Latino/a Youth Subcultures in Elizabeth, New Jersey:
Memory, Spacemaking, and Citizenship, 1980s-1990s

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Colombian American club kid Andre Melendez, also known as Angel Melendez (1971-1996), who should be remembered for how he empowered others, especially youth in Elizabeth, to be who they really are, even amidst systemic repression and violence toward racial, cultural, sexual and gender difference. To my niece and nephew, Alexandra and Brandon Avivi, I hope to trade with you both stories of our youth someday, and share how you helped me get sanely through the arduous task of writing and thinking through this dissertation. To my loving parents, Carmen Emilia and Farid Avivi, I'm so lucky to have you as mamí y pápi. My "hard" work could never compete with your lifelong selfless sacrifices to help me get where I am.

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PREFACE

This project is about understanding how subculture scenes and groupings among Latino youth in Elizabeth, New Jersey in the 1980s-1990s can offer a deep understanding of the personal lives, motivations, visions of the world and what "U.S. nation" meant to those of us who participated in them. I will consider how, for example, we identified with the values of the 90's house (music) nation, hip-hop (music) nation, or rave (techno music) nation. Subcultures offered competing visions of U.S. nation during that time; thus, I am asking in this project how my experiences (and the experiences of those I interviewed in this research) reflective of these tensions and of relationship building among youth. In effect, our subcultures were personal, influential and powerful in our lives in that they conveyed a sense of "where we wanted to go and were going to go" outside state values and expectations. We can see this anti-state or (im)mobility or movement as a youth post-nationalism or cultural nationalism through our groupings, which were often trivialized, criminalized and erased by dominant values and ideologies. Ultimately, I want to show the forces and tensions between local youth subculture and state policies of race, assimilation, multiculturalism, nation, and [simplistic notions of] success and failure. Our sense of belonging and being through subculture challenged static state markers and offered very personal and meaningful moments of self-discovery and belonging that often were not welcomed in the national community.

In this preface, I focus on my youth story to offer my own voyage through different subcultures that embraced my changing racial, sexual, and gender subjectivity despite, for example, my parents' and educators' linear expectations of mobility, success and assimilation into middle class and heteronormative mainstream society. While state policies attempt to create linear narratives of assimilation, mobility, delinquency, and deviance, youth subcultures that I navigated engendered in me and others anti-state non-linear narratives of nuances, queerness, hybridity, unpredictability, and being as one really is despite societal expectations.

Therefore, this project examines the tensions that resulted when the state often boxed Elizabeth Latino youth as working class, imminently failed, deadbeat and heterocentrist, despite the fact that their experiences and subjectivity were more nuanced amidst vibrantly rich subculture scenes and ideologies (hip hop, rap, goth, skate, punk, club kid, gay ball and voguing, etc.) in the New York City area. Access to different subculture scenes provided a third space or hybridity in which youth could explore "who they felt they really were and were they were going or wanted to end up" at a particular moment while not being contained by Hispanophobic, homo- and transphobic state policies and ideologies of exclusion. Here, I offer how I identified with a heterosexist black and Latino hip hop and house scene but eventually also explored alternative, techno and rave scenes that complemented my gay and effeminate gender and sexuality.

What brought me to this project was a desire to center and understand the importance of subculture in Latino/a youth lives of the 1980s-1990s, which is often completely undermined and viewed as an immature and terminal "growing up" phase, and even as deviant and criminal in some cases. Rather than seeing it as an unproductive

phase, I explore how youth creativity, relationality, group- and spacemaking were ultimately linked to finding belonging despite, for example strict and simplistic (parent and teacher) expectations, binaries (of race, gender, and sexuality), (social and class) boundaries and (ethnic and racial) divisions imposed by state policies and ideologies. In effect, I am interested in understanding how youth subcultures offer sophisticated examples of youths' political thought and ideology that should be treated as having great historical value in understanding youths' lives amidst anti-Hispanic state and market-centered ideologies.

Ultimately, if we are to create a historical narrative about Latino/a youth of the 1980s-1990s, we must center subculture to truly understand our everyday lives, how we related with others and with different groups, and our political views, which at times exceeded state racial projects and ideologies. My own life is telling of the different subcultural scenes local youth had access to and belonged in.   Putting subculture in the center of Latino youth lives matters to me or us because it is about celebrating our "youth of color" self-determination, thoughtful and valid political views, and the non-conformity we exuded in our everyday lives to live our struggles as we were despite failing (or choosing) to fulfill often white middle class dominant expectations and values amidst constant meaningful self-discovery and personal post-national values. Further, the subversive subcultural subjectivity of our everyday lives was influential in that it informed others in these subcultural scenes and in the nation to move forward as progressively as possible during that time. In light of this, we can begin to consider a balanced historical narrative of Latino youth subjectivity who were coming of age amidst subcultural scenes in the 1980s-1990s.

Mom, Dad, and the American Dream

I was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey to Latino parents (modestly educated first-generation immigrants from Colombia) who were an example of the many Latino immigrants of the mid 1960s to 1970s who arrived in Elizabeth and other cities with large industrial sites to work in factories. My parents, both undocumented until I was born, had arrived in Elizabeth and worked in what was left of Elizabeth's manufacturing sector. Eventually, my father found a job in a hotel and was the bell captain for one across from the Newark International Airport. My father was incredible at hospitality to guests; he was a model employee. On the other hand, my mother got a higher paying job with the help of a close "compatriota" as a skilled operator with Anheuser Busch in Newark in the packing department. My mother came to the U.S. as a skilled operator with years of experience working in pharmaceutical companies in Cali, Colombia. Despite my mother's limited English, which stunted her job performance at Anheuser Busch, she was also recognized as a star worker at the brewery for efficient and record-breaking production. Both of my parents would work in these jobs for twenty-five years.

Before my mother started working, she aspired to move out of Elizabeth and into a one-family house in another town. She equated moving into a tree-lined block of one-family houses of manicured lawns and backyard space with the beginnings of achieving the American Dream. My mother wanted to move out of our 1-bedroom apartment in Elizabeth and persuaded my father to start looking for a house in a better neighborhood. Ultimately, my father gave in and put a down payment on a house in Hillside that was just one block away from the apartment where we lived in Elizabeth. This would be the house

my parents would own until 2015. Talking to my parents decades later as a graduate

student, I realized the covert racism and discrimination they encountered in how the real

estate broker they worked with pushed my (uninformed, docile and limited English

speaking) parents to move into Hillside when in fact my father's ability to put forward a

good down payment could have allowed them to purchase a house in a better area.

The Hillside that I would come to call home was considered a less dense area than

Elizabeth, with blocks of one-family GI houses with cozy front porches and modest-sized

front and backyards only blocks away from mansions that included Phil Rizzuto's. Rizzuto

was a famous American Major League Baseball shortstop player who played for the New

York Yankees. I remember a female African American classmate once telling me that unlike

her, "You live in the white part of Hillside." The fact is that from an early age I knew that

living in that part of Hillside exuded more affluence and privilege than living in the largely

brown and black neighborhoods where most of my classmates lived on the Elizabeth side.

From first through eighth grade, my brother and I attended a parochial elementary school,

Saint Catherine's, whose school building was on the Elizabeth border (not far from the

apartment where I lived until I turned four) and whose church was on the Hillside border.

I remember that every time we went to church I would think about how the Hillside

border we were crossing into was "whiter" than nearby Elizabeth and Newark.

In a way, my Latino and black classmates viewed those who lived in the tree-lined

one-family house blocks of Hillside near Elizabeth as more privileged than the rest. Most of

the Latino classmates lived in Elizabeth's apartments or four-family houses, which was a

step down from the whites, Filipinos, and few Latinos living in the white part of Hillside.

Elizabeth felt like a Hispanic town, unlike Hillside with its "white" or "black" majority

culture, depending on the area. One of our classmates, a bright African American female who was particularly good in English class, lived in Newark's housing projects, which also bordered Elizabeth and Hillside.   Unfortunately, this student was often met with a lot of social and class hostility from the white, African American and Latino students (including myself) who viewed her as "less than" for living in the majority African American and Puerto Rican neighborhood of Newark's public housing projects. These social markers based on race and geographic positioning helped us to situate people socially as well as created hierarchies among us.

Performing the Good Student Role: Whitened Among the Minority Students

Aside from these racial and geographic markers, school performance was another area in which there were hierarchies among students.   Being a "good" student in elementary school as a Latino student, I was very much seen as the representation of a whitened student among many of my Latino and African American classmates who were average or for some reason or another disinterested or underperforming at school. I performed at average levels on standardized tests in elementary school but worked hard to be among the top kids in my class. Both of my modestly educated immigrant parents (my dad with barely a sixth grade education), for some reason or another, empowered me to work very hard in school. I remember in elementary school how my father helped me so passionately with my math work. His bright eyes and hope to see me strive compelled me to take my studies seriously from an early age. Because I was a hard worker (sometimes obsequious) and a "good student" among the mostly average Latino and minority contingent in my classes, I was marked as one of the bright yet annoyingly nerdy students (very much like Oscar Wao, the character in the well-known novel by Junot Díaz, only

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younger). Further, as an effeminate acting and teased gay student throughout elementary school, I took comfort in doing well in school. Among a class of thirty, about eight white and Filipino students and 1 African American student were tracked into the advanced reading and/or math classes, while the rest of us majority Latino and African American students were tracked into the regular classes. I was surprised and honored to be awarded the general excellence award among the advanced and high-test-scoring whites and Asian American students in my class. My "good" or whitened student performance had definitely paid off in the end.

Moving into high school, several of the Latino students in our class ended up going to the parochial high schools in the nearby area. Many of us either went to Saint Mary's, Roselle Catholic or Union Catholic High Schools. Saint Mary's was in Elizabeth and right near Elizabeth High School, while Roselle and Union Catholic were outside the Elizabeth area and situated on their own green campus of white middle to upper-middle class neighborhoods that felt like another world compared to our denser and largely working class minority urban context. For those of us who went to these parochial high schools, our parents worked very hard to pay the tuition fees instead of sending us to the public schools, either Elizabeth or Hillside High School. Our parents, including mine, felt that these parochial high schools were the alternative to the declining and dangerous public high schools in the area with their "violent," "hostile," and underperforming students. Our parents' fears were that these bad students would lead us into the path of underperformance, rebellion, laziness, and even criminal behavior. Some of my participants who went to parochial high schools in the local area frequently told me that the quality of the education there was overrated. From the perspective of Latino parents,

these institutions were not only stricter, with a more personalized approach, but they separated their children from other bad or urban and disadvantaged youth who could influence their children to engage in crime, drugs, violence, and homosexuality.

Spanglish Borders: A "Daotao" y la "Jungla" After School

I remember my deep affinity to the class and racial diversity and sense of Latino working class identity that I could find on the streets of Elizabeth that made it easier for me to engage with others than it was to engage with other youth in my high school, Hillside, and in Colombia. During my freshman year of high school, I hung out with Marie, who lived in Elizabeth not far from Elizabeth High School and St. Mary's High School. She attended only freshman year at Roselle Catholic and went to Elizabeth High School until she graduated in 1994. During my freshman year in particular, I had a hard time connecting with white classmates who viewed me as culturally out of tune with mainstream white identity and popular culture. Sometimes Marie and I would take public bus 59 on Chestnut Street in Roselle, walking the distance from Roselle Catholic High School to hang out in downtown Elizabeth. Marie and I were always excited to venture out and meet others, including her friends from Elizabeth High School, and to venture out into the shopping district where clothing and music stores like Mannings, Manhattan, Rio Roma, Alwicks, and Vogels were some of the big stores where youth at the time mostly shopped for clothes and music that were "in" (especially when they were on sale or when their birthdays and the holidays were near).

Marie and I would write in our notes about going "daotao" (downtown) to "la jungla" (pronounced hoon-gla and means jungle) to OUR Elizabeth. By "our," I am referring to the fact that Elizabeth was our home, unlike the Roselle Catholic campus we were bused

to every morning, where we felt foreign. These words express our own youth Latino

identity and political positioning at the time as working class Latinos/as outside the

majority-white heteronormative and lawn-green suburban school campus in Roselle.   They

also represent a linguistic and cultural hybridity or an in-betweenness that expressed a

subjectivity outside that of an assimilated and bilingual individual.   Being second-

generation Latino youth from first-generation Latino immigrant laborers, our enunciation

of "daotao" emphasized our close identification to our recently-arrived parents'

pronunciation of English words.   Spatially speaking, "daotao" emphasized that Elizabeth's

downtown was largely Hispanic and that it was ours.

"La Jungla," or the jungle, was our term to differentiate Elizabeth's Latino third-

world culture from the majority middle class white-heteronormative space enforced on us

by our teachers and parents. Elizabeth, in our eyes, was an urban jungle, or a space that

represented a non-middle class, brown, black non-heteronormativity, and Latinidad

(outside the whitened Latino identity of our parochial high school).   "Jungla" was a space in

which Latinos or non-whites were at the center and dominated local culture, in our eyes.

We would say wide-eyed and grinning, "We are going to la juuuungla!" "Jungla" also

symbolized the unpredictability and possibility of befriending or grouping with other youth

from Elizabeth High School without the strict adult or parental monitoring that only

allowed us to engage with youth of their liking.

Three-Way-Call Summer After Freshman Year:
Andy, Charlie La Quack, and Belle Ebonaire Preach

Three-way calls with school friends and random strangers often became a fun

pastime, especially during the summer months. I remember how my closest male friend

Jason accidentally connected with openly gay students from Elizabeth High School (who

are mentioned and/or participated in this project) on one of these three-way calls. I knew

about them through friends who went to Elizabeth High School.   These students had

become leaders of their high school and were known to fight for their dignity as out-gay

youth (see the "Out in the High School" Chapter). Charlie, Andy, and Belle were well known

high school students. My friends from Elizabeth High School had told me how cool or "over

the top" they were, and how they pushed buttons and stood out at Elizabeth High School

for cross-dressing, voguing and being so gay. But no one really knew them. I wondered

how they got Jason's number. I couldn't believe that he was talking to them! Now I think,

it's quite possible that these youth engaged him on the street and assumed he was gay or

questioning, given his softer and effeminate demeanor. Jason never told me how they had

gotten ahold of his number.

He told me how, in this three-way call, Charlie La Quack had invited him to go to a

party with his other gay friends. He was offended and threatened by their assumption that

he was or could be a closeted gay. This is when Jason was laughing in his softy,

lighthearted and indifferent way and said, "ah ha, oh yeah, hahaha, I don't hang out with

gays or go to gay parties, hahaha…I don't want to catch AIDS…hahahaha." I remember

Jason saying these words and I could not believe what I was hearing. It was so direct from

both parties. AIDS was such a taboo topic to bring up because it was assumed in our world

that no one would contract it. Jason and I lived in a whiter suburban culture in which we

assumed that those who were affected by AIDS or were more likely to get it lived and went

to school somewhere else. At this point, Jason was directly speaking on the phone with the

other, and soon this world of ours shook and crumbled.

He explained to me that his responses led them to retaliate. "What if your child ends up gay, would you say those things to him or her?" Belle asked him, "Would you say those things if you or your future son or daughter contracted HIV?" She further said, "I know people with HIV. It's not a crime. I hope you don't get it." Andy repeatedly went on the phone and said to him, "Why are you so homophobic, you should just come out!" I see now how their response to Jason was a recruitment intended to humanize him or get him to come out if his homophobia was a symptom of being closeted. In fact, it did have that impact on me, but I remained silent despite the distant connection I felt from that phone call. What if Jason actually became compelled to express a connection with them? Or had accepted the invitation to go to that party? The ticket for Jason and myself could have been the entrance into a gay house music and vogue subculture that we had not been exposed to, and our youth lives might have been impacted positively if the engagement had happened. I realize now how Charlie, Belle, and Andy were recruiting us through this three-way call. In 2013, Andy explained to me that he saw himself as performing a kind of organizing to find other closeted or isolated gays, not only in the high school but on the street, so that they could grow in numbers to build a strong local youth gay community or gay house or gang of brotherhood and support. Despite my fear of them for being what my parents would perceive as degenerates and a sexual and moral threat, knowing that they were in Elizabeth (and even though we never met in person) gave me the feeling that other flamboyant and eccentric Latino and African American LGBTQ youth understood me.

Yearbook Senior Portraits on Edge:
Racial and Sexual Excess in a Majority White Catholic High School

Latino, African American, and white and other minority youth bused from less privileged neighborhoods in Elizabeth, Newark, Irvington, and Hillside were "benefitting

from" or exposed to white mainstream and middle class dominant culture within the Catholic schools. In effect, schooling in these Catholic high schools facilitated our conditioning and assimilation into white mainstream, Catholic and heterosexist middle class culture that helped us achieve some form of mobility and success after high school. To a certain degree, having this exposure and approximation to the white middle class "helped" inner city students gain social and culture capital to incorporate themselves and downplay their Latino origins in a majority white culture after high school.

Latino students at Roselle Catholic High School found ways to defy the racial and sexual conventions through their local Latino identity that was threatening to the moral fabric of a majority-white and middle class high school student body. Latino students at my high school acted on their local Latino/a working class aesthetics and political positioning to differentiate themselves from the values our educators strove to instill in us. For example, one Puerto Rican classmate called herself "Loca," after the loca in the song from the influential Nuyorican Latin freestyle, hip hop, and house band Two Without Hats, whose early 1990 songs "Try Yazz" (Esa Loca)" and "The Breeze" were big hits particularly in the Latino/a youth freestyle, house, hip hop scenes. My high school female peer had "Loca" written as her final high school year quote under her official graduate picture. In house and hip hop driven bass beats, the lead singers of Two Without Hats repeatedly chant, "esa loca dale huevo" or "give that crazy girl egg." This song has explicit sexual working class undertones that visualize a Latina's or women of color's uncontained sexuality, celebrating her untamed, unrepressed and unforgiving sexuality of performing oral sex for her enjoyment. In taking on that nickname and making it her yearbook statement, my classmate was adhering (not necessarily being promiscuous during high

school) to a vibrant, unforgiving, and brown female sexuality that was forbidden and even pathologized in a white-majority student body.   As a result, she exhibited "the personal being political" within a strict Catholic and white mainstream student majority that practiced white codes of virgin and modest sexuality. Her use of "Loca" displayed her political identity and affirmed her uncontainable brown sexuality outside a racial project of whitening her sexuality to comply with middle class mores.

In another example, an early 1990's male Hispanic graduate of Roselle Catholic described himself as a "Hispanic causing Panic" in his yearbook picture.   His yearbook signature more than likely derived from Kid Frost's "Hispanic Causing Panic" album, released in July 1990. "Hispanic Causing Panic" was one of the first Latin(o) rap albums to hit the rap scene. Such a statement can be interpreted as a political sentiment that defies the mainstream climate and calm of the white majority student campus. In effect, this high school graduate's conclusion at the end of his four years in the high school was that his sense of thinking and (sexual) being caused panic as a Hispanic because he refused to assimilate into a white middle class mainstream but instead expressed his racial, cultural, and sexual difference from within his culturally distinct working class origins.

In my own case, my yearbook quote was more ambiguously Latino, culturally speaking, than those of the other two students; yet, I too defied the heterosexist white middle class majority expectations of the school. After a Madonna song track, "Secret Garden," from her album Erotica (1992), my quote read, "Many were afraid to enter my secret garden." My quote was based from Madonna's song on this album, which expressed liberated and unconventional forms of hetero- and homosexuality to (primarily) a mainstream U.S. audience at the time, like her sexually explicit documentary *Truth or Dare*

(1991) and her Blond Ambition tour in 1990. Similarly to my peer's use of panic, my statement addressed a fear of empowered gay subjects who had the capability to recruit or help others sort out their gayness during high school. My image of a secret garden was symbolic of an imagined peripheral and homosocial counterspace of support within the school or one where plural sexuality and tolerance reigned rather than the heterocentrist world of most of my classmates.

Aside from Madonna's non-heteronormative productions encouraging me and others to come out during high school, they also offered some representations of Latino queer dancers that I identified with. Madonna's hiring of Manhattan-raised Latino gay minority male dancers Jose Gutierrez, of Dominican descent, and Luis Camacho, of Puerto Rican descent, conveyed to me a working-class or underprivileged Latino gay male hybrid identity or an in betweenness relative to American mainstream gayness and queer Latinidad, despite U.S. mainstream film and music productions that all too often downplayed racial and cultural difference. I studied Camacho's and Gutierrez's dance performances and came to my own conclusions about their Latinidad, marked in their dance steps, facial gestures, expressions, and brownness, which constantly reminded me of my own second-generation queer Latinidad. Something felt similar to me about our backgrounds; I knew we were all children of immigrant or homeland parents navigating our sexualities, American, Latino, and homeland identities in an American nationalist context. These dancers offered one of the few popular representations that I related with, and they exuded Latino diasporic queer male identity within U.S. popular culture in (self-) empowering ways despite U.S. mainstream simplistic and commodified media productions. I imagined letting that queer diasporic feeling grow in "my secret garden."

My Journey through Youth Subcultures: A Personal Odyssey of Race, Gender, and Sexuality

During my high school years, I explored different subcultural styles that helped me to explore different racial, sexual, and gender positionings. However, my core was house music. During my freshman and the beginning of my sophomore year of high school, I was mostly into house music. By sophomore and junior year, I had moved away from dance music for a while and became interested in alternative groups like The Smiths, The Cure, and Depeche Mode. By senior year, I fell back into dance music, particularly the techno scenes that had surged in the early 1990s. One thing felt clear: that the musical and clothing elements of different subcultural phases helped me connect with people across race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender.

Before arriving in high school, my classmates and I were listening to house music songs that would define my musical taste in dance music. Re-mixed songs like "I'll house you" by the Jungle Brothers, "She's Homeless" by Crystal Waters, "This is Ska, by Longsy D (Big One Records)" and "Pump Up the Jam" by Technotronic, and "Video Crash" by Tyree were some of the first songs in my experience that invited me to house music dance and DJ dance culture. That is, by eighth grade, some of my classmates were buying turntables and mixers and making tapes of their own re-mixes. However, my taste in house music during freshman year in high school was for a medley of freestyle, Latin house, and hip hop songs, beats, and mixes. Unlike in the eighth grade, Elizabeth's youth dance culture exuded Latino musical elements that I immediately identified with and craved.

During the summer before freshman year, three concerts titled Hugs Not Drugs at Elizabeth High School, sponsored by promoter Mellie Mell in the Latino freestyle and dance

music scenes, and by several local food, hair salons and music stores, encompassed this kind of musical medley of dance musics that appealed to and brought together a largely Latino and African American youth audience. The concert brought in a number of freestyle, reggae hip-hop, and Latin and black house artists like Stevie B, Coro, Lissette Melendez, El General, Oh Snap!, Two Without Hats and DJ Grandmaster Flash. (While Stevie B was performing, I remember one of his high notes blew my eardrum because I was too close to one of the speakers! I had ringing in my ears for a couple of days.) These musical subculture fusions that centered a working class black and Latino youth audience evoked in me a sense of belonging among the crowd that I had a hard time feeling in my hometown of Hillside or in my high school.

Similarly, Deee-Lite was another group that I listened to enthusiastically that exuded a countercultural vibe outside white and black mainstream audiences. In fact, I would say Lady Kier's band became my most treasured group, representing social diversity that placed queerness and sexuality at the center, which was highlighted especially through their wacky 70's disco-themed outfits of bellbottoms, platform shoes, and huge-collared and multicolored polyester fitted button shirts. In fact, at my high school, only the oddballs truly listened to Deee-Lite because it was considered too weird and for gay people. Further, Lady Kier's message was about finding a "world clique" outside regulated mainstream and national borders. I imagined Kier situating herself in the Greenwich Village in her song "World Clique," when she sings, "From the global village/in an age of communication/ New York City," because she wanted to inspire her listeners to relate with others across difference and to value the counterculture and multiculturalism that could be found in this New York City neighborhood that Elizabeth and Hillside youth did not live far

from. I listened to their local Village deep house-inspired songs "What is Love?" and "Good Beat" and remixes religiously. Soon after, with the help of a train ride from Elizabeth, Jason and I would be walking around in the Village, getting a sense of this greater world of sexual and cultural difference. Karla, an interviewee and female high school friend, mentioned that some male classmates condemned going to the Village as dangerous and "total gay" thing to do. The sharp binary existed that if you went to the Village, you were gay, just as Andy, another interviewee, explained that society believed that if you were gay, you automatically had HIV. Among my male friends, Jason was always open to going with me to the Village by the end of our freshman year. Even while my gender and sexuality was frequently questioned from elementary school into high school, Jason was one of the few male peers that overlooked that or practiced a form of strategic silence. In a way, I believe that what brought us together was our liminality as not quite Latino or not Latino enough, because first of all, we were raised in the white part of Hillside. Given that we lived in the white part of Hillside, I often felt like our Latino cultural identity and Latino maleness had less weight than that of the Latino boys who were from majority-Latino Elizabeth. Jason was half Polish and half Salvadorian, and because he came from a middle class professional family that privileged their cultural whiteness, he was inhibited from being culturally and linguistically compatible with his Latino identity. In my case, however, my Arab name and identity also complicated my acceptance as a full Latino. In addition, I felt like our subtle effeminacy (more mine than his) put our Latino maleness in question, especially among my macho-acting Latino peers. This liminality pushed me to find acceptance in other groups too, particularly among inherently white subcultures like a European-centered gender

variant and androgynous alternative, techno and rave subculture that was outside a predominantly heterosexist house and hip hop subculture.

