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Abstract

Using oral history interviews, this study collects and analyzes the narratives of fourteen Black Cuban migrants, residents of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Participants migrated to Albuquerque between 1994 and 2013, and either self-identify or were identified by others, as *negro(a)* or Afro-descendant. This study rejects notions of assimilation and focuses on the resettlement process and life experience of participants. This thesis uses many words used by participants to describe themselves and their experiences. The study investigates their resettlement process, paying close attention to how they navigate the notions of race and ethnicity in Albuquerque. This research identifies community and language as primary themes in the resettlement process of Black Cuban migrants, and analyzes these themes in depth.

Keywords: immigration, resettlement, Black Cubans, Afro-Cubans, assimilation
Albuquerque, New Mexico, Pan-Africanism, Latin America, Caribbean, integration

RESILIENCE TO SPARE:
THE RESETTLEMENT PROCESS OF BLACK CUBAN MIGRANTS
IN ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

by

Suyént Rodríguez Candeaux

B.A., University of New Mexico, 2017

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Pan African Studies.

Syracuse University
May 2019

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Dedication

Para mami y papi.

*Quienes han luchado y trabajado
incansablemente para darme las mejores oportunidades posibles.*

Gracias por tu amor y apoyo incondicional.

Los amo.

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Thank you to every single person who allowed me to capture your story for this study. I hope this work does your story justice. I hope it is better than you expected. I hope it brings you bliss. I hope it is everything you deserve, and more. I hope it brings change.

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Introduction

Introduction

After arrival in the United States, migrants are expected to engage in a resettlement process. For Cuban migrants who do not come under the family reunification program, their resettlement process is facilitated by Catholic Charities or smaller refugee resettlement agencies. Migrants often use other spaces—formal and informal—to form their community and integrate into the United States. Within the field of sociology, there are many theories on how integration functions. These theories are often problematic, ethnocentric, nationalistic, and supremacist. Thus, I intend to take a different look at the resettlement and integration process of Black Cuban migrants in the United States by intersecting Psychological Acculturation and Critical Race Theory. Two major themes were present in the oral histories I have been told: community involvement and language. The narrators engaged in a creative process of community involvement by using the resources around them to create a new life in the United States. Language was present in nearly every oral history, the role of language ranged from being an advancement barrier to a social unifier. Both of these major themes have an integral role in the resettlement process of the narrators.

As a tenant of Critical Race Theory, I push my study beyond explaining society, and into offering concrete guidelines to improve the existing social and cultural structures of the resettlement process. This work criticizes the color-blindness of immigrant assimilation theories, and provides a metanarrative that complicates the existing stories of Cuban immigrants in the United States. I offer a new way to look at these processes by providing participants with an opportunity to

share their lived experiences through their oral histories. I collected fourteen oral histories of Cubans in Albuquerque, New Mexico that identified as Black, afro-descendant, and/or were identified as Black by others. I measured and identified race in these three ways to illustrate the diversity in identification of the people whose stories I captured, and also to highlight the complexity of identity. This approach is based on work done by Dr. Nancy Lopez that measures race based on three components: self-perceived race, ascribed race, and street race (López *et al*, 2017). In my research I included African ancestry to analyze the relationship between self-identifying as having African ancestry, and self-perceived race and ascribed race.

The year 2020 will be a census-taking year in the United States. The upcoming census will have some changes to the demographic data, these changes are being frequently discussed within communities of color. In an Afro-Latinx panel at the University of New Mexico in April 18, 2018, Dr. Nancy Lopez stated some significant differences between identities that should be taken into account when deciding which box to check in the census—and other forms that request demographic data. Dr. Lopez defined street identity, self-identity, and ancestry. She defined self-identity as the way persons define themselves, how they identify without any external influence. Street identity is how a person is perceived by others, it is the identity they carry when they walk down the street, it is the identity that they are perceived to have at a superficial glance. Ancestry is the geographical and/or ethnic identity of a person's ancestors, an identity that is genetically carried, although not always physically observable. It is important to understand the difference between

these identities to understand the information I present in this thesis. I strive to document how Black Cuban migrants engage with these three different identities, and how and if migration has altered the way they identify. All of the participants I talked with were in one or more of the following categories:

Do they self-identify as <i>negro(a)</i> ?	Do others identify them as <i>negro(a)</i> ?	Do they identify as mix?	Do they identify as having African ancestry?
--	--	--------------------------	--

The above chart will be used in my thesis to illustrate the multifaceted and complex ways the participants identify, and also to avoid the oversimplification of their identities.

Migrating into a country means more than working towards a better life, and learning a new culture; migrants also have to navigate how their new community perceives them. Unlike other migrants, Afro-descendant migrants are often identified as their proximal hosts (African Americans) because of their phenotypical race (Kasinitz, *et*, 2008). This affects how they are perceived, treated, socialized, and their experience in the United States. Simultaneously, they continue to hold other identities that may be overshadowed by their street-identity.¹ Black Cuban migrants must navigate a new system of racial classification, possibly having to redefine their

self-identity,² reconsider their street identity, and engage in community formation³ of a new space. In my study, I strive to answer how Black Cuban migrants function within the configurations of race and ethnicity in the United

¹ Street identity has been defined by Dr. Lopez as the identity that people are perceived to be by others.

² Self identity refers to how an individual identifies themselves.

³ Community formation refers to how migrants (national and international) engage with their community and create their community (Ruffin, 2018).

States. I identified community involvement in the form of social connections, employment, and education, and language as the main social factors that influence the resettlement experience of Black Cuban migrants.

There is much research and literature on the experience of Cuban migrants in Miami, Florida, but this body of scholarly research has primarily focused on the experience of middle and upper class White Cubans who migrated during the first two migration waves; this will be discussed in the next chapter (Current, 2010; Sweig, 2009). These previous studies have lacked an adequate racial approach. My study creates a new body of knowledge that will offset the lack of research on Afro-descendant Cuban migrants in the United States. This study should help scholars, institutions, and community members gain a deeper understanding of the many factors that affect the resettlement process of Black Cuban migrants. With this new knowledge, institutions will better serve this community, and ease their resettlement in the United States. Scholars could build on this foundational research to better explain Afro-descendants' identity reconstruction process that is caused by migration. Community members should be able to better understand their role in the resettlement process of Black Cubans migrants; and Black Cubans themselves should be able to engage in introspection facilitated by these research findings to better understand their own resettlement process.

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Albuquerque, New Mexico is the smell of hatch green and red chile roasting in the parking lots of grocery stores. It is the sight of the Sandia Mountains under the orange and blue sky. It is October dawns filled with hot air balloons. This space is all too often referred to as tricultural: the perfect balance between Native American cultures, Latinx/Hispanic cultures, and Anglo Saxon culture—problematically erasing the presence of afro-descendants in this space.

New Mexico Demographics ⁴

In 1990, 1,434,555 United States-born people and 80,514 foreign-born people resided in New Mexico. Only ten years later, the foreign-born population had grown to 149,606, an increase of 85.8 percent. Most recently, in 2016 the United States-born population rested at 1,882,609, and the foreign-born population at 198,406. Interestingly, 74.4 percent of the foreign-born population identified as Latino of any race in 2016, and 45.8 percent of the United States-born population identified as Latino. A total of 1,009,849 individuals in New Mexico identify as Hispanic/Latin *regardless* of country of origin. Although the United States-born population greatly surpasses the foreign-born population, Hispanics are a numerical majority.

As of 2016, 1.7 percent of the foreign-born population identified as Black or African American, and 2 percent of the United States-born population identified the same. In New Mexico, Black people are just as likely to be United States nationals as foreign born. This means, that both populations are just as likely to be encountered—

⁴ All of these numerical facts are sourced from Migration Policy Institute: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/NM>

and, numerically, one does not overshadow the other. As of 2016, 1,495 Cubans resided in New Mexico, that is 0.8 percent of the foreign-born population. Cubans in New Mexico are quantitatively surpassed by British, Germans, Chinese, Indians, Pilipino, Vietnamese, Mexicans, and Canadians. Mexicans have the highest number of foreign-born residents in New Mexico, scoring 69.2 percent.

Albuquerque, New Mexico Demographics

The total population of Albuquerque exceeds 448,000. Almost 40 percent of that population consists of Hispanics/Latinx. This means that Hispanic/ Latinx (specifically Mexican) culture is very present in Albuquerque. There are approximately 1,819 (0.36 percent) Cubans in Albuquerque.⁵ Well below the 3.7 percent of the United States population that Cubans are accountable for.⁶

Between 1983 and 2004 the United States has received 51,787 Cuban refugees. Cubans are the 7th largest refugee population in the U.S. The Cuban refugee population has been highly concentrated in Miami, Florida with 56.5 percent of Cuban refugees resettling there. Albuquerque ranks as the metropolitan area with the fourth-highest concentration of Cuban refugees in the United States.⁷ It is this high concentration of Cubans in Albuquerque—an unpopular city—that makes it intriguing, different, and worth looking at.

⁵ <https://www.cabq.gov/family/documents/affht-data.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/09/15/hispanics-of-cuban-origin-in-the-united-states-2013/>

⁷ [https://www.migrationpolicy.org\(a\)rarticle/refugee-resettlement-metropolitan-america](https://www.migrationpolicy.org(a)rarticle/refugee-resettlement-metropolitan-america)

Relocation

Most Cubans have been relocated to the Southeast side of the city. They are highly concentrated in the zip code 87108 (1.28 percent of the population there is of Cuban origin).⁸ This neighborhood is now called the International District, because of the high number of immigrants who have resettled there. However, prior to 2014 this area was notoriously called the War Zone.

Zip code 87108 has a violent crime and property crime index that is higher than the rest of the city, and the rest of the country. While this data may give the impression that the high number of migrants is what has caused the high rate of crime in this area it is important to understand that a majority of Cuban immigrants in Albuquerque are resettled through the Catholic Charities—the immigrants themselves do not have a choice in their relocation site. I believe that the Catholic Charities regularly resettles Cuban immigrants in this area because of the low cost of rent. Cubans have continued to be concentrated in this area because of the appeal of being nearby other Cubans and because they are already familiar with this area and/or surrounding areas; therefore, even if they move, they would likely stay nearby. Furthermore, they do not come to the United States with a surplus of money and often are economically restricted to the more inexpensive neighborhoods—such as the International District.

What does this mean for newly arrived Black Cuban migrants? They are being sent to crime-ridden areas and neighborhoods that are over-policed. *This* is their first impression of the United States, of life in Albuquerque, and it should be better.

⁸ <http://zipatlas.com/us/nm/albuquerque/zip-code-comparison/percentage-cuban-population.htm>

Resettlement into areas with high crime rates is specially dangerous for immigrant families with young children. There is a special vulnerability that comes with being an immigrant and speaking only Spanish. The number of people with whom migrants can socialize is limited, and they often have to put up with difficult people and situations because their language and network limits them.

Cuban immigrants in Albuquerque can find a relatively high concentration of other Cubans in the city. This is helpful for social integration and it helps them to navigate the city. They are in a city where Spanish is an extremely popular language, and they are surrounded by a great number of Hispanic/Latinx individuals. This is also helpful in terms of finding a job and conducting social interactions. These factors make resettlement into Albuquerque easier than it would be in other cities.

Literature Review

Earlier conceptualizations of acculturation assumed that migrants would unconditionally accept the culture, values, norms, and beliefs of the host country while relinquishing the ones of their home country (Gordon, 1964). This earlier conceptualization continues to reflect the current understanding of assimilation. However, assimilation is gradual and happens through generations (Alba & Nee, 2003). Every generation has different goals for their integration process. A family might believe that the only way to succeed in the United States is based on that earlier meaning of assimilation; it often leads to not passing the mother language to the next generation. Immigrants who planned to return home had low interest in assimilating and taught their mother language to the next generation. Second

generation immigrants would continue to assimilate by moving out of their parents' segregated neighborhoods, and marrying someone outside of their race. Sometimes, second-generation immigrants *wanted* to become ethnic and recover what had been lost due to assimilation (Alba & Nee, 2003).

Acculturation is the process through which culture and individuals are psychologically changed by the interaction between cultures. Acculturation includes: "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936 in Sam, & Berry, 2010). Psychology has focused on acculturation at an individual level; this is known as psychological acculturation. Berry (1997) defines four acculturation strategies: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization.

As a result of the interactions between different cultures, the boundaries of America's mainstream culture have been crossed, blurred, and have shifted. Alba & Nee (2003) affirm that West Indians and African Americans are subject to similar racial discrimination that pushes both groups into the same neighborhoods. However, they do not adequately address the experience and the assimilation process of Black immigrants. Jiménez (2010) explains that Mexican-Americans have most completely assimilated economically, educationally, and linguistically into the United States-American mainstream. Even though Mexican-Americans have successfully assimilated they are still behind their White countrymen. Mexican-Americans have not been able to "catch up" to White Americans in upward-mobility nor economic attainment because there are aspects of their identity that are not

optional, and they cannot shed. In contrast, European immigrants have an “optional” ethnic and racial identity (Waters, 2010). Having an optional racial identity arguably made it easier for European immigrants to assimilate into the United States American mainstream than their Mexican immigrant counterparts, whose racial identity is not optional (Jiménez, 2010). This argument is based on the assumption that Mexicans have a monolithic racial identity. In fact, there are White, Indigenous, and Black Mexicans; but the explanation provided by Jiménez assumes that all Mexicans look the same, and have the same racial identity. The assimilation experience of White, Black, and Indigenous Mexicans differs. White Mexicans have the “option” of shedding their ethnic and racial identity, whereas Mexicans of color cannot. My study attempts to fill this gap in the research by centralizing the racial experience of participants.

As described by Portes and Zhou (1993), segmented assimilation is a process that second-generation immigrants undergo.⁹ They describe three paths to assimilation: assimilating into American mainstream culture, assimilating into an American subculture, or staying rooted in the immigrant community. The social environment in which second-generation immigrants live is a major determinant of the assimilation path that immigrants go through. Most first-generation immigrant parents relocate to central cities and urban areas in the inner city. These writers claim that United States American natives ridicule Haitians, pushing them into a crossroad—they can either alter their behavior to fit into Black American culture or continue with their behavior and Haitian traditions. This example highlights the

⁹ Throughout this literature review I use the language that is used in the sources. While I disagree with assimilation, this is the word that is used in this specific literature.

importance of the national populations' reaction to immigrant identities. The authors argue that non-White immigrants who choose to assimilate into the mainstream culture end up assimilating into a subculture instead; this is usually downward assimilation, but as this literature review reveals: scholars believe there are other options.

Segmented assimilation is not binary, it is complex and has many possible ways of working (Haller, Portes, and Lynch, 2011). The frequency of downward assimilation must be acknowledged; this adds another layer to existing information and pushes segmented assimilation researchers to stay away from the ecological fallacy of overgeneralizing (Alba, Kasinitz, and Waters, 2011). Integration is a continuum, a spectrum, not a checkbox; many countries value education and obtaining a higher education is expected, so graduating college is not a form of assimilation but an attempt at upward mobility. However, choosing to attend a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) because of their history or the Black experience of these universities, may be a migrant's attempt at choosing to assimilate into a Black American subculture (Grillo, 2000). This is not to say that all Black immigrants that attend HBCUs do so with the goal of integrating into Black American culture, or that Black immigrants that attend Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) do not want to integrate into Black American culture.

New York state's large public university system and well-established welfare system facilitates the success of immigrant families (Kasinitz Mollenkopf, Waters, Holdaway, 2008). While this is uniquely the case in New York, education and non-profit assistance are factors to look at when analyzing the resettlement process of

immigrants in other states such as New Mexico. Immigrants today are entering communities where more families have transnational connections and well-established immigrant communities are more prevalent than in the past. Kasinitz, *et al* found that throughout history, and perhaps as a cause of immigration, the color line has been blurred. Immigrants that were not always considered White are now considered White. Regardless of the blurring of the color line, immigrants have experiences of racial and religious discrimination in their encounters with other people. Culture has often become an explanation for stereotyping immigrants' actions and personalities. It is important to understand the normalization of discrimination. Some immigrants have been exposed to discrimination for so long that they believe this type of interaction is the norm.

The decision to immigrate and the method chosen to do so is done through a cost-benefit analysis where immigrants carefully weigh their options (Dreby, 2010). One of the many routes of migration are parents who migrate and economically support the children they leave behind in their home countries. This strategic move allows the immigrant parent(s) to earn more money for their labor than they would in their home country, and provide for their children where the cost of living is lower than in the United States—the sacrifice accompanying this decision is great. These families are “transnational families,” where geographical borders divide a family that has emotional and economic ties (Dreby, 2010).

Children sometimes drop out of school because they plan or want to immigrate and do not believe they will see the results of their educational attainment—children often believe that their opportunities for success are in the

United States (Dreby). The increasing number of immigrants is creating a division in their home countries between the people who receive remittances and the people who do not—creating what Dreby cites as the “remittance bourgeoisie,” and giving children of immigrants “greater social standing.” The remittance bourgeoisie is salient to Cuba’s dual-currency economic system.

The Cuban economic reform of 1993-1995 introduced a dual currency system into Cuba by legalizing the United States Dollar (Blue, 2007). However, not everyone had access to both of these currencies. Remittances from family members in the United States created a social and economic divide between those who had access to USD and those who did not. As it will be explained in more detail in the next chapter, most of the earlier waves of Cuban migration were composed of White Cubans; therefore, most of the beneficiaries of USD remittances in Cuba were White. Along with the introduction of the dual-currency system, the 1993-1995 economic reform re-introduced racial, social, and economic inequalities into Cuba via who could obtain USD (Blue, 2007).

The 1.5 immigrant generation has a different process of integration into American society than did their parents; the main cause for this difference is their educational experience (Gonzales, 1969). Through the general education system immigrants have the opportunity to integrate into American society, their parents lacked this opportunity. Through the educational system, the 1.5-generation can develop a sense of belonging and membership in the community, and can develop social networks.

