cultural fabric of the Heights and leading participants to feel threatened, and in turn

torn about the changes.

Similarly, during her interview, Gia shared her concern that some of the cultural

practices that make the Heights a Dominican enclave, are being erased. In the following

vignette, she focuses on the vanishing of Dominican foods, mainly street vendors.

> *We are losing more than small businesses, probably also losing our health. You aren't going to get Josefa with her hole in the wall that sells* arroz, habichuela y carne *[rice, beans and meat] with her* sancocho *[traditional Dominican stew], you are going to get Chipotle, McDonalds; and we are losing probably our health at the same time. I'd rather eat a* pastelito *[meat patty] from the street than anything from McDonald's. You don't see that around here anymore, only on 181st, and I don't know how long that's going to last until the police comes and say "You don't have the proper credentials to sell this food on the street". Or the* piraguero *[shaved iced vendor] or the icies or the* Coco *[coconut] you can get that looks like you went to the Caribbean and they are chopping it in the corner. How long is all that going to last?*

Although some of the practices that Gia mentioned above may be foreign to some new residents, they are part of the participant's place-identity. Street vendors are not only part of New York City street culture, but by selling Dominican foods, these vendors are also a way to reinforce the distinct Latinx-identified community in the Heights (Duneier, 2000). Yet it is even more than that; to Gia this is more than just the street food, but a connection to the actual street vendors and place-based support networks, like borrowing money, as a means for survival. In a previous vignette, Gia mentioned that during her childhood street vendors were like family, and that as a child, Gia's mother used to borrow money from the same vendors that are slowly but surely being eradicated as a result of gentrification.

This conversation about surveillance is not necessarily about the ice cream truck, or the street vendor, nor about the new oven that Rose's neighbor has and she does not, but about the erasure of a community that has been so vital in the lives of the study participants.

Yet as critical as this group was about the White residents moving into the Heights, they were also critical of their Dominican community as well. While the Heights is still their home, as 2nd generation Dominican-Americans with a higher S.E.S., they want spaces where they feel comfortable and that meet their cultural *and* economic needs

On the Hyphen

> *I think that's why this neighborhood is really complicated in the way it's evolving. It's not just White people coming in, there's so many different aspects.*
> *(Ethnographic Interview, 2014)*

Because place is a process and therefore does not mean the same thing to everybody, the definition of place even varies with the Dominican community (Massey, 2013). Mario brought this up when he said: *"I think that's why this neighborhood is really complicated in the way it's evolving. It's not just White people coming in, there's so many different aspects"*. The 'many different aspects' he is referring to are the different kinds of Dominicans that are taking part in the changes. As individuals with higher S.E.S, the study participants have been exposed to integrated, mainly White, spaces. These spaces exposed them to different options, which they then want to experience in the Heights. Here we have Wilson sharing his feelings regarding the gentrification of the Heights.

> *I think, again, it's not Black and White so there's layers. Because when you've been exposed to other things you see that there's actually another way of doing something and that's where, for Dominican-Americans, the gears shift again. I allowed myself to remain open and expand my mind to something bigger than my own community, now I'm here and I have a critical eye.*

This idea of 'remaining open' may lead some 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study to be critical of Dominicans from different generations and/or S.E.S. Some of the participants felt that local, Dominican-owned businesses in the area were not all keeping up with the times. Experiencing the different spheres outside of the Heights exposes participants to different lifestyles. Take for instance Mario; as an artist Mario spoke emphatically about the business aspects of the changes. He is focusing on the older, more 'traditional' Dominican businesses, and the ways in which they sometimes simply cannot cater to the taste of the new professional Dominican generation:

> *Some of these owners are Dominican and they are only thinking Merengue Salsa, events like that. They are not thinking as far as artist. I think that's part of the 2nd generation movement is that there are Dominicans skaters, Dominicans into the arts, Dominicans that appreciate that and I think that the neighborhood changing*

on one end it's kind of like more open to art. Predominantly Dominicans right now are only entertainment nightclubs and just Bachata and Merengue. That's just one facet and one side of Dominicans, you have the other side of our painters, artist, musicians that are not musicians meaning Merengue and Salsa, there's other types. Then also you have filmmakers. So you have these Dominicans that would like to be at a café and chill. Where a Starbucks would be friendly to them in that sense, where they gonna go? A Dominican mom-and-pop restaurant where there's no Wi-Fi? (laughs).

They appreciate aspects of the changes, like Wi-Fi, yet this is not found across most of the older Dominican establishments. There was elements of their identity that are still not fully playing out in the Heights, this balance between their hyphenated Dominican-identity is sometimes at odds in the Dominican spaces in the area.

Yet, because the area is so diverse and complex, there are spaces where this group feels at home.

Balanced

Not only is the neighborhood complex and nuanced, so are the participants who are making sense of the changes. These individuals are not only making sense of the changes solely as Dominicans nor as Americans, but as the transnational Dominican-Americans. While many may be apprehensive about the changes, they are also very excited; therefore every single interview conducted for this study had the same underlying theme of feeing torn.

Below Anthony is telling me about one place where he feels most comfortable and why:

I wish there was a balance, everything in life needs balance. There's a café on the west side of Broadway and it's really good. You go in there and it's a Heights utopia. You go there and it's Dominicans and White people, it's never like "There's too many White people here".

Balance is a word that came up frequently during the data analysis; mainly participants appreciating the way the Heights is now. They believe it has the perfect balance between still feeling like a Dominican enclave, yet having the amenities and safety they always longed for. Similar to Anthony, Hector is telling me that he likes the current balance found in the Heights: there are Dominican businesses and there are chain restaurants and 'White' businesses. For example, he just finished telling me that although there is a new Starbucks in the area, there is also a new Yaroa restaurant as well. A Yaroa is considered a mini Dominican casserole made of mashed sweet yellow plantains layered with meat then topped with mozzarella cheese (Garcia, 2012): Hector:

> *They put a Starbucks but then they put a Yaroa (laughs). That's the new Dominicans... They build Heights Tavern then Casa de Mofongo so there is a balance.*

It seems like the 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study appreciate aspects of the neighborhood today. It's not the community they were used to in the past, and although there are newer non-Dominican residents moving in, the area has not lost its Dominican essence yet. There are new establishments that cater to an aspect of their identity that they would often times have to leave the area to experience; yet there are also places where they can still purchase goods and services that help them feel at home in a Dominican enclave. There seems to be a happy medium, which the 2nd generation would like to sustain:

Gia:

> *You have cafes and a few upscale clothing stores, you have restaurants that you would have probably never seen in this neighborhood: the Italian place, sushi place, the Mexican, the upscale Dominican fusion, the wine bars, the different types of bars. You have a Thai restaurant. There is a café that has really good burgers, that is right next to a church, where you can eat outside. Cigar lounges.*

Our generation is trying to hold on to the culture in a different way. It's putting in a new establishment with old settings but it's still changing. I feel like some Dominican establishment are moving with the flow, in terms of not letting go of authenticity and going more towards the new generation. While some are going to be visiting the establishment for its aesthetics, I am just here looking for my good rice and chicken. I need authenticity, I grew up in it. I don't want it as often, every now and then I have to have a platano. I do miss it, but I'm torn: but the neighborhood looks and feels and is so much better.

Jesus:

When you ask the question about ideally where do I see the Heights? I think we're at a decent medium right now, I would prefer it to stay roughly where it's at, where it's definitely gentrified already but not to the point where we've lost our identity, not yet. We're reaching that breaking point soon, I feel like in the next few years as far as the reality goes. But we're still very much a Dominican neighborhood, culturally. But if it continues to change at the rate it's changing that's not gonna be the case in 5 -10 years. Do I wish it weren't' like that? Yes, like I said I would prefer the medium where we're at now. Yes, there is a positive change, no matter what the intentions of that change or what caused that change. Businesses are doing better, it does have a nicer feel, it's changing in a positive way, for a lot of people. The fact that crime rate is going down not only for the new people coming in but it also helps the people who are already living here.

The area as it was during the fieldwork for this dissertation reflected the participant's complex hyphenated identity; overall the Heights catered to their entire Dominican-American identity. Sadly, through time the scales continue to tip towards a more homogenous neighborhood with less of a Dominican presence.

Conclusion

Change is an inevitable part of life and every community in the city of New York has undergone its fair share of it. After interviewing each participant I am aware that this particular group understands this reality of life. It's not change that's the issue, but its timing and pace, mainly how the cultural fabric of their community seems to be the price that is paid in its name (subject of Chapter 6 in this dissertation). Despite this

observation, participants are doing their best to learn how to live with the feelings of being torn: resenting that the changing are occurring now and now during the era of *Los Distubrios*, yet it's a resentment tempered with some feeling of liking the trappings of gentrification.

Although they appreciate most of the changes, they fear that with these changes comes a deterioration of a community that has been so vital for their existence. This is especially important for the 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study, because the ethnic enclave of the Heights is where their hyphenated identity was born and flourished.