Both my time in Colombia months at a time during the summers of 1990 and 1991 and at my parochial high school during sophomore and junior year immersed me into alternative musics, which were not black-centered dance music but were considered white-centered alternative-sounding music. By this time, groups like REM, Smashing Pumpkins, Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Nirvana, etc. were appealing to many of my classmates. These musics, considered American mainstream, were also relevant to goth, industrial, heavy metal and punk subcultures that brought youth together to trade music and relate personal tastes. As far as my taste was concerned, I gravitated toward a European, British alternative sound in which I heavily appreciated The Cure, Depeche Mode, New Order, Pet Shop Boys and The Smiths more than alternative American mainstream music.

My personal appreciation of European alternative, techno, and rave music largely dealt with the fact that it reminded me of being outside the U.S. and transported me outside the everyday life of a white American mainstream society I was being trained to assimilate to and incorporate successfully outside a post-industrial minority-majority Elizabeth that was portrayed as unworthy. It also transported me away from the local dominant black hip hop and heterocentrist subculture in which I found later I did not really fit, despite my working class Hispanic roots. Therefore, it was not surprising that while I was in Colombia during the summer after my freshman year, my cousin and I listened constantly to Depeche Mode, New Order, Pet Shop Boys and OMD over and over. He drove all over Cali's valley landscapes and cityscape and as we blasted their albums, giving me a sense of self-exploration through an audiotopia (Kun 2005); certain postnational music allowed me to

create my own maps and sense of geography outside of racial and class hierarchies and heterocentrism. That is, these European alternative synthesized and danceable musics and sounds empowered me to push for a new geography outside the racial and social order of my everyday life. After the summer of my freshman year, I could not wait to repeat this music listening with my cousin the summer after my sophomore year. My connection with these bands would prepare me for my journey into the world of rave, breakbeat and techno that led the British dance scene in the early 1990s and later appeared in the New York City dance scene. These musics exuded an inherent whiteness or Europeanness that did not appeal to most African American and many Latino youth who were purely into black-centered musics of house, hip hop, rap, and reggae. In some ways, listening to these musics drove me away from these brown and black centered urban youth subcultures in Elizabeth. Ultimately though, like my other participants in this project, I found moments of belonging in several subcultures through my contemplative, nuanced and changing racial, sexual, and gender subjectivity that could not be easily boxed by a national assimilationist project of racial, sexuality and gender.

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LIST OF PEOPLE:
INTERVIEWED AND/OR REMEMBERED

* These interviewees are local public figures. I have used their real names. They have all been interviewed, with the exceptions of Wally and Ivo.

** These are people who have not been interviewed but who were mentioned by other participants. Their names are pseudonyms, like the others on this list.

*Alex (aka DJ Alex Technique) is a second-generation Cuban American. He attended Elizabeth High School. During his high school years, he was a skater and an LGBTQ ally. DJ Alex Technique went on to become a world-renowned deep house DJ. He is co-founder of VIDA Lounge in Elizabeth, which closed in 2015. Alex is single and continues living in nearby Elizabeth. Alex continues producing music albums in the house music scene.

Andy is Cuban and Colombian American. He was one of the first high school students to come out in Elizabeth High School in the early 1990s. He was an informal mentor for classmates who were questioning and who came out after he did. He was active in the high school's gay house (or a gang of close friends and allies for everyday empowerment and support) and local voguing ball scene, was a local club kid in the NYC nightlife scene, and was friendly with Angel Melendez in high school. Andy attended some college and continues to be active and influential in the gay ball scene on a national level. He has been in a partnered relationship with a transgendered individual for many years.

**Belle Ebonaire is one of the first eccentrically out African American students to come out in Elizabeth High School in the late 1980s-early 1990s. She was an informal mentor for many questioning and recently out classmates. She was active in the ball scene and was a local club kid in the NYC nightlife scene. She was known to be friendly with Angel Melendez, a New York City club kid, in high school.

Bert is a second-generation Italian and Cape Verdean American who attended Elizabeth High School and was often mistaken for Puerto Rican. He was heterosexual and a homeboy who primarily enjoyed the rap and hip hop scenes, though he also enjoyed the local house and NYC nightlife scenes. He went to Wally and Ivo's parties. Bert just began college in 2013 and is interested in majoring in history. He is married to Karla and they live in Florida. Bert has one son with another woman who recently graduated from high school.

**Charlie La Quack was one of the first eccentrically out Latino students at Elizabeth High School. He was a mentor among many questioning and recently out classmates. He was

active in the high school's gay house (or a gang of close friends and allies for empowerment and support) and voguing ball scene. He was also a local club kid in the NYC nightlife scene. He was friendly with Angel Melendez in high school. He is in the fashion industry in California.

Daisy is a second-generation Cuban and Venezuelan American who was raised in Elizabeth, New Jersey.   Her family was active in the Cuban American Club in Elizabeth. She recounts her experience going to social events and dances there in her grammar and high school years. During her time at nearby Roselle Catholic High School, she persevered in speaking and writing Spanish fluently. She enjoyed house, hip hop, and Latin music.   She is engaged to a Cuban American from Miami and has a teenage daughter from her first marriage. She graduated from a four-year program in international politics and works for a multinational Hispanic media company.

Danniyal is a second-generation Pakistani American who attended Elizabeth High School. "Danny" was a skater in Elizabeth and throughout New York City in his high school years. Danny hung out with mostly Latino youth as a high school student and says he was often mistaken for Latino or Puerto Rican.   He learned Spanish very well as a student at Elizabeth High School and while hanging out with his Latino friends and their families. He went to college for one year to study fashion design and stopped attending. He has worked as a designer for fashion labels and has had a fashion company in New York City for over ten years.

David (aka DJ David Vibes) is a second-generation Colombian American. He attended Elizabeth High School and was an LGBTQ ally in the high school. He was a local deep house DJ who had a big LGBTQ following in Elizabeth. He had been an underground house music aficionado since the early 1990s. David Vibes worked since his early twenties with Masters-At-Work (MAW), a deep house music production company, and with famous DJs like Little Louis Vega, Frankie Knuckles, and Tony Humphries.   He also works for the state of New Jersey.

**Darren is a third-generation Italian American gay femme goth who went out with Katia and Marie to goth clubs and gay drag scenes. He appears briefly in the goth and skate chapter.

Ernie is a Puerto Rican student who became close with Andy and Charlie La Quack during his coming out process while a student at Elizabeth High School. While he was not a club kid, he went out with Andy and Charlie to Limelight and other gay and straight parties at local bars and clubs in Newark and the NYC metro area. He was a friend of Angel Melendez. Ernie graduated from a technical college and works as a medical assistant.

Felipe is a second-generation Colombian American. He attended Elizabeth High School and was an LGBTQ ally. He was a goth in high school and was often mistaken for gay. Since high school, Felipe has continued working at a nearby cemetery where he (and his older brother) threw Halloween parties. He lives in nearby Elizabeth; He is unmarried and identifies as heterosexual.

**Ivan is a second-generation Colombian American. He attended Elizabeth High School and was a house and techno DJ. Ivan was questioned as being possibly gay though he was not effeminate but had an androgynous disposition. He dressed like a skater or a raver. Ivan only comes up in the introduction's opening vignette.

Jason is half Salvadoran and half Polish and grew up in Hillside, New Jersey. He attended Roselle Catholic High School his freshman year and thereafter, attended Hillside High School. He identified as heterosexual but may have been perceived as gay or effeminate. He was one of my closest male friends, especially during our freshman year in high school in which we walked together in the Village. We broke ties when he grew certain that I was gay. We lost touch and he only appears in the preface of this project.

Johnny is a second-generation Dominican and Puerto Rican American. He attended Elizabeth High School. Johnny was heterosexual and a homeboy who was primarily into rap and hip hop. However, he became a house music aficionado and he hung out with gay peers in the ball scene who loved to dance, and he developed an avid interest in voguing. Johnny bought a house in Elizabeth. He is a DJ who often uploads remixes of old and current house music onto the Internet.

**Julie is a 1.5-generation Colombian American who attended Elizabeth High School. She was a lesbian punk who hung out with others in the skater, club kid, goth, industrial, and alternative scenes. She was known to be close with Angel Melendez since her childhood in Elizabeth.

Karla is a second-generation Puerto Rican who attended school at Roselle Catholic High School. She was very friendly with many students at Elizabeth High School and was into the rap, hip hop, house, and NYC nightlife scenes. Karla enjoyed Wally and Ivo's parties in Elizabeth and fondly remembers the tolerance, diversity and music in this scene. Karla attended a four-year college and currently works in a corporate job with a department store. After living in Newark for several years, she relocated to Florida.

Katia is a second-generation Cuban American who attended Elizabeth High School during her last year of high school. In that time, she was an ally to LGBTQ students. Before Katia became a goth and hung out at Aldo's in Lynhurst and QXT's in Newark with Julie, Darren, and Marie, she enjoyed and followed her brother (a local freestyle DJ) in the local house and freestyle scenes. She hung out at the "Porkchop Corner" at Elizabeth High School, which began as a self-marked space of Portuguese students who referred to themselves light-heartedly as "Porkchops" but later became frequented by goths, skaters, and gays. As a goth, she also frequented gay balls and parties like Jackie 60's. Katia attended a four-year art and fashion program. She is a freelance artist and designer. She has worked as a buyer for a mainstream clothing company.

Kenny is a second-generation Honduran and Filipino American who attended Elizabeth High School during his last year of high school. Since the eighth grade, Kenny enjoyed mixing house and hip hop on his turntables. He is a deep house and hip hop aficionado who

enjoyed the underground translocal house music scenes. Kenny attended a two-year program on music production. He works for an electrical company in New Jersey.

Lito is a second-generation Peruvian American who attended Elizabeth High School. He was in the gifted and talented program at the high school and was an ally to LGBTQ students there. Lito was "trendy," or what was considered conservative/preppy in appearance. He only went out to the underground house, techno and nightlife scenes with his older cousin, who was in his later twenties at the time. Lito graduated from a four-year prestigious business school and has had a successful career in finance in the car industry.

Lucio is a 1.5-generation Peruvian American who attended Elizabeth High School. He recounts being bullied for his effeminacy in grade school. In high school, matters were different due to his support network of other upperclass gay students and allies. Andy was a mentor to him and welcomed him into the gay house. Lucio was an underclassman when Andy was graduating high school. He was a club kid who enjoyed the NYC nightlife scene. Lucio attended community college and moved to Florida and works as a part-time real estate agent and full-time office manager. He also worked in the nightlife industry in Florida during the late 1990s and 2000s.

Lucy is a second-generation Uruguayan American who attended Roselle Catholic High School. She wished she had gone to Elizabeth High School because she had several friends there. Lucy enjoyed the NYC nightlife scenes and underground house and rave scenes during high school. She fondly attended Wally's and Ivo's parties. Lucy attended some college and works in the accounting department for an insurance company.

Manuelito is a second-generation Puerto Rican and Bolivian American. He was an ally to LGBTQ students at Elizabeth High School. He hung out with mostly skaters, punks, and goths at the high school. He is a freelance musician and librarian for a city in New Jersey. He lives in Jersey City.

Marie is a second-generation Cuban American who attended Elizabeth High School. She was an ally to LGBTQ students. Marie was into several alternative scenes as a high school student: alternative, punk, goth, and industrial. Marie hung out at the Porkchop Corner at Elizabeth High School and QXT's in Newark with her goth, industrial and punk friends. Marie has some college education and has worked as a buyer for a fashion label for several years. She still lives in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Mark is a second-generation Colombian American who attended Elizabeth High School. He was a skater, was friends with Danniyal, and enjoyed skating with others on Elizabeth and NYC streets and in particular, at the skate park in Elizabeth. Mark was also a house music aficionado and expressed his enjoyment of deep and tribal house spun at the Sound Factory Bar. He is a real estate broker in New Jersey and also works with his brother in Colombia's growing tourism industry.

Norma is a second-generation Salvadoran American who went to Roselle Catholic High School. She enjoyed the translocal underground deep house, hip hop and rave scenes of the

early 1990s. Norma enjoyed going to Wally's and Ivo's parties. She graduated with a four-year college degree and has worked in the legal sector helping underprivileged people. She has two children and is engaged to Kenny.

Oliver is a 1.5-generation Cuban American who attended Elizabeth High School. Oliver was questioning his sexuality by his junior year in high school. Tracked into college prep courses, Oliver, like Lito, was trendy or preppy. Despite his straight-edged look, he connected and remained friendly with other LGBTQ and eccentric goth, punk, and club kid students that hung out at the Porkchop Corner at Elizabeth High School. Oliver dropped out after one year in college. After working as a supervising manager for a furniture store, he moved into New York City and found a high paying job with a high-end furniture company.

Peter is a second-generation Puerto Rican and Guatemalan American. He was a skater. Peter was an ally to LGBTQ students and hung out in the Village to walk around with them after cutting class.   He attended a four-year college and has worked in non-profit organizations working to empower Latino youth.

**Ralphie is a second-generation Colombian American. He attended Elizabeth High School. During high school, Ralphie was known to be bisexual and was also a skater. He skated from time to time at the skate park. He was an aficionado of the techno scene and was a promoter in the New York City nightlife scene.

*Wally and Ivo were the founders of the famous Wally and Ivo parties of house, hip hop, funk and disco in Elizabeth. They were also promoters for the New York City nightlife scenes and they built an Elizabeth audience in these dance publics and counterpublics.

ABSTRACT

"Latino/a Youth Subcultures in Elizabeth, New Jersey: Memory, Spacemaking, and Citizenship, 1980s-1990s" is a case study that documents youth experiences of coming of age in the house, hip hop, club kid, goth, and skate subcultures in and near Elizabeth, a post-industrial New Jersey city often perceived (along with its residents) to be in decline and undesirable. This narrative reveals that Elizabeth was an important, vibrant subcultural center of progressive youth of color. Youth involvement in subcultures often resonated in subtle ways with support for social movements for racial equality and sexual and gender diversity in the 1980s-1990s. These subcultures represented more than the commodifiable fashions and immature and rebellious phase often associated with them. Ultimately, youth subcultures challenged right wing movements and their assimilationist, heteronormative, and multicultural values, offered youth spaces for their self-determination, and represented yourths' active cultural citizenship.

I conduct ethnographic interviews of 25 second-generation Latinos/as about their experiences with youth spacemaking within or outside dominant publics, such as in a minority Latino and African American gay house scene, the New York City nightlife club kid scene, an annual goth party at a cemetery, an afterhours goth hangout in a diner, and an unofficial skate park. This project contributes to subculture studies by centering Latino/a perspectives in subcultures that are usually reductively coded either white (goth, club-kid and skate) or black (house and hip hop). For Latino/a Studies, this project encourages scholars to employ a subculture lens instead of merely traditional static markers of race, ethnicity, and notions of

success and failure to understand Latino/a youth subjectivity and claims to belonging and

citizenship.

Introduction

Ivan was one of the few guys I could talk to about my sexuality, although he didn't say much to me about his. His artistic ways, evident in his DJ'ing, fashion sense, and photography, evoked a profound sense of tolerance and acceptance. I know that Ivan's twin brother and close friend may have had hang-ups about homosexuality, which may have influenced how open and vocal he was about being gay or queer-affirming. Then one day, before we hung out and drove aimlessly around Elizabeth in his 1976 Sunkist-orange Scirocco, he invited me into his room. Before I walked up the narrow stairs of his family's railroad apartment, I met his Colombian father for the first time and felt nervous that he'd sense my gayness and disapprove of where we were heading. Now in his room, Ivan pulled out a photo-shoot of himself laying face down on his queen-sized bed in a silver-sequined dress. In one picture, Ivan's head is hanging off the bed while his swan arms are reaching toward the night table. His long and open smile evokes a freedom that works well with how his lanky body lays effeminately on the bed, creating a wave-effect to his quilt blankets. I thought about what his parents would think about these pictures. Had they seen them? What would their reaction be?

While I was having dinner with a close high school friend, a second-generation Honduran-Filipino who was born and raised in Elizabeth, New Jersey, he said, "What if you don't find anything…I don't think people really have much to say that is worthwhile." Later in our conversation, he said quite simply, "My life in Elizabeth was a waste. I didn't do well in school. I wasn't motivated. Like my friends, I did drugs instead of being productive."

These are personal vignettes that offer a second-generation Latino perspective and community experience of those who were born and raised in Elizabeth, New Jersey. In the first vignette, Ivan's exploration of his sexuality and gender through his self-portrait photographs is evidence of how Latino Elizabeth youth defied heteronormative (what constitutes appropriate sexual mores according to middle class sensibilities that privilege whiteness and heterosexuality) and his Colombian immigrant parents' heteropatriarchal (or nationalist and heterosexist male centered) views while not always voicing it or being public about it, especially while living in Elizabeth. Ivan's queer materiality (his sequined dress) and artistry (his photography) are examples of important expressions of non-heteronormativity and countercultural thought among

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Elizabeth Latino youth that are worth exploring. In the second vignette, a more recent

conversation I had with a close friend reveals the overarching mentality that exists about being

Latino second-generation from Elizabeth. It suggests that there is nothing much to say or any

history to uncover because according to my friend, most of us did not amount to anything. Both

of these vignettes are indications of a lived past among the Elizabeth Latino second generation

that I seek to document, amplify and contextualize in order to contribute to our understanding of

lived experience among Latinos in the U.S.

From what I have gathered in my academic and local Elizabeth research, my close friend

Kenny is partially correct in believing that the prospects are not easy as far as finding "success"

stories among the Latino second generation. But this research study wants to move past this

marker of "success" to uncover "what happened," and what it was like to exist in Elizabeth as a

second-generation Latino rather than simply accepting that the majority lived a failed life. This

study will also move away from thinking of belonging as a marker of incorporation in the

national and immigrant community and instead take into consideration the richness of the daily

existence of this second-generation group, specifically in youth subcultures of house, hip hop,

goth, and skateboarding, and will explore other factors that motivated and influenced them, such

as the countercultural and diasporic elements of their lives.   Scholars define subcultures as

scenes or spaces of belonging in which members express different degrees of resistance to

dominant ideologies (Gelder 2007; Haenfler 2010; Greenberg 2006; Brake 1985) and ethnic or

immigrant societies (Munoz 1999; Habell-Pallan 2005; Johnson 2013) or in which they

experience exclusion due to racial, gender, sexual, and cultural difference (Munoz 1999, Warner

2002, Braziel 2008; LaFountain-Stokes 2009). This dissertation project seeks to offer an

alternative youth narrative based on subcultural spaces as a third hybrid space of cultural

difference rather than state-celebrated cultural diversity (Bhabha1990, Bhabha 1994; Buckland 2002 and Naber 2012) to challenge simplistic and reductive dominant mainstream and immigrant narratives circulating about the Latino/a second generation. The subcultural spaces that matter to this alternative narrative can be found within dominant publics or state-mandated spaces in which people come together and adhere to dominant ideologies and discourses, yet where their subjectivities are subdued or compromised (Habermas 1989; Skott-Myhre 2008; Rodriguez 2003; and Warner 2002), or counterpublics or spaces of non-conformity, difference and resistance in which people are marked (or self-mark themselves) as subordinate or subaltern (Warner 2002; Munoz 1999; Fraser 1992; Quiroga 2000; Rodriguez 2003).

Like my interviewees in this dissertation project, Ivan and Kenny belonged to different music subcultures that allowed them to explore different ways of being outside mainstream or immigrant society and allowed them to achieve connectivity and belonging among other youth in ways that did not resonate with dominant and immigrant values of success and belonging in the national community. When using the term "different ways of being," I am referring to the ways scholars write about and examine moments in which Latino/a youth performed ways of being that are considered marginal or queer relative to static dominant notions of identity, gender and sexuality. That is, the youth subcultures or scenes helped Latino/a youth perform fluid, "in-between" and "indefinite" subjectivities that pushed for unique ways of being outside state and heteropatriarchal notions of identity, gender and sexuality (Skott-Myhre 2008, Habell-Pallan 2005, Munoz 1999). In particular, this dissertation project follows Munoz's discussion in his book, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and Performance of Politics* (1999), of disidentifications or performances that exude a position "within and outside" the dominant public of mainstream and immigrant life (5). For example, even while we can assume that Ivan

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privileged his Latin(o) and Colombian masculine and heterosexual identity, his subcultural drag

performance in his room suggests meaningful affinity with and membership in queer spaces. In

Kenny's case, his connectivity with other youth in non-conformist ways by smoking up among

his friends in hip hop and house music scenes suggests discord with middle class and immigrant

values of productivity and success, yet he is ultimately judgmental in evaluating his and his

friends' "success" and contained by dominant values. Like Ivan and Kenny, my other

interviewees help us to understand the ways they found themselves between publics and

counterpublics in their everyday lives, yet felt different or pushed to be different (if only slightly)

from what was expected by state-controlled dominant and immigrant narratives (Munoz 1999;

Braziel 2008; Johnson 2013). Aside from individual acts of performance, there are acts of group

performance in subculture spaces that impact audiences in mainstream spaces or publics (Warner

2013; Dolan 2005; Rivera-Servera 2012; Rivera-Servera 2011; Buckland 2002) and that

complicate or challenge state notions of identity, gender, sexuality. In effect, rather than the state

controlling these youths' sense of self, I examine how their performances fall outside state logics

about Latinos/as and resonate with self-determinism (Skott-Myhre 2008 and Munoz 1999) rather

than (strict) conformism to hegemony and dominant ideologies.

By compiling ethnographic interviews of the Elizabeth Latino second generation who

came of age in the 1980s-1990s, this dissertation project gathers holistic and "from within"

testimony about individual and communal lives in Elizabeth. The study explores several

questions that feature second-generation Latinos at the center of Elizabeth life and society whose

subjectivity is not easily locatable amidst texts that represent and privilege dominant values of

mobility, conformity, whiteness, and assimilation in both mainstream and immigrant ethnic

media.   Under what social, economic, and political circumstances did the second generation

come of age in Elizabeth, specifically during the 1980s-1990s? Why have the dominant local and national mainstream and ethnic media misread this generation in ways that do not describe their ways of being, views, motivations and struggles? What subculture spaces in dominant publics or counterpublics did these youth (try to) belong to or form in translocal Elizabeth that may be seemingly unimportant yet say something about second-generation Latino/a youth being political and being involved in social movements in ways that contest or work with dominant spaces, ideologies and discourses to expand standing notions of tolerance, diversity, and multiculturalism? Ultimately, I argue in this project that Latino youth subcultures are important sites for understanding engagements with citizenship, agency, and self-determination. In effect, these sites offer Latino/a youth counternarratives about their competing visions of inclusion, diversity and multiculturalism outside rigid state ideologies and discourses.

Here, I offer a map of this introduction and what each section covers. First, I explain the methodology I used in gathering a second-generation counternarrative that critiques and/or displaces a dominant narrative of Latino/a youth. Second, I analyze the social and neoliberal (economic) contexts of the 1980s-1990s that often situated youth within a reductive dominant narrative of depoliticized state order and liberal multiculturalism, or state policies that sustain a division of people and potential groupings through a celebrated cultural diversity that privileges racial and ethnic hierarchies, whiteness, (cultural and linguistic) assimilation, middle-class aesthetics and heteronormativity (Melamed, 2011; Lee 1999, 156-160; Maira 2009; De Genova and Ramos-Zayas, 2003, 18; and Bhabha 1990). Third, I make a case for why Elizabeth was a uniquely diverse and powerful context for youth spacemaking and political gesturing within and outside dominant ideologies and discourses, and therefore a rich site of memory of youth thought and values of critical multiculturalism or politicized unity of social, class and cultural difference

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that impact my interviewees in the present. In the second half of this introduction, I offer a literature review that traces how different scholars have approached the state containment or self-determination of Latino/a youth. I end with a section describing youth subcultures that, while offering powerful critiques of dominant society, are often viewed as uninfluential, immature, commodifiable, and trivial. Because these subcultural sites were not outwardly political, they remained under the radar and were undervalued. Finally, I end with a chapter summary of spatial sites I examine – the public high school, a New York nightclub, goth and skate scenes, and the local Elizabeth youth dance scene – that give us insight into my participants' memories as I focus more on 'place-oriented' memories than the larger micro and macro contexts (Connerton and Casey in Hayden, 46) of my participants' lived past and present.

