A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY EXPLORING EXPERIENCES OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION AMONG OLDER AFRICAN AMERICANS AND LATINX IMMIGRANTS USING AN INTERSECTIONAL LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A phenomenological study exploring experiences of civic participation among older African Americans and Latinx immigrants using an intersectional life course perspective

by LAURENT REYES

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Background and aims: In the past 20 years, scholars, practitioners, and policy makers have expressed great interest and commitment to increasing older adults’ civic participation. Empirical research has found various health, economic, and social benefits for individuals who volunteer in later life and for society overall. However, there are major gaps in this literature, especially concerning civic participation among diverse populations of older adults in the U.S. First, few studies have explored civic participation beyond formal volunteerism and voting. Second, there is a dearth of literature examining the experiences of civic participation among non-White older adults, particularly African Americans and Latinx immigrants, who will constitute the largest non-White groups of older adults by 2030. Finally, the literature has failed to account for the socio-political context and structures of oppression that shape experiences of civic participation. Guided by intersectional life course theory to attend to these gaps, I set out to examine the research questions, “How do Latinx and African American older adults experience civic participation throughout the life course in the context of intersectional identities (i.e., race/ethnicity, age, gender, culture) and major life transitions (i.e., acquiring chronic
health problem, immigration)?”; and “How are these experiences similar or different between African Americans and Latinx older adults?”

**Methods:** I conducted a phenomenological study with 17 African Americans and Latinx adults (ages 60 and older) living in New Jersey and New York. Each participant engaged in an in-depth interview, followed by an optional document elicitation, then an oral history interview to explore experiences of civic participation across their life course. I drew from intersectional life course perspective and hermeneutic phenomenology to guide the design and analysis and to contextualize participants’ experience across the life course and within historical and the current socio-political space in which they live and participate. All data was collected, transcribed, and uploaded into Nvivo12. Data were bilingual (Spanish/English) and not translated for analysis. To analyze results, I first crafted narratives from the two interviews—a process of developing narratives from transcripts to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. In this case, it also helped to organize experiences across life stages and track the progression of the phenomenon alongside age, politics, and major life experiences (immigration, death, pandemics, illness diagnosis, etc.). This analytical process was complemented by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which prioritizes (a) diversity of lived experience, (b) context, and (c) relationship to life narratives.

**Results:** Four themes emerged that provide a nuanced understanding of experiences of civic participation among older African Americans and Latinx immigrants. The first theme, geopolitical and socio-historical context, situates when, how, and why participants began to participate; how their participation developed across their lives and within community, social structures, culture, and politics; and how such systems produce the
context for these activities to emerge. The second theme, the role of age/ageism, health/illness stigma, and race/racism in civic participation shows how interaction across social categories and systems of oppression affect participants’ decision of how, where, and with whom to engage in civic activities. The third theme, agency and resistance, demonstrates how African American and Latinx adults develop their own opportunities and capacity for civic participation in the context of hostile and neglectful social structures and governance. The final theme, linked lives, captures the values of compassion and connectedness. This theme reveals how social, cultural, and religious systems influence individuals' sense of interconnectedness, allowing them to engage across generations, international borders, and history.

**Discussion:** This dissertation contributes new insights on the multidimensionality of civic participation, including dimensions of spirituality, solidarity, survival, and empowerment. In addition, it presents evidence on the dynamics and experiences of civic participation across the life course in the context of geopolitical and socio-historical contexts. It also presents an opportunity to question processes of inclusion in “civic” participation among historically excluded populations, whose citizenship has, and continues to be, in question. Furthermore, this dissertation provides an example of the application of methodological and theoretical approaches that are underutilized in later life civic participation research and that have great potential for contributing to anti-oppressive research with marginalized populations. In addition, this theoretical and methodological approach gave way to results that demonstrate the richness, complexity, and essence of civic participation in the spectrum of time and space. Findings from this study could improve conceptualizations and measurements of civic participation for future studies, policy, and
social and health initiatives. Particularly, it further demonstrates the grave limitations of predominant social gerontological frameworks on later life civic participation (e.g., productive aging) and calls for re-conceptualizing civic participation in ways that center the lived experiences and historical socio-political struggles of ethnoracially underrepresented populations.
Dedicación

Esta tesis se la dedicó a la comunidad que me crio en mi niñez y me enseñó lo que significa contribuir, amarnos entre familia, amiga/os y vecina/os. En Cuba cuando preguntamos “¿cómo estás?” la gente responde “aquí en la lucha.” Esa lucha es únicamente posible por la colaboración diaria de nuestras comunidades. Y ahí, en Sol entre Cuba y Aguiar, fue donde yo aprendí lo que significa vivir y aportar a la comunidad. Desde pequeña tuve el apoyo de mis vecinas/os, las amistades de la familia y mis padrinos que me cuidaron y velaron por mí desde que nací: Gracias especialmente a Juana, Saida, Virgen, Sergio, Gil, Pedro y mi madrina Sylvia y padrino Juan Carlos por su atención y apoyo.

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Nací en el sol de La Habana
Donde luchaban mis vecinas, abuelas, tías y madre.
Criada por mujeres soberanas,
la valentía me corre en la sangre.
Elida Roché y Laurent Reyes
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My parents’ love and support during this time has been invaluable. Going home, filled me with joy, good food, and lots of pampering, which is exactly what I needed to stay on track. When I needed encouragement to keep moving forward, they were there, always reminding me to put my health and well-being first. I have learned from their life’s journey that perseverance, determination, and a supportive family can take you very far. And when I needed to play and exercise my creativity, my mana was ready to join me in some fun. I am thankful for her kindness and wisdom at such a young age. It has been an inspiration to see her grow and gives me great hope for the future ahead.

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time. Also, to my friends/colleagues who are/were working on their dissertation at the same time, co-working saved me. There were days when I would not have gotten out of bed if it were not because we had a standard co-working meeting. You kept me accountable and committed to this process, and for that I am very thankful. Know that you still have my support as you continue in your journey.

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Chapter I. Introduction

Civic participation is fundamental to American democracy and plays a key role in political, social, and economic outcomes (Barber, 1995; Fukuyama, 1995). Today, civic participation among older adults (ages 60 +) is receiving increasing attention from health organizations, private foundations, policy makers and scholars across various fields (Martinson & Minkler, 2006; Serrat et al., 2019). For example, the World Health’s Organization’s Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities includes civic participation among its eight domains of livability that influence the quality of life for older adults (WHO, 2007). In the U.S the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotions launched the Healthy People 2020 national objectives for improving the health of all Americans. The objectives include five domains for social determinants of health, which identifies civic participation as a key issue (Heyman et al., 2018). Finally, The Grand Challenges for Social Work Initiative includes the advancement of “Long, Healthy, and Productive Lives” as one of the Grand Challenges of the profession (2018 GC Fact Sheet No. 4). This challenge highlights the need to scale up programs that provide service opportunities for older adults, particularly volunteering and caregiving with the aim of addressing economic and social changes caused by a growing aging population. This perspective comes from productive aging which asserts that “aging societies will do better when they make better use of older adults’ capacity to make economic contributions through employment, volunteering, and caregiving” (Morrow-Howell et al., 2018, p. 81).

This growing national and international interest in civic participation in later life has been attributed to the emergence of studies emphasizing the potential for civic
participation, primarily formal volunteering, to improve the health of older adults and offset growing economic and social inequalities in a rapidly aging society (Boudiny, 2013; Gonzales et al., 2015; Morrow-Howell et al., 2015; Serrat et al., 2019; Tang, 2016). For example, various studies find that civic participation is associated with numerous positive health outcomes such as better physical and mental health (Ali, Khan & Zehra, 2016; Varma et al., 2016), decreased risk of mortality (Okun et al., 2013), higher levels of cognitive functioning (Proulx et al., 2018), decreased loneliness after widowhood (Carr et al., 2018), and higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004). Studies also find that the relationships forged through civic participation can potentially expand economic and educational opportunities (Benenson, 2017; Putnam, 2000).

However, current literature indicates that there are disparities in rates of civic participation among White older adults compared to older adults from ethnic/minority backgrounds. Most studies and government reports show that White older adults participate at greater rates than Latinx, Asians, and African American older adults (File, 2015; Johnson and Lee, 2017; Shores et al., 2019; Tang et al., 2012). Disparities are mainly reported for civic activities of formal volunteerism and voting (File, 2015; Johnson and Lee, 2017; Shores et al., 2019; Tang et al., 2012), while some researchers find that other forms of civic participation may be going unobserved (Martinez et al., 2011; Serrat et al., 2019; Torres & Serrat, 2019). This speaks to a fundamental problem in the study of civic participation, the lack of consensus among scholars in how to define and measure the phenomena (Greenfield, 2010; Serrat et al., 2019).
The empirical literature examining the concept of civic participation is fraught with inconsistencies in terms and definitions. In particular, the literature often conflates “civic-participation” and “civic engagement”, but important differences exist between the two. Whereas civic engagement indicates a psychological process of giving attention to social and political issues, civic participation implies an action, and thereby must be understood as behavioral (Serrat et al., 2019). The focus of this study is civic participation, which has been defined by a list of societal and political activities in formal and informal settings. Here formal participation is being defined as activities done within an established organization or institution, and “informal” participation is done outside of that context (Lee & Brudney, 2012). However, the lack of consensus among scholars, coupled with the predominant emphasis on volunteerism has limited our understanding about ethnic minority older adults’ experience of this phenomenon.

This gap in our knowledge concerning the experiences of civic participation among ethnic minority older adults is particularly relevant today given the rapid changes in the demographic makeup of the U.S. population, in what some social scientists are calling a “demographic revolution” (Morrow-Howell et al., 2015). It is predicted that between 2016 and 2030 the non-White population is expected to increase by 89% compared to a 39% increase among the non-Hispanic White population (Hamler et al., 2018). By 2030 about 20 million (28%) of adults aged 65 and older are expected to be from an ethnoracial minority group, with Latinx and African Americans being the largest non-White groups of older adults (Schulz & Eden, 2016). Furthermore, the population of immigrants ages 65 and older has increased by 70% since 1990, reaching nearly 12% (4.6 million) of the total older adult population living in the US in 2010 (Calvo et al., 2017),
with Latinxs being the largest group accounting for 37.8% of all older immigrants (Wilmoth, 2012). This growing population of Latinx and African American older adults hold a unique place in American history and today’s social political climate. On average, they enter later life with worse health, higher poverty, lower English proficiency, and lower levels of education than non-Hispanic White older adults (Camarota & Zeigler, 2016). These factors have all have been identified by the literature as barriers for civic participation (Barnes, Harrison, and Murray, 2012; Principi et al., 2012; Wanchai & Phrompayak, 2019).

Particular attention has been given to how these changes will impact economic security, health care, long-term care, and social security (Gonzales, Matz-Costa, & Morrow-Howell, 2015; Morrow-Howell et al, 2017). While formal volunteerism is being proposed as a solution to address these changes and improve health for older adults, it fails to consider several factors discussed in the literature. First, by promoting only one form of civic participation, policy and research are contributing to a narrow paradigm of older adults’ civic participation while other experiences are going unrecognized (Reisch & Garvin, 2016; Torres & Serrat, 2019). Second, some researchers are well intentioned in calling for equal opportunity to decrease disparities in rates of formal volunteerism among older adults from ethnic minority backgrounds. However, this focus unintentionally forces the dominant activity of civic participation onto a multicultural population, whose experiences and understanding of civic participation may be vastly different (Reisch & Garvin, 2016; Warnke, 2014). As Warnke (2014) states “To the extent that integrating diverse identities into these spaces entails simply acceding to the way they are already constituted, it requires [minority groups] not simply to discard their
identities but to assimilate to white, male, heterosexual and other exclusionary norms.” (p. 585). Third, this perspective continues to exclude and stigmatize those who cannot make a “recognizable contribution” due to their health, socioeconomic status, and/or their cultural background (Chambré & Netting, 2018; Martinez et al., 2011; Serrat et al., 2019). Finally, this “solution” places a heavy burden on older adults, especially those of marginalized backgrounds who are already facing many hardships, by asking them to help meet the social needs of our society at no cost or at low wages (Martinson & Minkler, 2006).

To this end, this dissertation proposes a different direction, one that considers the lifelong experiences of the phenomenon of civic participation from the lens of a small group of African Americans and Latinx older adults. To guide my understanding about the characteristics of activities that can be considered civic, I draw from the work of Serrat and colleagues (2019) who conducted a scoping review of the literature on older people’s civic participation for the past 50 years. From this review a typology of civic activities was developed outlining the following criteria: civic activities are voluntary; they fall under societal or political participation; they are done individually or collectively in formal or informal settings; and they have the intent of effecting positive change for individuals outside the family, for the community, or for society. This dissertation is also guided by an intersectional life course perspective and hermeneutic phenomenology that will serve to analyze if and how intersectional identities and life trajectories shape African Americans and Latinx’ experiences of civic participation throughout their lives.
The following sections are organized as follows. First, I will present a literature review of civic participation among older adults and differences between White older adults’ participation compared to African Americans and Latinx. This section also will present barriers to civic participation among these groups as they are presented in prior literature. This will be followed by a section discussing the history of these populations in the US as it concerns civic participation activities. I will then discuss the theoretical frameworks guiding this study and the focus of the dissertation and research questions. I will then present my study design, methods of data collection and analysis and lastly the potential contributions of this study.
Chapter II. Review of the Literature

Civic Participation among Older Adults: Differences by Race/Ethnicity

The literature on civic participation has identified a number of civic activities that include voting, involvement in political campaigns, volunteering, activism, and assisting friends and neighbors, amongst others (Hinterlong & Williamson, 2006; Martinez et al., 2011; Minkler & Hostein, 2008; Putnam, 2000; Serrat et al., 2019). Yet much of the literature and government data on older adults’ civic participation primarily examines formal volunteering and voting (Greenfield, 2010; Martinson & Minkler, 2006). The available data shows that older adults are more likely than younger cohorts to volunteer for health and social/community service agencies and religious organizations (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016; Musick & Wilson, 2007). They also volunteer most often as tutors, mentors, or friendly visitors (Morrow-Howell, 2017). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016) found that in 2015 more than 23% of older adults (65+) volunteered, and on average they performed more hours of volunteer work than any other age group. Similarly, the voting rates among older adults have historically been higher than those of any other group (Putnam, 2000). As stated by Hudson (2018) in reference to “gray power,” “The political and policy standing of older adults is unequalled in the pantheon of American social welfare policy” (p. 364).

However, for African American and Latinx older adults’ rates of participation in formal volunteering and voting have consistently been found to be lower compared to White older adults (Shores et al., 2019; Johnson and Lee, 2017; File, 2015; Tang et al., 2012). For example, in 2015 Whites volunteered at higher rates (26.4%) than Blacks (19%), Asians (18%), and Hispanics (15.5%) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). These
disparities were also found in an empirical study by Tang and colleagues (2012) whose bivariate and multivariate analysis showed that Black older adult participants were less likely to volunteer in formal organizations than their white counterparts. However, the same study found that when Black older adults do volunteer, they commit more hours and experience more health benefits than White older adults.

Similarly, the often celebrated “gray power” really lies within White older adults’ political power (Hudson, 2018). One study found that in the 2016 elections 87% of voting adults 65 and older were White, non-Hispanic (Hudson, 2018). Recently a study measuring civic participation through four domains of partisan objective; associational-partisan (e.g., voting), social-partisan (e.g., boycotting), associational-civic (e.g., participating in Parent-Teacher Organizations), and social-civic (e.g., talking with neighbors) found that overall older adults are more engaged than young Americans in all domains of participation. Yet, across race Blacks and Latinx were found to engage at lower rates than Whites in all dimensions, irrespective of income and educational attainment (Shores et al., 2019). The same study finds that Latinx have the lowest levels of civic engagement than any other subgroup.

**Barriers for Civic Participation Among Older Adults**

Several determinants for lower rates of civic participation among older adults have been identified. Among them, most notably illness and disability, poverty, and language barriers have been found to disproportionately affect African Americans and Latinx older adults (Barnes et al., 2012; Principi et al., 2012; Wanchai & Phrompayak, 2019).

*Illness and Disability*
Overall, the literature shows that older Americans’ health has been consistently improving, but this improvement does not apply across all races and ethnic background (Taylor, 2008). A large body of literature finds that disparities across cognitive health, prevalence of chronic conditions, and disability disproportionately affect minority older adults (Gilsanz et al., 2019; Ferraro et al., 2017; Mehta & Yeo, 2017; Seeman et al., 2010; Zahodne et al., 2017). For example, a recent study found that older Latinx and Blacks have prevalence frailty rates 65%–85% higher than whites (Bandeen-Roche et al., 2015). Similarly, Latinx and African American older adults have been found to have greater rates of disability and overall lower health outcomes than White older adults (Angel et al., 2015; Bandeen-Roche et al., 2015; Kachan et al., 2015; Markside and Rote, 2015; Martinez and Varella, 2017). Rates of overall disability have also been found to be higher for foreign-born Latinx compared to those who are US-born (Sheftel, 2017). Studies show similar findings for rates of cognitive disability, a recent study found that Latinx women and Black women have cognitive disability rates twice as high as those of Whites (Martinez and Varella, 2017). Among this population, perceived discrimination has been found to be a risk factor for racial/ethnic disparities in mental health (Lewis et al., 2015; Luo et al., 2012; Mouzon & McLean, 2017), physical health (Lewis et al., 2011; Luo et al., 2012), biological measures (Fuller-Rowell et al., 2012; Lewis et al., 2010) and substance use (Todorova et al., 2010).

Various studies have found that for older people with chronic health problems, physical and cognitive impairments and poor mental health are more likely to reduce participation (Kimura et al., 2013; van Hees et al., 2020). For example, a recent Dutch study of older adults created a typology of social participation and found that older adults
who were socially withdrawn were more likely to have a severe disability compared to those who were both proximally and proactively involved (van Hees et al., 2020). A Japanese study by Kimura and colleagues (2013) found similar results, but in addition showed that even adults with severe disability were involved in passive forms of social participation. More recently, a US study using a nationally representative sample of working-aged adults examined differences in formal and informal volunteering among adults with sensory disabilities, cognitive disabilities, physical disabilities, or multiple disabilities (Shandra, 2017). The study found that there were no differences in likelihood of informal volunteerism among adults with disabilities compared to those without disabilities. On the other hand, formal volunteerism was less accessible to adults with disabilities (Shandra, 2017). Along these lines, some scholars find that ableism may be driving assumptions about the inability of people with health problems and disabilities to participate (Barnes et al., 2012; Warburton et al., 2007). In fact, one study found that compared to non-Hispanic White older adults, older Black, Hispanic, and Asian adults reported fewer days where their chronic illness impaired their role as a worker, volunteer, or caregiver (Hughes, Woodward, and Velez-Ortiz, 2013). The authors suggest that these findings may be attributed to economic constraints and cultural responsibilities of these roles that stresses participation despite health problems (Hughes et al., 2013).

**Poverty**

Research consistently finds that minority older adults tend to live in greater poverty. Distributions of poverty by race among older adults differ substantially between non-Hispanic White older adults (8%) and Latinos (18%) and African Americans (19%) (Mather et al., 2015). It is also important to note that immigrant status has been
associated with greater poverty levels in later life than non-immigrants and non-Hispanic Whites, with Hispanic older immigrants having the highest poverty rates (Angel et al., 2010; Markides et al., 2013; Wilmoth, 2012). Poverty among ethnic minority older adults is partially attributed to a lifetime of low-skilled, low-paying, physically demanding, and irregular labor that also diminishes their health (Williams et al., 2008).

In addition, studies have found that after accounting for neighborhood poverty and other SES Blacks participate at higher or comparable rates than other racial groups (Putnam, 1995; Stoll, 2001). Shores and colleagues (2019) found that although more income and educational attainment was a consistent predictor for civic participation among Whites, Blacks, and Latinx, there was one exception. Older Blacks with less educational attainment and lower income were more likely to do favors for neighbors and talk to their neighbors compared to Blacks with higher levels of income and education (Shores et al., 2019). The authors suggest that these findings could be attributed to living in a more racially diverse neighborhood. An earlier study found evidence of the explanation proposed by Shores and colleagues (2019). Stoll and Wong (2007) study of immigrant Latinx living in LA in the 90s found that living in a predominately White community was associated with lower levels of participation, even after controlling for socioeconomic status. They attributed this to lack of culturally relevant options for participation such as co-ethnic churches, and cultural community organizations. In addition, this study tested the effects of neighborhood poverty on civic participation across racial and national origin groups found that neighborhood poverty was negatively associated with civic participation (Stoll & Wong, 2007).

Language Barriers
Among older immigrants it has been found that 33% of long-term immigrants and 75% of recent immigrants do not speak English (Wilmoth, 2012). Language barriers have been found to affect older adults’ participation (Jang et al., 2016). For example, several studies among Asian older adults have found that those with greater English proficiency are more likely to volunteer than those who report lower or no English proficiency (Lee et al., 2018; Syed et al., 2017). Among Latinos research on this topic is more limited, but a study on the social activity engagement of older Latinx adults found that language inclusion was significantly associated with being more active with friends and activities (Rodríguez-Galán & Falcón, 2010). Another study found similar results showing that English language difficulty is significantly and negatively associated with civic participation (Stoll & Wong, 2007). The authors of this study speculated that organizations whose dominant language is English may be less likely to recruit and facilitate the participation of individuals who lack English-language skills (Stoll & Wong, 2007). More widely examined in the literature are effects of language barriers on healthcare access, social isolation, and depressive symptoms (Chi et al., 2013; Karliner et al., 2017; Shell et al., 2013; Todorova et al., 2013).

Cross-cultural Experiences of Civic Participation

Scholars have suggested that civic participation may be different across cultures, but due to the focus on volunteerism it may be going unrecognized (Martínez et al., 2011; Torres & Serrat, 2019; Wright & Nayar, 2017). Below I discuss civic activities beyond volunteerism under the categories of political and social participation as defined by Serrat and colleagues (2019).

Social Participation
Overall, empirical scholarship shows that immigrants, American-born ethnic minorities, and Whites may all have different understandings of social interactions, engagement in organization, and the use of neighborhood space (Ramakrishnan & Viramontes, 2010; Walker, Littman, Riphenburg-Reese, & Ince, 2016). For example, a qualitative study of Mexican hometown associations (HTAs) in Los Angeles found that undocumented immigrants and those with limited English proficiency are more likely to participate through these associations than through formal mainstream organizations (Ramakrishnan & Viramontes, 2010). HTAs were started by small groups of immigrants from the same town or village in Mexico and allow immigrants to participate in their communities through the activities that are most relevant to them. Some of the activities highlighted were fundraisers for homeland projects or family reunification programs, in addition to organizing activities and events that preserve and celebrate participants’ home customs and traditions (Ramakrishnan & Viramontes, 2010).

Another example of social participation is community gardens, which have been recognized as an alternative to urban disinvestment and environmental degradation allowing residents to engage in their own placemaking and claim their right to the city (Gerodetti & Foster, 2015). In addition, they have been found to provide immigrants and refugees with continuity across countries (Egoz & Nardi, 2017; Gerodetti & Foster, 2015; Wen Li et al., 2010). A study of Chinese older immigrants found that their autonomous participation in community gardens served to repair their sense of displacement and loss of control. The community gardens allowed them to grow foods from home and gave them comfort and security in their new country (Li et al., 2010).

**Political Participation**
The political participation of older adults is discussed to a lesser extent in social work gerontological literature. While studies find that racism can be a barrier for formal volunteering, recent studies have found that among African Americans, experiences of racism may encourage activism (Mattis et al., 2004; Szymanski, 2012; White-Johnson, 2012). One study examining the effects of racism on volunteering and political participation among African American men found support for racism as a catalyst for political participation, but not for volunteering (Mattis, 2004). Furthermore, this study found that men 41 and older were more likely to be a member of a political or social justice organization than younger age groups (Mattis et al., 2004).

Similarly, research on volunteerism shows that illness is a deterrent for participation. However, a study of older adults living with HIV in Ontario, Canada found that their chronic illness was a motivation for their activism and provided them a sense of generativity (Emlet et al., 2017). Another study on this subject found that activists with HIV reported greater social network integration, social well-being, engagement in active coping with discrimination, and greater meaning in life than non-activists (Earnshaw et al., 2016). This evidence is supported by a qualitative study exploring the factors that contribute to the politicization of older adults, which finds that perceived threat is an essential driver despite poor health (Guillemot & Price, 2017).

Overall, these studies show that there are differences across groups of older adults in how they participate civically in their communities. These studies demonstrate that while formal volunteering and voting rates are low among older adults from ethnic backgrounds, civic participation is alive in many other ways among these groups. These disparities have been found to exist in other forms of participation, such as leisure
activities. Floyd (1998) found that preference of leisure activities and level of participation are influenced by ethnic values and experiences of marginalization that limit access to participation. Given the history of exclusion of marginalized populations in American civic life, it is not surprising to find disparities in formal civic activities today.

The continued emphasis on formal volunteerism and voting as the primary activities of civic participation continue to exclude the experiences of this phenomenon among African Americans and Latinx older adults. To better understand why civic participation has been primarily reduced to formal volunteerism and voting in research and policy the following sections provide a historical background of the development of civic participation in social welfare policy and US democracy. In addition, a history of this development in the context of racially marginalized populations is not complete without acknowledging the foundations of structural racism that continue to permeate our society today.
Chapter III. Historical Background

US Social Welfare Policy on Older Adults’ Civic Participation

Welfare policy, history, and societal norms have all played a significant role in the development of civic participation among older adults (Goerres, 2009). The focus on older adults’ volunteering as civic participation did not emerge until 1963 (Martinson & Minkler, 2006). Just thirteen years earlier Robert Havighurst (1950) published the results of a survey asking participants about how appropriate 91 different activities were for older adults. Among the highly disapproved activities were being overactive and running for office. When these results were published older people were discouraged from volunteering (Chambré, 2018). At the time the results of this survey were published, White men over the age of 65 had the lowest rate of poverty among all older adults (70.7%), non-white older women had the highest (94.1%) (Ross et al., 1987). Ten years later the White House Conference on Aging came together for the first time to discuss the major problems that were facing older adults; among them was the need to create opportunities for full and productive living (Tibbitts, 1961). Productive in this case corresponds to market contributions and what is referred to by Tibbitts (1961) as “today’s rational, highly productive society” compared to “primitive societies.”

Tibbitts (1961) states: “…older people themselves no longer have the bargaining position for status which they enjoyed in relatively simple, subsistence economies. Primitive societies ascribed status and position to older people on the basis of services which they could perform, and which were useful to the group… these possessions are much less widely distributed and, in some cases, have much less value in the marketplace.” (p. 374).

While Tibbitts (1961) describes differences in the societal value of older adults through a comparison of change due to an assumed progression from “primitive” to modern, it
would be more accurate to understand that these differences exist simultaneously today among different cultures. However, what is true and exemplified in this document, as well as in the empirical literature on older adults’ civic participation, is that economic productivity rather than local informal services deemed beneficial by the group, has become more valuable in our political and academic discussions.

Four years after this document was published, this language was integrated into the Older Americans Act under the concept of civic participation. Soon after, in 1965 under The Office of Economic Opportunity the Foster Grandparents Program was created, providing minimum wage to low-income older adults in exchange for volunteering in orphanages and hospitals (Martinson & Minkler, 2006). This program was one of many government programs designed to address poverty at that time and was well received because it was not a “handout”. During this time, similar programs supporting volunteerism among older adults to meet social needs emerged: the Senior Companionship Program, Senior Corps, Experience Corps, and the National Retiree Volunteer Coalition (Martinson & Minkler, 2006).

In 1971 the federal volunteer agency Older Americans Volunteer Programs of ACTION was established, which included the Foster Grandparents Program (FGP), the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), the federally funded Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), and the Senior Companion Program (SCP) (Cnaan & Cwikel, 1992). Consequently, this was also a time when nonprofits were supported by government funding to provide health and social services, resulting in a spike in growth of nonprofits from 1965 to 1970 (Burke, 2001). With the Nixon administration came a reduction in social welfare spending and a sense that such programs interfered with
private investments and profits (Abramovitz, 2017). This was further supported by the Reagan administration who cut federal government grants by 20%, resulting in a loss of $30 billion for the nonprofit sector and cutbacks in programs, staff, and overhead (Hall, 2016; Liebschutz, 1992). These changes led many nonprofits and other social service agencies to rely more and more on volunteers (Liebschutz, 1992; Sanders and Putnam, 2006).

Today, relying on volunteers has become an expectation, particularly with the growing number of older adults who are expected to be in better health and have more education. For example, an article in the Stanford Social Innovation Review states “Older, educated volunteers…have the potential to perform valuable and highly skilled work, donate money, and activate social networks that multiply the impact of their individual contributions. By 2020, there will be millions more like them, thanks to the coming wave of retiring baby boomers.” (Esiner et al., 2009, p. 37). Not only do most (81%) nonprofits and charitable organizations rely on volunteers (Hager, 2004), but it has become an economic strategy to aspire to give the ongoing funding constraints and staff turnover of nonprofits (Esiner et al., 2009).

Almost 60 years later since the Older Adults Act, our society finds itself in a similar place. The steep rise of the older adult population, a shift in the racial/ethnic distribution that brings with it an increase in social service needs due to unaddressed historical socio-political inequalities and continued need for volunteers to offset the lack of federal funding for nonprofits. The solutions first presented in 1961 have only slightly evolved, and for the most part formal volunteering continues to be the dominant perspective in how to best utilize this growing population. However, this solution ignores
the needs of this diverse group people and the ongoing contributions they make to our communities and societies through their own networks. In addition, the ongoing commodification of older adults contributes to further marginalization of those who cannot make “recognizable” contributions through formal sectors. This is particularly relevant among African American and Latinx older adults whose health, wealth, and education have not seen the same growth as for White older adults.

In addition, the continued priority on formal volunteerism presents problems for the scientific understanding of how civic participation is practiced outside the formal setting. It also presents a barrier for understanding how the effects of exclusionary policies play a role in the experiences of civic participation among marginalized groups. To make significant strides in science as well as in our policies, we must first recognize how the historical and current sociopolitical climate deters ethnic minorities from being willing or able to participate within the confines of formal civic participation (Katz, 2013). Further on, government, foundations, and scholars must be willing to invest and promote a wide range of civic activities that extend beyond formal volunteerism and consider the vast experiences of this ethnically diverse population.

**American Democracy in the Context of Historical Racism**

Civic participation is one of the pillars of American democracy, which has been famously celebrated since the early 19th century when Alexis de Tocqueville stated that the US was a “nation of joiners” (Schlesinger, 1944). However, what has not been acknowledged in much of the literature on civic participation is the long history of exclusion that has kept racial/ethnic minority groups from fully participating in formal civic activities. Formal activities of civic participation exist within historical structures of
inequality that were initially designed to exclude certain populations from participating in American democracy and continue to do so today (Fraga and Wilcox-Archuleta, 2018; Morrison, 2014). The origin of these oppressive structures can be traced to the period of colonization in the Americas and Africa that began the forced migration of Africans to the Americas during the Transatlantic Slave Trade and gave rise to the groups we term today African American and Latinx (LaVeist, 2017). The racial heritage of Latinx individuals can be traced to the mixing of three racial groups Indigenous, Black, and White, during the period of colonization (Chavez-Dueñas, Adames, & Organista, 2014).

The majority of Blacks in the Americas arrived through the transatlantic slave trade that forced the migration of people from the regions of Senegambia, the Ivory Coast, the Gold Coast, the Bight of Benin, the Bight of Biafra, west central Africa, and southeast Africa (Konadu, 2017). During this period of colonization all rights of personhood were reserved for White Europeans, while African people were rendered commodities to be exploited for profit (Konadu, 2017). Despite the violent degradation inflicted upon African people, resistance was common during kidnappings, on board ships, and during enslavement. Unfortunately, enslavement was only the beginning, as Konadu (2017) states “For those who arrived in the Americas, the terror and violence of capitalist greed only continued, morphing thematically into mass enslavement, mass segregation (Jim Crow, debt peonage), and mass incarceration” (p.9).

**African American Older Adults**

Today’s older population grew up as children or young adults during the Jim Crow laws that legalized racial segregation and discrimination by excluding Blacks from living in certain neighborhoods, towns, and even entire counties (Feagin, Picca, and
Thompson-Miller, 2014). During this time the physical, psychological, and social interactions between Blacks and Whites were controlled in all facets of daily life (Thompson-Miller and Feagin, 2007). African Americans were treated as second class citizens with limited access to education, welfare institutions, employment, voting, among other aspects of society (Hamler et al., 2018). Feagin and colleagues (2014) hypothesize that these experiences produced a type of post-traumatic stress syndrome “segregation stress syndrome” that was passed down through generations and has negative consequences on physical and emotional well-being in later life. Some studies have found that this cohort is at higher risk for dementia (Gilsanz et al., 2019), has higher odds for lifetime mood disorders, anxiety disorders, and depressive symptom (Mouzon et al., 2017; Nadimpalli et al., 2015) and is more impacted by major lifetime discrimination than everyday discrimination compared to younger cohorts (Wheaton et al., 2018). Feagin and colleagues (2014) write, “When such deep wounds and their expanding impacts are left untreated, they don’t go away, they don’t heal, and the festering grows until something is done...” (p. 231).

With the Civil Rights Movement came the end of legal segregation and discrimination. However, the legacy of this past is still present today and continues to be upheld through societal and political institutions that continue to exclude people of color. For example, soon after the Civil Rights Movement the rate of incarceration in the US began to rapidly increase, so much that by 1985 for every 100,000 residents 312 were incarcerated (Wildeman and Wang, 2017). Mass incarceration and lack of federal protections for individuals who have been incarcerated is responsible for preventing nearly 6.1 million Americans from voting (Uggen et al., 2016) a majority who are
African American and Latinx (Tucker, 2017). Therefore, it is no surprise that voting rates among these populations have been historically low (File, 2015). Campbell and colleagues (1964) discuss that people will abstain from voting if they believe politics is beyond their power. The history of African American and Latinx in the US is one where political power has continuously been denied and used against them.

**Latinx Older Adults**

Today we are living through one of the most anti-immigrant periods of American history, with a record number of anti-immigrant laws and policies affecting children, adults, older people, and entire families (Chavez-Duenas et al., 2019). The number of anti-immigration bills since 2005 increased from 300 to 1,500 in 2015 (American Immigration Council, 2015). Though anti-immigrant policies are targeted towards undocumented immigrants, they affect entire communities and increase the likelihood of perceived discrimination among Latinx regardless of citizenship status (Almeida et al., 2016). For Latinx individuals, a history of anti-immigrant legislation coupled with racial segregation and discrimination has been found to lead to a diminished sense of psychological trust, security, and safety (Rojas-Flores et al., 2017).

Latinx and Asian older adults have the lowest rates of citizenship, which effectively bars 44% of immigrants from voting (Wilmoth, 2012). In addition, Latinx communities are faced with nativism, racism, and ethno-centrism that negatively impacts their physical and psychological well-being (Bryant-Davis, & Ocampo, 2005; Perilla, Nor-ris, & Lavizzo, 2002). Nativism involves negative stereotypes about Latinx, such as believing that immigrants are taking away jobs and/or are undocumented immigrants and
therefore criminals (Chavez, 2008), statements that have been explicitly broadcasted by number 45 (Coutin, 2019).

To the contrary, the majority of Latinx hold legal residence, but there are about 8.8 million Latinx who are undocumented. This group suffers further hardships and challenges that documented Latinx do not experience such as increased risk of exploitation, abuse, and deportation (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Passel & Cohn, 2015). This is both at the hands of individuals as well as government agencies such as the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) that perform raids in workplaces, schools, picking up people in the streets and arresting them in their homes (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017). This increase of aggressive anti-immigrant policies and programs affect more than those who are undocumented, as many Latinx individuals live in mixed legal status families (Menjívar, Abrego & Schmalzbauer, 2016). This has contributed to increased fear and anxiety among older Latinx adults (Rodriguez et al., 2017). Studies have found that growing fear among this population prevents them from carrying on with everyday activities (Sladkova et al., 2012), trusting the police or health care providers (Silka, 2007).

The historical exclusion of these groups coupled with modern day structural discrimination, anti-immigrant climate, and rising violence by law enforcement against Blacks and Latinx (Hughey, 2015) are likely to have implications for the ways African Americans and Latinx experience civic participation. Prominent scholars have found some evidence to show that discrimination plays a role in determining where ethnic minorities are able to volunteer (Musick & Wilson, 2007). Musick & Wilson (2007) found that ethnic minorities are less likely to be invited to volunteer than Whites. They
also found that Blacks were more likely to volunteer through their church and Whites in social service organizations. Both were found to be more likely to volunteer in groups of their dominant race (Musick & Wilson, 2007). Research also finds that Latinx and Blacks are more likely to foster kinship and community relationships to cope with discrimination compared to Whites (Calasanti & Slevin, 2001).

This calls attention to the unique circumstance that older Latinx and African Americans find themselves in as they age in the US, and the challenges they may encounter in participating in their communities. Scholars have suggested that civic participation may be different across cultural groups, but due to the focus on volunteerism it may be going unrecognized (Martinez et al., 2011; Torres & Serrat, 2019; Wright & Nayar, 2017). Studies find that the positive health impact of civic participation are extended to activities outside formal volunteering. Some studies show that participation has a greater effect on the overall quality of life and self-reported health among marginalized groups who may often feel a sense of “not belonging” within formal American organizations (Li et al., 2010; Ramakrishnan & Viramontes, 2010; Tang et al, 2012; Zhang, 2014). For example, a photovoice study of older adults’ social participation in urban environments found that sense of belonging was the “engine” for their engagement with neighbors, support groups, and commitments to various roles in the community (Andonian & MacRae, 2011). This theme was found to be particularly salient in the context of diversity (Andonian & MacRae, 2011). Yet, what is missing from this is an understanding of how identity and the socio-political history of marginalized groups shape experiences of civic participation throughout their lives. This is a critical piece for grounding these findings and moving science, policy, and practice forward.
Chapter IV: Theoretical Background

Intersectional Life Course Perspective

This dissertation proposes an in-depth look into the life trajectories of marginalized older adults, with a focus on their experiences of civic participation through an intersectionality lens. To guide the design, conceptualization of interview questions, and the analysis of this dissertation, I draw from an intersectional life course perspective as described by Ferrer and colleagues (2017). The intersectional life course perspective integrates intersectional theory and life course perspective. Intersectionality theory originates from critical race feminist theory and was introduced by Black feminists and Women of Color activists and scholars (Grzanka, Santos, & Moradi, 2017). This theory focuses on examining the interplay between systems of oppression (e.g., racism, ethnocentrism, nativism, sexism) and the ways they manifest and impact an individuals’ life whose identity crosses various of these socially constructed groups (Crenshaw, 1989). Life course perspective was proposed by Elder (1974) to describe the linkages between one’s individual life trajectory and outside factors. The four major concepts that make up this perspective are (a) history, (b) timing, (c) relationships, and (d) agency. The first discusses the interconnection between people and significant events that shape and are shaped by people and are long-lasting, even beyond the individuals’ life. The second concerns specific events happening during a timeframe that affect each individual differently. The third focuses on the interconnectedness of human relationships that are experienced throughout ones’ life. The last concept is about an individual’s ability to make choices and exercise agency within structural constraints (Ferrer et al., 2017).
The intersectional life course perspective proposes four dimensions that integrate the life course perspective and the theory of intersectionality. Ferrer and colleagues (2017) present the dimensions as a series of “steps” that can guide and help to contextualize the experiences of marginalized individuals across the life course. The first step involves identifying key events and the time of those events, in addition to identifying the structural forces that contributed to the manifestation of such events. For example, for someone who immigrated to the United States, it would be important to identify when in their life that transition happened, what factors contributed to that decision (i.e., immigration policies, social unrest), and the effects of relocation (i.e., discrimination). In this way, the life course perspective is extended to consider the individual, structures and institutions, and relationships between people.

In step two, Ferrer and colleagues (2017) suggest examining locally and globally linked lives beyond individual and families to generations and national/international borders (Hopkins & Pain, 2007). Here, the authors draw attention to intergenerational relationships and transnational contexts in which life trajectories are experienced. This step asks us to consider “how people organize their lives, judge ‘progress’ or ‘success’, and formulate their identities based on relationships that occur with family, ancestors, between generations, and across transnational contexts” (p.12). Such inquiry would allow us to understand aging within a contemporary context of globalization and the influence of intersecting relationships on one’s identity.

Step three highlights the varied identities of older adults and suggests that we consider categories of difference (e.g., race, gender), the processes of differentiation (e.g., racialization, gendering, etc.), and systems of domination (e.g., racism, colonialism,
sexism, and patriarchy) (Dhamoon, 2011). This includes both identities for socially determined identities as well as individually perceived identities, and how it shifts throughout the life-course, historical contexts, and structures and systems. For example, an individual growing up in a predominately Hispanic neighborhood might not be particularly aware or identify with their Hispanic identity, but as they move to spaces where they are now a minority this identity may become stronger and more influential in how they navigate the world and their lives. By identifying these dimensions, we may understand how an individuals’ lived experiences are shaped and how the same experience with a phenomenon may fluctuate throughout the life course.

Finally, step four is an analysis and contextualization of the results from step one to three within broader systems of oppression and the role of resistance and agency. Step 4 suggests an “assessment of how processes of differentiation, and systems of domination shape the lives, agency and resistance among older people” (Ferrer et al., 2017 p.10). Ferrer and colleagues (2017) present agency and resistance as both structured and interpretive, and therefore are constructed and experienced as it relates to difference and systems of oppression. This dimension allows us to understand how older adults of racial minority exercise agency and control even as they encounter multiple systems of oppression that correspond to their intersectional marginalized identities (Dannefer and Settersten, 2010; Settersten & Gannon, 2005).

**Theoretical Underpinnings of Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

The foundation of this inquiry emerges from the study of lived experience, phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology was founded by Heidegger who insisted that to understand the essence of a phenomenon, it was necessary to interpret, rather than
measure or explain, its “whatness”. Heidegger described the ways of being (Dasein) through five existentials: relationality, spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and materiality (van Manen, 2014). Being, or what Heidegger termed “Dasein”, refers to what it meant to be-in-the-world in our everyday. Heidegger developed a “bare a fundamental structure of Dasein” that would allow us to study the “everydayness” (Heidegger, 2008, p. 65). Heidegger rejected the notion that the subject and the object are separate, but rather the two are in constant relation with each other through all five existentials of being: lived relation (relationality), lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), lived things and technology (materiality). These are thought to be universal ‘themes’ of life for all people (van Manen, 2014). They are also not separate from each other, but simultaneously happening as we experience ourselves and the world (Wollan, 2003). Given the focus of this study on understanding how civic participation is experienced among African Americans and Latinx adults 60 and older, I outline how these existentials guide my exploration of civic participation among this population.

**Relationality**

Relationality pertains to the relationships one has with others that provide meaning and purpose (van Manen, 2014). To explore the relational aspects of civic participation is to ask how people relate to the experience of civic participation and/or how people relate to the spaces where civic participation occurs. This involves asking questions about the familiarity individuals have to others who are involved and the space. It might also involve asking questions about the meaning of the space and the relationships that arise in the context of the phenomenon, as well as understanding the
values and norms of the people and space that shape the experience of participation.

“Dasein finds ‘itself’ proximally in what it does, uses, expects, avoids—in those things environmentally ready-to-hand with which it is proximally concerned” (Heidegger, 2008, p. 155), meaning that the experience of civic participation comes into existence through relations with the built and social environment in which it is practiced.