Busey and Cruz (2015) urge for the inclusion of Afro-Latino(a)s into the educational curriculum. The authors explain the complexity of the Latino(a) identity and history, and the need to include Latino(a)s of African descent into history courses. The authors also believe that understanding Black Latino(a) history is crucial for an accurate understanding of Black history in and outside of the United States of America. They also argue that a more inclusive educational curriculum works to defeat the stereotypical image of Latino(a)s having only European and Indigenous ancestry. This inclusion to the academic curriculum would make it easier for Afro-descendant immigrants to resettle and integrate with very little racial and/or ethnic dissonance, because their identity would be less disparaged by their new countrymen and women. Instead of having to choose between a racial and cultural identity, Afro-descendant immigrants would have the opportunity to embrace more comprehensive identities. I found that this was true of younger migrants, whereas Cuban migrants that came when they were older had firmly established identities that were not altered by people's perception of them.

After immigration, first-generation Cuban migrants face a change in how race is conceptualized. Latin American countries conceptualize race as a continuum (Andrews, 2004). This is largely the case because Latin America's conceptualization of race is rooted in a caste system—there are many ways in which a Cuban can describe their race (e.i. *mulato(a)*, *mestizo(a)*, *negro(a)*, *blanco(a)*). In contrast, the United States sees race as a binary system. Dzidzienyo (2005) claims that race is more restricted in the United States because the country is still living the results of the one-drop rule and Jim Crow laws that segregated all people of color. Afro-descendant

immigrants may be considered *mulato(a)* or *mestizo(a)* in their home country, but in most parts of the United States most would be labeled Black. According to Dzidzienyo, second-generation immigrants would not undergo the same conflicting change in racial conceptualization because they did not experience the caste system, their understanding of race is informed by the United States' one-drop rule. In addition to a differing conceptualization of race, Dzidzienyo and Oboler (2005) believe that it is conflicting when Afro-descendant immigrants are perceived as their proximal host¹⁰ (African-Americans) because their cultural identity is disregarded. This will be further discussed when I share Javier's singular story.

Researchers, including Greenbaum (2002), argue that Afro-Cuban immigrants had to rely on their national identities in order to neutralize the negative connotations of their Blackness. Afro-descendant immigrants that choose to differentiate themselves from African-Americans might do so with the intention of negotiating the negative connotations of being a Black person in the United States. By highlighting their cultural or national identity as a means to highlight a difference, they disassociate from African Americans as a coping technique. However, regardless of their efforts, Jim Crow forced all people of color together, thus Black Cubans and African Americans ended up forming tight relationships and marrying each other in the 1930s and 1940s. Greenbaum (2002) describes another scenario. After the collapse of the cigar industry, Afro-Cubans in Ybor City, Florida migrated North, the reduction of the population weakened the Black Cuban community, thus forcing the remaining Afro-Cubans to integrate into Black America. In these cases

¹⁰ The proximal host is the racial or ethnic group in the receiving country that immigrants are perceived to be part of.

described by Greenbaum (2002), there are Black Cubans who adopt a national identity as a means to alleviate the negative connotations of being Black in the United States; they choose an assimilation path that remains rooted in their immigrant communities. The second case describes the importance of laws in the receiving country and how these laws influence and even force immigrants' assimilation path. The third case describes a weakening immigrant community that pushes immigrants to assimilate into the American subculture of their proximal host.

Newby (2005) interviewed 45 Afro-Cubans in Albuquerque, New Mexico and Austin, Texas. They found that how Cuban immigrants integrated depended on their rejection and/or acceptance from different ethnic groups. Mexican locals did not accept Afro-Cubans as Hispanics, and questioned their presence in Hispanic venues. The Black community in these areas also rejected Afro-Cubans because they did not share the same history. These rejections led Black Cuban immigrants to preferably identify by their nationality. What I found was much different from this, Black Cubans had good relationships with Mexicans, and often fraternized with them. They did not share any stories of rejection either with Mexicans or African Americans. While Cubans did identify as Cubans, most also identified as Black or Afro-descendant—this did not change after migrating.

Methods

The designated methodology for this research study was gathering oral histories. This was the most appropriate measure because it empowered the community to share their narratives, it allowed them to share their histories without

me imposing perimeters, and it allowed the participants to share what was important about their lives in the United States instead of being given strict guidelines on what they should talk about. Engaging in oral histories neutralized the power dynamics associated with my positionality, instead giving the power of the study to the narrators. This study was based in Albuquerque in 2018, where I conducted oral-history interviews of 14 Cuban migrants.

Participants

The participants in this study are narrators, they are community members who chose to participate in this collection of oral histories. Narrators were male and female Cubans over 18 years old that self-identified as Black or having African ancestry, or were identified as Black by another individual. Narrators had to live in Albuquerque at the time of the oral history interview. People were not allowed to participate if they were under 18 years old, did not identify as Black or as having African ancestors, if someone else did not identify them as Black, and if they did not live in Albuquerque at the time of the oral history interview.

Fourteen people shared their oral histories. Seven self-identified as Black and three identified as a being mixed, eleven were identified as Black by someone else, thirteen identified as having African ancestry, and all fourteen identified as being Hispanic/Latino(a). Four of the narrators were female and ten were males. Thirteen of the narrators were born in Cuba and one was born in the United States to a Cuban father and Mexican mother. Those born in Cuba migrated to the United States between 1994 and 2013. A married couple migrated in 1994, one participant in 1999,

one in 2000, one in 2003, one in 2004, one in 2005, one in 2009, three in 2010, one in 2012, and one in 2013. Eleven of the narrators left Cuba as adults (over 20 years old), one left as a toddler and another as a 16-year-old. The educational level of narrators varied; however, this was not a common topic of discussion within their oral histories.

Sampling procedure

I used the snowball method as the sampling procedure. After each oral history interview was finished I asked narrators if they knew of someone else who met the inclusion criteria that would be interested in participating. Some participants gave me contact information of people. I then contacted the possible narrators by phone. This was the most appropriate sampling procedure as there is not a common location where Cubans gather in the community where I could approach them.

Measures

Before the oral history interview started, during our introductory conversation, I omitted mentioning race because I did not want to make narrators aware of race—if there was any mention of race during their history I wanted it to be as independent as possible. I used a set of carefully constructed oral history questions that were intended to spark the conversation such as “How do you describe yourself?” Ultimately, narrators had the agency to direct the conversation in the direction they desired—sharing what they deemed was important. Narrators had the power to share as much or as little as they wanted. The oral history interviews were

conducted when and where the narrator suggested; homes, the barbershop, and coffee shops were some of the locations.

As the collection of oral histories continued, I updated the language I used throughout the encounter as a way to more accurately represent the community, the language they use, and to render the power of storytelling to them. For example, during one of the first oral history interviews the narrator mentioned “integration,” a word he used to describe the process of settling into the United States, becoming a member of the community. Thereon, if I was to talk about the process of resettlement I would use the word “integration.” Participants defined “integration” individually, each giving it a unique personal meaning. Eleven of the interviews were conducted fully in Spanish, two were conducted in Spanglish, and one in English. The interviews were audio recorded for accuracy with the permission of the narrators.

Limitations

The most stark limitation of this research is the imbalance of gender distribution. The ratio of males to females was 2.5 to 1. This was not intentional. In fact, halfway through the collection of oral histories I realized that this was happening and, in an attempt to rectify the imbalance, I intentionally began asking narrators if they knew women who would be interested in participating. This attempt was unsuccessful. A second limitation of the narrators was the age distribution. Two participants were in their early twenties, while the rest of them were middle-aged. No seniors participated as narrators. These limitations may be representative of the

general population of Black Cuban migrants in Albuquerque, but there is no reliable data to corroborate the number of Black Cuban residents in Albuquerque.

The histories I collected were subject to filtering by the narrators, because, as they share the information that they deem important, they are also able to exclude information. While this is a strength of oral histories that I am counting on, it is also a limitation, because I must rely on the history that is provided. Oral histories are based on the memories of the narrators and on their viewpoints. Memories are fragile; they may be distorted and manipulated. But memories may also be updated—as time goes by and more data about an event is collected, the recollection of an event may have more accurate information that was not recalled or available in the beginning.

Another limitation of this study is the amount of time I spent in the field. Having spent only two months collecting oral histories, I had limited access to the population and limited time to collect information. As such, the scope of my research is limited by the time I had to conduct interviews, analyze them, and write this thesis. The scope of my research is limited to Albuquerque, the applicability of this study beyond this space is disputable. Lastly, as a researcher I must address my positionality. I am a young Black and Hispanic/Latina woman, of African, Chinese, French, and Spanish descent. I was born in La Habana, Cuba and migrated to Albuquerque as a child. I am college educated and bilingual. My positionality allowed me to have relatively easy access to possible narrators, and because I engaged in snowball sampling I was able to sample beyond the immediate community I knew. My age neutralized some of the power dynamics that would be

associated with my positionality. The methodology I chose—oral histories—also balanced the power dynamics of the relationship because the power of narrating was given to the participants and the highest value was placed on them and their histories.

Chapter Overviews

In the upcoming chapter, I briefly provide some historical background. I analyze race relations in Cuba and migration history between the United States and Cuba. Focusing on migration waves, I cover the push-and-pull factors of the four Cuba-to-United States migration waves and migration policies. The second chapter focuses on community involvement as participants pursue their education, work, become involved in the community, practice religions, and frequent local establishments. The third chapter analyzes participants' language, the social implications and boundaries of language, linguistic discrimination, and the limitations of language. The final part of this work is composed of a conclusion and resolution that offer guidelines on how to move forward with the findings of this research, how to implement this work into our lives, and the implications of the results of this work.

Chapter One: Historical Background

Chapter One: Historical Background

In this chapter I provide a brief historical background of race relations and the colonization in Cuba; paying special attention to the life experiences of Black Cubans in the island. I discuss the colonization of Cuba by the Spanish and its war of independence, followed by two United States occupations. I analyze Cuba's relationship to and within the African diaspora. I analyze the post-revolution migration waves from Cuba to the United States; I focus on the push-and-pull factors of these waves, and the economic status and race of the populations that make up these waves. These are important factors to understand, as they provide the context for the migratory experiences of the narrators in the upcoming chapters. The Cuba the narrators lived in and the United States they migrated to is a result of the history shared in this chapter. Their experiences as Cuban migrants is a result of these waves and the path paved by Cuban migrants before them. In this upcoming section I discuss race relations in Cuba: how the government sees it and how history shows it.

Race in Cuba

In the United States of America the term *mulato* is outdated, and carries negative connotations—that is a matter of perspective. In Cuba, *mulato*, and *mestizo* are still commonly used to describe a person's phenotypical race. These are the definitions of ethnicity and race that I will use as the foundation for the content of my thesis:

Ethnicity: generally used in reference to groups characterized by a common nationality, geographic origin, culture, or language (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993).

Race: people typically use skin color, hair, and other physical characteristics to define race. Many psychologists today agree that race is more of a social construction than a biological essential

(Matsumoto & Juang, 20).

Race in Cuba was never harmonious, or free of White supremacy. Israel Castellanos, a Cuban researcher born in 1891, believed in the biological reality of race—that criminality was inherited and associated with race. His racial criminology studies and articles were published in Cuban academic journals (Bronfman, 2005).

The quotes below provide examples of this scientific racism:

“[T]he North American tables only use the categories ‘White’ and ‘Black,’ with all data on mulattoes folded into one category of Black. In other words, the American ethnic puritanism stubbornly refuses to recognize the anthropological reality of the mestizo. As if obscuring the statistics eliminated the scientific reality of mestizaje[.]”

–Castellanos (in Bronfman, 2005)

Castellanos implemented a form with questions in race, complexion, hair, eyes, nose (tip and base), lips, mouth, ears, and tattoos. He believed that Cuba’s ethnic make up (hair and race) would further the study of criminology. (in Bronfman, 2005)

Many White and Black Hispanics are met with surprise because they do not meet the expectations of what a Hispanic “looks” like. After engaging in a variety of conversations regarding what a Hispanic looks like, one answer by Dr. Finnie

Coleman stood out: “Habitually, Hispanic is used to describe people that look neither White nor Black.”

As stated in the definition at the beginning of this section, ethnicity is not something that can be seen, and still, Hispanic—an ethnicity—is erroneously and commonly used in the United States as a racial descriptor. Ethnicity is not a common classification in Cuba, it does not exist in the census and several participants stated that the first time they encountered the word was in the United States. This is a change in classification that new Cuban migrants must engage. Moreover, the existing perceptions that United States residents have of what a Hispanic looks like further problematizes Black Cubans’ identities (discussed in Chapter Two).

Foreign Involvement in Cuba

In his diary, written in 1552, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, Bartolomé de Las Casas, a Spanish friar, describes the Indigenous population in Cuba to have been completely annihilated. De Las Casas’ assumption is inaccurate. In recent research it was found that in the maternal lineages of a sample size of 245 individuals, there was a 33 percent Native American, 45 percent African, and 22 percent Eurasian contribution; there was no trace found in paternal lineages (Mendizabal, 2008). However, indigenous ancestry in Cuba is not populous enough, the culture is not commonly seen, and indigenous Cubans are not frequently encountered. After the presumed annihilation of Taínos and Ciboneys, Bartolomé de las Casas, a historian turned fray and proclaimed “protector of Indians,” argued for

Africans to replace indigenous people as slaves (Las Casas, 1982). The first reports of Africans in Cuba are dated 1513 (Sweig, 2009). As the indigenous population in Cuba decreased, kidnapped Africans became the primary means of labor in the Spanish colony. In 1774, Cuba's population was 173,000, 25 percent of which were enslaved Africans, and 18 percent were free Blacks (Sweig, 2009). The genocide of indigenous Cubans and forced immigration of African enslaved people changed the population and face of the island, and would later change the island in its entirety in ways that colonizers would not of imagined.

Forced and voluntary immigration continued to take place in Cuba for different reasons. Florida was a Spanish colony between 1513 and 1763 and for a second time between 1783 and 1821 (Gonzalez-Pando, 1998). The British received Florida in 1763 as part of the Treaty of Paris, after which the Spanish who lived in Florida were considered refugees. To help them resettle into Cuba, the British gave each of them thirty-three acres of land and an enslaved Black person (Gonzalez-Pando, 1998). Later, during the coolie period, between 1847 and 1874, 125,000 to 150,000 Chinese indentured and contract laborers were brought into Cuba to work in sugarcane fields and build railyards alongside enslaved Black people. (Hu-DeHart, 1993; Yun, 2008). It is believed that the role of Chinese indentured servants was transitional from slavery into neo-slavery or "free labor." They worked alongside enslaved Black people, subject to much of the same inhumane living and working conditions, sometimes Chinese laborers resorted to suicide as an escape from these conditions (Yun, 2008). Between 1912 and 1921, approximately 81,000 Haitians and 75,000 Jamaicans immigrated to Cuba as laborers (Gomes da Cunha, 2014; Perez de

la Riva, 1979). However, Haitian immigration to Cuba can be traced back to 1791, the beginning of the Haitian revolution (Gomez da Cunha, 2014; Ferrer 2003; Scott, 2005). I was able to collect the oral history of a man whose parents migrated from Haiti to Cuba in the 1920s—he will share his story in the next chapter. Cuba has seen much immigration from around the globe, most of them related to labor and colonization.

From 1791 on, the fear of a Black insurrection grew stronger among the Spanish as the number of Black people in the island grew larger (Jimenez, 1993). Colonial officials believed the answer to this fear was to limit the interactions between enslaved Black people and free Black people, and to encourage Spanish immigration to the island to maintain Whites as the majority (Reid-Vazquez, 2011). The Haitian revolution of 1804 marked the start of “Black fear” in the Spanish colonizers of Cuba. Spanish colonizers became afraid that what happened in Haiti could also happen in Cuba—its most lucrative colony.

In 1812, a series of slave revolts took place in Puerto Principe, Bayamo, Holguín, and La Habana. The first rebellion was in Puerto Principe, where enslaved people and free Blacks rose against their enslavers in five plantations, killing eight enslavers, and burning or damaging several plantations (Childs, 2006). Colonizers staged a public execution of fourteen enslaved people, and sent sixty-three prisoners to Florida (Childs, 2006). Rumors spread that there would be another uprising in Bayamo; however, this plan did not come to fruition when a slave told his master of the plans for a rebellion (Childs, 2006). A month later, there was an uprising outside of La Habana, where the insurgents and free Blacks spread into three groups to

spread their message of insurgency to surrounding plantations (Childs, 2006). As warnings against any future rebellions and to calm the hysterical colony, Spanish officials massacred anyone they assumed played a role in the 1812 Aponté Rebellion—named after leader José Antonio Aponté (Sarduy & Stubbs, 1993).

The years 1843-1844 were characterized by the conspiracy of *La Escalera*. Around this time, Black people accounted for over 50 percent of the Cuban population (Sweig, 2009). Rumors of uprisings being planned by enslaved Black people, free Black people, and British abolitionists spread across the Cuban colony. As a response to this conspiracy, colonial officials tried and publicly executed anyone rumored to be part of the conspiracy, this became known as the Year of the Lash (Paquette, 1988; Reid-Vazquez, 2011; Sarduy & Stubbs, 1993). The veracity of whether or not this conspiracy was true is debated by historians, however the consequences of the conspiracy are terribly real (Paquette, 1988, Reid-Vazquez, 2011).

In November 1843, officials responded with unparalleled brutality to a series of slave revolts in western Cuba. The collective rebellions, which officials deemed a conspiratorial plot, became known as the Conspiracy of La Escalera (the Ladder). The ladder, to which officials tied and whipped the accused until they confessed or died, symbolized the violence of the 1844 repression both literally and figuratively. (Reid-Vazques, 2011)

On October 10, 1868, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes freed his slaves and offered them the opportunity to join his army and fight for Cuba's independence. This was the beginning of the Ten Years' war, the first of three wars to gain Cuba's

independence. Céspedes was unsuccessful; however, the Spanish government agreed to grant amnesty to participants in the insurrection and freed the slaves that participated (Sweig, 2009). From 1879-1880 there was a second insurrection in a smaller form (Sweig, 2009). On October 7, 1886, all Black people in Cuba were freed. Cuba's third and last war of independence began in 1895 and ended three years later in 1898. Promises of emancipation were made to encourage Black people to join the first two wars of independence, promises of racial equality were made to promote enlistment in the third war of independence.