Methodology

Decentering Dominant Narratives, Texts and Space: The Ethnographic "I" as an Elizabeth Latino Youth

My local positioning as a Latino youth who came of age in Elizabeth and nearby Hillside allows me to include my experience and insight in this self-reflexive ethnography (Visweswaran 1994; Denzin 1997; Behar 1995) regarding the ways and moments youth came together through subculture and across race, class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality to dismantle the dominant mainstream order of liberal multiculturalism and "[depart] from realist conventions" that uphold state power (Visweswaran 1994 and Denzin 1997). In effect, this self-reflexive ethnography is a postmodern "messy-text" (Maira 2009, Denzin 1997, Dominguez 1994; and O'Reilly 2009) in that it offers multi-vocality and hybridity that disrupt static and privileged cultural, nationalist and mainstream identities (Behar 1995; Nayaran 1997 and Denzin 1997).

Further, my positioning as a first-world scholar of color helps me to articulate a local Latino/a youth narrative of the time that complicates my "insider" status (Behar 1995 and Nayaran 1997). I therefore acknowledge the deconstructive component of this ethnography that addresses how my educational background has privileged me to speak in the language of those in power (Visweswaran 1994; Nayaran 1997; Dominguez 1994). As an academic scholar trained in critical race and ethnic studies, cultural studies, Latino/a studies, queer of color and Latina feminist studies, I am using my academic knowledge to show and describe how our youth subculture scenes disrupted or complicated the heteronormative, depoliticitized and liberal multicultural order and hierarchy of people across race, class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. My schooling puts me in a unique liminal or outsider position (Nayaran 1997 and Behar 1995) relative to my peers to describe our Latino/a youth experiences in first-world academic terms external to our everyday local street language from back in the day.

I point to the moments when Elizabeth youth subtly or overtly challenged dominant discourses about the ordering, value, and future of working class Elizabeth youth across race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality. In a growing individualized, market-driven, and depolicitized world, journalists, educators, politicians, and parents often discouraged or pathologized groupings of minority youth, which were viewed as imminently criminal or gang-like or leading to unconstructive or destructive behavior. While there was reason to believe in some instances of bad, unruly or violent behavior among minority groupings of youth, this study complicates oversimplified views of groupings or spacemaking as inevitably bad to also consider critical youth thinking, creativity and (self-) empowerment in these moments between or outside dominant expectations and ideologies in the subcultural spaces of the 1980s-1990s. I show moments when youth came together in multi-voiced, messy, and unpredictable ways that

challenged liberal multicultural strategies of social borders and divisions and formulated spaces of critical diversity and multiculturalism (Maira 2009 and Kanpol and McLaren 1995). That is, I offer an alternative understanding of everyday Latino working class youth life that was far more political, deliberate, and egalitarian, showing active and cultural citizenship and mutual agency through space- and scene-making that local and national dominant narratives in ethnic, mainstream newspapers, films, and popular mainstream youth culture either do not show, or underestimate and simplify.

Born and raised between Elizabeth and nearby Hillside by Colombian immigrant parents, I maintained a strong connection to Elizabeth given the growing presence of different forms of racial and sexual diversity and Latino presence that often felt more natural to me than the more homogeneous white mainstream society that I experienced living in (the white part of) Hillside and attending my parochial high school. As an adolescent, I enjoyed my family's weekend dinner plans at any one of the Colombian restaurants on Morris Avenue in Elizabeth where I engaged with other Colombian families over live music or live soccer or boxing matches.

Elizabeth was a place to engage other Latino youth and other youth of color. We related through our everyday commonalities and interests like Spanglish, music, food, local urban youth styles, homeland ties and visits, and life with our immigrant parents. Several of my interviewees were classmates from Roselle Catholic High school and lived near me in Elizabeth or Hillside like Daisy, Lucy, Norma, Kenny and Karla. Marie, a close friend during our freshman year at Roselle Catholic, left to attend Elizabeth High School. My friends Manuelito, Katia, Oliver, Peter, and Ivan were from Elizabeth High School, Elizabeth's public high school. Others also came from the city's two coed parochial high schools: St. Mary's and St. Patrick's high schools. I met some of these friends at other friends' houses, the occasional house party (chaperoned or

uncharoned) and at local dance parties. In some cases during this project, I got to meet friends

of friends who I had known of but never had the chance to meet in person as a youth, like

Danniyal and Andy.

In particular, I identified with and partook in several various youth subculture scenes and

groupings while I was coming of age in Elizabeth. For me, these musical subcultures allowed

me to connect with other youth despite social borders, divides, and hierarchies of race, ethnic,

and class differences, though gender and sexual ones were more difficult to overcome. While

subculture groupings brought white, blacks, and Latinos together, in my experience, it is

important to recognize how it brought other large Elizabeth and nearby Elizabeth ethnic groups

together with Latinos, particularly the Portuguese, Filipinos, and Haitians who hung out in these

music scenes. However, the cultural and immigrant identities of these specific ethnic groups

were very similar to Latinos. I grew up with several Portuguese and Filipino friends whose

sense of food, immigrant life and family, and language were strikingly similar to mine. During

junior high school, with a growing majority of Latino/a classmates, freestyle music and

accompanying Spanglish on the radio struck a resonance with my cultural and linguistic

hybridity. By eighth and ninth grade many of us began identifying with a growing house music

and DJ mixing scene that splintered from a gay black subculture and become more the norm and

more heterosexist in nature, with a strong hip hop and working class aesthetic. During eighth

grade, one of my closest Filipino American friends enjoyed mixing house music with his father's

turntables, used for wedding parties. We wore Levi or Carhartt baggy jeans or overalls, oversized

polos, button-down plaids or t-shirts, and Nike or Adidas sneakers or stomps. If we were lucky,

we would get a genuine Stussy or Mossimo shirt from Mannings on Broad Street in Elizabeth on

sale or at their summer sidewalk sale. Yet, like the freestyle scene, the house music that we

youth listened to was often seasoned with Afro-Caribbean instruments and Spanglish street

language that resonated with our immigrant cultural identity. In particular, Two Without Hats

was a big translocal phenomenon whose Latin(o) and Nuyorican flavor and sexuality added to

the largely black-driven house scenes of the early 1990s that included music producers, DJs, and

the vocalists Jellybean Benitez, Little Louie Vega, and India.

Unlike the largely masculinist and heterocentrist house scene that has grown among

Latino youth, I was aware of an LGBTQ Latino and black subculture among Elizabeth High

School youth who were known to vogue, dress up in drag, and go clubbing "in the city." I never

got a chance to meet two such youth, Andy and Charlie La Quack, directly because we were in

different social circles, different schools and did not live near each other. The fact that I knew of

them and their fame suggests how their power, charisma and groupings engendered some form

of personal identification, attraction, and affinity with them even though I did not know them

personally. Actually, in one fateful moment, I was very close to meeting them when a friend of

mine engaged them on a three-way call (See Preface). They were often viewed as not only

rebellious but also as dangerous and likely to be infected with HIV/AIDS. Several of my friends

knew them from school, however, admired them and commented to me then that they were bold

and unafraid to be who they were: eccentric youth during a repressive time when LGBTQ people

of color, particularly youth, were signaled as quick-to-become HIV/AIDS carriers. Despite both

fearing and admiring them, I knew that their scene brought sexual and gender tolerance, which

was comforting to know of while questioning my own sexuality and amidst what were largely

heterosexist and heterocentrist dominant youth subcultures in Elizabeth and Hillside.

During the end of my junior year and all of my senior year, between 1993 and 1994, my

closest friends in high school and I grew enamored with the underground NYC rave scene that,

as an interviewee claimed, was about "unity" "ecstasy" and "inclusion." My friends and I went several times to NASA, a legendary rave party in the Tribeca section of New York City. We also went to the Limelight dressed in raver gear, hoping to hear techno and house music. We wore oversized jeans, oversized or vintage shirts with butterfly collars, glow in the dark jewelry and dog tags, and shelltops, pumas or airwalk sneakers. Our dress was similar to skater gear. Unlike the more heterocentrist and dominant house dance scene that I encountered in translocal Elizabeth, the rave scene was underground at the time, and LGBTQ affirming. In my experience, many of my local Latino friends and acquaintances found the rave scene's music to be way too accelerated compared to house and rap music's slower beats-per-minute. My interviewees mentioned that the techno scene music was "too European," or not "soulful enough" for their cultural frame of urban Afro-centric and Afro-Caribbean and Latin(o) rhythms. Instead, even the sped up house and disco beats in breakbeat techno were too white for their appeal. In effect, local house and hip hop aficionados viewed the techno scene as strange, and "too gay or queer," like the goth and skater scenes. Despite this, my closest friends and I connected with Colombian, Peruvian and Salvadorian youth interested in these scenes. We also connected with other ravers outside of Elizabeth who were of Asian origin (Korean-, Indian-, and Filipino- Americans) but lived in white-majority middle class towns like Fanwood and Springfield, New Jersey. In particular, we grew close with Elizabeth Salvadorian youth who lived near the "port," which was considered to be a lower social class neighborhood than ours. Both of my friends started dating Salvadoran ravers. In one case, one of my friends' parents strictly disapproved of one of them because of where he lived in Elizabeth and because he was not pursuing college while she was. In my case, my mother was particularly worried that I was hanging out with effeminate and potentially gay youth in these scenes that would influence my

gender and sexual identity, especially given that by late junior year I came out to my parents as bisexual. Even amidst our social differences and parental disapproval, my friends and I managed to maintain our subcultural circle.

Positioning Second-Generation Friends' and Friends of Friends' Subjectivities and Spacemaking: Elizabethan Latino/a Youth

This dissertation's focus is creating the beginnings of a historical narrative about a specific Latino second generation that came of age in the 1980s-1990s. Because the sample for this dissertation is small, it cannot be representative of an entire population, but it raises important questions for pursuing a larger project in the future. In doing so, it offers a counternarrative history of the Latino second generation in Elizabeth that does not just stop at examining their belonging, success and assimilation in the U.S., but also takes into account their multiple positionalities across nationalist, diasporic, countercultural, queer, and sexually-transgressive dimensions of everyday existence.

My interdisciplinary methodology consists of ethnographic interviewing, textual, and spatial analysis to offer an Elizabeth Latino second-generation counternarrative. First, I conducted recorded interviews of 25 mostly 1.5- and second-generation Elizabeth-raised Latinos. I define the 1.5-generation to be participants who were born outside the U.S. and immigrated here by the age of 9 and came of age and were schooled as teenagers in this country. As far as the second-generation, who make up the majority of my participants in this sample, I am referring to those born in the U.S. of Latino/a first-generation immigrant parents. These interviews were recorded, semi-structured and lasted no more than two hours. First, I recruited friends I went to school with or got to know socially growing up in Elizabeth. Some of my friends connected me with their friends, thereby producing a "friends of friends" snowball effect.

Ultimately, my criteria for the sample were that my participants had to be Latino/a of 1.5 or second generation and had to have been born and/or raised and schooled in Elizabeth. A couple of exceptions were made with two interviewees, Danniyal and Bert, who were not of Latino descent but passed socially as Latinos and hung out mostly with Latinos while growing up in Elizabeth. As part of the interview process, I met with my interviewees several times to discuss their memories about certain places and their social lives while coming of age. I met with interviewees in places of their choice, yet I always suggested meeting at a nearby library or open campus space in the Elizabeth/Union area where I could record the interview with minimal noise and where we would have privacy. In some instances, due to timing, scheduling conflicts, and preferences, we would go out to a restaurant or café. In some instances, I paid for dinner and in other instances my participants graciously paid. In a few instances, some of my participants invited me to their homes, where they felt most at ease talking about their personal lives. The gathering of memories of different diasporic, racial, and geographic contexts such as dance spaces in Elizabeth and New York City, skate scenes in Elizabeth and Westfield, New Jersey, or goth scenes in Elizabeth and Newark, New Jersey offer a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995 and Ramos-Zayas 2012) of Latino/a youth lived experience in the 1980s-1990s that complicate views of them as being contained and ordered by racial projects (Omi & Winant 1994) and dominant ideologies and discourses. Along with informal interviewing, I took ethnographic notes after the interviews. Being born in Elizabeth and partially schooled there as a second-generation Colombian American, I am informed by my own experiences, and I wrote autoethnographic notes at times when interviewees reminded me of my own life in Elizabeth in our youth subculture. In some cases, I was friends and spent social time with some of the participants in this study. Prior to the interviews, I sent an initial questionnaire that requested biographical

information, participants' views about and experiences of their lives in Elizabeth, and information about authorship of cultural production. I sent this initial questionnaire to 40 potential subjects.   Responses to this questionnaire helped me choose my sample of interviewees, ensuring that I gathered a heterogeneous pool of participants across nationality, gender, sexuality, class and race.

Second, this dissertation performs a close reading of newspaper texts from several sources to identify neoliberal characterizations ascribed to first- and second-generation Elizabeth Latinos. This research will decenter such characterizations by incorporating my interviewees' testimonies, which describe Latino second-generation individual and communal lives in Elizabeth in terms of their post-national, countercultural, queer and sexually transgressive subjectivities. Third and most important, I conduct a spatial analysis throughout the chapters of this project by identifying a spectrum of dominant publics, counterpublics, or a "a culture within a subculture" (Johnson 2013, 133)," that adds valuable nuances to this narrative of Latino/a youth life and social participation while coming of age in the 1980s-1990s. In some circumstances, counterideological political leanings and cultural work worth remembering circulate in some youth translocal spaces that contrast with how Latino/a youth are often marginally situated in dominant neoliberal texts and publics. In Chapters 1 and 2, I show how Elizabeth Latino/a Youth navigated dominant publics and show moments in which they assumed or resisted them. In chapters 3 and 4, I examine how Latino youth amplified dominant publics that articulated groupings of either a dissidentified whiteness or non-whiteness, or gender and sexual nonconformity, or that created counterpublics that defied at times the racialization and sexualization of Latino/a youth amidst liberal multiculturalism in a growing neoliberal economy, which I explain below.

Latino/a Youth in a Time of Growing Neoliberalism:
Tensions Between Liberal and Critical Multiculturalism

This dissertation contextualizes the Elizabeth Latino/a Youth experience during a
historical moment, neoliberalism, which impacted the first and second generation both similarly
and differently between the 1970s and 1990s. Neoliberalism came into being during late
capitalism and at the height of the Civil Rights Era, when governments could no longer
guarantee the welfare of their citizens but began to rely on corporations to ensure sustainable
employment, wages, and the eventual middle class mobility of its citizens (Duggan 2003;
D'Avila 2008; Sawyer 2004). Metropolitan and secondary cities experienced a steep decline in
the manufacturing industry by the 1960s, and the transition to a service and information industry
left fewer jobs that ensured sustainability and middle class mobility for lesser-skilled,
undereducated and blue collar workers. Yet, corporations are interested in making profit and not
in assuring sustainable jobs. Racialized black and brown youth in working class to poor
communities are impacted the most by the lack of opportunities in a neoliberal economy as
Harvey (2005) describes.

Ultimately, U.S. neoliberal policies could not guarantee welfare for everyone but instead
could only benefit or distinguish a few—those who demonstrated (or were chosen for their)
whiteness, assimilation, self-sufficiency, individualism and alliance with the state—while
demonizing individuals and groups who could not assume such qualities. That is, under a liberal
multicultural strategy, the binaries of "good" and "bad" citizens and groups maintained
hierarchies and divisions that maintained state control and suppression of politicized anti-state
collectivites. At the same time, the U.S. government cut back on social services and public
institutions because in a market-style driven society, color-blindness in a dawning Post-Civil
Rights Era trumped identity politics and racial and ethnic collectivism (Duggan 2003; D'Avila

2008; Prashad 2001). Gaye Theresa Johnson (2013) explains that neoliberal interests, "…valorized private power…endorsing perceptions that the working poor, and not government policy or corporate capitalism, were to blame for their own condition" (132). In line with this, the government honored and celebrated exemplary models like "good" citizens or model minorities who could get ahead on their own, contribute to the economy, and ally with government rule (Duggan 2003; Karam 2004; Lee 1999; Prashad 2001).

In contrast to good neoliberal models, some individuals and groups were deemed bad neoliberal subjects, like most working class Latino and minority youth, who were portrayed as being prone to poverty, failure marginality, and crime. Their "inability" to get ahead was often demonized and characterized as cultural or genetic pathology and sexual deviance (Duggan 2003; Ramos-Zayas 2012; Ferguson 2004). Neoliberal policies and neoliberal cultural values of individualism and hard work diminished and pathologized racial minority groups' protests against racial and social welfare and inequality in the growing Post-Civil Rights privatized state. As such, these individuals and groups were portrayed as the reason why the U.S. was not getting ahead, and as the cause of the U.S.'s social problems. For example, Chapter 1 in this study documents how journalists portrayed Elizabeth Latino/a youth as bad neoliberal subjects and placed the burden on a growing racialized student majority to be the reason for Elizabeth Public High School's decline. This study's aim is to complicate reductive representations of the Elizabeth Latino/a second generation by offering their voice and perspective regarding other dimensions of their lives, specifically with respect to subculture.

America's shift from a welfare state to a neoliberal state placed on citizens and immigrants (individuals and groups) the expectation that getting ahead in this country meant "pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps," and that one must structure one's life around "rugged

individualism" and not organize or group around social welfare and identity politics (Duggan 2003; Ramos-Zayas 2012; D'Avila 2008; Prashad 2001) bolstering ideologies of liberal multiculturalism. Hard work, individualism, and conformity to liberal multiculturalism policies instill competition among ethnic and racial groups and strong divisions along sexual and class lines that weaken or destroy pan-ethnic, pan-Latino, or pan-sexual or non-heteronormative community building (D'Avila 2004; D'Avila 2008; Ramos Zayas 2012; Rivera-Servera 2013). For example, in Chapter 1, I look at how educators, politicians, administrators, and journalists regulated liberal multicultural state education policies that depoliticized diversity, enforced "market-style" academic tracking in school, monitored "gang-like" student groupings and assimilation to sustain hierarchies, divisions, and "isms" among students. In other chapters, I look at the ways mainstream citizens adhering to liberal multiculturalism (parents and market-niche consumers) or those in power (politicians, education administrators, club kids, market-niche empresarios) monitored working class or "bridge and tunnel" (perceived as marginal, undesirable and lowbrow –see chapter 2 for a longer definition) Latino/a and minority youth bodies, groupings or spaces by profiling them, similar to policies of "stop and frisk" in a neoliberal regime of policed and white(ned) or commodified space that criminalizes working class youth of color (Hanhardt 2008; Hanhart 2013; Anderson 2009; Andersson 2015, Kanai and Kenttamaa-Squires 2015; Corben et al. 2011). Such liberal multicultural policies portrayed most working class to working poor Latinos and youth of color and their groupings as limited consumers, undesirables, dangerous, criminal, and demonstrating failed futures.

Yet, youth find ways to express themselves "as they are" outside what Comaroff and Comaroff (2001) discuss as a culture of neoliberalism that excludes others through consumption, wealth, moral panics, and sexual and gender conflicts. In effect, these youth resist the culture of

neoliberalism in some moments and defy (good) neoliberal citizenship (Galvez 2013 and Maira 2009 and 2005) that rewards individual effort, productivity, consumption, depoliticization and conformity to market and economic forces with (potential) national belonging. That is, this project explores the moments that Latino/a youth created or were a part of an everyday subtle or informal politicized spacemaking or a space and subculture of critical multiculturalism that mattered, in which such scenes dismantled social borders, binaries, hierarchies, and divisions. In effect, these youth's anti-state ideologies of critical multiculturalism show moments of self-determination, agency and anti-neoliberal political leanings through subcultures aligned with left-wing social movements and politics. In the chapters, these youth groupings were often not neatly contained by liberal multiculturalism or market forces but with their everyday articulations and struggles in their scene making they aligned with the countercultural ideologies and discourses of Black Civil and Social Welfare Rights and Gay and Lesbian Rights of the 1960s.

Putting the Second Generation at the Center:
A Consideration of Elizabeth's Immigrant, Mainstream and Subcultural Contexts

Overall, I have identified three spaces in which my research will offer testimony and evidence regarding how the post-1965 Latino second generation navigated coming of age in translocal Elizabeth. The first area deals with the cultural context or immigrant space and how the Latino/a second generation's coming-of-age was shaped by their Latino/a parents' immigrant communal experience and community building amidst a growing liberal multicultural America that maintained divisions and hierarchies among Latinos/as and other racial groups. The first-generation Latino community built early on a physical presence of markets, ethnic/national community groups, and neighborhoods/homeownership that structured and defined second-generation lives. While the second generation used and related to these first-generation paved

places, this research examines spaces and places that were either self-made and/or outside the

first generation's purview. For example, in the once Cuban-dominant market area on Elizabeth

Avenue, the majority of stores and supermarkets were first-generation run businesses as early as

the 1960s. Also several first-generation Cuban and Hispanic community organizations existed on

this avenue. The same could be said for the Colombian market and Colombian-American

community organizations that grew on Morris Avenue by the early 1980s (Avivi 2003). Further,

Avivi (2003) writes on these ethnic market spaces and turfs between Cuban and Colombian

markets that generated distinctions and competition between the ethnic groups. This is an

example of liberal multiculturalism among immigrant groups; second-generation youth

internalized such divisions growing up among first-generation immigrants in Elizabeth. Another

example is comparisons or binaries[1] between Elizabeth and Newark Puerto Ricans as imminently

insufficient citizens and families in need of social services and Cubans as model minorities and

families, which lead to hierarchies between Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and other ethnics who

supposedly demonstrated self-sufficiency or dependency. Similar ethnic distinction and

boundary making occurred between Dominicans and Puerto Ricans over the same issue

(Hoffnung-Garskof, 2008). Ultimately, these distinctions between good and bad neoliberal

citizenship weakened pan-Latino and pan-ethnic community building and racial and ethnic

(politicized) collectivism. Latino ethnic groups in Elizabeth often built their own individual

community groups that were not pan-Latino because neoliberal cultural values encouraged

individuals and groups to compete and therefore seek distinction and exceptionality in the state

as good and model neoliberal citizens.

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[1] "Cuban Refugees Shun Aid" *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 23 July 1964. Print.
 "Hughes Praises Refugees: Cubans called NJ Asset" *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 15 April 1966. Print.
"Hispanic Influence Felt in Elizabeth." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 7 July 1975. Print.

Aside from standards of self-sufficiency, liberal multiculturalism sustained a political economy optic that privileged traditional family order and heternormativity and suppressed or marginalized sexual and gender non-conformity or deviant sexualities. In a way, this could be understood in terms of how the state invokes the preservation of "good" blood ties or "blood purification" among immigrant families, through the family reunification laws of 1965, for example, to forge a healthy heteronormative nation of white cultural hegemony among first- and second-generation immigrants (Somerville 2005). Members of the Latino second generation often live in first-generation-run communities in which their genders and sexualities are assumed to be (or are policed as) heterosexual because they do not live in non-heteronormative spaces (Cantu Jr. 2009; Peña 2005; Zavella 1997). Having said this, I do not mean to misrepresent all first-generation immigrants as being assumedly heterosexual when in fact many came to this country as queer or homosexual (Guzman 2006; Decena 2011; Mananlansan 2003; Sandoval-Sanchez 2007; La Fountain-Stokes 2009; Peña 2005; Cantu Jr 2009; Marquez 2007) or to suggest that these social divisions were never challenged among first-generation immigrants, even if through strategic silence (Decena 2011; Decena 2009).

Growing up in Elizabeth, I remember going to the Colombian- or Cuban-owned hair salons with my mother and getting my haircut by several out and effeminate gay or queer Latino first-generation immigrants. I also remember how some of them would take up space on the street in their flashiness and eccentricity. One gay and very fit first-generation Dominican hairstylist who always cut my hair on Broad Street would go to a nearby McDonald's to get a cheeseburger before or after cutting my hair. I had a surfer cut phase when I was in my early teens and each time he'd screech loudly, "there's your surfer cut." Also, for several years, my mother and father welcomed a first-generation queer immigrant Colombian and Puerto Rican

male couple who first became friends with my mother's single female distant cousin, Rosalba, who stayed with us in Hillside during her first years after she left Colombia to live in the U.S. While she stayed with us, "los Robertos, " whose first names were both Roberto, came to our house on weekends to visit Rosalba and eventually grew very friendly with my parents. Eventually, "los Robertos" came from their home in Hell's Kitchen to join us on family birthdays or to help me with two annual science fair projects in elementary school. Puerto Rican Roberto was a high school teacher in Manhattan and later achieved a doctorate in bilingual education. Even while there was a strategic silence between "los Robertos" and us, we all thoroughly enjoyed their company. Ultimately, these immigrant cultural spaces were different from mainstream nationalist spaces, but many first-generation immigrants wished to incorporate themselves within the national community by adhering to nationalist values like self-sufficiency and good family and sexual practices that mirrored middle class heteronormative life and mores. Having said that, Latino first- and second-generation immigrants often faced social obstacles to their social, cultural, and linguistic difference, which were incompatible with white mainstream sensibility.