**Spatiality**

Spatiality refers to the ‘there’ where one is being; in phenomenology this is less about the physical world and more about the space that matters or concerns the individual (Heidegger, 2008). In this sense, spatiality is about the meaning of the space we inhabit in our everyday, much of which we often take for granted. This is discussed in phenomenology as the pre-reflective state of experiencing the world, one which is without thought or effort. The structure of civic participation for African American and Latinx older adults calls for an experience of space that would allow them to be who they are and participate how they want. If the spaces where certain forms of civic participation take place inspire fear, stress, or mistrust, the older adult may avoid those experiences of participation. For example, African Americans and Latinx might seek spaces for civic participation where they do not feel discriminated against based on their race, age, class, gender, citizenship, or culture. Lived space is felt and can affect how a person feels and how they can ‘Be’ in that space (Mackey, 2005). Therefore, we must inquire about how the space shapes the civic participation of marginalized older adults and how civic participation influences the spaces this population occupies. "Inquire into the nature of the lived space that renders that particular experience its quality of meaning." (van Manen, 1990, p.103).
Corporeality

Corporeality refers to the way an individual experiences the world through their physical body (van Manen, 2014). This can guide my reflection on how civic participation is experienced through the aging, racialized, and gendered body. The focus here is on the body one is and the experience it produces through the interactions with the material and social world. For most of us our body goes unnoticed, we engage with the world through the body but only pay attention to it when something goes wrong. Phenomenology allows us to highlight the lived experience of the aging body (van Manen, 2014). In addition, because this study concerns racial minority groups, we must also consider the intersectionality of the aging racialized and gendered body. Therefore, we might inquire about how older adults experience their bodies in the context of civic participation. How does their body shape and influence the ways they participate civically?

Temporality

Heidegger considered the individual to be positions in the world temporally, at once in the past, present, and future. From this he derived that the natural way of existence was ‘inauthentic’ due to the influence of preconceived ideas due to expectation, past experience, and the desire to conform to attitudes, values, and behaviors of those who surround us (Heidegger, 2008). In this way, being aged is existing in a temporally aged state, rather than measurable age the focus is on expectations, value judgements, and interpretations of what it means to age. Heidegger referred to this as ‘fallenness of Dasein’ referring to existing in the world without being aware of the deeper meanings, and thus absorbing outside values and expectations as ones’ own. Therefore, it would be
important to ask about their beliefs on if and how their intersecting identities (e.g., race, age, culture, gender) influence the ways they can experience civic participation. Perhaps, civic participation itself is temporally bound, to better understand this we might ask about the beliefs and values pertaining to the phenomenon. For example, prejudices about older adults may affect the ways older adults feel they can be in the world, they may hold beliefs about appropriate forms of participation in later life stages, and the role that is assigned to them as an older adult in society.

**Materiality**

Materiality refers to the ‘equipment’ or objects that we encounter in the world. Heidegger introduced the notion of ‘equipment’ to capture the relational aspect (van Manen, 2014). Heidegger distinguished relations as: “things that are relationally “ready to hand” such as tools or equipment and things that are relationally “present at hand” as objects of contemplation or reflection” (van Manen, 2014, p. 108). The difference here is in our consciousness, the pre-reflective state which takes things (object) for granted compared to the reflective state that thinks about the (equipment) particularly when it fails to function as we expect it to. For example, an older adult who uses the bus may take for granted that it is accessible to them, only when the bus does not meet their needs will it become a point of reflection and enter their consciousness. This moment allows us to learn more about the use of the bus in this instance, more broadly the way the individual relates to the material world allows us to better understand how experiences are shaped through ‘equipments’ (van Manen, 2014). Keeping this in mind, we might ask about if and how older adults’ experience of ‘equipments’ contributes to their experience and
meaning of civic participation. What ‘equipment’ is required to facilitate African American and Latinx older adults’ civic participation?

**Focus of the Research Study and Research Questions**

Given the growth of African American and Latinx older adult population in the U.S., coupled with increasing research that finds ethnoracial disparities in rates of civic participation, this dissertation aims to explore how intersectional identities and life trajectories shape African Americans and Latinx older adults’ experiences of civic participation throughout their lives. Further on, an acknowledgement of the shared and unique history among these populations leads me to examine how experiences of civic participation may overlap or diverge among these two distinct yet related groups. Guided by hermeneutic phenomenology, and an intersectional life course perspective this study posits two research questions.

RQ1: How do Latinx and African American older adults experience civic participation throughout the life course in the context of intersectional identities (i.e., race/ethnicity, age, gender, culture) and major life transitions (i.e., acquiring chronic health problem, immigration)?

RQ2: What are the differences and similarities between African Americans and Latinx older adults in their experiences of civic participation?
Chapter V. Design and Methods

Research Design

Civic participation is as varied as the number of research methods that have been used to study it. However, the use of quantitative methods far exceeds any other methodology. A recent systematic review of the literature on civic participation among older adults found that 75.1% of all studies in the past 50 years have used quantitative methods, only 21.8% have used qualitative methods, and 3.2% used mixed methods (Serrat et al., 2019). Although, most of the studies on this subject have been quantitative, the use of questionnaires does not allow for an in-depth understanding about the experiences of this phenomenon, particularly as they exist outside of formal volunteerism. Qualitative methods are more suitable to explore the wide variety of civic activities that are not formalized, but only 14.3% of studies have examined older adults’ experiences of civic participation (Serrat et al., 2019). For example, one study conducted in Baltimore City used focus groups to explore definitions of volunteering among African Americans and non-Hispanic Whites and concluded that civic engagement encompasses more than formal volunteerism and significant barriers must be removed to facilitate participation (Martinez et al., 2011). This is one of only a few studies that considers a cross-cultural perspective and racial/ethnic minorities’ experience of civic participation. Serrat and colleagues (2019) find that out of 349 studies only 4.6% considered a cross-cultural perspective, and fewer paid attention to racial/ethnic minorities (1.7%) and immigrants (1.1%). Not a single study considered the intersectionality of multiple systems of inequality in the context of this phenomenon (Serrat et al., 2019).
Only few studies have used a phenomenological design to explore some aspect of civic participation among older adults. Among them is a dissertation from New Zealand exploring everyday neighborhood participation among fifteen older adults (Conaglen, 2019) and a study with eight older men in Mexico (Cordero & Villar, 2019). None, however, have focused on African Americans and Latinx older adults, and to my knowledge none have applied an intersectional life course perspective. Hermeneutic phenomenology is especially suitable for this study given its focus on understanding the lived experience of a phenomenon, in this case one that appears to be misrepresented in the literature and invisible among certain populations. This methodological approach was chosen because it focuses inquiry and analysis on participants lived experiences and allows the researcher to interpret the meaning of those experiences in the context of intersectional identities and life trajectories (van Manen, 2014). In addition, this method is appropriate for marginalized populations, who historically have been stripped of their agency and voice. A phenomenological approach gives participants the space to be active participants in the construction of their own narratives (Wertz, 2005). Finally, phenomenology has been adopted by scholars seeking to study social, economic, and cultural interactions (Moustakas, 1994), topics that are salient to this study.

Other qualitative methods such as grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and narrative inquiry also examine the lived experience of individuals. However, the objectives of each are different from what phenomenology offers, as well as the philosophical underpinnings that guide each methodology (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Grounded theory is focused on understanding the lived experience of process, such as
understanding the ways in which individuals can gain access to opportunities for civic participation or to understand the processes involved for doing civic participation (Creswell et al., 2016; Patton, 2015). In addition, this methodology’s main objective is to produce a theory that explains a concept (Creswell et al., 2016; Patton, 2015). On the contrary, this study draws from a pre-defined framework of civic participation to recruit the study sample and develop questions (Serrat et al., 2019). Ethnography is an anthropological approach that examines culture, and while culture is an aspect of this dissertation it is not the focus (Creswell et al., 2016; Patton, 2015). On the other hand, a case study design is more aligned with the purposes of this study, which is to collect in-depth information about the experiences of participants in a close-knit environment (Creswell et al., 2016; Patton, 2015). However, because this is a study of two different groups that span across various geographic areas, this design is not suitable. Finally, narrative inquiry is also appropriate for explorations of lived experiences, but it places greater emphasis on the connectedness between study participants (Creswell et al., 2016). Although some participants in this study might share some level of connection, it is not a necessity and it could even work against the objective of this study in understanding the essence of the phenomenon as it is experienced by a diverse group of individuals (Creswell et al., 2016). Therefore, I chose phenomenology as the most suitable method that would allow me to understand the experiences of civic participation among African Americans and Latinx older adults living in New Jersey and New York. This methodology considers the differences between these groups as well as within their individual experiences, while providing a foundation that unites them (van Manen, 2014).
**Sampling and Recruitment Strategy**

In phenomenology, it is recommended that researchers interview 5-25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 1989). Participants were given a $25 incentive for their participation in each interview (total $50 per participant). In phenomenology studies, the use of criterion sampling is recommended to ensure that all participants have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell et al., 2016). Criterion sampling involves selecting participants based on predetermined criteria of importance for the study (Patton, 2015). In addition, recruitment through professional networks and snowball sampling were utilized to recruit individuals who were not affiliated with formal organizations, or who were involved in different types of civic activities. The sampling criteria for participation in this study is African Americans and Latinx adults aged 60 and older who were currently doing some form of civic participation; self-identify as not having significant cognitive impairments (i.e., dementia, Alzheimer’s disease); and living in New Jersey or New York. These states were chosen because they have some of the highest populations of older African American and Latinx immigrant older adults in the United States. New York has the largest number of African American older adults living in the United States (Administration for Community Living, 2018), and the older immigrant population has been growing at twice the rate than the older native-born population (González-Rivera et al., 2019). Similarly, New Jersey’s population of adults aged 60 and older who are African American and Latinx is greater (20%) (U.S Census, 2019) than in the U.S as a whole (17.9%) (Roberts et al., 2018). In addition, this study was carried out as COVID-19 emerged as public health crisis, which most affected my target population living in NJ and NY. Finally, New Jersey was also
chosen because the researcher had established networks that facilitated recruitment in this region. Recruitment began in June 2020, after I received IRB approval, and continued until September 2020.

This research is guided by the civic participation typology provided by Serrat and colleagues (2019) that define civic activities as those that are: voluntary; can be considered societal or political participation; are done individually or collectively in formal or informal settings; and have the intent of effecting positive change for individuals outside the family, for the community, or for society. In previous research on civic participation, participants have described the concept as “helping others” and “contributing to the community” (Martinez et al., 2011). I created digital flyers using this lay language to recruit the sample from organizations in NY and NJ.

First, criterion sampling was carried out with a list of over 20 community organizations in New York and New Jersey working with African American and Latinx older adults. These organizations were identified by the researcher’s prior experience, through professional networks, and through internet searches. Organizations were directly contacted through phone and e-mail to disseminate the call among their membership/clients and refer older adults who met criteria. The e-mail included the screening tool (appendix D1) with over 20 activities of civic participation listed and some basic demographic questions that helped to determine participant eligibility. The screening tool was administered over the phone and was used to ensure eligibility and not as a data collection tool. The e-mail included a flyer to share with their membership/clients and networks, participant criteria (60+, African American/Latinx,
living in NY/NJ), and what to expect from study participation (focus of study, number and order of interviews, and incentives). After an initial call establishing eligibility with participants and collecting additional contact information, a phone interview was scheduled. Prior to the phone interview participants were emailed the same information organizations received detailing focus and expectations for the study, the demographic questionnaire, and the consent form.

In addition, snowball sampling and researcher’s professional networks were used to recruit individuals who participated in activities that had not yet emerged in prior stories, and to target the immigrant Latinx population, which was harder to recruit. This helped avoid over sampling from the same groups, as well as increase variety of civic participation experiences. Using the screening tool, participants were asked to refer individuals doing activities different from them to ensure a greater variety of civic participation experiences. These strategies allowed me to reach individuals who were more widely connected to different groups and communities, and who participated in almost every type of activity listed in the screening tool, in addition to activities I had not considered. Most of my sample was recruited through established organizations (n=9) and professional network (n=6), and four individuals were recruited through snowball sampling, but two dropped out (n=2). Initial recruitment began with organizations in New Brunswick and the Bronx and expanded thereafter.

**Data Collection**

Phenomenological studies use a range of data collection methods to capture the essence of a phenomenon, such as in-depth interviews, documents, film, photography,
and personal documents (i.e., journal entries, poetry) (Barush et al., 2011; Patton, 2015; Shenton, 2004; van Manen, 1990). By including multiple data collection methods, the researcher can increase their understanding of the phenomena and build evidence through data consensus and substantiation (Barush, et al 2011). However, it is important to note that in phenomenology, accuracy, as in reliability of the story, is not as important as the essence of the experience as recalled by the participant (van Manen, 2014).

This study employed various methods of data collection: first, a short demographic questionnaire (see appendix D2) followed by an in-depth semi-structured interview capturing experiences of civic participation within the past 12-months (appendix D3); third, a document elicitation exercise (appendix D4), which was optional; and finally, an oral history interview focused on experiences of civic participation throughout the life course that incorporates questions for participants who elected to participate in the document elicitation exercise (Grant, 2018) (appendix D5). In addition, public archival documents were used to clarify names of public figures, quotes participants referred to, and situate participants’ stories under developmental life stages.

Each interview lasted about 1.5 to 2 hours and was audio-recorded with participants’ permission and transcribed. Participants had the choice of doing the interviews in English or Spanish. The first phase of data collection involved going over the study’s aims and consent form (available in English and Spanish) that was also e-mailed to them. After reviewing the consent form, participants were asked to participate in an in-depth semi-structured phone interview capturing experiences of civic participation within the past 12-months. Once participants provided consent, the
researcher proceeded by first administering a short demographic survey. Then the researcher conducted an in-depth interview focusing on experiences of civic participation within the past 12-months from the day of the interview. This interview included several questions about participants’ experience during Covid-19 and how their participation has been affected. These questions intended to capture the current context that has primarily affected the groups I am interviewing for this study and can serve to shine light on how participation may be affected by the emergence of a crisis.

At the end of the first interview, participants were asked to participate in the second interview, and were provided with a verbal prompt encouraging to create a piece that speaks to their life-time experience of contributing to the community. This prompt was also emailed to them after the interview if they indicated willingness to participate. Participants were given the option of submitting written or audio recorded poetry, stories, journal entry, or visuals such as photographs, collages, drawing, painting, or other documents they wanted to share. This elicitation was strongly encouraged, but optional.

The optional elicited documents speak to participants’ current and lifetime civic activities and were elicited digitally, such as photographs, collages, drawings/paintings, poems, or other documents that tell the story of the ways they contribute to their community (Grant, 2018). The elicitation of documents, archival and self-created, allows participants to express their lived experience through the medium that is most accessible to them (Grant, 2018). Literature has found that when discussing difficult or abstract concepts, and recalling memory, elicitation techniques can help to facilitate participant engagement (Grant, 2018). In this study, the documents served to assist participants in reflecting about the meaning of their experiences throughout their life and preparing them
for the oral history interview. They were asked to submit materials via e-mail or text a few hours before the interview for the researcher to prepare and integrate into the interview guide.

The second point of data collection was the civic participation oral history interview incorporating the elicitation exercise. The document elicitation questions were incorporated into the introduction of the oral history interview guide but were skipped if the participant opted-out of the exercise. Only five participants sent documents before the second interview to discuss, they were all African American participants. An additional four participants sent photographs that referenced one of their stories after interviews had concluded, two of them were Latinx. The documents participants submitted were used to reflect on questions such as “What does this piece say about the ways you have helped or contributed throughout your life?” As suggested by prior studies when using elicitation methods, it is important that the researcher takes a back seat and allows the participant to describe and interpret as freely as possible, without forcing meaning or their own interpretations of the participants’ photographs (Glaw, 2017). Once participants discussed their document in-depth, the researcher proceeded with open-ended questions focusing on prior life experiences of civic participation, such as, if and how major life events (i.e., chronic illness, immigration), intersectional identities, and socio-political climate have influenced their experiences of civic participation throughout different life stages. After the interviews were completed, participants were asked to remain available for further communication to clarify their experience during the analysis phase. Some participants continued sending e-mails with more information that they wanted to include in their story. Formal data collection period lasted from June 2020-September 2020.
Oral History

Oral history interviews involve the participant telling or retelling personal or social experiences in first-person. These stories often are told in the context of a specific time and/or place, and like much story telling they often do not follow a linear timeline (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). This requires a collaboration between researcher and participant to make sense of the story and may require follow-up questions that will serve to reconstruct or “restory” the experience for analysis and interpretation later (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002, van Manen, 2014). This process of gathering stories, analyzing them for key elements, and rewriting them in a chronological sequence is called restorying or crafting (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002; van Manen, 2014). In this process, researchers must include rich detail that provide insight into the context of the lived experience. In phenomenology the products of restorying or crafting are referred to as anecdotes, and they serve to link abstract interpretations with pragmatic lived experience (van Manen, 2014). Therefore, it is important to stay as close as possible to the experience, and it is recommended that researchers ask for concrete examples of a specific instance, situation, person, or event, and explore the experience in-depth (van Manen, 2014).

Oral history interviews are also an appropriate data collection method for ethnic minority populations and have been used in the literature to explore aspect of civic participation. For example, oral history has been used with Latinx older adults to document their activism during the Chicano movement (Roriguez, 2019), with older Black adults involved in the Civil Rights movement (Rogers, 1988), and to understand
immigration trajectories of various populations (Thomson, 1999). Within Latin American communities, oral history is known as “testimonio” and has been used by journalists, researchers, and community members themselves to preserve and challenge the privileged mainstream story/knowledge (Rodriguez, 2019). “Testimonios provide a gateway into the lives of a largely marginalized population, legitimizing their experiences by highlighting collective and individual forms of resistance” (Huber & Cueva, 2012, p. 377).

The validity of data derived from oral history interviews has been critiqued as a limitation by some scholars given the reliance on past memories (Thompson, 2017). However, oral history experts have responded to these concerns by highlighting that the purpose of oral history interviews is not to focus on facts of the incident, but “the symbolic truth they convey” (p.229). Thompson (2017) states “History, in short, is not about events, or structures, or patterns of behavior, but also about how they are experienced and remembered…what they believe might have happened…may be as crucial as what did happen.” (p.228). Studies have found that researchers can help participants recall specific memories by asking about key phases in the individuals’ lives as well as events that trigger emotional investment (Thompson, 2017). In the context of civic participation among African American older adults the researcher asked about their experiences during the civil rights movement. For Latinx immigrant older adults the researcher asked about their experience of civic participation before and after immigration to help trigger memories. This approach to in-depth interviews also serves to contextualize the experience and meaning making in larger themes, such as immigration,
language, race, socio-political movements of the time, among others (Thompson, 2017). In addition, this study addresses the concerns of memory by using document elicitation techniques. While participants where free to select any type of document, most sent archival photographs that referenced a particular story. Photographs provide a visual method that can facilitate memory recall, particularly when discussing life history (Barton, 2015; Harper, 2010).

**Document-elicitation**

Barton (2015) describes the strength of elicitation techniques in its ability to displace “the focus of interviews onto external stimuli and, in some cases, changing the power balance between researchers and participants... [and] help researchers collect rich data even on difficult topics.” (p.180). Particularly relevant is the ability for elicitation techniques to make participants feel comfortable, make the research process more transparent and yield more authentic data driven by the participant (Barton, 2015; Grant, 2018). Previous research exploring older adult’s engagement in civic participation has used photography to document characteristics of their local environment (Mahmood et al., 2012), explore barriers and facilitators to access (Asaba & Suarez-Balcazar, 2019) and define the meaning of community initiatives (i.e., age-friendly) (Novek & Menec, 2014). Elicitation techniques facilitates the co-construction of meaning between the researcher and respondent, allowing the participant to take a more active role in the research process (Barton, 2015; Grant, 2018). Similarly, the use of archival photo-elicitation in oral history interviews has been discussed for its potential to help
participants revisit memories, reinterpret past events, and draw out meaning (Parker, 2009).

In the context of this study, which seeks to explore a concept that may have many names and meanings depending on culture, language, and history using a document elicitation technique can allow participants to express and discuss civic participation through their own lens and language (Barton, 2015; Harper, 2002). This technique has also been found to give power to the participant to guide the conversation and discuss what is relevant and meaningful to them (Rémillard-Boilard et al., 2017). By using a method that gives agency to the participant and engages them in conversation, issues of trust may be ameliorated and refusal rates potentially lowered (Van Auken et al., 2010).

Elicitation techniques can be respondent-driven and researcher-driven. Researcher-driven elicitation involves the researcher selecting materials or documents to present to the participant, which has been done as a technique for memory recall (Barton, 2015; Gong et al., 2012). In contrast, respondent-driven elicitation techniques involve the participant selecting or creating the documents or materials they would like to discuss during the interview (Grant, 2018; Padgett et al., 2013; Walker, 2014). A study conducted by Padgett and colleagues (2013) exploring the benefits and challenges of employing respondent-driven photo elicitation found that the benefits outweighed the challenges because it produced richer and more expansive data than what had been shared in in verbal-only interviews. The study also found that participants felt empowered by taking the photographs and controlling their narrative and could engage in critical reflection with the researchers (Padgett et al., 2013).
Studies using elicitation techniques have encountered some challenges. Various scholars highlight that the use of elicitation techniques might reduce the pool of participants willing and able to do this task (Bennett, 2015). This issue was ameliorated in the study by making the exercise optional. Padgett and colleagues (2013) also found that photographs could produce positive and negative emotional responses, but these were offset by the trust and rapport the interviewer had built with the participants. They also found, that for participants having control over the photographs helped them to cope with some of the emotions that arose in the interviews. In this study, the elicitation techniques were used in the second interview, after I had established a rapport with the participant through two previous conversations (screening and first in-depth interview). In addition, because it was optional and they were free to share any kind of document, none of the participants shared photographs or documents that produced negative emotional responses. On the contrary, they shared photographs, poetry, and art that spoke to experiences that made them feel proud or confident. Both oral history and document elicitation provide a unique platform to “make the invisible visible” (Bukowski and Buetow, 2011, p.739). These methods have been found to be more accessible to marginalized populations whose stories and practices might not be as easily captured through traditional in-depth interviewing methods (Padgett et al., 2013; Barton 2015).

**Analytic Strategy**

All data was collected, transcribed, and uploaded into Nvivo12. Elicitation documents discussed during the interview were saved separately to refer to during analysis, but stories derived from these documents were added as a section in the life
narratives. Analysis began in September towards the end of data collection. Hermeneutic phenomenology and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) guided the analytic strategy carried out for this dissertation. The rigorous analytical process carried out in this dissertation is detailed in Appendices P1 to P5. Appendices P1 to P4 present four examples that correspond to the four themes presented in the results section. Each example begins with the original transcript and walks readers through the crafting process, open coding, axial coding, selective coding, and the final write up in the dissertation. Appendix P5 presents the overall coding tree for themes and subthemes in the results section. In phenomenological studies the subject is the phenomenon, and participants become the pathway by which we can understand dimensions of the phenomenon, largely through stories or anecdotes taken from interview transcripts (van Manen, 2014; Crowther et al., 2017). This is done through crafting of anecdotes that demonstrate a variety of experiences participants have had with the phenomenon. In addition, IPA provides a method by which we may understand how participants make meaning of their experience. These analytic methods are further enhanced using the Intersectional Life Course Perspective (Ferrer et al., 2019). This perspective allows the researcher to advance the analysis to understand the lived experience within a larger context that considers time, locality, categories of differences (e.g., race, gender), processes of differentiation (e.g., racialization, gendering), and systems of domination (e.g., racism, colonialism, ageism).

*Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a contemporary qualitative approach that allows the researcher to explore how participants’ make meaning of their experiences. This approach prioritizes (a) diversity of lived experience, (b) context, and (c) relationship to life narratives (Chan & Farmer, 2017; Miller, Chan, and Farmer, 2018; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). IPA has its roots in traditional phenomenology, but while traditional phenomenology is focused on identifying the essence of the phenomenon (commonalities across experience) IPA examines the similarities and differences of perceptions and/or experiences across the sample (Smith et al., 2009). In addition, IPA seeks to go beyond description and understand the meaning that is derived from these experiences. To do this, it draws from other phenomenological frameworks that center on the historical, contextual, and political influences that shape an individual’s experience (Smith et al., 2009).

IPA is carried out in two phases of analysis (Finlay, 2011). The first order of analysis is to develop a single-case analysis for each participant that produces a descriptive account of the phenomenon as experienced by the participant. This allows us to understand the individual experience and perceptions of a common phenomenon and develop an understanding of the variety of experience within that single case. For example, individuals may experience civic participation differently across each life stage, depending on where they live, the circumstances in their lives, the political climate at the time, the dominant culture of that period/geography. Therefore, this first step allows for an in-depth examination of the phenomenon as it develops within an individual’s
lifetime, it allows us to understand what matters to them, specific events, relationships, and values (Larkin & Thompson, 2012).

In the second-order analysis phase, we can begin to compare across cases to draw out patterns between experiences and perceptions (meaning making), and better understand how these experiences vary between individuals. For example, two people may both be politically involved in protests and activism, but one may experience these activities as invigorating while the other finds them draining both physically and emotionally. This allows us to better understand the range of experience that a phenomenon can produce and allows us to understand those differences through a lens that considers historical, cultural, societal, political, and personal factors. This analysis is referred to as a double hermeneutic, where the researcher attempts to make meaning from participants’ own meaning making of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Finlay (2011) provides a set of steps to guide IPA analysis the first is immersion in the original data, followed by focusing on “chunks of the transcripts” (in hermeneutic phenomenology these are crafted anecdotes) to develop emergent themes, then searching for connections across themes and integrating as needed. In the second-order analysis we begin looking for patterns and differences across cases, then deepening the analysis by bringing other theories/lens that help to make sense of the analysis. Suggestions for maintaining rigor during this process is to engage in constant reflection through reflexive memoing and discuss the data/emergent themes with other researchers (Larkin and Thompson, 2012). This process is described in appendices P1 to P5.

**Crafting Anecdotes**
While IPA emphasizes the use of raw data throughout the analysis, a common process in analysis of phenomenological data is crafting. The use of crafting anecdotes in phenomenology is a common tool used to demonstrate the unique properties that make the phenomenon what it is. Through participants’ stories we may glimpse into the essence of civic participation throughout one’s lifetime and from the perspectives of historically silenced groups. Van Manen refers to this approach as borrowing other peoples’ experiences, their reflections, and stories in order to better understand the deeper meaning of the phenomenon (2014). It is essential in phenomenological studies that researchers use various stories as examples of the experience. This can provide deeper understanding of how the phenomenon differs among groups or individuals and the experiences that are common throughout. Though the stories emerge from participants, they speak to fundamental experiences of the phenomenon so that those reading it may also recognize themselves in aspects of the experience (Gadamer, 1976). Overall, the focus is on trying to understand the phenomenon in-depth, and through the examples (anecdotes) expose new insights and aspects of the phenomenon.

Often, interview data will not have neatly told stories, and so the researcher must construct these stories or “anecdotes” in a process referred to as “crafting” (Crowther et al., 2017). Crafting is the process of “deriving narratives from transcripts” (Caelli, 2001, p. 276). It entails a series of steps that begin with an intimate understanding of the participants’ experiences and those of the researchers, which allows for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and how the understandings evolve throughout the research process (Crowther et al., 2017). This required various readings of the transcripts
and the crafted stories. This is not a linear process, but rather what has been termed a “hermeneutic circle.” The researcher moved between the whole text and the stories within it as they continued interpreting the data. In this study, this involved moving between two interviews, data derived from elicitation, and public data to create cohesive narratives that describe participants’ lifetime experiences of civic participation. This corresponds to the first order of analysis described in IPA, where the researcher becomes immersed in the individual cases and can develop a description of the experience as told by participants (Finlay, 2011). Crafting these anecdotes facilitates the process of interpretation and allows for a deeper understanding of phenomena that other forms of data analysis may not allow to emerge (Crowther et al., 2017).

Crowther and colleagues (2017) provide detailed guidelines and examples of the process of crafting. For example, the researcher may remove extraneous or repetitive detail, focusing the narrative to describe what happened and how it was experienced. To ensure the flow of the story, the researcher adds words to link different sections of the interview, give context, polishes grammar, reorders sentences, and brings in other small excerpts from the original transcript that are pertinent to the story. Then the researcher engages in the interpretive process of asking themselves questions, such as, “Does this story ‘show ‘the experience?’” “Does it engage?” “Are we still holding the meaning as gifted by the participant?” (p. 831). This is an iterative process, and anecdotes may be re-crafted and re-edited as the analysis deepens. It is also important to note that the process of crafting these stories for each participant allowed the researcher to establish time order of events within a historical context that provides insight into how structural forces
contribute to the manifestation of such events, as suggested by the Intersectional Life Course Perspective (Ferrer et al., 2019).

While not much has been written on mixing these types of analysis, for this study it provides an opportunity to organize the data in a manner that allowed the researcher to understand experiences of civic participation through life stages and track the progression of the phenomenon alongside age, politics, and major life experiences (immigration, death, pandemics, illness diagnosis, etc). In addition, IPA provides a clarity to the analysis of phenomenology that hermeneutic analysis does not. For a new researcher, such as myself, this guidance is essential in helping me manage the data and draw up a clear plan of steps that will allow me to conduct the analysis with rigor. These two approaches are complementary as they provide the ability for the researcher to understand the lived experience from various perspectives, a single experience, a lifetime experience, and the collective experience.

**Coding Strategy**

As suggested by the methodology of phenomenology, the crafting of stories continues throughout the analysis process. Though I had finalized versions of each participants’ narratives for the process of coding, the stories continued to be refined to present the essence of the experience in the most succinct and accurate manner. This mainly entails removing unnecessary words or details. To begin the first-order analysis, in vivo coding was employed to preserve the language used by the participants and draw out key narratives. The focus here was on capturing one or more of the following: description of civic activities across four life-course stages (childhood, young adulthood,
adulthood, and older age), the meaning participants attribute to their participation, how intersectionality informs the experience, national events related to their experience, and life experiences related to their civic participation. This first part of the coding process was conducted in two separate Nvivo projects, separated by racial/ethnic group. This was done as a bracketing strategy to ensure openness to the coding process in both groups and allow codes to emerge. Axial coding began before in vivo coding was completed, as themes began emerging. Once in vivo coding was completed the two projects were merged and further axial coding between groups was conducted. Using the intersectional life course perspective dimensions, selective coding was conducted. Codes were grouped under the four dimensions specified in this perspective, historical time, categories and systems of oppression, agency and resistance, and linked lives. This process is described in appendices P1 to P5.

Strategies for Rigor

In phenomenology, the researcher runs the risks of saturating the analysis with biased interpretations, rather than staying close to the lived experience (Patton, 2015). To address this risk, the researcher engaged in *epoche-reduction*, as suggested by hermeneutic phenomenology, before beginning analysis (van Manen, 2014). The epoche-reduction consists of reflecting and writing assumptions and preunderstandings about the phenomenon that would produce one-sided understandings of an experience or just speak to the researchers’ expectations. This is described by van Manen as “a search for genuine openness in one’s conversational relation with the phenomenon.” (p. 224). The researcher needs to be self-aware of their sociocultural backgrounds, their personal politics, beliefs
and values, and their own biases/predispositions in the context of the study (Barush et al., 2011; Creswell et al., 2016; Lietz et al., 2006). Since researchers are interpreting participants’ experiences through their own lens, it is essential that they acknowledge how their own decisions and identity can impact the meaning and context of the study (Lietz et al., 2011; Shenton, 2004). However, it is understood that one cannot dismiss all bias, but rather, simply be aware of it and open to continually question assumptions (van Manen, 2014).

This study also employed the use of *memoing* to engage in reflexivity throughout the research process, beginning with instrument development. Researchers who have used this method have found it to be helpful for informing their analysis and work with the data in new ways (Crowther et al., 2017). Finally, the researcher also conducted member checking with participants as a strategy to ensure that anecdotes and preliminary interpretations are not solely the researchers’ assumptions (Zambas, 2016). To make the best use of participants’ time, the researcher provided them with their life narratives constructed from the raw data for them to review, edit, make additions or remove content if they wished to. This method can provide validity of the quality of experiential anecdotes (van Manen, 2014). A call was scheduled to make changes to the final document. Participants were provided a $25 incentive for their time; only 12 participants chose to make edits. This was both a strategy for the researcher to demonstrate transparency and remain accountable to research participants after data had been collected. Except for one participant who dropped out after the first interview and asked to not be contacted, all participants were sent and confirmed receiving their stories. Nine
participants chose to revise and edit their stories. Edits were mostly minor and five added new stories or elaborated on their stories. None of the participants removed any stories.

Credibility of the study can also be strengthened through data triangulation. Barush and colleagues (2011) describe triangulation as the use of multiple data collection methods that can increase the researchers’ understanding of the phenomena and build up the evidence through data consensus and substantiation. In phenomenology, this is done by conducting several in-depth interviews, and could also incorporate collection photographs and other documents from participants (Barush et al., 2011; Patton, 2015; Shanton, 2004). This study includes two in-depth interviews, optional participant elicitation documents, and additional public documents searched during data analysis to provide context and clarification of participants’ stories, such as dates, quotes, and names of public figures or events. These data collection methods will help to improve the quality of data and to capture various dimensions of the phenomenon. However, it is important to keep in mind that in phenomenology facts of the events are not as important as the “symbolic truth” it conveys (Thompson, 2017, p.229). Throughout the analysis the application of reflexivity, bracketing, and negative case analysis was used to help challenge the dominant themes and analytically compare cases to demonstrate exceptions or define limits (Barush et al., 2011; Shenton, 2004).
Chapter VI: Results

Results from this study describe, contextualize, and provide insight into the experiences of civic participation across the life-course of 17 participants, ten African Americans and seven Latinx living in New Jersey (n=13) and New York (n=4). Table one shows participants’ demographics. Most interviews were conducted in English, six Latinx participants preferred Spanish. Most African American participants were born in the Northeast where they currently reside, except for three participants born in the South and one in the Midwest. Latinx participants were all born in Latin America, two were from South American, two from Puerto Rico, two from Mexico and one from Central America. The majority of Latinx participants immigrated in their 30s - 40s, in the period of 1973-1995. One participant arrived at the age of 15 in 1965 and the other in her 50s in 2010. During data collection most participants reported being age 60 to 69, and only two African Americans were over the age of 80. Most participants identified as females, and one participant identified as non-binary and went by the pronouns they/them/their.

African Americans in this sample had higher levels of education than Latinx participants. The majority of Latinx participants had a high school education or less, compared to African Americans who half reported a college degree or more. In addition, almost all African American participants reported being retired, compared to Latinx participants who mostly reported full-time or part-time work, except for two who were on disability and one who was retired. All Latinx participants who reported being employed also reported a disruption or loss of employment due to COVID-19. Most participants from the total sample reported having a disability or chronic illness, and eight reported a decline in their health due to COVID-19 (primarily mental health). Almost all Latinx
participants reported currently living with family or a partner, and either renting or not paying rent (family subsidizes). On the other hand, four African Americans reported living alone and half of the group reported owning their home. Most participants reported driving as their main mode of transportation.

Findings show that all participants, except one who dropped out after the first interview, were civically involved through informal means. These included non-registered/formalized community groups and associations, political blogging, providing alternative medicine to coworkers and neighbors, connecting individuals to jobs, goods, and services, mentorship, feeding the homeless and other activities. Three participants, two of which were Latinx, described experiences of solely participating in informal civic activities. The rest of participants discussed formal participation activities in addition to their informal participation. In fact, formal participation was the way most participants defined being civically involved, which led them to initially claim they were not very involved. Formal participation consisted mainly of volunteering in formal organizations, non-profits, block associations, fraternities, and churches. Among these, participating through church or a religious organization was by far the most common. In addition, most participants described their participation in predominately Black and Latinx groups and organizations. However, a few discussed participating with White majority groups/organizations, and almost all who did were African American participants. All participants, except two Latinx men, reported being active voters, and a few African American participants reported civic involvement in voter registration initiatives.

Results from this study reflect the major dimensions specified in the intersectional life course perspective. The first theme “Geopolitical and Socio-Historical Context in
Civic Participation” addresses the dimension of time in history and human lives, whereby the two are weaved and defined by significant events that reverberate for years to come. In this theme I explore the socio-political, economic, and the U.S national health context that emerged throughout participants’ stories. This theme provides a foundation to understand experiences of civic participation as they are embedded at the crux of geopolitics and life transitions. The second theme, “The Role of Age/Ageism, Health, and Race/Racism in Civic Participation” speak to the dimension of social categories and systems of oppression that interact to produce different experiences for different people. This theme describes participants’ experiences of how, where, when, and with whom they choose to participate. In this theme, I consider age, race, and health as categories of differences and racism, ageism, and stigmatization of illness/disability as systems of oppression. The third theme, “Agency and Resistance in Civic Participation” applies the third key dimension examining how agency and resistance emerges within the context of oppressive systems and processes of differentiation. In this theme, I present stories of Latinx and African American older adults’ describing civic activities that function to preserve and build their communities’ capacity in the context of marginalization and exclusion. Finally, the fourth theme “Linked Lives” corresponds to the dimension of linked lives which considers the interrelated and interdependent nature of humanity as it extends across the lifespan, international borders, and lifetimes. Thereby, this theme presents participants’ experiences of civic participation in the context of connections across their lives, globally, and historically.
Table 1. Participants’ Demographics

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African Americans (n=10)</th>
<th>Latinx Immigrants (n=7)</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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*Note: participant only completed the first interview.
Chapter VII: Geopolitical and Socio-Historical Context in Civic Participation

Results from this study shine light on experiences of civic participation throughout individuals’ life-course and in the context of geopolitical and socio-historical contexts. The first sub-theme discusses the socio-political context in United States and Latin America related to participants’ political participation or lack thereof. This section begins with stories from the period of the Civil Rights movement, which was pertinent to early life experiences of civic participation among African American participants. It also broadly discusses the political context in Latin America during this same period as described by Latinx participants who were living in their respective countries at the time. In addition, more recent events such as the immigrant movement and Obama’s presidential election are discussed. The second sub-theme centers on how participants’ economic context during childhood shaped social participation. This section focuses on the relationship between civic participation (primarily social activities) and the economic context participants lived in as they were growing up and extends to experiences in later life. Latinx participants’ narratives in this section focus on the economic context in Latin America and African American narratives speak to experiences in the U.S. The third sub-theme explores national health crises, beginning with the HIV epidemic, COVID-19 and ends with the Black Lives Matter movement which has been described as a public health crisis. This section describes how participants personal experiences through these national crises effect their civic participation. This type of analysis allows us to understand how geopolitical and socio-historical contexts intertwine with participants’ personal life events to influence experiences of civic participation throughout the life-course.
Civic Participation within a Socio-Political Context Across the Life Course

The Civil Rights movement was a prominent period during the early life of many African American participants in this sample. The ages of African American participants range from 2 to mid-30s during the period of 1954-1968, when the Civil Rights movement was taking place. Some participants discussed being politically mobilized by this movement, while others discussed being sheltered and preoccupied with other aspects of their lives. For example, the youngest African American participant was born in 1952 in Kansas. They described being hurt and disturbed by watching the violence against Black protesters during the Birmingham riots on television. However, they were only ten years old at the time and described being sheltered by their family and community, allowing them to focus on “childhood things.” Similarly, one participant who was in her early 20s and living in New York during this time described how the Civil Rights Movement was not a focus for her experience during this time. As the youngest of three and being a woman in the 50s and 60s, she describes being sheltered and preoccupied with the traditional expectations of women during this time.

“I really didn’t think about anything other than being a wife and a mother.”

When I was in my 20s, I was thinking about getting married and having children, then my husband went straight to Vietnam after he graduated. As a naïve person at that time, I really didn’t think about a lot of stuff for the future. A lot of things were happening back then, but I really didn’t think about anything other than being a wife and a mother. I loved Angela Davis at that time, but I didn’t think about being an activist then. It was a lot of things happening back in the ’60s that I really didn’t consider in my future. This African American woman (Angela Davis), she had this big afro and at that time, I had a big afro. I saw that she was free, but I guess it's because I was the third child, I was sheltered. We worked at Rockefeller University as waitresses back then, my uncle was the chef at the University. After my husband came home from Vietnam, we got married and my sister got me a job with the Martin Luther King Health Center.
However, for other participants this period sparked their political participation and set them on a path of activism which they still identify with in their later life. For example, one participant described getting politicized by the civil rights movement while fighting in the Vietnam war. He joined the military at the age of seventeen at the suggestion of a judge after spending 30 days in a juvenile detention center because of a robbery he was involved in. “I joined the army because I wanted to escape. I had a sense that I was trapped in the ghetto.” At the time of our interview, he held a position as a district leader for the democratic committee in his ward and was involved in various other political groups.

“There I was in Korea standing up for democracy, peace, and freedom and we didn't have it back home.”

I'll tell you what made me political, is when I started reading while I was in the army and the civil rights movement was going on. During that period there was a lot of struggles going on in the United States, and then you get a little bit of information. Things were happening in this country. I only knew a little bit about it from the news and so on, but I knew that I needed to make my contribution. That was the most important thing. I didn't know anything about joining a movement or anything like that, but I just knew that I had to get involved because I was a young Black man experiencing racism. Anyway, I was getting politicized by the anti-racist struggle then and of course, we had to deal with some racism within the military itself...

There I was in Korea standing up for democracy, peace, and freedom and we didn't have it back home. We didn't have it in the United States. It was a contradiction, and it was embarrassing. I was embarrassed by that. I really was. There were pictures on television of Bull Connor spraying those kids with hoses down in Alabama. There were pictures of demonstrations and things that I thought-- The four Black girls they blown up in a church in Birmingham, Alabama. I was born in Alabama.

It was not until after I came back from being overseas that I had my first opportunity to participate in a public demonstration associated with the civil rights movement. I was in the military for almost seven years and during the mid-1960s I was stationed at Fort Sheridan in Chicago…From there, I went up to Milwaukee where this Catholic priest, Father John Groppi, organized a young anti-racists group, the NAACP Youth Council. They were holding open housing marches. They used to have these restrictive covenants. It was like segregated
neighborhoods were enforced, both legally and socially. This group was organizing against those segregated neighborhoods. I was able to go up there and participate in two of those marches. Being there just gave me a sense of commitment to fight against racism and to fight for equality. It was in my personal interest, and I thought that it was wrong for people to be discriminated against on the basis of their color and their history. I didn't believe in this. I bought into the idea that we're all created equal, and that we're all endowed with certain unalienable rights. I believed that stuff and so I tried to act on it.

Similarly, another African American participant who was in college in the South during this time described his participation in the Selma to Montgomery March of 1965. He expressed not knowing the significance of this moment as it was happening, but now in his later life he sees the importance of it in the greater context. At the time of our interview this participant was a volunteer for the NAACP.

“I participated in the Selma to Montgomery March back in '65.”

I participated in the Selma to Montgomery March back in '65. You'll never forget that because history will not let you forget it. I was a student at Tuskegee University, the university organized buses and everybody went. You had a lot of students over there. In fact, a lot of the nursing students were aiding to help marches and things. They had them deployed there...Some students drove, some students got on buses and went over, I got there on bus.