Next Chapter

The next chapter, six, is the second empirical chapter in this dissertation and it highlights the various displacement pressures that the participants were working through, mainly cultural displacement; this occurs when the effects of gentrification begin to change the cultural fabric of the Heights, often times leading residents to feel alienated in their own home (Atkinson, 2016; Cahill, 2007; Zukin, 2010). Although Chapter five highlighted the perceived feelings of threatening study participants may feel threatened when places change, especially if, like the participants in this study, their identity is directly tied to it; they become protective and defensive when the area begins to gentrify. Chapter six contains stories about the direct displacement pressures that the 1st generation was working through, as shared by the participants. Operating in what Carling (2008) calls the 'moral economy' of transnational communities like the Heights, the 2nd

generation serves as cultural brokers to the 1st generation. For the 2nd generation, the moral economy goes beyond morality, and is about place-identity as well. So when the neighborhood begins to change what the 2nd generation experience is not the nostalgia mentioned by Gordon (1964), but it is almost as if they are being ripped away from their homeland.

Chapter 6

Displacement

Social relations form a major part of the cultural fabric that binds a community together. They are one of the main pillars in any community and assist their members in feeling safe, welcomed and at home in their neighborhood. These relations are important for all communities, but as we saw in the Literature Review they play a particularly vital role within transnational immigrant communities like the Heights. One of the ways in which these social relations are sustained is through the Moral Economy that is at the core of transnational communities; the extended family, friends and even small businesses owners are central to an individual's life within this economy (Carling, 2008; Hage, 2002). The connections with these community-members help form this cultural fabric, which then plays a major part in the hyphenated Dominican-American identity of the participants in this study.

This connection, I argue, is also what leads the 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study to feel torn about the gentrification of the Heights. As we saw in the previous empirical chapter, they appreciate some of the changes brought about by gentrification, yet they feel torn, mainly perceiving the changes as a direct threat to their identity. This chapter will highlight the reasons why the 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study are concerned about the ways in which these changes are a direct threat to longer-term, 1st generation Dominican residents of the Heights. The reason for this concern is twofold: as part of any Moral Economy, these individuals were raised to care for the community that helped their parents when they first arrived to the U.S., not only direct family members, but extended ones as well. Also: If gentrification continues,

and the people and businesses that form part of this identity are displaced, members of the 2nd generation Dominican-American community are left with a strong sense of cultural displacement. One of the major ways in which the 1st generation is threatened by direct displacement pressures is via landlord harassments. The 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study are concerned that now that there is an ability to make more money from the housing stock in the Heights, people who have been there for decades are in a more fragile positions because they may not have the resources to 'defend' themselves from this harassment. The situation that the 1st generation finds themselves in is important to the study participant's because the displacement of the 1st generation will completely alter the cultural fabric of the Heights, reshaping the ethnic enclave where they grew up and in turn their identity.

The first section of this chapter will therefore highlight how the gentrification of the Heights jeopardizes this cultural fabric, and how this in turn affects 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study. The second section will discuss threats of direct displacement, mainly as it relates to the 1st generation. The three main techniques used to accomplish this displacement in the Heights: 1) landlord buyouts, 2) lack of renovations and repairs by landlords, mainly in rent-regulated apartment and 3) landlords selectively enforcing/nitpicking at lease agreements in rent-regulated units. The last section of this chapter shows how, because of the Moral Economy in the Heights, 2nd generation Dominican-Americans find themselves using the social capacity they have acquired as members of integrated spaces to serve as cultural brokers to help the 1st generation remain in the Heights.

Cultura:
Cultural Fabric of the Heights

> *I go to the Heights to get alcanfol to get javon de*
> *cuava, el candando, el javon azulito, it's so good.*
> *(Ethnographic Interview, 2014).*

There is a Moral Economy among transnational communities in which the

extended family is both highly valued and honored. Immigrant parents instilled in their

children a sense of communality, which is this idea that they must always be grateful and

pay back the many favors that family members and friends did for them when they first

arrived to the U.S. (Ballard 200l; Fog Olwig 2002; Levitt, 2009; Schmalzbauer, 2004).

Carling (2008) argues: "repaying the gift of communality is a central element in the

moral framework of transnationalism" (p.6). Repayments, according to Hage (2002), are

made in small installments, through lifetime participation in your community. This

participation comes in the form of visiting family, attending community events, and for

2nd generation Dominican-Americans like those in this study, it means serving as their

community's cultural broker. This Moral Economy helps form the connections that play a

vital role in the cultural fabric of the enclave. When this cultural fabric is in jeopardy, as

a result of gentrification, 2nd generation Dominican-Americans like those in this study

feel threatened; not only because it is their culture that is as risk, but their place identity

as well.

Cultural displacement can provoke feelings of alienation among long-term

residents, even those who no longer live in the Heights. This is because, as this study has

already demonstrated, place for this group is not only limited to its physical necessity, nor

an area where their day-to-day unfolds, but is also a place where their vital social

networks are created and sustained. Yet for the 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in

this study, this definition of place goes beyond just cultural practices, and includes their

place identity. Below are vignettes that highlight the ways in which the cultural fabric of

the Heights is vital for the study participants.

Victoria lives in the suburbs, yet she is still very much part of the community of

the Heights. Not only does she run most of her errands there (purchasing most of her

groceries, getting her nails and eyebrows done), but also her children attend private

schools in the Heights. Her mother and brothers still live in the community and her

husband owns a barbershop in the area. She said this about the shop:

> *You have people coming in from different areas, they don't necessarily
> live there anymore. They come from Jersey, they bought houses in Jersey
> but they like how the barber does their hair or the lady does their hair. My
> husband has clients coming in from Philly sometimes.*

Why would these individuals travel to a barbershop all the way in the Heights when there

are certified barbers in New Jersey and in Philadelphia? Why does Victoria go to the

Heights to get her hair done? I argue that this is beyond the beautician who does her hair

or about how her husband cuts his client's hair; it is about family and about the

communality. It is not about the barber per se, but about the culture of barbershop, mainly

the experience of the participants being around their own kind and feeding that side of

their hyphenated identity that was cultivated by participating in cultural practices as they

were coming of age. These cultural practices range from purchasing Dominican cleaning

products, to traveling to the Heights for a haircut. While these practices are all conducted

in a physical space, the meaning behind the place transcends the bricks and mortars. For

example, here we have Rose who compared her local Bodega to 'home':

> *I have a Dominican Bodega on the corner of my house it's still a 'Bodega.' Yo,
> everywhere else is a Deli, but I still go to the Bodega because you got that
> Dominican cheese I like. You don't have the hummus like in the Delis, and Delis*

are great, but still when you want that Dominican stuff, the Bodega still feels like home to me.

When the word 'home' is used in this context, it is not only referring to the nostalgia for the sights and smells of the Heights, but to the transnational actions they practiced in their actual homes, which they also practices in spaces outside of the home, like a Bodega. Someone else who mentioned the *Bodega* was Gia:

The Bodega that has been around for 26 years is closing at the end of July. With that we are losing the platanos *[plantains] that comes or* yucca *[cassava] you can get in the corner because you are hungry at 2 in the morning. Now they are probably going to sell the bodega and put another restaurant or another gourmet supermarket and instead of paying one dollar* por un café, *you are paying $6 for an espresso and it's the same thing!*

For Gia, and other study participants, this is much more than losing a Bodega or about expensive coffee, but about a piece of their identity being sold and converted into a place that will most likely just be a building to them, and not hold as much emotional significance as the Bodega did.

It is this sense of home that makes participants want the Heights to stay Dominican.

Wendy says the following about the cultural fabric in the Heights.

I think the Heights has a very rich culture with Dominicans, we get the parades up here. People from the Bronx come here, people from Brooklyn come here, when we do our own little parade. It's just nice to have something for us. Every Dominican has a connection to the Heights, those in New York City and those outside.

In this example we see how Wendy is arguing that the Heights is a vital component to her identity, as well as to other Dominicans outside of the enclave. Here she is highlighting that the meaning of the ethnic enclave of the Height, its cultural fabric, is important for 'every Dominican' even those who are not from the Heights. This connection is what

drove most of the participants to want to stay in the neighborhood, with some even

purchasing retail and residential property in the area. Here we have Alba who would also

purchase a home in the Heights:

> *If I were given the chance to purchase and stay, I would, mainly because of the connection, the connection to people, you feel at home. I want to be able to let the Dominican side of me to come out [laughs] it's a part of me too.*

The culture is so vital to her that Alba is willing to set deeper roots in the Heights by

becoming a homeowner in the area. That Dominican side of her that she mentions is what

arguably serves as a buffer against discrimination outside of the Heights.

Hector is a homeowner in Harlem, but frequents the Heights because his mother

still lives in the rent-controlled apartment where Hector and his siblings were born.

During his interview Hector mentioned his appreciation for some of the current changes

in the area, yet when I asked if he would've like to have these options as he was coming

of age, he had this to say:

> *No! Because that's what makes me who I am. I know about* Caballo Blanco *[Dominican wine] and all that shit they had in the bodega like* Salami Campesino *[Dominican salami] [laughs]. Now they don't have that; now everything is Boar's head. That's the whole thing, because now that the neighborhood is changing, that Dominican part is leaving. There is a supermarket on 160th and St. Nicholas* que tiene un *[they have a] Dominican products aisle, before they were all over the supermarket, now they are only in that aisle. Before the* cassave *[traditional Dominican bread] was right next to the cashier, the* aguacate *[avocado], things that we eat, not anymore. I still go to the Heights to get* alcanfol *[camphor], to get* javon de cuava, el candando, el javon azulito *[multi-purpose Dominican glycerin soap], it's so good.*

Just like place is more than just bricks and mortars to these individuals, the cultural items

mentioned in Hector's vignette are more than just physical goods. They represent

elements of a culture that is part of their lives and a way to remain connected to their

Dominican identity. Their taste and preference for these products were born out of their

upbringing in a community that was more than just home to them, but now form part of their identity.