The 1898 Cuban War of Independence attracted the intervention of the United States after the United States warship *Maine*, mysteriously sank on February 15, 1898 in the Habana Harbor (Bernal *et al*, 2005; Gonzalez-Pando, 1998; Rice, 2016). On April 8, 1898 United States Lieutenant Andrew Summers Rowan was sent to scout the island—fifteen days later the United States declared war on Spain, joining forces with Cuban revolutionaries to defeat Spain (Rice, 2016). Cuba's independence would become convenient for the United States' victory of the Spanish-American War. After losing the Spanish-American War, Spain ceded control of Cuba, Guam, Puerto Rico, and for twenty million dollars sold the Philippines to the United States. From 1898 to 1902 the United States occupied Cuba. The country was able to achieve independence from United States occupation given they turn over Guantanamo Bay to the United States and added the Platt Amendment to the Cuban Constitution. The Platt Amendment, appended to the Cuban constitution in 1901, allowed the United States to intervene in Cuban affairs (Gonzalez-Pando, 1998; Livingstone, 2009). By then, the United States was an

industrial and economic superpower that wanted to continue growing. However, “[r]acism prevented US presidents from trying to subsume the rest of the Americas into the United States. Politicians, scholars and journalists agreed that lazy, inferior ‘Latin Indians’ would drain the vigor of the thrusting new nation and dilute the purity of Anglo-Saxon blood” (Livingston, 2009). Moreover, colonizing Latin America would be financially costly. Instead, from 1898 to 1934 the United States chose to develop an intermediate path of dominating Central America and the Caribbean through the imperialistic designs of financial policies and military interventions (Livingston, 2009). By taking this route, the United States was able to control Central America and the Caribbean in a cost-effective way and they were able to decrease the chances of racial mixing on mainland United States.

From 1905 to 1909, the United States occupied Cuba for a second time. This second occupation was requested by Cuban President Estrada Palma who was elected for a second term in 1905. His reelection was surrounded by opposition conspiracies and insurrections (Gonzalez-Pando, 1998). Overwhelmed, he requested help from United States President Theodore Roosevelt, who authorized the occupation of Cuba until 1909 when a new president was elected (Gonzalez-Pando, 1998).

In 1901, all Cuban men could vote; this led to some Black political leaders like Juan Gualberto Gomez and Martin Morua Delgado; but racial equality had not sufficiently been established. A sense of betrayal overtook the Black community in Cuba. Fourteen years after Cuba gained its independence, Black Cubans saw that their position in society had not improved from what it was under Spain’s rule. They

had fought in the war of independence but were not given the justice, nor the political and social equality they were promised. In the span of ten years, between 1902 and 1912, 250,000 Spaniards migrated to Cuba, pushing Black Cuban laborers into unemployment (Perez, 1986). In 1902, Black political leaders like Generoso Campos Marquetti protested the unjust treatment of Black Cubans and met with President Tomas Estrada Palma and other political leaders to discuss the life conditions of Black Cubans, with no result. In 1908 Evaristo Estenos and Pedro Ivonet formed the Partido Independiente de Color, a political party to represent the interests of people of color; they were determined to change their socioeconomic status in their homeland (Ray, 2009, Sarduy & Stubbs, 1993, Sweig, 2009). But in 1909, conservative Black political leader Martin Marua Delgado sponsored the Morua Law, which made it illegal to form political parties across racial or religious lines (Ray, 2009; Sweig, 2009). In response, in 1912 the Partido Independiente de Color rose in rebellion releasing the Race War of 1912 (Perez, 1986, Ray, 2009).

After pleading with politicians to improve the living conditions of Black people, protests-turned-uprisings broke out throughout the country. The protests were centered in Pinar del Rio, Matanzas, Las Villas, and Oriente, and were led by Evaristo Estenos and Pedro Ivonet among others. Symbols of oppression such as foreign-owned and sugar properties were burned (Perez, 1986). In May of 1912, the United States deployed their military to protect the plantations owned by the United States. The Cuban government also dispatched the military to the Eastern coast and handed out rifles to White people to protect their property— “Whites were allowed to carry unlicensed weapons. Racial hatred was on the rise as a result of persistent

and unconfirmed reports of pillaging and of attacks upon White women by Blacks” (Fermoselle-Lopez, 1978). These rumors spread to Havana, where White mobs lynched Black people, chanted racist slurs, and persistently picked fights with the Black people they encountered. At the end of the short war, Cuban military members executed 3,000 Black people—civilians and rebels who had been promised immunity alike (Fermoselle-Lopez, 1978).¹¹ A military officer stated:

Since the withdrawal of the constitutional guarantees several negroes . . . have been hanged, presumably by the soldiers, but no one believes that these negroes were really rebels. As a rule the bodies are left hanging to the trees, or left lying by the roadside, no effort being made to bury them or to fix the responsibility for the executions. The execution of innocent negroes may have served the purpose of intimidating the disaffected. (Perez, 1986)

The Race War of 1912 came to an end with untold atrocities committed upon Black citizens who wanted the equality José Martí preached, the equality they were promised, and that they had fought for.

Cuba began to embrace its Black culture between the 1920s and 1940s. During this process of *Afrocubanismo*, African cultural traits were embraced and venerated as part of the national identity of the island (Moore, 2015). The movement was geared towards the adoption of Black culture and the Black arts as mainstream cultural traits. The movement “influenced virtually all domains of art, elite and popular. It inspired the poetry of Emilio Ballagas, José Tallet, and Nicolás Guillén”

¹¹ There is no official count of how many Black people were murdered, some sources indicate 3,000 (Fermoselle-Lopez, 1978).

(Moore, 2015). Although the movement officially died-off in the 1940s, the effects of *Afrocubanismo* are still observable in the country today. It is common to see *Iyabos*—initiates into the *Santeria* religion, African musical instruments are used in various popular genres such as *son* and *rumba*. Cubans' Blackness and connection to Africa is well understood and accepted as part of the national identity. Due to its national Afro-Cuban cultural identity, African influences are not seen as an “other,” helping Cuba be ahead of many western countries that do look upon Afro-descendant cultures as “others.” However, this nationalized racial identity gives the false perception that there is no racism in the country because “Blackness” has been “accepted” by the nation (Andrews, 2004). But this rationale is often far from the truth, even after decades have passed.

In the 1970s:

Castro defined Cubans as not only a Latin-American but also a Latin-African people. ‘Many of our forebears came to this land from Africa as slaves. And slaves put up strong resistance and fought hard in the Liberation Army. We are brothers of the Africans and ready to fight for the Africans,’ he said then.

‘The blood of Africa runs deep in our veins.’ (Sarduy & Stubbs, 1993)

Cubans have been able to accept their African ancestry without compromising their Cuban nationality. Sarduy and Stubbs (1993) claim this is the case because throughout history, Cubans of all races have united to fight common battles. To their point, while scientific racism, Darwinism, and eugenics were the norm in the United States, the venerated patriotic José Martí (1853-1895) believed in equality and justice for all. He died spreading his message of a united Cuba through his speeches and

literature (Sweig, 2009). General Antonio Maceo (1868-1896), a Black general who fought for Cuba's independence and died during the last war of independence, served as an example of Black excellence and Black patriotic sacrifice. One could easily conclude that with such wide acceptance of the Afro-Cuban culture, heroes, and color-blind ideology, the island would be a country of racial equality. The contrary is true, colorism and racism was and is alive. Between 1896 and 1900, three "scientists" exhumed the remains of General Antonio Maceo, they measured his inanimate body, and reached the conclusion that a man of such excellent leadership skill was not entirely Black, he was a "racial mixture of a 'White' brain capacity blended with 'Black' limb proportions and strength to render him a 'truly superior man'" (Bronfman, 2005; Montalvo & Montane). Fast forward one-hundred years to 2000, Fidel Castro states in a speech:

I am not claiming that our country is a perfect model of equality and justice. We believed at the beginning that when we established the fullest equality before the law and complete intolerance for any demonstration of sexual discrimination in the case of women, or racial discrimination in the case of ethnic minorities, these phenomena would vanish from our society. It was some time before we discovered that marginality and racial discrimination with it are not something that one gets rid of with a law or even with ten laws, and we have not managed to eliminate them completely, even in 40 years.

There has never been nor will there ever be a case where the law is applied according to ethnic criteria. However, we did discover that the descendants of those slaves who had lived in the slave quarters were the poorest and

continued to live, after the supposed abolition of slavery, in the poorest housing. (Castro, 2000)

Much like other plantation societies (societies whose economies functioned on the backs of and with the hands of enslaved people), Cuba continues to struggle with the present-day effects of the enslavement, racism, commodification of Black Culture, and exploitation that its Black citizens have had to and continue to endure.

Migration Waves

The United States was the first country in the Americas to have a process of naturalization based on race; it lasted from 1790 to 1952 (FitzGerald & Cook-Martin, 2014). The United States also had immigration policies based on race that lasted from 1803 to 1965 (FitzGerald & Cook-Martin, 2014). The United States has carefully constructed its immigration policies to limit *who* immigrates. Historically, there have been populations of people not allowed into the United States for a variety of reasons. These will be discussed in the following section. The “closer to Whiteness,” the more likely the person would be allowed to immigrate and naturalize in the United States. This desirable Whiteness was constructed to include practicing the protestant religion, ability to assimilate, and being a skilled laborer—these traits were looked upon positively. This was made possible through the enforcement of immigration quotas through the Immigration Act of 1924 which favored Northern and Western Europeans and more closely restricted Southern and Eastern European migration (Cook & Fitzgerald, 2014; Ngai, 1999). This prejudice and self-interest lay at the root of immigration policies and laws—past and present.

According to Cook-Martin and Fitzgerald (2014) immigration of a group of people has been banned because:

- They were believed to be unable to govern themselves (unfitting for a democratic nation like the United States)
- They were believed to be a threat to national security
- They were believed to be of an inferior race

And people have been allowed into the United States because:

- They were perceived as good workers
- The United States had good relations with their country of origin, and wanted to keep it this way
- The United States wanted to avoid conflict with a powerful, and economically thriving nation
- It was assumed they wanted to return to their country of origin after working
- The United States would benefit financially from labor because immigrants would be paid low wages

The United States has updated its immigration policies according to its current foreign interest. Furthermore, laws may seem equal on face value, but through deeper analysis it can be understood that they are based on constructions of who belongs and who is an “other” (Yeng, 2014). A historical example of this is when literacy tests were part of the screening process for immigrants. While this practice may seem equitable, it placed a preference on migrants that originated from English-

speaking countries and had access to education (i.e. it favored United Kingdom migrants over Japanese migrants) (FitzGerald & Cook-Martin, 2014). It also favored men over women by virtue of sexist educational policies in many countries. Migration between Cuba and the United States has been a longstanding tradition.

Table 1.

United States Naturalization and Immigration Laws by Ethnicity.

1790	Naturalization restricted to free whites ¹
1803	Restriction of black immigration ²
1862	Ban on Chinese “coolie” migration ³
1870	Naturalization allowed for persons of African descent ⁴
1875	Ban on subjects from “China, Japan, or any other oriental country” coming for “lewd or immoral purposes” ⁵
1882	Exclusion of Chinese labor immigration ⁶
1907–08	“Gentlemen’s Agreement” restricts Japanese ⁷
1917	Creation of Asiatic Barred Zone and literacy tests ⁸
1921	Quota system favoring northwestern Europeans ⁹
1924	Quota system further favoring northwestern Europeans and banning aliens ineligible to citizenship ¹⁰
1940	Naturalization allowed for “descendants of races indigenous to the Western Hemisphere” ¹¹
1943	Repeal of Chinese exclusion; Chinese become eligible to naturalize ¹²
1952	End of racial prerequisites to naturalization; symbolic Asian quotas ¹³
1965	End of national-origins quotas; caps on annual preference visas per country for Eastern Hemisphere ¹⁴
1968	Caps on annual preference visas for Western Hemisphere take effect ¹⁵
1976	Applies the annual caps on preference visas per country to the Western Hemisphere ¹⁶
1978	Single worldwide preference visa cap ¹⁷
1986	Mass legalization program; small NP-5 program favoring citizens of countries “adversely affected” by the 1965 act ¹⁸
1990	“Diversity visa” program ¹⁹

1. 1790 Uniform Rule of Naturalization, 1 Stat. 103, Sec. 1.

2. Act of Feb. 28, 1803, ch. 10, 2 Stat. 205.

3. 1862 Act to Prohibit the ‘Coolie Trade’ by American Citizens in American Vessels, 12 Stat. 340.

4. Naturalization Act of 1870, 16 Stat. 254, Sec. 7.

5. 1875 Page Law, 18 Stat. 477.

6. 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, 22 Stat. 58.

7. 1908 Root-Takahira Agreement.

8. 1917 Immigration Act, 39 Stat. 874.

9. 1921 Emergency Quota Law, 42 Stat. 5.

10. 1924 Immigration Act, 43 Stat. 153.

11. 1940 Nationality Act, 54 Stat. 1137.

12. 1943 Magnuson Act, 57 Stat. 600.

13. 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act, 66 Stat. 163.

14. 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, 79 Stat. 911.

15. 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, 79 Stat. 911.

16. 1976 Eilberg Act, 90 Stat. 2703.

17. Act of October 5, 1978, 92 Stat. 907.

18. 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, 100 Stat. 3359.

19. Immigration and Nationality Act. 104 Stat. 4978.

The 90-mile closeness between Cuba and the United States has made migration between both countries an easy option for recreational, educational, and political reasons. Cuba and the United States remained tightly involved until the Cuban Revolution of 1959. Elite Cubans had the opportunity to be educated in the United States, to vacation in the United States, and—when a political regimen was overthrown—to seek refuge in the United States (such is the case of Fulgencio Batista who fled after he was overthrown). Fidel Castro carried out a divide-and-conquer technique by discrediting one adversary at a time, he “disbanded the army and jailed, executed, or forced into hiding any supporters of Fulgencio Batista who did not follow the deposed dictator into exile” (Gonzalez-Pando, 1998). Fidel Castro eliminated one enemy at a time, United States business in Cuba, the free press, the Catholic Church. He succeeded because the people backed him up until they were the target of his attack, at which point their only option was to leave Cuba or be subjected to his punishment (Gonzalez-Pando, 1998).

Existing literature identifies four waves of Cuban migration. These waves were caused by an exodus of thousands of Cubans leaving the island within the span of months or sometimes days. The first was between 1959 and 1962. The second was the Camarioca Boatlift beginning in October of 1965 until 1978. The third was the Mariel Boatlift, also known as *marielitas*, during 1980. The fourth was in 1994, during the special period, this wave is known as the rafters or *balseros*. As of 2013, most Cuban immigrants had settled in Miami, Florida; Fort Lauderdale, Florida; New York, New York; Newark, New Jersey; Jersey City, New Jersey; Tampa, Florida; Los Angeles, California; Orlando, Naples, and Cape Coral, Florida; Las Vegas,

Nevada, Houston, Texas; and Chicago, Illinois (Rusin, 2015). Politicians have long used migration policies as they see convenient, to their advantage (Masey, Durand, & Malone, 2002).¹² Since 1959 migration laws in the United States and Cuba have been used as political strategies, “turned on and off at the will of those in power” (Bernal *et al*, 2005). Allowing Cuban exiles to enter the United States and encouraging migration with the 1965 Cuban Adjustment Act was a strategic move to destabilize Cuba and showcase the dangers and failures of communism (Current, 2010).

First Wave of Cuban Migration (1959-1962)

The first wave of Cuban exiles came after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Generally, when a new government took power in Cuba it was done violently and the predecessors had to go into exile. However, after the triumph of the Revolution of 1959 not only government officials went into exile, but the affluent as well (Garcia, 1996; Gonzales-Pando, 1998). By 1959, 30,000 Cubans were already living in Miami, Florida (Garcia, 1996). According to the 1960 United States census, 124,416 Cubans (nationals or of Cuban parents) were living in the United States (Current, 2010). During this wave, 248,070 Cubans exiles arrived in the United States (Garcia, 1996). They were attracted to South Florida as this area already had a Cuban community, the climate and environment was similar to Cuba’s, and the flight to Havana was fifty-five minutes and inexpensive (Garcia, 1996). Although most of them stayed in South Florida, they went wherever they

¹² Refer to Table 1 for United States laws on immigration and naturalization based on ethnicity and race.

could secure jobs (Garcia, 1996). This population was characterized by their social position, they had high educational attainment, they were White, and business owners. (Gonzales-Pando, 1998). In 1962, 31 percent of Cuban refugees were professionals (Current, 2010). This wave encompassed people who were in the higher socioeconomic strata, they were educated, and professionals, had studied English, and were well accustomed to the United States as they had visited multiple times—the United States was not a strange land and they were well-positioned to succeed after exile. They were older immigrants and were able to resist acculturation because their identity as Cubans was well formed prior to migration (Gonzales-Pando, 1998). This group migrated to the United States believing that Castro's governance would not last and they would be able to return to Cuba soon when a new government was in place (Portes, 1995). Because they had this mentality they referred to themselves as exiles, not migrants (Current, 2010). Although they were professionals, they were not able to practice their professions in the United States, and often had to rely on unskilled jobs. They had to work at whatever jobs they could secure, generally the service industry. Women generally worked as seamstresses, domestic workers, waiting on tables; while men worked in construction, or maintenance (Garcia, 1996). Eventually they found their niche in entrepreneurial activities and were able to send their children—the next generation—to college.