The marching was from Selma to Montgomery, which was about 40 miles southern east of Montgomery. When they got to the capital, a lot of students from Tuskegee went from Tuskegee over to Montgomery, the capital of Alabama. Everybody was surrounding the capitol and they didn't want the march there. So, once you got there if you left you couldn't come back, that was the way to eliminate people. They had no restroom facilities there and sooner or later you're going to have to take a bathroom break. If you leave, you’re not coming back. You had to stay there and endure because there were speeches by Dr. King. It was pretty rough there. They had state troopers and the National Guard, all of this stuff around. Later on, state troopers on horseback was riding over folks and they had cattle prods and all this stuff, kind of wild. People were getting hurt. It wasn't a battle because the students would not have battled. Rarely did violence show up in Martin Luther King rallies. Just in that.

At that point, the significance really didn't resonate with you at that time. You were young. You understood why it was being done, but not how important it was. You know some things that should have been happening that weren't. There are some rights that were still being violated and stuff. That things shouldn't be this way but they are. How do you change things? Your world was
much smaller than now and once you leave, what you were viewing was a small portion of what actually was happening.

Other participants described being influenced by the movement, although not directly involved with it. For example, one participant who was in high school during this time, described organizing other children his age to get involved in local political efforts. While this was not directly connected to the civil rights movement, he mentions being inspired by what was happening at the time.

“I got some more kids my age to come along, and we got on the picket lines”

I was in something like junior high school or high school. We were trying to get our community center reopened. A lot of the adults, they wanted to participate. They all said, "Yes. Let's do this. Let's do that." I came along. "Yes, well I want in." They was like, "No. You're too young. You're too young." I can remember arguing with them about this. In hindsight, they were probably trying to protect me. To say that this could turn out to be real ugly, like maybe people getting arrested or beat by police and by higher defense governmental forces. They thought I was too young and shouldn't be involved in this kind of stuff. I also understood the rec center they were trying to get open was for certain people like me, my age, so we stayed involved.

They were going to form picket lines and they thought that probably there's going to end up being a lot of arrests, and no. I got some more kids my age to come along, and we got on the picket lines just along with them. Fortunately, nothing came about. It was like, "You can't turn us around." I was looking at the civil rights movement. If you look at it, there's always been youth that have been very much involved in things.

This participant was also a longtime volunteer of the NAACP and was involved in many local and national political efforts, including a campaign “to restore the right to vote for 83,000 former felons” which passed in New Jersey in early 2020. He and one other participant spoke about the Emmett Till murder in 1954, learning about the lynching of this 14-year-old boy as young children made them “keenly aware of racism.” In discussing this murder, they talked about the way Black parents had the responsibility to show “the children the ugliness and explain it to them.” This was a topic a few African
American participants discussed throughout their stories, one participant talked about attending the National Black Holistic Retreats that begun in the 60s were prominent civil rights’ leaders, such as Betty Shabazz would speak, and there would be talks on “what to do if the police stopped you. They taught you how to live in a racist society and how to cope as a Black person in America.”

Teaching a community how to protect themselves to ensure their survival is a common civic activity among the Black community that has gone unrecognized. Yet, it plays an essential role in their ability to subsist, and safely participate in political civic activities that would be considered life-threatening for them within the racist context of the United States. Due to this understanding, one participant described political activities such as rallies/marches as too dangerous given their prior experiences. This African American participant who was living in the South described an experience early in her life that kept her away from political participation for the rest of her life.

“I guess we knew where we were supposed to be, and we stayed there.”

Likewise, Latinx participants overwhelmingly refrained from political participation. This was due to several factors, one being fear of deportation among undocumented immigrants. Only two Latinx participants discussed being politically active. Both were
born in Mexico and described their participation with the immigrant movement to make licenses available for all New Jersey residents regardless of citizenship. However, this type of participation presents a great risk to them if they are undocumented. As one of the participants explained, when he tried to encourage his co-workers and friends to join the marches many refrained due to fear of deportation.

“Don't go, the migra is going to take you.”

I invite them to get involved in organizing to help eliminate the licensing problem...It is all about wanting to collaborate, to cooperate in meetings, not monetarily but with presence. Some go and some don't, then they say, "Don't go, the migra is going to take you." It's the fear they have. I've been going and the migra never shows up. But the same thing happened to me, when I was told to go, I'd say, "No, it's hard, the police are going to come." I thought we were going to get caught by the police because it's a public scandal. But I began to analyze the words the president said that there is free speech, where is our right of free speech? I'm going to participate and see what happens, either way I can't work, if I'm sent to the doctor, well that's ok (he was disabled due to a work accident). That's why I participated...

(In 2019, they won the right to receive driver’s licenses for all.) The last one I remember the most is when we won the licensing law for everyone, and even my grandson was jumping with excitement. They said no, they're never going to give us licenses for everyone, but you have to try, if you don't try, they're not going to hear us. They have to hear us, because a child who doesn't cry doesn’t get fed, that's how they had us.

These stories speak to the anti-immigrant and Anti-Black context of the U.S. that functions to silence these groups through state sanctioned violence. Among Latinx immigrants it is mainly experienced through the fear of deportation for those who are undocumented, that at any moment they can be taken. While, among African Americans it is due to the threat of police violence that can result in death. In both accounts, people are running a hefty risk when they decide to participate in these civic activities, but as the participant above states “a child who doesn’t cry doesn’t get fed.” They are willing to take this risk, because the alternative is more detrimental for the entire group.
Some Latinx participants held negative views of government and politics which they perceived as corrupt and ineffective. These views were carried through generations, and many described adopting this view from childhood experiences in the 1950s-1960s. Some participants described being taught to avoid politics by their parents, while others learned from personal experiences in their countries of origin, which were later reaffirmed here in the U.S. For example, one participant from Chile explained his father’s influence on his political participation, which was later validated by his personal experiences with the local government in New York where he resides.

“They’re not interested in the community.”

My dad was always averse to politics, he said, "Politicians are to be in the government palace and swell up with money, so don’t believe them." So that’s why I don’t participate in politics either.

[In another story he explains] You go where these congressmen who belong to the government are, and they practically don’t do anything. They do not give priority to what you are asking for. It's been three years since I went to ask for something, unfortunately the councilman that was there died, a block from here. He never did anything, and nothing has ever been done... They're just interested in making money, but they're not interested in the community.”

This participant describes most of their experiences with politicians as a “deception”, a sentiment that various other Latinx participants shared. They discussed how politicians only used people to get what they want and after would not care to uphold their promises.

As one participant from Ecuador stated:

"I've never been involved in politics, I've never liked it, ever. Because people only use you in our countries, they use you nothing else, for the time they need you. When they've moved on to get what they want, they forget you exist. I don't like that, no... I prefer to do my things my way, on my side and I think it's better because that way the heart is not damaged..."
Similarly, another participant from Mexico recounted stories of watching his father’s involvement with a political party. He described seeing how the party took advantage of people who had little education.

"My dad was president of the PRI (The Institutional Revolutionary Party)"

When I was little, all I did was work in the countryside, we made bricks. My dad was president of the PRI for our town. They always sent him to Mexico with some old car that never arrived, they arrived as the meeting was over... I didn't like the way they treated him, and I would say, "Ask for this," "You can't ask for anything, we're not rowdy," he said. When I grew up, I was seeing it... It's bad to say, but that's what they're looking for, ignorant people to deceive them, people without study to have them as collaborators, but they're eyes are closed. They don't know what they're doing. Since I was young and my dad took me, I wanted to scream and say I want this for my people, but my dad never let me. I said, "PRI is no good." I was 12 when I went with my dad to PRI stuff... This participant on the other hand was mobilized by witnessing this injustice, he was the only Latinx participant who was politically involved in his country of origin and became politically involved again in the U.S. in older age.

On the other hand, almost all African Americans described being politically active now in older age. For some these stories began with the 2008 presidential election, which was discussed among various African American participants as a moment of mobilization and pride among the Black community. One participant living in New Jersey described doing voter registration in Pennsylvania and NJ.

“A first African American president, I would have done anything.”

My greatest joy was in 2008. They weren't doing anything down here but up in Rockland County where I used to attend church up there, one of the unions up there ran a bus to Pennsylvania to campaign for Barack Obama. I was on that bus, my girlfriend and I, and they put us off in a certain neighborhood. If I tell you that some of those people sicced dogs on us I wouldn't be lying. Pennsylvania wasn't a state that was going to vote for Barack Obama. I think that's why they sent us there, but those people were mean spirited...I certainly wasn’t about to be bitten by a dog but I really-- A first African American president, I would have done anything. It signaled a new era, we thought finally we have somebody who maybe would look out for some of the things we needed…I did voter registration
for Barack. I had voter registration at the church, and I asked some of my Hispanic friends to come so they could interpret for the Spanish people who showed up.

This same participant was just as motivated to remove number 45 from office in 2020. She talked about some online organizing she was doing to ensure that people would receive their ballots at home during the pandemic. She said, “I helped Obama get in and I want to help get 45 out.” This commitment to political participation was shared among many in this group and exercised through various other political activities such as activism, community organizing, and political blogging, among others.

**Civic Participation in the Context of Economic Inequality**

Most participants described growing up in households and neighborhoods of low socioeconomic status. Particularly among Latinx participants poverty was a common experience throughout their lives that extended to older age. In many ways the experiences described prior about government corruption has much to do with poverty in Latin America. In addition, one participant also connected the economic context to the history of colonization.

"Our country has been a very looted country."

Ecuador is a very blessed country because it is a country of wonderful wealth, there is so much wealth in Ecuador, but bad governments, politicians have plundered us. Right now, they are taking it or have caught about 45 people who have been stealing from the country there, in government. It is a country that unfortunately governments take everything, there is a lot of poverty, it is not poverty, but it is misery, because I can say, "I am poor", but misery is another thing. The difference is that the poor person has to have his little house or pay rent, live and eat, but the misery is that you don't have a house, you have to stand two sticks and a leaf on top and make a house or with cardboard. Eating once a day, that's misery…And we were conquered, too. When we were conquered there was a lot of cruelty, a lot of injustice, they raped women, they stole a lot. Our country has been a very looted country, they took the gold as well without caring,
the Spaniards. From there comes people with a very hard heart, very rebellious. They took away our values, other customs were put in, other cultures.

Last night, I even saw on television that statues of Christopher Columbus were being knocked down, because they say that Christopher Columbus should not be honored, because the conquest was terrible, how come they put him there as a hero? The people now want to recover these cultures, those traditions of old, they are peoples who have a lot of resentment, a lot of pain for the way we have been conquered.

Various Latinx participants described what she refers to as “misery” where they talked about not having necessities such as food to eat or a home to live in when they were children in the 50s and 60s. They also described knowing people who were financially struggling in this way. In these instances, some participants described ways they would cooperate with other members of the community to ensure the livelihood and well-being of neighbors and school mates. For example, one participant from Puerto Rico described a time in her childhood when she requested the cooperation from her neighbors to help an elderly couple who could not pay their rent.

“Un granito de arena.”

In Puerto Rico I lived in a humble area. There were 51 buildings and there was an elderly couple, I never forget that. I think the old man stopped getting some money, they didn't have money to pay the rent, they didn't have for food, they cut off the lights and things to cook. I found out because I talked to the old lady a lot, I always liked talking to older people. And she told me they didn't have the money to pay the rent. I was about 13, so I talked to my mom and said, "Mami, we have to do something to help the older couple next door." And I decided to take an empty medium sized can of milk. I decided to visit the 51 buildings, with 12 apartments in each building. They put so much money in my can, and by then things weren't as expensive as they are now, you know everything has changed.

The older couple was crying with joy, I said, "You don't worry, what's more, we're going to give you some money so that the next time you have to pay the rent, you already have it there." There was money left after all that, we checked on other people in the community who were in need. We were able to corroborate with their bills and other things... "Here's extra money to help them." There wasn't a family that didn't give me money. The initiative was mine and then
other people decided to do other things... It felt like a joy in my heart knowing that I had contributed, as I say, a grain of sand.

There were many experiences like this throughout Latinx participants’ stories from childhood and young adulthood. They described feeling a sense of empathy and compassion when they saw that others were in need, despite them living in precarious conditions themselves. One participant described the time when his grandfather passed away and the family sought cooperation from neighbors to pay for the funeral expenses, which was common practice in their town in Chile.

On the other hand, African Americans experiences of poverty in childhood varied more. While some discussed a similar sentiment of collaborating and sharing with the community, a few participants described the limitations to civic participation brought upon by their financial restrictions. For example, one African American man from the south described growing up in a housing project where the community was close-knit, but everyone just had enough to maintain their family.

“Nobody had a whole lot anything. You feed your family, I feed mine.”

I grew up in a housing project...Everybody looked out for each other. It was tight knit. I knew that if somebody saw me doing something, they will tell my parents because you had to be careful about that. You respected the elderly people in the community and everyone else from there. I didn't play too much in the community because I was always active in scholastic sports. It was when I get home from school, it will be darker and stuff like that. There was not too many places to play in that community. You just live up there and that was it.

Rarely did you go over to other people house to eat. Everybody ate at their house. It was an agriculture community for business and so most of the workers were agricultural workers and that kind of stuff. They harvested the stuff. There were a lot of orange groves, watermelon fields, and that kind of stuff. It was the majority of the work was harvesting produce and fruits. Nobody had a whole lot anything. You feed your family, I feed mine...My mother would help folks as much as she could.
In their adulthood years and older age, both African Americans and Latinx participants described a tendency towards helping others, despite their own financial challenges. Both groups described being instilled these values through their parents and the church or their religious beliefs. For example, one African American participant described a time when they were evicted from their apartment and had to live in a shelter for some time. While this was a difficult experience, their faith gave them the perspective of seeing it as an opportunity for helping others in the future.

“I could use that experience to help other people.”

The experiences I’ve had that are not comfortable for me serve so that I can say “I know what that’s like” and I can help others. When I got evicted, it gave me the opportunity to know what it’s like to go through that and I could use that experience to help other people, and then I got a better apartment myself…The eviction thing really threw me for a loop, but I never lacked food, healthcare, or a place to stay. I was inconvenienced, and at the time I wasn’t able to see that, but I always had everything I needed. When I was evicted and had to go to a shelter it wasn’t easy, there was no lights, and it was cold. It never got any sun; my window looked out to a brick wall…I got up every day and I went out and do things that I would do before I got evicted. I was an example to them because they saw me get up and do things. I kept volunteering and going to church services. I immediately applied to housing connect; I was doing everything to get out. I would not have known all I know now about how to handle evictions if I had not lived through that. I was there for three months and then went into supportive housing…Ultimately, everything happens for a reason, and I am grateful.

At the time of our interview, this participant was volunteering with various organizations and was also “part of the advisory board for an AIDS services org, I was appointed by the City Council. Through them I help people get housing. People come to me, and I’m able to give them information and help them.”

A few Latinx participants discussed not being able to be civically involved due to financial constraints. Particularly Latinx men talked about needing to work extensive
hours to provide for themselves and their families in the U.S. and in their countries of origin. For example, one participant from El Salvador described his adulthood years in the U.S. consisting of working from 7am to 11pm and only having Sundays off. This made it impossible for him to get involved in his community. Once he was asked to move to Puerto Rico for the company, the work routine changed, and he had more time to get involved with the community and begin participating. One of the ways he was involved was through an informal U.S. citizenship study group that he formed when he was studying for the test.

"We studied the questions for citizenship."

I started studying the questions for American citizenship. It was 100 questions and [through his job as a salesman he met people who were also studying]. I was not a citizen at the time, I was just a resident... I said, "If I become a citizen, I'm safer," and I started studying the questions. When I visited the homes, the conversation would come up and they would say "I'm studying for citizenship" and I was like, "Where are you going? Do you want me to help you? I've studied them too." We were already forming a group two, three...they brought a friend, two friends, three friends. There came a time when I had eight in the group, and we studied the questions for citizenship.

Eventually the group became formalized. Someone from a nearby school found out what he was doing and arranged him to meet with the school’s director, who asked him to formally teach a class to help students take the test. Some participants discussed ways that they helped others within their place of employment. For example, one participant from Chile talked about learning how to provide alternative medicine to help co-workers who would have accidents at work, because health care was beyond their means.

"I learned to make “curaciones” and take care of those who were injured in the jobs because there is no money there. Big companies, you know they don't want to spend much. Someone who knows what Merthiolate is for, when there is an infection, when someone gets pierced by a nail."
Another participant described an instance at work when she collected signatures and called the union because she saw there was an injustice happening at her workplace. She was fired from the factory because of this initiative.

“I was the first one to start asking for signatures.”

I remember working in a factory when I was younger. I don't think we were getting paid enough, something like that. I think it was something about the pay. I think I called somebody, and it got me in trouble because I was the one that closed offers. This is before my second job in a factory, and something happened, and we didn't have a union... I was the first one to start asking for signatures. I lost my job, but I was just like - I don't remember much of it, but I think that I called somebody from the union to come and I was the responsible one for doing it... I remember that incident very vaguely but, that's the type of person that I would be. If I see somebody is getting hurt in the street, I will be the first one. If it's wrong, I will be the first one to help. I don't like injustice.

Justice was discussed by many participants as the source of their motivation for getting involved. Their personal experiences living through economic injustice served to instill in them a sharp awareness of other people’s needs, and a sense of responsibility to take action to improve their situation.

Civic Participation in the Context of National Health Crises

In the early 1980s the HIV epidemic took hold in the U.S., similarly to COVID-19, there was little information about how it spread and less information about how to treat it. Thousands of lives were lost during this time, among them the Black and Latinx community was most affected. One African American participant described how their diagnosis in 1986 changed their life trajectory and influenced their civic participation.

“Three Blessings”

On August 15, 1986, thirty-four years ago, I was told to get my affairs in order because I would be dead in two years. I was 34 when I was diagnosed with HIV positive. At that time death from HIV was almost certain. The doctor
cautioned me to be careful around my nieces, aged one and two. What the flip did that mean? Don't touch them?

During this time, I looked in my spirit and my spirit revealed to me, there was actually three blessings. The first blessing is that I did not have to worry about getting it anymore. The second blessing is that it taught me the importance of priority. This is important, and it's not negotiable…And the third most important blessing is, it taught me that whether I have two years or two minutes, I'm going to live until I die.

It taught me the importance of prioritizing, and the importance of living my life fully. I ain't got time for nobody, and nobody's bullshit…I have been HIV positive for half of my 68 years. I have been unable to transmit HIV for 17 of those years. I have had no AIDS related illnesses during this time…This just focused me in a way that, okay, I know that death is inevitable, so now let me make sure that I do as much as I can with the time that I have here. In fact, about eight years ago, I was having a conversation with spirit, and I said, "Why am I still here?" Considering so many other people were diagnosed when I was diagnosed are far-gone. Spirit said to me, "You're still here because you need to go out so that people can see you and hear your story." That's why I'm here, and every chance I get, as I'm doing now, I'm telling my story. I am living my life like it is golden because my life is golden. A-hó!

In this story we can see how telling one’s story is a form of civic participation, this may happen through research, art, activism, and other forms, but there is much that we all learn from listening to a story. In addition, this participant discussed various experiences participating in rallies and marches in demand of health and housing rights for people living with AIDS. Among them they described a protest in 2016 where they were arrested while protesting to get “funding for people living with AIDS in New York City to get housing, regardless of their HIV status.” A case they won and continue to fight for the rest of New York State.

Another participant also discussed how living through this period in history affected their participation. This Latinx participant who owned a hair salon at the time in New York City talked about how her community was affected by this epidemic. Her
response in seeing this was to support anyway she could, through marches, benefits, and personally caring for some of her staff who eventually passed away.

“Through a lot of stuff that I did in my salon I'd contribute to the AIDS society.”

When the AIDS epidemic came, there was no cure and it was very fast, happened very fast. I lost nine people that worked for me. They were my friends... We were faced with a lot of pain because not only I'm losing employees, but I'm losing my friends... Through a lot of stuff that I did in my salon I'd contribute to the AIDS society. We did events and I provided a lot to them, taking care of them physically. Taking them to my house and provided for them so they felt secure. At the time, there was a lot of fear that if you talk to somebody that had AIDS, you got AIDS. I educated myself. I also reassured my husband that it was safe for them to come over. Fortunately, it has changed, and people have accepted things and learned that you just don't catch AIDS from being next to somebody, but at the time, there was a fear. Just like now, what we've just been through in March when this pandemic came...”

In this story we can see how community businesses can also be civically involve and serve to support their communities. This same participant described how a local restaurant donated food for the community during the pandemic, which she delivered. “I went door-to-door to all the housing buildings with a bunch of people to deliver salads and food that a restaurant donated. They needed volunteers and I took it upon myself to go and bring it door-to-door.” However, a more common experience among participants was receiving support from local organizations, non-profits, and church. For example, one African American participant said:

“I have gotten calls from the church where they ask, "Do you need help with anything?" They were reaching out to all seniors. A ministry must have gotten my number from their seniors list. And I've gotten calls from younger fraternity brothers that ask do I need any help but I'm okay. Also, from NAACP and neighbors have asked, "Do you need any supplies and things?" but I have declined it. I'm healthy and I can get around. It hasn't been a problem for me. I have a son living in New York City, so I will send packages of stuff that he can't get there. I have also donated to food banks during this time.”
This was a common experience, as participants described ways they’ve been supported during the pandemic and also ways they are lending support to people in the community. One participant discussed how COVID-19 gave her the opportunity to receive help, instead of always giving.

“COVID has changed my experience with the community. Many people really have come through. I’m receiving now. I’ve always been giving. I really have been receiving, it’s really community coming alive. Here you just think community, like an annual film festival, or something you go to and pay money for, but this is the first time I’m really receiving... Now the community has really come to help each other, and I’ve been able to benefit from that directly. You have the food distribution and other personal items...”

This was a shared sentiment across groups, as both Latinx and African American participants commented on how the pandemic had brought people together, despite creating physical distancing. One participant put it this way “We do try to maintain the physical distance, but we're trying to prevent the social distancing.” In addition, a few Latinx participants discussed helping people who were undocumented and unable to collect unemployment. One participant described how he helped undocumented older adults from his church who lost their jobs during the pandemic.

"How are they able to survive?"

They are Hispanics over the age of 60, one is 85 years old, the other is 70 and the other is 65 years old, some don’t have legal documents. I was wondering, if they can’t get help from the government, no coupons, no this, and they're out of work, how are they able to survive? I called them to ask them how they were doing... Since I have some savings, I started sending $40 or $50 every two weeks to four brothers. Then I'd go to the supermarket and buy $15 or $20 of shopping and deliver it to them. Then I realized that in certain Baptist churches around my building, they were providing food. Then I went and they gave me one for me and I asked them if they could give me two or three more and yes, they gave them to me. I’d go to another church, ask one for me and ask for two or three more. They gave it to me, until I gathered 10 bags. What I was missing, I went on to buy to complete some bags and then I was going to hand them out.
Among those who were doing activism and meeting with groups in the community prior to COVID-19, stories of online civic participation were common. Many used the term being “zoomed-out” as they talked about going from meeting to meeting online during their days. As one person said, “We're in more meetings now than when we had to actually leave the house because it's easy.” One participant discussed a new approach they had taken to canvassing.

“We can't do door to door canvassing, so we're doing something called deep canvassing online. We did training in that and how to do that in the computer. Instead of going door to door, we can do it now through something called deep canvassing on the telephone or through text messages. So, all of my organizations have adapted to the new situation. We've not stopped what we're doing. We just shifted in doing it because the problems that we're dealing with have not gone away just because of COVID. We're putting together a frequently asked questions for our text banking campaign.”

For others, it has limited their participation to the point that they feel they are no longer contributing. As one participant living in New York who volunteered with a housing organization stated “Right now I've not been contributing to the community. I run into people, and they ask me questions and I will try to answer them to the best of my ability if they have a problem. But our office is closed, and I can’t go there...” Being physically present was brought up by various participants as being essential to their participation. This participant explained it further:

“What I’m doing now is not really civic participation, I really don’t like it, because civic participation is about doing outreach physically, not through the telephone. Having your body there, outreach means that my body has to be on the spot...If I'm voicing my opinion, I would like to be there too. It’s important because it lets them know that I am here, and I feel that you're not doing what you're supposed to do. I'm here to fight for my rights. I believe in being there for my right as a citizen and talking... I'm here in body and soul.”
One Latinx participant who was volunteering at the church pantry, felt that during COVID it was more important than ever for her to be there doing that work. This activity came at a risk to her, and she was diagnosed with COVID-19 during this time but recovered quickly and returned.

“I became more aggressive with my volunteering because we had less people coming to help.”

This is the first time that in our lifetime we've been faced with a pandemic that is a virus that will kill you versus the economy or versus things that happened in the past or war. This is a different thing, and we are learning how to live with it…A lot of people were afraid to come to the church to help. I have volunteers that called me and said, "You know, I don't think I could do this, I'm afraid." I used to say, "Look, whatever is good for you, nobody is telling you to come. If you don't feel like coming, it's okay." Then I became more aggressive with my volunteering because we had less people coming to help. The pastor and some of the people in the church, it's like, wow, I can't believe you- because I'm 69 years old, I'm not a kid.

When I had COVID, I had it for three days that I didn't know I had it because the symptoms was just, I lost my taste and I lost my smell, but nothing else… the sciatica was hurting my leg, they were getting a lot of numbness. That's when I ended going to the hospital in the middle of the night when I couldn't take the pain in my lower body. That's when the doctor said, "I'm going to give you a shot. I'm going to give you steroids for a week and go and get yourself tested." I did, and I tested negative. Then I went for the antibody, and I tested positive. I stayed home a week after that.

My friend got very alarmed. She said, "I don't understand why you keep going to pantry. You shouldn't be out there. Please don't go, please don't go." I said, "You don't understand. There's a need. I have to go... We went from 75 to 80 seniors to serving 500 people, and families coming with six, seven children, what are you going to do? … The blessing of that week was that we didn't have pantry. I didn't have to worry about not going to the church.

Similarly, another participant discussed how they continued meeting with their friends and neighbors and working on community projects. Among them was a project to get people in their community tested for COVID-19.

“We got around 350 people to participate in our neighborhood to get tested.”
During COVID my friends, wife and family have been a source of support. We've had dinner with my neighbors, we've collaborated. We're working on a couple of projects together...One having to do directly with COVID, namely that we collaborated with this private health organization to do COVID-19 testing as well as doing antibody tests. We got around 350 people to participate in our neighborhood to get tested. We also help with the food distribution in the community for people who are in need. Dry goods that we distributed in collaboration with the city and the county to residents in our area, mostly seniors of course...

The other thing that we've been working on is doing community outreach among our neighbors. We're putting up yard signs associated with the Black Lives Matter movement. We're selling those for a small fee as a fundraiser. What we're doing is connecting to the larger anti-racist movement, of course, in this country and elsewhere around the world. We're using it as a statement of multiracial anti-racism that we're putting forward. We're making it clear to the world that at least 100 houses in our neighborhood are committed to the fight against racism. Our neighborhood is majority African American.

In this participants’ story we find how civic participation at the local level has repercussions beyond the immediate geographic area. It also shows how just a few people can organize to strengthen a community.

Involvement with the BLM movement was primarily discussed among African American participants. These stories mostly focused on the murder of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor that sparked a revival of street protests and demonstrations during quarantine. However, one participant connected the BLM movement to their own experience of losing her son to gun violence and finding support in activist groups like “Mothers on the Move” and other community organizations.

“I also became involved with Mothers on the Move, doing demonstrations for my son's death.”

I didn't go to this protest [BLM protests in NYC], but I went to quite a few. I walked with Al Chapman and various other people. I also became involved with Mothers on the Move, doing demonstrations for my son's death. We had marched because of the gun violence and it's not just for police officers, people in general. Then I ran into a lot of the mothers whose children have been killed. In
all these marches I became friends with a lot of them. And we developed a friendship during those times. My child was not killed by the police, but regardless killing is a sin no matter who you are. And that child's supposed to still be alive because you are older than that... these mothers feel the same way. So, that brought a lot on our body. We could be fighting, but still, it brings a lot on us that it makes our bodies deteriorate. Because knowing that you don't have an answer... why my child has been killed. But that's enough to last me for the rest of my life until the day I die, that my child's been killed at 17. And I'm 72, and he's dead. The system is broken. Now, that police officer who killed that young man, he didn't use a gun. He used his body. So that alone, that's telling you, "I can do anything I want."

For this participant seeing the news on the continuous murders of young Black men has been triggering. She discussed meeting with a Latinx friend, who lost her son to police violence, to help each other cope during the pandemic and protect their mental health.

“We have been friends for over 30 years, and we go out every day. We call it the golden girls of senior citizens or whatever. We go out and do exercise and it has helped us cope during COVID and with the killing of George Floyd because her son was killed by a police officer. So, we try not to listen to a lot of reports on television because it brings back memories... It’s a lot of back and forth so we try to stay away from that because it really pulls you back to what happened to your child, you're still alive and everything... It keeps us busy, our mindset.”

Similarly, another participant described being unable to remain engaged with the continuous news of these killings. She said, “it’s too much to get these blow-by-blowes over... For my own health, it’s enough to hear that it happened.” However, she talked about how her ongoing work with a mental health organization, allowed her to support her students during that time.

“I'm not a psychiatrist, but just want to be encouraging.”

I’ve been in contact to support my students from the mental health caretakers’ class I teach. Sharing information that has come from all different places, resources, and reaching out to help them with what they're going through as a teacher of the course. I'm not a psychiatrist, but just want to be encouraging and share information that may be helpful to at least one of them. I’ve been in contact with them and have been able to give them resources...
One young lady from my caregivers’ class who is not of color, called me to ask how she could get some support. Something to help with the mental stress for an African American man with what they’re going through now. I thought that was amazing. So, I got information from the mental health organization to share and things that have helped me.

Almost all African American participants and a few Latinx participants talked about being disturbed by the murder of George Floyd and the continuous attacks by police. In addition, many African American participants talked about wanting to support the movement in some way. Although marching and protesting felt like it was beyond their capacity due to age and health (see Theme 2). However, a few discussed participating in the protests, these participants had devoted most of their life to activism and political organizing. For example, one participant talked about how they have been doing this work before BLM began, but this movement gave him hope that things would change.

“… it gives me hope that maybe I will see resolution to this.”

It's funny, all the stuff you see going on now, what people are doing now is what I had been doing for years. It’s like the rest of the world are finally catching up to this. This is what I’ve been doing. I'm feeling good because I think it will bring a quicker resolution to the system. You look at Black Lives are still on civil rights strike, started in 1956. You had Emmett Till slain, then you had '57, you had Rosa Parks doing the bus sit-in. ’63 you had the march on Washington, then the Civil Rights bill got signed. The next year in '64, the equal rights amendment got signed. Maybe it won't take another 10 or 15 years for these issues to get signed. When I see this, the ground floor of this, it gives me hope that maybe I will see resolution to this. I know never in my wildest dreams did I ever think that I will see an African American president. Then it happened.

Similarly, another participant talked about how the activism he was doing now with BLM reminded him of his childhood, watching the civil rights movement on television from his home in Kansas.
“In fact, I gave a speech at a rally right before Occupy City Hall and I was telling the group there, what we’re doing now is what I saw as a kid. And I didn’t understand it, but I felt it, but now I understand it and now I’m part of it. I was actually participating in what I saw as a kid growing up. But back then I was in Kansas, and Kansas is a long way from Alabama and all these other things.”

This participant discussed their involvement with the Queer Liberation Movement and talked about how George Floyd’s murder mobilized them to hold a march that had been cancelled due to COVID-19.

“We had to suspend everything. But then when George Floyd happened, in three weeks we put together the March.”

The Reclaim Pride Coalition is made up of several different organizations…We began planning The Queer Liberation March as far back as January. I was going to be part of the peers committee… I was involved with putting that together… We were working on that up until March and then we had to suspend everything. But then when George Floyd happened, in three weeks we put together the march. I was the co-volunteer coordinator, responsible for the volunteers, I would tell them what needed to be done.

The Queer Liberation came out in response against police violence 50 years ago in Stonewall. So, this is exactly what we did. We formed because we got sick of the parade with corporate sponsors, with police and with a lot of floats, that is not a queer liberation, which is why we formed an alternate march. So, when George Floyd was murdered, we decided that we had to do this, because our thing is against police brutality. COVID or not, this is a life-or-death situation. This is exactly what we did 50 years ago, and we had 50,000 people this year and 45,000 people last year.

It’s a very diverse group of people, different ages, race, gender…We've been part of the other Black Lives Matter demonstrations and demonstrations for the Black trans women who've been murdered. We're still doing stuff…We're bound together by our commitment to social justice and bringing down the system that we live in…This is why we exist, is to tear down, and humanize toxic racial capitalism and its adverse effects that it has on people. Sexism, racism, misogyny, White supremacy. These are all the things that we are, that we counter. It’s not reform, it’s revolution.

In these stories we can see how participants’ civic involvement extends throughout history. These stories allow us to understand experiences of civic participation from
childhood to older age, as it intertwines between personal circumstances and the geopolitical context of the time.
Chapter VIII: The Role of Age/Ageism, Health/Illness Stigma, and Race/Racism in Civic Participation

Participants in this study discussed the honor and importance of elders in Latin American and African American culture. They conveyed the respect they learned to have towards older adults in their communities. Participants also spoke of how one’s participation changes as they age due to cultural traditions, physical limitations, and ageism. Their stories describe the ways their participation is limited by health limitations, illness related stigma, and the U.S. health care system. On the other hand, participants also described how their experience of aging and/or living with an illness or disability enriched their civic participation. Finally, this theme also examines how race/ethnicity and racism shape experiences of civic participation. While I present these subthemes separately, it is important to note that these social categories and systems of oppression intersect consistently through participants’ experiences of civic participation. Therefore, you will find that some stories and quotes speak to more than one subtheme.

Age and Ageism in Civic Participation

Effects of Internalized and Societal Ageism on Civic Participation

Throughout their stories, participants often expressed a sense of honor and respect for older adults’ involvement in the community. In addition, they drew boundaries around the right way for older adults to participate. Overall, stories with participants showed that there was a sentiment that some civic activities belonged in specific age groups. For one, participants in both groups seemed to agree that offering wisdom, advice, and mentorship were ways that older adults can contribute to their communities. While other activities were not appropriate for an older person, such as marching, demonstrations, protests, etc.
Like one participant stated, “I want to get involved with this movement, but I don't mean walking up and down the avenue with rallies, no, that's for the young people.” This idea was maintained even when they expressed their willingness and ability to participate.

“Normally the younger people will generate most of the protest. It may be organized by others, but they normally rise to the forefront of activity. Our role is to provide them advice because experience is a great teacher…I probably would be out there with the Black Lives Matter protesters if it were not for COVID-19, because I’m in pretty decent shape.”

As this quote shows, this participants’ disposition to participate is not informed by health but rather by the social role older people occupy as advice givers. One African American participant described this positionality through the lens of physical aging and the toll this activity has on the body. However, she goes beyond aspects of health to describe the appropriate behavior for older adults in society. Thereby, demonstrating how internalized ageism informs their choice of participation.

“I didn't see anybody old out there demonstrating.”

When you're older you go to whatever speed your speed is, and wherever your thing is and that's what you're supposed to. I didn't see anybody old out there demonstrating. When I was there [refers to childhood experience in a demonstration], it was like, "Okay, they did get hurt." I didn't stay on this Earth all these years by not knowing how to mind my business a little bit. This is not my time to do anything. I got a little bit of experience. I wouldn't be out there with that Black Lives Matter. That's what I'm saying. I wouldn't do that. I just wouldn't do it, because I don't have the strength to deal with that like that. I'm an older person and my body isn't that strong. I have no right being out there trying to deal with that, there's no reason for me to do that.

My role in the community is to give as much wisdom as I can give and try to talk to people. In other words, we're not supposed to be loud and boisterous. We're just supposed to know how to sit down and mind our business.

Internalized ageism also presented itself in participants’ stories of civic participation as they discussed who they consider an older adult. Some participants explicitly separated themselves from the category of “senior,” regardless of their age. For
example, a 73-year-old Latinx participant who works in an older adult center described how the term “senior” had more to do with health status than age.

"I don't consider myself senior. It's because of my health."

Well, the health part in seniors is the most vulnerable. I mean, they have to be more careful, because the problem with seniors is that they can't move themselves to go shopping, to go to the supermarket, to go to -- When I say, "Senior, " I mean others. I don't consider myself a senior. It's because I'm in good health, I can get dressed, I can walk, I can do this, I can do the other thing. When we say, "Senior," it’s like there are limitations. So, as I see them at the center, they have limitations.

There are two kinds of seniors for me. I have rated them into two categories; some who have an impairment. The others, who have no impediment, just age. Those who are elderly, but they look healthy, these people are worthy of admiration, because they dance, they sing, they do crafts, they do things to entertain themselves, they arrive in their own cars, and they are not in need. Now, there's the other kind of senior, who is incapacitated, barely walks, is blind or deaf, can barely walk, needs someone to take him by the hand to get on or off the bus. That kind of senior is already another category. It's the category of disability, one way or the other. They are the ones who, right now, are in their homes, some alone and others with their relatives, with their children, nephews, and grandchildren. Others, who are visited, and food is taken to them. There are some who don't comment on anything.

These stories speak of the ways internalized ageism can function to shape participants’ choices in the ways they participate and contribute. In addition, it shapes the overall perception of older adults’ ability to be a contributing member of society. However, ageism was also discussed through societal expectations of productivity. The same participant who described the two types of older adults made a poignant remark on society’s attitudes towards him as an “active” older adult, and the ripple effect it had for him in other categories of marginalization. He said:

"Thank God I have never been rejected, I have never been belittled, nor have I been made to feel that I didn’t belong. It’s because my custom is always, "How can I help you? What can I do good for you?” Here it is, you can help us." Me, "That’s good." No, I've never been rejected for being Hispanic, I've never been
rejected because I'm of older age, I've never been rejected for being an immigrant. Since they see me active, they like me.”

This idea of being valued and accepted in society because of one’s ability to be “active”, productive, viable, or “util” (useful) was a common theme through both groups, particularly among Latinx older adults’ narratives. Almost all expressed their desire to be and the security they found in being “util” through their civic participation. One participant said “uno tiene que ser útil.” (One must be useful). And when discussing how they felt in meeting this expectation they expressed feeling good, satisfied, pleasure, and felt protected from the stigma attached to older adults as being “not good for anything.”

Similarly, among African Americans, ageism as it relates to being active/useful was discussed through society’s emphasis on youth. Some phrases that were repeated across participants was “this is a youth-oriented society” and phrases like “The younger generation have to be willing to accept that we have a contribution to make.” Various participants made references to ageism in our society and the ways it shapes how older adults can participate. For example, one participant spoke about the way ageism works to devalue older people in our society, and how the first step forward is through developing respect. This participation said, “Respect people as they are, not what they are, but just to respect them as being a human being.”

**Changes in Civic Participation Due to Age and Aging**

Various participants alluded to how the process of aging itself changed the ways they contribute. They described finding more confidence in themselves as they got older and assuming more leadership. An African American participant discussed how it was not until the age of 68 that she began to take leadership in her participation.
“I was 68 when she [her partner] passed. I was a mature person. I could say who I am with the whole wisdom of experience…I had to step out here and really introduce myself to people. I would say that in my later life I take leadership in what I do. Although I've been active in the past, but it wasn’t in a leadership role. I said to myself, I can do these things. I have a life of experience. I know what I’m capable of doing. If I say or people say this is what we want to do, I can step up and say, okay, I can be an active participant. I'm involved with some other projects, last year I was part of planning for a national conference run by Black depressed gay men. And other projects in development of organizations that I got started with other people.”

A few other participants also spoke about how as they grew older, they not only gained more confidence but also were exposed to people with more resources. This allowed them to develop networks that supported their participation. For example, an African American participant living in New Jersey described the difference in their experience of participation during her 20s compared to now.

“I'm doing more now, and the roles that I'm taking on now are different.”

I think I'm doing more now, and the roles that I'm taking on now are different. I was working directly with children when I first started out, now I am on boards that help children and students. I'm not reading to little kids anymore at the schools, or interacting with little kids, but I am on boards that help them with things, or, in my church, when I solicited funds so that they could take the kids to the museum in New York.

I only started soliciting funds after I got older and was making friends with people who had money to donate and were of the donating kind. When I was in my 20s, I wasn't really asking my friends to donate to anything. Anything that I did that was a community service, I just did on my own. It's after I got older, that I made friends and people who were interested in helping other people… I couldn't ask them at 20, no. Because they didn't have it at 20, and I wasn't there. I think I would have been reluctant to ask my friends for money back then. I grew into who I am. I wasn't always this outspoken and outgoing. I was kind of shy, to tell you the truth. I have evolved over the years into somebody who will at the drop of a hat, call her friends and say, “We need supplies for the infant center. What can you contribute?” I wouldn't have done that back when I was 20.

Similarly, a Latinx participant also spoke to the mastery that comes from years of experience and the ability to continue learning in older age. She described herself as an
“exhortadora” a type of mentor that could help others develop the skills and knowledge she mastered throughout her life. She discussed her physical limitations as an opportunity to develop other strengths, emphasizing that everyone has something to contribute.

"I want people to realize that we can all do."

Exhortator is how I feel inside, especially at this stage I’m in, that I am no longer young, I feel that there is still something in me that can be developed to help other people who have the physical capacity. That’s what I want people to realize we can all do. I can do less now in certain areas because I am older and have my physical discomfort, but another young person comes, who has not dared to do something that they have wanted to do all their life, I become their exhortator, it’s like a mentor.

Her experience draws attention to the ageist idea that after a certain age people stop evolving, learning, or developing skills and capacities. As she states, “there is something in me that can still be developed” and presents this stage of her life as an opportunity to exert herself as a mentor or “exhort” balancing her knowledge and experience with someone else’s physical capacity.

**Health and the Stigmatization of Disability/Illness in Civic Participation**

**Changes in Health**

While illness and disability pose challenges to individuals’ participation, participants in this study also described the ways their health status inform the ways they participate. For example, some participants described their civic participation as a healing and protective factor for their physical and psychological well-being. Others discussed how they have changed their participation activities according to their physical capacity as they get older. And a few participants discussed that due to health and physical limitations they no longer contributed much. One 70-year-old Latinx participant who is
disabled and unable get around on his own, described how his physical limitations have limited his participation.

"Right now, there are a lot of things I can't do anymore."

It's been four years since it’s practically impossible to go out and help people, the church that I’ve helped before. I'm disabled, I can't go out anymore. I had to put a bar in the bathroom to support myself and get dressed with one hand, that's all. I can't stand long. I no longer participate in any of that, in the community, because of an amputation on my foot. There are many things that I can no longer do because they have to come get me, transportation is already difficult, buses are sometimes full... The other thing is diabetes, I fall asleep anywhere. I'm sitting and I fall asleep out there, so there's not much I can cooperate with. I can no longer participate because of the disease and what's going on with COVID now. I was in good health until 10 years ago or so, so, a good period passed. Father God is going to call me one of these days. I used to bring clothes, shoes and donate it to institutions. I would give some neighbors clothes, give them packages, bags of clothes. Now I say, "Whoever wants something, he has to come to my house to look for it." Here I have a lot of clothes, I have my trunks, boxes and I have them promised, but they have to come and get them...

I've often gotten jobs for other people, through word of mouth as they say. Passing the word from one to the other. That's what they call me, "Hey look, if there's anyone." Two months ago, it happened, I was lying here when they called. I helped him out all the same, through contacts. A boy came here from Chile, a friend's brother, and says, "Hey, if you know of someone that needs a mechanic...I recommended him to this guy because he came with very good credentials.