Therefore, the second spatial context I document in this project is that of mainstream U.S. society and the ways the Elizabeth Latino second generation was situated in it. One important example of U.S. mainstream space in this project is the Elizabeth, public schools and how they were regulated by state discourses and pedagogies of diversity, multiculturalism, and inclusion. In 1983, Elizabeth Mayor Thomas Dunn attempted to enforce an English-only ordinance that banned city workers from speaking any language other than English during work hours. With the increase in the Hispanic population to 30 percent of the town's residents by the early 1980s, Mayor Dunn, Elizabeth mayor from 1964-1992, grew alarmed that Elizabeth's culture was

becoming Hispanicized. Mayor Dunn's initiatives gained local, tri-state, and national attention,[2]

especially among Latino activists claiming that his motives were Hispanophobic and violated the

Constitutional right to free speech. After the mayor's initiatives failed, the town's city council

put the ordinance back on the table.[3] In the end, the city council did not pass it either. However,

these kinds of efforts by Anglo and conservative Latino politicians in Elizabeth are examples of

pro-assimilation measures designed to get Hispanics and other slow-assimilating immigrants and

their children to assimilate and conform to white cultural hegemony as quickly as possible. In

line with this, the bilingual programs[4] instituted in Elizabeth's public school system were not

meant to preserve Spanish language skills or Latino cultural identity, but instead to quickly bring

students' English skills to proficiency and to privilege a whitewashed identity.

Not only did this ordinance mark Spanish as a language of difference, but this was a

lesson for Hispanic immigrants and youth to articulate dominant whitened identities that showed

a command of pure English without Span(gl)ish and other street hybrid languages in dominant

publics of white cultural hegemony. Along with a pure form of English, assimilating to white

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[2] "Hispanic 'war' on Dunn report probed." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 26 March 1983: 11. Print.
 "English-only memo leads to talk of recalling Dunn." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 18 July 1983: 1. Print.
 Koppisch, John. "Suit Charges Discrimination by Dunn in Hiring Hispanics." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 10 Aug. 1983: 1. Print.
Murray, William. "Closed-door meeting held on 'English-only' memo." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 25 Aug. 1983: 4. Print.
Murray, William. "Dunn asked to revise memo on language use." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 31 Aug. 1983: 1. Print.
[3] "Council may back English-only law." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 25 Nov. 1986: 1. Print.
"English-only law (Decree urged by council man)." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 26 Nov. 1986: 1. Print.
 "Language Bill Pushed off the Agenda." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 24 Dec. 1986: 1. Print.
[4] "Elizabeth Parley Focuses on Future of Hispanic Youth." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 16 Oct. 1980: 6. Print.
 "Debate All-English vs. Bilingual Impact." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 28 April 1986: 9. Print.
"Bilingual Teaching." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 28 July 1986: 1. Print.
 "Hispanic Influence Felt in Elizabeth." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 7 July 1975: 9. Print.

mainstream expectations was promoted. Therefore, it is important to consider how my

participants' racial, diasporic and subcultural subjectivities were attached to hybrid and street

languages and were viewed as inferior and foreign to dominant conventions.   Ultimately, the

devising of this ordinance reflects how a mayor and those in power conveyed linguistic and

cultural purity to sustain whiteness that avoided intermixing among languages and races in the

dominant public. Monitoring Hispanics to ensure that they spoke dominant forms of English in

public also meant distancing them from the blackness of inassimilable African Americans and

Hispanics. In her book, *Spaces of Conflict Sounds of Solidarity: Music, Race, and Spatial*

Entitlement in Los Angeles (2013), Gaye Theresa Johnson discusses how leading conservative

scholars like Arthur Schlesinger, Laurence Auster, and Richard Brookhiser, complicit with local,

state, and federal policies against racial and ethnic collectivism such as Elizabeth's English-only

ordinance, warned against ethnic studies' counterideology and multicultural movements that

repudiated Anglocentric culture they claimed was the founding common culture of the nation"

(131-132). Further, according to Johnson these scholars worked to destroy "…the

institutionalization of histories and contributions of people of color" (Johnson 132), which also

included their performances of cultural and linguistic excess in Anglocentric dominant publics.

Elizabeth Latino second-generation youth endured moments of anti-Latino cultural identity and

anti-Spanish language sentiments that were instilled by pro-assimilation policy efforts they

experienced throughout their childhood and coming of age before the "Latin Explosion" (Hayes

Batista 2004); yet, their subculture spaces show Latino/a diasporic, cultural and linguistic

orientations (Munoz 1999; Skott-Myhre 2008; LaFountain-Stokes 2009; Rivera-Servera 2011;

Rivera-Servera 2012; Urciuoli 1996; Zentella 2002) that disidentified with dominant publics of

white cultural hegemony.

Further, LGBTQ youth also disidentified with a heteronormative mainstream public within the school in which these youth often felt marginalized or unsafe. Lucio, a younger participant among the out gay veteran youth, shared with me that the year before starting at Elizabeth High School, he went to the Hetrick Martin Institute (HMI)[5] in the Village to get counseling support and empowerment. Having faced constant bullying in parochial school by other boys due to his effeminacy, he went to the HMI to seek familiarity because he could not find it among his family or socially in his everyday life in Elizabeth. My participants brought up experiences of facing rejection or being fearful of being rejected by their conservative parents, family and friends. These painful circumstances make it important to recognize the courage of questioning, out, and ally youth when they performed or disidentified with eccentric identities or nonconforming viewpoints outside dominant or heteropatriarchal Latino/a or immigrant identities, masculinities, and femininities (Habell-Pallan 2005, Braziel 2008, Munoz 1999, Johnson 2013). Unfortunately, intolerant parents, family, and peers based their unrelenting narrow views on anti-gay stigma that was further exacerbated by the AIDS crisis of the 1980s-1990s.

Another interviewee, Andy, explained to me how as an eccentric gay youth he often felt that people around him in his everyday life, especially in school, perceived him and other out-gay youth as AIDS carriers, including his high school classmates and his friends' parents. Another interviewee, Ernie, explained that he felt during his high school years that he would die of AIDS. Ernie faced depression by junior year in high school largely due to anxieties about his sexuality and about contracting HIV; he asked me why the high school administration did not have any services to create a more gay-tolerant environment that included AIDS awareness and

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[5] Hetrick-Martin Institute's official website: http://www.hmi.org/

reduced fear and stigma. Despite the social anxieties and stigmas that led to symbolic violence, bullying, isolation, etc. toward gay people, my interviewees indicate that they still performed gay-tolerant or eccentric gay subjectivities from their subcultures that disidentified with standing conventions of sexual and gender conservatism in their everyday Elizabeth context.

Third, this dissertation's main focus looks at spacemaking through subculture that at times broke away from values of liberal multiculturalism found among immigrant and mainstream spaces. This subculture space became a third space that articulated these youth's in-betweenness or hybridity relative to immigrant and mainstream values and spaces. These third spaces allowed youth to articulate their own values and subjectivities while incorporating their lived experiences amidst the mainstream cultural contexts I described above.

Whether in Elizabeth, a surrounding suburb or New York City, I examine Latino/a youth spacemaking in several circumstances. First, I examine Latino/a youth subcultures in dominant publics (Habermas 1989; Rivera-Servera 2011; Rivera-Servera 2012; Buckland 2002; Gray 2009; Warner 2002). In some cases Latino/a youth in their subcultural identities attempted to assume standing ideologies to belong or practice boundary-making (Gray 2009) that flagged difference. In the case of queer counterpublics (Warner 2002; Fraser 1992; Gray 2009; Rivera-Servera 2012; Johnson 2013; Rodriguez 2003; Quiroga 2000; Mumford 1997), I examine the moments in which Latino/a youth practiced spacemaking such as tactics or subtle incorporation through "calculated actions" that exceed dominant expectations and culture in respective publics (de Certeau in Aponte Pares 2001) and spatial entitlements or "… [a] creat[ion of] new collectivities based not just upon eviction and exclusion from physical places but also on new and imaginative uses of [music], technology, creativity, and spaces" (Johnson 2013, x, 1-2). Similar to Munoz's discussion of disidentificatory performances, Gaye Teresa Johnson, in

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Spaces of Conflict and Sounds of Solidarity (2013), discusses how Latino/a youth are not

necessarily in subordinate positions of counterpublics but engage in individual and group

performances that spatially form an empowered "culture within a subculture" that "express the

everyday realities [including cultural and mainstream orientations] of a being a person of color"

(133). These spatial dimensions help us to understand the second generation's self-practices of

Latinidad, utopia, and heterotopia within and outside dominant publics and inform us of their

political sentiments, agency, resistance and/or complicity with neoliberal state projects.

By putting the second generation at the center of Elizabeth Latino History through

subculture, I identify seemingly worthless spaces and places like a skate park in an abandoned

gasoline station, a school corner known as the Porkchop Corner that was (re)occupied and

(re)defined by club kids, goths, skaters and punks, a gay house or gang-like grouping of LGBTQ

youth at Elizabeth High School, and Wally and Ivo's parties in a rundown area of downtown and

in a cemetery that the second generation paved on its own. The Porkchop Corner was initially a

space outside the high school among mostly Portuguese youth who self-identified and

appropriated the term "porkchops" lightheartedly while coming of age in a depolicitized context

of ethnic hierarchies. The term, however, was derogatory to earlier Portuguese immigrants in the

Northeast (principally Massachusetts and New Jersey), denoting backwardness and uncleanliness

like a pig, and being unworthy to be treated as a decent human rather than as an animal or outcast

immigrant. In some cases, these spaces and places were not only local but translocal (Haenfler

2010) because they were developed and situated not only within Elizabeth, but also outside the

town, particularly due to a connection to New York City's Greenwich Village, a historically

renowned countercultural neighborhood in downtown Manhattan, and other New Jersey towns

and cities, including Newark. This observation alone suggests that the Latino second

generation's cultural identity and the spaces and places they created were not only products of the immigrant cultural and mainstream dynamics of the town, but also include surrounding subcultural and countercultural dimensions worth documenting as part of their daily lived existence. For example, my informal and formal interviews explore the significance for the Elizabeth Latino second generation of hanging out in "the vill," as many came to call it. Because the Village was a liberal, gay-friendly environment, I examine my subjects' ties, for example with the gay and music subculture scenes downtown, that impacted their Latinidad, particularly within Elizabeth.

What's Political in These Youth Spaces? The Case for Elizabeth

Elizabeth is just as important as other secondary cities that have been studied, like Providence, Rhode Island, Framingham, Massachusetts, Perth Amboy, New Jersey, and Hialeah Florida, if not more so, due to its impressive diversity, which is similar to that of Queens, New York (Ricourt and Danta 2003). As an (inter)national port city and industrial center from the Industrial Age to Late Capitalism, Elizabeth attracted a diverse population of white ethnics, African Americans, black Caribbean and Latino groups and some Asians. Among non-Latino groups that were connected with local Latino/a youth given the similarities in their immigrant, bilingual, and cultural identities were Portuguese, Filipino, and Haitian youth (O'Campo 2016; Zhou and O'Campo 2016; Waters 1999). Many of these ethnic youth were also born and/or schooled in nearby Elizabeth. I remember these immigrant youth calling themselves Flips (for Filipinos) or Porkchops (for Portuguese), historically racist terms yet appropriated by the younger generation of the 1980's and 1990's to accentuate their racial and cultural difference in light-hearted and depoliticized ways within a context of liberal multiculturalism. Moving up the ethnic ladder erases earlier immigration history and episodes of exclusion, non-belonging, and

ethnic racism in the U.S. in favor of a progressive and mobilized narrative of the present (Lee 1999; Ignatiev 1995; Roediger 2005; De Genova and Ramos Zayas 2003; Ramos-Zayas 2012). My first experience among a non-Colombian immigrant group was with Haitian families who lived near my parents' friend Estella and her family, who were also Colombian. Estella also lived on Lexington Place in a row of four-family houses that at the time were mostly owned by Hispanic, Portuguese, and white ethnic families. When I went to play with Estella's sons between the age of 6 and 7, I saw the Haitian kids and families outside. Sometimes, the families came together and had a barbecue while listening to Haitian music. These families were the first black families to live on Lexington Place (on the Elizabeth and white section of Hillside border) and not in Elizabeth's African American majority neighborhoods near downtown Elizabeth. There was a sense of cultural identity between Haitian, Portuguese, and Latino families given their homeland ties and language maintenance and perseverance between the parents and their children. These ethnic communities were substantial in number, and their community building, from my own experience and observations, was tight-knit. Aside from similar immigrant and cultural identities, Latino youth would mingle with these other ethnic youth amidst different music subcultures as well that would ease at times the existing social borders and hierarchies between them.

Like the late 1950s and 1960s exiled Cubans, for similar and different reasons, the Portuguese were also regarded as a self-sufficient and model minority in post-1965 immigrant America, particularly in Elizabeth and Newark (DaCosta-Holton 2005). Early on, the Portuguese were lower on the ethnic ladder in earlier waves of U.S. immigration (DaCosta-Holton 2005). This "achievement" among the Portuguese helped them to stand out exceptionally among other browner and less economically and socially stable recently arrived Latino immigrant groups

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from South America and the Caribbean and working class to working poor African Americans. The center of Portuguese ethnic and civic life was in the Ironbound in nearby Newark. I constantly heard Portuguese friends in elementary and high school going to Ferry Street in the Ironbound, Newark (which is 5 miles away from Elizabeth) for Sunday church, restaurants, and ethnic food shopping. In one case, one of my high school Portuguese classmates' father/family owned a fish market on Ferry Street.

Similar to the Portuguese, Elizabeth was not the center of immigrant and civic life for Filipinos. The Filipinos in Elizabeth were also an exceptional group, especially when compared with most lower-skilled Latino immigrants who arrived for factory jobs. While some Filipinos took manufacturing and service jobs, most of them were "good immigrants" who had much higher levels of education than Latinos who arrived from South America and the Caribbean to translocal Elizabeth (Lee 1999 and Hsu 2015). In fact, in my experience, most Filipino parents were either working in hospitals as nurses or were accountants or had well paying corporate office jobs. Most Filipinos who I grew up closely with also lived in the "white part of Hillside" and eventually moved out to more well-to-do majority-white towns outside of Union County. My friends and I often compared similar Tagalog and Spanish words and foods. One friend loved my grandmother's cooked meals (after our after school basketball backyard sessions) because her cooking was similar to his own Mom's. My grandmother always remembers this and recollects catching him in her pans with such love. Most Filipino youth were excellent students and often high tracked into honors and advanced placement courses, from my elementary and high school experience.

Ultimately, Elizabeth's diversity lends itself to unveiling how second-generation youth created pan-Latino, pan-sexual and pan-racial social networks through subculture scenes or

spaces among a multitude of ethnic, racial and national groups amidst a divisive climate of liberal multiculturalism. The town not only offers a unique ethnic, racial and class diversity, but also a lived diversity of sexual and gender variant markers through youth subculture spaces in the gay house, goth, and skater scenes, as I show throughout the chapters of this dissertation. Yet, Elizabeth is unique in how its geographic positioning relative to white-middle mainstream and counterculture life, which informed youths' queer Latinidad (Rodriguez 2003) among second-generation Elizabeth Latino youth in their hybrid positioning around race, class, gender and sexuality. Elizabeth's rich Latino/a and racial and ethnic diversity (similar to Queens, New York's) and small secondary city size allowed youth to experience different degrees and configurations of strong familiarity, relationality, belonging, and group making that brought more possibilities of critical diversity than in more homogeneous, segregated and impersonal, bigger cities like Cuban Miami (Portes and Stepick 1993), Mexican Los Angeles (Sanchez 1993), and Mexican or Puerto Rican Chicago (De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003) for example. Further, such a rich texture of different mainstream, immigrant, and subculture translocal spaces youth navigated in their everyday lives gave these youth their own strong transcultural and hybrid identity in which they were influenced by all three spaces but uncontainable at times by local (Elizabeth) and state power and parental rearing. While from the outside, Elizabeth is often portrayed as a solid (heterosexist) working class immigrant town, this study complicates this homogeneity and shows youth cultural work of individual and group performances that engendered tolerance over difference or a politicization of second-generation spatial and subcultural dynamics.

Another dimension of this project is a translocal component insofar as how the Latino second generation related to people/communities outside Elizabeth, particularly the Greenwich

Village and nearby middle class Elizabeth suburbs. To put it simply, this counternarrative dissertation constantly reminds the reader that these youth are not only a product of Elizabeth and its immigrant and mainstream spaces but also of surrounding towns and their dominant, subcultural, and countercultural spaces. For example, my participants' proximity to the Village, or New York City's downtown, where gay subcultures and institutions were at the center and thriving, gave them the direction and support to perform "out" gender variant or gay tolerant Latino youth identities even within the context of mainstream spaces or dominant publics and first-generation machista and heteropatriarchal families and community, homophobic and gender conforming peers, or in sexual and gender repressive spaces like their own schools and on the street. In some cases, these youth brought or maintained contact with outside youth and their social and cultural capital by bringing them into Elizabeth not necessarily for purposes of consumption and profit but for human exchange and relationality. In these cases, I consider how these youth are an anti-neoliberal creative class that sustained critical multiculturalism in unordinary and memorable ways. In effect, these subculture groupings point to how these youth are not only from Elizabeth but disrupt contained and limited socialization, racialization, and futures.

Elizabeth's youth spacemaking and subcultures mirrored the 1990s social movements in their tolerance of sexual and gender variant and potentially AIDS-infected youth and combated the right wing political base and conservative immigrant values of liberal multiculturalism, pro-assimilation (Hispanophobic), pro-family, anti-Latino queer, anti AIDS posturing (Munoz 1999, 146-147). These subcultural spaces should not be passed off as immature "youth phases" and consumption of popular "entertainment media (television and music)" (Street, Inthorn et al. 2012) and commodified subculture fashion but as political or valid political gesturing among

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youth who disagreed with the right wing's political position on many issues that affected them in their daily lives and were often a matter of well-being and life or death. The politics of these youth circles did not involve the type of traditional or formal political organizing (Smith, Lister, and Middleton 2005 and Gálvez 2010) that is usually weighed as significant or as action worthy of acknowledgement. This project makes a case for the ways these youths' subculture spacemaking is outright political cultural work, performed by supposedly disempowered, apathetic, and imminently failed working class youth of color who aligned with white majority progressive social movements to educate and/or humanize others against the repressive homophobic, transphobic, xenophobia in their everyday mainstream, immigrant, and subculture spaces. In her book, *Guadaloupe in New York: Devotion and Struggle for Citizenship Rights among Mexican Immigrants* (2009), Alyshia Gálvez quotes Richard Wood as saying, "Politics is profoundly a cultural enterprise…[it is] about creating meanings" (Wood in Gálvez 2010, 102), reminding us how informal organizing in religious rituals produces unconventional spaces where the political does happen. In effect, these Latino/a youth subcultural spaces have important social meaning and offer alternative forms of political organizing, youth nation-building and citizenship.

Using An Interdisciplinary Approach to Challenge Simplistic Narratives, Texts and Space

As an interdisciplinary scholar, I draw from Ethnic Studies, Cultural and Media Studies, Latino Studies, Queer Studies and Latina Feminist Studies to amplify Elizabeth history and challenge journalistic accounts by portraying, through critical ethnography, second-generation individual and communal agency and spacemaking through youth-lived subcultures outside nationalist, mainstream and immigrant constructs. Therefore, I position myself as a cultural

studies scholar who wishes to show the significance, hybridity and spacemaking of youth Latino/a culture amidst the tensions and discourses of nationalist, mainstream and immigrant spaces that youth navigated, identified with at certain moments, and refuted in others. Scholars such as Fregoso (2003), Anzaldua (2007), Blackwell (2010), Cepeda (2010), Gopinath (2005), La Fountain-Stokes (2009), Cantu Jr. (2009), Zavella (2011), Eng (2001) and Sandoval-Sanchez (2007) have suggested that a nationalist frame to any communal or diasporic narrative results in the privileging of certain identities – mainly masculinist, heteronormative, honorary white or mobilized – that represent a state-mandated heteronormative Latinidad complicit with state ideologies that seek to monitor, subdue and divide all Latinos/as, especially from pan-Latino, black and brown, and pan-sexual community building. In line with the neoliberal historical moment, heteronormative Latinidad becomes the basis for characterizing those who cannot embody it as undesirable, unworthy, pathological, and failed, which leads to further antagonisms between "good" and "bad" neoliberal subjects. Instead, scholars are interested in finding ways that various groups construct relationalities (not only divisions) across pan-ethnicity, race, class, gender, and sexuality that build agency among one another (Blackwell 2010; A. Smith 2006; Cotera 2010; Arredondo et. al 2003; Sandoval 1991; Sanchez 2002; Flores 2000). This dissertation plans to bring out the relationalities that the Latino second generation has accomplished that undermine nationalist and neoliberal constructs, particularly through youth subcultures.

Along with relationalities, these disciplines seek to uncover self-determinations, desires, and subjectivities that are elided by nationalist and heteronormative narratives, text, and space. Latino and Ethnic Studies are committed to understanding how people have defined for themselves what "Latinidad" means to them outside nationalist and discursive (state-mandated)

frames. I want to capture what Latinidad means to second-generation Latinos/as in Elizabeth, New Jersey that is apart from state-imposed Latinidad. Latino/Chicana feminist studies (Anzaldua 2007; Cepeda 2010; Zavella 2011; Zavella 1997; Espin 1997; Vargas 2010; Paredez 2009; Blackwell 2010) is interested in non-heteronormative sexual and gender transgressions and desires, which, though often marginalized and suppressed by U.S. hegemonic strategies, vigorously shape the Latinidad of our communities. Apart from that, these scholars use a Latina/Chicana feminist lens to uncover "hidden" self-claims, liminalities, and transnational feminisms that fall outside U.S. discursive spaces and/or heteronormative Latinidad. This study challenges nationalist and heteronormative constructs by documenting how the second generation supported and/or exuded queerness and sexual and gender transgressions in youth subculture scenes and groupings not seen in local first-generation parents and leadership. Queer studies scholars (La Fountain-Stokes 2009; Rodriguez 2003; Decena 2011; Quiroga 2000; Manalansan 2003; Murphy, Ruiz et al. 2008; Patton and Sanchez-Eppler 2000; Luibheid and Cantu Jr. 2005; Luibheid 2008; Drucker 2015; Eng 2001 and 2010) examine the identity, subjectivity, space and materiality of queer subjects, or those who fall outside (or cannot pass into) a white, upwardly mobile heteronormative and homonormative class, and whose cultural excess is deemed as threatening to dominant U.S. society's cultural fabric. The homonormative is defined as gay, upwardly mobile, middle class and complicit with heteronormativity. In the late capitalist/neoliberal age, Latinos able to pass and assume heteronormative and homonormative codes shed their queerness or cultural excess. Queerness encompasses all excesses, not just cultural but racial, class, sexual and gender transgressions. It is important to document second-generation communal agency of critical multiculturalism as queer political sentiments and resistances that counteracted heteronormative Latinidad and neoliberal projects.

Ultimately, this work uncovers an undocumented history of how second-generation Latinos of multiple positionalities from working class New Jersey were not only influenced by oppositional and countercultural movements that helped them resist the notion of belonging and national, heteronormative and assimilative projects, but how they themselves contributed from the margins.

Complicating the Past:
 The Second Generation and the Tribulations of Remembering Their Own

This dissertation makes a case for what is rich about the Latino second generation's history in Elizabeth and why it is worthwhile to document this population's past in the town. Moreover, I argue that this project recovers a past that deserves to be recorded, celebrated, and stored as a legitimate account of Latino history, identity, and experience. According to the larger U.S. dominant narrative on the Latino/a second generation, the past should not be remembered or celebrated because it is about a displeasing and unworthy moment in one's life associated with working-class status, cultural excess, disempowerment, and disadvantage. Dolores Hayden writes in her book, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (1996) that for many people, "…the past is something they want to escape" (45), similar to Kenny's opening vignette. The dominant historical nationalist narrative (Nora 1989, Ho Tai 2001, Bhabha 1990 and 1994, Crane 1997, and Connerton 1989) often reminds the Latino second generation to only celebrate when moving out of their working class lives and view their lives as only mattering when they reach middle class status, achieve mobility and incorporate within the national community. This mentality is certainly rooted in neoliberal logic. Thus, such an assimilative and nationalist historical narrative instructs us that we what we learn, value, love, and gain from the working-class lives of our childhoods should be erased and not seen as signs of success or

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worthiness that belong inside what is constituted as fit and heteronormative by U.S. dominant standards. Precisely, through ethnographic interviewing, I expand on the moments my participants described of their everyday lived experiences that challenged a "unitary" nationalist historical narrative of liberal multiculturalism and neoliberal values. That is, through their individual and intersectional experiences, they described groupings of critical multiculturalism (McLaren and Kanpol 1995) or a third space (Bhabha 1990 and Bhabha 1994) that persisted in their lived present (Connerton 1989, Nora 1989, Crane 1997) outside the bounds of nation and its ideologies, discourses, and racial hierarchies.