Between 1960 and 1962, 14,000 Cuban children were brought to the United States under an operation called Pedro Pan (Torres, 2003). Through Operation Pedro Pan, United States officials convinced Cuban parents that their children were in

danger in Cuba, as there were rumors that the Cuban government was going to send children to the Soviet Union. The United States government encouraged Cuban parents to send their unaccompanied children to the United States. Some children were later reunited with their parents, others were not. Operation Pedro Pan came to a halt in 1962, after commercial flights between Cuba and the United States were suspended as a result of the Cold War. The halt of commercial flights slowed down the number of Cubans that left the island.

This wave of migration was pushed out of Cuba by civil unrest, political repercussions, and fear of communism. But they were also pulled out of Cuba by the United States' encouragement and anti-communist propaganda such as Operation Pedro Pan. Most of the migrants in this wave were White, upper or upper-middle class, and professionals.

Second Wave of Cuban Migration (1965-1978)

The second Cuban exodus was from 1965 to 1978. From October 10 through October 28, 1965, 5,000 Cubans left for the United States after Castro announced that Cubans with family members in the United States could leave if vessels came for them at the Camarioca port—this only lasted until the United States stopped the boatlift (Camarioca, 2010). From December 1965 until 1978, United States President Lyndon B. Johnson allowed Cubans with family members in the United States to migrate to the United States through Freedom Flights that departed twice a day from Varadero, Matanzas (Current, 2010; Gonzalez-Pando, 1998). Three-hundred-thousand Cubans were brought to the United States through these flights. In 1966,

United States congress adopted the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966 allowing Cubans that arrived in the United States after January 1, 1959 to apply for permanent residency in the United States without having to leave the United States (Eig, 1993). At the time, no immigration quotas capped the number of Cubans who could apply for permanent residency in the United States (Eig, 1993).

This group of people had become disillusioned with the revolution. Unlike their family members in the first wave, they had believed that the revolution would be for the better, bringing racial and social equality to the people. In 1966, 21 percent of Cuban refugees were professionals, and in 1967 18 percent were professionals (Current, 2010). Most immigrants are pulled to the United States by the promises and appeal of the American Dream and the Land of Opportunities. But the story is different for Cubans. The first two waves of Cuban exiles were pushed out of Cuba by sociopolitical unrest in the country. Additionally, this wave was pushed out by the dangerous failure of a political system they once believed in and simultaneously pulled by the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966 that provided Cuban migrants documented status. This wave of migration was not solely caused by one of these push-or-pull factors. By 1970, 3 percent of the 544,6000 Cuban immigrants in the United States were Afro-descendants (Current, 2010; Sweig 2009).

Third Wave of Cuban Migration (1980)

In November 1978, Castro held a dialogue in Cuba known as *Diálogo*. During this conversation he met with Cuban exiles and discussed the release of political prisoners, and ultimately allowed exiles to return to Cuba to visit their family

members for the first time since their departure (Gonzales-Pando, 1998). As emigrants returned home to visit their family members for the first time since their exile, the stark differences in their lifestyles sparked the desire for Cubans to leave the country. A wedge was driven between the émigrés that visited and Cuba and those that did not. This exodus is characterized by the several attempts by Cuban nationals to enter Latin-American embassies in Havana, Cuba to seek asylum. The most successful was the entrance to the Peruvian embassy on April 1st, 1980 by bus driver José Antonio Rodríguez Gallego who drove his bus into the embassy seeking asylum (Portes & Stepick 1994; Sweig, 2009). During the event, a Cuban security guard was killed. Fidel Castro demanded that the bus driver and passengers be turned over to into the Cuban authorities to be tried for the murder of the guard, but the Peruvian officials refused. As a response, Castro removed the security guards from the Peruvian embassy, resulting in over 10,000 Cubans seeking asylum by occupying the Peruvian embassy (Sweig, 2009). This was a major embarrassment for Castro, and as a response he opened the borders of Cuba for anyone to leave (Hawks *et al*, 2014). This ignited the third wave of migration, known as the *Maríel*. During this wave, over 125,000 Cubans arrived at the shores of Florida. Cuban exiles could pick up anyone they wanted out of the Mariel port—provided that they also took members of the population handpicked by the government.

This wave was one of the most controversial waves of Cuban migration. Its public image was characterized by the very small population of “criminals”, mentally-ill, and gay people that the Cuban government placed onboard. Of the 125,000 Cubans that arrived during this wave, 15,000 were mentally-ill (12 percent),

16,000 had a chronic health disease (12.8 percent), and 26,000 had a criminal record in Cuba (20 percent) (Sweig, 2009). A number of these criminal records were fabricated by the migrants so they could board vessels, some were political prisoners, and others engaged in activities that are not criminalized in the United States. All things considered, 4 percent of the “criminal” population were felons, and most had already served their time (Sweig, 2009). Most importantly, 80 percent of the *marielitas* had no criminal record—but this information was not reported in the news. The demographics of this wave also differed from the previous two, 15-40 percent were Black or mulatto, on average they were 30 years old (10 years younger than those of previous waves), 70 percent were male—many of whom could not leave during the previous wave because they were of military age, they were middle class workers, and had more years of education than the middle class workers of previous waves (Sweig, 2009). Cuban migrants resisted relocation attempts by the United States government, 73 percent of them stayed in Florida, concentrated in Dade County/Miami (54 percent of total Cuban migrants), 6 percent relocated to New Jersey, 5.5 percent to New York, 4.3 percent to California, 1.5 percent to Illinois, and 1.2 percent to Texas (Sweig, 2009). Cubans relocated where they found jobs and cultural sponsors to support them in their integration process—both of these were secured by resettlement agencies. A number of the Cubans who relocated outside of Florida returned to Florida (Current, 2010; Sweig, 2009). Cuban exiles in this wave and those in the fourth wave, were not considered refugees. Up to this point, the United States defined refugee as any migrant that came from a country whose ideology differed from theirs—a communist country fit this description (Sweig,

2009). However, the Refugee Act of 1980 defined refugee as someone with “well founded fear of persecution,” most of these migrants did not fit the new definition.

Fourth Wave of Cuban Migration (1994)

Cuba relied heavily on Soviet Union imports of oil, food, and other consumer goods. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 triggered the Cuban *Periodo Especial* (Piercy & Goodier, 2010; Sweig, 2009). The *Periodo Especial* lasted until 1995 and was characterized by economic hardship, scarcity of consumer goods and food. The United States’ tightening of its trade embargo on Cuba also contributed to the economic hardship Cuba experienced. In 1994, Castro opened the borders of Cuba allowing people to leave if they wished. Up to that year, anyone caught attempting to leave the island would be imprisoned. The economic hardship experienced in the island during this time pushed people to migrate in search of better financial opportunities. During this fourth wave of migration, over 50,000 Cubans fled the island—often in home-made vessels. Those that fled during this wave are known as *balseros*. In order to deal with this exodus, United States’ President Clinton sent all Cubans caught attempting to enter the United States to Guantanamo Bay, where they could either voluntarily go home or wait for their visa application to be approved. Some Cubans also made their way into Guantanamo Bay—United States territory—in order to seek asylum. This was the first time since the Spanish-American War of 1898 that the United States government did not freely welcome Cubans onto the mainland.

Conclusion

Cuban emigration saw a sharp increase after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution of 1959. Although going into exile was common for Cuban politicians, Fidel Castro's leadership decisions had dramatic results, inducing multiple exodus waves of Cubans who moved beyond the political realm and into the general population. Each wave of Cuban migration was subject to different push-and-pull factors and the people that composed each wave were different from one another. Race in Cuba, similarly to many other countries has not been free of conflict—this fact was acknowledged by Cuban President Castro himself. Race relations had not explicitly caused any of the waves discussed in this chapter; however, inequalities that disproportionately affected the Black population of Cuba did play a role in the later waves (i.e. lack of access to USD). In comparison with other migrant groups, Cubans have received an exceeding amount of federal support, presumably putting them at an advantage for integration (Bernal *et al*, 1982). The upcoming chapter, will discuss the aid that Cuban migrants received. Although most participants migrated after the third exodus, they shared many of the same issues as the earlier waves. Conversely, they resettled in a “non-traditional” space—Albuquerque, New Mexico. The upcoming chapter, analyzes their resettlement experiences as those pertain to their community formation in a desert 1,600 miles away from the natal country.

Chapter Two: Community Relations

Chapter Two: Community Relations

“Sí. Gracias a la unión que tiene el ser humano, porque esa gente, un nigeriano, un africano, los dos son africanos, se encontraron conmigo y me llevaron a ese lugar. Si yo no tuviera aquella cosa de siempre acercarme un poco a mis ancestros, a lo mejor, sí, claro, a otra persona que no sea de mi raza, que no sea de mi cultura, me podría ayudar igual, pero la que me encontré fue esa”
–Fabián

(“Yes. Thanks to the unity that human beings have, because those people, a Nigerian, an African, both of them are African, ran into me and took me to that place. If I didn’t have that tendency of always getting closer to my ancestors, maybe yes, of course, another person that wasn’t my race, wasn’t my culture, could of helped me the same, but who I found were them.” –Fabián)

“Your friends, if they are not influencing you or mentoring you then I don’t feel there’s a need to be friends with them” –Nathan

Migration is such a memorable event that without prompting, most participants shared the exact date in which they left their natal Cuba. Most participants left between 2005 and 2013, and all of them left after 1994. Most participants have only lived in Albuquerque, New Mexico with the exception of Alvaro, Ana, and Gilberto. Although this sample does not include the Cubans who left Albuquerque, and did not return, Albuquerque has been a great fit for the participants that did stay. Alvaro, a participant, cited leaving Albuquerque thirteen times but always returning because that is where his family is.

The Albuquerque community has been defined as a tri-cultural space, where Native American, Anglo Saxon, and Hispanic cultures are present in high numbers. These three cultures are present throughout the state of New Mexico in the shape of cultural centers and museums, architecture styles, popular foods, high concentrations of these populations, to name a few. Albuquerque is an outstandingly tolerant space. This is the community the participants are integrating into. I use the word “integration” because, during one of the first oral histories, one participant used this word to describe his process of learning how to navigate United States laws, system, and culture, how to live a life in the United States with little-to-no inconvenience, how to get used to the new space they were inhabiting. As such, my usage of that word throughout this chapter deviates from the definition used in academia and embraces the definition that each individual participant has conceptualized, which is different for each person.

Community is a commonly discussed theme in the participants’ narratives of resettlement. Most of the participants I spoke with were met by Catholic Charities

when they arrived in the United States. At their arrival in Miami, Florida, Catholic Charities offered migrants two or three options of cities they could resettle in such as Chicago, Illinois; Atlanta, Georgia, Las Vegas, Nevada, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Once they arrived in Albuquerque they were provided with an apartment, furnished to the extent that Catholic Charities could, because furnishings are donations from community members. They offered migrants cultural orientation classes, connected them with English classes, helped with job placement to the extent that they could, aided in enrolling children into schools, and helped in applying for working permits and social security numbers.

Through a course taught by Dr. Finnie Coleman, I became familiar with the square of knowledge. Knowledge, or lack thereof, can be divided into four kinds:

	Know	Don't Know
Know	Things you know that you know	Things you don't know that you know
Don't Know	Things you know that you don't know	Things you know that you don't know

As newcomers, being provided with mentorship, community connections, and social networks is important because there are many things that migrants are unaware-of. Relationships with other people are essential to their resettlement process because they inform newcomers, they are a gateway to information, a source to learn from. Throughout the narratives shared in this chapter, you will read of stories in which friends helped newcomers by giving them information they were unfamiliar with and

instances where newcomers needed help to access information and it was offered by a member of their social network.

This chapter discusses some of the resettlement stories that participants shared. It discusses the stories as each pertains to an experience of settling and navigating their new community. It analyzes some aspects of these lives that relate to how they formed their new communities through community involvement (local and diasporic), employment, education, and social standing.

The oral history interviews started by asking participants how they identify themselves; each subsection starts with a brief quote of participants' descriptions of themselves. The first quote is a direct citation from the story. If there is a second quote, it is an English translation of the original quote. In this chapter you will learn about the histories of Fabián, Clara, Daniel, Pedro, Azucena, Adonis, Alvaro, Dayana, Camilo, Javier and Nathan.

Fabián

“Yo soy descendiente haitiano, cubano haitiano. Como descendiente cubano haitiano, mis padres llegaron a Cuba en el año 24. Mi nombre es Fabián Pierre.”

(“I am Haitian-descendant, Cuban-Haitian. Like a Cuban-Haitian descendant, my parents arrived in Cuba in the year 24. My name is Fabián Pierre.”)

Fabián's father migrated from Haiti to Guantanamo, Cuba in 1924 in search of better financial opportunities. Fabián, in turn, migrated to the United States in 2006 in search of better financial opportunities. He migrated with his wife and

children when he was 50 years old, and they have lived in Albuquerque, New Mexico since their arrival. Among other things his life shows the endlessness of migration and the human instinct for self-improvement. Fabián feels that the United States has extended a helping hand to him. Above all he feels welcomed and has a great sense of gratitude.

Much of our oral history interview revolved around his identity as Haitian and a member of the African diaspora; he showed great pride in both of these identities. When his father migrated to Cuba he worked for the Spanish in the sugarcane fields along the Eastern coast of Cuba. Fabián described the work his parents did as a form of enslavement, *“de forma esclavista.”* His father was asked his surname at his arrival but the overseers did not know how to spell it, so they gave him the last name of the sugarcane field owners’: Rodríguez. When Fabián initially introduced himself to me, he did so with his creole surname, Pierre, instead of his government name, Rodríguez; consciously reclaiming his last name. He described this experience by saying *“destruyen esa gran cosa de mantener los apellidos de los ancestros pero no destruyen lo que es la cultura”*, “they destroy that great thing of maintaining the ancestors’ surnames, but they do not destroy the culture.” Like other laborers, his family lived in barracks provided by the plantation owners. The living quarters were divided by race and nationally. Plantation overseers allowed laborers to have parties during their off-time. His family was able to maintain their Haitian culture through these parties. During this time they would speak their language, play their music, sing their songs, which allowed him—the next generation—to absorb these cultural

elements. Fabián grew up knowing Haitian Creole, as well as its music, and dance—elements that became fundamental to his life.

In the United States, as in Cuba, Fabián has made connections with Haitians and Africans. He believes that people are the same, but cultures mark a difference. However, he observed that African cultures and Haitian cultures have close connections and are united through similar aspects of their culture such as the Yoruba religion, rumba music, and some dances. When I met with Fabián, he was wearing a necklace and bracelet with Black, red, yellow, and green beads. He explained that he uses them so people can identify him as African, to spiritually protect himself, and to pay his respects to his ancestors. These beads show his close connection to and reverence for his African ancestry. When I asked him about his opinion on Miami Cubans and their attitudes towards the Cuban government his response was that it was “*un tema obsoleto*,” “an obsolete topic.” He continued:

El tema de Miami es un tema-- ¿Tú sabes cuál es la palabra “obsoleto”? La palabra obsoleto es algo que ya no sirve, es algo que está muy viejo, que hay que tirarlo. En Miami existe una organización que se está alimentando de eso. Algunos viejos que tuvieron los 50 años que está la revolución cubana ahí, a su forma. Ellos vinieron para acá e hicieron una asociación donde ellos van a difamar y hablar del país, “porque aquel no es democrático, por que es de su forma,” y ganan por eso.

The topic of Miami is a topic—Do you know the word “obsolete”? The word obsolete is something that is no longer useful, is something very old, that has to be thrown out. In Miami there is an organization that is feeding on that.

Some old people that have 50 years since the Cuban revolution has been there its way. They came here and made an association where they can defame and talk about the country, “because that one isn’t democratic, because it’s its way,” and they win because of that.

Fabián’s attitude towards Cuba and its government is quite different from that of Cubans who migrated in the first two waves to the United States (Current, 2010; Sweig, 2009). He is more concerned with helping his family than with whether that help supports the Cuban government. He believes that the Cubans who resettled in Miami in these earlier waves have benefited from their anti-Castro narrative. A narrative that he describes as obsolete and that must be discarded to make room for the needs of the younger generation.

In Cuba, Fabián was a supervisory nurse. When he migrated to the United States he had to work doing unskilled labor for a minimum wage. In 2007, the Albuquerque minimum wage was \$6.75 (The Albuquerque Minimum Wage Ordinance, 2006). An African friend recommended that he look into taking a course to be a nurse assistant at a for-profit medical institute in Albuquerque. He signed up for the course (which was taught by a Nigerian teacher), he graduated, and is currently a Nurse’s Assistant. Although there is a great difference between the career he had in Cuba and the career he has now, he is grateful to at least be in the same field. He shares that he always tries to seek friendships with other Afro-descendants, and that thanks to this he was able to find the nursing assistant program. As he will say it, maybe a White friend would have done the same thing for him, but it just so happens that it was a Black friend who helped him get back into his professional

field. When I asked him if he was able to take these classes because of his connections he stated:

Sí. Gracias a la unión que tiene el ser humano, porque esa gente, un nigeriano, un africano, los dos son africanos, se encontraron conmigo y me llevaron a ese lugar. Si yo no tuviera aquella cosa de siempre acercarme un poco a mis ancestros, a lo mejor, sí, claro, a otra persona que no sea de mi raza, que no sea de mi cultura, me podría ayudar igual, pero la que me encontré fue esa.

Yes. Thanks to the unity that human beings have, because those people, a Nigerian, an African, both of them are African, ran into me and took me to that place. If I didn't have that tendency of always getting closer to my ancestors, maybe yes, of course, another person that wasn't my race, wasn't my culture, could of helped me the same, but who I found were them.