Similarly, a 73-year-old African American participant described the toll that her civic participation has taken on her physical and mental health. She felt that she had given enough, and it was time to let younger generations do the work. She said:

“I have given my body and soul to my community.”

I think I'm worn out on giving back because I have given my body and soul to my community. And people don't realize that they have to pull themselves up and finish the rest. I'm not the only one out there. I'd like to continue, but I would like the younger people to finish, help their community. I got to say that certain things within my body, my body couldn't take it. Between my son being killed, running to all the community events, running to meetings to have information...
It's a lot on your body to take, your mind, you overwork, and plus having my kids. It's a lot of stuff that I'll say that your body cannot take. It gives me a lot of pressure, not being able to put things down. Pressure of too much stuff at one time. Activism takes a toll on the body and on the mind. What keeps me going is my believe in the Lord, he has been keeping me going to understand what I'm doing. Now I am passing on the knowledge, I have made my bed. I am throwing it at you... It’s your bed but take it easy. Take it easy. Don’t get yourself killed in the meantime. Take it easy and love your family.

Another participant, an 85-year-old African American discussed how she participates less now than she used to since walking has become more difficult, but now has turned to doing “social activism on Facebook or any other medium... I'm trying to do political education on my computer with other people who read and through my blog.” Similarly, another participant who discussed difficulty walking said that now they focus on training the youth to do the work they cannot do anymore.

“I can't walk picket lines like I used to or go through marches like I used to. I know these things have to be done. I try to train youth on how to do a march, how to do a picket line, things you must consider, legal consequences. I have a level of expertise where I could impart my knowledge on them now so that they can carry on the things I used to do. They will organize a block cleanup. They will see to it that the senior citizens and shelters in their area are not dismissed and overlooked.”

Various participants in this study discussed the ways their role in the community has changed due to changes in their health. Mentorship was a common practice among African Americans in particular, and among Latinx adults it was more common to hear about the ways they connect people to jobs and services through their networks.

In addition, serving their communities was also described as a preventative mechanism for managing mental health problems. Various participants said that civic activities keep them occupied, as one African American participant said, “Being busy like that keeps us from getting depressed.” This was particularly relevant in the context of
COVID-19, when many participants discussed needing an outlet to remain engaged and avoid falling into depression. For example, one Latinx participant who suffers from depression talked about how her online civic participation has helped during the pandemic.

“Now with the pandemic I have made the prayer group visual to see each other, before it was only by voice, and that encouraged them a lot, they laughed, we had a beautiful time. During the pandemic we have kept in touch and that has served me alot physically to not depress me, because I have a tendency towards depression, but I have not become depressed.”

**Illness/Disability Stigma and Health Care System**

Depression, stress, and anxiety were often discussed among participants as a mental health challenge they cope with through their civic participation. Related to this, one African American participant living with HIV described how participating in HIV walks helped her overcome internalized stigma associated with the illness and helped her build community.

“The first time they asked me to participate in one of these walks I said, “Oh, my god.” They give you shirts. I asked my best friend that lived next door. That's when we started being friends and stuff, and I asked them about it. I walked with them, and I didn't look at the people standing on the outside watching us walk up. We walked in areas where people knew me-- I lived all over this town, so people are going to know. I started to say, oh, my god because my son knows everybody, he's all over the place, and I didn't want nobody to start picking on him or saying stuff to him. I felt kind of like, I don't know, should I be doing this? I did it anyway... I didn't really know we were going to be wearing t-shirts. I was like, well, they can do it, they're just like me. If they can do it, I can do it.

I felt safe because I had my little community. I do them every year now, the last time was really hard for me because I told you, my spinal stenosis and stuff is getting a little worse. I tried to walk, yes. They got some people that give a ride all the way to the park. It’s a long walk, and we walk right up the middle of the main street, which people need to see that you can be better because that's where most alcoholics and drug addicts in that ward hang out at. I didn't really mind. After the second year, I got proud to wear that shirt and walk, because it’s
something that happens and you embrace the problem, you start getting yourself
together. You start looking better and you hope that it inspires other people. I say,
if you've got questions, just ask me. By doing the walk I am showing people that
they can be helped too.

Similarly, for another participant civic participation motivated them to get up in a
moment in their lives when they were in a “vegetable” state after suffering an accident at
work. His family was involved with the movement for licenses for all and seeing that
they had a chance to win motivated him to start attending the marches despite being
unable to walk. He described this participation experience as one that served him as a
type of physical rehabilitation which he could not afford.

"[The marches] served as a rehab, because I didn't have therapy, it's very
expensive."

When I started with X organization I couldn't walk, then I was involved in
the marches driving my son-in-law's truck. They were marching and I was driving
slowly there with them, it was 20 miles, to help them. I'd take a group to the
marches and bring them back. Then little by little I was walking already, an hour
and I couldn't take it anymore. I had to get back in the van, and drive for a while. I
couldn't walk too much because the accident damaged my lung, so I had to walk
slowly, not accelerating, not making sudden movements or carrying something.
Nothing, just walking an hour, an hour and a half, and I was getting in the van. I
liked it because I felt good, but I got tired and my back hurt. Even if I wanted to
go on, I couldn't. Feeling like we were going to be able to win the licenses, that
gave me a reason to make an effort. I thought the more people they saw walking,
the better. That motivated me so much to keep moving forward.

The accident left me virtually unable to walk, but that [the marches] served as a rehab, because I didn't have therapy, it's very expensive. It is not
within our reach to pay $400 each therapy. And at first, I couldn't even stand up, I
was like a vegetable, they had to lift me up for everything, I couldn't move alone.
When I started to be able to move more, they helped me take little steps like a
child and it hurt a lot. But I got up and they took me practically in the wheelchair
to the van to see that first march. There I felt like walking again. I started moving,
then I was able to move more and more until I managed to walk. It helped me a
lot to be able to walk slowly in the marches and that caused me to keep walking.
That's what rehabilitated me the most, if not I may still be lying down, and the
tickets I got from the police were very expensive.
While this participant’s experience of civic participation helped to heal him, another participant described their participation as a way to ensure their health. An African American participant living with HIV discussed their ongoing advocacy to protect The American Health Care Act that allows them to afford HIV medication, which otherwise they would be unable to access or live without.

“I had no choice.”

When 45 is trying to gut The American Health Care Act, that affected me directly. I’ve been campaigning Medicare for all four years. The health system in this country does not work. This is the only country I’ve lived in, where health is a commodity…If they gutted it, then I would lose the Medicaid that has given me the life-sustaining medication that I needed, that I could not have afforded if I didn't have Medicaid. One of my HIV medicines costs $2,000 a month. One of them, and I take three. So, I got arrested the first time representing 24 million people who had no healthcare at all. The second time I got arrested, to support the Affordable Care Act, was to make sure that the Medicaid that I have was not taken away, the Medicaid that is keeping me alive. I had no choice. Had they taken that away from me, then the quality of my life would not be the same, or I might not be here.

Race and Racism in Civic Participation

Due to the U. S’s Anti-Black and anti-immigrant culture, both African Americans and Latinx participants often chose to participate within Black and Latinx communities. Primarily, African American participants described more often participating with the Latinx community as allies and with the White community to gain resources. While Latinx participants mostly described within group involvement. Their decision of with whom to participate and serve was described through several factors. Some participants felt that the people that needed and welcomed their help the most were Black and Latinx. In addition, experiencing microaggressions, tokenism, and racism influenced their decision to participate or not participate with White majority groups. Latinx participants
talked about how language, citizenship and culture were important elements in their choice of where and how to participate.

The majority of Latinx participants were solely involved with Spanish speaking organizations/groups. This was largely due to language access, but having a common culture and background gave them more confidence in their participation. For example, one Latinx participant living in New Jersey described feeling more comfortable among other Latinx people because it removed cultural barriers, facilitated communication, and this is the community that she felt she knew best.

“All, with Hispanics I feel more comfortable, of course, because I am Hispanic and because I speak Spanish. Of course, I have the greatest ease of communicating, I have no problem communicating. I know the needs and everything, too. Also because of culture, because it also depends a lot on culture, it changes everything. I know my culture, I know how I speak, there’s no fear because of culture.”

While another participant who was very involved in their community back in Mexico described how culture, language, and citizenship were the main factors deterring their participation in the U.S.

“The differences I feel here is the fear of the police, back in Mexico if the police caught me, I am in my village, here if I get caught by the police they send me back to my town, it is a big difference. For example, if I go to a protest here and immigration arrives, they will deport me back to Mexico... There’s always more to lose here. If I were a citizen, it would be another song. There are other risks here... I would like to participate with other ethnic groups, but if they do not speak Spanish, not so much because I don’t know English. If there was translation, then I could.”

In addition, another Latinx participant mentioned that language coupled with racism was the main deterrent for why he did not participate with Americans.

“I don't participate with Americans because there I do feel like I'm going to be rejected because of the color of my skin, and because I don't know English. You always notice, when you go to the hospital, or go somewhere and they stare at
you, it's uncomfortable. So that's why I don't participate with American organizations, because I know they're going to reject me.”

Similarly, among African Americans racism, tokenism, and microaggressions were discussed throughout the narratives as reasons for why they prefer to not get involved with majority White organizations/groups. For example, one participant living in New Jersey discussed how stereotypes of African Americans and Latinas as house cleaners are often brought up among predominately White groups. These encounters make her feel uncomfortable and insulted.

“You Socialize with Your Own…with other groups stereotypes come up a lot.”

Most of the places where I volunteer or organize with are mostly made up of African Americans and Latinx except the senior centers. The AARP chapter here is African American mostly…I feel comfortable with everybody, but you socialize with your own I guess I would say. It just happens naturally it's not anything I seek out. I think you feel more comfortable. If you're with other groups, they have so many questions to ask you. They want to get in your businesses and what do you do, and stereotypes come up a lot. I live in a well to do town. I see a lot of people here they have a cleaning person, and most of them are of color from the islands, or they're Latinas. And a lot of times people come almost short of asking me if I know somebody to help clean. It's insulting. Unfortunately, I think a lot of times that's the only person of color they see. They only see people of color, African Americans and Latinas, as somebody who cleans their house. They don't see that person as someone who could be educated, have a White-collar job, because they just don't see beyond that. What they see every day is somebody of color coming to clean their house, so they see me or you, and that's what they see. That's wrong. When I socialize, or when I'm doing something, it's more comfortable because at least I don't have to go through that.

This participant was not alone in expressing feeling uncomfortable among majority White groups. One participant was struggling with the dilemma of whether to get involved with a local fundraising group in town that she had recently been asked to join. She discussed her thought process with me as she was making this decision, and her main concern was that she would be the only Black person in that group. This presented an
opportunity for her to be tokenized and placed in difficult situations when it was time to make decisions concerning funding local groups.

“They're all White…I don't want to join them because I wouldn’t feel comfortable being part of that board.”

Before the pandemic I volunteered in a community org in town that does fundraising for all the nonprofits and have been around for over 80 years. Well, we haven't met in a long time, but the director called just to check on me, and asked if I would join the board of the community group. They're all White. I know the board members, but I don't want to join them because I wouldn’t feel comfortable being part of that board. I have no problem with them, but I might be even prejudiced. I might vote for all the Black or Hispanic organizations that apply for money. When I think about who I am, I think I might. I don't think that would be good, and I just am not feeling them. I don't feel that I can contribute to that kind of board. Or maybe when it comes around time to allocate money to these nonprofits, I'll be the first one to stick up for the Black daycare center that’s in town that needs money.

Ultimately, she decided to reject the volunteer position due to the lack of representation on the board. This position would have placed her in a vulnerable and stressful position among her community and within the board.

A few African American participants described that when they did choose to participate with a majority White organization it was a strategic move to gain resources that were unavailable in their community. For example, one participant described their involvement with Goodwill Association “I got involved because I wanted to get their support on things that we were doing in our community…We maintain a connection with them for the purposes of mutual aid.” Similarly, an LGBT participant explained how issues of tokenism and lack of resources within the Black LGBT community influenced their participation with White LGBT organizations.

“We don't have the resources that the White organizations have.”
I'm not an assimilationist. Most of all my contact is in the Black community or the Puerto Rican community where my partner was. I don't have any need to strive to be outside in the larger community. In the larger, White community I wasn't so interested in doing that role because I don't believe in educating White folks about Blacks. I did that for years, but I wouldn't waste my time that way. I made a choice to work in my community, as she made the choice to work in the Puerto Rican community.

White people still have the resources, and even in the LGBT community where I primarily function, we're very aware of racism and the fact that our organizations don't have the resources. I'm very vocal about that. For example, last year Stonewall, the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Revolt. Big Big. That was an international thing that took place here and across the world, but particularly here in New York. Many of the Black organizations got to be included in programming... We were just brought out to promote it and we knew we were. I just said to my friend this morning, "You know next year we won't get all of that attention so let's ride that attention for it as much as we can." As LGBT people, we're still a minority within the LGBT community, and we don't have the resources that the White organizations have. I just choose where I put my efforts.

Like the participant above said, “I made a choice to work in my community”, most participants felt that it was within their communities where they were most needed and welcomed. For example, an African American discussed how the community where she lives and participates in is made up of the people who get “the short end of the stick.” If she lived in a White community, she felt that she just would not be needed in the same way.

“The people that I'm servicing get the short end of the stick.”

I'm helping my own people, because I identify with them. I think, a lot of times, the people that I'm servicing get the short end of the stick, and I know that a lot of them cannot advocate for themselves. I certainly found that out through some of the things I've been doing. Like when I volunteered to be secretary of a group that provided advocacy for parents and students in dealing with the school teachers and administrators when there was a problem. The parents didn't know how to speak to the administrators at school, so we formed a group. We would go with the parents to talk to the administrators and sort of out the issues.

There was a need, and I found that helping them gave me a great deal of satisfaction. To go into the school with them and ask the pertinent questions of the school principal, or even the teacher. They needed that; they needed an advocate. If their son was being suspended or expelled, they needed somebody to go in
there with them and talk to that school superintendent or the principal, so we did that. We supplied those advocates, and we did it because those kids were Black and needed the support. I think about the things that I did with the outreach ministry, like giving out the clothes and the health services we provided. At one time, we were giving HIV testing, in the beginning. We had a trailer out in the parking lot. There was a component about getting the clothes, and the shoes, and the toys for the kids, and the household goods. It was needed.

(In another story describing her involvement in projects with her community) “This is where I live, this is the demographic where I am. I probably wouldn’t do community service if I was living in a different town, where the majority was White. They just wouldn’t need me.”

Some participants did state that they had never experienced racism, ageism, or health related discrimination as part of their civic participation experiences. However, as the participant below explains, most participants also discussed being selective with whom, where, and when they participate. In addition, they discussed the boundaries they place upon interactions through body language, as one African American participant who collaborate with White majority groups described.

"I maybe pick and choose what I associate with."

I’ve never been told or made to feel like I can’t get involved because of race, age, health, or something else. I think people size up a person before they make statements relative to what you can and can’t do. They'll listen and view your interactions and body language. They will say, "Well, that may not go well if I make that statement." Maybe it's how the presentation is from the person, the response that you give to them...

I guess a bit of varied experience in life because most of my work was with predominantly White guys. I maybe pick and choose what I associate with. Basically, I think people can read certain people and know when to present certain things to them, and when not to or what not to say and what to say. That's about reading body expressions and things.

It was clear from participants’ stories that their civic participation in later life was informed by both categories of differences (race, age, health) as well as by systems of oppression. As another African American participant stated “I align myself to spaces where being discriminated against an aspect of my identity is not an option. If I cannot be
myself in a space, I don't get involved, period.” Yet, in the face of marginalization and exclusion they described the ways they built capacity from within.
Chapter IX: Agency and Resistance

Participants stories showed an ongoing commitment to progress in the face of oppression and marginalization. When their culture and history was being silenced, African Americans created informal means by educating their children and keeping this knowledge alive through generations. Similarly, Latinx participants continue celebrating and honoring their traditions through informal means that keep their culture and history alive in their new country. Participants built institutions when the established ones did not welcome them. They continue to build programs and capacity within the community to ensure access to resources and for their voices to be heard. They exercise their agency and resistance every day. In a society that continues to push back against their right to exist as equals, maintaining and growing community power is essential as they build towards a just future.

Cultural and Historical Preservation as Civic Participation

Given the lack of knowledge available through White American centered education, cultural and historical preservation became essential aspects of civic participation within these communities. Among both African American and Latinx participants in this sample, cultural and historical preservation was a common facet of their experience of participation. Among African Americans, historical and cultural preservation was centered on solidifying identity, increasing self-esteem, building community, and honoring the struggle for liberation. One participant recounted his experience attending Freedom School in New York which were originally founded by the civil rights volunteer run group Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and
designed to provide "intellectual stimulation and linked learning to participation in the
movement…" (Perlstein, 1990, p. 297). The participant said:

“I went to public school, but my parents also took us to the freedom school. There was a church that was giving us Black education, on the history of Black people. They're talking about the Fanny Lou Hammer of the world, CJ Walker. We was learning about our culture and our history. This was a constant, constant thing in my childhood. The freedom school was faith-based experience. It was an extensive class in the freedom school, or there'd be a special program maybe in the afternoon.”

Another African American participant living in New Jersey described her experiences of civic participation through her own experience of re-claiming her cultural roots in her 20s. She had various stories of experiences where her civic activities consisted of passing along cultural knowledge and wisdom through programs and projects that she worked on or led.

“We contribute to this country, and we're not taught about that.”

It was very important to know about my history and it still is because we contribute to this country, and we’re not taught about that. When I was in grammar school the only thing, I ever learned about was this one page that showed Black people picking cotton. I was so ashamed, and I felt so bad, I just cringed in my seat. Then there was another time you had to talk about what country you came from. We were brought here as slaves, and I was always so ashamed. I felt so bad, but that's why I got involved with the library because I wanted to read more about people who looked like me. There were very few fiction stories then. At the library, I saw that, and I thought about our history and culture. It's a history that I thought more to learn about because our history is not taught. This is what we're fighting for, same thing with Latinos it's not taught. It should be taught, it’s part of America. This is how you get pride; I know who I am. I know what my ancestors did, and I stand on their shoulders.

I was involved with JAMAA which means Family in Kiswahili and is an Afrikan Culture Unity Organization which was based in New Rochelle, NY. I was
very active in the organization & credit them with receiving my cultural name and laying the foundation for my cultural knowledge which I still pursue today. In JAMAA I became the national Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs, and I did all the programming. I was a volunteer because, to me, it's just so important, it's part of our identity, and we need to know who we are as a people. The Founder and Master Teacher, Mwalimu r. Sabree passed a couple of years ago. The master teacher taught us about Afrikan and African American history and culture. I learned about Kwanzaa and taught Kwanzaa in schools because it’s not taught. This was all volunteer work as a part of the organization.

[Through her civic participation collage, she discussed the principles of Kwanzaa] Kuumba, one of the Kwanzaa principles, means creativity, and to do always as much as we can in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it. I feel like this is part of civic participation, we want things to be better because of what we're doing. The volunteer work, whatever works to make it better than we inherited it

Another example of cultural preservation was described by one participant from Oaxaca, Mexico living in New Jersey who developed an informal international association that honors the religious and cultural traditions of worshiping The Assumption of Mary (la Virgen de la Asunción), a tradition that is tied to their family ancestry and is celebrated by his hometown every year.

“We do it because we don't want to lose our tradition and culture.”

I throw a party every year on August 15th for the Virgin of the Suntion where los paisanos from the town meet, I started in 2004. That image is of my family’s descendants, and the chapel of the virgin is in Oaxaca in my village. We started the savings box to repair the chapel with los paisanos who live here, also the people living over there cooperated a lot to do it. The savings bank works that if a person needs $20, they can use it for what they need or only if they want to help, then grab $20 and return $40 next year. We lend almost all the money to make more in the coming year. It helps people here because we don't charge a high interest, then people ask for $1,000 and the next year they pay back $1,500. There have been people who have benefited, because if they need it, they can ask for it and return it after the year.

I am the president of the association and I have a secretary and three collaborators. The party is public for anyone who wants to come and venerate Our Lady. Currently at most 200 people participate. They used to be only paisanos from our town, but it has already been expanded to Dominicans, Hondurans, and other states of Mexico as well and other countries. We all contribute something, I say I'm going to give tamales, and they all bring food to share. The party is hosted
in the house of the high priestess, all they have to do is provide a drink at night during prayer and leave the house open for people to come and leave food. We do it because we don't want to lose our tradition and culture.

However, the case above was an exception, given that most Latinx participants described celebrating their cultural traditions within the home. For example, another participant from Mexico discussed the differences in how they celebrate here compared to Mexico. They attributed that difference to the individualist lifestyle the U.S. has compared to the more communal culture of his town in Mexico which promotes the participation of all residents.

“Here it is different from what it is in Mexico, in Mexico it is something else and here -- Religion is the same, but customs are different. Back in Mexico it's your duty to participate for an image, there you have to make food, breakfast, mass, rockets, balloons, it's different from the one here. For example, I admire our Lady of Guadalupe, there on December 12th is her feast. In that image is my devotion, or El Niño de Huehuetlán, is a child, who was born on December 24th, that’s four days [dedicated to honoring him], is also my devotion, I participate in those festivities. These are parties for the whole town, they kill four pigs, lots of drinking, you have to give food and drink to everyone. Here, we just celebrate with the family in the house, that’s it.”

Overall, the individualist cultural values of the U.S. were referenced, by both African American and Latinx participants, as a challenge to community participation. In contrast, their experiences from childhood within their communities here and abroad, showed that they had been raised with a sense of community solidarity, both due to the need to protect their history and traditions and as a means for growth and celebration. These cultural values continued to be cultivated within their families and in the way they participate in the community.
Building Supports for the Community

As participants recounted their life stories, it became clear that with age also came more resources through education, social networks, life experience, and confidence. Many told stories of creating programs, groups, institutions, and leading initiatives in their communities. Participants described themselves through many labels, such as activist, organizer, fighter, mentor, rebel, leader, and solutions person, but none of them described themselves as joiners. In fact, one participant specifically said, “I’m not really a joiner.” The following stories speak to their leadership and initiative. A Latinx participant living in New Jersey talked about a program that she got started in her church. Initially, she hoped to create a non-profit, but the church provided space and resources that facilitated the process, and she was able to get started right away.

“I am completely in this focus that I need to get this (Dress to Inspire program) to happen.”

I have a program that I started in November 2019; it's called Dress to Inspire. It is a smaller scale of Dress for Success. When I found the church, I was already looking for a space to form this group. I wanted to do a non-profit, I already had gone to City Hall, but there was a room in the church that nobody was using... [the pastor offered it to her for the workshops]. We created workshops every two weeks in the church, lasted two hours, where we bring speakers and motivate the ladies. Sometimes we will have 10 to 15 young ladies, and we serve lunch, and make sure we had a nice presentation…There are so many things that Dress to Inspire was offering besides job placement, doing resumes, how to do an interview, how to look in an interview. It's a program to get them to not be afraid to go back to school, college or get a career, not just a job. They need that support that they don't have because a lot of them they come here from another country, and they don't have anybody...

For the program I will be doing an interview on a one to one because a lot of these women also, they come from other countries, and they have the education and can practice those things here. They don't have a license, and they don't know the language. I know people that they were accountants, they were lawyers, they were doctors. It's just the support system that'll get them together in a table, open
up, share, and also learn. You could have another person that could help you in that table and network and know that you're not the only one going through this. When we started, a lot of people open up, people cry, people laugh, people talk about their relationship. People talk about different things in a very open way knowing that it was confidential and it's not going anywhere else because it's a church. We know that gossiping or talking things like that it's not what God wants from us. That made a difference too because they know that I'm a deacon there. But more than anything, like I said to you, it's just I want to make a difference. I am completely in this focus that I need to get this to happen…

Her story highlights the skills and resources that the immigrant women in the program bring. This speaks to the greater pool of knowledge, skills, and wisdom that live in these communities but often go unrecognized because there is a lack of systemic support to mobilize them. This program the participant created provides a space to create a professional and personal support network that builds on the strengths of the community and the resources available. Similarly, an African American participant living in New York spoke of her lifelong work in community development and capacity building among Black and Latinx communities in the U.S and Puerto Rico.

“The thing was to get people of color into educational programs, because they were not being accepted in White institutions.”

I met my partner and we worked in community development around the country. We developed an alternative educational institution that we ran in San Diego. We taught kids, Black, Latino, White, Filipino kids, entrepreneurship. They learned how to start their own businesses. We had a very expensive art program, theater, gallery, visual, dance, jazz. I used to travel around the United States where we were training community leaders to be more effective in their community. We did that for many years. Then we moved to Puerto Rico, where we did community development work up in the hills of Puerto Rico with the community there. We taught farmers how to grow hydroponically, and they developed their own business…

We created a free standing alternative educational institution. That must have been the late 60s, early 70s, there were lots of independent, ethnic based schools around the United States…Many offered accreditations, but we decided just to be a community education program, not to worry about degrees.
The thing was to get people of color into educational programs, because they were not being accepted in White institutions. At that point, they were not being accepted, and many did not have the adequate background, say, to compete in a traditional B.A. program. So many of the other schools in the network developed their curriculum, and we developed our curriculum also. Once they were accredited there was no need to go to a traditional program. There was a whole network of alternative educational programs, like Boricua College which still exists.

That's why, as I get older, I just feel like we have to talk history, because people just don't understand that there were things that we had accomplished, and they're wiped out. The other thing was, and this is why we had an art program, there were a whole group of art programs across the United States that were developed. Our people were not being asked to participate in traditional art institutions, whether it was opera, the museum, the art institution. So, we developed our own institutions, and they became famous, like El Museo del Barrio.

This participants’ experience and ability to create and be involved in the development of large institutions speaks to the accessibility of generous resources granted through her advanced educational degree and affiliation to established institutions. However, despite her personal experience, her story speaks of the general experience of marginalized communities’ inability to gain access to mainstream resources and institutions. It also demonstrates, that when people do have access to supportive networks as she did, they are able to create needed programs and initiatives that help their communities grow and thrive further than what society allowed them to. Stories from Latinx participants in countries outside the U.S. also showed their determination to pull resources available to them to improve their communities and help younger generations. One such story comes from a participant from Mexico, who as part of the parents’ association built a new school for the town for their children to go to. A project that had to be fought for because the local government would not give its approval initially.

"We didn't accept that. We wanted an elementary school with two floors."
I also participated with the parents committee for two years in a row to serve the school. We were 12 parents from the same classroom and one of us says, "We're going to do a school with two floors" no one had that in mind, he said it jokingly, but we all committed to it. It took us a year of organizing because we were denied permits. They only approved one floor schools, which we call chicken coops, it's for two classrooms, it's what they gave us. We didn't accept that. We wanted an elementary school with two floors. A year of organizing for that. After we were given the permits, we met with someone who gave us a budget of what it would cost. Once we had that budget from the architect, we called the town, we showed them the plans and what we wanted for the school. They accepted and they all collaborated to create the school, they all cooperated. One year we managed to lay the foundation, the bottom. Another committee came in, and they didn't plant a brick, not a stone, we had to get together again to continue. The furniture was given to us by the government. The school was built by the village and the committee, whom without nothing would have gotten done. I got involved for the kids, I still had three kids at school and since my mission is to help the school that's the work of the committee.

While these participants differ in scale of their participation, what is foundational in all their stories is their commitment to utilize whatever resources they have at their disposal to help their communities grow and succeed.

“Keep on, keeping on” Everyday Civic Participation

The stories prior described the large projects that participants took on to make structural and social changes within their community. Yet, most of their experiences centered on the everyday participation, the maintenance of community. This participation was particularly important given government negligence and oppression. Participants described this participation as a necessity to keep their communities clean and safe. One participant described the change in perspective of their civic participation from childhood to adulthood.

“This was just a way of life for us, serving our community.”

This was just a way of life for us, serving our community. If there was an area in the community that- let's say, the garbage accumulated in. Somebody would say, "Let's organize a cleanup." We would get out there with brooms and
shovels and literally clean our neighborhoods. It was our duty to maintain our neighborhoods. All this is service to your community, and it becomes like second nature. When you saw some older woman coming home with grocery bags, you'd better not let her walk by; you'd better say, "Hold on, Ms. X. I'll carry that bag for you." You were learning service.

When you're young and going through it, you're not understanding why I am doing this. Why there's a block cleanup. You realize the reason for the block cleanup is because the City Department of Sanitation isn't coming through to clean the block up. You don't learn this at the time, but by doing this service, as I got older, this is when I started to make the connections, though. The service that I do now is what I was raised to do, so I never feel like I'm doing anything special. I'm doing what needs to be done to help my community and my people survive and go further. I realize now that what we're doing is for survival. In fact, that's what we did for survival, but the children didn't understand that because they learnt that this is what you do. Like when you're sitting in the kitchen and your mother's showing you how to cook an egg, they're teaching you how to survive and eat.

Community clean ups were a prominent civic activity among participants, particularly Latinx participants in their country of origin. Various people told stories of routinely going out with neighbors to keep the block clean. In addition, they contributed to keeping the lights and water on for their neighbors when it failed. In the U.S. context, both African American and Latinx participants talked about doing little things for their neighbors, like sharing the WiFi, food, and shoveling the snow. Beyond these small individual acts, participants also spoke of collaborating with other community members through informal groups and block/neighborhood associations. These types of groups in the community were mostly discussed among African American participants. For example, one African American participant discussed how his involvement in the block/neighborhood association began as an initiative to maintain safety in the community.

“I'm just an active willing participant and member in the community.”
I mobilized the block association itself. It wasn't just me obviously. I don't do these things by myself. I'm just an active willing participant and member in the community. I'm trying to live up to my responsibility. It was the work of a stable working-class, slightly middle-class neighborhood. They were Black homeowners for the most part, not solely, but primarily African American homeowners in the neighborhood. The neighborhood faced the possibility of serious deterioration from gang elements.

The block association was founded in 1983, but I got really involved in the 90s. It started when a family of drug dealers moved into the block. That sparked the need to get them out of here…Ultimately, we had to reach out to the homeowner, and they eventually evicted them.

The other issue was that we were concerned about open drug trafficking up on the main drive in our neighborhood, in the commercial strip. We were concerned about that, and we wanted to put a stop to it because it was deteriorating the neighborhood. So, we mobilized a group of residents to go up there and protest, stand out in the evening and occupied a corner so that they couldn't do any drug dealing. We knew that if we were standing up there, they wouldn't be able to do their business.

We went up there and we engaged with the young people who are out there, about what they were doing. What came out of it was that they had no recreational activity whatsoever at all. There was nothing going on for them to do. We realized that they were right. At that point, we said, "What we need to do is agitate for and advocate for the establishment of youth recreational programs in the neighborhood." That's how we got started, the block association was already a club at that time.

We got a good leadership in the Block Association, and the president and I got into the Neighborhood Association and began to organize. We began to organize activities that had been previously done in the park in our neighborhood, it's a wonderful park, but it was underutilized. Gangbangers were going up in there, harassing some of the older life tenants, residents of the apartments. There was some of that going on. So, we started advocating for programming in the park as well as in the schools, in terms of after school youth development program, and started a little league baseball program in collaboration with the Councilperson at that time.

Through this story we can appreciate the compassion in which community members approached the young people who were causing disturbance in the neighborhood. Instead of attacking them, they engaged in conversation, listened and were able to respond with community initiatives that addressed the need in the community.

Like this story, one Latinx participant from Puerto Rico described her own approach to
learning about the strengths of community members to address the issues she observed as a Peace Corps volunteer in another town in Puerto Rico.

“I began to do an investigation of the resources available within the community.”

I was 17 when I started in Puerto Rico, and they sent me to Argentina and Panama. I was the first person they accepted to work in the Peace Corps who was not 18 years old…They asked me if I was afraid to work there [town in PR], I said no. There were many people who drank, others used drugs... There were four divisions, and I chose group organization. That's when I prepared myself before I graduated. I’ve always liked groups. So, I started organizing groups where youth could participate. That's the idea, so that they would have an activity to do and not have to be on the street exposed to others giving them bad things that they offer you, cigarettes and everything. I began to do an investigation of the resources within the community that could help these young people, and for me too, so I could learn what was there. For example, I could get art teachers, carpentry, sheet metalwork for boys. I got ladies who knitted and embroidered. The young girls, the teacher came and taught them. I had to keep an eye on all that.

Group organizing was a common approach to addressing community needs. As the two stories above show this can be done through establishing formal community groups, but it also occurs naturally through social networks that share similar interests in the community. This was the case for one African American participant living in New Jersey who described her group of Black older women who got together due to their common interest in participating in the community. They were involved in separate community projects and served as a resource to contribute to each other’s programs/orgs.

“We call ourselves B three, that means Black, Blessed and Beautiful.”

We call ourselves B three, that means Black, Blessed and Beautiful. I didn’t start it, we formed it together, we’re like a small community action group. Two of them I met through the High School Alumni Education Association. We’ve been friends maybe for the last eight or nine years...Lola was doing food pantry at the church. The other one is a minister; she's involved in all kinds of stuff. Marla worked at Montclair State University. She is on the board of a childcare center at her church and on a board of the personnel hiring at her church. We were drawn to each other because of our community service.
Most recently, one of my friends from the group said that the senior center didn’t have any masks. So, we donated money to her, and she ordered 178 masks, so that everybody in the senior building could have a mask. We did that. Another thing we helped with was the infant center. The director called me about a month ago and we’re talking. She just tried to make sure that I was okay because she’s sheltering in place. We used to be very busy around this time. Anyway, she told me that the infant center needed help. I said, "Give me the name of the person and I'll contact them. My friends and I can help do something."

Like this participant shows, the group itself provides them a way to learn about what is happening throughout the community and who might need help. It also provides them with resources to address those needs. Another African American participant who is very active in the community, talked about how he is plugged in to several social circles that keep him involved. In addition, because he is well connected, he can connect these informal groups to resources in the community that can facilitate their work.

“I knew about it through my social circles.”

This past year in the fall we went down to one of the housing developments out here in the town over to get the neighborhood physically cleaned up. That was a local initiative from the community. Members of the community said, "Let's clean up the block and clean up the streets." I knew about it through my social circles. I'm a community activist, a lot of my social circle, are also other activists. We don't just go out and let's say march for a cause, we're also friends.

A lot of people in the community who are not formally associated with any group, know I have skills on how to organize groups. These aren’t actually formal groups. You might have people on a block that are concerned about their community, and they might want to do something. They'll come together as a unit to do a task. It's not like they're a regular group that meets every week or every month. It might be just an ad hoc community group that says, “we're trying to get a block clean-up, how do we do it?” I would get more people and let them know how to do it, getting permits from the city if you need to get, like for a clean-up you might need some permission from public works. I could tell them how to do that and they will actually do it. Sometimes, because I have the relationship with some in the government and all that, I may ask them on behalf of them, they want to do this. I talk to somebody I may know down the public works, or the City Hall and they could make things happen.
Through these stories we see that civic participation in the everyday functions to maintain the community. This can involve helping neighbors keep the lights and water on, sharing food with each other, ensuring the safety of the neighborhood, cleaning up the streets, advocating for educational and community programs, and organizing community groups that can help to share resources and knowledge with each other. Another important factor to highlight from some of these stories is that the social and political are not mutually exclusive. The people they are marching and advocating with can also be friends. In addition, having ties to those involved in political civic participation can facilitate the social civic activities.
Chapter X: Linked Lives

The principle of “Linked Lives” is central to the life course perspective. This principle emphasizes the interdependence of individuals across the life course. Traditionally, “Linked Lives” has focused on relationships with family members, communities, and networks across generations. However, in intersectional life course perspective it is described as a broader concept that allows us to examine the interdependence of individuals across generations, borders, and history (lifetimes). Results from interviews show that the experience of civic participation is precisely established on the notion that human beings are interdependent. This sense of connection to others is followed by a sense of responsibility to help the other. This theme focuses on how participants’ connections to people/communities across international borders, generations, and history influence their experience of civic participation.

Civic Participation Across Borders

Some participants shared experiences of civic participation at the international level. This experience was almost exclusively discussed among Latinx participants. However, one African American participant noted her participation in an international group called “Grandparents Around the World” where her participation was mostly as a member. Among Latinx older adults, all except two Puerto Rican participants, told stories of how they continue to support communities in Latin America, and not just their own. For example, one participant from El Salvador told a recent story of mobilizing people in their church to gather donations for people in Honduras that had been affected by the hurricanes. This all began after a fellow church member was telling them that their family in Honduras had been devastated by the hurricanes. Upon hearing the news, he offered to
help because his job was giving out food and clothes and he was able to request donations through there. He also collaborated with other church members to go to other churches and gather more donations. In total they were able to send four boxes of donations to help the community there. Similarly, another Latinx participant woman talked about an online religious support group that she created with Latinx women living in other U.S. States, Latin America, and one in Angola.

"I was looking for that support in people."

I have a prayer group for four years now, it was formed on August 11, 2016. I formed this group of women internationally where we connect every day by Facebook messenger, Monday to Saturday. Thank God it has been sustained. I had a problem with a son who went to jail and that motivated me to form that group and we’ve kept it. I was looking for that support in people, in the need I was putting my son and his case before God. I sought to be supported in prayer and so it was formed. The need, you can say was the motivation to form this group.

In addition to creating this international support group, the experience of having her son imprisoned made her aware of the conditions in which people were being held. As she got to know people there, she began sending money and helped two other people gain their freedom. This is a community that she continues to support from her home in New Jersey.

"I helped two people who had served their sentence."

In prison, for example, when my son was imprisoned in Ecuador, I had the opportunity to meet many people and help them. Now, whenever I can, I deposit $20, for them it’s enough. Those who are imprisoned in Ecuador receive such poor food. Since my son was already imprisoned there, I already know about it, I met people. I helped two people who had served their sentence, but their family didn’t have the money to move the cases. I was able to help, and they received their freedom. Thank God, I met them in there. My son would say, "Mom, how can we help them?" I took those two cases, helped them and they got out. I met other people there who became friends with my son. I know they don’t get toilet paper, not a soap, or anything, they have to pay to be given that and it’s expensive. I already know that need, I send them money so that they can have
their personal things. I don't always do it because I don't have it, but I do it when I can.

Another participant who comes from a very impoverished town in Mexico, spoke of helping about 20 of his neighbors come to the U.S. so that they too would have a chance to improve their socio-economic status. He was able to achieve this by working two jobs for 12 years, that allowed him to use one paycheck to pay his bills and the other to send back home to his family and community. Through work he would keep his mind occupied and avoid falling into depression because he didn’t have his family with him. In addition, it also allowed him to continue helping his community.

"I was able to bring five of my children and about 20 neighbors."

I arrived in the United States when I was 30, the first week I arrived I worked no more than one shift and after work I came to watch television. I didn't feel good because I don't have my kids, I don't have my wife. I looked for another job. I had two jobs to get that out of my mind about looking for the family. Only by working do you lose that notion. One shift was to pay the expenses and another to send back, but I was young. I was like this for almost 12 years, now I can’t even do one shift. During that time, I was able to bring five of my children and about 20 neighbors. I'd pay for the ticket and then they'd give it back to me once they got here. They were neighbors from my town, with little resources, and if there was a way to help them, I would help them. They called me and I would explain what life was like here, and if they wanted to come, I would tell them I was willing to help them. I wanted to help them because I lived that moment just like them. As I said, I lived under an old plastic-covered car, that's why. They're people who were completely exhausted there. Sometimes, as much as you want to run, you can't reach the hare. Some I brought, they're even better than me, they've done very well. There's a family that's already selling Mexican products and have their own cars. They knew how to make it, and that gives me joy.

Through these narratives we find that international civic participation provides individuals with an opportunity to remain involved in their native communities while also building community in the U.S. In addition, most international civic participation pertained to goods and monetary donations. Among this sample, all Latinx immigrants spoke about coming from economically disfranchised communities. Throughout their
stories all of them mentioned growing up in poverty and learning to help each other with whatever they had to offer. For example, one participant from Mexico said:

"In my town there was a lot of poverty, but because everyone knew each other, they all invited each other. All the people were very charitable. I saw that in my town one could help, even if they did not have much or were also in need, whether we were family or not. We were always in communication, there was no need to ask for help.”

This was a shared story among most Latinx participants and some African American participants. There was a consciousness around the need for material security, and it was the way most international civic participation would manifest. One participant said this was her favorite way of contributing, because "The economic is the necessity. Because if there's a disease, you need money. If there's hunger, you need money. If there's no clothes, it's money. That's the way they can be helped the most."

**Civic Participation Across Generations**

A clear theme that cut across all participants’ experiences of civic participation was a sense of interconnectedness and a desire help people. Many discussed how their religious/spiritual beliefs informed their sense of compassion and commitment for helping others. In addition, all participants told stories of difficult times throughout their lives where they received support from their community or an individual. These experiences served to instill a sense of “paying it forward” towards others who found themselves in difficult situations. For example, one older Latinx participant living in New Jersey told a story from his twenties when he moved to Mexico City to go to modeling school. He ended up forming a group that would collect food and feed homeless people in the city. His motivation for this initiative emerged from personal experiences of being helped when he first arrived in Mexico City.
"I had a lot of help from people when I needed it."

When I lived in Mexico City, I had the opportunity to help others through friends of a private modeling school. I was about 25-27 years old. The modeling students and I would go out and try to pick up food and things to take to people in need who lived on the street. We collected money from restaurants and locals. The initiative came out spontaneously. We studied in downtown Mexico City and went out for fun to drink and stuff. And as we were going out, we realized that people were in great need. I identified myself with the difficult situation of people, because when I got to Mexico, I lived something very hard. I arrived very young to the city and a woman helped me get a room where I slept on the floor on a towel. And there was another lady who also helped me a lot and invited me to eat at her house and cooked tortillas for me. I struggled a lot before I got into modeling. Once I was in modeling school, I met people who had more opportunities and their parents brought us water and food and I cooked for us. So, I had a lot of help from people when I needed it, when I didn't have a place to live or food to eat. So, this emerged from my own life.

Another participant, age 68, who had been living with HIV for half his life, described their decision to enroll in a COVID clinical trial. They saw it as an opportunity to honor the risks that others have taken and pay it forward.

“It’s a way to pay back for the risk people have taken in the past and also for the future generations.”

I signed up for a COVID testing study. I got into the study because Black people are woefully misrepresented in clinical trials. This is the seventh clinical trial that I have been in. All the other trials were for HIV medication. This is the first one that isn’t for HIV, but actually I wanted to know what the effects of the vaccine would have on HIV positive people. Every medication that I’ve taken, someone had to go through a clinical trial for and that’s the only way to figure out the side effects. I’m willing to do that because I’ve been on 50 or 60 medications and people had to do clinical trials for that. It’s a way to pay back for the risk people have taken in the past and also for the future generations. It’s a situation that’s going on and I need to be on the forefront to figure out how to take care of it, this is my way of being an activist.

Most participants spoke about contributing to the communities and causes that were personal and directly connected to them. However, a few talked about their involvement in causes that were not directly part of their experience. This was described
as a sense that we are all connected, and you never know who will be there to help you when you need it. This idea was evident both in their personal experiences as well as in their religious/spiritual belief system. For example, an African American older adult born in New York described how a stranger saved his life, and that experience allowed him to realize that “Everybody has something to give.” He explains his commitment to advancing causes that are seemingly unrelated to him, such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). DACA is an immigrant led movement and policy that grants undocumented residents brought to the U.S. as children to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and become eligible for a work permit (Mallet-García and García-Bedolla, 2021).