Another interesting element that surfaced from the data was when I was analyzing the interviews from individuals who were parents. When asked if they wanted the community to be around for their children every parent answered yes. We met Victoria earlier in this chapter; even though she owns a home in the suburbs, her two children were attending private school in the Heights, as mentioned above. Like other participants, despite having access to other services across the N.Y. Metropolitan area, she chose to send them to school in the Heights. This decision, as per Victoria, was mainly out of convenience, but also because she wanted her children to be around the Dominican culture. Below is the first part of her vignette:

> *My brother still lives there* [in the Heights] *and even though I live in the suburbs, I actually got a babysitter in the area because if anything happened I had my brother who lived around there and worked around there. I had more people to help me with my kids in case I was late to pick them up, rather then having them in the suburbs where I really don't have anyone.*

During our conversation she talked extensively about her attempt to keep her children as connected to their Dominican culture as possible, and one way was keeping them in the Heights. At a local café near her corporate job in midtown she told me that when her children were small, she insisted on a Dominican babysitter:

> *And as much as I criticize it I love the Heights 'cause you find everything and it's your people at the end of the day. You can find a decent babysitter at a decent price in the Heights. It's not the same as day cares down here, you're gonna pay a lot of money and the schedule is not flexible. Dominicans are gonna feed your kids rice and beans. It's our people and I think other cultures prefer to be around their own kind. Polish people want to be with their Polish people. Everyone kind of feels a little bit more comfortable when you know the culture. Because it's Dominican I feel comfortable with them.*

Here is an individual with a corporate job who can most likely afford childcare around her job in Midtown, yet she prefers childcare in the Heights. Her choice may be out of preference and also due to culture. The community is now not only facilitating her connection to the Dominican culture, but her children's as well.

The enclave of the Heights becomes vital in the lives individuals whose identity is intricately woven within the cultural fabric of the area; it began with the 1st generation, and now even some of the 3rd generation is part of this fabric. Yet it is arguably the 1st generation who currently play a necessary role in this fabric, therefore, as much as they attempted to fully appreciate and enjoy the improvements to the community, the direct threat of displacement to the 1st generation keeps them feeling torn.

The next section highlights the stories that participants shared about the ways that gentrification is threatening the culture in the Heights and will highlight one of the primary manifestations of gentrification in the Heights: landlord harassment of 1st generation tenants in rent-regulated apartments.

Displacement of the 1st generation

The moral economy within transnational communities, coupled with the way the Heights has played a direct role in the participant's identity, leads the 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study to contend with the direct displacement pressures placed on the 1st generation. Even though most of the study participants were not dealing with direct displacement themselves, this group seemed much invested in their communities' battle with displacement, with the majority of the study participants sharing

stories of gentrification-induced displacement pressures faced by the 1st generation. Therefore, when making sense of the gentrification of the Heights, this group factored in other community members, mainly the 1st generation. Placing this generation at the center of their sense making leads the study participants to feel torn: they appreciate some of the changes but feel threatened by the direct displacement pressures placed on some of the 1st generation. This is a threat because the 1st generation forms a vital component in the Heights' cultural fabric; their displacement will then lead to changes that will transform the community into a place that this study group will not recognize. The direct displacement pressures of the 1st generation in turn directly affect the study participant's place-identity.

Place-identity and the 1st generation

As we saw in the Literature Review, displacement is not only about being physically relocated from a neighborhood, but our conversations regarding displacement, according to Davidson (2009), are tied in to the way we define place; therefore, versus only defining place as a physical location, our definition should start from a socially constructed and very personal one. In this part of Alba's interview we get to see her relationship to place and what factors she uses to define it.

> *There is a Starbucks now by the hospital, before there was a pizzeria and now there is a Chipotle. They changed it for people around there. On Broadway, after, I wanna say 164th, they have WaHi diner and Heights Tavern. I been there once. It was built for young people, but I don't see a grandmother with her groceries going there.*

The fact that Alba mentioned the grandmother with her groceries shows how vital this type of individual is to her definition of place. Therefore when this grandmother is

displaced from the community, Alba will be directly affected; this is because the grandmother plays a role in Alba's definition of what place means to her. While Alba brought up the grandmother with her groceries, Gia is telling me how important the Bodega owner and employees were to her upbringing:

> *I remember when I was a kid, My mom left me and my three brothers alone but the* Bodeguero *[grocery store employee] was the one that my mother was like "If you need anything you go over there, we'll make sure to take care of it when we get back because they are family." They weren't really family, it was the community and that was family and we are losing that. You could borrow money from the* piragüero *[icy man], they were family. It takes a village to raise a child, but that's not the same anymore, I don't feel it. The changes in the neighborhood are probably for us, yet sometimes against us at the same time.*

As in many cultures, for Dominicans the family extends beyond the immediate members and includes married children, parents, siblings and even the small-business owners, like the Bodega employees in Gia's vignette (Reynoso, 2003). The result then is that the socially-meaningful moral Dominican family plays an important role in the formation of 2nd generation Dominican-American identity. Therefore, when this group is making sense of the gentrification that is sweeping their community, they take these members of the socially-meaningful family into account, even including some of the community's small business owners and street vendors.

We met Margaret in chapter 5; another home-owner who recently purchased an apartment in the Heights; while she discussed certain tensions that are playing out in her Co-op, Margaret also spoke fondly of the building where she grew up, and where her grandmother still lives. Margaret brought up this socially-meaningful family when she began telling me about how she missed the old super in the building where she grew up:

> *My super came from D.R. and he would always stand in front of our building. So before all of the management stuff, he was our super but he went back to DR because management came in. The landlord died and the son inherited the*

> *building and he wanted to do everything with lawyers so the lawyers suggested you do it the right way. "We can fix everything, we'll take care of everything" and that's how they did it and fired the super. That changed everything and he wasn't our super anymore, now it's this younger guy. The super was almost like family. We never saw him again, we never saw his children, it's so different now. He used to live downstairs in the building and if you needed something fixed he would just do it and everyone in the community knew him. Now these buildings have these management companies that manage the rent and they bring in their own super.*

Like Margaret, when discussing this notion of 'community/family', many participants mentioned their building's super and their positive relationship to this individual. Wilson was one of the participants who also mentioned his super; he told me that a new management company in his building replaced the super. "The super was a Dominican dude, He was like a father. He was so awesome. He left to Jersey for a new job". These are individuals who play vital roles in the lives of the 2nd generation and are part of their transnational, Dominican-Americans identity.

Not only did I hear stories of missing the 1st generation, many participants shared their concerns over this group's inability to stay afloat in the sea of changes. The 2nd generation possesses the social capacity needed to successfully navigate the changes going on in the Heights. As individuals of higher S.E.S., they were able to acquire skills in the integrated settings they've navigated; some of the skills include: fluency in English, higher levels of education, access and mastery of technological advances. Yet despite their capacity to successfully navigate the changes, many still worried about the 1st generation's inability to do the same. Ericka holds a Master's degree and has a salary-based job. This allows her to partake in the new amenities offered in the Heights, yet she wonders about her mother's ability to do the same:

> *You now have these new options. Me being a professional and getting a paid salary and I understand it's worth it, but what about my parents? They can't*

afford to do it. For example, Yummy Thai: what old school Dominican is gonna walk into Yummy Thai? We were walking by there one day and I asked my mom if she knew what that was and she was like 'yo no se que es eso' [I don't know what that is]. My mom is also in an income-based building, you pay based on your salary and I worry about that: what if that option wasn't available for her?

When making sense of the changes in the Heights, individuals like Ericka are torn; they feel conflicted between appreciating new spaces like Yummy Thai, yet worry that their family but not be able to do so, but worse, that they will be displaced.

What I also found was that as they navigated the changes in their community, many study participants looked beyond that socially-meaningful Dominican family and included the larger community. In this part of her interview Alba is telling me how the Bronx has more Dominicans than the Heights, and she is sad that many had to move to the Bronx, which she feels is a step backwards (New York City Department of City Planning, 2013):

The main thing I started to see changing is the rent and I feel bad for some people. I was telling my husband it's the life and death of the community: it's gonna die but it's gonna get life for a different community. What pains me is that for most of the other cultures the change was because they were moving for better, we are not moving for better because the Bronx is not better. And I think that's something that's painful, you know?