Just as Sherry Ortner, in *New Jersey Dreaming: Capital, Culture, and Class of '58* (2003), explains how Newark, New Jersey's Mount Prospect neighborhood is deemed a forgettable, unworthy place for her subjects, the Elizabeth second generation, I believe, feels the same way about overall working-class, post-industrialized and undesirable Elizabeth. Ortner's interviewees were reticent about returning to their past because to them Newark was not a worthy place to remember in its post-industrial, depressed state, nor was their personal past in the town. That is, Ortner's interviewees' successful present and what they made of themselves is what mattered to them, yet her study shows how these subjects moved away from viewing their Newark past as unworthy through remembering. Ortner explains how interviewees articulated a social memory in which they, "…told [her] stories…that could be profoundly interpreted and interrogated for underlying [counter]ideologies, missing meanings, hidden patterns [in the present]…"(6). Similar to Ortner's project, this dissertation is about recovering meaningful moments through my participants' memories; even those most seemingly insignificant ones reveal meaningful moments in which they express an affinity for Elizabeth and values, desires,

or visions in their present despite overall overarching negative sentiments about Elizabeth as unworthy.

In contrast to Ortner's work, my dissertation examines youth-lived memory within several publics, including the school, to examine youth subculture spaces in either publics or counterpublics. In effect, I ask my interviewees questions that elicit their social memory to center a youth-lived place memory or identify spatial sites that are "place-oriented" and "… a container of experiences that contribute so powerfully to…intrinsic memorability" (Connerton and Casey in Hayden, 46). In effect, the "places" or spatial sites I discuss with my interviewees, such as Wally and Ivo's parties, the Grindstone skate park, the Porkchop Corner, and Elizabeth High's gay house, are under the radar (or outside) of dominant and (first-generation) immigrant narratives and say something meaningful and powerful about the everyday existences, values, and counterdiscourses of these Latino/a youth during that time. Overall, the music scenes that are featured in this dissertation uncover and complicate dominant neoliberal ideologies and attitudes by showing how this population's pan-Latino, non-heternormative, and queer communal agency actually made Elizabeth a foundational place worth sharing with the world. When it comes to recollecting the self by place, I agree with Ortner's assertion that, "stories about self in the past [are] meant to illuminate the self in the present" (5). I found that among several of my participants, skepticism over remembering our youth lives waned as we focused on their memories. Yet other interviewees were deeply excited about remembering the past because it was a topic that was often left out in their present lives. According to Jonathan Boyarin in his book, *Remapping Memory: The Politics of Time and Space* (1994), remembering is a politics of memory about "…a past mobilized for political purposes" (2). Boyarin and others help to put into perspective how place memories such as those in this project recover a political gesturing of

our own of citizenship, whether subtle or confrontational against being colonized within the bounds of nation and its ideologies and racial projects. I would add that stories of self-determination not only say something about lived moments of nostalgia in the present but an imagined future rooted in lived lives in translocal Elizabeth despite previous and ongoing racist, anti-working class and anti-Hispanophobic dominant ideologies and discourses.

Literature Review

Latinidad and State Monitoring

Scholars have examined the ways that the U.S. government has deployed strategies to order, categorize, subdue, and divide Latinos.   Suzanne Oboler (1995) examines the deployment of homogenization, mongrelization and the term "Hispanic." Oboler argues that homogenization worked to erase the particularities and demands of specific Latino groups and their post-colonial positionings in U.S. empire.   Mongrelizing Latinos was another strategy to maintain groups as third world, colonized, exploitable, second-class citizens, excluded from the nation and therefore powerless to challenge white racial order. Oboler explains the U.S. deployment of the term "Hispanic" by 1969 as a way to reduce the radical and militant agency of Puerto Rican and Mexican groups standing for ethnic particularity and cultural nationalism at the height of the Civil Rights and Ethnic Rights Movement. De Genova and Ramos Zayas (2003) argue that by the 1970s, instilling the term "Hispanic" in a growing privatized state was a way of trivializing ethnic particularities and creating a depoliticized identity driven by market success. Thus, imposing the term "Hispanic" both homogenized groups and tore away at what Padilla (1985) terms "Latinismo," and situational ethnicity instances where Latino groups came together to resist white hegemony or make demands on the government because of structural inequalities.

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D'Avila (2008) explains that with the rise of neoliberalism, good neoliberal representations of Latinos portrayed them as model minorities in a white racial order "that does not threaten but rather reinvigorates American values" (10).   Unlike thriving Latinos, African Americans have come to represent a "threat" to American values in their demands for social welfare, social justice and racial equality. In more extreme instances, African Americans have split from the white racial order by advocating for communism and cultural nationalism. Thus, D'Avila argues that it is in the state's best interest to distance Latinos from blackness and African Americans. These good neoliberal representations are another contemporary form of monitoring Latinos and portraying them in ways that reify white cultural hegemony.

Ultimately, the state views the second generation homogeneously as hybrid, "foreign stock," alien citizens, or threatening to white hegemony (Duany 2002; Perlmann 2005; Ngai 2004; Ramos-Zayas 2003). These markers maintain them as excludable unless they achieve linguistic and cultural assimilation. In terms of sexual and gender subjectivities, queer studies of color scholars have examined queer diasporas of mostly first-generation legal and undocumented immigrants and their impact on the U.S. locality (Patton and Sanchez-Eppler 2000; Decena 2011; Marquez 2007; Manalansan 2005; Manalansan 2000; La Fountain-Stokes 2005 and 2009), and how the U.S. deploys policies and policing to marginalize and exclude these subjects (Luibheid 2008; Luibheid 2002; Rodriguez 2003). Thus, I am defining queerness not only to examine non-heterosexual subjects defined as gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender in the U.S. but also defining it more broadly in terms of how non-white non-heteronormativity is racialized, "mongrelized," stigmatized, or pathologized against white middle class political economy and racial order. My project advances the scholarship of queer diasporas by offering a second-generation account of how these subjects can be viewed in this way in terms of how their hybrid

subjectivity, coupled with their non-heteronormativity, diasporic orientations, sexual and gender

nonconformity, and cultural excess threaten the state's definition of a depoliticized Hispanic

identity with potential pan-racial, pan-ethnic and pan-sexual politicized groupings. Even more,

this project suggests how subculture subjectivity mattered at times more than state labels of

ethnic identity and displaces state power over individual youth and groups. This project

examines moments of pan-Latino and/or pan-ethnic building across gender and sexuality,

tolerance and diversity in the Latino second generation that defied the government's Hispanic

ethnic label to promote agency, community building, and resistance against white racial order.

Latinos, Education, and Mobility

Since the 1990s, sociologists have published studies on the Latino second generation or

the "children" of first-generation parents who are deemed the "new Latino immigrants," or those

who came after 1965. Such scholars have been primarily interested in studying the Latino

second generation's educational and economic opportunities and outcomes and whether they

translate into self-esteem, upward mobility, middle-class status, and entrance into the national

community as worthy citizens. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) examine the ways national, ethnic

and racial groups perform in school and grapple with assimilatory education policies and anti-

bilingual policies in school. These scholars conclude that strong bilingualism and cultural

maintenance in schools for Latino students facilitates a positive self-image and self-worth,

selective acculturation[6] and better academic performance. Telles and Ortiz (2008) argue that

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[6] Portes and Rumbaut (2001) define selective acculturation "as the situation when children are fully bilingual and preserve significant elements of the parental culture as well as the full communication with their parents" (145). School practices should help facilitate this in children of immigrants because it raises the chances for better school performance and strong self-worth and self-esteem.

language and cultural maintenance between the Mexican first and second generation is stronger than between later generations and can lead to better school performance and eventual career success. These scholars support the view that education curricula and policies must optimize bilingual programs to increase the second generation's performance.

Kasinitz, Mollenkopf et al. (2009) published a New York-based study of second-generation immigrants and concluded that the majority of Latino (especially poor Puerto Rican and Dominican) and African American students are often tracked into remedial and the least competitive classes and relegated to underperforming city public schools. This study supports the view that the ethno-racial and minority capital of the Latino second generation is often disregarded or undervalued by teachers, as do studies conducted by Carter (2005), Itzigsohn (2009), and Neckerman, Carter, and Lee (1999). In all, Kasinitz, Mollenkopf et al. (2009) conclude that among different ethnic groups, Latino groups are one of the least prepared or favored to be competitive for professional careers or white-collar employment in the "hourglass" service industry. By examining interviews with Latino students, these authors concluded that educators regarded Latinos as inferior for not adequately embodying dominant capital in the successful and promising ways that white and Asian high school students do. Bonilla-Silva and Mayorga (2011) argue that white supremacist school structures discourage the use of these capitals to sustain white cultural hegemony and therefore force minority students to assume and conform to standards they do not necessarily identify with to excel academically.

Alba and Nee (2003) show how nuances of mobility among the Latino second generation must not be overlooked because, they argue, today's second generation are likely to attain higher educational attainment than their parents, as well as better jobs than their parents – jobs that are more professional and managerial. These authors argue that the process of assimilation from

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previous immigration waves has changed in that race and parents' social-political and economic

positioning is not as deterministic as it was during earlier migration waves. Itzigsohn (2009)

argues that Dominican students are not fully assimilating but experiencing a process of stratified

ethno-racial incorporation to pave a place for themselves in American society. Like Alba and

Nee, Itzigsohn posits that Dominican second-generation students are getting ahead more than

anticipated when one looks at how they are moving up in comparison to their first-generation

parents and not only in comparison with white mainstream society.

Scholars suggest that the second generation perform highly gendered traditional roles in

family life, resulting in a few Latinas performing substantially better in high school and in the

labor market than boys (Smith 2006; Smith 2002; Lopez 2004; Carter 2005). These studies

suggest that boys are less likely to develop strong language and cultural maintenance because of

traditional family roles that encourage girls to stay at home while boys often hang out on the

street. While this research is important, it maintains boys and girls in traditional and heterosexist

roles without any inkling of non-heteronormative gender and sexual orientations.

Ultimately, these scholars provide an understanding of how white cultural hegemony and

educators are limited in viewing the Latino second generation's potential given the ethno-racial

or minority capital they have. Worse, this research demonstrates that educators are even less

equipped to understand the gender dynamics of ethno-racial and minority capital in ways that

might improve school performance and tracking. Based on certain markers that determine

"success" for highly professional jobs and the white-collar sector of the service industry, the

Latino second generation overall are judged as being unfit to assume these jobs and achieve

mobility. Instead of looking at the nuances that exist, second-generation Latinos are read flatly

as failing, underachieving and as an imminent laboring to working poor workforce without

sufficiently valuable human and cultural capital. I contribute to this scholarship by offering

accounts of my subjects' school experiences in Elizabeth to show how these youth showed a

strong inclination to critical multiculturalism (Kanpol and McLaren 1995) or politicized diversity

and spacemaking or a third space outside dominant publics of either shared or dignified existence

and struggles across race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality and/or social empowerment that

fall outside or defy a market- and mobility-driven educational curriculum or society at large. I

contribute to the scholarship on Latino youth gender and sexuality by showing how they

"queered the classrooms" and exuded their racialized and sexual and gender non-conforming

marked subjectivities and alliances with LGBTQ students and worked together in some moments

within the school to form an empowered network of anti-neoliberal cultural workers who resisted

hidden or overt racist, anti-Hispanic, homo-and transphobic agendas of (neo)liberal educational

policies and liberal multiculturalism.

Second-Generation Political Claims and Spacemaking

In this section, I point to studies that examine how second-generation populations in the

U.S. have organized to make political claims in their own ways, often outside traditional

immigrant and mainstream politics. Some scholars have concluded that the second generation

lacks consistent participation (Smith 2006; Itzigsohn 2009; Kasinitz, Mollenkopf et al. 2009).

The Latino second generation is often portrayed only within the realm and community building

of first-generation leadership and not on its own terms. In some cases, the second generation is

perceived as being more attracted to gangs and related violence that form outside first-generation

guidance and mentorship and signal criminality, delinquency, and bad citizenship (Vigil 2002;

Smith 2006; Smith 2008; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Kasinitz, Mollenkopf et al. (2009) argue

that the New York Latino second generation shows considerable disinterest in civic or political

mainstream institutions and community organizations because their parents pass down

disenchantment with homeland political institutions. However, other studies offer moments

when the second generation expressed discord against assimilatory projects and discriminatory,

anti-immigrant and anti-ethnic agendas of the U.S. government. As a result, the second

generation expressed a reactive ethnicity and held on to hybrid identities and immigrant

identities. These moments in history that scholars point to remind us of the contributions and

legacies of the second generation that complicate history and are worth examining and

remembering because they show these subjects as leaders and pioneers and not just failed or bad

neoliberal citizens.

With respect to the Japanese second generation or the Nisei generation, Yoo (2000) and

Ngai (2004) examine their racial and ethnic consciousness right before and during the height of

Japanese internment during World War II. Yoo taps into a rich history of a Nisei subculture of

racial and ethnic consciousness during historical moments before and during the war to show

how this second generation resisted U.S. assimilation projects. Ngai (2004) documents how the

majority of Nisei youth detained in the internment camps deny turning against Japan and avoid

having their hybrid identity, cultural and language maintenance taken from them.

Among the Latino second generation, several scholars point to moments of second-

generation leadership and ethnic and racial consciousness. Sanchez (1993) examines how the

Mexican second generation in Los Angeles began to take leadership after the Mexican

repatriation in the 1930s. These leaders built the first Chicano institutions while also being

outspoken about discrimination, segregation, education, and anti-assimilation. Duany (2002) and

Ramos-Zayas (2003) document the Puerto Rican second-generation leadership during the 1960s

and 1970s, such as the Young Lords Party, which worked on projects for social and economic equality, justice, sustainability and political representation for Puerto Ricans on the mainland at the height of the Civil and Ethnic Rights Movements. Hoffnung-Garskof (2008) shows how Dominican and Puerto Rican first- and second-generation high school students in New York City during the late 1960s and 1970s organized to demand educational equality as well as challenge the racialization of U.S. education policies. The students fought to not be racialized as black by these educational policies because racialization meant that they would receive an inferior education compared to white and middle class students.

Youth Subculture and Political Claims

Unlike the studies that I describe in the prior section, this study points out that the Elizabeth Latino second generation coming of age in 1980s-1990s did not experience these threshold political moments. As a result, the dormancy of cultural and ethnic activism among the Latino second-generation youth strengthened local assimilation projects that impacted second-generation lives. On the other hand, the gay and lesbian movement, as well as the HIV/AIDS crisis during the 1980s-1990s, led to ethnic, racial, sexual, and gender tolerance that perpetuated groupings among the second generation and therefore disrupted heteropatriarchal and nationalistic ideologies and discourses among them.

Aside from these important examples of bold leadership and consciousness that arose among second-generation populations in the U.S., this dissertation examines what Robin Kelley (1994) terms "infrapolitics": "to describe the daily confrontations, evasive actions, and stifled thoughts that often inform organized political movements" (8). I advance Kelley's (1994) work by examining the daily infrapolitics among the Elizabeth Latino second generation because they

illustrate how the second generation were still significantly political outside traditionally organized and outspoken political movements through disidenifications and spacemaking in subculture. This is not to insinuate that Elizabeth Latino/a subcultural infrapolitics were pre- or proto-political. In his book, *Politics of Affect* (2015), Brian Massumi explains that affect is proto-political that "…concerns the first stirrings of the political, flush with felt intensities of [everyday] life [and struggle]" (Preface). I appreciate Massumi's description of pre- or proto-politics "… bring[ing] out the [stirrings or] politicality of affect (Preface). But, I assert here that Elizabeth Latino youth were at an age at which they performed infrapolitics, whether subtle or outright confrontational, and past the stage of proto-politics. In her work, *Guadalupe in New York: Devotion and the Struggle for Citizenship Rights among Mexican Immigrants* (2010), Alyshia Gálvez challenges the concept of proto-politics among New York Mexican immigrants and their religious processions, which she describes as being "…for the acquisition of greater rights and dignity as immigrants…[yet] cast as 'pre-political settings [because these] immigrants…may not acquire the skills necessary for participatory democracy" (102-103). In the same way, I believe that like these immigrants, these youth created these subcultural spaces as "cultural enterprises" (Wood 2002 in Galvez 2010, 102) with claims to "greater rights" and "dignity." However, mainstream society views youth as too young and unsophisticated to be taken seriously and to effectively make claims in this manner, and even less so through formal participatory democracy. Taking this further, I am specifically focusing on working class (origin) Latino/a youth or of color mostly viewed by the state as a problem, culturally excessive, and as an imminent underclass to the national community that lacked valid ideologies or discourse. Similar, then, to these working class Latino/a youth and the agency of their subcultural spaces, the "illegal" Mexican immigrants and their religious processions Gálvez describes in her work

are "not simply protopolitical…but …deeply political (102). In fact, I assert here that these subcultural spaces should be treated synonymously with outspoken political gestures and organizing (Torres, Rizzini et al 2013 and Smith, Lister, and Middleton 2005) against anti-Latino youth neoliberal and liberal multicultural policies that persistently undermine, criminalize, and infantilize their groupings and youth ideologies. Or in the words of Luis Munoz, who acknowledges how "subculture based cultural production" is equally powerful as grassroots activism and "radical" like the work of activists (Munoz 146). I show how these infrapolitics harnessed pan-Latino or "Latinismo" (Padilla 1985; Oboler 1992) and pan-ethnic groupings and/or gender and sexual tolerance that defied white racial order (including ethnic divisions) and heteronormativity. These accounts of daily life among the Latino second generation offer information for a history that offers a "decolonial imaginary"[7] (Perez 2003) and a pan-Latino and pan-ethnic narrative (Sanchez 2002). One example of this comes from Pena's (2003) study of how gay second-generation Cubans were active agents in Miami, holding on to gay Cuban Spanish terms that demonstrate infrapolitics and resistance to gay white language assimilation. Pena shows how these Cuban second generation are agents of a gay linguistic transculturation of hybridity (not language assimilation) in the Miami/South Florida area. Similarly, these youth subculture spaces and scenes among Latinos and other youth of color are political acts against white cultural hegemony and heteropatriarchal values that reflect a youth nation of cultural, linguistic excess and sexual and gender non-conformity.

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[7] Emma Perez defines decolonial imaginary in the following way in her essay, "Queering the Borderlands: The Challenges of Excavating the Invisible and Unheard": "How do we contest the past to revise it in a manner that tells more of our stories? In other words, how do we decolonize our history? To decolonize our history and our historical imaginations, we must uncover the voices from our past that honor multiple experiences, instead of falling prey to that which is easy – allowing the white colonial heternormative gaze to reconstruct and interpret our past" (123).

This study is a youth model of political participation in which its subtle nature is often underestimated and viewed as apathetic or not politically motivated at all, which in fact (portrayed in this manner by journalists or those in power) is beneficial (for the state) to maintain repressive, racist, divisive and homophobic state policies against working class Latino/a youth. Instead, I also advance a portrayal of active youth citizenship that works for the youths' benefit, not for the state's, through their own formal or informal organizing and intellectual capacity (Maira 2005 and 2009, Smith, Lister, and Middleton 2005 and Torres, Rizzini, et al. 2013). In effect, for individual youth and the agency of spacemaking, youth subculture allowed youth a hybrid, third space where they could explore their subjectivities and prevented them from simply conforming or being boxed into state categories of good or bad Latino identity or immigrant heteropatriarchal Latino identity (Diaz 1996 and 2007 and Negrón-Muntaner 1999, 514). This study suggests how Latino subculture spaces created their own active and political maneuvering amidst less masculinist, heteropatriarchal, pan-Latino, pan-racial, groupings, making meaningful self-claims in their everyday lives and spaces against state policies, power, and repression. In effect, I advance how Elizabeth youth spaces should not be undermined in their ability to create sound counterpublic spaces that were threatening to the state policies and authority to the extent that such spaces were manipulated by the state through economic and development processes (for example the eventual tearing down of Wally and Ivo's and the skate park) (Mananlansan 2005 and Kanai and Squires 2014) centering on consumption and value instead of critical spacemaking (i.e. fitting in only with the right attire, for example, expensive skate gear and club kid clothing from Patricia Field's) (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000, Buckland 2002, Manalansan 2005, Drucker 2015).

Latino/a Youth and Subculture Studies

Subculture typically represents underground (safe)spaces, scenes and groupings that youth belonged to and/or created that articulated a resistance to their sense of exclusion from their dominant national or local community context (Brake 1985 and Lopez). However, other scholars suggest that some subculture spaces and identities are incorporated into, exist within, or form boundaries amidst mainstream and dominant publics (Warner 2002; Drucker 2015; Skott-Myhre 2008; Gray 2009; Quiroga 2000). For example, in Chapter 1, I examine how the gay house at Elizabeth High School was a counterspace to Elizabeth High School's public that provided a safespace that shielded students against a repressive and homophobic school culture that arguably condoned symbolic power and violence. Furthermore, these subculture groupings produced sexual, gender, and racial plurality or heterotopic groupings that contested liberal multiculturalism and depolicitized groupings and educational curriculum within the bounds of the school. To achieve these groupings and spaces, these youth had to stand out or exude some form of eccentricity and assume subcultural conventions.

According to the specific subcultures I examine in this dissertation project, such as the house, goth, and skate scenes that emerged among Latino/a youth in Elizabeth in the late 1980s-1990s, each one had their specific styles or bricolage (Hebdige 1979 and Gelder 2008) or materials that gained a new meaning when worn to address a social critique of their local and national context. For example, in the goth scene, my male youth participant, Felipe, in Chapter 4, wore black knit stockings, skirts and heavy eyeliner to emphasize non-conformity with constricted male heterosexual performance and affirm an androgynous performance or "vision of a genderless society." In another example, gay Latino/a youth dressed or assumed New York club-kid homonormative fashion wear that critiqued dominant middle class heteronormative

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styles and conventions. Similarly, Hebdige's classic study of white working class white punks suggests how these youth critiqued middle class conventions and dominant values. However, while Hebdige's study of youth subcultures became foundational for studying youth agency, counterspace, and political contestation, it was nonetheless a predominantly white narrative that did not offer non-white perspectives that today's queer of color critique scholars, for example, urge.

Ultimately, while Latino/a youth assumed these subculture styles and social critiques, they were often misrepresented within an inherently white or black subculture narrative that often failed to consider the ethnic, cultural and diasporic subjectivities of Latinos/as in these spaces and groupings. In this study, I offer different multi-positional dimensions among Latino youth to displace either an inherently white or black subculture narrative and add a Latino/a second-generation subjective positionality to them. For example, these inherently white narratives do not suggest how Latino male goth youth are also critiquing their Latino heteropatriarchal and machista ethnic cultures by wearing knit stockings, heavy eyeliner, and long feminine hair. Also, they do not explain how Latina goths are contesting their conservative and inhibited sexualities within Latino heteronormative cultures by wearing hyperfeminine bricolage like corsets and S&M looking outfits. Secondly, the homonormative club kid scene was depicted as a privileged middle class white gay scene that disqualified racially marked bridge and tunnel bodies such as working class Latino/a youth from Elizabeth. I explore in Chapter 2 how my participants who consumed this club kid culture both assumed and critiqued its conventions yet used it as a place to further their own self-determination based on their geographic and social positioning and cultural and racial excess, much in the same way Lopez (2012), Habell-Pallan (2005), Chavoya and Gonzalez (2011), Munoz (1999), Vargas (2012)

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examine how Latinos/as queers situate themselves and disidentify within and outside these inherently white subcultures, scenes, and spaces with their cultural and diasporic excess. This dissertation project advances these authors' works to offer a similarly amplified narrative while also situating Elizabeth Latino/a youth in black and Latino translocal house, goth, skate, and hip hop scenes.

In effect, we can compare these multiplicities or contradictions within subcultures with how Latino/a feminist and queer scholars are constantly looking for either multiplicities, complexities or contradictions of Latino/a subjectivities that lie hidden in prevailing and simplistic ideologies and discourses. We can understand youths' multiple participation in different subcultures as identifying with certain qualities in each of them that complement individuals' personal tastes and racial, gender, and sexual subjectivities and defy state order, categorization, and hierarchies of people Bourdieu (1984) and Thorton (1995). For example, I show how several of my participants connected with different scenes simultaneously while having a particular subculture core. For example, Katia's core was goth, yet she and her friends visited and identified with gay house music dance and drag scenes. Also, Felipe's core was goth but he also identified with dominant local subcultures of hip hop, rap, and freestyle. A third example is Ralphie's core as a skater who enjoyed the rave and club kid scenes that were affirming to openly gay and bisexual youth, unlike the homosocial yet heterosexist skateboard scene (Borden 2001).