“The person you help along the way may be the one to help you.”

I know when I was fighting for DACA students. These are people who have come usually by their parent, they have been brought here. By them succeeding, the DACA student that you help succeed may be the one that cures the cancer you’re going to get. The person you help along the way may be the one to help you. We're different pieces of the puzzle.

When I was younger, I had an incident where somebody tried to rob me. They end up hurting me and I had to end up going to the hospital. The person who took me to the hospital was, what we often refer to as the neighborhood bum. He was the one in the corner, the one, they ask you for money. This man, he saved my life. It proved the point that everybody has something to give. You realize that these experiences are many. No matter who you are, you can give something.

Similarly, a Latinx older adult also spoke on this same sentiment, that everyone will go through a situation or get to a stage where they need help. He describes it as the nature of being human and growing older, and because no one is exempt from needing help it is in everyone’s best interest to contribute and help others while you can. A type of paying it forward to yourself.
“There is a principle in human being through life, that we will not always have the same strength that we have when we are young. We will not always have the people that we have next to us when we are young. We will not always have the same capacity for comfort that we have when young, because life keeps on changing. You're going to have times when you're going to need someone who can help you. Everyone goes through stages, different situations. And that's why I recommend behaving well with people, being kind, asking them what you can do, because life turns. Life is up or down. You can bring people closer, but one can also reject them, but if you reject them, there is no prosperity.”

In addition, many participants also spoke of how they derived a sense of connection and commitment to people through their religious/spiritual values. Whether they were protesting, cooking food for the homeless from their homes, or volunteering with a non-profit, most participants described a spiritual aspect to their participation. It was not uncommon to find phrases such as “the spirit moves me” or “being of service to God is to be of service to my neighbor” throughout their narratives of civic participation. Particularly for Latinx participants, most of their participation was through the church or directly tied to their religious practices. However, both groups talked about the spiritual experience of civic participation a way to express the principles they gained from their faith such as compassion, love, and respect for all people. For example, one participant living in New Jersey who immigrated from El Salvador described their experiences of civic participation through the sentiment of compassion, which he attributed to his faith.

“Feeling compassion for people in need was something I watched first and then thought these people could be helped one way or another. Compassion is a feeling you have when you want to do things, because when you don't want to. It also doesn't serve that there is compassion if the person doesn't want to do, but good feeling, good attitude, moves when you want to do things. But when you don't want to do things, you don't move, you don't feel compassion. It is important to feel compassion because a feeling of wanting to help develops, and from that point the works that are done according to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ moves one through the spirit of God.”
Similarly, an African American participant living in New Jersey described her civic participation as an expression of love, love that God gave her and that she shares through cooking.

“You know what? I don't do it for acknowledgement or anything. I do it from the heart because I think people could use it. I would like people to feel like other people do on a holiday. It makes me feel good to give to people. I like to see the look on people's face. It's so amazing to see, and they were so thankful. God just gave me love to spread around, and so I do it with the gift that he gave me. Sharing food is my way of showing love for people. I love to see people's faces light up when you give them something, especially when they taste the food, because my food is fantastic. I have to brag, and it helps put some nourishment in their bodies. It makes them a little happy. It makes them feel like they could be worth it. The thing is you don't know a person's story. It's no reason that you can't help.”

In this quote she is referring to various stories she told of making food for her community and to feed the homeless. Specifically, she is recalling a recent time during COVID-19 when she decided to cook up an Easter meal for homeless people in her town.

“I asked my best friend. Her, my daughter and myself, we masked up, we gloved up. We prayed, and we fed 25, 30 people all around my town. They was mostly Puerto Rican and a few White people when we go feed the homeless, and some African Americans. That was my first time doing something like that. It's an amazing feeling to help somebody else…”

There were many other stories among participants of the ways in which their spirituality and faith influenced their experience of civic participation. It was not just a motivation, but the experience itself was a spiritual act. As one participant said “I would not call what I do civic participation; I call it helping people, being human. This is what I've been called to do…it's a spiritual obligation because if I don't do it, my spirit feels bad.”

**Civic Participation Across History: Honoring Ancestors**

Among African Americans, narratives often paid tribute to the ancestors that had come before them. This sense of connection to history was only present in the interviews
with African Americans. Additionally, the connection to history was primarily experienced through the connection to their ancestors. Stories linking their current experiences of civic participation to the history of African Americans in the U.S. were most often told through the lens of the “trials and tribulations that my ancestors have been through” to gain the rights and opportunities they have today. This connection to the ancestors provides them a sense of responsibility to continue building on their work and exercise their rights. For example, one African American woman living in New Jersey talked about how this would be the first year at the age of 75 that she votes by absentee ballot. She always goes to the polls because she is conscious of the struggle and sacrifices that her own family, and many other African Americans, endured in the U.S. to gain access to this civic right.

“I've voted in every election, because we had lots of African Americans who lost their lives because they voted. My great, great, grandmother, I've been told, had to guess how many beans were in a jar in order to vote. Of course, I'm going to vote. That's ridiculous but those are the kinds of things that they did to us back then to stop us from voting.”

It was common to hear African American participants say that their contribution was a way to “honor their ancestors” and to acknowledge that they “stand on their shoulders” and as one African American participant said “Yes, I do stand on others' shoulders but I'm looking for somebody to stand on mine also.” There was a sense that their contributions were part of continuum of the work that had been done before their lifetime, during their lifetime, and that it will continue with future generations. As one participant said:

“I think it's your duty to get involved. You owe it to your ancestors to get involved. They did to make it better for us. If you get involved, you'll make it better for the next generation and you'll make a better world. There are sacrifices
You can make to make it better for the coming generation. You have some experiences that the past generations don't have that will enable you to solve some of the issues that are being confronted and go from there. You got to be involved.”

Through their relationship to the ancestors, they are connected to history. To honor the ancestors is to honor the history of Black people in the U.S. and to contribute to the growing prosperity of their community. One participant describes how their connection to the ancestors, instills pride in who she is. This is a connection that she is committed to establishing among the youth to develop their self-esteem.

“This is how you get pride; I know who I am. I know what my ancestors did, and I stand on their shoulders. I wouldn't have my job today if it wasn’t for them. We couldn't eat at a restaurant; we couldn't shop in stores. They didn't want you going in and trying on clothes that White people had to come in and buy. You couldn't try on shoes because you're putting your Black foot in the shoes. You couldn't even go in the stores...This is why I work with young people because they don't feel they're somebody. They don't know who they are. You have to know who you are, and from where you came. This helps you to know where you're going. People talk about today, "Oh, Black lives matter. Every life matters." Sure it does, but we haven't-- That's why so many people have so much low self-esteem.”

Similarly, another participant living in New York, who was politically involved through movement organizing and activism, also discussed how their connection to history comes from their relationship to the ancestors. In addition, they describe that this connection supports and informs their civic participation. As they say “I do it for them because they could not” speaking to the responsibility they feel for carrying the struggle of their ancestors who were denied the right to be heard.

“My spiritual connection encompasses the ancestors. I am the answer to their prayers, hopes, and dreams. I owe it to those who were murdered, raped, castrated, sold, beaten, humiliated and all manner of things that would never come across my mind. Each time I stand up and disrupt business as usual to disrupt the capitalist, colonialists and the prototype “illegal” immigrants who not only took jobs, but also stole the Indigenous Nations' land and built this country with free
Every time I speak truth to power, I upset people's convenient cozy, White privilege; I do it for them because they could not.”

Through participants’ narratives we can begin to understand how civic participation extends beyond simply being a political or social activity and appreciate the sense of interconnection among humanity. From here, emerges the desire to contribute to those outside yourself and the family. As participants stories in this theme show, the experience of civic participation for them is one that embodies a practice that honors their history, spiritual/religious beliefs, personal journey, and the people that have supported them along the way.
Chapter XI: Discussion

"All men [and women] are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.” -Martin Luther King.

This dissertation set out to examine the research question “How do Latinx and African American older adults experience civic participation throughout the life course in the context of intersectional identities (i.e., race/ethnicity, age, gender, culture) and major life transitions (i.e., acquiring chronic health problem, immigration)?” I also aimed to explore how these experiences differ between African Americans and Latinx older adults. This is the first study, to my knowledge, to explore civic participation across the life course among these two populations. In the introduction, I discussed how older adults’ civic participation is a central aspect of national and international health policy and research agendas (Heyman et al., 2018; Morrow-Howell et al., 2018; WHO, 2007). A review of empirical research indicates various health benefits for individuals who volunteer in later life and the economic and social benefits that volunteer work contributes to society. However, I identified gaps in the empirical literature on civic participation in later life: a limited number of studies exploring civic participation beyond formal volunteerism and voting; a dearth of literature examining the experiences of civic participation among non-White older adults, particularly African Americans and Latinx immigrants; and, finally, a failure to account for the sociopolitical context and structures of oppression that shape experiences of civic participation. These gaps indicate an incomplete understanding of civic participation among older adults in the United States. Consequently, I used the intersectional life course perspective to guide this phenomenological study. The application of this theoretical perspective allowed me to
examine experiences of civic participation throughout the life course and within sociopolitical structures. Four themes emerged from the findings of my study that provide a nuanced understanding of experiences of civic participation among African American and Latinx adults aged 60 years and older.

In this chapter, I summarize the key findings and discuss these findings concerning the literature on civic participation in later life. Then, I reflect on the study’s methodological and theoretical approach, implications for practice and policy, and limitations. I conclude with ideas for future research and a conclusion statement.

**Summary of Findings**

The findings are presented in chapters 7–10 and focused on the four dimensions of the intersectional life course perspective (Ferrer et al., 2019) as they connected to themes emerging from the data. The first theme, geopolitical and sociohistorical context, situates experiences of civic participation throughout the individual’s life course within a historical timeline. This dimension emphasizes the concept of time, which makes apparent the continuum of experiences of civic activities over the life course. Participants engage in similar activities throughout their lifetimes and often refer to historical events or personal events from their past to describe and/or give meaning to their current civic participation activities. Participants often recounted their stories of civic participation through a cause-and-effect narrative. This allowed me to situate when, how, and why they began to participate and how their participation developed across time in the context of social, political, and/or personal events. These stories highlight the interconnectedness of individual experiences within community, society, culture, and government and how such systems produce the context for these activities to emerge. Their civic activities
were sometimes a product of systemic oppression and marginalization but could also be a product of cultural traditions, customs, and values that instilled a sense of kinship and responsibility for the well-being of others, and the two often overlapped.

The second theme, the role of age/ageism, health/illness stigma, and race/racism in civic participation, pertains to the dimension of exploring categories of difference and how they shape identity and experience (Ferrer et al., 2019). In this theme, I discuss the interaction across social categories and systems of oppression that affect participants’ decision of how, where, and with whom to engage in civic activities. This reveals how civic participation is circumscribed due to structural forces. In response, participants described how their identity and systems of oppression (ageism, racism, and ableism) inform their participation. For example, some participants cited a need to feel useful as they got older. Others mentioned refraining from participation in White majority spaces to protect against tokenism and microaggressions, and others discussed their health status as a motivator to and limitation to their participation. These are described separately, for many participants, but were simultaneous considerations.

The third theme, agency and resistance directly ties in with the dimension of agency and resistance in the context of systemic oppression among older adults (Ferrer et al., 2019). This theme shows how African American and Latinx adults develop their own opportunities and capacity for civic participation in the context of hostile and neglectful social structures and governance. It demonstrates civic activities that emerge as resistance and/or protection against systems of oppression. In this theme, participants discussed cultural and historical preservation, safety against police violence, block clean-ups, alternative education programs, and more. While these activities emerged in reference to
systemic oppression, they describe how opportunities, resources, and alternative institutions are built and developed from within the community. In addition, it presents how civic participation goes beyond altruism and is motivated through solidary commitment, survival, and a desire to empower their communities.

The fourth theme, linked lives, corresponds to the dimension of examining locally and globally linked lives (Ferrer et al., 2019). This theme captures the values of compassion and connectedness that reflect the desire to participate and contribute to the well-being and advancement of others. This reveals how social, cultural, and religious systems influence individuals’ sense of interconnectedness, allowing them to engage across generations, international borders, and history. For example, Latinx immigrants were often involved in civic life in the United States and their country of origin. In comparison, African Americans discussed a transcendental connection across history expressed as a responsibility to ancestors. Overall, participants shared how their civic participation is deeply connected to their spiritual and religious practices. They often referred to their service as a calling from spirit or God, demonstrating how civic participation can be a form of spiritual practice.

Overall, participants’ stories describe a range of civic activities (social, political, formal, and informal) that they are currently involved with or have done throughout their lives. However, their stories speak to more than the pragmatic activities of civic participation. Their experiences were as much about what they did as the way they live. As one participant said, “This was just a way of life for us…,” and another stated, “I’m a person who serves in my community, that’s my identity, and that will be on my tombstone.” Many stated that what they did was nothing special; it was just what had
been cultivated within them through community, religion, and culture. Their participation is a continuous expression of themselves and their people’s history. Their stories embedded the stories of thousands.

**Implications for Research on Civic Participation in Later Life**

Research on civic participation in later life has observed that older individuals from ethnoracial minority groups are less engaged than older White adults (Gonzales et al., 2015; Musick & Wilson, 2007). However, this literature has primarily focused on formal volunteering and voting. This has led various scholars to question the capacity for current conceptualizations and research on civic participation to accurately measure and recognize it among the overall older adult population (Gonzales, Shen, Wang, Martinez, & Norstrand, 2016; Martinez et al., 2011; Serrat et al., 2021). The overemphasis on formal volunteerism and voting has created a gap in the literature concerning how older adults contribute to their communities (Martinez et al., 2011; Serrat et al., 2019; Torres & Serrat, 2019). In particular, experiences of Latinx and African American older adults’ civic participation have not been studied in depth, and civic participation among this population may be underreported (Martinez et al., 2011; Serrat et al., 2021). Scholars have also suggested that there may be differences in civic participation between ethnoracial groups (Burr et al., 2007; Martinez et al., 2011; Warburton & McLaughlin, 2006).

The literature offers evidence that civic participation in these communities may often be carried out informally, outside of established institutions (Martinez et al., 2011; Ramakrishnan & Viramontes, 2010). Research has found that the church is a major site for civic participation among African American and Latinx older adults (Audette et al.,
Furthermore, literature on Latinx immigrants’ transnational participation has found that it is common for them to remain involved in their communities of origin after resettlement (Bolíbar, 2019; Tsuda, 2012; Vertovec, 2009). However, research on civic participation among older immigrants and transnational participation is scarce (Serrat et al., 2019; Torres & Serrat, 2019). In addition, civic participation literature in later life has not given adequate attention to historical inequalities and systems of oppression that shape civic participation. This is of particular importance considering that Blacks and immigrants historically have been excluded from formal civic activities (Hamler et al., 2018). In many cases, they continue to be excluded due to racism (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005; Perilla, Norris, & Lavizzo, 2002), language barriers (Jang et al., 2016; Rodríguez-Galán & Falcón, 2010), citizenship laws (Wilmoth, 2012), and disproportionate rates of incarceration (Tucker, 2017; Uggen et al., 2016).

This section presents a discussion on belonging and inclusion in civic participation framed by geopolitical and sociohistorical contexts for African Americans and Latinx immigrants. Particular attention is given to the concept of “civic” as it relates to citizenship and formalized civic institutions that provide opportunities for participation. First, I present literature on citizenship and belonging to discuss limitations of the term “civic” and present evidence of ways that belonging through spiritual and transnational communities informs participation. This leads into a discussion of the literature on inclusion/exclusion in civic participation and its relevance for equitable participation. I focus on the rightful presence framework (Squire & Darling, 2013) to expand beyond the limitations of an inclusion-based approach to civic participation among historically marginalized older adults. I suggest the term “Rightful Participation”
to represent the need for structural and systemic change in civic participation scholarship and practice to increase our understanding and support for civic participation in communities of color. Second, I draw attention to social and political participation and discuss the merging of the two categories within the politicized experience of Blacks and immigrants in the United States. Third, I suggest a new organizational framework for activities of civic participation that highlight dimensions of participation beyond the exclusive categories of social and political to reflect experiences of civic participation based on solidarity, survival, and empowerment. Last, I present a discussion on place and civic participation to draw attention to the various settings where older adults participate, which have not been given sufficient attention. Place of employment emerged naturally through participants’ stories, Internet-based civic participation was significantly tied to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the church figured more prominently and consistently in their experiences across the life course.

**The exclusionary framework of “civic” (citizen) participation.**

Literature on civic participation in later life is largely devoid of adequate attention to the geopolitical and sociohistorical context in which people participate. However, we must examine these contexts given the long history of racism and discrimination that has denied citizenship rights to those who are not White and of European descent (Portes & Rambaut, 2006). Boemraad, Koorteweg, and Yurdakul (2008) discuss the concept of citizenship as “a form of membership in a political and geographic community. It can be disaggregated into four dimensions: legal status, rights, political and other forms of participation in society, and a sense of belonging” (p.154). This definition indicates that although individuals may have legal citizenship, other dimensions may not be met.
“Second-class citizenship” is often used to describe the sociopolitical limitations that African Americans, Native Americans, and immigrants from the Global South face in the United States and their sense of exclusion (Deckard & Heslin, 2016; Vrasti & Dayal, 2016). In this study, a few African Americans and Latinx immigrant older adults expressed feeling unwanted and persecuted in the United States, which explained why some of them chose to work within their communities and took precautions when working with majority White American groups.

Belonging has been defined as a feeling that one is an integral part of the environment, family, social circles, neighborhood, communities, cultural groups, and physical places (Hagerty et al., 1992). Further on, Mahar, Cobigo, and Stuart (2013) state that “these feelings of external connectedness are grounded to the context or referent group, to whom one chooses, wants and feels permission to belong” (p. 6). Yuval-Davis (2006) suggests that beyond emotional attachment, a sense of belonging is also about “feeling ‘safe’” (p. 198). This concept of sense of belonging as feelings of attachment, permission to belong, and feelings of safety within a group are of particular importance for communities that have historically experienced multiple levels of systemic violence and marginalization (Harris & Battle, 2013). For example, most African Americans in this sample described experiencing racism throughout their lives. Some Latinx immigrants described feeling discriminated against based on citizenship status, skin color, and economic status at some point in their lives. The accumulation of oppressive experiences throughout the life course produced specific and often vulnerable situations in later life (Ferraro & Shippee, 2009), which shape how, when, where, and with whom participants chose to engage civically. Carter (2007) proposed the term “race-based
traumatic stress injury” to describe the impacts of racism on psychological and emotional health among people of color.

However, research that examines the association between civic participation and a sense of belonging within the context of systemic racism and oppression is rare. This study's findings are supported by research that shows that social and political involvement is associated with a sense of belongingness (Andonian & MacRae, 2011; Harris & Battle, 2013; Stewart et al., 2009). In the current study, civic participation was often situated within the context of marginalization and exclusion from White American society, especially for African American older adults. Therefore, civic activities (social and political) were mostly carried out within their ethnic groups. A more in-depth understanding of their sense of belonging could reveal how African Americans and Latinx immigrant older adults understand/view their participation outside of their communities. In this study, findings show that participants’ sense of belonging was connected to their spiritual/religious groups. Spiritual/religious belonging informed how participants engaged civically; it was not always in religious settings, but it was through these groups that civic activities were often carried out. For Latinx participants specifically, transnational communities continued be a source of belonging and motivation for participation. Most of their civic activities were directed to helping new immigrant arrivals and communities in Latin America, with a few examples of transnational collaborations. These communities were mostly ethnoracially and culturally congruent. A few participants described the importance of shared history, culture, and language as important aspects of their sense of belonging and thereby their comfort and willingness to participate. These experiences are hardly discussed in civic participation
gerontological literature but call into question the term “civic.” A more equitable framework of civic participation is necessary to recognize and support activities via religious groups and transnational communities and with groups that are not considered citizens.

**Spiritual/religious civic participation.**

Scholars have established the role of religion and religiosity in shaping civic engagement (Cadge & Ecklund 2007; Uslaner, 2003), particularly its ability to create a common bond between people and instill a sense of purpose (Uslaner, 2003). In the present study, spirituality and religion were a common and constant thread across participants’ experiences of civic participation regardless of ethnicity, country of origin, or socioeconomic status (SES). While it is well known that religion and spirituality are central aspects of community life in African Americans and Latinx communities (Mattis & Jagers, 2001), there is little research on the role of spirituality in civic participation in later life. However, many participants brought up their faith in their stories of civic participation. For example, a queer African American elder living in New York City described a “spiritual high” when participating in a demonstration or protest. They described feeling “peace like a river” and that their “spirit feels bad” when they do not engage civically. Various participants, Black and Latinx, described their civic participation as their “calling,” a “responsibility to the ancestors,” and a gift bestowed upon them by God. The literature on civic participation among Latinx and African Americans has discussed the importance of spirituality (Mattis & Jagers, 200; Mora, 2013). For example, Mora (2013) conducted an ethnographic study on civic participation
with Latinx immigrants and found that participants described volunteering or “service” as spiritual activities—a finding this research also highlights.

Similarly, literature on African American spirituality has described the role of ancestors, saints, spirits, and God in community life, suggesting the relationship to these entities is treated as extensions of the community (Mattis & Jagger, 2001; Nelson, 1997). They are actively involved in the daily lives of individuals, providing guidance and support when needed (Mattis & Jagger, 2001; Nelson, 1997). This was evident in African Americans’ stories of civic participation, as they described their engagement with spirit, ancestors, and God in how they decided to participate, their experience of participation, and the meaning of their contribution. Through these narratives, we can appreciate the experience of civic participation as one that embodies a practice that honors spiritual connections to gods, saints, spirits, and ancestors. These findings suggest the need for studies to consider civic participation as a spiritual practice and the dimension of spirituality in conceptualizations of it in later life. In addition, the findings lend evidence to examine the concept of linked lives in the life course perspective. This concept has primarily focused on generational, local, and international relationships (Carr, 2018), but we must consider spiritual relations as part of individuals’ experiences throughout the life course.

**Transnational civic participation.**

For older Latinx immigrants, their sense of belonging extended across borders, and their stories of civic participation demonstrated this. They spoke of the ways they continue to contribute to their communities of origin and the communities of their friends/coworkers in other countries in Latin America. The ongoing relationships and
communities maintained by immigrants in their countries of origin are well documented in transnational literature (Bolíbar, 2019; Tsuda, 2012; Vertovec, 2009). Furthermore, some scholars have found that Latinx engagement in their country of origin also affects how they participate in the host country (Tsuda, 2012). Several examples in this study provide evidence of this phenomenon. Various Latinx participants describe how they mobilize to collect funding and donations in the United States to send back to countries in Latin America and create groups and associations that benefit the Latinx diaspora. The economic effects of remittances are not minor: in 2019, they amounted to nearly $100 billion in Latin America (Orozco, 2021).

This has been linked to resource mobilization theory, which relies on social networks as the structure of mobilization (Bolíbar, 2019; McAdam, 2010). Through local and international networks, Latinx immigrants can mobilize and participate civically among various countries simultaneously (Bolíbar, 2019; Tsuda, 2012). In addition, scholars have also posited that one’s immediate environment is associated with transnational civic participation (Bolíbar, 2019; Vogel & Triandafyllidou, 2005), such that Latinx immigrants living and socializing within the Latinx community have more opportunities to participate transnationally. Much has been written on transnational civic participation among immigrant groups, but less is known about this phenomenon in later life (Torres & Serrat, 2019). The current study supports that transnational civic participation processes may be consistent across the life course. However, further research is needed to understand differences across age groups better. One difference that might emerge is in transnational political participation. The literature on this subject has found that transnational political participation is not uncommon among immigrants.
(Boulianne, 2020; Erlingsson & Truman, 2017; Hickerson, 2012). However, the current study only found evidence of transnational social participation.

**Rightful participation: A framework for equitable civic participation.**

Literature on civic participation in later life has described the need for inclusion of diverse older adults given evidence of inequalities in rates of participation across race, SES, and health/disability (Bortree & Waters, 2014; Gonzales et al., 2015, 2016; Johnson & Lee, 2018; Kelley-Moore & Thorpe, 2012; McBride et al., 2011; Putnam, 2000; Scharlach et al., 2013; Serrat et al., 2018, 2021; Tang et al., 2009). Some scholars have framed inequity in the participation literature and in practice as an issue of erasure. For example, Kelley and colleagues (2018) describe erasure as a “problem of exclusion—an absence of key voices and groups from the conversation” (p. 56). This has led many scholars to assume that inclusion, such as participation, representation, and “having a seat at the table” in formal organizations and institutions, would lessen the problem of erasure/exclusion (Gonzales et al., 2016; Kelley et al., 2018; McBride et al., 2011; Tang et al., 2009). However, it may be contributing further to the erasure of marginalized communities and continuous reproduction of structural inequities (Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Scholars have described the problematic use of inclusion as a concept that relies on maintaining the status quo, that is, the maintenance of hierarchies of race, gender, age, class, and among other categories of difference (Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2020; Martin, 2019). Discourse and efforts focused on inclusion do not attempt to disrupt systemic inequities (Vratis & Dayal, 2016) and therefore do not address the issues of exclusion and erasure. Serrat, Scharf, & Villar (2021) highlight that research on exclusion in later life civic participation has been
neglected. They present a foundational framework to begin understanding this phenomenon through an ecological systems perspective. I suggest that such framework would benefit from an application of critical frameworks of power, such as “rightful presence.”

The rightful presence framework draws from Arendt’s (1951) notion of “the rights to have rights” (Squire & Darling, 2013). Rightful presence posits that rather than extending rights to a group of people, we question the ways existing rights were developed to strip the inherent rights these groups had. In my research, African Americans and Latinx populations’ rights as citizens, ability to participate in civic life, and, more broadly, to have their culture and history recognized were removed during colonization (Ortiz, 2018). Therefore, rightful presence emphasizes that justice is not an extension or an invitation but a reclaiming of inherent rights. The rightful presence framework has been adopted in education and citizenship studies. In the context of civic participation, it may serve to develop further understanding of the dichotomy of inclusion/exclusion in later life among racialized older adults (Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2020; Vratis & Dayal, 2016). Calabrese Barton and Tam (2020) describe its use in helping scholars shift away from discussions of inclusion toward an equitable framework of learning.

The rightful presence framework asks reformers to shift away from inclusionary (e.g., “for all”) foci where the impetus is on the individual to assimilate into the culture of power or remain marginal to the learning community. Instead, the framework refocuses reform on the locally conditional ways in which normalized learning can be disrupted and transformed through engaging in political struggle against Whiteness and patriarchy (p. 438).
This framework can be applied to civic participation in later life literature to help us examine the rhetoric of inclusion. For example, Gonzales and colleagues (2016) attended to the increased concern for the inclusion of older racial and ethnic minorities in formal volunteering by studying the distribution of individual and neighborhood resources (economic, social, and built environment characteristics) among non-Hispanic Black and non-Hispanic White adults. Their findings agree with previous research showing that more resources are significantly associated with formal volunteerism for non-Hispanic Black adults. However, this research is not focused on increasing the participation of Black older adults but rather “maximizing formal volunteerism.” This is the case for most research on civic participation in later life that particularly attends to formal volunteerism (Bortree & Waters, 2014; Johnson & Lee, 2018; McBride et al., 2011; Serrat et al., 2019; Tang et al., 2009). A critical perspective of current literature calling for the inclusion of marginalized older adults must be situated within a framework of power dynamics that considers how the concept of inclusion, in and of itself, positions those being included as secondary.

The continued focus on increasing inclusion into formal volunteerism disregards (excludes) the ways Black older adults and other ethnoracial groups are and have been contributing to our society. In addition, through this discourse, scholars are unintentionally centering institutions and their leadership (White majority). In doing so, the power to control who is included, their level and activity of participation, and who benefits remains within these entities (Calabrese Barton & Tam, 2020). Results from the current study show that a White-majority-led environment deters active participation of African American and Latinx older adults, as it presents an increased risk of
microaggression and tokenism. Therefore, a framework that critiques the power dynamics in current formalized civic participation structures is necessary to better understand the problem of inequitable participation between White and ethnoracial, marginalized older adults. This would question the term “civic” as it relates to citizenship, belonging, who can and is expected to participate, and who leads and decides within formalized civic organizations/institutions.

Building from the framework of rightful presence, I propose “Rightful Participation,” which suggests a shift in focus away from inclusion toward reimagining and developing new ways of supporting participation that honors the experiences and practices of those who have been historically marginalized and excluded (Calabrese Barton & Tam, 2020; Squire et al., 2013; Vratis & Dayal, 2016). This means developing literature that centers the lived experiences and historical sociopolitical struggles of ethnoracially underrepresented populations. It also emphasizes the importance of scholarship that seeks to understand and render visible the contributions these groups are already making to our society and the structural limitations they experience in doing so. Such literature would provide a more comprehensive understanding of civic participation and provide insight into the needed resources and supports that can be allocated to facilitate the current efforts in communities of color.

**Beyond social and political civic participation.**

Thus far, civic participation literature in later life has focused on identifying specific activities that are social or political, formal or informal (Serrat et al., 2019). Findings from this study lend evidence to research indicating that informal and social civic activities are the more common types of civic participation among Blacks, Latinx,
and immigrant populations broadly (Martinez et al., 2011; Ramakrishnan & Viramontes, 2010). However, this study shows that civic participation is more about context and intention and less about the discrete activity. For example, a queer older African American participant who is HIV positive said their contribution was telling their story, which many people may not consider a civic contribution. However, their story held unique historical significance given the context of the time and place that they were born in and the purpose they give the retelling to raise awareness and educate the community. Telling one’s story as a process of data collection in a research study is also a civic contribution. In this way, we can appreciate the expansive nature of civic participation and the many ways it is expressed. Therefore, I suggest we shift our focus away from the type of activity to the context and intention in which activities are carried out.

This study presents a foundation by which to reconsider the organization and conceptualization of civic participation through discrete activities and mutually exclusive categories of social and political participation (Marinez et al., 2011; Serrat et al., 2021). Its findings could be used to develop a more nuanced conceptualization and improve the quality and accuracy of measurements of civic participation in studies with ethnoracially marginalized groups. This would produce scholarship that better reflects differences in experience of civic participation among ethnoracial groups, not by discrete activity but rather by context and intention of the activity. I am not suggesting that we completely disregard the categories of social and political. Rather, we should not treat them as purely exclusive classifications in our organization and conceptualization of civic participation. In addition, I propose that we further examine how an activity may be considered civic among one group and not another. Similarly, how one activity may be identified as purely
social among one group but social and political among another due to the sociopolitical context and motivations behind the activities. Finally, through a sociopolitical analysis, we may also find the ways political and social participation interact, such that less political involvement may produce greater need for social participation at the community level.

**Economically stratified civic participation.**

Research demonstrates that more affluent communities are more likely to be politically involved than poor communities, which feel unseen and unheard by political systems (Bartels, 200; Uslaner & Brown, 2005). The political science literature has discussed the role of economic segregation, finding that policy responsiveness is greater for communities that have concentrated affluence than those with concentrated poverty (Flavin & Franko, 2020). In addition, studies find that unequal policy responsiveness creates a need for more social participation (care work, community work) due to a lack of public investment (Yu et al., 2021). This creates a vicious cycle, where those in lower SES communities, which also tend to be Black and immigrant communities, have less political power. Therefore, fewer resources are funneled into these communities (Flavin & Franko, 2020; Yu et al., 2021). Findings from this dissertation suggest a similar pattern, showing an unequal division between participation in political versus social activities.

Overall, Latinx immigrant older adults in this sample were rarely involved in political activities beyond voting, and voting was also inaccessible to a few. In addition, in agreement with previous literature on unobserved civic participation among African Americans and Latinx participants, informal participation was predominantly social
(Martinez et al., 2011; Ramakrishnan & Viramontes, 2010). This might be evidence of economic stratification in types of civic participation, wherein social participation (care work, community work) is relegated to those in the lower income strata and political participation (influencing leadership and power) is reserved for those in the higher income strata (Flavin & Franko, 2020; Levinson, 2010). This presents an interesting direction toward understanding how civic participation’s social and political dimensions interact to produce differences in who participates in which. Future research in later life civic participation can examine in greater depth differences in social and political participation by race and community SES. Furthermore, social and political participation must be reexamined as exclusive categories of civic engagement. Participants in this sample demonstrated a subtle but consistent overlap between the two categories that stems from the ethnoracial politics of being Black and/or an immigrant in the United States.

**The social is political: The politicized existence of Blacks and immigrants.**

Recently Torres and Serrat (2019) have called for more research on the political civic participation of immigrant older adults. In this sample, Latinx immigrant older adults were rarely involved in formal political activities. This was due to several factors. For one, lack of citizenship prevents participation in the electorate. Beyond that, participants identified the persecution of undocumented immigrants, language barriers, lack of knowledge of the U.S. political system, and experiences with politics in their country of origin as reasons they do not engage in politics. The empirical literature has also identified many of these factors (Almeida et al., 2016; Jang et al., 2016; Rojas-Flores et al., 2017; Sladkova et al., 2012; Syed et al., 2017). However, if we consider the
political nature of the social position immigrants occupy (Glenn, 2011), we may find that politics is embedded within what we often categorize as social civic activities. For example, in this study, participants described activities concerning the preservation of cultural practice and history. At face value, these activities may seem social; however, a deeper look would reveal that they are fundamentally political, given the anti-immigrant context of the United States.

The preservation of cultural practices and history has not been given much attention in civic participation in later life literature. This could be because these activities may be unique to marginalized groups, and most civic participation literature in later life has been focused on White Americans (Martinez et al., 2011; Serrat et al., 2019). However, these practices are born from a history of systemic oppression that does not acknowledge or formally teach the stories of Black Americans, Latinx people, or other marginalized groups (Ortiz, 2018). It is up to these communities to find the means to pass down that knowledge and practice to younger generations, and as it is often said, “knowledge is power.” Rhodes (2017, p. 92) writes

…culture was to be the instrument of a black revolution…influence of Malcolm X and his proclamation that “[W]e must launch a cultural revolution to unbrainwash an entire people.” This liberatory culture involved developing pride in black history and affirming a distinctive black culture rooted in an identification with Africa as a homeland.

In this way, cultural practices and historical knowledge are political civic activities, as much as they are social. Similarly, qualitative research has found that Mexican Americans’ participation in Hometown Associations (HTAs) is more common than participation in formalized organizations (Fitzgerald, 2008; Ramakrishnan & Viramontes, 2010). HTAs are started by small groups of immigrants from the same town and allow
them to participate in their communities through fundraisers for homeland projects or family reunification programs, among other activities that preserve and celebrate their home customs and traditions (Ramakrishnan & Viramontes, 2010). The activities performed by HTAs and individual immigrants in general, such as remittances and family reunification, can be considered both social and political civic actions activities, given the overwhelming anti-immigrant sentiment in U.S. politics (Duquette-Rury, 2016).

**A new organizational framework for civic participation.**

As we expand the literature on civic participation to include the experiences of historically marginalized older adults, we must reconceptualize civic activities beyond strictly social or political. Most attempts at doing so have organized activities between social (care work, volunteering for social causes, and community participation) and political (electoral activities and advocacy) (Serrat et al., 2019). Given that the lines of social and political blur among ethnoracial marginalized groups, more nuanced categories would help develop the concept of civic participation. For example, literature on civic participation has discussed altruism and philanthropy as types of civic activities (Wright, 2001). In this study, stories of civic participation often spoke of solidarity, survival, and empowerment. The literature on these concepts has included the topic of civic participation (Ebert & Okamoto, 2013; Greenberg, 2001; Levinson, 2010), but it has not been explicitly defined through these dimensions. Understanding civic participation through solidarity, survival, and empowerment more clearly demonstrates the motivations and utility of the activity.

**Solidarity.** Findings from this study lend evidence that solitary actions are common civic activities among African Americans and Latinx older adults. Solidarity has
been described as “The greater the average proportion of each member’s private resources contributed to collective ends, the greater the solidarity of the group” (Hechter, 1987, p. 18) and as the middle ground between the individual and the collective (Scholz, 2015). Meaning that people act for the benefit of the group because they see how they also benefit as part of that group. This speaks to a sense of belonging and mutual support inherent to solidary sentiments and actions (Scholz, 2015). Therefore, I would categorize participants’ efforts directed toward sustaining community and providing mutual support as solidarity civic activities, including block parties and associations, neighborhood clean-ups, watch groups, and helping neighbors (Gerodetti & Foster, 2015; Martinez et al., 2011; Serrat et al., 2019). In addition, political solidarity was exemplified through stories from African American older adults that expressed a deep commitment and support throughout Obama’s presidential campaigns (Jones & Stanford, 2013).

Survival/resilience. Another dimension revealed through participants’ civic participation experiences are those that are protective and more closely resemble strategies for survival. Survival strategies are often discussed in resilience literature (Elsass, 1995). In the context of community, scholars have defined resilience as the ability for a community “to withstand the impact of major or traumatic stress…remain functional…return to their pre-stressor state...” (Hobfoll et al., 2015, p. 174). As various scholars have emphasized, resilience rests on acknowledging and accepting that the “pre-stressor state” disproportionately reproduces adversity and trauma among communities of color (Aniefuna et al., 2020). Many people in this study described how their civic participation was informed and motivated by the trauma and inequity they experienced because of their socioeconomic position and ethnoracial identity. These civic activities
can be the same as those previously mentioned in solidarity. The difference is that these are activities that directly emerge from state violence, government neglect, and systemic oppression (Auston, 2017; Flavin & Franko, 2020). In response, communities mobilize to sustain their livelihood and protect their members. Current conceptualizations of civic participation discuss opportunities and possibilities to be civically active (Serrat et al., 2021), but these activities stem from necessity. It is collective survival rather than altruism or social responsibility that motivates this type of participation.

Empowerment. On the other hand, civic activities of empowerment serve to enact justice and build toward the future. Empowerment theory can help us understand how civic participation involves strategic efforts toward emancipation and social change:

“Empowerment theory highlights the ability of individuals and groups to participate in emancipatory processes and action-oriented activities to improve difficult situations, challenge oppressive systems, and create justice” (Lardier et al., 2020, p. 3).

Empowerment activities would be more akin to those described in the results subsection of cultural and historical preservation. Such activities build community power, preserve knowledge, and sustain traditions in contexts of hostility or exclusion (Vela-Almeida et al., 2021). Developing schools, museums, programs, and other resources, as described in the results subsection “Building supports for the community,” are empowerment activities.

**Place and civic participation.**

The study of place and locality is fundamental to civic participation, given that place affects life chances on every dimension throughout the life course (Friedland, 2016). In this study, participants discussed engaging in civic activities in their homes,
employment, the Internet, and the church. However, the literature on civic participation in later life has not devoted enough attention to the role of place and locality (Gonzales et al., 2016; Musick & Wilson, 2007). This may be partly due to the focus that confines activities to formal organizations and public community spaces (Gonzales et al., 2016; Tang & Morrow-Howell, 2008). A more comprehensive understanding of civic participation beyond formal activities of voting and volunteering allows us to consider experiences of participation within the place of employment, Internet, and religious setting.

**Place of employment.**

Civic participation within the place of employment has been largely missing from civic participation literature overall. In this study, one participant discussed how they provide alternative medical advice and care for injured coworkers at work. Among Latinx and African Americans, employment-based injuries are common and well documented in the literature (Flynn et al., 2015; Seabury, Terp, & Boden, 2017; Taylor et al., 2018; Walton et al., 2017; Wright, 2019). In addition, compared to Whites, the utilization of healthcare services among Latinx and African American populations is lower even though the proportion living at the poverty level is greater (Anderson et al., 2013; Copeland, 2005; Guendelman & Wagner, 2000). This means that many people at best must find alternative health services and, at worst, lose their jobs and go untreated, like the story of one Latinx immigrant older adult in this study. However, the lack of research on civic participation in the workplace creates a gap in our understanding of the various other ways in which people contribute civically to this space. Due to this gap in our literature and current frameworks of civic participation, the current study explicitly
excluded questions about workplace participation. Nevertheless, it emerged through participants’ stories and raises important questions that future research should explore.

**The Internet.**

The 2020 COVID pandemic left many without employment. Among older adults who were affected, the majority were Latinx (57%) and non-Hispanic Black (41%) (Brown, 2020). As the most vulnerable groups in this pandemic, their ability to leave home was highly restricted (Garcia et al., 2020). However, participants in this study continued to find ways to participate and ensure the well-being of others in their communities. For some, it meant risking their lives by continuing to be civically involved in the physical community and their church; others relied solely on digital networks. Research has found that older adults are less likely to use digital technologies and online networks (Mukherjee, 2011), but the pandemic created a necessity among this population to learn and adapt to online-based participation (Lachance, 2020). An emerging body of research in civic participation in later life is recognizing the increase in online civic activities (Mukherjee, 2011; Lachance, 2020; Rudnik et al., 2020). Future research should explore the possibilities for online civic participation among older adults, particularly those who are disabled or homebound. This is particularly important for Latinx and Black American older adults, who have the highest disability rates (Brenner & Clarke, 2018), particularly Latinx immigrants (Sheftel, 2017).

**Religious settings.**

Most participants in this study remained civically involved from home during the pandemic, but a few continued to participate in the community. For example, a Latinx woman felt fiercely committed to her volunteer work at the church’s food pantry. Among
Latinx communities, research has shown that the church plays a significant role in civic participation and may be the deciding factor in the level of engagement. This is particularly relevant for this study, given that Latinx immigrants are one of the most religious groups in the United States (Pew, 2007). For example, one study of Latinx immigrants living in L.A. in the 1990s found that living in a predominately White community was associated with lower levels of participation, even after controlling for SES (Stoll & Wong, 2007). They discussed that this might have been due to a lack of coethnic churches and cultural community organizations. This study also found that political participation was highly motivated by the church; therefore, in churches where political activities are not promoted, Latinx political participation is less (Jones-Corra & Leal, 2001). This may provide some reasoning behind this study's findings of the low levels of political participation among Latinx immigrant older adults. However, much of this research has been performed among the general population, with little consideration for differences by age.

Studies have also found that church involvement is a significant predictor of social and political participation among African Americans regardless of SES (Mastin, 2000; Musick & Wilson, 2007). As Mastin (2000) describes,

> The community church has long served as a facilitator of political action for African Americans… Unlike many social organizations that draw attention to social differences, often excluding individuals based on economic differences, many black churches do a good job of minimizing such differences. In short, the African-American church has been able to facilitate civic and political involvement among the economically diverse groups in the African-American community (p. 117).

However, few scholars have examined how civic participation is carried out within religious settings (Fulton, 2018; Hill & Donaldson, 2012; Wood, 2005). Most of this
research is found in community organizing literature, drawing from Saul Alinsky and other political organizers (Wood & Fulton, 2015). Participants in this study described the church’s role along the life course and how their parents, neighbors, and other community members engaged in social and political activities within the church, sometimes exclusively. This suggests a need for later life civic participation literature to further examine experiences within the church.