Alba and her husband have salaried jobs, yet although they did not feel threatened by direct displacement, they were threatened by a constant sense of cultural displacement that comes from the perceived threat that their community is becoming something that is foreign to them (Hyra, 2014; Zukin, 2010). A layer is added to this when we factor in what Alba said above: she is not only worried that the neighborhood is changing but *how* it's changing. She realizes that displacement of the 1st generation is a major factor that is changing the community and this worries her. Even businesses owners like Jesus, who may arguably benefit from gentrification of the area, may themselves feel torn. Jesus:

> *I have very mixed feelings about gentrification especially as a small business owner. Before I noticed the changes but it wasn't something I put much thought into it. But as a business owner where it kind of affects you first hand it's positive, the influence of money is positive. But my main concern with this is losing the culture identity as a community, not that diversity is a problem.*

As a small business owner, Jesus can profit from the changes, mainly by selling the

supplies needed to renovate and upgrade the area. Yet, he is still worried about the

cultural fabric of his community, clearly stating that he is concerned that the Heights is

"*losing the culture identity as a community*"

One participant that mentioned the 1st generation extensively was Tasha. She is a

mother of two young boys, and her grandmother and mother are her babysitters. I met

with Tasha at a Wholefoods near her job downtown. When I first asked her about her

feelings regarding the changes in the area she said this:

> *A lot of little different restaurants are opening up. Not necessarily Dominican food but Italian food, all sorts of stuff. I see the change slowly but surely. There's a Starbucks on Dyckman, which I thought was crazy! And I like Starbucks it's weird [laughs]. For my mother for instance, she's not gonna pay $4 for coffee, she can't afford to pay $4 for coffee. And a lot of the people in the area either. But I pay it, you would pay it because we work in certain areas and get used to it. I think our generation is slightly different where we are more exposed, we are working downtown. That kind of stuff is cool for us, right? We go have dinner, go have lunch, happy hour, brunch, all this stuff. Not necessarily my grandmother, my mother, the people who are still in the neighborhood not something that they can afford. My mom will never pay $25 for a manicure and wait for 2 hours for brunch? (laughs). Hell no! It's just different, we were raised here. The struggle is real, my mom just never had extra money to take herself out to dinner with her kids. And sometimes I feel extremely guilty because I'm thinking, $25? I have two kids, this money could go to something much more productive like my kid's education, childcare.*

Although Tasha, and other participants spoke about the financial barriers that prevented

the 1st generation from taking part in the changes, they also understood that there were

other barriers that went beyond finances. Things like language barriers, and even the

digital divide that exists between generations, also played a role. Jesus, a small business owner mentioned this:

> *I work a lot with buildings, managers, and management companies and they're forcing people out, literally just because they want to get those higher prices which, from a business perspective I understand. If you own a building and you can get $1500 in an apartment where you are currently getting $500 it makes sense to make an extra $1000. But from the perspective of the people living in these neighborhoods it's just not doable, its not. Especially when you're the older generation who have been here. Those are mainly the ones still holding those low-income apartments. And they're being forced out, landlords don't do the renovations, they find any way to evict them. Many landlords are not doing their job and some of these people are not from this country and don't know their rights and not that those rights are plain to see either.*

Even as a small business owner, who can directly benefit from the changes, mainly via construction materials, Jesus is still concerned about his community and their ability to navigate the changes. It's almost a moral obligation that the 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study have to the group who created the foundation for the cultural fabric that is part if their identity.

One of the main ways in which the participants in this study expressed the real threat about the direct-displacement pressures was highlighting the tactics that landlords were using to displace tenants. The data in this study revealed that the primary manifestation of gentrification was the efforts by landlords to remove the 1st generation from their apartments. Through a number of mechanisms, landlords were creating severe socio-economic pressures on these tenants in order to either collect more rent in these units or evict the tenant. The most important of these relates to the pressure on tenants in rent-regulated units as landlords tried to illegally raise their rent and/or offer these tenants money for their apartments. Another mechanism was to deny these tenants needed renovations and/or repairs to their apartments. The last mechanism was landlords' using extreme measures like selectively enforcing rules that had been overlooked in the past

and/or tracking down and evict tenants in rent-regulated units. The next section will share participant's stories as it relates to all three.

Buyouts

The aging population in the Heights seems to be a target for landlord harassment. This is mainly because these are the residents inhabiting the highly sought after rent-regulated apartments in all of New York City, especially in gentrifying communities. A majority of study participants spoke about their knowledge of landlord buyouts, with most of them highlighting that it was the older, 1st generation that was being targeted. As we saw in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, in New York city rent-regulated units are a dying breed; with only 22,000 rent-controlled units are left on the market, and the Heights being on area with one of the highest rent controlled stock, it makes the older tenants in rent-controlled units a target for landlord harassment (Gaumer, 2015; New York City Rent Guidelines Board: Housing Supply Report, 2018). The following are stories regarding landlord buyouts in the Heights.

Wendy was born in the late 60s, and her 75 year-old mother has lived in the same rent-controlled apartment, on the east side, since she arrived from the D.R. in 1961.

> *You know what the landlords are doing? People like my mother, they are paying them to move out. Giving them $20,000, or $25,000. We know a couple who lived across the street and the landlord gave them like $25,000 and they put it down on a house so they can move out. The landlord remodeled the complete apartment, my mom told me they rented it out for $1,800 or $1,900.*

Similarly, Tasha's grandmother, who lives in a rent-controlled unit in the same building where Tasha grew up, is also being offered money to leave her apartment.

> *My grandmother is rent controlled….The landlord changed maybe 10 years ago and definitely tried to give my grandmother some money for the apartment, definitely because my grandmother is older and again, she's rent-controlled…. But if he fixes it up he can charge more. He gave the neighbor some money, I think like $15,000 something ridiculous. This is nothing. My grandmother was tempted to take this man's $15,000 and go to DR.*

Mario's grandmother was also directly offered a buyout for her rent-controlled unit:

> *It's bad! It's really really bad, it's spreading. I think that's sad. I had friends going through that. That was one the first signs of gentrification where I realized that the neighborhood was changing, when landlords starting buying the buildings and pushing people out. "Yo! Landlords are buying places now and pushing people out". I'm also hearing, "My aunt's going through that, my mom's going through it, my grandmother's going through it". My grandmother's back here from DR because her landlord is trying to kick her out. They want to give her 200 grand. They will make that back ten-fold.*

There is now more money to made in the second most gentrifying neighborhood in New York City; between 2000 and 2015 housing prices in the enclave increased six-fold (Hernandez, Sezgin & Marrara, 2018; NYU Furman Center State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods, 2017). The increase in housing prices means that landlords can charge more rent for their units, sending some individuals on a campaign to unlock the profit potential in these older, rent-regulated units occupied by elderly 1st generation Dominicans.

Yet landlord buyouts were not the only displacement mechanism brought up during the interview process. There was also mention of the lack of repairs and renovations within rent-regulated units.

No Repairs/Renovations

While some landlords directly offered certain tenants a sum of money in exchange for their rent-regulated units, other landlords took approaches that were more indirect,

insidious, and sometimes even illegal. These tactics were meant to cause tenants to feel stigmatized and so out of place that they may 'choose' to leave their apartments on their own. One common tactic was for landlords to allow rent-regulated units to deteriorate; this was accomplished by the landlord's refusal to repair or renovate the property. Stories of leaky ceilings and faucets were not uncommon during the interviews for this study. I heard about cracks running along the walls, which had been there for months, and about a ceiling that has been leaking, on and off, for 7 years. All the while adjacent market-rate units were being gutted and fully renovated.

The trend that surfaced from the data was this belief that some landlords treated tenants in rent-regulated units as second-class citizens. While their neighbors in market-rate units were likely moving into completely gutted and renovated apartments, tenants in rent-regulated units sometimes had to go to great lengths just to get a fresh coat of paint in their home; sometimes even going into their own pockets to pay for renovations. In his work on Polish immigrants in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, Stabrowski (2014) notes that, "for many Polish tenants a sense of loss and dispossession-of everyday displacement-emerges alongside the realization that landlord's neglect of their apartments will last only as long as their tenancies. Once higher-paying tenants have taken their place, it is believed, much-needed maintenance and renovations will surely follow" (p. 812). Let's take a look at what Rose had to say about this matter:

> *There's a lot of new tenants, a lot of construction workers and contractors in the building. Now they do repairs, they renovated our apartment last year, they did floors they did the walls. Though they didn't completely change it like the one next to us. I was like, 'Shit, let me live there, it's beautiful!'*

But these changes came only after Rose's mom and the landlord were involved in an

extensive back and forth regarding the types of renovations that would be made. She

continues:

> *They did fix our floors, we had linoleum, but underneath we had wood floors because it's an old apartment. Now we all have it in our rooms. But the landlord was like "We can't change the bathroom tiles." The landlord refused to fix the bathroom completely. The toilet, the sink, even the walls were very messed up. So my mother asked him and he was like "It's not in the budget, we can't." But my mother just put in her own money, because she had to fix the bathroom because she said, "Everything else is fixed." And she didn't get reimbursed, because the landlord said that the team we had hired didn't have anything to do with the team he hired. We didn't get a full shower we still have a porcelain tub, she had to pay for the tiles on the floor and for the sink and the toilet. She was very upset.*

I heard similar stories from other participants as well: landlords renovating only part of

the apartment and left the rest as is, leading tenants to feel uneasy in their apartment. This

tactic may arguably be worse than if the landlord had not touched their apartment at all; it

is what Atkinson (2015) calls symbolic displacement. This is where the actions of the

landlord can have the "effect of generating an emotionally destabilizing environment. In

terms of symbolic change, this was also made manifest in strategies of disinvestment,

such as not providing repairs and maintaining decorations which generated feelings of

being out of place, even while they still tried to stay put" (pp. 384-385). These tactics are

genius ways to stir up feelings of discomfort and push tenants out, 'by choice.'

Jesus, the hardware store owner we met above, offered some insight into this

situation. When asked if he knew of landlords purposely not renovating in order to kick

out tenants he had this to say:

> *Yeah! All the time! Especially in this industry. Where either the people themselves have to do the work so they come here purchasing the materials. Some of it is the customization and making it feel like home but some of it is out of need. When it's out of need that's when it's sad to see 'cause landlords are not doing their job and some of the people are not from this country and don't know their rights.*

But what if the renovations were not out of necessity or safety, but to make their apartments look and feeling homier? Are these tenants not entitled to those types of renovations? A tenant in a rent-regulated apartment has the same desires to feel safe as well as cozy in their home as one within a market-rate apartment. When a space no longer feels like home most people will do their best to change that feeling, yet unfortunately some end up leaving the apartment all together.