However, these multiplicities can be part of a shopping for identity in what scholars describe as a post-subculture moment in which the meanings and bricolage of subcultures lose their impact, or what Maffesoli (1996) terms a "neo-tribe," or "consumer subjectivities and groupings that are more fleeting or superficial forms of affiliation." Scholars like Muggleton

(1997), Thorton (2005) and Maffesoli (1996) point out that in these subcultural subjectivities and groupings cultural meanings and politicized articulations are debilitated by hegemony's production, commodification, and mass media portrayals of subcultural capital and bricolage for mainstream consumption. Hodkinson describes how, in a postmodern media and market, a post-subculture view affirms a condition of hyperreality, or that "the media has us and controls us" and therefore "consumers become free from coherent, distinctive or meaningful cultural ties" (Hodkinson 2002, 17) like subculture groupings. Further, Muggleton (1997) writes about how in a post-subcultural moment, youth shop to "build one's own consumer identity" that does not have the same meaning as committing to a particular subculture or subcultural substance (Hodkinson 2002) or capital in the way that Thorton (1996) describes in her work.

Yet, in Hodkinson's study *Goth: Identity, Style, and Subculture* (2002), he suggests how goth symbolic items still maintain significant value among particular local groupings even while dominant society experiences hyperreality from mass production. Further, Hodkinson also posits that even while goths try on other subcultures in certain moments, this does not necessarily weaken their membership in their particular gothic groupings in their local scenes. Ultimately, I advance Hodkinson's illuminating study by showing that even while taking into account a post-subcultural moment, there is evidence of youth in their local everyday lives creating meaningful spaces of belonging and survival outside the mainstream. Following Hodkinson's lead, I examine the performances of working class Latino/a youth in the 1980s-1990s whose multipositionalities in inherently white or black working class subcultural spaces were left unaccounted for and misunderstood yet were signs of community building and agency even while in an arguably post-subcultural moment of commodification of voguing (Negron-Muntaner 2004), skate culture (Yochim 2010), and goth culture (Brill 2008 and Hodkinson 2002).

New Jersey Texts on Latino/a Immigrant Youth, Youth of Color and Subcultures

There are a number of literature, academic, and film texts that document the social and economic circumstances and mainstream views of urban working class to poor Latino/a youth and youth of color that mirror the lived experiences of Latino/a youth in Elizabeth. In some of these cases, these texts describe how youth identified with subcultures and faced heterosexism. Urban areas like Paterson, Perth Amboy, and Newark, which hold substantial Latino/a immigrant, Puerto Rican, and African American populations, are the centerpieces of these texts. While some of the texts I cover below offer some significant examples of youth subjectivity of marginal subculture, often times they are individual and not representative of youth groupings. This project looks closely at group dynamics to see how they were potentially political and practiced active and cultural citizenship that ultimately did not serve state power but each youth's sense of self-determination, instead.

In 1989, John G. Avildsen's mainstream film *Lean On Me* (1989), starring Morgan Freeman, featured a failing, apathetic and dangerous minority majority Eastside High School in Paterson, New Jersey while offering a description of the social and economic realities of these local youth. *Lean On Me* (1989) was a social commentary not just about Paterson High School but about the declining majority minority schools throughout the U.S. that were written off as unsalvageable and needing to be taken over by the state. In the first scenes, the audience is led around the high school halls, showing a state of chaos and mostly apathetic, unruly, and/or violent students throughout the building that at first seems sensationalized. Yet, the film documents Paterson High School's quick road to recovery and transformation of student attitudes and standard performance on the state's basic skills tests. *Lean On Me* sent the message to other

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similar high schools that it was possible for youth of color to perform well amidst poverty, racism, and violence. However, this plan for a quick road to recovery meant expelling instead of working to reform the worst students (as seen in the beginning) who were involved in drug dealing, gang activity, and other criminal activity. Actor Morgan Freeman played African American Principal Joe Louis Clark of Eastside High, who was praised for his disciplinary work to improve the inner city high school. The film highlights how centering black cultural capital and the student body's local situated knowledge over white cultural hegemony brought student interest, transformation and success.   Other texts offer similar descriptions of Latino/a and African American youth in urban schools, but they specifically write of the divisions and hierarchies that such students faced according to neoliberal values of individual success.

In *Drown* (1996), Dominican American author Junot Diaz offers an ethnic-specific perspective of (self-) perceived individual success and failure within a school. Diaz's fictional vignettes about living in Perth Amboy, New Jersey's working class majority Dominican context, convey the limited opportunities most of these youth had, including within the school. For example, in one episode, the narrator describes how the school curriculum picked out a few "orbiters" while most students, largely Dominican and Latino/a, would "burn out" of school (105-106). The narrator felt hindered by this outcome and felt he was doomed to fail. In another instance, the narrator explains how a U.S. government officer approached him while he was outside jogging and had nothing else to do because he was without a job. The recruiter promised him that he'd achieve a heteronormative life like his, asking if he had any one of these: "…a wife, a house, a car…Discipline. Loyalty" (100). This episode is reminiscent of how underperforming male students had to choose between drug dealing or ROTC as a respectful path to assimilation as well as loyalty to the nation and discipline (a heteronormative life).

ROTC recruiters are often placed in majority minority high schools (Lipman 2007, Perez 2008, and Giroux 2004) and not in white middle class majority high schools to persuade desperate minority youth to sign up because many have limited options for legal economic security after high school given. Unfortunately, many males turn to drug dealing. In another episode, the narrator declined a government office job, indicating that "he wasn't army material" (100). This self-realization suggests the narrator's unwillingness to conform to state notions of success. Instead, he continued living a life of limited opportunities in Perth Amboy, which led to very slim chances for mobility.

In *Street Therapists: Race, Affect, and Neoliberal Personhood in Latino Newark* (2012), Ramos Zayas writes that educators perceive most African American and Puerto Rican kids as having the wrong neoliberal affect (this is also sustained by a metanarrative about Newark's youth of color as violent) or wrong attitudes to succeed despite the static and inefficient attitudes Ramos-Zayas found among educators and adults within the schools she visited. Unlike *Lean On Me* (1989), where the entire student body came together amidst racial and cultural difference to pass the basic skills test, Ramos-Zayas shows us how racial and cultural difference among and perceptions of different ethnic and immigrant groups sustain division among all youth of color in Newark. She documents throughout this book how Newark's recent South American immigrant students (largely Brazilian, Colombian, and Ecuadorian) often assume or are perceived as more frequently adopting the state values of student success and discipline than most Puerto Ricans. Ramos-Zayas conveys how there is a binary between "good" immigrant Newark as youth as "supercitizen immigrants" (Honig in Ramos Zayas, 81) who can be whitened and/or adopt to neoliberal values of mobility and success, and most Puerto Rican and African American youth who end up in a path of decline. Therefore, South American immigrants are pitted against

underperforming African American and Puerto Rican students who are perceived to be aggressive and apathetic. In one instance, Ramos-Zayas (2012) describes a male student who is unwilling to pursue ROTC but instead pursues cooking as an alternative vision and self-sense of discipline that is not in conformance with dominant notions of discipline or success (80). This male student's decision to pursue cooking rather than ROTC maintains him as a marginalized subject outside the bounds of nation. Taking this further, I would say that this interviewee's decision of "surviving on cooking" instead of pursuing a stable job with the Army queers or disables his masculinity (Ramlow 2009) from the perspective of dominant expectations of male sexuality and heteronormativity.

In fact, several of these authors raise how male and female youth of color are marginalized, viewed as disabled, or made a spectacle as a result of their affinities with certain subcultures that appear significantly different or strange to standing conventions of male and female sexual and gender conformity. In *Drown* (1996), Junot Diaz also helps us to understand the rigid mainstream and immigrant heteropatriachal and homophobic contexts of Perth Amboy and the surrounding area that in some ways limited youth from exploring who they really were and could be without the support of critical multicultural school policies and curriculums for instance. Amidst the anti-gay culture Diaz writes about, there is a scene in which the narrator and a character named Beto are fooling around and having homosexual sex that is left unsaid. In the context Diaz writes about, there is really no place for homosexuality amidst a machista culture in which men having sex with men is an act and not an identification. This is the only option, and resonates with Latin(o) male sexualities and not a mainstream U.S. identification model. Perhaps, this is why Diaz did not develop an openly gay character. For example, in Ramos Zayas' work, she notes how black lesbians in Newark become spectacle as a fashionable

trend or feared among students and faculty instead of being genuinely understood and embraced (through critical multicultural discourse in the high school) for their aggressive attitudes, which is reflective of the struggles with homophobic, transphobic, and misogynist people they dealt with in their everyday lives.

In *The Brief Wondrous Like of Oscar Wao* (2007), Junot Diaz's second novel about New Jersey and Dominican/Latino youth life, specifically in Paterson, he offers some insight about how local youth received inherently white subcultures and white(ned) sexuality. Before doing this, Diaz establishes dominant male sexuality by explaining how Paterson and other urban towns, including Elizabeth and Newark, "…[were] an urban swath known to niggers everywhere as Negrapolis One…[where] Hispanophone Caribbean girls [were]…everywhere" (26). Diaz is offering an urban map of urban Latino male sexuality in which youth males and females performed expected forms of dominant subculture sexualities and street language (use of the n-word to describe Latino males) of Latino rap and hip-hop. In effect, Diaz situates the main character of his novel, Oscar Wao, an awkward second-generation Paterson-raised Dominican American whose introverted behavior (spending his time reading the great books and immersed in comic book subculture) is often ridiculed by other boys who conform to local and dominant conventions of urban working class male sexuality. Diaz, therefore, positions him as an outsider, or being and speaking too white, which signals that he is not Dominican(o) enough—similar to goth and skaters whose racial identity and sexuality are questioned in one of my chapters—given his inability to speak street language and assert a smooth and aggressive urban Latino sexuality. We find later that Oscar was named after British gay writer Oscar Wilde, though his name is pronounced in Spanglish (Dominicanglish) as Oscar Wao (180) to phonetically emphasize his queer and disabled Dominican male sexuality that is too white for most of his local Latino/a

youth. They not only question his Dominicanness but refer to him as a "Domo" or (Dominican Homosexual) who looks and is the incarnation of "fat homo Oscar Wilde" (180). In effect, these judgment calls on Oscar's sexuality by these male peers suggest his questionable sexuality and whiteness amidst local dominant youth subculture and immigrant spaces.

Aside from how other males perceived Oscar as Oscar Wao, Junot Diaz also describes the ways atypical subcultures and sexualities were a source of concern for parents and other family adults. From an immigrant parent's point of view, such male and female youth had diverted from expected performances as Dominican male and female immigrant youth. This raises questions about both the mainstream and immigrant spaces that these youth had to navigate in Diaz's novel, like in Elizabeth. In one episode, the narrator, who is female, discusses how she had a "punk chick" phase (54) and as a result she was not only signaled by "kids on the block" whose appearance was outside the norms of Latina sexuality, especially for her punk-lesbian hair, and called "blacula" and "devil-bitch," but most importantly experienced strong disapproval from her Aunt Rubelka (who thought she had a mental illness) and disownment from her mother.   Ultimately, her mother could not handle the narrator's straying from Dominican notions of heterosexual female beauty and sexuality. In effect, Diaz's discussion of how these adult immigrant family members unsupportively dealt with the narrators' self discovery of non-conformity through subculture is helpful to understand how Elizabeth Latino/a youth faced similar trials and tribulations in their personal lives and therefore sought a third space of belonging where they felt like they could be understood**.**

Chapter Summaries

In Chapter 1, "Out Youth in the High School," I explore how Latino second-generation youth were racialized and tracked under the growing neoliberalized educational curriculum of

Elizabeth's Public School system. In particular, I focus on Elizabeth High School's "coming out" student body of the late 1980s and early 1990s. By critically reading representations of Latino/a youth in Elizabeth's local newspaper texts, I show how gay Elizabeth Latino/a youth of color were doubly marginalized by repressive and liberal multicultural neoliberal education policies. I examine the cultural work, boundary-making and minoritarian spaces of my informants who resisted the dominant space and pedagogy of the school.

In Chapter 2, "Shadowing Angel Melendez: Bridge and Tunnel Youth at the Limelight," I explore how the Latino/a second generation consumed and sought some degree of belonging in the powerfully visible and "legendary" New York nightlife "club kid" scenes. In particular, I explore representations of the late Angel Melendez, a 1.5/second-generation Elizabeth-raised Colombian-American club kid murdered by Michael Alig, the king of club kids. I include perspectives from my interviewees who knew Angel from high school. Contrasting narratives about Angel in several documentary films with the narratives of my interviewees amplifies a dominant homonormative narrative about NYC club kid subculture, one that excluded the social and racial positioning of my participants as "bridge and tunnel" NYC clubgoers. Ultimately, I center my Elizabeth informants in the club kid scene to show how their consumption of this public did not always conform to this privileged-white dance subculture but was critical of it, with more affinity to anti-neoliberal underground house scenes.

Chapter 3, "Elizabeth Nightlife Scenes: Strategies, Tactics, and Youth Dance Counterspace," focuses on my informants' recollections about how they enjoyed local dance spaces in Elizabeth that often mirrored New York City's dance scenes yet are remembered as their own. I explore two instances in which Latino/a youth complicated normative dance publics in Elizabeth. In the first instance, I show how Latino/a youth gay subcultures used tactics of an

emerging gay-friendly media of the early 1990s to position themselves within a strictly

heterosexist dance public in Elizabeth that ultimately incorporated gay youth only marginally yet

made these spaces more gay tolerant over time. In a second instance, I examine Wally's and

Ivo's parties as a youth dance counterpublic that centered queerness and pan-racial groupings

and exuded anti-neoliberal counterideologies and counterdiscourses of success, worth, and

"good" citizenship.

Chapter 4, "Queer and Latino/a Goth and Skater Masculinities, Femininities, and

Spaces," explores Latino/a youth who embraced goth and skate scenes, subcultures perceived as

white by most Latino/a youth. In particular, I explore how these youth, whether gay or straight,

were perceived in hip-hop, house, and freestyle scenes, subcultures perceived as black and

Latino. Latino/a goth and skater youth were often viewed as queerer than gay youth in house

music scenes, especially in their performances and embodiments of masculinity and femininities

perceived as white and foreign to Latino/a youth in dominant black youth subcultures. I examine

moments of spacemaking, such as in a cemetery and a skate park, and how they served as

critiques of the racialization and sexualization of Latino/a youth amidst neoliberal ideologies and

discourses. Ultimately, I include Latino/a youth in the narratives of white subcultures,

highlighting their critique of neoliberalism and potential parallels with black youth

subcultures.

The Epilogue, "Bringing Elizabeth Back: The Vibe in a Different Time," offers accounts

of my interviewees' perspectives and actions to bring back the youthful deep house scenes of the

early 1990s. Why are some interviewees optimistic while others are cynical about the potential

for Elizabeth's scene to thrive today within the New York/New Jersey metro area? I discuss the

successes, failures, hopes and pessimism, as expressed by several house music DJs and others,

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about reviving the 90's youthful scene among a now middle-aged and dispersed Elizabeth-origin

cohort amidst new and competing local electronic and Latin dance scenes and audiences.

Chapter 1
Out Youth in the High School

"Out Youth in the High School" specifically examines how working class LGBTQ Latino high school students at Elizabeth High School faced multiple forms of (racial, ethnic, sexual and gender) discrimination and heterosexism that impacted their school performance and led to truancy and dropping out, as revealed in some of their interviews. I examine the ways my LGBTQ interviewees, who went to Elizabeth High School from the early to mid-1990s, discuss (often negatively) this neoliberal school public based on ideologies of liberal multiculturalism that impacted them, and the ways in which they assumed and resisted this public and its white cultural hegemony. Along with race and class exclusions behind the growing curriculum of liberal multiculturalism, working class to working poor LGBTQ students of color faced double or triple marginality due to their sexual and gender nonconformity, which is left undocumented in school archives and local newspapers. In providing previously unaccounted for LGBTQ and ally student perspectives, I argue that some Latino/a youth resisted Elizabeth High School's stigmatization of LGBTQ students amidst a growing neoliberal climate and rigidly heterosexist school public. I examine how school youth sites engaged other students and faculty that encouraged them to expand their views concerning sexual and gender diversity, particularly of local minority LGBTQ youth.

I divide this chapter into four sections. In the first, I define what a neoliberal curriculum is and why it came to be within a national and state context. In both contexts, I first show how such educational curriculums negatively affected working to poor students of color. Then, I

show how such streamlined heteronormative curriculums impact LGBTQ students of color, according to scholars and activists. I examine how New Jersey educators and politicians addressed the equal access of public education for minority and LGBTQ students of color.

In the second section, I examine a series of articles in Union County's mainstream newspaper, the *Elizabeth Daily Journal*, that contextualize my interviewees within the neoliberal moment of educative reform, ideologies and discourses that targeted "bad" or underperforming students in the early 1990s. These articles cover a major investigation in 1991 about the troubling underperformance, truancy, and violence of Elizabeth's by-then Latino-majority high school. Ultimately, I analyze these texts in ways that unveil color-blind representations that adhered to the neoliberal ideology of race through an economy of words (Giroux 2004 59, 61 and Bonilla-Silva 2014). In a way, "underperformance," "truancy," and "violence" became index words of this dominant narrative characterizing "bad" Elizabeth High School students. I show how these texts solidified a reductive image justifying the view that the appropriate approach to educational reform was surveillance, discipline, and punishment of a Latino student majority high school instead of implementing alternative curriculum measures that worked to incorporate non-heteronormative students of color, including a growing LGBTQ student of color contingent, in the early 1990s.

In the third section, I juxtapose my Latino interviewees' experiences and subjectivity with the newspaper's reductive and colorblind portrayals of Elizabeth High School to challenge the symbolic power, symbolic violence, and growing neoliberal educative reforms and ideologies that often disfavored and disenfranchised them. Among the *Elizabeth Daily Journal* articles, I did not come across any that covered the growing and visibly out-gay student body. This is likely because the journalists at this newspaper adhered to traditional and heteronormative

notions of family and sexuality. I introduce my LGBTQ and ally participants engaging in

moments of boldness and fearlessness within the repressive school public as a contrast to their

misrepresentation and invisibility in the *Elizabeth Daily Journal*. After that, I provide their

counternarratives, along with those of their allies', specifically, their ordeals with truancy,

underperformance, and violence, which amplify and nuance simplistic dominant accounts in the

newspaper.

Finally, in the fourth section, I examine LGBTQ counterspaces that were left

unmentioned in the official narrative of the Elizabeth High School public that appeared in the

Elizabeth Daily Journal. Without any alternative/critical multicultural pedagogies and without

sufficient support services within the school public, these counterspaces provided youth with

empowerment and agency in their everyday lives. The counterpublics they constructed there

counteracted the limits of Elizabeth High School's neoliberal curriculum and public. Ultimately,

my LGBTQ informants, as students of Elizabeth High School, point to a different lived, shared,

and spatial experience that I seek to put at the center of this chapter. Ultimately, this chapter

contributes to this project by making a case that these youth were not simply conforming or

hopelessly yielding to the ideological and racist foundations of their local school public

(concerning "unworthy," "failed," and "apathetic" gay and working class LGBTQ students of

color) but were displaying and even subtly protesting with their alternative subjectivities,

motivations, and resistances in order to be represented and incorporated more equally.

By the mid 1980s, federal officials throughout the U.S. began to promote liberal

education reform policies in U.S. public schools, beginning with A Nation at Risk (National

Commission, 1983) and other later policies[8] that included efforts to streamline curriculum and "push for standards, accountability, and regulation of schools, teachers and students" that linked education with a global market economy and based student success on test-taking ability, individualism, discipline, conformity and heteronormative behavior (Ward 2012, Lipman 2007) . These policies were "market-style" education reforms with "an economic liberalist streak" (Ward 2012) that viewed market-style education as the way to achieve equal opportunity for all students. However, this kind of curriculum developed ethnic liberal ideologies that engendered individual effort, cultural assimilation, and political accommodation of racial minorities in a U.S. colorblind society while inhibiting (through lack of funding and resources) their self-determination and political organization and community empowerment (Lee 1999, 160). These liberal education reforms culminated into a full-fledged neoliberal federal education policy, No Child Left Behind, in 2002, which ran until December 2015. Ultimately, scholars found that this curriculum proved to be harmful to most working class and urban poor Latino and African American students and favorable to middle class white and white(ned) students (Giroux 2004, Lipman 2007, Ward 2012). According to Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Susan Mayorga in *State of White Supremacy: Racism, Governance, and the United States* (2011), U.S. school publics (or dominant meeting spaces and classrooms in which surveillance and discipline regulated student behavior, embodiments and groupings according to depoliticized state ideologies that categorized good and bad students) sustained a white cultural hegemony in which educators and their students were instructed to perform and exude whiteness that translated as markers of heteronormativity, individualism, and depoliticization, which several scholars claim are harmful to most working class to poor students of color. Similarly, scholars discuss how such rigid

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[8] Steven Ward (2012) lists a number of proposed neoliberal policies after A Nation at Risk. See pages 174-175.

educational curriculums are a sign of symbolic power and its symbolic violence (often covert), methods of hegemonic power and violence (in the form of silencing and disciplining) that reify heteronormativity, and social and racial hierarchies that make non-heteronormative students feel undervalued and feel like they do not belong to the school public (Shields, Requa and Haskell 2010, Burtch 2010). Angela Valenzuela (1999) refers to this as substractive schooling for minority youth.

This chapter specifically examines how issues of cultural excess, whether racial, ethnic, linguistic, and/or sexual and gender variant, were not properly addressed in Elizabeth High School amidst the state's growing neoliberal education reform agenda to provide "equal" schooling for all. In *Other People's Children: The Struggle for Justice and Equality in New Jersey Schools* (2007), Deborah Yaffe examines two long state court cases, Robinson v. Cayhill (1970-1976) and Abbott v. Burke (1979-1998), in which New Jersey education funding remained contested as unequal between middle class white-majority suburbs and poorer non-white-majority urban schools. Yaffe argues that the sharp funding disparities between middle class suburbs and urban poor neighbors dating from (at least) the 1970s and the dominant individual values of achieving middle class status and being rewarded with good schools in these suburbs meant leaving others behind and disenfranchised. She features "other people's" children from poor and minority New Jersey families in urban school districts like Irvington, Camden, Jersey City, and East Orange. Ultimately, Yaffe's case studies of children and their families reveal the ways economic and ethnic (neo)liberal ideologies promoted unequal state funding allocations between suburban, majority-white middle class communities and urban, largely minority working class to working poor communities, which perpetuated an unfair state educational system that deeply infringed on the rights and mobility of urban, working class children. That is,

Yaffe's analysis shows how largely poor and minority children of working class origins are undermined within New Jersey's state school system as unworthy outcasts from the national community and not given an equal public education. However, the fact that Yaffe does not offer any substantial discussion about Elizabeth nor students from this urban district correlates with how Elizabeth was deemed at first as an exceptional urban school district despite a growing non-white working class student body (that I briefly discuss later) yet was still silently impacted by statewide liberal values and discourses of education and unfair tax allocation to underprivileged school districts. Along with the impact of unequal and racially discriminatory schools that place these children at a strong disadvantage compared to middle class suburban children, Yaffe also features committed education activists fighting liberal and conservative politicians and school officials who persistently viewed the cultural excess of minority and poor children and the financial mismanagement and corruption of urban schools rather than the economic advantage or privileging of mostly middle class suburban students of the state school system as "the problem." Throughout the life of these two legal cases activists sought to democratize the state's school funding through dismantling tax formulas and loopholes that would (help) equalize school curriculums and material resources for suburban and urban districts.

However with the passing of the federal law NCLB, these efforts by New Jersey activists to improve social welfare and citizen rights to efficient public education waned due to (neo)liberal ideologies and discourses. Even though NCLB passed about ten years later than when my interviewees went to high school, it is important to consider the strong influence conservative and liberal politicians, legal experts and education officials had while my interviewees attended high school during one of these ongoing state legal cases. Yaffe writes,

> NCLB requires states that accept federal education money…to ensure that every child achieve proficiency on standardized tests of core. By ordering states to break out test

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score data by such demographic categories as race, gender, and economic disadvantage, the law makes it impossible to hide the failure of poor minority children within schoolwide or statewide averages (3).

In effect, the "impossibility" that Yaffe raises here emphasizes the federal and state

governments' reluctance to address actual racial, social and class inequalities among urban and

suburban schools that maintain minority and poor children at a stark disadvantage. NCLB

sustained a colorblind and liberal strategy behind testing to insure an "equal" opportunity for all.