**Theoretical and Methodological Implications for Civic Participation Research**

In addition to this dissertation’s implications for substantive knowledge development on civic participation in later life and among historically marginalized groups, it has methodological and theoretical importance for the field of aging as it concerns antioppressive gerontological social work research in the United States. The study’s conceptualization and design draw from hermeneutic phenomenology and applies qualitative research methods of in-depth interviewing and elicitation techniques to produce thick data. These methods, combined with an intersectional life course perspective, allowed me to consider geopolitical place, systems of social stratification, sociohistorical and biographical time, and transcendence of generations. Participants reflected on the shared experiences of their families and communities over various generations and geographic locations. For one, Latinx participants were all immigrants from all regions of Latin America, and they spoke of their experiences of civic participation in rural, urban, and suburban areas, including within the United States. Similarly, African Americans discussed experiences of civic participation throughout the various states in which they lived, which included Middle America, Southern states, and the Northeast.
Everyone told stories of their family, neighbors, friends, and even strangers from whom they learned about civic participation. This included people who were homeless, suffered from drug addiction, lived in extreme poverty, were orphaned at a young age, suffered traumatic experiences, were financially stable, had postgraduate degrees, or had an intact family unit. Some participants themselves experienced various situations within their lifetimes, such as being financially secure and then homeless later in life. This study draws from the richness and complexity of life. As one participant said, “La vida da vueltas” [life gives you turns]. That experience is captured throughout this study, demonstrating how civic participation can, and does, occur in a multitude of geographic locations, life circumstances, life stages, and sociopolitical contexts. As some respondents described, civic participation is a way of life rather than discrete tasks and activities. I would not have attained these insights without the theoretical and methodological approaches that allowed participants to share the complexity of their experiences among various communities and across time and place. In this section, I discuss these applications, which strengthened my study, and their potential for future research with ethnoracial marginalized older adults.

**Theoretical implications for civic participation gerontological research.**

The intersectional life course perspective has been used rarely within the field of gerontology and not at all within the civic participation literature (Serrat et al., 2019, 2021; Torres and Serrat, 2020). However, this theoretical lens proved essential in understanding the experience of civic participation among historically marginalized populations. It provided a framework to situate participants’ experiences within the context of life-course trajectory and the sociopolitical context of the time. This allowed
me to frame their experiences within structural systems of oppression that shape their opportunities, behaviors, and motivations. This ability to situate civic participation within the context of systemic oppression is essential to develop a critical understanding of how literature and policy define what activities are considered “civic,” who can participate in formal civic activities, and the contexts in which informal civic activities emerge. The intersectional life course perspective guided me to inquire and analyze participants’ life trajectory engaging in civic activities, how personal identity and systems of oppression interact to influence experiences of civic participation, and the roles of politics, social expectations, culture, and religion/spirituality in informing their experience across time (Ferrer et al., 2019).

This study provides a model for how this framework can be applied throughout the research process to guide the methodological approach, research questions, and data analysis. It highlights the importance of situating the phenomenon within the greater context of a person’s life and the political and social environment to understand their participation experiences accurately. Applying this framework can advance civic participation scholarship in later life to move beyond the conceptualization of civic participation as discrete activities, particularly formal volunteerism (Nesteruk & Price, 2011; Serrat et al., 2019). It presents an opportunity to build a comprehensive understanding of the development of civic participation across the life course in the context of systemic oppression. In addition, it challenges current scholarship that largely excludes the study of civic participation among older immigrants and ethnoracial minorities, thereby limiting our understanding of this phenomenon (Gonzales et al., 2016; Serrat et al., 2019).
Through this theoretical framework, we can appreciate the vastness of ways one can engage civically, the systemic constraints applied throughout our society, and how marginalized communities resist and innovate to continue contributing meaningfully. Applying this framework in this study has implications for research examining the health and social outcomes of civic participation among older adults and across the life course. For example, it can help answer questions concerning how processes of migration and relocation influence the experience of civic participation in older age, a topic that has been understudied in this literature (Serrat et al., 2019). Torres and Serrat (2020) published a paper highlighting the dearth of research on the topic of older migrants’ civic participation. It primarily addresses international migration processes, but questions can be expanded to include migration within a singular country (Wilkerson, 2010), topics of displacement due to global issues (i.e., economy, politics, religion), and in the local context (i.e., gentrification) (Versey, 2018) and how these experiences affect civic participation throughout the life course. Similarly, because the civic participation literature has identified various barriers, such as SES and health (Burr et al., 2018), this theory would be especially useful to understand how economic mobility and changes in health, as well as access to social and health services, throughout the life course influence experiences of civic participation (van Holm, 2019).

Furthermore, this theoretical lens can meaningfully advance gerontological literature overall. For one, it challenges the field to critically examine the influence of structural and systemic forces on an individual’s life chances, behaviors, and barriers. From this lens, we may consider solutions that address the need for systematic structural changes rather than individual behavioral changes (Ferrer et al., 2017). In addition, the
intersectional life course perspective would help the field of gerontology increase research centering on the experiences of historically marginalized ethnoracial groups (Hulko et al., 2019; Serrat et al., 2021). This would allow us to produce a research agenda that is forward looking, innovative, creative, and aligned with a growing diverse population of older adults whose identities are ever more complex in a globalized society with increasing economic and social inequalities.

Recently, various scholars have published calls for civic participation research that is more inclusive of underrepresented ethnoracial groups (Serrat et al., 2021; Torres & Serrat, 2019). One scoping review found a great gap in research on civic participation among immigrants and racial/ethnic minority older adults (Serrat et al., 2019). This review of 349 articles over the past 50 years worldwide found only 12 articles discussing civic participation among racial/ethnic minority older adults and 10 on older immigrants’ civic participation (Serrat et al., 2019). The field of gerontology must employ theoretical frameworks that consider the intersections of multiple categories of identity (age, race, citizenship, etc.) (Torres, 2019) to effectively study the experiences of civic participation among ethnoracial marginalized populations. This study demonstrates how the intersectional life course perspective can be applied in civic participation research with these populations. Despite a need to apply this theoretical lens to quantitative research with diverse older adults, to my knowledge, most, if not all, of the available empirical research using this approach has been qualitative. Furthermore, in older adults’ civic participation literature, the few papers that explored racial/ethnic minorities and immigrants only considered one dimension of identity (Serrat et al., 2019). This further highlights the need for civic participation scholarship to engage a framework such as the
intersectional life course perspective. Theoretical frameworks that consider the intersections of multiple dimensions of our lived experience will be indispensable to our ability to develop the field in parallel with an increasingly diverse and globalized society.

**Implications of methods for gerontological research on civic participation.**

This dissertation holds important implications for the use of various research methods and methodological approaches in the study of civic participation among African American and Latinx immigrant older adults. Three aspects of this study’s methodology proved to be particularly helpful in generating its contributions. First, the phenomenological approach provided philosophical insight and direction to the study and analysis of lived experience. Second, the oral history method for data collection allowed participants to recount their experiences freely, pulling on personal and historical events of the time. Finally, a collaborative, participant-centered approach gave ownership and agency to participants over their stories. These three aspects combined led to the richness of the findings presented in this dissertation.

**A phenomenological approach.**

This study was guided by a phenomenological approach, emphasizing participants’ personal experiences with the phenomenon through description and meaning making. This approach allows researchers to understand the “everydayness” of the experience and the essence of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2014). Scholars have also highlighted the utility of this approach to qualitative research with ethnoracial minorities (Orbe, 2000; Spencer, 2007). Although phenomenological research is not popular in social work literature, it has been used in other studies exploring civic participation (Conaglen, 2019; Cordero & Villar, 2019; Ghiglier et al., 2020) and proved to be a great
strength of this study. It was particularly helpful in sensitizing me to various dimensions of experience or what Heidegger termed “Dasein” (ways of being) through five existentials: relationality, spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and materiality (van Manen, 2014). These informed my inquiry in specific ways. For example, it led me to ask about the relational aspects of civic participation, such as whom people saw participate as children, whom they participate with now, and the spaces in which they participate. It also led me to ask about how they feel when they participate, considering their identity, who is around, the environment, and how their body feels, particularly when they mentioned physical limitations.

The philosophical position toward the study of experience can be valuable for other studies that attempt to examine or redefine social concepts from the experience of those most closely affected by the phenomenon. For example, a phenomenological approach might be particularly helpful for research seeking to redefine the concept of retirement and productivity in later life (Morrow-Howell et al., 2001; Schulte et al., 2018). A phenomenological approach that uses a theoretical framework, such as an intersectional life course perspective, can also further our understanding of how structural and systematic forces shape aging, access to retirement, and “productivity, among historically oppressed groups, providing needed insight into the context and history of these concepts. These insights can further inform retirement and later life research and policy that considers structural forces of inequality” (Brown, 2009; Katz & Calasanti, 2015).

This approach was crucial in attaining thick and rich data that went far beyond superficial descriptions of civic participation and unearthed significant and unexpected
findings, surprising both the participants and me. This was evident through comments across participants who initially felt they had not been civically involved to a great extent and later expressed satisfaction with themselves for realizing all they had contributed throughout their lives. This also highlights how the term “civic participation” has limited use among these groups, because it was unknown to many. Others referenced formal volunteerism that was both task oriented and time limited. Adopting the language of helping and contributing outside the family and employment opened the conversation to a greater variety of experiences of civic participation. This is also a strength of phenomenological research; it allows participants to describe and define the phenomenon in their own words (van Manen, 2014).

**Oral history and elicitation techniques.**

Phenomenological research guides us toward storytelling as a data collection approach (van Manen, 2014), which enriches the quality and depth of the data (Agosto, 2016; Phoenix et al., 2010). However, this dissertation was rooted in historical time and life course trajectories, so it was necessary to use a more structured form of storytelling that would allow me to place stories within specific life stages and periods. Oral history interviews were the best fit because they guided participants to recount stories of their civic participation in specific life stages and historical periods. In addition, storytelling as a data collection method has been found to be effective with Latinx and Black older adults because it is a common cultural practice among these groups (Huber & Cueva, 2012; Rodriguez, 2019; Rogers, 1988). It allows participants to provide context and information that is meaningful to them and that researchers might not have known to ask about (Wertz, 2005). This method provides contextual information that researchers can
probe further to develop a more comprehensive analysis of the experience (van Manen, 2014). The wholeness of the story produces a deeper understanding of the experience and allows us to make connections through various dimensions across participants (Phoenix et al., 2010).

I also used document elicitation techniques that could be visual, auditory, or literary. These materials allowed me to understand civic participation through the participants’ perspective. I was able to probe deeper into the quotes, pictures, and poetry they shared and reflect together on their experiences of civic participation as they chose to represent them through the elicitation piece. This exercise was also an activity of civic participation itself. These methods, elicitation techniques, and oral history interviews inspired participants’ agency and ownership of the study and can increase their level of involvement. Other scholars have had similar experiences with visual elicitation techniques, oral history interviews, and storytelling approaches broadly (Clandinin et al., 2016; Copes et al., 2018; Orr et al., 2020). Particularly when working with marginalized groups, these techniques have increased trust between researcher and participants (Aytur et al., 2020; Clandinin et al., 2016; Copes et al., 2018; Padgett et al., 2013).

**Collaborative, participant-centered research.**

I also utilized narrative crafting in the early phases of the analysis. This technique is used to organize and synthesize stories and adds clarity (Crowther et al., 2017; van Manen, 2014). Crafting is a type of restorying or reorganization of transcript data to create cohesive stories of participants’ experiences (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002; van Manen, 2014). This method was particularly complementary to the theoretical framework that I applied. It allowed each story to stand on its own, representing the
interconnectedness between personal experience and the relevant context in which it emerged. This facilitated comparisons across participants in participation experiences and in drawing connections between the social, political, cultural, religious, and economic context of their experience. Eventually, this method allowed me to create a timeline and follow individuals’ participation throughout the life course and history. Therefore, it presented me with a higher level understanding of the experience of civic participation within a lifetime and across generations.

I reorganized the transcript data to create the stories, so it was essential that I provided participants with the stories I crafted. I followed up to gather their comments and edits to ensure the validity of the information and avoid misrepresenting their experiences. This further strengthened my study because it gave participants agency over their narratives via the opportunity to remove content, restructure stories, or add new stories and information. It also increased rapport with them, which was evident through their continuous participation throughout the research process and expression of their investment and role in developing the study. These methods combined with the theoretical approach have implications for the potential to shift the extracting nature of research and create a more collaborative and participant-centered approach for underrepresented ethnoracial groups (Clifford, 2017; Strier, 2007; Swadener, 2004). This is a topic of increasing importance in gerontological and social work research, particularly in health-related studies (Gilmore-Bykovskyi et al., 2019; Gluck et al., 2018; Mitchell et al., 2020; Reidy et al., 2012).
Implications for policy and practice.

This dissertation has important implications for policy and practice. Its findings contribute to a new understanding of experiences of civic participation for two ethnoracial groups that have been historically excluded from the formal civic activities of voting and volunteering. This has strong implications for examining the current conceptualizations of civic participation in national health initiatives and academia. In addition, it presents a new direction and approach to gerontological social work and aging policy that employs the framework of “productive aging,” as emphasized in Social Work Grand Challenges (Morrow-Howell et al., 2018). This dissertation raises critical questions regarding our current approach to facilitating civic participation in later life, particularly how these frameworks contribute to the continued systemic oppression of ethnically marginalized populations and imperialist structures of aging that center White, native-born older adults. In the subsections below, I elaborate on this critical perspective concerning three prominent initiatives that aim to promote older adults’ civic participation: Age-Friendly Cities and Communities, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Culture of Health, and the American Academy of Social Work Grand Challenges.

Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

The World Health Organization's “Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Movement,” spearheaded in the United States by AARP, is designed to develop policy, infrastructure, and social supports that facilitate aging in the community and reframe our thinking about older adults (Lehning & Greenfield, 2017). This initiative has a framework that provides communities eight domains of age-friendliness to assess and
improve upon, one of which is civic participation (WHO, 2007), defined as supporting older adults to participate in meetings and events, including them in advisory councils and boards of organizations, and incorporating their input in developing policies and programs (WHO, 2007). However, most older adults continue to be engaged as either consumers of services or volunteers and are rarely engaged in planning and developing policies and programs (Buffel, 2018; Greenfield & Reyes, 2019; Rémillard-Boilard et al., 2017). In addition, ethnic minority older adults are rarely engaged in these initiatives (Buffel, 2018; Greenfield & Reyes, 2019; Rémillard-Boilard et al., 2017).

Age-Friendly initiatives attempt to reshape our community life to be more inclusive of older adults, but it is clear from the design of its framework and the available research that not enough attention has been given to civic participation outside of formal volunteering and communities of color (Buffel, 2018; Greenfield & Reyes, 2019; Rémillard-Boilard et al., 2017). Findings from this study present evidence that would help inform and improve these initiatives. For example, the activities presented in the civic engagement domain of livability describe participation as the opportunities to join established meetings and workgroups (WHO, 2007). However, participants in this study identified as activists, organizers, fighters, mentors, rebels, leaders, healers, and solutions people; none described their identity as volunteers or joiners. One participant stated, “I’m not really a joiner.” Indeed, their stories demonstrate leadership, innovation, and profound commitment to the well-being of their communities, who one participant described as the people “who get the short end of the stick.” Others expressed hesitation toward working in majority White spaces, and one participant directly claimed that they would not collaborate in majority White communities. This is pertinent to initiatives such
as these that have emerged in majority White communities and are primarily led by
White older adults and persons with institutional power, such as local government
officials (Buffel, 2018; Thomése et al., 2018; Greenfield & Reyes, 2020).

**RWJF Culture of Health.**

Similar to Age-Friendly Communities, the RWJF Culture of Health initiative
includes “civic engagement” as one of the determinants of health it is advancing. It takes
an innovative and holistic approach toward achieving health equity (Chandra et al.,
2017). It recognizes that health goes beyond medical care to include the social and
physical environment in which people live, work, and play (Chandra et al., 2017). The
action framework consists of four action areas (making health a shared value; fostering
cross-sector collaboration; creating healthier, more equitable communities; and
strengthening integration of health systems and services) and one outcome area (to
improve population health, well-being, and equity; Trujillo & Plough, 2016). As part of
the first action area, the framework includes two measures for civic engagement: voter
participation and volunteer engagement (Trujillo & Plough, 2016).

This initiative is meant to benefit the overall U.S. population in reaching health
equity. However, the focus on such a limited perspective of civic participation
unintentionally excludes some of the most vulnerable populations that cannot or are less
likely to participate in these activities (i.e., nonnaturalized immigrants; non-English
speakers) (Jang et al., 2016; Torres & Serrat, 2019). Results from this research found that
even participants who did participate in formal ways were more involved with political
organizations or the church rather than social organizations. The social contributions
were often through informal activities informed by their relationships with community
members. However, the frameworks employed by the Culture of Health and the Age-Friendly initiative would fail to capture many of the civic activities that Black, Latinx, and immigrant people are involved in within their communities (Martinez et al., 2011; Ramakrishnan & Viramontes, 2010). A broader conceptualization of civic participation would allow these national initiatives and others to expand their inclusion and support the target populations.

**Grand Challenges for Social Work.**

The Grand Challenges for Social Work (GCSW) has emerged to focus our attention on the most critical social issues. This initiative relies on the joint efforts of scholars, policymakers, and professionals to tackle long-standing and complex social welfare problems facing our society today (American Academy of Social Work & Social Welfare, 2018). The American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare has identified three overarching areas: (1) individual and family well-being, (2) stronger social fabric, and (3) a just society. Within these main areas, the profession has identified 13 broad challenges, including to “Advance Long, Healthy, and Productive Lives” (G.C. Fact Sheet No. 4, 2018; Trahan et al., 2019), which calls for scaling up programs that provide volunteering and caregiving opportunities among older adults to address economic and social changes caused by a growing aging population.

This grand challenge draws from and advances a productive aging perspective. *Productive aging* asserts that “aging societies will do better when they make better use of older adults’ capacity to make economic contributions through employment, volunteering, and caregiving” (Morrow-Howell et al., 2018, p. 81). Scholars have critiqued and discussed the negative economic and social implications of continuing to
advance a productive aging perspective (Estes, Mahakian, & Weitz, 2001; Martinson & Minkler, 2006). For example, Estes and colleagues state that

The movement to enhance elder productivity, which inevitably confounds successful aging with productivity, provides the necessary cognitive framework for the retreat of the state and for cuts in Medicare and Social Security. In this way, the concept of productive aging may be useful in advancing the interests of those who wish to contain and roll back the welfare state (p. 5).

Similarly, Martinson & Minkler (2006) have discussed the economic burden of such rollbacks on states, municipalities, and ultimately on older adults themselves who are called to volunteer to take up the slack. A productive aging perspective does little to recognize systemic oppression and racial inequalities (Estes et al., 2001, Minkler & Estes, 2020). The literature with this framework has been largely devoid of empirical research and discussion of non-White older adults (Luo et al., 2021; Morrow-Howell, 2006; Morrow-Howell & Gonzales, 2020). Fundamentally, advancing a productive aging framework is a move toward social, racial, and economic inequality by placing a greater responsibility on individuals and communities to meet the growing social needs and supporting the devolution of the social welfare state (Estes et al., 2001; Martinson & Minkler, 2006; Minkler & Estes, 2020).

A critical perspective examining the overwhelming focus on formal volunteerism and voting in later life civic participation literature is necessary. For one, we must acknowledge that these civic activities have been historically exclusionary and continue to be inaccessible to many groups. Results from this study show that older Black adults and Latinx older immigrants are highly involved and committed to the well-being of their communities in the United States and abroad. However, formal volunteerism is only
one of the pathways by which they exercise this commitment. Most of their effort and contributions are informal and go unrecognized and unsupported by our sociopolitical system (Reyes et al., 2020). It is important to expand access to formal civic participation among underrepresented ethnoracial groups, but it is equally necessary to support the ways they have been participating despite these restrictions (Estes et al., 2001; Martinez et al., 2011; Martinson & Minkler, 2006; van Dyk, 2014). A research and practice agenda that centers on the experiences of older ethnoracial marginalized populations may be better suited to tackle the social problems facing the increasingly diverse older population today. Such agenda must recognize the responsibility of the social welfare state in intervening on the growing economic, racial, and social inequalities that affect the ability of people who are Black, Indigenous, immigrants from the Global South, or members of other marginalized populations from aging with dignity.

**Limitations**

This dissertation demonstrates various strengths in its design, theoretical and methodological approaches, and quality of data, yet it is not without limitations. Primarily the limited participation in elicitation exercise, small sample size, race and nationality heterogeneity in the Latinx sample, and geographic limitations—each of which is discussed below.

First, although the elicitation exercise proved meaningful to participants who elected into it and produced rich data into their experience of civic participation, only five participants chose to send materials before the second interview. This was largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic making it unfeasible to carry out this part of data collection as intended. The data from the elicitation exercises informed the overall results, but research
would benefit from having the elicitation piece be a focal part of the study. This could yield richer data and provide a visual component that would facilitate the interpretation of materials and written results.

Second, it is common in phenomenological studies to have a small sample size (Creswell & Poth, 2016), but a larger, more focused sample may provide more richness and depth into experiences of civic participation, considering that I explored two similar but significantly distinct and complex ethnic groups. This provided an opportunity to compare and draw wider insight into experiences of civic participation from a multitude of perspectives, but it also limited in-depth understanding within a single group. This is particularly relevant for research with Latinx participants because the variation across countries of origin introduced more variance in historical, political, cultural, and social structures. This limited the opportunity for a comprehensive understanding of experiences of civic participation across the life course. However, a clear focus on religion, experiences of poverty, and migration helped to ground their experiences of civic participation as a group. In comparison, African Americans had greater overlap in cultural practices, history, and a history that could be traced as a group. Therefore, their stories had more similarities and provided a more comprehensive understanding of civic participation across the life course in the context of historical sociopolitical forces. Future research examining Latinx civic participation may benefit from focusing on one or a few selective groups from a specific nationality.

In addition, I did not ask participants for their racial identity. Therefore, any information on race emerged naturally through their stories. Overall, Latinx participants did not explicitly state racial identity, and only a few made references to their race. One
explicitly identified as White, as they told a story where a White European was challenging their identity as a White person, and another explicitly stated feeling discriminated because of the color of their skin. Due to the complexity of race within the Latinx community, it would be beneficial to explore the phenomenon of civic participation across racial groups within the population. Racial identity among African Americans was more consistent: they all identified as Black. However, one participant made a reference to having light skin and being jokingly told they are not Black by friends and family. This draws attention to the variation of experiences within the Black community due to the culture of anti-Blackness that seeks to divide and marginalize people by skin lightness (Monk, 2015; Roth, 2016). Studies should explore more in depth how race, racism, and anti-Blackness affect experiences of civic participation within these populations.

Finally, the transferability of findings is also limited because data collection was only carried out in New Jersey and New York (urban and suburban regions). This may raise questions about experiences of participation in other geographic regions due to differences in accessibility, ethnic density, and cultural disposition to civic participation. A report by the Pew Research Center (Smith et al., 2009) found that rates of civic participation (defined as “involvement in political or community group”) were consistent across urban, suburban, and rural regions. However, some research shows potential differences in rates of social participation across urban, suburban, and rural communities, with some findings indicating lower rates in urban settings (Tavares & Carr, 2013) and others the contrary (Vogelsang, 2016). In addition, these studies are not consistent in their measures of participation and were conducted in various countries.
Furthermore, some studies have found that participation among Black and Latinx people is more common when they live in ethnically diverse communities, that is, communities with a greater population of people from various racial/ethnic backgrounds (Shores et al., 2019; Stoll & Wong, 2007). For example, one study suggests that for older Blacks living in more racially diverse neighborhoods, educational attainment and income play a lesser role in their likelihood to participate civically. In addition, another study found that Latinx immigrants living in Los Angeles in predominantly White communities had lower levels of participation after controlling for SES (Stoll and Wong, 2007). These studies suggest that, for African Americans and Latinx immigrant adults, living in ethnically diverse communities plays an important role in their likelihood to participate civically. This was apparent in the current study given that participants resided in states that were ethnoracially diverse and allowed participants to tap into several networks beyond their immediate neighborhoods where they could connect with others who shared their ethnicity and/or cultural background. Future research should examine how experiences of civic participation differ among underrepresented ethnoracial older adults living in rural regions across states and countries, and in majority White communities (Serrat et al., 2019).

Conclusion

This dissertation has led to new insights on the multidimensionality of civic participation among Black and Latinx older adults and the dynamics and experiences of civic participation across the life course in the context of geopolitical and sociohistorical contexts. In addition, it expands the conceptualization of civic participation beyond social and political dimensions, to consider spirituality, solidarity, survival, and empowerment.
It also presents an opportunity to question processes of inclusion in “civic” participation among historically excluded populations, whose citizenship has and continues to be in question. Furthermore, it provides an example of a methodological and theoretical approach that is underused in later life civic participation research. A phenomenological approach and intersectional life course perspective proved to be highly suited for an in-depth understanding of civic participation across the life course among African Americans and Latinx immigrant older adults. Results demonstrate the richness, complexity, and essence of civic participation in the spectrum of time and space. In addition, it highlights the need to critically examine and expand our approach to the study of civic participation to include a historical and sociopolitical lens that appreciates the interactions of systems and individual-level behaviors across the developmental life course. Studies can expand on this research to understand how civic participation manifests in different ethnoracial communities, along the economic strata, and throughout other geopolitical contexts. Furthermore, this study can serve as the foundation for future research that seeks to reconceptualize civic participation through the lens of ethnically diverse older adults.

As we move forward, a shift in our approach to the study of civic participation in later life is required to expand its applications to an ethnoracial diverse and increasingly immigrant society (Fraga et al., 2010). First, social work and gerontology must critically examine current conceptualizations of this phenomenon and how it is unintentionally excluding the contributions of non-White older adults. Second, new and consistent measures of civic participation need to be developed that capture activities beyond the formal and other aspects of the experience (i.e., access, discrimination, motivations,
interpersonal experience). I call on researchers to expand methodological techniques that center the participant as the expert and seek their collaboration. In addition, such techniques are needed in research with ethnoracial marginalized groups to improve the historically damaging effects that academia has inflicted upon these communities (Hulko et al., 2019; Smirnoff et al., 2018). Methodological approaches, such as phenomenology (Orbe, 2000), narrative inquiry, arts-based research (Coemans & Hannes, 2017; Orr et al., 2020; Wright et al., 2016), community-based research, and action research (Blair & Minkler, 2009; Burns et al., 2020; Schensul et al., 2006), can evolve the field of civic participation in later life to invite collaboration across disciplines, professions, and communities.

Third, a framework for civic participation in later life that centers the experience of ethnoracial marginalized older adults is greatly needed. Such framework can help to challenge current scholarship on underrepresented ethnoracial older adults that are reproducing inequalities and oppressive frameworks (Chaouni et al., 2021; Martinson & Minkler, 2006; Torres, 2019; Zubair & Norris, 2015). It could draw from approaches consistent with critical race theory, particularly the intersectional life course perspective I presented here. This theory is especially suited to guide a framework on civic participation in later life given its strength-based perspective and consideration of the historical sociopolitical contexts. Social work is uniquely positioned to lead this effort, given its commitment to social justice and the professions’ mission to identify and correct inequalities affecting marginalized communities (Bussey et al., 2021).

Finally, as an institution, we must reflect on how we uphold White supremacy and enact systematic oppression among the groups we seek to study (Longres & Scanlon,
2001; Pyles, 2020). Being reflective and critical of our social position in this system and making changes from within will challenge us to reimagine how we approach knowledge production. One approach to moving in this direction is to allocate more resources to hiring and supporting Black and Latinx community members in leadership positions in all levels of academia (faculty, administration, grantee institutions) (Gonzales et al., 2021). Diversifying leadership will help expand the perspective, expertise, and reach of our profession in the workforce, academically and politically. It is also necessary to develop curricula that reflect critical theories and research on systemic oppression throughout the life course, such as what I have discussed. Expanding the use of underused frameworks, such as decolonial frameworks (Chandanabhumm & Narasimhan, 2020; Chaouni et al., 2021), critical race theory (Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010; Thrasher et al., 2012), and the intersectional life course perspective (Ferrer et al., 2017), can further develop our ability to engage students in critical and visionary thinking to work toward a just society. Whether in research, practice, education, or policy, we must seek approaches and ways of thinking that consider lives within historical, social, cultural, spiritual, and political systems that are inextricably connected and foundational to how individuals and communities evolve across time.
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Appendices

Appendix D1. Screening Tool Checklist

Place a check mark next to all the activities that you have done at least once throughout your life. Keep in mind that these activities refer to how you have contributed to others OUTSIDE your family and work.

### Political
- □ Voting
- □ Donating money to political parties, campaigns, organizations.
- □ Signing petitions
- □ Contacting political representatives
- □ Canvassing for a political cause or campaign.
- □ Participation in political organizations or forums.
- □ Writing letters/emails/blogs/articles with political content.
- □ Running for or holding a public office
- □ Volunteering on campaigns
- □ Participating in protest
- □ Boycotting or striking
- □ Participation in social movement organizations.

### Social
- □ Volunteering with a formal organization
- □ Donation of money/in-kind supports to charities/NGOs
- □ Volunteering with church
- □ Frequently doing acts of service for people outside your family (sharing food with neighbors, running errands for someone, carpool, etc).
- □ Organizing/contributing to a block party or other community event (i.e. public potlucks).
- □ Participated in a neighborhood watch group.
- □ Organizing or participating in virtual watch groups through whatsapp, facebook, signal.
- □ Participated in neighborhood clean ups or beautification projects (murals, etc).
- □ Participated in a community garden.
- □ Providing alternative health medicine/advice for community members (healers).
- □ Organizing or participating in cooperatives (exchange of services/goods-bartering system).
- □ Creating or participating in the development and/or maintenance of community media outlets (radio, newspaper, etc).
☐ Participation in informal political groups (not registered).
☐ Phone banking for a campaign
☐ Organizing or participating in a group to inform/educate others.
☐ Organizing or participating in a community “money pool”.
☐ Sending money and/or goods to your community in another state/country.
☐ Previously participating in research studies
☐ Other political activities:
☐ Other social activities outside the family:

In the past 12-months, have you participated in at least one or more of these activities?
☐ No ☐ Yes, list them: __________________________

If you answered YES to the last question and would like to be contacted to participate in two interviews about your experiences doing this activity (ies), please fill out the information below:

1. I am 60 years of age or older: ____ Yes  ____ No
2. I identify as African American/Black _____ Yes  _____ No
3. I identify as Hispanic/Latino/Latina ____ Yes  _____ No
4. I currently live in New Jersey _____ Yes  _____ No
5. Name: _______________________________________
6. Cellphone number: ___________________________
7. Email: _______________________________________
8. Any other way you would like to be contacted:
_____________________________________________
Marca todas las actividades que ha realizado al menos una vez a lo largo de su vida. Tenga en cuenta que estas actividades se refieren a cómo ha contribuido AFUERA de su familia y trabajo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Político</th>
<th>Social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Votación en elecciones</td>
<td>□ Voluntariado con una organización formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Donando dinero a campañas, organizaciones, o/ y partido político.</td>
<td>□ Donación de dinero / apoyo en especie a organizaciones benéficas/ ONG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Firmando peticiones</td>
<td>□ Voluntariado con la iglesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Escribir cartas / correos electrónicos / blogs / artículos con contenido político.</td>
<td>□ Frecuentemente realiza actos de servicio para personas afuera de su familia (compartir alimentos con vecinos, hacer mandados para alguien, compartir el viaje, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Ir a tocar puertas para promover una causa o campaña política.</td>
<td>□ Organizar/contribuir a una fiesta de barrio u otro evento comunitario (comidas públicas).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Hacer huelga</td>
<td>□ Participó en un grupo de vigilancia vecinal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Contactar representantes políticos</td>
<td>□ Organizar o participar en grupos de observación virtual a través de WhatsApp, Facebook, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Postularse u ocupar un cargo público</td>
<td>□ Participó en limpieza de vecindarios o proyectos de embellecimiento (murales, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Voluntariado para una campaña.</td>
<td>□ Participó en un jardín comunitario.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Participando en protesta</td>
<td>□ Brindar asesoramiento/medicina de salud alternativa para los miembros de la comunidad (curanderos).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Participación en organizaciones políticas o foros.</td>
<td>□ Organizar o participar en cooperativas (intercambio de servicios/sistema de intercambio de bienes).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Participación en organizaciones de movimientos sociales.</td>
<td>□ Participar en el desarrollo y/o mantenimiento de medios de comunicación comunitarios (radio, periódico, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Participación en grupos políticos informales (no registrados).</td>
<td>□ Organizar o participar en un grupo para informar/educar a otros.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
☐ Banca telefónica para una campaña.

☐ Organizar una protesta o acción política.

☐ Organización política a través de la iglesia.

☐ Otras actividades políticas:

_________________________
_________________________
_________________________
_________________________

☐ Organizar o participar en un "grupo de dinero" comunitario (Tanda o Cundina).

☐ Enviar dinero y/o bienes a su comunidad en otro estado/país.

☐ Participando previamente en estudios de investigación.

☐ Otras actividades sociales fuera de la familia:

_________________________
_________________________
_________________________
_________________________

¿En los últimos 12-meses has participado en al menos una de estas actividades?

☐ Sí  ☐ No

Si respondió Sí a la última pregunta y desea ser contactado para participar en dos entrevistas sobre sus experiencias realizando esta(s) actividad(es), complete la siguiente información:

1. Tengo 60 años de edad o más: _____ Sí _____ No

2. Me identifico como afroamericano/negro _____ Sí _____ No

3. Me identifico como hispano/latino/latino ____ Sí _____ No

4. Actualmente vivo en Nueva Jersey _____ Sí _____ No

5. Nombre: ___________________________________________

6. Número de teléfono celular: ____________________________

7. Correo electrónico: ______________________________________

8. Otra forma que le gustaría ser contactado:

________________________________________
Appendix D2. Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your birthdate?
2. What is your gender?
3. What city where you born in?
4. How many years have you been living in the US? (if born outside US)
5. How many years have you been living in [name of city/town where they live now]?
6. Who do you currently live with? (choose all that apply)
   ___ alone
   ___ with partner
   ___ with roommates
   ___ with family

7. What is your current marital status?
   ___ Never married
   ___ Separated
   ___ Divorced
   ___ Widowed
   ___ Married

8. Do you own a home or business here or abroad? ___ Yes ___ No

9. Do you rent or own the home where you reside? ___ Rent ___ Own

10. How do you get around [name of city/town they reside in]? (choose all that apply)
    ___ Drive
    ___ Walk
    ___ Public transportation
    ___ Bike
    ___ Taxi/Uber/Lyft
    ___ Family, friends, neighbors give rides (specify)

11. What is your level of education?
    ___ Less than High School
    ___ High School
    ___ Some College
    ___ College Degree
    ___ Graduate education or more
12. What is your current employment status?
   ___ Employed full-time
   ___ Employed part-time
   ___ Self-employed
   ___ Unemployed
   ___ Retired
   ___ Unable to work due to disability

13. Did your employment status change due to Covid-19? ___ Yes    ___ No

14. Do you have a chronic health condition or disability? ___ Yes    ___ No

15. In general, would you say your health is...?
   Very good     Good        Neither good nor poor       Poor        Very Poor

16. What languages are you comfortable communicating in? ____________________________

--------------Spanish---------------------

1. ¿Cuál es tu fecha de nacimiento?
2. ¿Cuál es tu genero?
3. ¿En que ciudad naciste?
4. ¿Cuántos años lleva viviendo en los Estados Unidos? (si nació afuera de EU)
5. ¿Cuántos años lleva viviendo en [nombre de la ciudad / pueblo donde viven ahora]?
6. ¿Con quién vive actualmente? (elige todo lo que corresponda)
   ___ sola
   ___ con mi pareja
   ___ con compañeros de cuarto
   ___ con mi familia

7. ¿Cuál es su estado civil actual?
   ___ Nunca casada
   ___ Separados
   ___ Divorciados
   ___ Viudas
   ___ Casados

8. ¿Es dueño de una casa o negocio aquí o en el extranjero? ___ Sí    ___ No

9. ¿Alquila o es dueño de la casa donde reside? ___ Alquila    ___ Dueño

10. ¿Cómo te mueves por aquí en [nombre de la ciudad / pueblo donde residen]? (elige todo lo que corresponda)
    ___ Manejo
___ Camino
___ Transporte publico
___ Bicicleta
___ Taxi/Uber/Lyft
___ Familia, amigos, vecinos me llevan (especifica)

11. ¿Cual es su nivel de educación?
   ___ Menos de 12 grado
   ___ Graduado de Secundaria
   ___ Alguna educación Universitaria
   ___ Graduado de Universidad
   ___ Estudios de Posgrado o mas

12. Cuál es su situación laboral actual?
   ___ Empleado de tiempo completo
   ___ Empleado a tiempo parcial
   ___ Trabajo por cuenta propia
   ___ Desempleado
   ___ Retirado
   ___ Discapacitado

13. ¿Tu situación laboral ah cambiado con Covid-19?  ___ Sí  ____ No

14. ¿Tiene una condición de salud crónica o esta discapacitada/o? ___ Sí  ____ No

15. En general, dirias que tu salud esta…
    Muy bien   Bien   Ni bien ni mal    Mal    Muy mal

16. ¿En qué idiomas se siente cómodo comunicándose?
Appendix D3. Current Experiences of Civic Participation

In-Depth Interview of Experiences of Civic Participation within the Past 12 Months

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I am going to ask questions about the ways you have contributed to your community within the past 12-months and how Covid-19 has affected your participation. I will be using the checklist you completed prior to this interview.

As we continue, I will ask you to tell me stories about your experiences helping others. I want you to focus on the contributions you have made to your neighborhood, community, and/or society, outside of your family and work.

1. To begin, can you tell me a little about the networks you are counting/leaning on during this time? Who are they and what support(s) do you receive from them?
   
   Probe: Would you describe these networks as part of your community?
   
   Probe: Who else, or what other groups do you consider as your community?

2. Has your idea of community changed since Covid-19? If so, in what ways? (expanded, remained the same, or become more restricted).

3. In what ways has the current situation (Covid-19) affected your daily life?
   
   Probe: How has it affected the way you participate or contribute in your community?

4. In the checklist you mentioned you have done XX activities; how does it feel to participate in your community in this way?
   
   Probe: How long have you been participating/contributing in this way?

5. Would you say that these activities are examples of civic participation?
   
   Probe: Can you tell me what civic participation means to you?
   
   Probe: How would you describe someone who is civically involved?

6. What does it mean to you to be able to contribute to your community?

7. Before Covid-19 where would you participate (i.e. church, community garden, organization)?
   
   Probe: Can you describe one of your experiences participating there?
   
   Probe: How would you get to the places where you participated? (Walking, care, taxi, etc).
8. Can you describe the groups you collaborated/participated with?
   Probe: How did you know the others involved?
   Probe: For how many years have you known them?
   Probe: Are you currently in communication with them?

9. In the checklist you mentioned you have done XX activities, which of these activities has been the most meaningful for you? And how did you get involved doing that?
   Probe: Can you share a story of your experience participating in that activity?
   Probe: What made this experience so unforgettable for you?

10. In the past-12 months have you had any experiences when you were told or made to feel like you were too old to be doing some of these activities?

11. Can you tell about your most recent experience where you helped or made a difference in someone’s life, a group, or community?
   Probe: What motivated you to do that? (Probe for personal, political, and social motivators).
   Probe: How did you feel doing that?

That is all the questions I have for now, is there anything else you would like to add about your current contributions that I did not capture?

Things to do at the end of interview:
- Thank them and ask them how they would like to receive their $25 incentive (Cash App, Mailed Cash, $25 gift card to spend online).
- Provide them the prompt for the next interview and respond to any questions they might have.
- Schedule the next interview.
Entrevista en profundidad de experiencias de participación cívica en los últimos 12 meses

Gracias por tomarse el tiempo de reunirse conmigo hoy. Voy a hacer preguntas sobre las formas en que ha contribuido a su comunidad en los últimos 12 meses y cómo Covid-19 ha afectado su participación. Usaré la lista de verificación que completó antes de esta entrevista.

A medida que continuamos, le pediré que me cuente historias sobre sus experiencias ayudando a otros. Quiero que se concentre en las contribuciones que ha hecho a su vecindario, comunidad y / o sociedad, fuera de su familia y trabajo.

1. Para comenzar, ¿puede contarme un poco sobre las redes en las que está contando / apoyándose durante la pandemia? ¿Quiénes son y qué apoyo (s) recibe de ellos?

2. Antes de Covid-19, ¿dónde participaba (es decir, iglesia, jardín comunitario, organización)?
   Sondeo: ¿Puedes describir una de tus experiencias participando allí?
   Sondeo: ¿Cómo llegarías a los lugares donde participaste? (Camina, bus...)

3. ¿Y con quien participaba (son amigos, vecinos, familiares, negros, hispanos, blancos)?
   Sonda: ¿Cómo conociste a los demás involucrados?
   Sonda: ¿Desde hace cuántos años los conoce?
   Sonda: ¿Actualmente estás en comunicación con ellos?

4. ¿Ha cambiado su idea de comunidad desde Covid-19? Si es así, ¿de qué manera? (expandido, permaneció igual o se volvió más restringido).

5. ¿De qué manera la situación actual (Covid-19) ha afectado su vida diaria?
   Sondeo: ¿Cómo ha afectado la forma en que participa o contribuye en su comunidad?

6. En la lista de actividades usted mencionó que en los últimos 12 meses a participado en XXXX; ¿Cómo se siente participar en su comunidad de esta manera?
   Sondeo: ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas participando / contribuyendo de esta manera?
7. ¿Cuál de las actividades en las que has participado ha sido más significativa para usted? ¿Y cómo te involucraste haciendo eso?

Sondeo: ¿Puedes compartir una historia de tu experiencia participando en esa actividad?
Sondeo: ¿Qué hizo que esta experiencia fuera tan inolvidable para ti?

8. ¿Diría que estas actividades son ejemplos de participación cívica?

Sondeo: ¿Puedes decirme qué significa para usted la participación cívica?
Sondeo: ¿Cómo describirías a alguien que está involucrado cívicamente?

9. ¿Qué significa para usted poder contribuir a su comunidad?

10. En los últimos 12 meses, ¿ha tenido alguna experiencia cuando le dijeron o le hicieron sentir que no debería participar por su edad o su raza?

11. ¿Puedes contarnos sobre tu experiencia más reciente en la que ayudaste o hiciste una diferencia en la vida de alguien, un grupo o una comunidad?

Sonda: ¿Qué te motivó a hacer eso? (Sondeo para motivadores personales, políticos y sociales).
Sonda: ¿Cómo te sentiste al hacer eso?

Estas son todas las preguntas que tengo por ahora, ¿hay algo más que le gustaría agregar sobre sus contribuciones actuales que no haya capturado?

**Things to do at the end of interview:**

- Thank them and ask them how they would like to receive their $25 incentive (Cash App, Mailed Cash, $25 gift card to spend online).
- Provide them the prompt for the next interview and respond to any questions they might have. (Tell them you will send the prompt in an email for them to continue reflecting on)
- Schedule the next interview.
Appendix D4. Elicitation Prompt

Contributing to the Community

I invite you to reflect about your lifetime experiences contributing to the community and broader society. Based on these reflections create a poem, story, collage, drawing, painting, take a photograph or anything else that captures the essence of your experience contributing to others.

Please reflect on the things, people, places, and moments that have been part of your experience of how, where, when, what, and why you contribute.

Here are some questions to guide your expression.

- What have you found to be the importance of contributing to others outside your family and work?
- What aspects of your identity influence or inform how you contribute?
- What life experiences have influenced your willingness to give back to others, the community, and/or society?

Be creative in how you approach this exercise. If you find yourself stuck just jot down some reflections of each question and choose one that inspires you most. You can feel free to ask for help from family and friends just make sure your voice is not compromised.