He made these social connections, and others, through his involvement playing music for Zumba classes in Albuquerque. The group of musicians constitutes members of the African diaspora: an African, a Jamaican, a Chinese-Ethiopian, and himself a Cuban-Haitian. The group prepares and performs music in Swahili, Spanish, Haitian Creole, and English. The versatility of the language of their songs, their nationalities, and music genre is testament to the reach of the African diaspora. Their group serves as an example of the connecting ability that the African diaspora possesses. They are able to unite in Albuquerque, a space where the African and

Afro-descendant population is below the national average, and whose cultural presence is absent from the tri-cultural state narrative.¹³

Fabián is very certain and proud of his identity, which has not shifted after migration. His Pan-African mindset has allowed him to foster close relationships to his ancestry and allowed him to connect with people beyond his birth-countrymen. He has been able to connect with members of the African diaspora from Jamaica, Nigeria, Haiti, and other countries. This take on social connections is not new to him; in Cuba he was also connected with Haitian and other Afro-descendants. This perspective allowed him to become involved with the Zumba music group. Fabián's Pan-African mindset and involvement in this community organization allowed him to expand his social network beyond his immediate Cuban network—something that proved helpful. Because of these connections he was able to obtain an education that allowed him to move forward in the United States job market.

Clara

“Una gente alegre, siempre sonriente, siempre dándole un aliento a las personas.”

(“A happy person, always smiling, always encouraging people.”)

“Yo vine de Cuba. Estuve seis días en el mar. De seis días en el mar me llevaron a Guantánamo, en Guantánamo estuve cinco meses, de cinco meses llegué.” “I came from Cuba. I was in the sea six days. After those six days in the sea they took me to Guantanamo; I was in Guantanamo five months, five months later I arrived.” Clara

¹³ Albuquerque and New Mexico demographics are discussed in more detail in the introduction.

is one of the 50,000 Cubans who fled Cuba in 1994. She met her husband, Camilo, on the United States Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, while they were waiting to be sent to the United States. They decided to resettle in Albuquerque, New Mexico and have lived there since. Soon after her arrival, she was sentenced to 9 years in prison, but only served 14 months before her case was overturned. In prison she was introduced to the word of God, this experience continues to be a central part of her life as she celebrates her 8th anniversary of being a pastor. She identifies as a helper, and this shows in her commitment to improving the lives of others. She continues to visit prisons to advise prisoners, has been to every hospital in Albuquerque to serve the community, and passes out food in the street to those in need.

Catholic Charities facilitated her and her husband's resettlement process in Albuquerque. Catholic Charities helped her secure a job at the Hyatt hotel, a hotel several other participants have also worked at. They also taught her to use the bus system, and secured an apartment for her. The help Clara received does not deviate from the help more recent migrants have been offered. Today, she is a citizen of the United States but continues to clash with the culture. She is not fond of the individualistic culture of the United States, and compares it to the collectivist culture of Cuba. She mentioned the welcome, warmth, and helpfulness of the Cuban people in Cuba. She makes a distinction between Cubans who reside in Cuba and Cubans who reside in the exterior, citing that after migration, Cubans change for the worse. She is disappointed in their complacent attitudes and the value they place on material things, and also distances herself from the actions of the Miami Cuban community, as she believes that they engage in empty-hearted protests instead of

helping Cuban residents. She shares that Cubans do not attend church regularly, so she does not socialize with them frequently.

Clara identifies as Cuban, Hispanic, Black, and as having African ancestry—she is very proud of these identities. She shared that she feels a special need to help when she sees Black people in the streets and expressed interest in establishing a mission trip to Nigeria through her church. When she was in prison, her Black prison mates saw her as one of their own and protected her. She also states that Black Americans like her accent and how she speaks, and call her a “sister.” Today she mostly socializes with Mexicans, as they are the main population of her church—the community space she frequents the most.

Clara’s time in prison facilitated her transition into the United States by introducing her to religion. In turn, religion gave her a sense of purpose and facilitated her integration into Albuquerque by providing a space where she could become a member of the community by meeting other community members and providing a space where she could give back to her community. Her ability to speak English has allowed her to form relationships with African-Americans, widening her circle beyond the immediate Spanish-speaking community. However, her social circle remains mostly Mexican, as they make-up the largest part of the church congregation. Furthermore, her disappointment in the changes the Cuban community has undergone after migration has left her with a reduced number of Cubans with whom she socializes. For Clara, it is clear that nationality can only go so far in terms of community-building. It is also evident that she engages in a Pan-African framework as is shown in her affinity for helping African-Americans and

African migrants. Clara's community is composed of people who touch her heart, beyond language and nationality.

Daniel

“Una persona autónoma, una persona que le gusta salir adelante, le gusta esforzarse, tener metas, lograr objetivos, una persona que no se da por vencido.”

(“A self-sufficient person, a person who likes to get ahead, that likes to strive, have goals, achieve objectives, a person who does not give up.”)

Daniel arrived in the United States in 2010. He was in Miami, Florida for three months before he arrived in Albuquerque, New Mexico to be with his family. Daniel is a unique case in relation to the other participants. He arrived in the United States through the family reunification program; as such he did not receive assistance from Catholic Charities. He migrated to change his lifestyle, to help family members. Although he did not have help from a resettlement agency, his family and friends helped him integrate into Albuquerque.

Daniel identifies as Afro-Cuban, Black, and is very proud of his color. I asked him if there was a change in how he identifies to which he replied:

Si hubo un cambio en eso, que fue lo que me choco por que yo siempre he sido negro, pero aquí no puedes poner que eres negro, aquí tienes que poner hispano, latino, afro-americano son los de aquí, quiere decir que no puedes. [...] Fue un cambio bien brusco, pero uno se acostumbra

Yes there was a change in that, which was what clashed with me because I have always been Black, but here you can not put that you are Black, here you have to put Hispanic, Latino, African-Americans are the ones from here, which means that you can't. It was a very abrupt change but you get used to it.

He continues:

Yo los llamo familia. Yo digo que todas las personas negras, vengan de donde vengan, todos venimos de África. Todos somos familia, todos somos primos, todos somos hermanos.

I call them family. I say that all Black people come from Africa, regardless of where they come from, we are all from Africa. We are all family, we are all cousins, we are all brothers/sisters.

He states that these feelings are reciprocal from African Americans, even though they think they are the only Black people. Daniel has had to face racist experiences in the United States. He states that the racial climate is similar in Cuba, but in the United States it is more tense, adding that the United States also has anti-Hispanic sentiments. However, he does not feel harmed by the anti-immigration climate in the United States, stating that he had to brace himself and fight to meet his goals without being concerned about what the people around him believe. Daniel believes that he has integrated in the United States, even sharing that he is now a citizen. He states that a lot of hard work, suffering, and “*montar bicicleta abajo de la nieve para llegar al trabajo*”, “riding a bicycle under the snow to get to work” has helped him integrate.

His statement about the changes in the way he identifies echoes the feelings and experiences of a number of other participants who have been impelled to identify as Hispanic/Latino and to abandon their identities as Black people. However, this experience has not stopped him from socially identifying as Afro-Cuban and Black. In fact, this was the first identity he shared when I asked how he identifies. His response shows that while he only checks the Hispanic/Latino box on demographic information he still identifies as Afro-Cuban and Black, perhaps he only shares this with people who understand his Blackness as a Cuban migrant.

Pedro

“Una persona trabajadora.”

(A hard-working person.)

Pedro arrived in the United States in 2013. Throughout his time in the United States he has only lived in Albuquerque. His resettlement process was guided by Catholic Charities, they helped him get his United States Residency and Work Permit. He was connected with English classes at Central New Mexico Community College (CNM), but he only attended briefly because he did not like the classes. In the United States, Pedro identifies as Hispanic and Spanish. In Cuba he identified as Cuban-Spanish. When I asked him what his racial identification was, he said he identified by his name. With a tone of certainty—like it was obvious—he stated he did not have African ancestry. However, the person that recommended him as a participant identified him as Black because of his dark skin color and kinky hair. He speaks Spanish with his acquaintances. He practices Santeria and has not had any

difficulty practicing his religion in Albuquerque. He is unbothered by the immigration climate in the United States. He believes that he has integrated into United States society. When I asked him how he felt about the immigration climate in the United States he stated that he was unbothered and did not see the point in becoming emotionally concerned with it.

Pedro was very short and un-descriptive throughout our encounter. However, our conversation was very telling of his community membership. Although he stated that he was friends with “everyone,” his friendship circle is limited to Spanish speakers because he speaks only Spanish. He has met most of his friends through his job. Because religion is a communal activity mostly practiced with other people, his religious practice has also facilitated his socialization with other people who practice the same religion. What I find most telling of our oral history interview is the way he identified, identifying as Spanish and not claiming any of his phenotypically present Black roots, even when I explicitly inquired. Our brief encounter did not provide sufficient information to provide a definitive and accurate interpretation of why Pedro does not identify as Black or Afro-descendant. In comparison to the other participants, his experience is a singular one. He is the only participant who identified as not having African ancestry and instead identified solely as being of Spanish ancestry. However, because he identified as having Spanish ancestry, it can be deduced that he is not against identifying an ancestry, just against claiming a Black ancestry, whether that is African or a predominantly Black country like other participants did. Practicing an Afro-Cuban religion has not incentivized him enough to claim his African ancestry, neither has his skin color or his hair texture.

Azucena

“Soy una persona capaz, una persona luchadora. Soy una persona que me gusta tener logros, tener éxito, y lo busco. Soy trabajadora, incansable. Soy una persona humilde.”

(I am an able person, a fighter. I am a person who likes to have accomplishments, success, and I search for it. I am a worker, tireless. I am a humble person.)

Azucena came to the United States with her husband, step-son, and daughter. When they arrived they were given the option of resettling into Las Vegas, Nevada or Albuquerque. They were told that of their resettlement options, Albuquerque was the safest city for the children, it was a quiet city. She has lived in Albuquerque since her arrival in 2005. One of the reasons she migrated was to search for freedom, specifically freedom of enterprise, which she did not have in Cuba. Azucena used her new-found freedom to open her own business in 2007, two years after her arrival. This is the fastest climb out of unskilled labor that I collected information on, and the only one of fourteen participants who is a business owner. Like other community members, she rated the quality of support she received from Catholic Charities as good, helping her with how to greet people, what food markets to go to, and where to take English classes.

In Cuba she identifies as being Black, and in the United States she identifies as being Cuban. These identities have not changed because of migration to the United States, however different aspects of her identity become salient depending on the space she is in. When she is in Cuba, where most people share the same nationality, her Blackness is salient. When she is in the United States, where her

nationality is different from most people around her, her nationality is salient. Azucena also identifies as Hispanic and Latina. This identification was new to her when she migrated to the United States, she shared that she initially did not know what this meant, but was told that's what she had to check.

She is frequently mistaken as being from the United States. Sometimes those experiences make her feel good because she looks like she is from the United States, like a national, like she belongs. These experiences also evoke negative emotions because she can not speak English to clarify that she is actually not from the United States. This statement highlights the positive emotions associated with appearing to belong in the receiving country. However, the same statement highlights the feelings of inadequacy that are evoked when she cannot adequately express her accurate identity.

When I asked her how Black people were seen in the United States, she states that as a Black person she has never had any problems, but that she has seen how other Black people have been discriminated against. She cited recent events such as the expulsion of a Black man from a coffee shop and police brutality. When I asked her if she thought there was a difference in the treatment of Black people who were migrants and Black nationals she stated:

No estoy muy segura de que haiga diferencias por que sean inmigrantes o sean nacidos.

Yo creo que el problema está en nada más por el color. Después es que se enteran si son inmigrantes o no. Lo primero que hacen, que he visto que hacen, es atacar al negro por el color.

I am not sure that there is a difference because they are immigrants or born here. I think that the problem is only in the color. Later is when they find out if they are immigrants or not. The first thing they do, that I have seen them do, is attack Black people because of their color.

The wording in her statement suggests that she includes herself as part of the Black population in the United States, a conscious membership in the African diaspora. While she is not aware of having experienced any anti-Black discrimination or racism, she understands that racial discrimination is real and that, as part of the Black community, she may be a target. Furthermore, she provides an excellent explanation, stating that neither nationality, primary language, nor migration status serves as a shield against anti-Black discrimination—showcasing the Pan African principle that regardless of these identities Black people are subjected to similar treatments around the diaspora. It is astonishing and shows tremendous resilience in her part, to understand these social realities and not shy-away from continuing to identify as Black. Some studies suggest that migrants choose to identify as something other than Black to cope with the negative associations of Blackness; but, Azucena has not taken this route. It has been her choice to remain rooted in her Black identity, an identity that allowed her to make connections beyond her immediate migrant community. Connections that helped her when no one else did.

When I asked her to tell me about her relationship with Black Americans she shared that they are very sweet, wherever she goes or passes by they greet her. Even when White people don't greet her, Black people do. I asked her to tell me about her relationship with African-Americans, and she discussed one of her friendships with

an African-American woman, who helped her a lot when they met. Azucena shares that this friend did not want her to continue working at beauty salons where she was being underpaid and exploited, so she took it upon herself to help Azucena reinstate her cosmetology license in the State of New Mexico. This friend researched information and made connections for her. Azucena was a practicing cosmetologist in Cuba, but after she migrated she had to find work elsewhere—she tapped into the resources she knew, including her case manager through Catholic Charities, but they were not helpful in finding out how she could reinstate her license in the United States. Her friend nonetheless, who is a public servant, traveled with her to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where the Board of Cosmetologists and Barbers of New Mexico is located and spoke with various beauty schools to find out what the process would be like for Azucena who already had a license but out of the country. Furthermore, she found a school where a staff member spoke Spanish and could help her. Within two years Azucena had completed a refresher course, had passed the State of New Mexico theoretical and practical examinations, had earned her cosmetology license, opened her own beauty salon, and created jobs for community members. Azucena's story will be further discussed in the upcoming chapter.

Azucena's climb into self-employment and licensing reinstatement was in part due to how she identifies herself, as: *“soy una persona capaz, una persona luchadora. Soy una persona que me gusta tener logros, tener éxito, y lo busco. Soy trabajadora, incansable, soy una persona humilde”*, “I am an able person, a fighter. I am a person who likes to have accomplishments, success, and I search for it. I am a worker, tireless, I am a humble person.” However, beyond what she explicitly states, she showed a tendency for

perseverance and resilience. Her tendency to socialize with other Black people facilitated her social connections with other members of the African diaspora, which in turned helped her overcome the information-barrier and eased her transition into the skilled employment sector. It was because of these connections that she was able to learn how to reinstate her license and move forward in her integration process. When her official resources failed, her social network helped her navigate her new space. It was Azucena's ability to develop a successful business plan and work ethic that has allowed her to run a successful business. It was also her embrace of the trans-national Spanish-speaking community, and vice-versa, that offered her a stable customer base.

Adonis

“Nací en Cuba, La Habana, en el Hijas de Galicia, ese es el Municipio Cerro, 10 de Octubre.”

(“I was born in Cuba, Havana, in Hijas de Galicia, that is the Cerro Municipality, 10 de Octubre.”)

Adonis migrated to the United States in 2012 and resettled into Albuquerque, New Mexico with the help of Catholic Charities. He has lived in Albuquerque since. He started identifying as Hispanic when he arrived in the United States, *“en Cuba no se usa eso”* he states, “in Cuba that is not used”, people in Cuba are identified as *“negro, mulato, blanco”*, Black, Mulatto, White. When he arrived in the United States he was told to select the Hispanic box even though he does not understand or know what Hispanic is. He did not state who made him select the Hispanic option in

demographic information, but it can be deduced that it was his resettlement agents. As Adonis later states, his resettlement agents were charged with helping him fill-out his social security number and work permit application. Although he identifies as Black, "*piel negra, ojos negros*", "Black skin, Black eyes," he has been forced to abandon that identity because he believes that in the United States he "has to be" Hispanic because Black is another thing that he is not. Part of this belief was informed with his initial encounter when he was told he could not identify as Black and had to identify as Hispanic.

Adonis shares that he was able to start integrating into the United States as soon as he started working. Work gave him agency and purpose. He socializes with everyone, some United States Americans (even though he does not speak English), some Mexicans and Cubans. He has met most of his friends at the barbershop and at jobs. Although he reports that Catholic Charities worked swiftly, they did not help him integrate, only offered financial assistance. He was unemployed for ten months because his work permit application was improperly filled out. He had to find a lawyer by himself to solve this issue. After he received his work permit and secured a job he felt that his integration process started, and "*poco a poco*," "little by little" he continued to integrate.

To Adonis, like other participants, working has been a major step in the resettlement and integration process. For Adonis, it marked the beginning of his integration, and gave him a sense of purpose. Given that many participants migrated for financial reasons, it comes as no surprise that employment is one of the major goals and markers of integration. It is worth noting that financial assistance was not

a marker of integration for him, but employment was. For him, integration goes beyond monetary attainment, perhaps integration is marked by job security, becoming part of the community through employment, or becoming a financial producer. The inability to secure a worker's permit in a timely manner was a stressful experience for Adonis, and other migrants like him. It is troubling that after his arrival in the United States, a self-identified (and identified by others as a) Black man would be told to not identify as Black, and to identify as Hispanic/Latino. It is further troubling that this new label, that he is unfamiliar with, would not be defined or explained to him, but that he was simply told to change his identification. The professionals who told him how he must identify and how he could not identify lacked the cultural understanding to work with this population.

Alvaro

“Una persona Buena.”

(“A good person.”)

Alvaro came to the United States in 2010. He lived in Miami, Florida for almost two years and has spent the rest of his time in the United States in Albuquerque. He left Albuquerque twelve times, but he always returns because his family is there and he eventually begins to miss them. He identifies as having African and Spanish ancestry, racially identifying as *mestizo*, a mix of races. In Albuquerque, he mostly socializes with Cubans and some Mexicans. He states that he isn't affected by the current anti-immigration social climate of the United States, and strongly

believes that families should not be separated by deportation. He does not feel that he has fully integrated into the United States because he does not like some of the things in the United States, such as discrimination against immigrants. He shares that he was raised in a place that is much different from Albuquerque, which has made his integration more difficult. For Alvaro, life is difficult in Albuquerque, partly because of the cold temperatures and the dry climate. He shares that Albuquerque's climate makes it difficult for him to go to work.

Alvaro has found it difficult to integrate into Albuquerque because he lacks sufficient positive emotions towards the city. Furthermore, even when he lived in a city that he enjoyed, the distance from his family complicated his stay in that space. He has been unable to fully embrace and make the city his home. In his case, the lack of positive emotions towards his community and the dispersing of his family has inhibited his integration process.