In effect, liberal and conservative politicians', educators', journalists' and other hegemonic

actors' values of individual accountability and freedom were colorblind strategies, or as Eduardo

Bonilla-Silva puts it in *Racism without Racists: Color-blind Racism and the Persistence of*

Racial Inequality in America (2014), "a professed colorblindness" that avoided acknowledging

the systemic racism occurring in this educational curriculum.   By the end of these two cases

battling over school funding in an imminent neoliberal era, the values of accountability and

efficiency became the "middle ground" for equalizing education among all students, substituting

for actual work toward social welfare and addressing inequality between privileged-white school

schools and urban schools. That is, administrators and teachers evaluated students using notions

of individual accountability (Lipman 2007, 44-45) and individual freedom (Giroux 2004, 62-63)

and viewed those who did not want to or could not assume the rigid values that defined good,

imminently successful, and well-behaved students as not working hard to secure their futures, or

being failures, without seriously looking at outside social circumstances and limitations that

middle class children often do not face in their privileged lives. Scholars posit that this

curriculum pushed most African American and Latino students down to the bottom of the

economic ladder (Lipman 2007, 44-45, Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters 2008, Telles and Ortiz

2008) and left them without good prospects for the future or even in eventual imprisonment (Giroux 2004).

Scholars discuss the urgency of dismantling a (neo)liberal curriculum with alternative or critical multicultural pedagogies that decenter a white cultural hegemony within the school public (Shields and Requa 2010, Lipman 2007, 54-56 and Prier 2010). Such pedagogies incorporate and center minority students' everyday needs, cultural knowledge and capital, and self-determination (Prier 2010, Kanpol and McLaren 1995, Moll and Ruiz 2002, and Giroux 1995), which are equally important as neoliberalism's market-based values, if not more. Instead, politicians and school administrators enforced surveillance and discipline tactics to protect good students that "mattered" and policed bad or criminal students and their behavior, embodiments and groupings to preserve an efficient and white cultural hegemony within the school public (Giroux 2004, Lipman 2007, 54). In light of that, these discipline, surveillance and enforcement measures, or what Giroux 2004 describes as prison-like zero-tolerance policies proved to be disproportionately detrimental to (the performance and sense of belonging of) working class youth and Latino and African American students (91-104) and perpetuated unruliness, apathy, underperformance and even criminal behavior within the school public.

In relation to broader discussions of inequality of the time that included sexual and gender nonconformity, New Jersey had a more reserved position on these issues. Scholars have written about how liberal and neoconservative politicians disfavor(ed) LGBTQ issues in light of traditional family values. Lipman (2007) writes in her essay, "No Child Left Behind: Globalization, Privatization, and the Politics of Inequality," that neoliberal educational policy "promot[es] favorite neoconservative causes including…sexual abstinence and attacks on gays and lesbians" (36). For example, while liberal and right wing conservative politicians like

Florida's Anita Bryant (Murphy, Ruiz, Serlin 2008) and state politicians (like Trent Lott and

Jesse Helms) supported by the Moral Majority (Miceli 2005) defended a heteronormative

educational curriculum that protected youth from being influenced by non-traditional family

values including pre-marital sex, abortion, and homosexuality, the fact that New Jersey

experienced less conservative activism around these issues often left them ignored or taboo

(Ortner 2003). Yaffe's analysis offers a public counterideology and counterdiscourse around

equal educational schooling throughout the state for poor and minority children that emphasized

issues of race and class but did not engage with issues of gender and sexual nonconformity.

On the other hand, in his documentary, Julio of Jackson Heights[9], Richard Shpuntoff

portrays activism among educators, gay activists, and elected officials concerning the harsh anti-

LGBTQ social and political climate for gay Latino men, men of color and youth in Queens, New

York, in light of Bronx-born Julio Rivera's gay-hate bashing and murder in July 1990. Toward

the end of the film, Shpuntoff features educator Daniel Drumm[10] advocating for a critical

multicultural curriculum, Children of the Rainbow, which incorporated not only racial and ethnic

tolerance but gender and sexual tolerance in light of Julio Rivera's murder. The hope among

educators and some elected officials was that this curriculum would teach students about

tolerance and diversity while incorporating LGBTQ youth successfully and change the

homophobic climate within Queens schools and the community into the next generation.

Unfortunately, the curriculum was met with strong opposition by local parents and conservative-

leaning elected officials like Mary A. Cummins, President of School 24, who refused just three

pages of the Children of the Rainbow curriculum's gay and lesbian education as documented in

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[9] Official website for movie: http://julioofjacksonheights.com/about-the-film/

[10] Daniel Dromm is a well-regarded gay and human activist in Queens. He was elected to New York City's city council in 2009. For more information, check this webpage: http://council.nyc.gov/d25/html/members/biography.shtml

Steven Lee Myers' *New York Times* article, published on December 13, 1992, entitled "How a 'Rainbow Curriculum' Turned Into Fighting Words." Myers includes in his article how Cummins felt that these three pages were 'dangerously misleading' gay and lesbian propaganda that misinformed youth to recruit them into this alternative lifestyle.

Ultimately, despite the loss of Children of the Rainbow, Queens LGBTQ queer activism came to be a national leading model that critically challenged heteronormativity and homogeneity in the schools by bringing to light the silencing of LGBTQ issues amidst rampant homophobia and gay violence (in the wake of Julio Rivera's murder) in the early 1990s, a time when issues of gender and sexual nonconformity were left unexplored or undermined. Scholar Melinda Miceli, in *Standing Out, Standing Together: The Social and Political Impact of Gay-Straight Alliances* (2005), writes of the repressive environment that LGBTQ students experienced during the liberal and neoconservative ideologies and discourses of the late 1980s and early 1990s before the formation of Gay and Straight Alliances. In *Get that Freak: Homophobia and Transphobia in High Schools* (2010) Rebecca Haskell and Brian Burtch explain that LGBTQ bullying in the high schools is often left unreported, unresolved or unacknowledged, which is evidence of symbolic power and violence at play and which reifies a heterosexist school public. Moreover, such violent acts are evidence of symbolic violence against LGBTQ youth not only to make them spectacles but to also make them feel undervalued relative to heterosexual classmates due to dominant values of heteronormativity and middle-classness (Haskell and Burtch 2010). In *Street Therapists: Race, Affect, and Neoliberal Personhood in Newark* (2012), through her ethnographic interviews in Newark high schools Ana Ramos-Zayas offers student views of how the issues of homophobia and transphobia toward black and Latino/a youth seemingly became an issue of the past and how Newark was apparently

more gay-affirming than other New Jersey cities (267-268). However, Ramos-Zayas critically

examines the Newark school public to show that recent gay "trendiness" of openly-gay students

in the school does not override the increasing homophobic attitudes of teachers (268-270) and

violence toward gay students in Newark in the wake of 15-year old black lesbian Sakia Gunn's[11]

murder/hate crime in 2003 and amidst a contemporary neoliberal school public. Further, like

Giroux, who posits in *The Terror of Neoliberalism* (2004) that the future of working class

African American and Latino youth is dim because these students "disappear" due to zero-

tolerance and prison-like policies, Jose Munoz argues that those in power (educators,

administrators, and politicians) view LGBTQ youth of color as unentitled to a future and

therefore unworthy within the school public (Munoz cited in Rands, McDonald, and Clapp, 154-

156).

Symbolic Power at Play:
An Investigation Justifies Enforcement

Before I focus on the 1991 Elizabeth High School investigation, it is important to

consider previous controversies that suggested how elected officials promoted a monolingual and

monocultural Elizabeth in official public spaces that was intimately tied to the growing and

threatening Hispanicization of Elizabeth by the mid-1980s. In 1983, conservative and

Republican Mayor Tom Dunn attempted to enforce an English-only ordinance that prevented

people from speaking in a language other than English in the workplace. This came about when

English-speaking office workers at city hall complained that they could not understand ongoing

side conversations in another language (mostly Spanish or arguably Spanglish) by public

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[11] This article (http://www.afterellen.com/movies/44735-dreams-deferred-the-sakia-gunn-project-plays-at-moma-this-weekend) mentions a documentary entitled Dreams Deferred about the vigils in Newark held in the wake of Saskia Gunn's murder.

employees also working at city hall.[12] During this controversy, journalists at the *Elizabeth Daily Journal* conveyed Mayor Dunn's views in a colorblind fashion. Yet, Hispanic community leaders and Latino organizations protested that Mayor Dunn's motive was an anti-Hispanic posture amidst the (alarmingly) growing Hispanicization of Elizabeth. The *Elizabeth Daily Journal* persistently portrayed Mayor Tom Dunn as dumbfounded and innocent regarding these accusations. The Puerto Rican Legal Defense Fund and Hispanic community leaders filed a discrimination lawsuit against Dunn for discrimination against Hispanics in the city. Even though the ordinance did not pass, city council members again attempted to pass the English-only ordinance in 1986[13]. This act by some of the city council members of the mid-1980s shows persistence in attempting to enforce a "safe" and heteronormative linguistic and cultural standardization upon a growing Hispanic Elizabeth whose language and immigrant and working culture could transculturate with Elizabeth's Anglo official culture and publics. The symbolic power behind this was to enforce and preserve an English-only language and cultural public that sustained a Hispanophobic white cultural hegemony. In terms of symbolic violence, these politicians' actions served to silence and treat Spanish speaking first- and second-generation

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[12] *"*Hispanic 'war' on Dunn report probed." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 26 March 1983: 11. Print.
 "English-only memo leads to talk of recalling Dunn." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 18 July 1983: 1. Print.
Murray, William. "Closed-door meeting held on 'English-only' memo." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 25 Aug. 1983: 4. Print.
Murray, William. "Dunn asked to revise memo on language use." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 31 Aug. 1983: 1. Print.
Koppisch, John. "Suit Charges Discrimination by Dunn in Hiring Hispanics." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 10 Aug. 1983: 1. Print.
[13] "Council may back English-only law." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 25 Nov. 1986: 1. Print.
"English-only law (Decree urged by council man)." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 26 Nov. 1986: 1. Print.
 "Language Bill Pushed off the Agenda." *Elizabeth Daily Journal* 24 Dec. 1986: 1. Print.

immigrants as "less than" by marking their culture and language as not belonging and as second class within the official public.

These controversies prior to Elizabeth High School's investigation in 1991 offer an understanding of how conservative politicians dealt with linguistic and cultural difference that was intimately tied with racial and ethnic excess in official dominant publics. In effect, these politicians attempted enforcement measures to control and stigmatize difference rather than incorporate it into Elizabeth official publics. This poses the question, "How do these ordinances reflect how politicians and educators viewed linguistic and cultural difference within the school public during this time?" Elizabeth High School's 1991 investigation was presented in the same color-blind manner in the *Elizabeth Daily Journal* as the language ordinances to avoid revealing the racist nature of the surveillance and discipline measures being undertaken in the Latino-majority high school. Based on the ordinance, the message to Latino students was to eliminate their cultural difference and assimilate, or be treated as an outsider and a second-class citizen by those in power. In effect, students were encouraged to suppress and devalue their linguistic and cultural capital and to assume or be contained by heteronormative codes.

In 1986, Elizabeth High School was honored as an efficient urban public high school in New Jersey while Latinos were becoming the majority-minority of the town and school[14] and the non-English language controversy was taking place. During the mid- to late-1980s, newspaper journalists published articles about how the high school was not free of the challenges that come with urban education, such as violence in the schools, underperformance and truancy of students, and bilingual issues of immigrant first-generation children, yet the school was portrayed as a

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[14] Shields, Nancy. "City High School Kids' Scores Make the Grade." *Elizabeth Daily Journal.* 28 June 1986. 1. Print.
Mitchell, Peter K. "Elizabeth's School System, Certified, Sitting Pretty." *Elizabeth Daily Journal.* 18 June 1986. 7. Print.

solid school public and exemplary in terms of its educational policies and pedagogical practices. State officials viewed Elizabeth High School as a model school public where working class to low-income Latino and minority youth probably had a better chance to succeed than in any other part of the state. Several articles raised the idea that of all the New Jersey urban high school districts, Elizabeth was the only one not at risk of being taken over by the state. The fact that Elizabeth High overall was doing comparatively better than other state urban high schools justified the view that educators and local officials were doing a reasonably good job and helping ethnic and minority youth to succeed. Despite the differences of opinion among Latino community leaders, the official text conveys the view that the "quality of education" for students of color found at Elizabeth High School did not need to be reformed to meet their social and cultural needs. In effect, journalists portrayed the white cultural hegemony in Elizabeth's school public as sufficient and therefore not needing to change.

Yet within a span of five years, a different series of newspaper articles came out that portrayed Elizabeth High School in a completely different manner, one in which the student body and public was in the midst of a crisis given the underperformance, truancy, and violence of a now Latino-majority student body. From February through April 1991, an investigation was undertaken that put into question the efficiency of the school and its teachers as a public educational institution. Journalists from the EDJ, Andrew S. Harris and Dana Coleman, ran an investigative series that at first suggested that Elizabeth public high school educators and local public officials did not have a handle on an efficient and safe environment for the student body. These journalists exposed waves of violence, drugs, truancy, and underperformance occurring in the majority of the high school's student body. Unlike in 1986, the journalists now reported that the state might take over Elizabeth High School. While in some ways it was crucial to bring

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these issues to light, the fact that these markers were imposed on the student body, without real discussion of educational reform or students' everyday lives, further stigmatized the now Latino majority as being the problem for a declining school. Ultimately, these articles conveyed conflicting messages that blamed or put the spotlight on either the largely white administration and faculty or the Latino majority student body. As I will show, such conflicting messages maintained a colorblind position that masked the racialization and stigmatization of the majority Latino and Black minority students who were evaluated as "bad" students during this investigation.

Even amidst these conflicting evaluations of the faculty and student body, I show in this section that the way these journalists wrote these articles justified to their readership the need for enforcement measures in the school to contain "bad" students. These articles justified the need for surveillance, discipline, zero-tolerance, and punishment reforms that ultimately contained mostly Latino and other minority students. Once an exceptional and white-majority school, Elizabeth High School's social and racial composition had shifted, and therefore the school public's white cultural hegemony and harmony could be compromised without appropriate measures and policies. Ultimately, the journalists', educators', and politicians' failure to consider and advocate for alternative pedagogies that would incorporate the non-heteronormative student body demonstrates the symbolic power and violence used to stigmatize and exclude this student population while preserving white cultural hegemony within the school public.

Underperformance

An unattributed article that ran on February 18, 1991, entitled "Dropouts, Low Scores Plague Elizabeth High," which was part of this investigative series, documents how staggering

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the numbers of dropouts and low performing students were. In this article, we find that Elizabeth

High School is a Latino-majority school in which, "of 4,147 students…slightly more than half

are Hispanic. Almost 30 percent are black, and 16 percent are white." Among the figures

reported in the article, EDJ noted that "students do not do measurably well in moving beyond

high school. Of the 821 students who graduated last year, fewer than half went on to college."

As far as the dropout rate was concerned, "the proportion of dropouts at the high school is more

than 8 percent, compared to a 4.7 percent statewide…" (13). This article offers an overall profile

of EHS' student body that is seemingly neutral and colorblind yet conveys a Hispanic-majority

student body in decline. In her essay, "No Child Left Behind: Globalization, Privatization, and

the Politics of Inequality," Pauline Lipman discusses how Chicago teachers share cynicism over

students of color contributing to the deterioration of the quality of the school:

> [They] report that in some schools…some teachers and parents blam[e] African
> American and Latino students for bringing down the school's scores…[without]
> examin[ing] together the underlying ideologies, structures, school norms and practices,
> and dominant assumptions responsible for the marginalization and low-achievement of
> students of color, immigrants, and language minority students (Lipman 2007, 44).

This author's quote above offers an example of how youth of color are easily put to blame; it

seems likely that readers of the EDJ will similarly have and reify racist neoliberal ideologies and

discourses. When journalists do not incorporate information about the existing racist and

unequal operating structures of a school, they may generate a colorblind narrative that is harmful

to Hispanic and African American students.

Another colorblind strategy in this article is the use of the word "plague" in the headline,

which sensationalizes the underperformance, failure and dropping out of a Latino-majority

student body. The use of the word "plague" is conservative and liberal right-wing rhetoric

(neo)liberal politicians, educators, and journalists ascribed to an unfit non-white majority student

body spreading or polluting bad markers that led to the deterioration of the school public. The word is not a directly racist term but its use here is comparable to overt racist depictions of poor immigrants bringing disease or polluting the nation with both disease and racial and cultural difference (Lee 27-43, Stern 2005 and Molina 2006). "Plague," in the form of a verb in the headline, is an attack on the school public that educators and politicians urgently handled as a war-like, "attack on U.S. soil" offensive. Similarly, Giroux (2004) describes how U.S. war on terrorism policy impacted U.S. neoliberal education policy, which disproportionately targeted working class youth and youth of color with cuts in children's education and the "militarization of school" (83). Further, the use of the word "dropouts" in the headline conveys that those committing this threatening action are inadmissible, dangerous, and must be driven out of the school public if they cannot assimilate to the normative standards of whiteness and neoliberal reform. Even though this took place before "war on terror" policies, it is evident here how these journalists frame this article as a defense against aggressors as in an actual war. In effect, it entices the readership to view these aggressors as threats to (well-being of) the school public, or synonymously, the nation. Their performance within the school public is viewed as a disease they spread, suggesting that their exclusion would restore a healthy high school for the students that matter. In neoliberal terms, these youth are not part of the "shrinking public" (Duggan 2003, Prier 2010).

Truancy

On April 1, 1991, Andrew S. Harris and Dana Coleman jointly wrote a newspaper article entitled "Class Absentees Get Credit," about the devastatingly poor attendance of the students, stating that, "To [Dunn Jr.'s] knowledge, no attendance review team has ever existed, let alone

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stepped in to enforce attendance policy" (1). Based on the attendance records, only 100 of 840 students, or 12 per cent of the graduating seniors, were performing adequately, that is, fulfilling the attendance standard and assuming the codes of Elizabeth High's student policies (1). The quote above reveals Dunn Jr.'s justification for his strategy of investing in an "attendance review team" to handle these problems. This sentence alone shows Dunn Jr.'s discipline or surveillance-based approach to combating these issues, which upheld the enforced and policed neoliberal setting rather than promoting alternative pedagogical reform to enhance the performance of the Latino student majority. In other articles, journalists justified other enforcement measures such as more security and police presence within the school in response to escalating violence in the school.

In an article entitled "Elizabeth High Gets Tough on Truants," Dana Coleman reports on the high school's disciplinary and enforcement measures to solve this student problem, and she also offers several Latino and African American student perspectives. It's important to recognize the racial hierarchy in this article, particularly in the way that the students' white and black representations are portrayed. Regarding the attendance problem, Coleman quotes Negrin, a 17 year-old Latino EHS senior, as saying, "Students are not motivated to go to school, and that contributes to the absenteeism problem" (1). Negrin, as a class representative (class treasurer), is arguably a heteronormative student who represents the "good" Latino students of Elizabeth High School. His inclusion in the article casts him as a whitened subject and downplays the racist intent of the enforcement measures to convey a transparent and democratic school public. Near the end of the article, Coleman offers three African American students' perspectives from Lewis, Canady, and Muse. All of these students together suggest that the high school student body has felt the quick turnaround from lax monitoring of attendance to a "crackdown on attendance."

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The fact that the journalist does not mix the Latino and African American students and perspectives within the article (but rather lumps all the African American perspectives toward the end of it) illustrates the racial hierarchy and deliberate distancing between Latino and black students the article promotes.

The zoomed images of the three black students that accompany this article can be read as a covert racist message that conveys black students as the problem within the school public. Even while the journalist wrote this newspaper article in a way that does not single out any racial or ethnic group as being the problem, Stuart Hall, in his edited book *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (1997), explains how one must read the message or "preferred meaning" (Hall, 228) of an article by interpreting the written and visual texts. Hall explains "...'difference' matters because it is essential to meaning; without it, meaning could not exist" (234). Because this visual image depicts three African American Elizabeth High School students, the "difference" in this passage according to Hall is suggesting that the "binary opposition" between whiteness and blackness is the "difference" in this article. According to Hall, the preferred meaning of this newspaper article is hidden through colorblind ideology and the fact that the black students are seemingly represented and even suggest their agreement with enforcement. Yet, the preferred meaning here is that black students are the problem, in which case they are the object of policing and enforcement. The preferred meaning is equating bad choices of students and a deteriorated school public with blackness. While blackness here is represented and reduced as the threat to the deteriorating school public, whiteness is preserved as the standard or ideal in this text, particularly in how Negrin's profile is not displayed.

Similarly, Vinson and Ross posit in their essay, "Education and the New Disciplinarity: Surveillance, Spectacle, and the case of SBER," that the "hegemony of the image" is found in

ones that, "…seek to 'normalize' the interests of the economically and politically powerful as 'natural,' 'neutral,' or 'correct…'" (62). In effect, Vinson and Ross suggest that blackness is 'normalize[d]' as bad relative to the standards of those in power. Further, they also write that images of public schooling, "work to enforce, control, and discipline both cultural knowledge and behavior…" (62). In effect, the image of blackness the article creates is one that controls and curtails black cultural knowledge and behavior among minority students that according to those in power lead to underperformance and failure. Given that many Latino students are underperforming and being truant, the preferred meaning and hegemony of the image also casts Latino/a students tied to blackness in these negative and harmful ways.

Violence and Drugs

In a February 18, 1991 article on violence in Elizabeth High School entitled "Elizabeth High Violence Common: Journal Reporter Discovers Discipline is Almost Non-Existent," journalist Andrew Harris conveys the urgency of investing in neoliberal enforcement measures rather than alternative pedagogical strategies. Even though Harris brings to light the undeniably substandard educational climate at Elizabeth High School, for which he finds the administration and faculty at fault, his article also conveys a culturalist or culture of poverty perspective on Elizabeth High School students that suggests that they are innately prone to delinquency and violence. Journalists, politicians, and academics have critiqued or depicted racial and ethnic subjects as having a predisposition to poverty, crime, and illness that makes them outcasts or an underclass. (Moynihan 1965, Lewis 1966, Lee 1999, Molina 2006, Stern 2005, Lafountain-Stokes 2009 and Ferguson 2004). Before publishing this article, Harris walked into Elizabeth High School on several occasions, posing as a student. He was able to walk the school's

hallways, where he explains that students were hanging out and failing to be in class. Even more, he witnessed teenagers "seeking illegal drugs" and "carrying knives." Ultimately, Harris came to the conclusion that the student body had a strong propensity for being violent.   Harris writes that at the high school, "beyond minor displays of authority, [he found that] 4,147 students are generally allowed to do as they pleased." In this quote, Harris accounts for the entire Elizabeth High School population here being allowed to do "as they pleased" and places the burden on the school faculty and administration. His words "minor displays of authority" promote the need for a surveillance and enforcement plan. He goes on to say that, "the freedom inevitably turns to violence." While Harris here is also referring to the individualistic and free nature of the public school teaching approach, his culturalist bent describes students as unfit to handle freedom and (naturally) violent as a result.   Ultimately, Harris approvingly informs the readership that school administrators are working to tighten up the security on a prone-to-violence-student-body.

Further, Harris describes several incidents of student-on-student violence that support why security must be tightened and offers no thought of education reform.   In particular, he details two incidents of violence, showing the ways he and the education administrators read these students and their backgrounds through neoliberal and racial ideologies. In one incident, he documents that an "honor student was hospitalized with a concussion when a group of teens jumped him, flipped him upside down and threw him down on his head."   Similar to Coleman's earlier article, which portrayed Negrin as a good student, Harris distinguishes the victimized student as an "honor student," reinforcing the value of a student "that matters" and must be protected. According to Giroux (2004), the idea of tightening security in the public school reduces working class youth (of color) as subjects to keep "out of sight, patrolled, and monitored

so as to prevent them from becoming a social canker or political liability to white middle class populations (students) concerned about their safety" (95). In effect, this seemingly neutral article about Elizabeth High School is constructing a racial binary between the white(ned) and good honor student and the "black" or bad troubled students that justifies security measures instead of discussing alternative pedagogies that humanize students of color.

In a last *Elizabeth Daily Journal* article, dated April 11, 1991 and entitled, "Youth Poll," several students of color raised "isms" and violence (exclusion, bullying, assault) that impacted them greatly within the school (and which sound alternative pedagogies could have turned around). The reporters asked six students, "What do you consider the most important thing in your life?" I would like to direct my attention to two of the six interviewees in this article. Two of them were gay, as documented to me by several participants in my study. One of the gay students explains that, "…getting people to respect me in the school" is one of the most important things in his life, while the other gay male student said, "[the most important thing is] respect for me in this school because people (minorities) like me always get discriminated against in the high school." What the two openly gay students said about "getting respect" gives us an understanding of the potential leadership and cultural work they performed to make the school public a more tolerable and accepting space for other LGBTQ youth at Elizabeth High School.   Yet, the pathology and stigma attached to groupings of color, particularly gangs wishing to "gain respect" from other gangs and students, hinders the journalists who wrote this article from portraying a group dimension among these students.