Sadly, sometimes the renovations weren't about aesthetics but a matter of safety or health. Margaret's grandmother still lives in the same building where Margaret was raised in; in this part of her interview Margaret is describing how her grandmother's building was improving rapidly, yet within her home, her grandmother has had a leak in the bathroom ceiling (on and off) for 7 years.

> *It's a 2-bedroom and in the last 20 years it's gone from $200 to $750. And management is doing all kinds of renovations in the building, but not for my grandmother. She's always had this problem in the bathroom ceiling, it's some pipe issue and that's dangerous because it leaks and the bathroom molds, and my grandmother's breathing can be affected. And we get the feeling that they don't want to fix it, or it's like such a hard time because they want her to move out so that they can raise the rent and renovate it.*

Here we have an example of how participants in this study are sometimes torn between appreciating the changes, and also being worried about the 1st generation. Margaret is a new homeowner who cannot fully enjoy the new apartment she purchased because she is worried about her grandmother, a member of her family, and in turn of her community. We met Margaret in Chapter 5 when she shared stories about feeling torn between the new, mainly White, residents, in her Co-op, and older residents of color. Now we see her here being torn between trying to appreciate the changes in the Heights, yet feeling concerned for her grandmother's well-being.

An interesting factor in Margaret's interview was her emphasis on her grandmother's building being renovated: she told me that the building has a brand new door with a new intercom system, the lobby is now clean and well lit, yet her grandmother's apartment has had the same issue for 7 years. Much like Rose's experience, Margaret noted that market-rate apartments in the same building were being gutted and renovated, while her family's unit remained neglected. The rest of Margaret's story below is regarding her grandmother's neighbor and another friend:

> *One of my grandmother's old neighbors in D.R. has a granddaughter who lives in the same building- she just moved in. She has roommates there and my grandmother went to visit and saw they gave her new cabinets new tiles and she was like "I can't believe it, they haven't even fixed my ceilings". They just want to get my grandmother out so they can charge like $2000 more or less. 'Cause you get the view of the water, of Jersey. The same thing is actually happening to our friend who lives in one of the older buildings that has a really small staircase, more than 4 floors, no elevators and he lives all the way on the last floor. His parents used to live there and they moved to D.R. so he kept the apartment. After [Hurricane] Sandy the roof has gotten so bad that he had a big bubble on the ceiling and they still haven't fixed it. So he's going to court at the moment to see what they can do because they basically just want to kick him out, because he has, I guess, the view.*

In the excerpt above we see two forms of symbolic displacement: landlords not providing adequate repairs and renovations which made tenant's homes unsafe, and landlords sending a strong message when they do not fix a leaky ceiling in one apartment, yet completely gut and renovate adjacent market-rate apartments in the same building.

Another observation made by some study participants was that, prior to gentrification landlords were more lenient in terms of the rules pertaining to rent-regulated apartments. Many mentioned rarely seeing their landlords before the changes in the neighborhood, with their interactions being only with the building's super. Now because of the gentrification in the Heights, landlords are more present with some

literally going door to door and offering tenants money for their rent-regulated units. Yet

others are taking more extreme measures and suing tenants in these units.

Nit Picking

One word that Hector mentioned in his interview, and that I used when analyzing

the data was: nitpicking. Although he was the only one to use the word, the majority of

other participants mentioned aspects related to nitpicking. Many mentioned how

landlords were now selectively enforcing rent laws and regulations that were often

overlooked in the past, yet today may be considered violations that can cost tenants their

apartments. Below is Hector's take on this:

> *When it comes to housing I think it's unfair what landlords are doing. They're nit picking. For example, the lady that used to be next to us, she only has 1 daughter, and when the girl turned 21 the landlord told her "No that's it, you off the lease." That's because the building has turned into Columbia University dorm, pretty much. That apartment she's in is paying $800 for a 3 bedroom so the landlord is losing like $3500 because that's a $5000 apartment, pretty much. Because, ok, let me give you an example-my apartment is a 3-bedroom and Mami pays what? $450! But the one downstairs, it's the same layout, but they are White girls from Minnesota and they are paying $4,650. The apartment is decked out! It's sooo beautiful, it's renovated. But they have three different leases, the landlord is making a killing. Now what the landlords are doing is nit picking at leases.*

In this vignette we see a number of factors playing out. To begin, we have a tenant who is

being asked to move because she is now over 21 and cannot, as per the landlord, live in

the apartment with her mother. Yet according to the New York City Rent Guidelines

Board: "Under the rent control rules, you could take over or 'succeed' to the apartment

only if you had lived with your mother for the two-year period immediately preceding her

passing or departure from the apartment" (New York City Department of Rent Guidelines

Board, 2019). If this young lady has lived with her mother for two consecutive years than this means that her mother can pass the lease over, keeping the apartment under rent-control. The landlord may be aware of this rule and may be working to have her evicted in order to prevent this from happening, and continue to lose money. The second factor in this vignette is the huge rent-gap in the Heights between rent-controlled apartments and market rate apartments (Smith, 1996). The median rent for a 3-bedroom apartment in the Heights is $3,000 (www.nakedapartments.com). Hector's mother's $800 3-bedroom rent-controlled apartment is then costing the landlord $2,200 a month, which is $26,400 a year. This gap will continue to widen as the Heights continues to gentrify, only leading landlords to try to close this rent gap as soon as possible, and sometimes by extreme means.

Selena shared a personal story about her mother and her aunt both losing rent-controlled apartments in the Heights. Selena's aunt obtained her rent-controlled apartment via another family member in 1995, and just like her sister (Selena's mother) she ran a legal business out of her home. Fifteen years later, in 2010, the landlord sued Selena's aunt on the premise that her name was not on the apartment's lease. Selena told me that, although the landlord had always been aware that her aunt's name was not on the lease, he never pursued the situation until the Heights began to change. "She paid $700 in rent since like '95 and like all of a sudden her landlord has a problem that her name is not on the lease?! All these years it wasn't a problem". Unfortunately, Selena's aunt lost the apartment, and her business, and was forced to move in with a relative. Unlike Hector's example above, which may be a case of a landlord illegally evicted a tenant, Selena's aunt's case may be one where the landlord is now lawfully adhering to the rules set by

the RGB, the same ones that were being ignored for decades. Regarding lease succession the RGB states:

> In general, for rent-controlled apartments throughout New York State, any "family member" of the tenant may have the right to protection from eviction when the tenant dies or permanently leaves the apartment. The family member's right to protection from eviction is dependent upon such family member having resided with the tenant as a primary resident in the apartment for two years immediately prior to the death of, or permanent leaving of, the apartment by the tenant (one year for family members who are senior citizens or disabled persons). The family member may also have the right to protection from eviction if he/she resided with the tenant from the inception of the tenancy or from the commencement of the relationship (Rental Guidelines Board: *Succession Rights,* 2019).

Selena's parents shared a similar fate just 5 years prior. In 1995 they purchased a home in another state yet her mother continued to run her own businesses out of their rent-controlled apartment in Inwood. For about 10 years her parents routinely commuted to the Heights to tend to their business, visit family and to run errands. This all ended when in 2005 the landlord sued them and they lost the apartment:

> *When my parents moved from the Heights in 1995 they still had their apartment and the landlord sued them 'cause they were like "It's against the law to have a house across state lines and still have a lease in your name in New York City." And my parents didn't even bother to fight it because my dad was like "I'm not even gonna deal with it" and we lost the apartment.*

Why didn't the landlord sue her parents prior to the gentrification of the area? This is a question that Selena, and other participants who mentioned lease enforcement asked themselves.

Landlords are now cracking down on lease tenure and being more vigilant as to who resides in the apartments. They are taking extreme measures to crack down on their rent-regulated units in particular. Some of these measures would not seem so extreme, and wouldn't cause feelings of sadness and resentment, if landlords had upheld the same rules and regulations prior to the gentrification of the Heights. The neighborhood went from one where there was little to no surveillance of rental units, to now landlords even crossing state lines to try to evict their tenants, mainly those living in rent-regulated units. Walter's story highlights this extreme measures. During his interview he shared stories about his landlord harassing his family for their rent-controlled apartment. When asked if the landlord was *entremetio* (nosy) before gentrification, Walter said no, then informed me that their landlord has taken extreme measures to try to evict his sister, who is now the lease holder:

> *My little sister has the apartment that we grew up in. She moved to Louisiana and has it sublet and they found out and are trying to get her out. She got served papers in Louisiana! Louisiana! That's weird, that's so weird. My sister didn't talk to the super or anything and the person who stayed in the apartment is not legally here and he has his family. My sister sublet this apartment so we won't lose it because it's been in our family for about 35 years. She's going back and forth. Every time she goes to court they are always postponing or something like that. The landlord wants the apartment, it's a 3br that pays $800. It's not a smart thing to give up that apartment.*

Like Walter, participants in this study are socially invested in the changes to the area and many want to stay up in the area. This apartment has been in his life almost as long as Walter has been alive and it has deep emotional significance for him. Similar to these

apartments, the entire community of the Heights holds special meaning to the study participants and they want to help their community resist the changes. They use the social capacity, obtained in the integrated spaces they are a part of as individual with higher S.E.S., to serve as cultural brokers for the 1st generation. Because their Dominican-American identity is directly tied to the Heights, this role is more than just about the Moral Economy that makes up transnational communities, it is also a group fighting to keep their identity intact. Sometimes the cultural brokering involved a participant directly working with a family member's landlords, or serving as a translator in tenant court. Other times it came in the form of simply exposing their loved ones to the inequalities brought about by displacement pressures, or educating them on their rights as tenants in rent-regulated apartments.