-----Spanish-----

Contribuyendo a la comunidad

Los invito a reflexionar sobre sus experiencias a través de su vida contribuyendo a la comunidad y a la sociedad en general. Pensando en estas experiencias, cree un poema, una historia, un collage, un dibujo, una pintura, tome una fotografía o cualquier otra cosa que capture la esencia de su experiencia contribuyendo a los demás.

Reflexione sobre las cosas, personas, lugares y momentos que han sido parte de su experiencia de cómo, dónde, cuándo, qué y por qué contribuye.

Aquí hay algunas preguntas para guiar su expresión.

- ¿Cuál ha sido la importancia de contribuir a otros fuera de su familia y trabajo?
- ¿Qué aspectos de su identidad influyen o informan cómo contribuye?
- ¿Qué experiencias en su vida a informado su disposición a ayudar/contribuir a los demás, a la comunidad o a la sociedad?
Sea creativo en cómo aborda este ejercicio. Si se encuentra estancado, simplemente anote algunas reflexiones de cada pregunta y elija la que más le inspire. Puede pedir ayuda a familiares y amigos, solo asegúrese de que su voz no se ve comprometida.
Appendix D5. Oral-History Interview

Civic Participation History Interview Guide with Optional Elicitation Methods

Thank you for meeting with me again. This time we will be focusing on your experiences contributing to your community throughout life.

As we continue I will ask you to tell me stories about your experiences of helping and contributing to others. I want you to focus on the contributions you have made to your neighborhood, community, and/or society, outside of your family and work.

Elicitation exercise questions (to be skipped if participant did not participate)

We will be using the art you created to guide the interview, so to begin please take a few minutes to reflect on your piece and provide a brief description of what you created and what it means to you.

1. Can you tell me a little about your experience creating this piece?
   Probe: What was happening around you when you created this?
   Probe: How did you feel creating this?

2. Can you talk a little about what you reflected on as you were creating this piece?
   Probe: Did any of the prompt questions help you in creating this?

3. Why did you choose to represent your experience through this medium rather than another?

4. What does this piece say about the ways you have helped or contributed throughout your life?

General Questions (the elicitation exercise may be used as a reference to guide the participant to reflect on some of the questions below, or they can be stand alone questions if participant did not participation in elicitation exercise).

1. Can you tell me a story about the first time that you decided to get involved in helping others or to make a difference in a person’s life, a group, or a community? (Probe for personal, political, and social motivators).
   Probe: How did you feel doing that?

2. Who or what taught/influenced the way you thought about your role in society and how to contribute to others? (parents, religion, culture, politics, history).
Probe: How old were you when you learned or came across these people or events?

Probe: Do you think your role or the way you contribute to society has changed throughout your life?

Now, I want you to think a little bit about aspects of your identity such as your age, race/ethnicity, nationality/citizenship, gender, language, health status (disability, illness).

3. Can you describe a time when you were participating in a civic activity and some aspects of your identity were highlighted? (Example: this interview specifically called African Americans and Latinx older adults, so it emphasizes your age and race).

   Probe: What were some occasions when you felt called to or someone called on you to become involved that was related to your identity?

4. Continuing to think about your identity, was there ever a time when someone said or made you feel like you should not get involved that was related to your identity?

   Probe: What were some occasions when your identity kept you from contributing to the community the way you wanted to?

   Probe: Did these experiences affect your participation afterwards? In what ways? If they didn’t, how were you able to not let it affect you?

Let’s talk a little bit about where you grew up and life transitions. You said in the questionnaire that you were born in [city/town], is this also where you lived during childhood?

5. What can you tell me about the culture of the country where you grew up regarding how individuals contribute to each other, the community and society?

   Probe: How was this culture similar or different from your personal experiences with your neighborhood or community?

6. Can you tell me about an experience(s) in your life that changed your ideas about how you can contribute to the community or society? (i.e. immigration (country or state), getting a disability/illness, a change in work, losing someone important to you).

   Probe: How did that experience make you feel, what changed?

   Probe: Was this change in how you contribute something that happened naturally as a consequence of that experience? Or was it something that you reflected on first and decided to change?

WRAP UP
7. After thinking about how you have contributed over the years, what advice would you give people about the importance of getting involved and contributing to others outside family and work?

-------------------Spanish-------------------

Guía de Entrevista Sobre Historia de Participación Cívica

Gracias por tomarse el tiempo de reunirse conmigo hoy. Voy a hacer le preguntas sobre sus experiencias de participación cívica a lo largo de su vida utilizando la lista de verificación que completó anteriormente.

Primero, ¿puede decirme qué significa para usted la participación cívica? ¿O cómo describirías a alguien que está involucrado cívicamente?

A medida que continuamos, le pediré que me cuente historias sobre sus experiencias de participación cívica. Quiero que se concentre en las contribuciones que ha hecho a su vecindario, comunidad y/o sociedad, fuera de su familia y trabajo.

1. En la lista de verificación usted mencionó que ha realizado XX actividades, ¿cuál de estas actividades ha sido más significativa para usted? ¿Y cómo se involucraste haciendo eso?

   Sondeo: ¿Puedes compartir una historia de tu experiencia participando en esa actividad?

   Sondeo: ¿Qué hizo que esta experiencia fuera tan inolvidable para usted?

2. ¿Quién o qué le enseñó/influyó en la forma en que pensaba sobre su papel en la sociedad y cómo contribuir a los demás? (padres, religión, cultura, política, historia).

   Sondeo: ¿Cuántos años tenía cuando aprendió o se encontró con estas personas o eventos?

   Sondeo: ¿Crees que su rol o la forma en que contribuyes a la sociedad ha cambiado a lo largo de su vida?

3. ¿Puede contarme una historia sobre la primera vez que decidió involucrarse en ayudar a otros o hacer una diferencia en la vida de una persona, un grupo o una comunidad? (Sondeo para motivadores personales, políticos y sociales).

   Sonda: ¿Cómo te sentiste al hacer eso?

Ahora, quiero que piense un poco sobre aspectos de su identidad, como su edad, raza / etnia, nacionalidad / ciudadanía, género, idioma, estado de salud (discapacidad, enfermedad).

4. ¿Puede describir un momento en que estaba participando en una actividad cívica y se resaltaron algunos aspectos de su identidad? (Ejemplo: esta entrevista llamó
específicamente a los adultos mayores afroamericanos y latinos, por lo que destaca su edad y raza).

Sondeo: ¿Cuáles fueron algunas ocasiones en las que te sentiste llamado o alguien te llamó para involucrarte que estaba relacionado con tu identidad?

5. Continuando pensando en su identidad, ¿hubo alguna vez que alguien le dijo o le hizo sentir que no debería involucrarse que estaba relacionado con su identidad? (Sonda para la historia)

Sondeo: ¿En qué ocasiones su identidad le impidió contribuir a la comunidad de la manera que quería?

Sondeo: ¿Estas experiencias afectaron su participación después? ¿De qué maneras? Si no lo hicieron, ¿cómo pudiste no dejar que te afectara?

Hablemos un poco sobre dónde creciste y las transiciones de la vida. Usted dijo en el cuestionario que nació en [ciudad/pueblo], ¿es aquí también donde vivió durante la infancia?

6. ¿Qué puede decirme sobre la cultura del país donde creció con respecto a cómo las personas contribuyen entre sí, la comunidad y la sociedad?

Sondeo: ¿Cómo es esta cultura similar o diferente de sus experiencias personales con su vecindario o comunidad?

7. ¿Puede contarme sobre una (s) experiencia (s) en su vida que cambió sus ideas sobre cómo puede contribuir a la comunidad o la sociedad? (es decir, inmigración (país o estado), tener una discapacidad/enfermedad, un cambio en el trabajo, perder a alguien importante para usted).

Sondeo: ¿Cómo te hizo sentir esa experiencia? ¿Qué cambió?

Sondeo: ¿Fue este cambio en la forma en que contribuiste algo que sucedió naturalmente como consecuencia de esa experiencia? ¿O fue algo en lo que reflexionaste primero y decidiste cambiar?

CONCLUIR

8. Después de pensar en cómo ha contribuido a lo largo de los años, ¿qué consejo le daría a la gente sobre la importancia de involucrarse y contribuir con otros fuera de la familia y el trabajo?
Appendix P1. Analysis Process: Example 1

Results Chapter VII: Geopolitical and Socio-Historical Context in Civic Participation (Theme 1)

This appendix is an example of the analysis process beginning with transcript data, crafting narratives, in vivo coding, axial coding, selective coding, and the final presentation. This example explains this process for the first theme of the dissertation results, Geopolitical and Socio-Historical Context in Civic Participation.

For this example, I am using data from the second interview (oral history interview) with an African American participant (ETNY). I demonstrate each of these processes through six phases of analysis; phase 1: Transcript to crafted story, phase 2: Lifetime narratives of civic participation, phase 3: In vivo coding, phase 4: Axial coding, phase 5: Selective coding, phase 6: Write-up of results.

***Phase 1: Transcript to Crafted Story***

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) First order of analysis

This is the first phase of the analysis, in which IPA is conducted with transcript data to develop a single-case analysis for each participant that produces a descriptive account of the phenomenon as experienced by the participant (Finlay, 2011). Because I am guided by hermeneutic phenomenology, this phase involves producing these descriptive accounts through crafting of narratives (Crowther et al., 2017; van Manen, 2016).

During this phase, the interview data from the transcripts is re-organized and synthesized to craft narratives of participants’ experiences and situate them along the life course. In this example, I am using the transcript data from the oral history interview to craft a narrative of the participant’s experience.

A. Transcript data from interview two

Interviewer: Okay. I think you talked a little bit about your experience volunteering as an older adult but I’m very interested to know before, if you think back to your childhood, it doesn’t have to be volunteering and it doesn’t have to be political but do you have any memory of when you were growing up that you were involved in helping other people.

Interviewee: As a child, I don’t believe I had volunteered in my system of volunteer back then. I’m thinking about getting married and having children and a lot of that did not happen. My husband went into the service and went straight in Vietnam when we graduate and stayed in Vietnam and we did not hear from him. We got in touch with people to find out where was he in Vietnam. As a naive person at that time, I really didn’t think about a lot of stuff for the future. That was sad for me. It really was because the thing is other than being a wife and a mother it takes more, a lifetime. I loved Angela
Davis at that time but I didn’t think about being an activist at that time. It was a lot of things happening back in the '60s that I really didn’t consider in my future.

**Interviewer:** It’s very interesting to hear you say-- You love Angela Davis, and what is it that you loved about her at that time?

**Interviewee:** The march. This African American, this big afro and at that time I had a big afro. A lot of things that I saw that she was free and I guess it's, I was the third child, I was sheltered. A lot of things back then I really didn’t think about anything other than-- After my husband came home, we got married and his problem of being in the service that he got drafted, that a lot of things I felt that I really didn’t know, I told you I was young, naive and knowing that there was more to that of getting a college education and I graduate but the thing is I wanted to go into education and it takes more than just to get a diploma to go in education, it takes more.

Then after that, a lot of things happened in my life. I had to get a job and from there after I went-- No, what it was, the community off 169th Street and 3rd Avenue they had community programs at that time and my sister helped me get a job at Martin Luther King Health Center. Within the community people up in that area that some of the reasons of being in community watch. A lot of community people up until whoever is still alive they’ve been fighting for community.

... 

**Interviewer:** How about your age? Maybe when you were younger, did anyone tell you shouldn't get involved because you're too young, or now maybe people tell you like you shouldn't get involved because you're too old. Did anybody ever say anything like that?

**Interviewee:** Well, not. I can't remember them saying that when I was too old because like I said, when I was in my 20s, I didn’t go on demonstration because like I said, I was a third child. My sisters got me involved in a lot of stuff because we worked at Rockefeller University as waitresses back then. My uncle used to be one of the chefs that work in that college and show up because then, we had never-- me personally worked in that college of getting refined foods of growing up down the sea and fishing different things like that.

**B: Crafted Narrative**

The following crafted narrative that resulted from the transcript segment in part A.

“I really didn’t think about anything other than being a wife and a mother.”

When I was in my 20s, I was thinking about getting married and having children, then my husband went straight to Vietnam after he graduated. As a naïve person at that time, I really didn’t think about a lot of stuff for the future. A lot of things were happening back then, but I really didn’t think about anything other than being a wife and a mother. I
loved Angela Davis at that time, but I didn’t think about being an activist then. It was a lot of things happening back in the ‘60s that I really didn’t consider in my future. This African American woman (Angela Davis), she had this big afro and at that time, I had a big afro. I saw that she was free, but I guess it’s because I was the third child, I was sheltered. We worked at Rockefeller University as waitresses back then, my uncle was the chef at the University. After my husband came home from Vietnam, we got married and my sister got me a job with the Martin Luther King Health Center.

***Phase 2: Lifetime Narratives of Civic Participation***

The process above, transforming transcript data into narratives, was conducted for all experiences that participants shared related to their civic participation to produce a comprehensive document for each participant of their lifetime narratives of civic participation.

In phase 2, crafted stories were organized in chronological order within four life stages; 1. Childhood, 2. Young Adulthood, 3. Adulthood, and 4. Older Adult. Stories included in Childhood contained all relevant narratives from birth, including stories about their family’s (parents, aunts, grandparents, etc.) experiences of civic participation, up to end of elementary school. Stories included in Young Adulthood contained all stories from high school (teen years) to college (mid-20s). Stories included in Adulthood included all the stories from their late 20s up to late 50s, and stories from their 60s onward were included under Older Adult. The result of these stories was an extensive document for each individual participant containing stories of civic participation throughout their lives. Each participant was provided their personal lifetime stories of civic participation to review and edit before further analysis was conducted. Not all participants had edits to make, but they confirmed the stories reflected what they remembered and were a good representation of their experiences. A few participants added new stories or elaborated on the original stories, and this was incorporated into their finalized lifetime narratives document.

This participant and I talked over the phone about her narrative after she read it, but she only made a few small edits to one or two stories, neither of which are the one used for this example.

***Phase 3: In Vivo Coding***

IPA: First order of analysis continued

In phase 3, the finalized lifetime narratives for each participant were uploaded into their respective Nvivo project (1. Nvivo project for African American group, 2. Nvivo project for Latinx Immigrant group). A coding shell was created (the same for both groups), and in vivo coding was conducted (first for African American group).
In vivo coding was used here to continue developing an understanding of the individual experience and perceptions of a common phenomenon through a variety of experiences within a single case. This corresponds to the first order of analysis described in IPA (Finlay, 2011; Larkin & Thompson, 2011).

**A. Coding shell created**

A coding shell was created to initially conserve the organization of the narratives according to the life stages. In addition, three other codes were created to parse out information that discussed how participants defined civic participation, what is feels like for them, and how they got involved. Finally, one last code was added, intersectionality, to capture narratives that spoke about experiences involving more than one category of difference or system of oppression. This code was more relevant for analysis pertaining to the third theme (Appendix P3). In addition, not all codes created during this analysis were used for the dissertation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nvivo Shell:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Define Civic Par</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00. What CP feels like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>000. How people got involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. CP Childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. CP Young Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. CP Adulthood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. CP Older Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Intersectionality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B. In vivo coding**

In vivo coding was applied to entire stories and not on a line-by-line basis. Therefore, the story that was crafted above and titled “I really didn’t think about anything other than being a wife and a mother” was coded as:

*Code: A lot of things were happening in the 60s that I didn’t consider*

This code was organized under parent code 2. *CP Young Adult* (refer to coding shell above) because this story took place during the participants’ early 20s.

***Phase 4: Axial Coding Between Cases***

**IPA: Second order of analysis**

As themes began to emerge through in vivo coding, I began applying axial coding when appropriate and continued in vivo coding of new experiences that had not previously emerged.

This corresponds to the second order of analysis described in IPA, which guides us to begin comparing across cases to draw out patterns and themes in experiences and
perceptions (meaning making), and better understand how these experiences vary between individuals (Finlay, 2011).

**A. Axial coding between cases**

Code *Civil Rights* was created to group stories of participants’ experiences with the civil rights movement that occurred in childhood and young adult life stages.

**Coding explanation:** The story that was in vivo coded *A lot of things were happening in the 60s that I didn’t consider*, spoke to a theme that began to emerge of participants discussing their involvement or awareness of the Civil Rights movement happening at the time. This story, along with other African American participants’ stories, was coded under Civil Rights within their respective life course stage. Therefore, Civil Rights code appears in Childhood and Young Adult.

**Coding hierarchy** for narrative “I really didn’t think about anything other than being a wife and a mother”:

Shell code (parent code): *CP Young Adult*

- Axial code: *Young Adult Civil Rights*
- In vivo code: *A lot of things were happening in the 60s that I didn’t consider*

**B. Further axial coding between cases**

*Code National/Global Events* was created to group stories of participants’ experiences with major national and global events (i.e., Civil Rights, HIV epidemic, and COVID-19).

**Coding Explanation:** As participants’ stories of national and global events emerged, such as the HIV epidemic, Obama’s presidential election, Black Lives Matter, COVID-19, the Civil Rights and Stonewall, a higher-level code was created bringing all these codes together under the code *National/Global Events*. This code stood on its own outside of any developmental life stage, and it included stories throughout the life course.

**Coding hierarchy** for narrative “I really didn’t think about anything other than being a wife and a mother”:

- Parent code: *National/Global Events*
- Axial code: *Young Adult Civil Rights*
- In vivo code: *A lot of things were happening in the 60s that I didn’t consider*

***Phase 5: Selective Coding***

**IPA: Second order of analysis continued**
After conducting axial coding and concluding in vivo coding, I reflected on the theoretical framework guiding the study (the intersectional life course perspective) to guide this final phase of data analysis.

This phase is a continuation of IPA second order of analysis, which suggests that at this stage we deepen the analysis by also looking for differences across cases and bringing in other theories/lens that help to make sense of the analysis (Finlay, 2011).

Below I provide a quick summary of the intersectional life course perspective (Ferrer et al., 2019) to demonstrate how it guided my selective coding process.

The Intersectional Life Course Perspective Dimensions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Life events, timing, and structural forces</td>
<td>Establish time order of events and identify the structural forces that contribute to the manifestation of such events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Local and globally linked lives</td>
<td>Examine locally and globally linked lives beyond individual and families to generations and national/international borders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Identities and categories of difference</td>
<td>Consider categories of difference (e.g., race, gender), the processes of differentiation (e.g., racialization, gendering, etc.), and systems of domination (e.g., racism, colonialism, sexism, and patriarchy) and how it shifts throughout the life course, historical contexts, and structures and systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Agency, domination, and resistance</td>
<td>Assessment of how processes of differentiation and systems of domination shape the lives, agency, and resistance among older people. Present agency and resistance as both structured and interpretive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A. Four new higher-level codes were created based on intersectional life course theory.**

The following are the initial codes that were created corresponding to the four dimensions of the intersectional life course theory.

Theme 1. Experiences of Belonging (social categories and experiences of oppression)

Theme 2. Health and Aging

Theme 3. Agency and Resistance

Theme 4. Linked Lives

Parent Code *National/Global Events* is placed under code *Theme 3. Agency and Resistance*. 
Coding explanation: When I read the stories under the code *National/Global Events* it spoke to me of “Theme 3. Agency and Resistance” in the context of these specific historical events that took place along their life course. These were stories of participation in marches and walks during the Civil Rights movement, HIV epidemic, and Black Lives Matter, as well as stories of solidarity during COVID-19 and Obama’s presidential election, among other examples.

*At this point the child codes Young Adult Civil Rights and Child Civil Rights were combined to create the code Civil Rights to represent one national event, along with codes BLM, COVID, HIV epidemic, Presidential Election, and Stonewall.*

Coding hierarchy for narrative “I really didn’t think about anything other than being a wife and a mother”:

Selective Code: *Theme 3. Agency and Resistance.*

Parent code: *National/Global Events*

Axial code: *Civil Rights*

In vivo code: *A lot of things were happening in the 60s that I didn’t consider*

**B. The two Nvivo projects (African American project and Latinx Immigrant project) are merged before continuing further with selective coding.**

Explanation to merge: After creating the selective codes in both projects and doing an initial coding for each, I realized it was time to merge the two projects to get a more comprehensive understanding of civic participation experiences among both groups. During this merge, many codes integrated seamlessly since they shared the same code names (shell codes, some parent codes, selective codes), others were slightly different and I had to integrate them manually, others were totally different and this allowed me to see where the groups diverged in their experience.

Parent code: *National/Global Events* was integrated with Latinx immigrant project code: *National/Global Events* and left under selective code: *Theme 3. Agency and Resistance.*

**C. Selective coding continues with integrated Nvivo project.**

Selective coding required an intensive process of reflection to ensure that the codes created captured the dimensions of the intersectional life course perspective. Some of these codes were straightforward and the same language used in the theory was used for the codes (i.e. Theme 3. Agency and Resistance, and linked lives). Other dimensions, particularly “Life events, timing, and structural forces” was more difficult to capture succinctly in a code that also reflected the codes that had emerged through the analysis process thus far.
Below I explain how the selective code corresponding for this dimension “Life events, timing, and structural forces” underwent a series of changes and modification before being finalized as the code Theme 1. Social, Political, Economic, Health.

**Coding explanation:** As I continued to reflect on the intersectional life course perspective, I reflected on how *Experiences of Belonging* included stories about growing up in an anti-black society, experiencing poverty, citizenship and other codes highlighting marginalization. It also included experiences about cross-border participation and broader concepts like *solidarity* and *responsibility*. I realized that these codes were speaking to almost all the dimensions of the intersectional life course perspective and needed to be parsed out. So I created an additional theme on historical events and placed some codes from the theme *Experiences of Belonging* into the new code Theme 1. Historical Events.

I created *Theme 1. Historical Events* (while keeping *Experiences of Belonging* as its own code that I did not use as a primary theme in the final presentation of results). Some stories from code *Experiences of Belonging* were included in the new code, in addition to other codes.

Upon further reflection, I felt that the selective code was still not clearly capturing the entirety of the first dimension “Life events, timing, and structural forces.” So I renamed
the code *Theme 1. Historical Events (OLD)* and created a new and more descriptive code: *Theme 1. Social, Political, Economic, Health*. Under this code, I moved subcodes from other categories and combined them to speak to these four contexts across the life course.

D. Finalizing selective codes

As part of the selective coding phase, I also engaged in a reflective process to ensure that the codes placed under each selective code was best suited to reflect the corresponding theoretical dimension. This was sometimes a complicated process, since stories were comprehensive enough to capture several dimensions, and because the dimensions themselves are not exclusive to each other, but rather interconnect. Below is an example of this process using the crafted narrative titled “I really didn’t think about anything other than being a wife and a mother.”

Coding hierarchy for narrative “I really didn’t think about anything other than being a wife and a mother”:

Selective Code: *Theme 3. Agency and Resistance*.

Parent code: *National/Global Events*  
Axial code: *Civil Rights Young Adult*  
In vivo code: *A lot of things were happening in the 60s that I didn’t consider*

After the selective code corresponding to the first dimension “Life events, timing, and structural forces” was finalized as code: *Theme 1. Social, Political, Economic, Health*, the code: *National/Global Events* was broken down into several new codes and moved from *Theme 3. Agency and Resistance* into the code *Theme 1. Social, Political, Economic, Health*.

The code: *National/Global Events* was divided into two subcodes; (a) *Health context*: included codes COVID, BLM, and HIV epidemic. The second subcode code: *Anti-Black Society. Emett Till, Groveand Four, etc. Civil Rights Movement*: included codes Civil Rights, presidential election, and racism.

Final coding hierarchy for narrative “I really didn’t think about anything other than being a wife and a mother”:

Selective Code: *Theme 1. Social, Political, and Economic Context*.

Axial code: *Anti-Black Society. Emett Till, Groveland Four, etc. Civil Rights Movement*  
Axial code: *Civil Rights*  
In vivo code: *A lot of things were happening in the 60s that I didn’t consider*
***Phase 6: Write up of Results***

These subcodes were used to present evidence for the Results “Chapter VII: Geopolitical and Socio-Historical Context in Civic Participation.”

The story “I really didn’t think about anything other than being a wife and a mother” was included under the theme “Civic Participation within a Socio-Political Context Across the Life Course” where Civil Rights movement stories throughout the life course are discussed.

**Example from dissertation:**

**Chapter VII: Geopolitical and Socio-Historical Context in Civic Participation.**

**Civic Participation within a Socio-Political Context Across the Life Course**

…Similarly, one participant who was in her early 20s and living in New York during this time described how the Civil Rights Movement was not a focus for her experience during this time. As the youngest of three and being a woman in the 50s and 60s, she describes being sheltered and preoccupied with the traditional expectations of women during this time.

“I really didn’t think about anything other than being a wife and a mother.”

When I was in my 20s, I was thinking about getting married and having children, then my husband went straight to Vietnam after he graduated. As a naïve person at that time, I really didn’t think about a lot of stuff for the future. A lot of things were happening back then, but I really didn’t think about anything other than being a wife and a mother. I loved Angela Davis at that time, but I didn’t think about being an activist then. It was a lot of things happening back in the ’60s that I really didn’t consider in my future. This African American woman (Angela Davis), she had this big afro and at that time, I had a big afro. I saw that she was free, but I guess it’s because I was the third child, I was sheltered. We worked at Rockefeller University as waitresses back then, my uncle was the chef at the University. After my husband came home from Vietnam, we got married and my sister got me a job with the Martin Luther King Health Center.
Appendix P2. Analysis Process: Example 2

Results Chapter VIII: The Role of Age/Ageism, Health/illness Stigma, and Race/Racism in Civic Participation (Theme 2)

This appendix is an example of the analysis process beginning with transcript data, crafting narratives, in vivo coding, axial coding, selective coding, and the final presentation. This example explains this process for the second theme of the dissertation results, The Role of Age/Ageism, Health/illness Stigma, and Race/Racism in Civic Participation.

For this example, I am using data from the second interview (oral history interview conducted in Spanish) with a Latinx participant (EBNJ). I demonstrate each of these processes through six phases of analysis; phase 1: Transcript to crafted story, phase 2: Lifetime narratives of civic participation, phase 3. In vivo coding, phase 4: Axial coding, phase 5: Selective coding, phase 6: Write-up of results.

***Phase 1: Transcript to Crafted Story***

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) First order of analysis

This is the first phase of the analysis, in which IPA is conducted with transcript data to develop a single-case analysis for each participant that produces a descriptive account of the phenomenon as experienced by the participant (Finlay, 2011). Because I am guided by hermeneutic phenomenology, this phase involves producing these descriptive accounts through crafting of narratives (Crowther et al., 2017; van Manen, 2016).

During this phase, the interview data from the transcripts is re-organized and synthesized to craft narratives of participants’ experiences and situate them along the life course. In this example, I am using the transcript data from the oral history interview to craft a narrative of the participant’s experience.

A. Transcript data from interview two

Entrevistada: No, yo no tengo ese tipo de problemas. Lo mismo yo comparto con-- Por ejemplo, yo he dado conferencias a varones, pero sí hay varias damas conmigo. Por ejemplo, hay una cosa que se llama la motivación, yo soy una exhortadora.

Entrevistadora: ¿Qué es eso?

Entrevistada: Una exhortadora o exhortador es una persona que motiva a los demás a trabajar para la comunidad. Yo toda mi vida he sido eso, me ha gustado exhortar. Donde quiera que yo voy de las propias experiencias que he tenido.

En la iglesia yo di una conferencia de dónde está la verdadera hombría de un hombre cristiano. Había varones que me decían, "No, en mi casa la mujer tiene que lavar, planchar, cocinar, atender a los niños y atenderme a mí".
Yo le dije, "Mira hermano, usted está equivocado. Hoy día vivimos en una sociedad donde por el mismo estilo de vida que se vive, tiene que trabajar el papá y la mamá y hay que dejar los hijos en la escuela, buscar a alguien que lo recoja o uno mismo pick up y llevárselo y prepararle comida para que otro de los padres se vaya a otro lado. ¿Cómo usted cree que su esposa, si tiene cuatro niñitos, más usted, más la casa, más limpiar, más todo eso y cocinar, va a poder sin la ayuda de usted?".

"Mi esposo en mi casa me ayuda", yo les decía. Ahora hay un montón de varones en la iglesia que le cambió el concepto, la idea esa de que, "No, en mi casa yo soy el hombre, soy el que mando y se acabó", ya le ha cambiado, ahora le ayudan a las esposas.

Yo no digo que sea por mí, ellos mismos tomaron su decisión de hacer el cambio, pero, como yo te digo, sí pude hablar algo que pudieran asimilarlo como parte de un cambio en sus vidas para ayudar a la mujer, a la esposa, a mí eso me gusta.

Últimamente, desde que yo me lastimé mi brazo derecho, no hago muchas cosas, pero sí me siguen trayendo cositas y yo las sigo repartiendo. Tengo un listado de personas que me llaman, "Mira, me mudé y no tengo ni mueble". Los otros días me regalaron un futón.

Entrevistadora: Sí, tú me contaste la última vez y tú ayudaste a que alguien lo cogiera.

Entrevistada: Sí, yo se lo conté.

Entrevistadora: Sí, pero dime más sobre-- Quería saber un poquito más sobre esta idea de que tú eres una-- Nunca he oído eso, ¿soltadora o soldadora?

Entrevistada: Exhortadora. Viene de la palabra exhortar, que es una acción, tomar una palabra para convertirla en actividad, en una acción, por eso se le llama exhortador. Por ejemplo, exhortador o exhortadora de acuerdo al género, si es femenino o si es masculino, significan lo mismo, lo único que el género es lo que cambia, si es exhortador o es exhortadora.

Entrevistadora: Cuando tú dices que tú eres una exhortadora, ¿qué significa eso para ti?¿Qué es lo que dice de ti?

Entrevistada: Como yo me siento por dentro, especialmente en esta etapa en que yo estoy, que ya no soy jovencita, siento que todavía hay algo en mí que se puede desarrollar para que otras personas que tienen la capacidad física, que eso es lo que yo quiero, que la gente se dé cuenta que todos podemos hacer.

Vamos a poner, yo puedo hacer menos en ciertas áreas porque ya soy mayor y tengo mis molestias físicas, pero viene otra persona joven, que no se ha atrevido a hacer algo que ha querido hacer toda la vida, yo me convierto en su exhortadora, es como un [unintelligible 00:57:40].

Entrevistadora: ¿Como un mentor?
Entrevistada: Sí, exacto, como un mentor. Tú quieras ver cómo había gente, "Mira, yo tengo un problema, que en casa, como pagamos una renta bien alta, se me dañó la nevera", y yo tengo una persona ahí, que eso me gusta hacer a mí.

B: Crafted Narrative

The following crafted narrative that resulted from the transcript segment in part A.

“Yo soy una exhortadora (Exhort)

Yo soy una exhortadora. Viene de la palabra exhortar, que es una acción, tomar una palabra para convertirla en actividad, en una acción. Una exhortadora o exhortador es una persona que motiva a los demás a trabajar para la comunidad. Yo toda mi vida he sido eso, me ha gustado exhortar. Donde quiera que yo voy.

En la iglesia yo di una conferencia de dónde está la verdadera hombría de un hombre cristiano. Había varones que me decían, "No, en mi casa la mujer tiene que lavar, planchar, cocinar, atender a los niños y atenderme a mí". Yo le dije, "Mira hermano, usted está equivocado. Hoy día vivimos en una sociedad donde por el mismo estilo de vida que se vive, tiene que trabajar el papá y la mamá y hay que dejar los hijos en la escuela, buscar a alguien que lo recoja o uno mismo pick up y llevárselo y prepararle comida para que otro de los padres se vaya a otro lado. ¿Cómo usted cree que su esposa, si tiene cuatro niñitos, más usted, más la casa, más limpiar, más todo eso y cocinar, va a poder sin la ayuda de usted?".

"Mi esposo en mi casa me ayuda", yo les decía. Ahora hay un montón de varones en la iglesia que le cambió el concepto, la idea esa de que, "No, en mi casa yo soy el hombre, soy el que mando y se acabó", ya le ha cambiado, ahora le ayudan a las esposas. Yo no digo que sea por mí, ellos mismos tomaron su decisión de hacer el cambio, pero, como yo te digo, sí pude hablar algo que pudieran asimilarlo como parte de un cambio en sus vidas para ayudar a la mujer, a la esposa, a mí eso me gusta.

Exhortadora es como yo me siento por dentro, especialmente en esta etapa en que yo estoy, que yo no soy jovencita, siento que todavía hay algo en mí que se puede desarrollar para que otras personas que tienen la capacidad física. Eso es lo que yo quiero, que la gente se dé cuenta que todos podemos hacer.

Yo ahora puedo hacer menos en ciertas áreas porque ya soy mayor y tengo mis molestias físicas, pero viene otra persona joven, que no se ha atrevido a hacer algo que ha querido hacer toda la vida, yo me convierto en su exhortadora, es como un mentor.

**The quote below is what I have presented in the dissertation results, which is the translation of just the last two paragraphs (highlighted in blue) of the story above, which corresponds to the highlighted section of the transcript.**
"I want people to realize that we can all do."

Exhortator is how I feel inside, especially at this stage I’m in, that I am no longer young, I feel that there is still something in me that can be developed to help other people who have the physical capacity. That’s what I want people to realize we can all do. I can do less now in certain areas because I am older and have my physical discomfort, but another young person comes, who has not dared to do something that they have wanted to do all their life, I become their exhortator, it’s like a mentor.

***Phase 2: Lifetime Narratives of Civic Participation***

The process above, transforming transcript data into narratives, was conducted for all experiences participants shared related to their civic participation to produce a comprehensive document for each participant of their lifetime narratives of civic participation.

In phase 2, crafted stories were organized in chronological order within four life stages; 1. Childhood, 2. Young Adulthood, 3. Adulthood, and 4. Older Adult. Stories included in Childhood contained all relevant narratives from birth, including stories about their family’s (parents, aunts, grandparents, etc.) experiences of civic participation, up to end of elementary school. Stories included in Young Adulthood contained all stories from high school (teen years) to college (mid-20s). Stories included in Adulthood included all the stories from their late 20s up to late 50s, and stories from their 60s onward were included under Older Adult. The result of these stories was an extensive document for each individual participant containing stories of civic participation throughout their lives. Each participant was provided their personal lifetime stories of civic participation to review and edit before further analysis was conducted. Not all participants had edits to make, but they confirmed the stories reflected what they remembered and were a good representation of their experiences. A few participants added new stories or elaborated on the original stories, and this was incorporated into their finalized lifetime narratives document.

This participant and I spoke over the phone after she read her stories and in this conversation, she asked to add three new stories to her document and made minor edits throughout the stories, but this particular story was not changed/edited. The new document was sent back to her and she confirmed receipt and approval of the stories.

***Phase 3: In Vivo Coding***

IPA: First order of analysis continued

In phase 3, the finalized lifetime narratives for each participant were uploaded into their respective Nvivo project (1. Nvivo project for African American group, 2. Nvivo project
for Latinx Immigrant group). A coding shell was created (the same for both groups), and in vivo coding was conducted (first for African American group).

In vivo coding was used here to continue developing an understanding of the individual experience and perceptions of a common phenomenon through a variety of experiences within a single case. This corresponds to the first order of analysis described in IPA (Finlay, 2011; Larkin & Thompson, 2011).

**A. Coding shell created**

A coding shell was created to initially conserve the organization of the narratives according to the life stages. In addition, three other codes were created to parse out information that discussed how participants defined civic participation, what it feels like for them, and how they got involved. Finally, one last code was added, intersectionality, to capture narratives that spoke about experiences involving more than one category of difference or system of oppression. This code was particularly relevant for this chapter. In addition, not all codes created during this analysis were used for the dissertation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nvivo Shell:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Define Civic Par</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01. What CP feels like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>000. How people got involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. CP Childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. CP Young Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. CP Adulthood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. CP Older Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Intersectionality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B. In vivo coding**

In vivo coding was applied to entire stories and not on a line-by-line basis. Therefore, the story that was crafted above and titled "I want people to realize that we can all do." was coded as:

*Code: Yo quiero que la gente se de cuenta que todos podemos hacer (I want people to realize that we can all contribute)*

This code was organized under parent code 4. *CP Older Adult* (refer to coding shell above) because this speaks to the participants current experiences in later life.

***Phase 4: Axial Coding Between Cases***

**IPA: Second order of analysis**

As themes began to emerge through in vivo coding, I began applying axial coding when appropriate and continued in vivo coding of new experiences that had not previously emerged.
This corresponds to the second order of analysis described in IPA, which guides us to begin comparing across cases to draw out patterns and themes in experiences and perceptions (meaning making), and better understand how these experiences vary between individuals (Finlay, 2011).

A. Axial coding between cases

Code: *Los adultos mayores en la sociedad* (Older adults in society) was created and placed under shell code: *CP Older Adult*.

**Coding explanation:** The story that was in vivo coded *Yo quiero que la gente se de cuenta que todos podemos hacer* (I want people to realize that we can all contribute) spoke to a theme that began to emerge among participants discussing the role of older adults in society. This story, along with other Latinx participants’ stories, was coded: *Los adultos mayores en la sociedad* under the shell code: *CP Older Adults*.

**Coding hierarchy for narrative “I want people to realize that we can all do”:**

Shell code (parent code): *CP Older Adult*

Axial code: *Los adultos mayores en la sociedad*

In vivo code: *Yo quiero que la gente se de cuenta que todos podemos hacer*

B. Further axial coding between cases

**Code:** *Age, ageism, health* is created to group stories of participants’ experiences of civic participation that intersect these dimensions.

**Coding Explanation:** As participants told stories of how their civic participation has changed or remained the same in older age and in the context of personal health and ageism, a higher-level code was created to integrate these stories under the shell code of *intersectionality*.

The shell code intersectionality was created to ensure that I attended to participants’ experiences through an intersectional lens. Often a code that was placed within a life stage was also coded under this parent code with a name referring to the intersectional categories. This code emerged as I noticed that within older adults in society codes contained specific stories discussing the intersections of age, ageism, and health. The same was done for the African American File.

**Coding hierarchy for narrative “I want people to realize that we can all do”:**

Shell code: *Intersectionality*

Axial code: *Age, ageism, health*

In vivo code: *Yo quiero que la gente se de cuenta que todos podemos hacer*
***Phase 5: Selective Coding***

**IPA: Second order of analysis continued**

After conducting axial coding and concluding in vivo coding, I reflected on the theoretical framework guiding the study (the intersectional life course perspective) to guide this final phase of data analysis.

This phase is a continuation of IPA second order of analysis, which suggests that at this stage we deepen the analysis by also looking for differences across cases and bringing in other theories/lens that help to make sense of the analysis (Finlay, 2011).

Below I provide a quick summary of the intersectional life course perspective (Ferrer et al., 2019) to demonstrate how it guided my selective coding process.

The Intersectional Life Course Perspective Dimensions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Selective Codes</th>
<th>Subcodes included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Theme 1. Historical Events</strong></td>
<td>1. Civic participation (Childhood and Young Adult) 2. Culture and CP 3. Experiences of Belonging in Early Life (Social categories and systems of oppression).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. **Four new higher-level codes were created based on intersectional life course theory.**

The following are the initial codes that were created corresponding to the four dimensions of the intersectional life course theory.
Theme 1. Experiences of Belonging (social categories and experiences of oppression)
Theme 2. Health and Aging
Theme 3. Agency and Resistance
Theme 4. Linked Lives

Subcodes under Code: *Age, ageism and health* are parsed out to create two new codes: *Age and CP* and *Health and CP*, which are then placed under selective code: **Theme 2. Health and Aging**.

**Coding explanation:** When I read the stories under the code *Age, ageism, and health* I noticed that some stories were specific to issues of age and ageism. While some of these stories often spoke of changes to health, the underlying concept had more to do with societal expectations for the role of older adults. However, some stories concerning health did speak to issues of ableism, healthcare system problems, and solely health related experiences that sometimes limited participation but other times led to participation. Therefore, I decided to divide these stories into two separate codes that could speak to the larger theme of health and aging in civic participation.

**Coding hierarchy** for narrative “I want people to realize that we can all do”:

Selective Code: **Theme 2. Health and Aging**.

Axial code: *Age and CP*

In vivo code: *Yo quiero que la gente se de cuenta que todos podemos hacer*

**B. The two Nvivo projects (African American project and Latinx Immigrant project) are merged before continuing further with selective coding.**

**Explanation to merge:** After creating the selective codes in both projects and doing an initial coding for each, I realized it was time to merge the two projects to get a more comprehensive understanding of civic participation experiences among both groups. During this merge, many codes integrated seamlessly since they shared the same code names (shell codes, some parent codes, selective codes), others were slightly different and I had to integrate them manually, others were totally different, and this allowed me to see where the groups diverged in their experience.

Parent code: *Age and CP* was integrated with African American project code: *Age and CP* and left under selective code: **Theme 2. Health and Aging**.

**C. Selective coding continues with integrated Nvivo project.**

Selective coding required an intensive process of reflection to ensure that the codes created captured the dimensions of the intersectional life course perspective. Some of these codes were straight forward and the same language used in the theory was used for
the codes (i.e. agency and resistance, and linked lives). Other dimensions, particularly “Life events, timing, and structural forces” was more difficult to capture succinctly in a code that also reflected the codes that had emerged through the analysis process thus far (Appendix P1).

Below I explain how the selective code corresponding for this dimension “Identities and categories of difference” underwent a series of changes and modification before being finalized as the code *Theme 2. Race, Age, and Health*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Selective Codes</th>
<th>Subcodes included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3. Identities and categories of difference. | Consider categories of difference (e.g. race, gender), the processes of differentiation (e.g. racialization, gendering, etc.), and systems of domination (e.g., racism, colonialism, sexism, and patriarchy) and how it shifts throughout the life-course, historical contexts, and structures and systems. | **Theme 2. Health and Aging** | 1. Age and CP  
2. Health and CP  
| | | **Theme 2. Race, Age, and Health** | 1. Age and Ageism  
2. Health and CP  

**Coding explanation:** As I continued to reflect on the intersectional life course perspective, I reflected on how *Health and Aging* needed to be integrated with participants’ stories of race and racism in their experiences of civic participation to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these categories and systems interacted in informing how, where, and with whom participants participated. The code *Selective Participation* had previously emerged in the African American Nvivo project containing stories about how race, age, and health influenced the ways older adults participated, where they participated and with whom. After integrating the two projects, creating the potential themes, and further reflecting on the dimensions of categories of differences and systems of domination, I began to see how age, health and race tied together and created a second version of the Theme 2 code: *Theme 2. Race, Age, and Health*.

**D. Finalizing selective codes**

As part of the selective coding phase, I also engaged in a reflective process to ensure that the codes placed under each selective code was best suited to reflect the corresponding theoretical dimension. This was sometimes a complicated process, since stories were
comprehensive enough to capture several dimensions, and because the dimensions themselves are not exclusive to each other, but rather interconnect. Below is an example of this process using the crafted narrative titled “I want people to realize that we can all do.”

I created the subcode Age and ageism to include stories that discussed changes in civic participation due to process of age as well as the influence of ageism. To do this, I moved the code Age and CP from the previous Theme 2. Health and Aging and placed it under the subcode Age and Ageism. I also created a new code, ageism to separate the stories that particularly spoke to this issue, and left Age and CP for stories that described changes in how older people can participate that consider cultural values (i.e. respect, wisdom), health, and societal limitations (i.e. isolation), but do not place general limits to the ways older adults can and cannot participate.