Dayana

“Me considero una buena persona, un buen ser humano, con valores, con conceptos. Los necesarios para convivir”

(“I consider myself a good person, a good human being, with values, beliefs. The necessity to live with others.”)

Dayana has lived in Albuquerque, New Mexico since her arrival to the United States in 2009. She decided to resettle in Albuquerque because there she could receive aid from a resettlement agency. Moreover, her husband's brother had

been living there for many years. In order to receive financial aid, Dayana had to attend mandatory classes such as English classes and cultural orientation. When it came to employment, Dayana had to work at any available job—all of them minimum wage.

In her demographic information she checks the “Hispanic” box. When I asked her if she always identified this way, she stated that in Cuba:

No era necesario, no existía, no era necesario en ningún sentido en ningún aspecto. Por que por ejemplo cunado ibas a buscar un trabajo no necesitas poner una aplicación, para ir a la escuela tampoco. No era necesario llenar formatos ni nada. Como aquí que si vas hace una aplicación para agarrar un trabajo tienes que llenar una aplicación, para ir al doctor tienes que llenar un formulario.

It was not necessary, it did not exist, it was not necessary in any way. For example, when you would search for a job you did not need to fill out an application, nor to attend school. It was not necessary to fill out forms or anything. Like here, if you are going to apply to get a job you need to fill out an application, if you are going to the doctor you need to fill out a form.”

Beyond selecting the “Hispanic” box on forms, Dayana identifies as having African ancestry.

Si claro. En mi familia todos somos de raza negra. Por que existen dos razas, la blanca y la negra, tu y yo somos de raza negra. Aunque vulgarmente en cuba se dice que somos java o mulatas pero somos raza negra

Yes, of course. In my family we are all of the Black race. Because there are two races, the White and the Black, you and I are of the Black race. Even though in Cuba it is vulgarly said that we are *java* or *mulatas*, but we are of the Black race

While she checks the “Hispanic” box, her identity as a Black woman has not changed. She shared that sometimes she feels there is a difference in treatment between her and others around her, she walks into places and feels like she is treated differently, but she states that its up the person how they receive and interpret these encounters. Dayana stated that she feels integrated. She has friends of all ethnicities and speaks in English and Spanish with her friends.

Her identification as Hispanic seems to be only on paper, and pushed by the constant requirement of filling out applications in most areas of life in the United States. Her identity and lived experiences as a Black woman have not changed, and she continues to navigate her community as a Black woman. While her statement that *javaos* and *mulatos* are Black should not be generalized, it answered a longstanding question, some Cubans like Dayana and Daniel, see *mulatos* and *javaos* as Black.

Camilo

“Yo me considero hijo de Dios.”

(“I consider myself a son of God.”

Camilo came to the United States in 1994 during the rafters' exodus. He was 22 years old. He was given the option of resettling in Atlanta, Georgia or Albuquerque, New Mexico. He asked in which of the cities they spoke Spanish, and he has lived in Albuquerque ever since. Camilo's experience with the community around him is very telling and rich. During his first years in Albuquerque he socialized only with Cubans, partly because he spoke only Spanish. When he first arrived in Albuquerque, he socialized with people who were detrimental to his life. He shared that because he lacked proper mentorship he had difficulty learning how to navigate the United States, which complicated his integration process. He spent some time in prison, where he built a relationship with God that would change his life.

While he was growing up, religion was censored in Cuba, so he started to build his relationship with God only after he migrated. He is currently the head pastor of a protestant Spanish ministry along with his wife. His leadership role within church has allowed him to form strong connections in the Albuquerque community and beyond. He identified understanding the law and speaking English as crucial factors in the integration process, he identified these as major barriers to achieving success in the United States. Camilo believes that there are stigmas associated with the color of his skin, with being Latino, with his accent, and being an immigrant, but as a "son of God," those stigmas do not affect him. Additionally, he believes that those stigmas are not prevalent in Albuquerque because of the high number of Hispanics who reside in the city. Camilo believes that living in a place where the majority of the people are Hispanic is the best place to live. He has met most of his

acquaintances through the church, because his life in God has required him to change the people he interacts with.

For Camilo, prison was a space where his integration process was facilitated. It was through the institution of imprisonment that he met the word of God and learned to navigate the United States' sociopolitical system. His experience with the legal system is unique and rare. As he shared, he no longer associates himself with the people he once did. This disassociation suggests that while he, by God's grace, came out prison better than he went in, none of the acquaintances he had during that time shared the same experience. Camilo drives home the point that his relationship with people had a tremendous impact on his integration process. This is a point that is proven multiple times during his life's story, including his journey into prison, and his life at the church. It is necessary to conclude that positive influences and mentorship are required for a positive integration process into the United States. Moreover, Camilo has created a series of connections through his leadership at the church—adding yet another informal space where people can engage in community formation. Religion has helped Camilo deal with the negative stigmas associated with his Latino and immigrant identity by shielding him from internalizing them and reinforcing his belief that he is equal to all other human beings. However, he also perceives Albuquerque as a safe space (a bubble), where discrimination is fairly distant, given the high number of Hispanics that inhabit the metropolitan city.

Javier*“American dream”*

Javier arrived in the United States in 1999 with his mother, step-father, and sibling. For the past 20 years he has only lived in Albuquerque, New Mexico. His family wanted to migrate to the United States in search of freedom of speech and better financial opportunities. As a teenager, he wanted to have a color television and a CD player. When his family came they were told that Albuquerque was a good place to settle in, so they chose it as their resettlement city. He was in his second year of technical school when he came to the United States, but Cuban officials didn't let him take his transcript, so when he arrived in the United States at age 16, he was placed as a high school freshman. A year later, he received his transcript and was able to place as a senior. He believes he has integrated into the United States, “big time. You have to be willing to change in order to succeed, to not get in trouble.” Today, he considers himself very successful. When I asked him what made him successful he cited that he is able to provide for his family; he does not struggle to have a car, have a house, or pay bills.

When I asked him what race he identified as he said “Latino,” but in Cuba he identified as Black. He states that people in Cuba are all Cuban, all Hispanic, but they are either *Mestizo*, *Mulato*, Black, or White. He later identified himself as being *Moro* or *mestizo*. He listed the races in the United States as: Latino(a) (White or *mestizo*), African American (Black), and Anglo (White); leaving out Asian and

Indigenous people. In the United States, he does not consider himself Black because he is not part of the African-American culture. He states:

“no me considero negro porque no soy de su cultura, solamente me identifica el color, pero no soy de su cultura, no hablo el mismo idioma. They notice that I am not an African American because I have accents, and my sounds.”

Cultural and linguistic differences deter him from identifying as Black in the United States. He believes that even though they are the same color they don't have the same culture, and he does not feel any type of connection with them. However, he identifies as having African ancestry, and shared that his grandfather was Jamaican.

When I inquired about his friendships, he shared that he has a mix of friends, Whites, New Mexicans, Latinos, African Americans, and very few Cuban friends. He mostly speaks English and speaks Spanish when he goes to the barbershop. He described this experience by saying: “It takes me back to my roots. This is the closest thing I have to practice, have the sounds of my own language, of my own culture, the jokes. Things that they say.” His wife and kids don't speak Spanish. He has positive and negative feelings towards his distance from his culture, citing that culture forces people to change, “even if you don't want to, the people around you force you to change.” While he misses his culture, his people, Cuba, he states:

At one point you start separating. I feel good. *La Cultura cubana, es un poco chismosa, es un poco entrometida*, [Cuban culture is a bit gossipy, a bit nosey,] they know everything, we think we know everything, we are louder than everybody, we have to have the last word. Our music is better than everybody's. But then you have to go back and realize that no, these people

have their point too and you need to listen to them too. *Extraño mi cultura, a la misma vez mi propia cultura a hecho cosas*, [I miss my culture, at the same time, my own culture has done things,] one person did something bad, the whole community was bad.

Javier feels that he had to separate himself from his community in order to succeed. From his migrant age group, he is the only one that went to college. That brings him pride, *“es un orgullo para mi.”* He likes being outstanding in his group.

He shared that African-Americans are seen poorly in the United States and shared experiences of people mistaking him for African-American; he described these experiences as upsetting because that is not who he is, he is very proud of being Cuban, and believes people should not be looking at his skin color. Javier states that when people associate him as African American, they just see his skin complexion, not his security clearance, not his career; he starts being associated as a criminal. When people find out that he is Cuban they don't always change the way they treat him, because then he is a migrant and is associated with another series of negative stereotypes, such as taking job and being uneducated. Although United States Americans still see him negatively, Latinos(a)s change how they perceive him, seeing him as one of their own.

Javier selectively chooses who forms part of his community, and is very careful to choose people who have a positive impact on his life. This mindset has led him to create a distance between the Cuban community and the Hispanic/Latin America community in the United States. His rationale for not identifying as Black shows a conceptualization of the word as being exclusive to and exchangeable with

African-American. Javier highlighted how he identified as Black in Cuba but not in the United States—for him, the meaning of Black changes, depending on the country. He believes that skin color is not enough for him to identify as Black, but that culture and language play a bigger part on how he racially identifies. Although these beliefs are contrary to Pan-African schools of thought, it is important to understand these feelings and rationales, especially when trying to understand how Black migrants navigate configurations of race and ethnicity. The fact that he identifies as having African ancestry and that he identifies as Cuban informs me that he sees cultural similarities (such as language) as a stronger identity and skin color as an insufficient qualifier for an identity. He cites that African Americans are looked upon negatively, and when he is associated with African Americans those negative stereotypes are placed upon him—he describes these encounters as arousing negative and upsetting emotions. His way of coping with this is to distance himself from this community by rejecting the Black identity he once had and more strongly embracing his Latin American/Hispanic and Cuban identities

Nathan

“A regular individual, you know. Trying to do a little bit better than the average”

Nathan was born in Cuba, migrated to the United States in 2000, when he was three years old. He migrated with his mother and older sister. His mother did not want to come to the United States, because of propaganda that was being spread

in Cuba about racism in the United States. He visited Cuba once, in 2005. He did not like the power outages, so he did not return.

Nathan is selective about how much of his identity he shares and explains to others.

Racially I would define myself as Afro-Latin, ethnically I am Latin. I don't say I am Black or anything like that, I just say I am [inaudible]. But obviously if you ask me my history I have ancestors that are from Africa just like anyone who is Afro-Latin.

Despite this extensive explanation of his racial identity, when people ask him what he is, he just says that he is "Latin." According to him, he never thought of saying he was Black or Afro-Latin. When I asked him why this was the case, he said he is just not used to saying it because he just started hearing it, so "it feels weird to say 'Afro-Latin'." He would see that some people were called African-American and wondered "What are we?" Although he introduces himself as Latin, if "people really want to [talk to him] about it" he will say that he is Afro-Latin.

Nathan believes that people are seen as the stereotypes from movies, that people are scared of "us" (Black people). He finds it destructive that no one is teaching the younger Black generation about finances. This lack of financial education is inhibiting Black youth from getting out of the cycle of poverty. He is currently taking courses on the Foreign Exchange market (FOREX), and doing his part to break the cycle of poverty in his family and his circle of friends. He shares that attaining this information has not been easy. He started learning about finances through a program in high school called DEMA. Later, a friend introduced him to

the Foreign Exchange Market (FOREX). He believes that friends should influence and mentor each other. Nathan limits who he socializes with and tries to socialize with more business-oriented people, people that have a similar mindset to him. He is also trying to socialize with more African American people who know about history so he can become more educated. Most of his friends he met in high school or he has known since childhood. Nathan has very few Cuban friends.

Nathan is wise beyond his years. At a young age he was very clear about what he wanted and how he was going to get it. He consciously selected his friendships, and limited his circle to people who would uplift him and have a positive impact on his life. Although he does not say he is Black, when we talked about Black people in the United States, his word choice suggested that he includes himself when speaking about Black people; this suggests that he sees himself as part of the Black community. Furthermore, his interpretation of race shows that he aligns with the belief of a unified African diaspora, that he believes in the similarity of experiences of Black people in the diaspora, a common belief among participants.

Conclusion

The oral histories I collected yielded the conclusion that guidance from community members and becoming involved in the community are the greatest indicators of self-defined success and self-defined integration. Furthermore, some of the community members I spoke with, disassociate themselves from the Cuban enclave in Miami, showing exhaustion in speaking of the topic and disappointment with the community's actions. This is important because it highlights the boundaries

and limitations of nationality as a unifier. Similarly, their relationship to other migrant groups was highlighted by the use of dissociative words such as “them” and “they.” While participants showed humanitarian feelings, they also shared that they maintain strong boundaries on what is acceptable migration and what is not—this relationship will be further discussed in the upcoming chapter. This is also highlighted by their lack of interest in the migration climate, while they demonstrate that they are aware of what is happening in current events, most seem unbothered. This attitude is likely the case because all participants are documented migrants and their position of privilege shields them from being directly threatened by the current anti-immigrant and pro-deportation discourse. Conversely, many participants used inclusive language when discussing Black people, using words such as “us” and “we,” showcasing unity with other Black people across national origins. “Sister” and “brother” were also words that several participants used to describe how the African American community perceived them. These conversations drew lines between the communities they identify with and the communities they want to distance themselves from. Most participants do not associate with the Miami Cuban population and while they are welcoming of migrants they have strict opinions on what is acceptable migration. Most participants identify as Black people, and understand that their skin color subjects them to similar treatment as African-Americans. However, being mistaken for an African-American evokes a range of feelings among participants, some positive, some negative—this was the blurriest line drawn, yet it was still clear for the individual participant.

Each participant had different definitions of success and integration. These definitions affected their experience, sometimes leading to negative emotions because they were unable to meet their expectations in a timely manner and later feeling an extraordinary sense of achievement, pride, and success when they met their goals. Above all, social network was the most important resource participants had. It was through their social network, through the community they built in Albuquerque, that they were able to reinstate their licenses, fight legal battles, improve their living standards and quality of life. When the official resources were not enough, it was their community that helped them settle, integrate, achieve, succeed, and overcome.

Some participants experience Albuquerque as a safe haven from discrimination, citing discriminatory encounters outside of New Mexico. While Albuquerque has a low number of Cubans and Black people, participants still feel safe in this space; a long-standing quality of the United States' Southwest. While some participants have found it difficult to integrate into Albuquerque, most have found it heaven-sent.

Chapter 3:

Language

Chapter 3: Language

“Claramente, ya te digo, quería ser el enfermero que yo era en mi patria, pero no pude por barreras del idioma. El idioma aquí en Estados Unidos para la gente que llega es una barrera muy fuerte, porque siempre vamos a llegar a hablar, pero little a bit, no hablamos más, y a veces no podemos salirnos un poco más allá, porque personas como yo que llegan con una cierta determinada edad, no es como tú, que eres un pino nuevo que está empezando ahora. Tu mente está así, agarrándolo todo. Yo llegué aquí a este país con 50 años ya, sí, casi cumpliendo los 50. Hoy por hoy tengo 63 años, gracias a Dios.” –Fabián

(“Clearly, I will tell you, I wanted to be the nurse I was in my country, but I could not because language was a barrier. Language here in the United States, for the people that come, is a very strong barrier. But we will always arrive and talk, but a little bit, not more, and sometimes we can’t go beyond that because people like me arrive with a certain age, not like you, you are a new pine that is starting now. Your mind is there, grasping everything. I came here to this country with 50 years already, almost 50. Today I am 63 years old, thank God.” – Fabián)

When Cuban migrants first arrive in the United States through the visa lottery system, commonly referred to as “*el bombo*,” they are given two or three cities as resettlement options.¹⁴ Some participants mentioned choosing Albuquerque as their destination, because it was a safe city at the time. Camilo was given the option of settling in Atlanta or Albuquerque he had never heard of either city so he asked where they spoke Spanish. Camilo chose to settle in Albuquerque because the Spanish language was a widely spoken in the city. Participants shared having no information about the cities they can settle into, so when they are given their resettlement options they have to ask important questions to reach the best decision for them—language is one of those important questions.

Albuquerque was the home to various Native American tribes before Spanish colonization. During this colonization they were forced into enslavement and European assimilation, murdered, and displaced. These genocidal conditions were detrimental to the size of their population, culture, language, and power. And still, through various attempts to destroy this population and many legal battles thereafter, many Native American reservations are located throughout New Mexico and in close proximity to Albuquerque. After Mexico gained its independence from Spain, New Mexico became Mexican territory. Under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, New Mexico became one of the United States colonies, gaining statehood in 1912. Many of the descendants of Mexicans who live in New Mexico believe that the border crossed *them*, they feel a deeply rooted sense of belonging. Although their

¹⁴ The visa lottery, also known as Diversity Visa, allocated 55,000 visas to countries with low numbers of immigrants in the United States. Applicants are randomly selected and they are carefully vetted before being approved to enter the United States. Source: <https://cu.usembassy.gov/visas/immigrant-visas/diversity-visa/>

nationality changed, the geographical location of their birth did not. They too were forced to assimilate under different conditions. Many older New Mexicans recall their experiences in school, remembering the corporal punishment they were subjected to by teachers if they spoke Spanish. This is a very brief account of New Mexico's tri-cultural heritage, a common narrative that neglects the presence of other cultural groups such as Afro-descendants, and Asians. This short paragraph does not begin to explain the complex history of New Mexico, the pain and suffering of its people caused by the dehumanization that characterizes colonization, forced assimilation, and treaties that look at land and not the people who live in them. New Mexico is home to many ethnic groups. Many languages are spoken—some, such as *Diné* and Spanish, have been spoken for much longer than English. Many New Mexicans speak Spanish. It is the first language for many of them—even United States-born New Mexicans. While Spanish is widely spoken in Albuquerque, it is one of the most cited encounters of discrimination within the oral histories collected. Furthermore, learning English is also one of the most mentioned requirements for integration.