Moral Economy

Because the 1st generation plays a vital role in keeping the community culturally Dominican, the 2nd generation Dominican-Americans like those in this study will be affected if the 1st generation begins to move out. They are therefore willing to advocate for those who have played such an important role in the formation of their identity, yet may not have the necessary tools to navigate the changes. The 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study use their social capacity to serve as cultural brokers to buffer the impact of gentrification for the 1st generation.

The 2nd generation: An Anchor for the Anchors

Their access to integrated spaces provides the 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study with the skills that they use to help them identify disparities within their community, and, in this case, within their buildings. Many participants understood that the tactics mentioned above ways to get their loved ones to abandon their apartment so that landlords could double, sometimes even triple the rent. Their access has supplied them with skills that allow this group to experience the changes with more ease than the 1st generation. Some of these skills include: command of the English language (in verbal and written form); being technologically savvy; knowing how to file formal complaints against landlords or simply complaining to their landlord. These abilities are then used to help the 1st generation navigate a system, and a country, they may not be familiar with. Here we have Jesus telling me about an older 1st generation Dominican employee in his shop:

> *I have a 50-year old employee who works here and today we were talking about someone who won $65,000 through the lotto and my employee was like "If I had that money I would never have to work again". I was like, "you do realize you make $20,000 a year now, and you're telling me $65,000 will last you the rest of your life?". And he was like, "I will not have to work and be comfortable". And I tried to break it down and explain that this wasn't enough money to live off. And we kept going back and forth so he can see what the reality was. And the first thing he said was "I will buy a car". And I was like "that's where half your money is going to go, you have to think about registration". This is a 50-year old man and he doesn't know much about finances or how to manage money or the value of money because they have not seen that amount or dealt with that amount of money before.*

This vignette highlights the social capacity that the 1st generation sometimes lacks. For some members of the 1st generation, the Heights and the Dominican Republic is their world, with very little context regarding the larger world around them. Financial literacy is only part of what is required to navigate the changes brought about by gentrification.

Knowledge of their tenant rights will prove crucial to renters who are being threatened

with displacement, yet many of the 1st generation may not be aware of their rights as

tenants. They may feel that as renters, especially those living in rent-regulated units, they

may not be entitled to the same benefits as those in market-rate units. Sometimes study

participants had to intervene to help their 1st generation family members understand that

this is not so. When asked about renovations in her grandmother's rent-controlled

apartment, Tasha put it this way:

> *The landlord does not renovate. He just fixes the things that are broken and fixes them not so well. The sad part is that my grandmother and other people that are paying $200, $600 are kind of like "We can't ask for too much, we are only paying $600 rent. So don't fix it. Don't make this pretty because I'm only paying $200." And that's horrible! I keep telling them "You are paying $200 because you've been here that long, you didn't just move in. If you just moved in, no matter what color, what age, you will have to pay $1,300, $1,400, but you've been here! They are required to do whatever has to be done to make it safe." It's not legal obviously.*

In his article, Atkinson (2015) demonstrates how displacement pressures are particularly

acute for older tenants like Tasha's grandmother; tenants who are most likely less able to

challenge the landlord via legal means. Tasha also had to intervene when her

grandmother's landlord offered her a buyout:

> *My grandmother was tempted to take this man's $15,000 and go to DR. I know so many people have taken $15,000 which is a damn shame. My grandmother didn't take it because me and my mother talked some sense into her, we told her, "You're crazy don't do that. You're gonna go to DR, no don't do it, it makes no sense. Your doctors are here, everything's here"It's not realistic for her, she's old and all of my aunts and uncles are here. You're not gonna get a home attendant in the DR, your grandkids, your family is all here. That's why she didn't do it.*

In this case one can argue that Tasha is simultaneously serving as her grandmother's

cultural broker because she is worried about her grandmother's well-being, yet Tasha is

also worried about her own well-being, and that of her children. As one of her main

childcare providers, Tasha's grandmother is a vital component in her life; by her grandmother being directly displaced, Tasha may feel forms of indirect displacement as her support network is now in jeopardy.

I also heard a number of stories where study participants shared their concerns about the 1st generation's inability to navigate the system; we've already seen examples of this when Jesus was sharing his concern about his employee's plans with a mere $50,000. Below is another excerpt from his interview.

> *I don't know all of my rights as a tenant in a building yet I can easily look them up, I know how to look them up, I have that background. But you can't expect a 70-year old person, living by themselves, who has no family help, who has no other help to be able to know where to Google something. They may not even have a computer or access to a computer and not even know how to use one.*

Jesus is a small business owner who holds a college degree and is aware his rights as a tenant. Sadly, he knows that this may not be the case for some of the older tenants in the Heights. In this case Jesus is not serving as a direct cultural broker for his community, yet his concern for the 1st generation's well-being is arguably an indirect form of moral currency.

Sometimes though the participants in this study had to directly interact with landlords as they advocated for family members. Having someone with a specific vocabulary or presence can often times create quicker change for the 1st generation. Landlords may know that, unlike the 1st generation, the 2nd generation knows their rights and can take action whenever their family's buildings or apartments are not being kept up to code. As Hector said in his interview, landlords know "who to fuck with." Here he is telling me about an incident where he had to directly intervene and address his mother's landlord:

My mother has kids who went to school. We all know how to harass other people back and we are troublemakers! The landlord knows my sister and I are professionals, he sees me with my uniform and he's nice and he talks to us. But that's only now because one day the elevator wasn't working for like a month and I took a picture and he saw me and he was like "What's that for?" And I was like "I'm going to report you" And he asked why?' and I was like "Because my mom lives on the 6th floor and you know what we're going to do? We're not going to pay you the full rent until this elevator is fixed. It hasn't worked and she doesn't have the same privileges as someone on the second floor." My mom goes to BJs like every month and we all have to take her. Ella no va sola, ella va con nostros *(She doesn't go alone, she goes with us). So I told the landlord "My mom lives on the 6th floor we haven't been able to go shopping because this hasn't been working for months. Look I have my bags and I have to carry them upstairs, you're not getting your full rent." It literally took 24 hours and the elevator was working.*

Hector doesn't live there, he owns a place in Harlem, yet he frequents the Heights and may not want to be inconvenience when he visits his mother; another factor as to why he may have confronted his mother's landlord was the vital role that she plays in Hector's place-identity. As a member of the 1st generation, Hector's mother played an important role in the community that served as a protection for him as a child, and as an integrated member of the professional class.

Yet it's not only the 1st generation who is crucial when it comes to keeping the cultural fabric of the community intact, the data in this study revealed that the 2nd generation is also vital in this sense. This group can advocate for tenants who may not have the social capacity that participants possess.

Conclusion

The vignettes shared above tell a story of how change affects more than just the physical structures of a neighborhood, but the social structure as well. The loss of these social structures/networks found in any community, according to Fried (1966), may result

in a fragmentation of the person's place identity, and as a result a pathology where the individual feels disoriented and may begin to show signs of mental despair-similar to the physical ailments that displaced people feel, or what Fullilove (1996) calls 'root shock' . When the cultural fabric of a community is altered, this is something more than just nostalgia, more than just missing the local Bodeguero or an auntie who had to move due to rent increases, it also changes a person's identity. Where we live and the spaces we consider home play a major role in how we identify as individuals (Proshansky, et al., 1983). This is especially true for individuals whose transnational, hyphenated identity is directly linked to their ethnic enclave. When the cultural fabric of a community is altered, via displacement pressures, transnational individuals feel more possessive and want to fight to keep their community together.

The moral economy is like the needle that is used to strengthen the bonds that hold the community's cultural fabric together. These bonds extend beyond the nuclear family. People like friends, neighbors, and even the ice-cream man all play vital roles in the tapestry of the Heights. Sadly, gentrification-induced displacement is pushing part of the 1st generation out of the community, and if enough of these tenants end up leaving then the cultural fabric of the community will be remade into one that is unrecognizable to the 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in this study. This will lead this group to feel culturally displaced in a community that has served as one of the main components of their identity.

Next Chapter

The next and final chapter, seven, serves as the conclusion to this dissertation and provides the study's implications, Policy Recommendations and recommended directions for future research.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

> *If I had to say something I welcome the change just*
> *don't lose the essence. Because Washington Heights*
> *is predominately known for Dominicans, you know,*
> *even in the D.R it's known as little Santo Domingo. I*
> *mean St. Nicholas [Avenue} is called Avenida Juan*
> *Pablo Duarte.*
> *(Ethnographic Interview, 2014).*

This study presented a critical ethnography of 2nd generation Dominican-Americans and analyzed this group's transnational hyphenated identity within the context of an ethnic enclave that is currently gentrifying. It provided insight into the phenomenon from the perspective of a pivotal group in current U.S.. The 2nd generation Latinx community is one of the fastest growing groups in the country, and therefore, understanding theirs mode of incorporation should be a major policy issue (Flores, 2017). By focusing on the intersection between class, race, and ethnicity, as it relates to neighborhood change, this research has tried to make a contribution to our deeper understanding of the experiences of different socio-cultural groups with gentrification.