This reflective process led to keep the in vivo code: Yo quiero que la gente se de cuenta que todos podemos hacer, because the participant is discussing the ways she can continue to participate in later life, though she may need to adjust to certain limitations or contribute in different ways than she did when she was younger.

**Final Coding hierarchy for narrative “I want people to realize that we can all do”:**

Selective Code: Theme 2. Race, Age, and Health

Axial code: Age and Ageism

Axial code: Age and CP

In vivo code: Yo quiero que la gente se de cuenta que todos podemos hacer

***Phase 6: Write up of Results***

These subcodes were used to present evidence for the Results “Chapter VIII: The Role of Age/Ageism, Health/illness Stigma, and Race/Racism in Civic Participation”

The story “I want people to realize that we can all do” was included under the theme “Age and Ageism in Civic Participation” and under the subtheme “Changes in Civic Participation Due to Age and Aging” where I discuss the influence of age and aging on experiences of civic participation among older adults.

**Example from dissertation:**

Chapter VIII: The Role of Age/Ageism, Health/illness Stigma, and Race/Racism in Civic Participation

Age and Ageism in Civic Participation

Changes in Civic Participation Due to Age and Aging
…Similarly, a Latinx participant also spoke to the mastery that comes from years of experience and the ability to continue learning in older age. She described herself as an “exhortadora” a type of mentor that could help others develop the skills and knowledge she mastered throughout her life. She discussed her physical limitations as an opportunity to develop other strengths, emphasizing that everyone has something to contribute.

"I want people to realize that we can all do."

Exhortator is how I feel inside, especially at this stage I’m in, that I am no longer young, I feel that there is still something in me that can be developed to help other people who have the physical capacity. That’s what I want people to realize we can all do. I can do less now in certain areas because I am older and have my physical discomfort, but another young person comes, who has not dared to do something that they have wanted to do all their life, I become their exhortator, it’s like a mentor.
Appendix P3. Analysis Process: Example 3

Results Chapter IX: Agency and Resistance (Theme 3)

This appendix is an example of the analysis process beginning with transcript data, crafting narratives, in vivo coding, axial coding, selective coding, and the final presentation. This example explains this process for the third theme of the dissertation results, Agency and Resistance.

For this example, I am using data from the first interview (in-depth interview: participation in the past-12 months) with an African American participant (SENJ). I demonstrate each of these processes through six phases of analysis; phase 1: Transcript to crafted story, phase 2: Lifetime narratives of civic participation, phase 3. In vivo coding, phase 4: Axial coding, phase 5: Selective coding, phase 6: Write-up of results.

***Phase 1: Transcript to Crafted Story***

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) First order of analysis

This is the first phase of the analysis, in which IPA is conducted with transcript data to develop a single-case analysis for each participant that produces a descriptive account of the phenomenon as experienced by the participant (Finlay, 2011). Because I am guided by hermeneutic phenomenology, this phase involves producing these descriptive accounts through crafting of narratives (Crowther et al., 2017; van Manen, 2016).

During this phase, the interview data from the transcripts is re-organized and synthesized to craft narratives of participants’ experiences and situate them along the life course. In this example, I am using the transcript data from the in-depth interview on civic participation in the last 12 months to craft a narrative of the participant’s experience.

A. Transcript data from interview two

Interviewer: That's good to know. This is the last question. Can you tell me about-- Well, you did talk about your most recent experience where you helped, but I'll ask you in case anything else comes up. During COVID actually, have you had any recent experience where you helped someone, or you were part of a group that was making a difference?

Interviewee: Well, the Infant Center was during the pandemic because that was just as recently as two weeks ago. I'm talking about when I said we I'm talking about this group of friends that I have, that I have gotten into certain things. I got them to donate. Anyway, we have this senior citizen center and one of my friends of that group that we do things together. She said they don't have any masks. She heard from her pastor who visits there that they didn't have any masks. We donated money to her, and she ordered 178 masks, so that everybody in the senior building could have a mask. We did that. We did the babies at the Infant Center.
Interviewer: I wanted to ask, the group of women that you talk about that you're very close with and helped to organize sometimes. Are they also African American?

Interviewee: Yes, they're all African American.

Interviewer: Okay, and what motivated you to organize for the Infant Center?

Interviewee: Okay. All right, so one of the things I haven't mentioned is that I've been working for the community center as a volunteer for two years.

Interviewer: Yes, you told me that.

Interviewee: We're not in the office now. The director called me about a month ago and we're talking. She just tried to make sure that I was okay because she's sheltering in place. We used to be very busy around this time. Anyway, she told me that the Infant Center needed help. I said, "Give me the name of the person and I'll contact them. My friends and I can help do something." That's how that started.

Interviewer: Wow. Okay, so it was just through your connection?

Interviewee: Right, it's through my connections and most things happens through connections. Got to know somebody in order to find out what's going on with something.

Interviewer: Yes. The women that you organized this with, how long have you been--

Interviewee: Two of them I met through that High School AEA. We've been friends maybe for the last eight or nine years, I guess. Then one I knew because her mother and my mother were very close. She goes to the church that I go to. When she retired last year, I asked her to get involved with us and so that's what she's doing.

Interviewer: Okay, wow. It's almost like you've created some type of small community action group or something.

Interviewee: It is, it really is. I wouldn't take credit for creating it. What I want to say is we formed it and everybody-- I didn't start it. We call ourselves B three, that means black, blessed, and beautiful.

Interviewer: All right, I love it.

Interviewee: That's what we call ourselves and there are four of us. It just happened. Nobody said, "Hey, let's form a group." No, we just liked each other. We had things in common. [Name of friend] was doing food pantry at the church. That's one of them. The other one is really a minister. She's involved in all kinds of stuff. [Name of 3rd friend] worked at Montclair State University. She's on the board of a childcare center at her church. She's in charge on a board of the personnel hiring at her church.
What I want to say, I've picked people-- I didn't pick people. We were drawn to each other because of our community service. That's what I say. You made me think of that because I never even thought about that. You made me really realize, "Hey, this is how we got together because we all have an interest in our community."

**B: Crafted Narrative**

The following crafted narrative that resulted from the transcript segment in part A.

“We call ourselves B three, that means Black, Blessed and Beautiful.”

We call ourselves B three, that means Black, Blessed and Beautiful. I didn’t start it, we formed it together, we’re like a small community action group. Two of them I met through the High School Alumni Education Association. We’ve been friends maybe for the last eight or nine years…Lola was doing food pantry at the church. The other one is a minister; she's involved in all kinds of stuff. Marla worked at Montclair State University. She is on the board of a childcare center at her church and on a board of the personnel hiring at her church. We were drawn to each other because of our community service.

Most recently, one of my friends from the group said that the senior center didn’t have any masks. So, we donated money to her, and she ordered 178 masks, so that everybody in the senior building could have a mask. We did that. Another thing we helped was with the infant center. The director called me about a month ago and we're talking. She just tried to make sure that I was okay because she's sheltering in place. We used to be very busy around this time. Anyway, she told me that the infant center needed help. I said, "Give me the name of the person and I'll contact them. My friends and I can help do something."

***Phase 2: Lifetime Narratives of Civic Participation***

The process above, transforming transcript data into narratives, was conducted for all experiences participants shared related to their civic participation to produce a comprehensive document for each participant of their lifetime narratives of civic participation.

In phase 2, crafted stories were organized in chronological order within four life stages; 1. Childhood, 2. Young Adulthood, 3. Adulthood, and 4. Older Adult. Stories included in *Childhood* contained all relevant narratives from birth, including stories about their family’s (parents, aunts, grandparents, etc.) experiences of civic participation, up to end of elementary school. Stories included in *Young Adulthood* contained all stories from their late 20s up to late 50s, and stories from their 60s onward were included under *Older Adult*. The result of these stories was an extensive document for each individual participant containing stories of civic participation throughout their lives. Each participant was provided their personal lifetime stories of civic participation to
review and edit before further analysis was conducted. Not all participants had edits to make, but they confirmed the stories reflected what they remembered and were a good representation of their experiences. A few participants added new stories or elaborated on the original stories, and this was incorporated into their finalized lifetime narratives document.

This participant confirmed receipt of the stories and let me know that she didn’t have any changes to make.

***Phase 3: In Vivo Coding***

IPA: First order of analysis continued

In phase 3, the finalized lifetime narratives for each participant were uploaded into their respective Nvivo project (1. Nvivo project for African American group, 2. Nvivo project for Latinx Immigrant group). A coding shell was created (the same for both groups), and in vivo coding was conducted (first for African American group).

In vivo coding was used here to continue developing an understanding of the individual experience and perceptions of a common phenomenon through a variety of experiences within a single case. This corresponds to the first order of analysis described in IPA (Finlay, 2011; Larkin & Thompson, 2011).

A. Coding shell created

A coding shell was created to initially conserve the organization of the narratives according to the life stages. In addition, three other codes were created to parse out information that discussed how participants defined civic participation, what it feels like for them, and how they got involved. Finally, one last code was added, intersectionality, to capture narratives that spoke about experiences involving more than one category of difference or system of oppression. This code was more relevant for analysis pertaining to the second theme (Appendix P2). In addition, not all codes created during this analysis were used for the dissertation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nvivo Shell:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Define Civic Par</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02. What CP feels like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>000. How people got involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. CP Childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. CP Young Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. CP Adulthood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. CP Older Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Intersectionality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. In vivo coding

In vivo coding was applied to entire stories and not on a line-by-line basis. Therefore, the story that was crafted above and titled “We call ourselves B three, that means Black, Blessed and Beautiful.” was coded as:

*Code: We were drawn to each other because of our community service*

This code was organized under parent code 4. CP Older Adult (refer to coding shell above) because this speaks to the participants current experiences in later life.

***Phase 4: Axial Coding Between Cases***

IPA: Second order of analysis

As themes began to emerge through in vivo coding, I began applying axial coding when appropriate and continued in vivo coding of new experiences that had not previously emerged.

This corresponds to the second order of analysis described in IPA, which guides us to begin comparing across cases to draw out patterns and themes in experiences and perceptions (meaning making), and better understand how these experiences vary between individuals (Finlay, 2011).

A. Axial coding between cases

Code: Resources (Networks) was created as a new parent code that stood on its own.

**Coding explanation:** The story that was in vivo coded *We were drawn to each other because of our community service* spoke to a theme that began to emerge among participants discussing the how they themselves and their personal networks were a resource to their communities. This story, along with other participants’ stories, was coded: Resources (Networks) as a new emergent code that included experiences from all the life stages.

Coding hierarchy for narrative “We call ourselves B three, that means Black, Blessed and Beautiful”:

- Axial code: Resources (Networks)
- In vivo code: We were drawn to each other because of our community service

**Note:** At this point I was not sure how I would be using this code and left it as a long list of in vivo codes in both projects (African Americans and Latinx Immigrants code: Recursos).

***Phase 5: Selective Coding***

IPA: Second order of analysis continued
After conducting axial coding and concluding in vivo coding, I reflected on the theoretical framework guiding the study (the intersectional life course perspective) to guide this final phase of data analysis.

This phase is a continuation of IPA second order of analysis, which suggests that at this stage we deepen the analysis by also looking for differences across cases and bringing in other theories/lens that help to make sense of the analysis (Finlay, 2011).

Below I provide a quick summary of the intersectional life course perspective (Ferrer et al., 2019) to demonstrate how it guided my selective coding process.

The Intersectional Life Course Perspective Dimensions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Selective Codes</th>
<th>Subcodes included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Theme 1. Historical Events</strong></td>
<td>1. Civic participation (Childhood and Young Adult) 2. Culture and CP 3. Experiences of Belonging in Early Life (Social categories and systems of oppression).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A. Four new higher-level codes were created based on intersectional life course theory.**

The following are the initial codes that were created corresponding to the four dimensions of the intersectional life course theory.

Theme 1. Experiences of Belonging (social categories and experiences of oppression)

Theme 2. Health and Aging
Theme 3. Agency and Resistance

Theme 4. Linked Lives

Parent code: Resources (Networks) was placed under selective code: Theme 3. Agency and Resistance.

**Coding explanation:** This code spoke of the ways participants utilized their own knowledge, skills, and resources to benefit their communities. Therefore, I felt that it was best suited to speak to the dimension of agency and resistance, since it showcased how they took initiative to contribute resources and create new resources in the community.

**B. The two Nvivo projects (African American project and Latinx Immigrant project) are merged before continuing further with selective coding.**

**Explanation to merge:** After creating the selective codes in both projects and doing an initial coding for each, I realized it was time to merge the two projects to get a more comprehensive understanding of civic participation experiences among both groups. During this merge, many codes integrated seamlessly since they shared the same code names (shell codes, some parent codes, selective codes), others were slightly different and I had to integrate them manually, others were totally different, and this allowed me to see where the groups diverged in their experience.

Parent code: Resources (Networks) was integrated with Latinx immigrant project code: Recursos. Renamed Recursos. Resources (Networks) and placed under selective code: Theme 3. Agency and Resistance.

**C. Selective coding continues with integrated Nvivo project.**

Selective coding required an intensive process of reflection to ensure that the codes created captured the dimensions of the intersectional life course perspective. Some of these codes were straightforward, and the same language used in the theory was used for the codes. For example, this code: Theme 3. Agency and Resistance reflects the language from the dimension “Agency, domination, and resistance.” Other dimensions, such as “Life events, timing, and structural forces” was more difficult to capture succinctly in a code that also reflected the codes that had emerged through the analysis process thus far (Appendix P1).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Selective Codes</th>
<th>Subcodes included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Recursos. Resources (Networks)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Coding explanation:** This dimension was clear and pervasive through participants’ stories, because most of their stories spoke about the ways they took initiative or found opportunities to give back to their communities. Throughout their stories they understand that there was a need for resources and stepped up to meet those needs, sometimes intentionally and other times instinctively due to the socio-political circumstances and historical or cultural practices.

**D. Further axial coding between cases was conducted**

**Code:** *Community Resources* is created to group stories of participants’ experiences of civic participation that speak to group collaborations that benefit their communities.

**Coding explanation:** *Recursos. Resources (Networks)* was one of the most extensive codes in the data. When I read the stories under the code, I noticed that these stories spoke about several dimensions of civic participation as a resource. First, I saw the use of “I” as participants explained how they as individuals had skills, knowledge, and resources they offered to their communities. I also saw that many stories spoke of the lack of self-confidence they felt or saw that others had in their ability to contribute. I also noticed there were many stories that spoke about the lack of resources or the need for resources within their communities, and the reasons why their communities have less than others. Finally, I also saw that participants discussed creating community groups, such as block associations, informal action groups, and other informal groups that worked together to offer skills, knowledge, and resources to their community. These reflections, led to the creation of four new subcodes, among them *Community Resources* emerged to capture the stories related to the groups that formed by residents to benefit the community.

**Coding hierarchy for narrative “We call ourselves B three, that means Black, Blessed and Beautiful”:**

Selective Code: *Theme 3. Agency and Resistance*

Axial code: *Recursos. Resources (Networks)*
Axial code: *Community Resources*

In vivo code: *We were drawn to each other because of our community service*

**E. Finalizing selective codes**

As part of the selective coding phase, I also engaged in a reflective process to ensure that the codes placed under each selective code was best suited to reflect the corresponding theoretical dimension. This was sometimes a complicated process, since stories were comprehensive enough to capture several dimensions, and because the dimensions themselves are not exclusive to each other, but rather interconnect. Below is an example of this process using the crafted narrative titled “We call ourselves B three, that means Black, Blessed and Beautiful.”

After creating four codes that spoke to the nuances of resources as civic participation and I began to reflect on how I would write up this section, I started seeing a new way of organizing and making sense of these experiences. Participants’ stories clearly spoke to two levels of resource utilization in their experiences of civic participation. The first was the day-to-day experiences, which provided a type of maintenance to help people survive within current structures and systems that were exclusive and oppressive. The second was resource development, that is development of structures or systems that would help to build up more resources through time. As I reflected on these processes through their stories, I decided to conduct further axial coding to group stories using this new lens, creating two new subcodes: *Day to day contributions* and *Resource development*.

In vivo code: *We were drawn to each other because of our community service* was placed under new code: *Day to day contributions* because this group’s participation mainly consisted of helping the community as needs would arise.

**Final Coding hierarchy for narrative “We call ourselves B three, that means Black, Blessed and Beautiful”:**

Selective Code: *Theme 3. Agency and Resistance*

Axial code: *Recursos. Resources (Networks)*

Axial code: *Day to day contributions*

In vivo code: *We were drawn to each other because of our community service*

***Phase 6: Write up of Results***

These subcodes were used to present evidence for the Results “Chapter IX: Agency and Resistance”

The story “We call ourselves B three, that means Black, Blessed and Beautiful” was included under the theme ““Keep on, keeping on” Everyday Civic Participation” where I
discuss the ways older adults contribute in the day to day to help maintain the well-being of people in their communities.

Example from dissertation:

Chapter IX: Agency and Resistance

“Keep on, keeping on” Everyday Civic Participation

Group organizing was a common approach to addressing community needs. As the two stories above show this can be done through establishing formal community groups, but it also occurs naturally through social networks that share similar interests in the community. This was the case for one African American participant living in New Jersey who described her group of Black older women who got together due to their common interest in participating in the community. They were involved in separate community projects and served as a resource to contribute to each other’s programs/orgs.

“We call ourselves B three, that means Black, Blessed and Beautiful.”

We call ourselves B three, that means Black, Blessed and Beautiful. I didn’t start it, we formed it together, we’re like a small community action group. Two of them I met through the High School Alumni Education Association. We’ve been friends maybe for the last eight or nine years… Lola was doing food pantry at the church. The other one is a minister; she’s involved in all kinds of stuff. Marla worked at Montclair State University. She is on the board of a childcare center at her church and on a board of the personnel hiring at her church. We were drawn to each other because of our community service.

Most recently, one of my friends from the group said that the senior center didn’t have any masks. So, we donated money to her, and she ordered 178 masks, so that everybody in the senior building could have a mask. We did that. Another thing we helped was with the infant center. The director called me about a month ago and we’re talking. She just tried to make sure that I was okay because she’s sheltering in place. We used to be very busy around this time. Anyway, she told me that the infant center needed help. I said, "Give me the name of the person and I'll contact them. My friends and I can help do something."
Appendix P4. Analysis Process: Example 4

Results Chapter X: Linked Lives (Theme 4)

This appendix is an example of the analysis process beginning with transcript data, crafting narratives, in vivo coding, axial coding, selective coding, and the final presentation. This example explains this process for the fourth theme of the dissertation results, Linked Lives.

For this example, I am using data from the second interview (oral history interview) with an African American participant (MLNJ). I demonstrate each of these processes through six phases of analysis; phase 1: Transcript to crafted story, phase 2: Lifetime narratives of civic participation, phase 3. In vivo coding, phase 4: Axial coding, phase 5: Selective coding, phase 6: Write-up of results.

***Phase 1: Transcript to Crafted Story***

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA): First order of analysis

This is the first phase of the analysis, in which IPA is conducted with transcript data to develop a single-case analysis for each participant that produces a descriptive account of the phenomenon as experienced by the participant (Finlay, 2011). Because I am guided by hermeneutic phenomenology, this phase involves producing these descriptive accounts through crafting of narratives (Crowther et al., 2017; van Manen, 2016).

During this phase, the interview data from the transcripts is re-organized and synthesized to craft narratives of participants’ experiences and situate them along the life course. In this example, I am using the transcript data from the oral history interview to craft a narrative of the participants’ experience.

A. Transcript data from interview two

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit? When you say that your parents told you about your history, can you say what was it about? You talked about it like that was influential for you, and very important. Why was it important for you to know about your history?

Interviewee: It was very important, and it still is, because we contribute to this country, and we're not taught about that. I remember cringing. I was in grammar school, and the only thing I've ever learned about was this one page, and they showed black people picking cotton. I was so ashamed, and I felt so bad, I just cringed. Then there was another time you had to talk about what country where you came from. We were brought here as slaves, and I was always so ashamed. I felt so bad, but that's why I got involved with the library because I wanted to read more fiction stories.

There were very few fiction stories then, they were called black people's stories. It was very hard to find. I would go to the library; I would ask for them. That's why I had my own book business because it was very hard to get African American books. I started
vending, I sought out publishers, and I started vending books. It did very well because they were very hard to find. At the library, I saw that, and I thought about our history and culture. My parents talked about it. You’re very young, but it's not that long ago, that things I saw, for example, we couldn't eat. Young people don't get it today. You know the White Castle?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Interviewee:** We couldn't eat in White Castle. Black people weren’t allowed to eat in White Castle and other restaurants. My father took me to see that. He took us to see. What happened with the struggle, you would have, people would go in, and forth. They would sit at the counter and be arrested. My father took me and showed me that. I saw at White Castle, I saw them sitting at the counter, we were parked across the street. I saw them being arrested. I saw the police. My father told me, "I saw Malcolm X." My family, they were so excited about hearing him.

We would go to my aunt's on Sunday. When he spoke, they loved Malcolm X, and I saw him being assassinated. I wasn't there that day, but it was on TV. People were screaming. Dr. King. I lived through all of that. I always thought to read more about it and learn more about it because it wasn't in the history books. People talk about today, "Oh, Black lives matter. Every life matters." Sure, it does, but we haven't-- That's why so many people have so much low self-esteem. We built up this country, we built it up. That's why slaves invented so many things because they were doing all the hard work, and they thought of machinery to make it easier.

It's history. I did a whole thing talking about, what did I did, I had lots of different programs, I had at the library, that was part of my job, some of it. I met these people through my organization work, which I’ll tell you briefly about in a minute. I don’t know if you've heard of Ossie Davis, very famous actor. He gave the eulogy at Malcolm X's funeral. I had him come to the library and talk about that.

I showed the film of Malcolm X, and he delivered that eulogy, it's famous, that he gave at that funeral. Then, in Harlem, no church would take Malcolm X. I knew his wife, his wife lived in Mount Vernon. She went to the same hairdresser I went to. She came to the library. I knew Dr. Betty Shabazz, I knew her. We went on, it’s called the National Black Holistic Retreats. We went on those. They named it after her because she had come. It was such an honor, and privilege to be in her presence, and to walk with her, and hear her. Then, one of the library conferences I went to, Rosa Parks was there. I heard her speak.

I was a few feet away. It's a history that I thought more to learn about because our history is not taught. This is what we're fighting for. Our history is not taught, and just like we learn all about European culture, it's not taught. The same thing with Latinos. Great history, that's why they have that month because it's not taught. It should be taught. It's part of America. This pride, this is where you get pride, "I Know Who I am. I know what
my ancestors did, and I sit on your shoulders." I don't have any problem with my self-esteem.

… (Participant returns to this subject when answering another question)

Like I said, when you see all these great leaders and I stand on their shoulders, I wouldn't have my job today. I told you, I couldn't believe it. We couldn't eat at a restaurant; White Castle in Harlem. You learned we couldn't shop in stores. They didn't want you going in and trying on clothes that white people had to come in and buy. You couldn't try on shoes because you're putting your black foot in the shoes. You couldn't even go in the stores.

That's why Adam Clayton Powell was so big, because he said, "Work where you buy." We couldn't get jobs in none of those stores. This is this century. I'm not talking about olden history. This is in the '60s. We could spend our money, but you couldn't go in and try on anything. You could in and buy it. They wanted you in and out of those stores. The White Castle today, it's unheard of to think that we couldn't go eat in a White Castle.

I saw that. My father took me to see that. I know firsthand that it was a reality. They weren't the only stores. Woolworths. You're too young. may not know about Woolworths. Woolworths is like Dollar General, these stores. You couldn't go there. You couldn't work there. You couldn't work in any of them. We couldn't--

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: Yes, exactly. Adam Clayton Powell talked about what's in your hand. What's in your hand? There's something in your hand that you can work with or do or give or share. When you have something going on for you, what's in your hand. That's a very famous speech. To me, learning about [crosstalk]--

Interviewer: Who said that speech, "What's in your hand"?

Interviewee: Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. He was a famous African American. The church is named after him in Harlem; Abyssinian Church. His father was a senior pastor there. He is the one who's the leader in the community. He says don't shop where you can't work. Have you been to Harlem on 25th Street?

Interviewer: I've been to Harlem, but I don't know it very well.

Interviewee: Well, we couldn't work in any of those stores. I'm talking about in the '60s. None of them would hire us to work. We couldn't work; couldn't get jobs. He's the one who fought. He did the most legislation. He was brilliant. Adam Clayton Powell, please read up on him when you get a moment.

B: Crafted Narrative

The following crafted narrative that resulted from the transcript segment in part A.

**Story 1: “Something to aspire to”**
It was very important to know about my history and it still is, because we contribute to this country, and we're not taught about that. When I was in grammar school the only thing I ever learned about was this is one page that showed black people picking cotton. I was so ashamed, and I felt so bad, I just cringed. Then there was another time you had to talk about what country you came from. We were brought here as slaves, and I was always so ashamed. I felt so bad, but that's why I got involved with the library because I wanted to read more fiction stories. There were very few fiction stories then, they were called black people's stories. At the library, I saw that, and I thought about our history and culture. It's a history that I thought more to learn about because our history is not taught. This is what we're fighting for, same thing with Latinos it's not taught. It should be taught, it’s part of America. This is how you get pride, "I Know who I am. I know what my ancestors did, and I sit on their shoulders." I wouldn't have my job today if it wasn't for them. We couldn't eat at a restaurant; we couldn't shop in stores. They didn't want you going in and trying on clothes that white people had to come in and buy. You couldn't try on shoes because you're putting your black foot in the shoes. You couldn't even go in the stores.

That's why Adam Clayton Powell was so big, because he said, "Work where you buy." We couldn't get jobs in none of those stores. This is in the '60s. I'm not talking about olden history. We could spend our money, but you couldn't go in and try on anything. You could go in and buy it. They wanted you in and out of those stores. Adam Clayton Powell talked about what's in your hand. What's in your hand? There's something in your hand that you can work with or do or give or share. When you have something going on for you, what's in your hand? That's a very famous speech. He was a famous African American civil rights leader in Harlem, became a congressman. He says don't shop where you can't work. We couldn't work in any of those stores. None of them would hire us to work. He's the one who fought.

This is why I work with young people because they don't feel they're somebody. They don't know who they are. You have to know who you are, and from where you came. This helps you to know where you're going. People talk about today, "Oh, Black lives matter. Every life matters." Sure it does, but we haven't-- That's why so many people have so much low self-esteem. My parents talked about it. It's not that long ago, that we couldn't eat in White Castle. Black people weren't allowed to eat in White Castle and other restaurants. My father took us to see what happened in the struggle. People would go in, sit at the counter and be arrested. I saw them sitting at the counter in White Castle, we were parked across the street. I saw them being arrested. I saw the police. Young people don't get it today.

I lived through all of that. I always thought to read and learn more about it because it wasn't in the history books. My family, they were so excited about hearing Malcolm X speak. We would go to my aunt's on Sunday to see him speak on TV, they loved Malcolm X. I saw him being assassinated on TV. I don’t know if you've heard of Ossie
Davis, very famous actor. He gave the eulogy at Malcolm X’s funeral. I had him come to the library and talk about that. I showed the film of Malcolm X, and he delivered that eulogy.

…story continues, but later I broke it off into two stories, and retitled this one “What’s in your hand?” and titled the other “Something to aspire to.”

***Phase 2: Lifetime Narratives of Civic Participation***

The process above, transforming transcript data into narratives, was conducted for all experiences participants shared related to their civic participation to produce a comprehensive document for each participant of their lifetime narratives of civic participation.

In phase 2, crafted stories were organized in chronological order within four life stages; 1. Childhood, 2. Young Adulthood, 3. Adulthood, and 4. Older Adult. Stories included in Childhood contained all relevant narratives from birth, including stories about their family’s (parents, aunts, grandparents, etc.) experiences of civic participation, up to end of elementary school. Stories included in Young Adulthood contained all stories from high school (teen years) to college (mid-20s). Stories included in Adulthood included all the stories from their late 20s up to late 50s, and stories from their 60s onward were included under Older Adult. The result of these stories was an extensive document for each individual participant containing stories of civic participation throughout their lives. Each participant was provided their personal lifetime stories of civic participation to review and edit before further analysis was conducted. Not all participants had edits to make, but they confirmed the stories reflected what they remembered and were a good representation of their experiences. A few participants added new stories or elaborated on the original stories, and this was incorporated into their finalized lifetime narratives document.

This participant and I spoke over the phone after she read her stories and, in this conversation, she made edits throughout her stories and expanded on several stories as well as clarified information. The new document was sent back to her, and she confirmed receipt and approval of the stories.

**The narrative below is the version edited by the participant that was used for the analysis. Participants’ edits are in red font.**

**Story 1: “What’s in your hand?”**

It was very important to know about my history and it still is because we contribute to this country, and we’re not taught about that. When I was in grammar school the only thing I ever learned about was this one page that showed black people picking cotton. I was so ashamed, and I felt so bad, I just cringed in my seat. Then there was another time you had to talk about what country you came from. We were brought here as slaves, and I
was always so ashamed. I felt so bad, but that's why I got involved with the library because I wanted to read more about people who looked like me. There were very few fiction stories then. At the library, I saw that, and I thought about our history and culture. It's a history that I thought more to learn about because our history is not taught. This is what we're fighting for, same thing with Latinos it's not taught. It should be taught, it's part of America. This is how you get pride, 'I Know who I am. I know what my ancestors did, and I stand on their shoulders.' I wouldn't have my job today if it wasn't for them. We couldn't eat at a restaurant; we couldn't shop in stores. They didn't want you going in and trying on clothes that white people had to come in and buy. You couldn't try on shoes because you're putting your black foot in the shoes. You couldn't even go in the stores.

That's why Adam Clayton Powell was so big, because he said, "Work where you buy." We couldn't get jobs in none of those stores. This was in the '60s. I'm not talking about olden history. We could spend our money, but you couldn't go in and try on anything. You could go in and buy it. They wanted you in and out of those stores. Adam Clayton Powell talked about what's in your hand. What's in your hand? There's something in your hand that you can work with or do or give or share. When you have something going on for you, what's in your hand. That's a very famous speech. He was a famous African American civil rights leader in Harlem, became a congressman. He says don't shop where you can't work. We couldn't work in any of those stores. None of them would hire us to work. He's the one who fought to change legislation.

This is why I work with young people because they don't feel they're somebody. They don't know who they are. You have to know who you are, and from where you came. This helps you to know where you're going. People talk about today, "Oh, Black lives matter. Every life matters." Sure it does, but we haven't-- That's why so many people have so much low self-esteem. My parents talked about it. It's not that long ago, that we couldn't eat in White Castle. Black people weren't allowed to eat in White Castle and other restaurants. My father took us to see what happened in the struggle. People would go in, sit at the counter and be arrested. I saw them sitting at the counter in White Castle, we were parked across the street. I saw them being arrested. I saw the police. Young people don't get it today.

I lived through all of that. I was taught to read and learn more about it because it wasn't in the history books. My family, they were so excited about hearing Malcolm X speak. We would go to my aunt's on Sunday to see him speak on TV, they loved Malcolm X. I saw him being assassinated on TV. I don't know if you've heard of Ossie Davis, very famous actor. He gave the eulogy at Malcolm X's funeral. I had him come to the library and talk about that. I showed the film of Malcolm X, where he delivered that eulogy.

**This is the quote used in the dissertation results.

“This is how you get pride; I know who I am. I know what my ancestors did, and I stand on their shoulders. I wouldn't have my job today if it wasn’t for them. We couldn't eat at
a restaurant; we couldn't shop in stores. They didn't want you going in and trying on clothes that White people had to come in and buy. You couldn't try on shoes because you're putting your Black foot in the shoes. You couldn't even go in the stores…This is why I work with young people because they don't feel they're somebody. They don't know who they are. You have to know who you are, and from where you came. This helps you to know where you're going. People talk about today, "Oh, Black lives matter. Every life matters." Sure, it does, but we haven't-- That's why so many people have so much low self-esteem.”

***Phase 3: In Vivo Coding***

**IPA: First order of analysis continued**

In phase 3, the finalized lifetime narratives for each participant were uploaded into their respective Nvivo project (1. Nvivo project for African American group, 2. Nvivo project for Latinx Immigrant group). A coding shell was created (the same for both groups), and in vivo coding was conducted (first for African American group).

In vivo coding was used here to continue developing an understanding of the individual experience and perceptions of a common phenomenon through a variety of experiences within a single case. This corresponds to the first order of analysis described in IPA (Finlay, 2011; Larkin & Thompson, 2011).

**A. Coding shell created**

A coding shell was created to initially conserve the organization of the narratives according to the life stages. In addition, three other codes were created to parse out information that discussed how participants defined civic participation, what it feels like for them, and how they got involved. Finally, one last code was added, intersectionality, to capture narratives that spoke about experiences involving more than one category of difference or system of oppression. This code was more relevant for analysis pertaining to the second theme (Appendix P2). In addition, not all codes created during this analysis were used for the dissertation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nvivo Shell:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Define Civic Par</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03. What CP feels like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>000. How people got involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. CP Childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. CP Young Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. CP Adulthood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. CP Older Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Intersectionality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. In vivo coding

In vivo coding was applied to entire stories and not on a line-by-line basis. Therefore, the story that was crafted above and titled “What’s in your hand?” was coded as:

*Code: I know what my ancestors did, and I stand on their shoulders*

This code was organized under parent code 4. CP Young Adult (refer to coding shell above) because this speaks to the participants experiences growing up in the 60s which would have placed her in her teens, although some of the experiences covered in this story also refer to childhood.

*** Phase 4: Axial Coding Between Cases ***

IPA: Second order of analysis

As themes began to emerge through in vivo coding, I began applying axial coding when appropriate and continued in vivo coding of new experiences that had not previously emerged.

This corresponds to the second order of analysis described in IPA, which guides us to begin comparing across cases to draw out patterns and themes in experiences and perceptions (meaning making), and better understand how these experiences vary between individuals (Finlay, 2011).

A. Axial coding between cases

Code: *Reciprocity, honoring ancestors, paying it forward* was created as a new parent code that stood on its own.

Coding explanation: The story that was in vivo coded *I know what my ancestors did, and I stand on their shoulders* spoke to a theme that began to emerge among African American participants discussing the how their participation was linked to past personal experiences, as well as historical, that motivated to get involved in hopes of making it better for others in the present and for future generations. This story, along with other participants’ stories, was coded: *Reciprocity, honoring ancestors, paying it forward* as a new emergent code that included experiences from all the life stages.

Coding hierarchy for narrative “What’s in your hand?”:

Axial code: *Reciprocity, honoring ancestors, paying it forward*

In vivo code: *I know what my ancestors did, and I stand on their shoulders*

Note: At this point I saw that the Latinx code: *Reciprocity, Paying it forward* did not reflect stories of honoring ancestors, so I left this code as is until it was time to merge and see where the differences and convergence were.
***Phase 5: Selective Coding***

IPA: Second order of analysis continued

After conducting axial coding and concluding in vivo coding, I reflected on the theoretical framework guiding the study (the intersectional life course perspective) to guide this final phase of data analysis.

This phase is a continuation of IPA second order of analysis, which suggests that at this stage we deepen the analysis by also looking for differences across cases and bringing in other theories/lens that help to make sense of the analysis (Finlay, 2011).

Below I provide a quick summary of the intersectional life course perspective (Ferrer et al., 2019) to demonstrate how it guided my selective coding process.

The Intersectional Life Course Perspective Dimensions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Life events, timing, and structural forces.</td>
<td>Establish time order of events and identify the structural forces that contribute to the manifestation of such events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Local and globally linked lives.</td>
<td>Examine locally and globally linked lives beyond individual and families to generations and national/international borders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Identities and categories of difference.</td>
<td>Consider categories of difference (e.g., race, gender), the processes of differentiation (e.g., racialization, gendering, etc.), and systems of domination (e.g., racism, colonialism, sexism, and patriarchy) and how it shifts throughout the life-course, historical contexts, and structures and systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Agency, domination, and resistance.</td>
<td>Assessment of how processes of differentiation and systems of domination shape the lives, agency, and resistance among older people. Present agency and resistance as both structured and interpretive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A. Four new higher-level codes were created based on intersectional life course theory.**

The following are the initial codes that were created corresponding to the four dimensions of the intersectional life course theory.

Theme 1. Experiences of Belonging (social categories and experiences of oppression)

Theme 2. Health and Aging
Theme 3. Agency and Resistance

Theme 4. Linked Lives

Parent code: Reciprocity, honoring ancestors, paying was placed under selective code: Theme 4. Linked Lives.

Coding explanation: This code spoke of the ways participants connected directly with individuals throughout their lives, with younger and future generations, and with people across time, drawing on the experiences of ancestors throughout history. Therefore, I felt that it was best suited to speak to the dimension of Linked Lives, since it showcased how participants experiences where motivated and informed by people all along the continuum of their lives as well as their ancestry.

B. The two Nvivo projects (African American project and Latinx Immigrant project) are merged before continuing further with selective coding.

Explanation to merge: After creating the selective codes in both projects and doing an initial coding for each, I realized it was time to merge the two projects to get a more comprehensive understanding of civic participation experiences among both groups. During this merge, many codes integrated seamlessly since they shared the same code names (shell codes, some parent codes, selective codes), others were slightly different and I had to integrate them manually, others were totally different, and this allowed me to see where the groups diverged in their experience.

Parent code: Reciprocity, honoring ancestors, paying it forward and the Latinx immigrant project code: Reciprocity, paying it forward were both left separate under selective code: Theme 4. Linked Lives.

C. Selective coding continues with integrated Nvivo project.

Selective coding required an intensive process of reflection to ensure that the codes created captured the dimensions of the intersectional life course perspective. Some of these codes were straight forward, and the same language used in the theory was used for the codes. For example, this code: Theme 4. Linked Lives reflects the language from the dimension “Local and globally linked lives.” Other dimensions, such as “Life events, timing, and structural forces” was more difficult to capture succinctly in a code that also reflected the codes that had emerged through the analysis process thus far (Appendix P1).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Selective Codes</th>
<th>Subcodes included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2. Local and globally linked lives. | Examine locally and globally linked lives beyond individual and families to generations and national/international borders. | Theme 4. Linked Lives | 1. Culture, religion, and Spirituality in CP  
2. International participation  
3. Reciprocity, honoring ancestors, paying it forward  
4. Reciprocity, Paying it forward |

**Coding explanation:** This dimension was captured through participants stories of participation across international borders, generations, and ancestry. Their stories reflected a connection to personal past experiences, their communities of origin outside the U.S., and honoring those who had paved the way across history.

**D. Finalizing selective codes**

As part of the selective coding phase, I also engaged in a reflective process to ensure that the codes placed under each selective code was best suited to reflect the corresponding theoretical dimension. This was sometimes a complicated process, since stories were comprehensive enough to capture several dimensions, and because the dimensions themselves are not exclusive to each other, but rather interconnect. For this example, however, this process was straightforward and served to expand the ways we think about the dimension of local and globally linked lives.

**Code:** Reciprocity, honoring ancestors, paying it forward is divided up into two codes Reciprocity, Paying it forward and Honoring Ancestors.

**Coding explanation:** Honoring Ancestors was unique to African American experiences of civic participation. This code contained the stories of participants’ participation as a way to honor the work/contributions/struggles of their ancestors. Participants stories reflected in this theme went beyond connections with living people and included a spiritual connection to history. The other code Reciprocity, paying it forward was further
refined into experiences reflecting civic participation across generations and experiences of participation across borders.

Final coding hierarchy for narrative “What’s in your hand?”:

Selective Code: Theme 4. Linked Lives

Axial code: Reciprocity, honoring ancestors, paying it forward

Axial code: Honoring Ancestors

In vivo code: I know what my ancestors did, and I stand on their shoulders

***Phase 6: Write up of Results***

These subcodes were used to present evidence for the Results “Chapter X: Linked Lives”

The story “What’s in your hand?” was included under the theme “Civic Participation Across History: Honoring Ancestors” where I discuss the ways older African American adults are spiritually connected to the past and how those experiences influence their civic participation.

Example from dissertation:

Chapter X: Linked Lives

Civic Participation Across History: Honoring Ancestors

Through their relationship to the ancestors, they are connected to history. To honor the ancestors is to honor the history of Black people in the U.S. and to contribute to the growing prosperity of their community. One participant describes how their connection to the ancestors, instills pride in who she is. This is a connection that she is committed to establishing among the youth to develop their self-esteem.

“This is how you get pride; I know who I am. I know what my ancestors did, and I stand on their shoulders. I wouldn't have my job today if it wasn’t for them. We couldn't eat at a restaurant; we couldn't shop in stores. They didn't want you going in and trying on clothes that White people had to come in and buy. You couldn't try on shoes because you're putting your Black foot in the shoes. You couldn't even go in the stores…This is why I work with young people because they don't feel they're somebody. They don't know who they are. You have to know who you are, and from where you came. This helps you to know where you're going. People talk about today, "Oh, Black lives matter. Every life matters." Sure it does, but we haven't-- That's why so many people have so much low self-esteem.”
Appendix P5. Coding Tree

Note: Italicized words are chapters and themes as presented in the dissertation, and non-italicized words are codes used in analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Dimensions</th>
<th>Selective Codes</th>
<th>Axial Codes</th>
<th>Child Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Life events, timing, and structural forces. | **Theme 1. Social, Political, Economic, Health** | Anti-Black Society, Emmett Till, Groveland Four, Civil Rights | -Civil Rights  
- Presidential Elections  
- Racism |
| **Chapter VII: Geopolitical and Socio-Historical Context in Civic Participation** | *Theme: Civic Participation within a Socio-Political Context Across the Life Course* | Gov Distrust (Corruption and state sanctioned violence) | -Political participation  
- Abuse and corruption |
| & **Theme: Civic Participation in the Context of Economic Inequality** | | | |
| Health Context | *Theme: Civic Participation in the Context of National Health Crises* | | -BLM  
- COVID  
- HIV |
<p>| Immigration (License movement, DACA, Deportations) | <em>Theme: Civic Participation within a</em> | | Political participation |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identities and categories of difference.</th>
<th><strong>Theme 2. Race, Age, and Health</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter VIII: The Role of Age/Ageism, Health/illness Stigma, and Race/Racism in Civic Participation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Socio-Political Context Across the Life Course</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty (Education and Work)</td>
<td>-Childhood Poverty -Work and CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme: Civic Participation in the Context of Economic Inequality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age and Ageism</td>
<td>-Age and CP -Ageism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme: Age and Ageism in Civic Participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and CP</td>
<td>-Mental Health -Physical Health -Stigma and healthcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective CP. Choice due to Race.Ethnicity. Racism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme: Race and Racism in Civic Participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recursos. Resources (Networks)</td>
<td>-African and Black American Culture and History -Latinx Culture and Beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and Historical Preservation</td>
<td>-Resource Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme: Cultural and Historical Preservation as Civic Participation</td>
<td>Theme: Building Supports for the Community -Day to day contributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency, domination, and resistance.</td>
<td><strong>Theme 3. Agency and Resistance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter IX: Agency and Resistance</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and Historical Preservation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme: Cultural and Historical Preservation as Civic Participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recursos. Resources (Networks)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local and globally linked lives.</td>
<td>Theme 4. Linked Lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Chapter X: Linked Lives</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Honoring Ancestors Theme: Civic Participation Across History: Honoring Ancestors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International Theme: Civic Participation Across Borders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Only in vivo codes (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Religion and Spirituality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Reciprocity, Paying it forward</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>