While language is a central aspect of a migrants' life, not all participants discussed language in their oral histories. Some only mentioned it inconsequentially—not placing much value on it. This chapter introduces some new community members whose stories are centered around the power of language. It also continues the analysis of some of the previously introduced participants whose stories also intertwine with language. This chapter analyzes how language plays a role in the integration process of participants; focusing on the boundaries of

language, linguistic discrimination, language attainment, and its role in the settlement process as a facilitator and/or inhibitor. This chapter continues the stories of Fabián, Javier, Azucena, Camilo, and Daniel; it introduces the stories of Gilberto, Jesus, and Ana.

Gilberto

Me gusta mucho emprender siempre cosas nuevas, esa es una parte que no le tengo miedo a tener que hacer algo nuevo, no importa donde esté, siempre tengo la disposición de aprender algo nuevo.

(I like to undertake new things, I am not afraid of having to do something new, it does not matter where I am, I always have the disposition to undertake something new.)

Gilberto arrived in the United States in 2003, by means of the visa lottery. He describes the help the Catholic Charities offered him as “*una ayuda económica, fundamentalmente para que te puedas independizar e integrar a la sociedad,*” “economic aid, fundamentally so that you may become independent and integrate into society.” He found that the six months of aid provided by the Catholic Charities were sufficient for him to become independent and start a “normal” course of life without having to depend on the government. He describes himself as being racially human, and being ethnically mixed with the cultures of Cuba, his individual culture, and what he has acquired from American culture.

Cuando tú llenas un formulario te preguntan siempre que raza eres, yo les digo, ‘No, somos humanos’, ‘Bueno pero tienes que poner una, tienes que poner que Hispano’. En

Cuba no hay ese tipo de clasificaciones, como aquí que se clasifican las personas por el lugar de origen. En Cuba todos somos de Cuba.

When you fill out a form they always ask what race you are, I say, ‘No, we are human’, ‘Okay, but you have to choose one, you have to put Hispanic’. In Cuba there isn’t that type of classification, like here, where people are classified by place of origin. In Cuba we are all from Cuba.

Gilberto, like other participants was forced to check the “Hispanic” box in demographic information, an identity that was new to him after his arrival in the United States.

Gilberto returned to school at 49 years of age and is currently a student at a local university. His first challenge in going back to school was the English language. Because he did not speak English he would have been unable to understand the course material. His second challenge was that the people he asked for assistance did not know the process for an immigrant to enter the higher education system in the United States. Again, similarly to other participants’ experiences, the professionals responsible for guiding migrants integration process lack adequate knowledge to help them successfully reinstate their licenses or diplomas. It took Gilberto years to receive his green card, which was an obstacle to enrolling in school. He was told that if he did not have his green card he would have to pay out-of-state tuition. While he was sharing this situation with a friend, his friend told him that there was a way around this. It was only through his connection to a friend that he was able to learn information that allowed him to return to school. Because he had a minimum wage

job like many other migrants, it was “impossible” for him to pay for college. Eventually, after many years of studying English, waiting for his green card, giving up, waiting for Cuba to send information that stated he had received a Bachelor’s degree in Cuba, he was able to register for classes in Spring 2016. Although he has been offered scholarships and financial aid for his education, he has not applied for it because he has been able to pay for his education thus far.

When we spoke about United States immigration he stated that it was sad for the Cubans who were left in limbo when the “dry foot, wet foot” policy was terminated.¹⁵ However, he did not think that it was fair for Cubans to have special treatment and that this special treatment was actually a gateway for human trafficking and inappropriate use of the policy by Cubans. While he shares that some people feel like targets of anti-immigrant discrimination he states that he has not felt any discrimination because he is an immigrant or because of his language.

Gilberto believes that integration is the key to avoiding discrimination. When I asked him what integration looked like he said that it was not celebrating a national holiday, but learning English, earning a driver’s license, purchasing car insurance, and understanding the laws of the United States; these are ways in which people integrate. He believes that he has integrated and continues to set integration goals without forgetting that he speaks Spanish, or that he likes Cuban food and music. He returns to Cuba yearly to visit his family, but states that if he did not have family in

¹⁵ The “dry foot, wet foot” policy was terminated on January 12th, 2017 by order of President Barack Obama as an attempt to normalize relations with Cuba. In the months prior, there was a spike in the number of Cubans that emigrated in attempt to arrive in the United States before the policy terminated.

Cuba he would not return, because he does not see the value in returning somewhere one felt oppressed.

Gilberto has endured changes to his ethnic identity, having been changed by his contact with United States American culture. This contact has been so salient that it is now part of his own cultural identity. But, however salient it is, it has not changed his relationship to his mother language. Furthermore, after migration he has had to understand himself through a different lens whereby his national identity goes beyond an implicit common denominator and beyond the norm, and has become a classifier, a nationality that he no longer has in common with everyone in the country he lives in. Language was a major theme in our conversation. Gilberto believes English attainment is an important step in the resettlement process; it is the key to integration, avoiding discrimination, finding employment and attaining educational mobility. Gilberto shares that he has not encountered discrimination because of his language. This is arguably the case because he is now fluent in English, unlike other participants. Among other barriers, his earlier lack of English proficiency delayed the process for him to enter higher education. This barrier was imposed systematically through standardized admission testing that is required for admission into higher learning institutions in the Albuquerque area.

Fabián

En mi patria yo era un enfermero general de la salud pública. Hoy aquí soy un nursing assistant, soy el ayudante de lo que yo era. Antes yo era enfermero, pero aquí soy el ayudante. Ese es el problema del tabú que hay con los idiomas. Es verdad que estamos

en el país de las oportunidades, pero hay que poner de su parte, hay que avanzar en el idioma, porque si llegáramos aquí a este lugar y nos ofrecieran el trabajo de estar como venimos con nuestro título, fuera una felicidad. Hay que saber escribir y saber leer, saber prepararse en inglés todo. Yo hablo poco inglés, hablo francés y hablo español.

(In my home country I was a general nurse of public health. Today I am a nursing assistant, I am the aide of what I used to be. Before I was a nurse, but here I am the aide. That is the problem of the taboo that there is with language. It is true that we are in the country of opportunities, but you have to put in your part, you have to advance in the language, because if we arrived here, in this place, and they offered us the work of doing the same thing with our degrees, that would be happiness. You have to know how to write and know how to read, and know how to prepare yourself everything in English. I speak very little English, I speak French and I speak Spanish.)

Unlike other participants, Fabián is able to connect with people outside of the Spanish-speaking community because he speaks French. This has been an integral part of his membership in the Zumba music group, where he made great social contacts discussed in the previous chapter. Fabián attests to the importance of mastering English in the United States. For him, the difficulty of learning English has been a great impediment in furthering his studies. He believes that the United States is the country of opportunities but English must be mastered before being able to pursue these opportunities. Although he earned his license to be a nurse assistant,

he has been unable to pursue the career he had in Cuba because he is not fluent in English.

Claramente, ya te digo, quería ser el enfermero que yo era en mi patria, pero no pude por barreras del idioma. El idioma aquí en Estados Unidos para la gente que llega es una barrera muy fuerte, porque siempre vamos a llegar a hablar, pero little a bit, no hablamos más, y a veces no podemos salirnos un poco más allá, porque personas como yo que llegan con una cierta determinada edad, no es como tú, que eres un pino nuevo que está empezando ahora. Tu mente está así, agarrándolo todo. Yo llegué aquí a este país con 50 años ya, sí, casi cumpliendo los 50. Hoy por hoy tengo 63 años, gracias a Dios.

Clearly, I will tell you, I wanted to be the nurse I was in my country, but I could not because language was a barrier. Language here in the United States, for the people that come, is a very strong barrier. But we will always arrive and talk, but a little bit, we don't talk more, and sometimes we can't go beyond that because people like me arrive with a certain age, not like you, you are a new pine that is starting now. Your mind is there, grasping everything. I came here to this country with 50 years already, almost 50. Today I am 63 years, thank God.

Fabián's age has made it difficult for him to become fully fluent in English. This has not stopped him, as he has made connections with other people outside of the Spanish-speaking community through his tendency of fostering relationships with other Afro-descendants, the little English he knows, and the French he speaks.

Javier

When Javier enrolled in high school in 1999 as a 16-year-old, there was an English as a Second Language program in place. These programs are geared towards teaching English to speakers of other languages. Javier graduated two years after he enrolled in high school, and while he knew some English he was not very confident in his ability. He enrolled in a local community college because he did not fluently speak English. This way, if he failed a class he would only have spent the fraction of the money he would have spent at a four-year college. Additionally, he went to night school to further his English skills. His plan was to continue to a four-year college after graduation, but he secured a job in his field so he did not continue studying. Javier arrived in the United States at 16 years of age, a fairly young age, which likely helped him in his language attainment.

Today, Javier is fluent in English. Throughout our oral history interview he switched from Spanish to English, and showed more comfort when speaking in English. Javier speaks in English most days. His wife and children speak only English. At work he speaks only English. His friends are also English-speakers. The only times he speaks Spanish is with his parents and sometimes his parents-in-law who are from northern New Mexico. Sometimes he feels nostalgic about the distance from his culture, but he prefers it that way. Javier has consciously maintained a distance from the Cuban community and pushed himself into the United States community. This has included his friends, his work, the places he frequents, and the language he speaks. His integration process is characterized by his complete adaptation of English in most areas of his life, professional and personal; and by

seclusion from the Spanish-speaking community—leaving only his closest Spanish speakers. As discussed in the previous chapter, he has engaged in this behavior intentionally, and he believes it is necessary in order for him to succeed.

Jesus

“Una persona sencilla. Trato de no meterme en problemas. Trabajo”

(“A simple person. I try not to get into trouble. I work.”)

Since his arrival in 2010, Jesus has always lived in Albuquerque. He came to the United States with the hope of creating a better future and financial opportunities. When asked what race he was he said he did not know, he is a mix of everything. He states that he has African ancestry, and family members of different races—including his sons. While he is proud of being Cuban, and admits to never hiding this, he has pride and joy in his Latino identity. Furthermore, he shares that he has an affinity for Mexicans—his accent shows frequent contact with the Mexican community. He is wearing a Club América beanie, a popular Mexican soccer team. He is not affected by the immigration climate, and welcomes all immigrants.

Although Jesus states that his integration process would have been facilitated if he had studied English or chosen a career, he still identifies as having integrated—into New Mexico that is. Jesus states that life in a different state would be different, and thus his current level of integration may or may not be adequate elsewhere. An excellent follow-up question would be what makes integration into New Mexico unique? However, is it deducible that the language component is what makes New

Mexico unique in his ability to integrate regardless of the level of mastery of the English language. Jesus feels very comfortable around the Mexican population; therefore his need to learn a new language because of his circle does not seem dire. His affinity for Mexicans and extraordinary pride in the Latino identity shows that he feels a connection with people that speak the same language as him regardless of nationality.

Azucena

Me paso algo al principio que abrí mi propio salón. Me llego un papá con un niño para que le hiciera un corte de cabello. Llevaba yo apenas dos año aquí. Y entonces, le estaba explicando que yo no lo entendía por que no hablaba ingles, y entonces el me mira y me dice “¿como tú no hablas ingles?” en ingles me lo pregunta, “¿de donde eres?”. “Yo no hablo ingles, no soy de aquí, yo soy Cubana”, y entonces fue y busco a la mujer que hablaba español. Muy enojado el por que pensó que yo no le quería dar el servicio al hijo. Y entonces yo le dije a la mujer que yo si le hago lo que sea al niño, lo que no lo entendía por que yo no soy de aquí. Y en otras ocasiones, en otros lugares que he llegado también, me han dicho “pero tu negra y no hablas ingles, ¿de donde eres?”, “no, no soy de aquí, soy Cubana, y mi ingles no es muy bueno. Pero si en varias ocasiones me han confundido como que soy de acá.

(Something happened in the beginning when I opened my own salon. I got a father with a kid to give him a haircut. I had only been here for two years. And so, I was explaining to him that I didn't understand because I didn't speak English, and he looks

at me and tells me “what do you mean you don’t speak English?” in English he asks me, “Where are you from?” “I don’t speak English, I’m not from here, I am Cuban,” and then he went and looked for his woman who spoke Spanish. He was very angry because he thought that I didn’t want to serve the kid. So, I told the woman that I would do whatever he wanted to the kid, I just didn’t understand because I am not from here. And in other occasions, in other places that I have arrived they’ve told me “but you are Black and don’t speak English, where are you from?” “No, I’m not from here, I am Cuban, and my English isn’t very good.” But, yeah, on various occasions they have confused me with being from here.)

Azucena’s beauty salon is located in a predominately Spanish-speaking community in Southeast Albuquerque. Most of her costumers are Spanish-speakers, specifically Mexican. She strategically chose this location because she wanted to serve the Spanish-speaking community. With the support of this community she was able to expand to a bigger location within two years of the opening date. This location hosts six positions including barbers, cosmetologists, and a nail technician. Azucena has been a successful business owner in Albuquerque for over a decade. Her ability to open a business and be a successful entrepreneur without being fluent in English demonstrates her impressive business skills and shows that it is possible to do so in Albuquerque. Furthermore, this accomplishment shows the financial power that the Spanish-speaking community has in the area, successfully supporting her business for over a decade and allowing her to upgrade to a bigger space. Azucena has also been able to create jobs in this same community by hiring barbers,

cosmetologists, and nail technicians. This small aspect of her life shows how inessential language can be in this community, and how much success can be achieved without being fluent in English.

Azucena's level of English has not severed her relationship with the African-American community. When I asked her how African-Americans perceived her she stated:

Yo siento que me perciben como una de su raza, como una hermana. Podíamos decir quizás, hermana de raza, me respetan, me miran con respeto, me hablan con respeto.

I feel like they perceive me as one of their race, like a sister. We could say a sister in race, they respect me, look at me with respect, talk to me with respect.

I asked her if their attitude changed when she had difficulty communicating with them, to which she responded:

No, todo lo contrario, me han elogiado las dos palabras en ingles que he dicho. Me han dicho que "good, good", "perfecto", que "estoy muy bien". Y han querido seguir comunicándose con migo, a pesar del lenguaje.

No, just the opposite, they have complimented the two words in English that I have said. They have told me 'good, good', 'perfect', that "I am very good." And they have wanted to keep communicating with me, in spite of the language.

Azucena briefly worked at an African-American salon and she has several African-American clients at her beauty salon. Her ability to work with the African-American community in Albuquerque is partly due to the fact that kinky, curly, etc. hair is the same regardless of the country. Hair, like skin color, exists independently and in no relationship to the country of origin. In Cuba, Azucena worked with a predominantly Black customer base, her specialties were hair relaxers and hair extensions. These skills translated into the United States market, allowing her the opportunity to work with the African-American community even when she did not speak English.

Camilo

At his arrival in the United States, Camilo was given the option of resettling in Atlanta, Georgia or Albuquerque, New Mexico. He asked where they spoke Spanish and he has lived in Albuquerque ever since. He believes that it is best to live in a space where the majority of the residents are Hispanic because representation is important. When he got to the United States he lacked mentorship, which made it difficult for him to learn how to navigate the United States' systems. Moreover, because he spoke only Spanish he was limited to socializing with Cubans. These relationships and lack of mentorship got him into illegal activities for which he served time in prison. He believes that the two major barriers to achieving his personal goals: at that time were: not speaking English and not understanding the legal system. Now, Camilo is bilingual, he speaks English at work, Spanish at home, and both at church. The Spanish language is still an integral part of his life, preaching

at the Spanish ministry within a larger English-speaking church. By his own words and standards he has successfully integrated into Albuquerque.

Camilo's narrative highlights the importance of language in his choice of resettlement city. It also highlights how important it was for him to master English. His lack of English at his arrival forced him into socializing with people who were a bad influence. Today, his bilingual abilities, allows him access to better jobs, an active religious life, and better influences.

Daniel

Soon after his arrival in the United States, Daniel stopped attending English classes because they were too time-consuming and he needed to focus on working. After all, he migrated to the United States to financially help his family. Daniel speaks Yoruba. He is an active practitioner of the Yoruba religion, a religion he brought with him from Cuba. He is a *babalao*, a priest, keeper of the secrets of the religion. Daniel shared with me that thanks to his mastery of the Yoruba language he has been able to connect with Nigerians in Nigeria through social media. Through this connection he is able to buy religious artifacts that he otherwise would not have access to and simultaneously he is able to give financial help to the people from whom he buys these artifacts. Daniel's engagement in Pan-Africanism through his financial and social connections with members of the African diaspora is facilitated by his linguistic skill, religion, and access to social media.

He describes his religion as Afro-Cuban-Creole. He shared some of the discrimination he has endured as a practitioner of Yoruba. He shared that it is often

described as a “Black people thing” and “evil,” but it is not an evil religion, “*salvamos vidas*,” “we save lives,” stated Daniel. The practicing of the Yoruba religion is also looked-down upon by many non-practitioners because of the animal sacrifices that are part of many ceremonies. Daniel states that ultimately people kill animals to eat them. He stated that at least in the religion, their deaths are quick and painless unlike the torturous killings in animal farms for mass distribution.

Daniel discussed his belief that laws are used to discriminate against practitioners of the Yoruba religion; citing that he can spend up to five years in prison for animal abuse if he is found sacrificing an animal. Drums and expressive thunderous singing are integral parts of many religious ceremonies, but if neighbors hear him they are prone to call law enforcement. Consequently, he has to practice his religion behind closed doors and windows, in a confined space. Daniel brings up the United States Constitution’s guarantee that individuals have freedom of religion; however, the persecution that he experiences is not based on his constitutional right. He continues by stating that he does not feel at freedom to practice his religion, and compares his current condition to that which his ancestors had to endure during enslavement.

Daniel’s inability to continue with English classes is a common narrative among participants. Because other responsibilities have more immediate priority, participants Adonis, Alvaro, and Daniel have had to renegotiate their time allotment, often abandoning English classes. Daniel’s ability to speak another language allows him to make connections beyond his immediate physical community. Daniel is able to connect with many Nigerians and other Yoruba-

speakers because he speaks Yoruba. This skill strengthens his relationship to Africa and his religion. Furthermore, he is part of the economic system in Nigeria, something that is also facilitated by his linguistic ability. While he faces oppression post-migration because of his religion, his religion has facilitated his connection to the African diaspora through language.