This chapter summarizes and expands on the results that were delineated in Chapters 5 and 6, examines the strengths and limitations of the study, provides policy recommendations and lastly offers direction for future research.

Key Findings

Utilizing a qualitative, critical ethnography methodology, I interviewed 25 transnational 2nd generation Dominican-Americans with high socio-economic status (S.E.S.) to learn about how they experience the gentrification of the Heights. This

dissertation demonstrated that for this particular group the neighborhood is more than a 'place'; it plays a vital role in the formation of their hyphenated identity. A number of studies and theoretical perspectives informed the discourse of this dissertation mainly: acculturation and transnationalism (Berry, 2002; Belanger & Verkuyten, 2010; Hernandez & Sezgin, 2010; Itzigsohn, 2009; Kasinitz, Mollenkopf & Louie, 2006; Smith, 2006; Waters, 2004; Zhou & Bankston, 2016).

The research findings of this dissertation were presented in the previous empirical chapters (5 and 6) and are briefly summarized here. The first empirical chapter (chapter 5) demonstrated how this group of 2nd generation Dominican-Americans manage the contradictions in their interpretations of the current changes in the Heights. The multiple and sometimes-contradictory tugs that participants were working through led them to feel torn: they simultaneously appreciated and also resented the changes going on in their neighborhood.

Chapter six, the second empirical chapter, highlighted the displacement pressures that many of the participants were working through, mainly cultural displacement. This pressure is brought out because for the individuals in this study, their hyphenated identity is so intricately connected to the Heights. When the neighborhood begins to change, what this group experiences is not the nostalgia mentioned by Gordon (1964), but it is almost as if they are being ripped away from their homeland. Because the 1st generation makes up a substantial portion of this culture, 2nd generation Dominican-Americans proved to be more hands on regarding the displacement pressures of this group. That is the reason why this chapter was comprised of stories about the direct displacement pressures that the 1st generation was working through, as shared by the participants. The chapter's main focus

was primarily on tactics that landlords employed to evict long-term residents in rent-regulated apartments in the Heights. It also illustrated the ways in which the participants take part in the Heights' Moral Economy. The chapter highlighted stories about the ways that 2nd generation Dominican-Americans are utilizing the social capacity they had acquired as members of the integrated spaces, to help their community navigate the changes brought about by gentrification, with hopes of staying put (Akesson, 2004; Carling, 2008; Gowricharn, 2002; Hage, 2002).

The next section discusses the limitations of this dissertation.

Limitations

Although the data from this dissertation can add to the literature, there are limitations to this study. The first limitation is that I only looked at 25 individuals from one specific neighborhood in one specific city in the U.S. Their experiences, although important and informative, cannot be generalized to all other situations that may involve 2nd generation Dominican-Americans in the U.S., or to all gentrifying areas in the country. Additionally, the sample used was limited to college-educated Dominicans; thus, while the dissertation contributes to our understanding of how this particular group makes sense of gentrification, the conclusions cannot be use to understand all Dominicans, nor different Latinx nationalities, within the 2nd generation. To conclude, the small number of participants interviewed for this study, as well as the snowball sampling that was used, do not allow conclusions that are statistically representative. Therefore, the results need to be carefully interpreted. Yet, it is still the first attempt to understand how a subset of 2nd

generation immigrants, in one of the largest enclaves in New York City, experiences gentrification.

The next section highlights the general significance of this study, as well as its significance for policy and for academia.

Significance

This dissertation explored a new direction in the literature and offered a new perspective on gentrification. When thinking of the most vulnerable populations that can be at risk of being displaced from their ethnic enclave, one would seldom think of a group of integrated 2nd generation individuals who many would argue have 'made it' within the U.S. context (Clark, 2003; Taylor, 1992). Despite their perceived success and mobility, these individual's voices are important because, when discussing the negative effects of gentrification, mainly displacement, this group is seldom considered. From the voices of 2nd generation Dominican-Americans, policymakers will be able to discover the impact that gentrification has on class, race, and ethnicity individually and combined. We may be able to understand that is it not only those deemed 'vulnerable' who are affected by gentrification- induced displacement, and that even mobile, 2nd generation individuals still need ethnic enclaves, for reasons we may not be fully familiar with yet.

Significance for Policy

This study is significant for policymakers as it offers access into the perspective of a particular segment of one of the fastest growing groups in our nation (Fry & Parker, 2018; Hernandez & Stevens, 2011). The 2nd generation Latinx community is a group that

is reshaping the fabric of this nation; therefore our understanding of how they make sense of the changes in their community is important. By attending college, becoming entrepreneurs or running for political office, this group is restructuring the nation's cultural, economic and political arenas. Kasinitiz et al. (2004) tell us, "If Italians are yesterday's newcomers and today's establishment, then maybe Colombians are the new Italians and, potentially tomorrow's establishment" (p. 398). We're are already starting to see the 1st generation establish deeper roots within the political arena of this country. In January of 2017, Adriana Espaillat, a 1st generation, became the first Dominican to be sworn into Congress (Reichard, 2017). There are also countless 2nd generation Dominican-Americans who hold public office in New York City; Jose Rafael Peralta was the first Dominican-American in the New York Senate, and Diana Reyes is the first Dominican woman to be elected to public office. As the group increases, and the 1st generation paves the way, the 2nd generation will continue to leave its mark on American politics, and beyond.

Significance for Academics

In terms of academic work that is centered on gentrification, this study leads us to highly consider the need to include residents who remain in the neighborhood, and may not be facing 'direct' displacement pressures; as well as those who already physically left the enclave but may still be working through feelings of culture and symbolic displacement, as well as feelings of alienation and fear.

This study suggests that cultural displacement is an important community process that should not be ignored (Atkinson, 2015; Cahill, 2007). When studying gentrification,

scholars should therefore take the feelings of symbolic and indirect displacement serious. The general assumption has been that those who are negatively affected by the gentrification of their community are the vulnerable, lower class and/or elderly residents (Betancur, 2002, 2011; Stabrowski, 2014). If we want to understand the real damage caused by gentrification, then we need to take into account all parties affected by different forms of displacement, or what Davidson (2009) calls 'un homing'. One way we can achieve this is to create a different understanding of space, one where the emotional attachment to a place is also captured and as a result, a new definition of displacement is created (Davidson, 2009, p. 222). This means more Qualitative and/or Mixed-Methods research studies within the academy.

The next section will address the Policy Recommendations.

Policy Recommendations

Unless there are purposeful interventions that are enforced properly, neighborhoods like the Heights will continue to be ripped apart physically and symbolically. One attempt at preserving the cultural fabric of the area is to focus on policies that may mainly benefit the 1st generation; this is because, as we saw in Chapter 6 of this dissertation, this group is an important component to the cultural fabric that is so vital to 2nd generation Dominican-Americans identity.

One of the first policy recommendations that will be proposed comes directly from the individuals who were part of this study. When discussing solutions to the issues that they brought up during their interviews, many 2nd generation Dominican-Americans mentioned the importance of education, mainly for the 1st generation tenants in rent-

regulated apartments.

Education

My mom is 75 and she's in rent control. She has a 3br she pays $230. My son's godmother whose a Corporate Attorney. She stayed in the neighborhood and lives in the building down the block and has the same type of apartment as my mom and if I'm not mistaken her rent was $2,200. 10 times more than what my mother pays. My mom got the apartment when she arrived to New York in 1961. (Ethnographic Interview,2014)

In his article, *Rent regulation is fundamentally fair: Don't swallow the line that some tenants lose because others win,* Dulchin (2018) tells us that there are many misconceptions as it relates to rent-regulated housing in New York City. The two main ones are the following: that rent-regulation is similar to subsidized housing, in that part of the rent is being covered by tax dollars. Second, that there is an abundance of rent regulated housing in New York City (Dulchin, 2018). I argue that out of these two misconceptions, the more prevalent and dangerous one is the latter. This misconception can lead many New Yorkers to believe that other rent controlled apartments exist, and that individuals who are displaced from gentrifying communities that they are priced out of can simply move to other neighborhoods with rent-regulated/affordable units. As a city, and a nation, we should be concerned about the lack of availability of suitable alternative housing options elsewhere (Davidson, 2009). As Shaw and Hagemans (2015) argue: "If the sources of the familiar —shops, services, meeting places, other people in the neighbourhood, the nature of local social order and governance— become unfamiliar, low-income people may lose their sense of place without the capacity to find a new one" (p. 327). Although they may be able to eventually find a new place to live, they cannot replicate the community that took them years to form.

The education is not only for the general public, the majority who do not necessarily benefit from rent-regulated laws, it also needs to be targeted towards tenants in rent-regulated units. Ideally there needs to be more representation across community boards; this varies from things like age, class and nationality. There needs to be more outreach to the older tenants so that they are not being informed about their rights solely from their 2nd generation family member. As we saw in this study, the 2nd generation is an asset for a family who may be dealing with direct displacement pressures, as they can use the skills and tools acquired in integrated spaces, yet not all families have this luxury. The onus should also not solely land on the 2nd generation, but responsibly needs to be distributed to other parties, mainly landlords. One way to make this a reality is by pushing more enforcement on laws that are put in place to protect vulnerable tenants.

Enforcement

Laws *can* protect tenants in rent-regulated units, and/or those who are in danger of being displaced. What Jane Jacobs (1961) told us almost 60 years ago still rings true: "There is nothing economically or socially inevitable about either the decay of old cities or the fresh minted decadence of the new urban urbanization" (p. 7). Today, that statement should read: "There is nothing economically or socially inevitable about" gentrification/revitalization with mass displacement, mainly of the city's lower-income population. One of the ways to achieve this is through stronger regulation and reinforcement of these laws, mainly as it pertains to landlords. As Dulchin (2018) states: the problem is not rent regulated vs. unregulated tenants; but the landlords who find loopholes in the different laws that were put in place to protect the same tenants they are

harassing (Dulchin, 2018). An example of legislation that, when left unregulated can run

amok, is Preferential Rent.

Preferential Rent

In a rent-regulated apartment in New York City a landlord can decide that they

want to charge rent that is lower than the legal registered rate, as set by the New York

City Rent Guidelines Board (NYCRGB)

(http://www.nyshcr.org/Rent/FactSheets/orafac40.pdf). This new amount is called the

Preferential Rent, and it is a way for landlords to rent apartments that, under the required

regulated rent, may remain vacant sometimes (Metropolitan Council of Housing, 2018).

It is often looked at as a 'favor' to residents, yet there are several loopholes that can end

up harming the renter in the long-run.

The lack of fact checking by the city's Division of Housing and Community

Renewal (DHCR) is one of the main issues with Preferential rents. Landlords are required

to inform the DHCR on the maximum legal rent of the unit, as well as the preferential

rent that they are charging the tenant ((Metropolitan Council of Housing, 2018). Yet,

according to a study conducted by ProPublica, the DHCR doesn't always check to make

sure that the legal maximum rent numbers are in compliance. Podkul (2017) tells us that

when a tenant request an apartments' rent history the DHCR warns them that their

department "does not attest to the truthfulness of the owner's statements or the legality of

the rents reported in this document" (Podkul, 2017). This puts too much of the

responsibility on the tenant, who may not even be aware that the 'favor' they are

receiving can come with a hefty cost, mainly 'legal' (and often times unexpected) rent increases by the landlord.

The second issue is related to the first one, this lack of fact checking; because landlords are not fact-checked they "can revoke the preferential rates, and hike rents to the legal maximum, whenever leases come up for renewal. That can mean spikes of hundreds or even thousands of dollars" (Podkul, 2017). In some cases that can range from a $200-$500 dollars increase per month, in other cases the increase can reach the thousands of dollars (Plitt, 2017). Even during the two consecutive rent freezes in 2015 and 2016, landlords were still able to revoke the Preferential rents in their units and charge the legal maximum rent as stated by the NYCRGB (Podkul, 2017, http://www.nyshcr.org/Rent/FactSheets/orafac40.pdf). On their website, the Metropolitan Council of Housing warns the *tenant* to educate themselves on their rights as it pertains to these Preferential rents (Metropolitan Council of Housing, 2018, emphasis added). Too much of the onus is placed on the tenant, and not enough on the landlords. Not only are tenants often times unaware of the fine print in their apartment leases, they may also be unaware of useful services that are readily available to them, like the Right to Counsel.

The Right to Counsel

According to their 2016 annual report, the New York City Office of Civil Justice informed us that in 2013 only 1% of tenants in the city had legal representation in housing court (NYC Office of Civil Justice, 2016). The same document reported the funding for Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection for fiscal years 2013 and 2014 at $0 and $0, respectively (p.14). By fiscal year 2016 that number had jumped to $18 million

dollars and almost double that, at $32.9 million, by 2017. The increase in funding can be mainly attributed to Local Law 136, or what is called The Right to Counsel (RTC) (NYC Office of Civil Justice, 2016). This Legislation was passed on August 11th, 2017, making New York the first city in the nation to offer city-funded legal representation in tenant court. The RTC is mainly for low-income tenants that are facing eviction and is a system that is similar to public defenders for criminal cases (Perry-Abello, 2017; Right to Counsel, NYC Coalition, 2017).

This is important in a neighborhood like the Heights; that is not only one of the most rapidly gentrifying communities today, with a significance stock of rent-regulated units, but also one that received one of the largest rezoning plans in recent history (Mays, 2018; Furman Report, 2016). In August of 2018, after almost three years of planning, and much opposition from the local community, the Council of the City of New York passed a rezoning plan that would affect 59 blocks in the Inwood area (Kensinger, 2018). The EDC reported that the plan offered $400 million for investment projects to: restore parks and their shorelines, replace the Inwood library and improve the George Washington Education complex (Mays, 2018). Folded into this investment is also a promise to provide tenants with legal aid to help fight landlord harassment. The RTC, as well as the legal aid funding that was folding into the Inwood rezoning plan, are both great, and needed, especially in one of the 2nd most gentrifying neighborhoods in the city; yet, we must be careful not to ensure that there these rules are enforced (Hernandez, Sezgin & Marrara, 2018).

One rule that may help buffer the effects of gentrification across the city (mainly displacement) is the Certificate of No Harassment (CONH). With proper enforcement,

legislation like the CONH can prove beneficial in the fight to prevent the mass displacement that is threatening to destroy the entire cultural fabric of New York City, one neighborhood at a time.

Certificate of No Harassment (CONH)

CONH legislation was passed on Thursday November 30th, 2017 and states that in order for landlords to receive a permit from the Department of Buildings (DOB) to renovate a building or an apartment in specific locations across the city, they must first prove they have not engaged in any form of tenant harassment (City of New York Department of Housing Preservation and Development, 2018, p. 3). If the New York State Homes and Community Renewal determines that a landlord has harassed tenants within five years of application for renovation, then the CONH will be suspended. The landlord will be barred from proceeding with the renovation for the next five years unless they agree to construct an 'unstated' amount of low income housing (City of New York Department of Housing Preservation and development, 2018, p. 3). These parameters pertain to certain geographic locations across the city, including Manhattan Community District 12: Washington Heights and Inwood; in an excel spreadsheet of over 1,000 units on a CONH building list, 144 were in the Washington Heights/Inwood areas (Coalition Against Tenant Harassment).

Now that I have addressed the Policies recommendations, I will now provide recommendations for future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

The end of a work such as this should signal neither a

The findings in this study demonstrated that the 2nd generation Dominican-American experience with gentrification is dynamic. The participants' stories revealed that gentrification is a complex phenomenon that is no longer easily labeled as simply 'good' or 'bad'. This is especially true when referring to participants as complex as the ones in this study. The proliferation of this group in the U.S. make is so that this study can serve as a necessary springboard for further research. Throughout this study, there were a number of other potential research topics that surfaced, yet I had to limit to the topics for this dissertation. The following questions and topics developed out of this study and are potential areas for future research:

Conclusion

I am a Dominican, hyphen, American. As a fiction writer, I find that the most exciting things happen in the realm of that hyphen—the place where two worlds collide or blend together
(Julia Alvarez)

In her book, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, the prominent Dominican author, Julia Alvarez (1991), explores what it is like to live in what she calls 'the realm of that hyphen'. As a fiction writer, the most exciting things for her happen in that space. Yet, that realm is not always as exciting in real life as it is in novels; it is often times a tug of war of between never feeling American enough within integrated spaces in the U.S., yet never feeling Dominican enough in the Dominican Republic. Very few spaces offer

this group a place where they feel most at home, living out the fullness of their hyphenated identity. Although ethnic enclaves like the Heights can provide this for 2nd generation Dominican-Americans, gentrification is threatening to mold these physical spaces into a neighborhood where the culture may no longer feel familiar to this group, causing a major a shift in their identity. If the spaces that allow 2nd generation Dominican-Americans to live out their full identity are not being tended to carefully, this hyphen can in fact became a gap, a crack where individuals like the ones in this study may fall into.

By analyzing the housing patterns and preferences of this particular group, one may gain some insight into deeper structural issues of this nation, like racism and discrimination. In her work on middle-class African-American residents moving back to Harlem, Taylor (2002) shows that for people of color, their move into predominately communities of color is sometimes a response "to fundamental problems in American culture. Until our culture comes into the line with the fact of constrained economic and political inclusion for minorities, the need for a return to Blackness in many forms is likely to be felt. *This return is as much about racial pride as it is a defense mechanism* [emphasis added]" (p. 177). As Itzigsohn

(2009) has argued: "the receiving society is more than a context for the incorporation of immigrants; it is a powerful structural frame that molds the trajectories of immigrant generations" (p.77). This last statement is important because it provides insight into one of the reasons why residents of color, mainly those with higher S.E.S. may still choose to live in inner-city communities of color like Harlem and the Heights. In order to understand the settlement patterns/residential choices of one of the fastest

groups in the U.S. today, we may need to shift our focus away from housing and look at various structural issues in the country, mainly systemic racism and discrimination.

How can policy maintain the realm of the hyphen for individuals like those in this study? And is this the role of policy? As a group who will only continue to become more educated, and as a result more integrated, the 2nd generation Dominican-Americans of higher S.E.S. will pave the way for the younger 3rd generation that follows. The country should begin investing more time and money into understanding the ways in which the physical neighborhood has implications for the well-being of the largest immigrant group today, and who, in less than 30 years, will be a part of the majority in the nation (Frey, 2018).

This group can metaphorically help knit the Height's cultural fabric back together; in doing so they will simultaneously restore the fabric of various political, economic and social spheres in the country. To be productive members of society, we must take note of what is happening in one of the, if not *the* most, intimate aspect in the life of any human being, regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation, political affiliation, or class: home.

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