Ana

When I was younger and I used to live in Florida, I was maybe in third grade, I was in my best friend's backyard and she lived near a lake. And we would hang out on this blow up trampoline, and I just remember looking at the sky and thinking "this is the best day of my life." I love being with my friends.

Ana was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico and moved to Hialeah, Florida when she was in elementary school. She returned to Albuquerque when she was in middle school. She describes Albuquerque as being very diverse with different ethnic groups residing in the area. She grew very close to her Chicano(a) roots because this culture is so prevalent in Albuquerque. Miami, Florida helped her become close to her Cuban roots. She identifies as "Mexican-Cubana-Americana. Latina, Chicana." She feels comfortable having all of those identities at once within herself, but when she steps outside it can be difficult for people to see beyond her Mexican identity. As she explained, the Mexican identity is what most people come in contact with in Albuquerque, and people often assume that she is Mexican or Arabic. She states: "sometimes people are not going to understand who you are."

When she is in Miami, she brings up being Mexican first because it's the uncommon identity. In Albuquerque, Ana used to say that she was Cuban and neglected her Mexican side. Growing up she did not like the stereotypes that came with identifying as Mexican or the response she received from people. She did, however, like the response she got when she said she was Cuban. In Albuquerque, being Cuban is a more unique identity, or as she described it "exotic". After taking several Chicano(a) Studies courses in college, she has been empowered to identify as Mexican more often, and recently started identifying as Chicana. She describes being Chicana as "being proud of being Mexican and American, being both. Its an empowering term".

Ana identifies as having African ancestry because she has curly hair and there was a lot of racial mixing in Cuba. "When I [develop a] scar I keloid. My stepfather, who is from Cuba, is of African descent, and he told me that since I keloid I may have African ancestry. I think that is interesting." She hopes that she does have African ancestry. It would bring her pride to know that she has that possibility in her ancestry. One person thought she was Black in middle school, likely because she had very curly hair.

Being raised in an immigrant family has affected her positively because it opened her eyes to other cultures. She believes she is more informed and understanding about immigration than most people. She has a lot of Mexican friends because she went to a high school with a lot of Hispanic students. Ana's first language was Spanish and her mom supported her learning English. Currently, she speaks mostly English with her friends and at home. She states that it's easier for her

to speak in English because in an average conversation she knows all the words in English. Conversely, she frequently has to stop in Spanish conversations to think of the word she wants to use. Nonetheless, she frequently goes to the Hispanic cultural center on her college campus.

She is also active in Upward Bound – an organization that prepares low-income and first-generation students for college and promotes college education. She used to receive tutoring from this organization when she was in high school. After she enrolled in college, she kept in contact with the program, and her junior year of undergrad she became a tutor for the program. The program works with first-generation students, mostly Hispanic and low-income students. She used to feel that she wasn't smart enough and college was not for her until she was assigned a mentor through the program. Her mentor helped and inspired her, he became someone she looked up to. The program also helped keep her out of trouble. She had some friends who were not very good influences, but being part of an organization and having other people whom she wanted to make proud motivated her to earn a college education.

Ana has a multidimensional identity that she is very aware of. The identity she presents to others is an over-simplified version of the identity she holds as being truest to herself—this is similar to what Nathan does, who identifies himself as Latino unless the other person wants him to be more detailed. Overtime, her lived experiences have changed the way she presents herself to others. She used to avoid identifying as Mexican because she received negative reactions from people, but her Cuban identity brought her more positive reactions and a positive sense of

“otherness” that placed a distance between herself and the negative stereotypes associated with being Mexican. However, her Chicano(a) courses empowered her to do otherwise, she received the education and motivation she needed to claim an identity that she feels is more comfortable and that honors her truest self and her mother without compromise. I chose to include the wide spectrum of Ana’s oral history because language is a silent theme in her story. While we did talk much about the role of language in her story, just as much is said when language is not referenced directly. Her bilingual skill has granted her access to navigate the world of her choice. Her social network is composed of Spanish-speakers, English-speakers, and Bilingual people. She was able to transition into college without language being a factor. I chose to include her story last as a tale of the future. Many Cubans who live in Albuquerque will have children with Mexican partners because this is the Spanish-speaking population that is most present. In fact, participants like Alvaro have children with a Mexican partner. Ana’s story is the story of their children. A story of the future.

Conclusion

As a theme, language had a wide-ranging impact on participants’ lives. It is difficult to establish a single pattern of the role of language in their lives. Most participants agree on a few things: not knowing English makes life more difficult and learning English is an integral part to self-improvement and integration. Some participants cited language as a barrier for success (for example, a barrier to enrolling in school) and others strategically used their Spanish skills to target the Spanish-

speaking market and succeed regardless of their mastery of English or lack thereof. The participants who immigrated during or before their teenage years, like Ana and Javier, were able to grasp the language quickly and to move beyond the Cuban social enclave. The participants who came during or after their 20s struggled a bit more to grasp the language, and are still very rooted in the Cuban community and/or the Spanish-speaking community.

Speaking the same language does not guarantee unity or comradery. Many participants do not have close relationships with other Spanish-speakers outside of Cuban community, but a small minority does. When we talked about the current climate surrounding immigration, most of them were unbothered and any related problems seemed distant, even though they live in a largely migrant community, and they themselves are migrants. Several participants did express concern for other migrant communities; these participants, namely Ana and Gilberto, had closer relationships to Spanish speakers outside of the Cuban community.

Language functions as a barrier for many of the participants. It is a social barrier that limits the community with which participants can interact, and the barrier therefore limits the mentorship that they are able to receive. Language is also a barrier for employment opportunities, licensing reinstatement, and educational attainment. This experience has been a paradoxical situation for some participants. As they arrive in the United States they take English classes, but after a while, when they get jobs or as their families require more of their time, they have to abandon these English classes. They cannot advance in jobs, get jobs in their fields, or attain more education because they have had to abandon their English classes. Acquisition

of the English language is a milestone for some participants who then declare their integration into the United States. On the other hand, some participants feel that they have integrated even when they do not master the English language. All of these factors aside, participants showed that it is possible to succeed and integrate into Albuquerque without being fluent in English. They showed that businesses can thrive in Albuquerque with the astonishing support of the Spanish-speaking community, specifically the Mexican community. They showed that speaking a second language, even if it is not English, allows them to form beneficial relationships with other people. The lack of the necessity to be fluent in English as a requirement for integration is likely unique to Albuquerque.

Conclusion

Conclusion

I embarked upon this research study to answer the question of how Black Cuban migrants were navigating the configurations of race and ethnicity in Albuquerque, New Mexico. What I found contradicted a lot of existing literature. My literature review revealed that Black Cubans' integration path is complex and depends on a series of events and trials-and-errors. The rejection by the migrant community supposedly drives migrants to disassociate themselves from the migrant community (Newby, 2007). Acceptance by the migrant community supposedly drives integration them into the migrant community (Portes, & Zhou, 1993). The rejection or acceptance of the proximal host was also reported to influence the migrants' quality of relationship with their proximal host, and the adoption of national identities was explained as a tool to neutralize the negative effects of being associated with a race (Greenbaum, 2002). What my participants shared was a different experience. The participants who willfully disassociated themselves from the migrant community stated that they did so as a way to eliminate negative influences and succeed in their new communities. The biggest predictor of who participants socialize with are the places they frequent, specifically where they work and the religion they practice. Moreover, the high number of Spanish-speakers in Albuquerque has allowed participants to have access to a great pool of people beyond the Cuban community.

Albuquerque is the Land of Enchantment, a diverse city that goes beyond the empty promises of inclusivity. Cuban migrants who resettled in Albuquerque had limited options in regard to which cities they could relocate to, most of them had never heard of Albuquerque. Some chose to settle in Albuquerque because it was safe

for their children, others chose it because Spanish was a common language, and others chose it because they had family there. Regardless of what the reason was to relocate to Albuquerque, they thrived there. Some of them attribute their success to the welcoming culture of the Southwest city. Unlike other cities, Albuquerque does not just talk about a multi-cultural presence, life in Albuquerque is a multi-cultural experience for its residents. Many of the participants experience Albuquerque's diversity in their jobs, where many of them have succeeded without speaking English. Other participants experience Albuquerque's cultural diversity through their community involvement (e.g. playing music for Zumba classes like Fabián, owning a business like Azucena, being involved in religious leadership like Clara and Camilo). Many of these activities target a non-United States national population, and they still thrive. The cultural diversity of Albuquerque, New Mexico has allowed participants to succeed in various areas of their life—even though they have had to make cultural compromises. Gilberto, for example, stated in his oral history that as a way to integrate he can no longer listen to loud music because that is not the culture of the United States.

Every participant stated having social connections that go beyond the Cuban community, several of them come in contact with non-Cubans more frequently than Cubans, and others have purposely disassociated themselves from the Cuban community. This behavior highlights the limitations of nationality as a sole reason for relationships. Their flexibility in establishing friendships shows that living in a space where they do not have to socialize with people solely of their own nationality is liberating and sometimes necessary for success. Such is the case of Javier, who

disassociated himself from the Cuban community to reduce the negative influences in his life.

The cultural richness of Albuquerque allows migrants to have options. They are not limited to having Cuban, Latin American, or migrant friends because of the diversity of people who reside in the city. Albuquerque residents are so used to different cultures that they are accustomed to these interactions. The community around them, including African-Americans and Mexican-Americans, generally has positive attitudes towards them, making it relatively simple to socialize with other ethnic groups outside of their own. While Albuquerque is a relatively new migration destination for Cubans, it is the metropolitan city with the 5th largest concentration of Cuban refugees, and locals are used to migrants—especially Latin-American migrants. This facilitates the resettlement process of Cuban migrants to this area.

When participants described themselves, they discussed their personal traits, their outlook on life, and/or their personality; all except Fabián who described himself from a cultural standpoint. Most participants vocalized their Blackness—some, like Fabián and Daniel, were more vocal about it than others. They also demonstrated Afro-diasporic principles influencing their lives through community involvement, work, friends, and outlook on race relations. Such is the case of Clara who showed great interest in helping the Black community in her area. Or the case of many participants who described Black nationals as “brothers” and “sisters.” Language proved to have limitations and be an insufficient commodity on which to establish relationships. The social circles of most participants were limited to Spanish-speakers, but participants showed a lack of concern for other Latin-

American migrants. All of the participants are documented immigrants, and their migration status likely plays a role in their disregard for the immigration climate and how it's affecting the migrant community—specifically the undocumented migrant community. This is particularly striking because all participants stated they were proud Hispanic/Latino(a) and a majority of their friends are other migrants, their dismissive demeanor suggests that these cultural traits are not sufficient to establish solidarity.

Socially, Albuquerque is a great fit for most of the participants. They were able to form friendships inside and outside of the Cuban community. Some developed mentorships and are involved in the community. They are also able to integrate and engage in community formation without being fluent in the English language. Nonetheless, their professional reinstatement process was strenuous and characterized by a lack of professional guidance from their resettlement agents; but it was also characterized by the support of community members. Azucena, Gilberto, and Fabián were able to re-enter their field of work after migration, they were able to do so because a community member was able to connect them with the answers and resources they needed. Community members have a huge role in the successful integration of migrants. Although success and integration differed for each participant, most participants mentioned entering the workforce as an important part of integration. Additionally, some participants mentioned learning the laws of the United States as important milestones for integration, and some mentioned their citizenship as a great achievement. On the other hand, participants identify a lack of fluency in English as a major barrier to their integration process and to their success

in the United States. They shared their encountering obstacles to learning the English language such as arriving in the United States at an older age, having to work long hours, and a lack of time. Regardless, participants still identify as having integrated regardless of their English language fluency. Participants demonstrated that it is possible to succeed in Albuquerque without being fluent in English.

The existing narrative about Cuban migrants is dominated by the ideologies of Miami, Florida's Cuban community, but the ideologies of the people I spoke with differ greatly from this predominant narrative. This may be the case because Cuban migrants who live in Albuquerque are part of a different migration time than those in Miami, Florida. More importantly, what this ideological difference shows is that it is time to change the Cuban narrative in the United States. The ideology that is being propagated through news cycles and research is outdated. The narrative of Cubans in the United States has changed. It is easy to conduct research, report news, and use the Cuban Miami, Florida community as an easy sample population, a poster child, and as representative of the Cuban community in the United States. But the demographics of Cubans in the United States has changed, the distribution of Cubans in the United States has spread out and there are communities being formed all around the United States, as in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Research needs to be diversified. National news should highlight the Cuban community in other cities. The Cuban migrant narrative must be diversified in location *and* race.

Resolution

I caution against using any one story in this collection as a Horatio Alger narrative. A few participants showed extraordinary levels of professional success, but this was not achieved alone. Furthermore, their stories of success do not compensate for the difficulties they have to overcome to get there, and it certainly does not compensate for the avoidable adversity that other migrants have to overcome. Instead, look at their individual life stories and analyze the factors that helped them get to where they are, determine the obstacles that they had to overcome, or the obstacles that still exist and determine what can be done to improve the resettlement process.

These research findings indicate that a new theoretical framework must be developed because the existing ones are too limited. The language used in this topic must be seriously challenged and reevaluated. A wide majority of the literature that talks about Afro-descendant Cubans labels them as “Afro-Cubans,” but the people refer to themselves as *negro(a)*, Black. This must be acknowledged and respected. Afro-Latinx migrants must be more heavily included in Pan-African dialogues. The lack of research of this community is causing misinformation, harmful assumptions, and a gap in the knowledge of the African diaspora. In popular culture it is still a belief that Latin-American immigrants deny their Blackness; however, the oral histories collected tell a different story—Black Cuban migrants are well aware of their Blackness. Latin-Americans of African ancestry must be included in general education courses and books (Busey, & Cruz, 2015). If there were more inclusion of Afro-Latinxs in the general education curriculum, people would less frequently deny

the Blackness of Black Cuban migrants—an experience that participants like Daniel and Azucena encountered. And lastly, English language courses must accommodate the needs of this community because the existing system is not working for them.

A few participants cited difficulty in accessing information on how to reinstate their professional licenses, get diploma equivalencies, or enter higher education. The professionals in charge of aiding their integration process did not help them, and participants had to rely on other community members to achieve these goals. Professionals who are to work with migrants, especially those who coordinate their resettlement process and job placement, should be trained and better prepared to help migrants reinstate their professionals licenses, earn diploma equivalencies, and/or enter higher education. These professionals should be able to redirect migrants to certification boards, technical/vocational schools, and higher education admission offices. This process of personal advancement should be an option for all migrants, they should all be aware of the professional development opportunities that are available to them and the financial assistance available to fund their education.

Below I have included a chart with some quick identifiers listing how the participants relate to them. The phrase “not occurring” means that the answer to that question did not explicitly surface during the oral history interview. I have included this chart to provide a visual representation of the multidimensional ways people identify. This table illustrates that the common practice of telling migrants how they must identify does not adequately represent them, their experiences, or their identities.

Table 2—How Participants Identify

Participant's Name	Do they self-identify as <i>negro(a)</i> ?	Do others identify them as <i>negro(a)</i> ?	Do they identify as mix?	Do they identify as having African ancestry?
Azucena	Yes	Yes	Not occurring	Yes
Camilo	Not occurring	Yes	Not occurring	Yes
Clara	Yes	Yes	Not occurring	Yes
Dayana	Yes	Yes	Not occurring	Yes
Gilberto	No	Yes	Not occurring	Yes
Ana	No	No	Yes	Yes
Adonis	Yes	Yes	Not occurring	Yes
Alvaro	No	No	Yes	Yes
Fabián	Yes	Yes	Not occurring	Yes
Javier	Not in U.S.A. context	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jesus	No	No	Yes	Yes
Pedro	No	Yes	Yes (Spanish and Cuba)	No
Nathan	Yes	Yes	Not occurring	Yes
Daniel	Yes	Yes	Not occurring	Yes

All participants shared with me that they checked the Hispanic/Latino box in forms that ask for their demographic information. Many of them confessed not knowing what Hispanic/Latino means, they just check this box because they were told to do so by the people in charge of helping them fill out those forms. Some of them shared anecdotes of these professionals telling them they could not check the “Black” box, even though that is how they identify and have identified their entire lives. The practice of telling recent migrants that they must identify as Hispanic and not Black is problematic. The demographic information that is being collected from this community is not accurate. Demographic information is terribly important as many government programs rely on the demographic data collected to create policies, determine service evaluations, budgets, etc. Participants are not necessarily being misrepresented, they are Hispanic/Latino(a), but they are also Black/Afro-descendants. For some participants like Fabián and Daniel, Blackness is a central part of their identity, but regardless of the role of race in their identities, most participants are perceived as Black people and their lived experiences would closely correlate with the lived experiences of African-Americans – and the demographic data collected should take this into account.

Some participants, for example Adonis, shared that they were *told* to identify as Hispanic. Yet it was not explained to them what Hispanic meant, they were just told to select that box. Can you imagine? *Just being told* how you have to identify? Just being told what box to select on something as important as a census form? But it doesn't stop there. Participants begin to *believe* that they can not identify as Black, as what they are, as how the world sees them, as what they have been since the day

they were born. Their Blackness has not disappeared because they relocated. I call to action professionals who oversee the integration process of migrants to explain the meaning of the new racial and ethnic identities that function within the United States. I suggest that they do not attempt to strip the existing identities that migrants hold, nor force new identities onto them; just present the information and allow them to make the decision that best suits them.

The result of these changes will more accurately provide demographic data. Access to accurate information will allow migrants to continue working in their professions after migration and have an easier resettlement process. Learning English will improve the amount of opportunities migrants have access to, such as professional employment, higher education, and greater opportunity for social connections. The United States will benefit from the influx of new professionals, especially those in understaffed fields. These changes will improve the United States and people's lives—and that makes everything worth it.

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Vita

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