Andy explained to me that three of the six panelists (two Hispanic and one African American), even though treated individually in the article, were socially connected with the gay house and local gay youth subculture in their everyday lives as high school students. That is, the

article does not raise the relationality that the panelists may have had with each other, perhaps to deemphasize any (gay) minority groupings that could be threatening to the school's standing white cultural hegemony. Further, although these vocal students articulate their struggles with discrimination and desire to decrease discrimination, bullying and violence toward them in the school, there is no mention of sexual or gender discrimination or the overall homo- and transphobic climate of the school public. These students do not out themselves, given the overall repressive and unsupportive climate of the school public. Finally, the liberal multicultural angle of this article reinforces an individual approach to their plight rather than emphasizing potential groupings for leadership and cultural work for sexual and gender minorities within the school.

Ultimately, the investigation's findings pointed to the urgent need for the kinds of reform liberal and neoconservative politicians and educators articulated. There was no discussion from progressive and multicultural-minded politicians, educators, or community activists. These politicians, educators, and journalists were not interested in changing an educational curriculum to adapt to a shifting majority-minority population. These articles simplified the stories of Elizabeth High School students to promote enforcement against underperformance, truancy, and violence while not conveying individual stories around lived experiences of race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. In the next section, I center stories of LGBTQ Latino students that were erased during this investigation and portray the circumstances from their point of view. These missing stories offer us LGBTQ youth subjectivity and show how they assumed a repressive school public.

Silencing LGBTQ Youth? "I'm Here and Queer" within the School Public

Before I explore the LGBTQ interviewees' experiences with their own stories of truancy, underperformance, and violence, I want to present them in the empowered ways my LGBTQ interviewees and ally interviewees expressed. In Nicolas De Genova's essay, "The Queer Politics of Migration: Reflections on Illegality and Incorrigibility," he compares the 2006 mobilization of immigrants with the queer movement. The movements' slogans are similar. The immigrant mobilization slogan reads, "Aqui Estamos y No Nos Vamos! Y Si Nos Sacan, Nos Regresamos!" (De Genova 101). The queer mobilization movement slogan reads, "We're Here, We're Queer, Get Used To It." In this comparison of two movements, De Genova draws an important parallel between two marginal groups that refuse to give up their presence and fight for their queer and cultural citizenship within the bounds of the nation. Unlike the engagement and activism among pro-immigrant national and local organizations and activists that De Genova reports, my interviewees in high school at the time did not have this kind of connection with local metro NYC LGBT organizations. Similarly, however, the LGBTQ youth attitudes below also suggest an, "I am here, I am queer, we are not going anywhere" approach within the bounds of an anti-LGBTQ and school public despite daily episodes of bullying and intimidation and a general lack of resources for LGBTQ students. I offer moments when LGBTQ students showed persistence in exuding their non-heteronormativity and not complying with heternormative codes, or what De Genova terms an "anti-assimilationst gesture" or "uncompromising incorrigibility," as revealed through this chant: "We are who are, and what we are" (103). Like the queers and immigrants who protested that they were not going anywhere but staying "here" or "within the nation," the same thing could be said about these LGBTQ students' determination to remain within the school public as they were, in their excess and amidst imminent symbolic

violence (bullying). Finally, similar to what De Genova shows in her discussion of undocumented immigrants who exude a queer politics of abjectivity or the condition in which "…migrants are always already within the space of the state and can never really be entirely expelled" (104), LGBTQ youth were also in the same positioning within the school while also exuding a queer politics that 'does not cease challenging its master' (Kristeva in De Genova, 104).   In other words, De Genova suggests that these abject groups position themselves as empowered from an outside position or a space 'where [dominant] meaning [of order] collapses' (De Genova, 104). In effect, De Genova helps us understand the meaningful agency and powerful demands embodied in these subjects' abject performances and spaces that contest dominant space, symbolic order and belonging, whether within the nation or within the school. Further, student allies, who I also feature in the next subsection, found it admirable of these LGBTQ students to fight for their place as queers within the school.

This section offers moments of agency and eccentricity that counter the continual symbolic violence and power that suppress "undervalued" LGBTQ students who often matter the least. Genova highlights chants that indicate how these groups challenge symbolic power: "There's nothing you can do about it—your repressive power is nothing compared to the power of our vitality and our indomitable will to persevere and prevail" (Genova, 103). The interviews below show similar ways LGBTQ students challenge symbolic power and heteronormativity within the school public.

A 1992 graduate of Elizabeth High School, Andy explains that out of 4000 students, there were about 25 who were out while many were still in the closet and "dealing with their demons," and yet the school did very little to create an LGBT-tolerant high school. Many of these youth were exposed to and participated in gay and gay-friendly subcultures like the house music,

voguing, and nightlife scenes that dubbed these youth 'club kids' (given their clothing and embodiments), as well as the goth and punk scenes. One straight male, Bert, who eventually became an ally, says of the eccentricities of these youth, "These guys were in high school and they were already gay. A lot of them were flamboyant. Club kids wearing platform shoes and fuckin' neon puff platform shoes. You know black and white bobby socks. Shit like that so. Guys wearing little pig tails or whatever those things are on each side." The extravagant fashion these youth wore and the gender variance they displayed undeniably disrupted a rigid and normative school public, similar to the way Carlos Munoz Jr. (1989) demonstrates that Mexican-American youth adopted street language, carnalismo and styles of gangs to deflect "colonialization" within the school public and embody an anti-assimilatory, working-class non-heteronormative subjectivity. These LGBTQ youth of color who identified with an urban gay subculture exuded styles, street talk, and groupings (see later discussion in this chapter on gay houses) that ran contrary to heteronormative codes at Elizabeth High School. The street talk among Latino gay youth often used urban gay terms and Spanglish that defied Elizabeth officials' attempts to install a monolingual official public. Despite the potential for homophobic violence and bullying, these displays of embodiments, eccentricity, language and groupings of gender and sexual variance transmitted "posturing of a bold and fearless character" (Genova 103) or a confidence that challenged the school public's symbolic power and that at times (not always) defeated symbolic violence.

Andy explained that students like him were encouraged by the wave of popular culture in the 1990s that brought some form of positive visibility for LGBTQ subjects, although mostly gay white men. Andy describes the more positive gay visibility of pop-icons that occurred in the

early 90s, which facilitated the coming out of some of his classmates in the context of the high

school. He shares,

> In the 80s, [gayness] was stigmatized and even though we had Boy George when we
> were in middle school…You know when we were in grammar school, a lot of people
> made fun of Boy George, you know what I'm saying? But by the time 1990 came
> around, I would say that Janet Jackson, Madonna, definitely Madonna, had a big
> influence exposing gay men to America in a different light than what the media had
> portrayed them in the 80s as far as sex crazed, AIDS victims. It kind of influenced us [E-
> High students] to come out of these boxes and closets or whatever and embrace what we
> were…

As he explains in that quote, the issue of sexuality had become an open one by the early 1990s

while Andy and his friends were in high school. According to him, images of gay men in popular

culture brought some form of positive visibility that complicated the stereotypes of gay men as

"sex crazed and AIDS" victims.   In *Standing Out, Standing Together* (2005), Melinda Miceli

writes about the formation of Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) in the public school system as early

as the mid 1990s. Despite the fact that these GSAs had not yet occurred among Elizabeth High

School students, Miceli explains a new climate and visibility that Andy his LGBTQ peers did

experience that provided support for some form of agency "to come out of these boxes and

closets" and that for the gay and lesbian community at large in the 1990s was an invaluable

precursor to the development of these GSA's:

> [B]y the early 1990s, lesbian and gay subcultures and politics had become more
> mainstreamed in America, and more visible gay and lesbian public figures, media
> images, and narratives had emerged. The early 1990s also ushered in a more
> liberal political climate. After twelve years of a Republic administration
> sympathetic to, if not fully accommodating of, conservative Christian concerns,
> Bill Clinton's overt efforts to gain, and acknowledge, this support of gay and
> lesbian communities for the Democratic party at least gave the impression that
> gay rights issues had a place at the larger political table (9).

Similar to Andy's discussion of popular culture, Miceli indicates here how "lesbian and gay

subcultures and politics had become more mainstreamed and [seemingly] had a place at the

larger political table," indicating that there was a different level of visibility occurring during this time that challenged the repressive and marginalizing stereotypes of gays and lesbians. Like the "larger political table" Miceli brings up, Andy explains how this new climate in popular culture of positive images of gay men "influenced us to come out of these boxes and closets" and attempt to incorporate themselves among students and teachers. In other words, he suggests here a turn from being in the margins to "embracing what we were" within the school public.

It is important to consider a queer of color critique in Andy's and Miceli's discussion. When Miceli is talking about the shift to a liberal political climate from a conservative one, one must consider the racial and class dynamics of this representation. Inevitably, this new shift of gay and lesbian representation in the 1990s is mostly of a white, urban and middle class as demonstrated by scholars (Hames-Martinez and Rodriguez 2011, Moraga and Weatherston 2000, Becker 2006). Further, when Miceli mentions gay and lesbian subcultures, these must be taken to mean subcultures that privileged a gay and lesbian white and middle class that did not address racial and class diversity. The same can be said about the popular culture representation of gays and lesbians that Andy describes. As a result, even while Andy explains that LGBTQ students of color identified with these images, their non-white racial and non-middle class markers were often not fully represented. Even while LGBTQ youth of color in Elizabeth High School consumed these images they dissidentified with them in their everyday lives as underprivileged, racially non-white and working class youth.

However, Andy helps us to understand that more than dissidentifying with these popular images, there were some instances in which queer youth of color helped author non-white gay culture before it was commodified for mainstream consumption. For example, Andy explained to me that his voguing had developed before Madonna's production, in Elizabeth and Newark,

where underprivileged African American and Latino men and women developed the dance form and learned from each other. Even more, voguing became a vital form of agency and everyday survival among queer of color youth, which they used to express their subjectivity and build relationality among one another. Later on, Madonna developed her own style of voguing for the production of her 1990 hit, Vogue, outside the context of everyday life and survival of these queer youth.

Andy raises how "Madonna, definitely Madonna" brought in positive representations of gay men that were useful to the cultural work queer youth performed in their everyday lives, particularly within the school public. However, even while several of Madonna's dancers were gay non-white, African American, and Puerto Ricans that came from similar backgrounds as my own interviewees, Negron-Muntaner explores in *Boricua Pop: The Latinization of American Culture* (2004) how these dancers were contained in ways that reified Madonna's "imperial ambitions" and therefore their performances were not their own self-production and self-determination (147-149) nor was there room for them. In actuality, these dancers were propped and produced to further the iconic star's white privileged and globalized success because it was she who mattered most. In effect, Madonna's commodified and depoliticized voguing erased the legacy of everyday cultural work among queer of color youth like Andy, who used voguing to engender diversity and tolerance in their everyday lives and in school (as I show later). However, even while Andy asserts that his voguing derives from a gay black counterpublic, he acknowledges how Madonna's popular culture production was a step forward in creating more empowering representations of gay men in the early 1990s, especially amidst the AIDS crisis.

Impact on Students: Leadership and Eccentricity

One gay student ally, Marie, raves about one upperclass gay effeminate male, Charlie La Quack, and his leadership and boldness. I asked her who she thought the most popular kid and she responded that Charlie was because:

> First of all, because he was like a club kid so he was very, very extravagant, very eccentric gay and didn't give a shit and I wasn't personally friends with him but [one of my lesbian friends from school was really close to him] and some of my other friends… I feel like he didn't care! He was like, you know I don't care! I'm not gonna let anybody bully me. If I want to go to the prom with another guy I'm going to, you know, and people recognized that and nobody messed with him.

Marie describes here how Charlie's defiant attitude allowed him to successfully navigate dominant spaces that attempted to silence and potentially bully him. She says that "nobody messed with him." According to her, he was the most popular kid and achieved respect from both heteronormative and non-heteronormative students for his boldness and sense of individuality. Marie does not describe his "eccentricities" and "extravagance" as being looked down upon but as being regarded as elements of character and leadership that he proudly embodied in the dominant space and culture of the school. In her view, Marie describes Charlie's bold attitude as disrupting the symbolic violence homophobic students commit through bullying to reify the kind of symbolic power of the heteronormative school public that Rebecca Haskell and Brian Burtch describe in their book, *Get that Freak: Homophobia and Transphobia in High Schools* (2010). Instead of heteronormative students disciplining Charlie to change his behaviors in high school to those that the symbolic power of the school public condoned (through the hidden curriculum) by making him feel "less than" heterosexual students (Haskell and Burtch, 91), he undermined and challenged that symbolic power and violence with his self-determination. Similarly, a student named Ernie related that "if someone tried to mess with Andy, he would probably pull out a knife from his bookbag. Andy didn't take shit from no one."

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While Ernie's hypothetical scenario is exaggerated, he conveys Andy's fearless bold and leaderlike character, which everyone in school knew would not easily yield to symbolic violence.

In light of Charlie's defiant attitude, which Marie says was respected by classmates, the coming out of several Elizabeth High School students in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as explained by some of my interviewees, facilitated the identification of straight, closeted and questioning youth with the struggle to belong within the school public in their own right rather than conform to dominant norms and expectations. Mark explained his impressions of some of the gay students and how they positively impacted him: "They were seniors when I was a freshman. When I saw that, that's when I knew that, all right, I didn't have to be a thug. You don't have to be hard anymore. Now you have your groups. In high school, it's ok to be yourself." Mark describes how, as a skateboarder, his sexuality was frequently questioned or viewed as emasculated because after junior high school, he stopped assuming a dominant (mis)representation of an overly aggressive or imminently criminal Latino male youth. Peter, another heterosexual in high school, reflected on how he often hung out with the LGBTQ crew because he was inspired by their individuality, which broke with the mainstream norms. Both of these male students clearly show relationality with and not a binary to LGBTQ students of color. They show movement away from imposed dominant representations of good and bad neoliberal subjects. Further, as Latino male youth, they were using subcultural spaces to articulate Latino/a subjectivity or self outside of heteropatriarchal representations of Latino or ethnic Latino identity, which Latina/o and Chicana/o feminists (Anzaldua 2007, Moraga 1993, Perez 1999, Rodriguez 2003, Quiroga 2000, Lafountain-Stokes 2009) have explored and documented.

Latino LGBTQ and Ally Youth Speak:
Their Stories of Underperformance, Truancy, and Violence

The local media was reluctant to publish stories on any issues related to LGBTQ students. In this section, I explore with my LGBTQ interviewees their experiences with underperformance, truancy, and violence that were simplified in the *Elizabeth Daily Journal*'s investigative coverage to justify enforcement measures and not reflect the specific needs of certain students. Ultimately, these interviewees' testimonies show how educators, administrators, and politicians failed to work with Latino and minority LGBTQ students in compassionate and socially inclusive ways that would have modified the liberal multicultural curriculum to address their particular needs for a better performance and incorporation within the school public.

Underperformance

Oliver

Oliver is a 1.5-generation Cuban American Elizabeth High School student who was not impressed with the school's curriculum. He was tracked as a college-prep bound student, and while he did not indicate to me that was doing poorly in class, because of his indifference to the curriculum, he was underperforming and not working to his potential. While a student, Oliver was questioning or coming to terms with his sexual orientation. He explained,

> When I was there, I knew it was me, school, and Marie [a classmate]. I had to attend class because I had to get my high school diploma… I would have just taken my ummm GED and moved on with life. You know because quite honestly I didn't really appreciate the high school experience because I thought it was bullshit. I mean, you have to take four years of gym. You have to take you know three years of a science. I just thought… what am I doing with algebra today, you know? I would have taken my GED and I would have gone on to college. I

mean I knew college was something that I wanted to do, and something that I really needed.

In this quote, Oliver is expressing that Elizabeth High School's neoliberal standard curriculum did not motivate him to take genuine interest in his studies. It is telling that Oliver did not relate to the educational content and pedagogy of his classes.

His reflection indicates that he would have valued an alternative curriculum that would have stimulated him intellectually. Pauline Lipman describes in her essay, "No Child Left Behind: Globalization, Privatization and the Politics of Inequality," a more suitable curriculum for Oliver and similar students: "An alternative discourse…would call for schools that encourage students to ask questions as well as answer them; that require students to use knowledge to work on real world problems of personal, social, and ethic significance; that respect and build on students…" (54). This alternative discourse Lipman proposes suggests something outside a rigid and "market-oriented" curriculum would offer the kinds of questions and problem solving that Oliver could have begun to examine in high school that would have spoken to him from his multiple social perspectives. Oliver persistently mentioned in his interview that he was close to only one other classmate (Marie), who was also Cuban, throughout his high school experience. Other scholars like Giroux (1995) and Kanpol and McLaren (1995) describe critical multiculturalism as a tool in education to help students like Oliver relate meaningfully with each other across racial, cultural, and class difference.

<div align="center">Lucio</div>

Lucio was held back for truancy and explains the uneven and partial disciplinary action the school applied to the students. He recounts,

> "Ummm, I chose to drop out because I got held back. Then, all my friends were going to the next year. I got held back and I wanted to graduate with my friends and I just kind of started to feel an unfairness about the whole thing, the whole

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system and what I saw around me and how I saw people to the next grade and I got held back and my grades were good. So I just kind of decided… let me get my GED and that's what I did."

Lucio's "good" grades are in fact questionable given his excessive truancy, and therefore he was underperforming or, like Oliver, not living up to his full potential. Other interviewees' indications that they were getting decent grades even while cutting classes excessively points to the ineffectiveness and indifference of this school system for the majority of its students. Lucio describes how his disciplinary action was "unfair" and as a result he lost faith in the system. Subsequently, he left school to get his GED. He further explained in an earlier moment that [unlike him], "you would see these thugs that have been there for a long time and you just kind of like, they get passed to the next grade." Lucio's view shows his sense of deception because his own student record, in his opinion, was much worthier than theirs. His use of "thug" suggests a binary between him and them and the individualistic, competitive, and (colorblind yet) racist nature of the neoliberal school system he internalized. That is, he acknowledged his counterparts as unfavorable students or imminent delinquent citizens Perez (2008) and Ramos-Zayas (2006), unlike him, getting good grades and showing promise. On one hand, Lucio sees himself belonging more than these "thugs." Because "thug" connotes a heterosexual, urban working class Latino or African American male, his testimony also suggests the privileging of heterosexuals over LGBTQ students. Yet, in the end, these disciplinary reforms end up hurting both parties.

Lucio's testimony reveals that Elizabeth High minority students ended up losing to this liberal multicultural curriculum for the lack of care and effort from teachers. Latino and African American students interviewed in Philip Kasinitz's, John H. Mollekopf's and Mary Waters' book, *Inheriting the City: The Children of Immigrants Come of Age* (2008) complained that

teachers did not expect much from them, in contrast to their impressions of Asian-American and white students' experiences with teachers.   Their analysis shows how minority students are perceived as "less than" white and Asian American students who "show" more promise for formal sector jobs in the global market economy. In *Encountering American Faultlines: Race, Class and the Dominican Experience in Providence* (2009), Jose Itzigsohn offers an account from second-generation Dominican students who stated that change in their underperformance occurred when they felt that teachers sincerely cared and showed they really wanted to know about their personal background, interests, and perspectives. Itzigsohn's findings reflect the effectiveness of alternative pedagogical approaches for minority students. Angela Valenzuela's work proposes the elimination of subtractive schooling that is a "…dual strategy of exclusion and condemnation…[of Latino students'] language and culture" that undermines them as inferior and disposable (Valenzuela 1999 and Moll and Ruiz 2002).   In effect, Valenzuela suggests how the lack of inculcating student self-knowledge, language, and culture in the classroom makes Latino queer students of color inferior and foreign within the school public. Further, Giroux (2004) emphasizes that the private interests and corporate culture of public education has erased the principles of social responsibility, compassion, and the common good for all students (101-102). Nicolas, Stepick, and Stepick (2008) present an interview study of Haitian students in Miami who were able to "achieve" under substandard educational circumstances and found ineffective teaching practices. One student noted that the teachers would pass him with decent grades for being quiet and docile and not for his performance. By the time the student entered college, he said he could not read or write; he had to take remedial classes. His narrative reveals that by conforming in exchange for good grades, minority students allow themselves to be

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contained in this neoliberal curriculum. Nicolas, Stepick, and Stepick (2008) show the racist and inadequate school system that is ineffective for minority students.

Truancy

Ernie

Ernie discusses here his excessive class cutting during his senior year in high school. He was in school during the investigation that journalists from the *Elizabeth Daily Journal* published in 1991. He explains several circumstances that were not about laziness, indifference, or drug use that he claims led to his truancy.

> There were a series of problems that came up. You know, it was a big turning point that year. I came out in November of 1991… My grandfather had died prior to that. There were just a lot of things going on through my head and I found myself cutting a lot of class. A lot of times it was just to go downtown and go to Broad Street or just go back home and just going back to sleep because I was so tired from the night before just saying to myself. I actually had to go to summer school before attaining my high school diploma because I had failed two classes due to absenteeism in class. I was never there…Nobody ever addressed it until two weeks prior um when I was told I wouldn't be graduating unless I went to summer school. It was just amazing to me. Two weeks prior [to graduating].

Here, Ernie explains several personal circumstances that include grappling with his sexuality as a questioning and closeted student until he eventually came out in November 1991. He was on high school sports teams, and his ability to incorporate well among the boys and perform a heterosexual masculinity covered his homosexual orientation. Because there were no specialized supportive counseling services or teachers that could help him through that difficult time of coming to terms with his sexual identity, he turned to one of the openly gay students in the high school for support. Ernie explained to me the difficult "things going on through my head" during that period while he was coming to terms with his sexuality. For instance, he constantly thought his father would commit suicide because his only son was gay and therefore an

embarrassment to the family.   The fact that there were no supportive services[15] nor available teachers to help Ernie through this difficult time suggests his truancy is a consequence of the symbolic power and violence that preserves a homophobic and repressive school public. It was those moments when Ernie felt depressed without any support at school that harmed his school attendance and performance the most. Ernie's case shows the consequences of neoliberal and conservative politicians' and educators' reduction of support services for those outside traditional family values or viewed as excess to a neoliberal public (Duggan 2003).

Without supportive services, Ernie shared with me his sense of feeling unworthy in large part due to conflicts about his sexual orientation that greatly impacted his self-image. He shared with me that he decided to pursue the military in light of his academic decline in his senior year. He was aware that it was a definite probability that he could be drafted into the Persian Gulf War. He explained that back then he believed, "I would have rather died as a veteran than a faggot."   Because Ernie did not receive supportive feedback from teachers or counselors, his self-image and self esteem continued deteriorating.   His pursuit of military service is an example of how underperforming, delinquent or failing minority students often pursue ROTC to redeem their high school performance and also to insure a future for themselves and recover their (self-) image as students and citizens. Scholars Perez (2008) and Giroux (2004, 91-92) argue that ROTC programs and military recruitment practices often target urban schools with underperforming minority populations in which such students have little to no post-high school sustainable opportunities other than service sector jobs. Because the school curriculum is designed in a way that relegates minority students to the bottom of the global market economy, minority students are intentionally marketed ROTC programs instead of market-oriented

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[15] Andy also related to me in his interview that there were no social or psychological supportive services at Elizabeth High School at the time to help students coming out.

opportunities. Ernie's reflection is typical of how minority students feel they will regain their

"respect," "worthiness," and "deservingness" and full American citizenship status through

ROTC moving them up from their deficient citizenship (Ramos-Zayas 2006 and 2012, Perez

2008, 119). Further, Ernie's testimony shows how his questioning of his sexuality was

suppressed in favor of his racial, ethnic, and class identities so he could claim his good

citizenship.

<div align="center">Lucio</div>

Throughout high school, Lucio continued frequenting the Village area during school

hours with his friends, which led to excessive truancy.   He describes his first visit by himself to

New York City and the Village at 14:

> There was a movie that I remember seeing as a teenager on NBC or ABC and it
> touched on the gay subject, you know. And then after the movie…they gave you
> know a hotline for the Hetrick-Martin Institute[16]. I don't know if you've ever
> heard of it, but um, …because the movie was about this gay guy that was
> struggling to come out to his family so they gave a hotline to the Hetrick-Martin
> Institute. So at the time I called the hotline and I made an appointment with like a
> counselor there. I had never been to NYC by myself and I just took the train and I
> was just 14 and I took the train by myself. I remember I was downtown or in
> central station and I have to get to Christopher Street downtown in Westside
> Highway where it was. It was being in this big world being in the city by myself
> for the first time trying to navigate the subway system and get from point A to
> point B. It was pretty exhilarating and exciting.

Prior to this moment in the interview, Lucio explained several instances throughout his middle

and junior high school years where he was bullied for his effeminacy. Until the eighth grade, he

had not received adequate support services and suffered a strong sense of isolation and

repression. Therefore, finding this resource on television (no other than the Hetrick-Martin

Institute for the empowerment, advocacy, and education of LGBTQ youth) was compelling for

him. Further, he describes his first visit by himself into downtown New York City and

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[16] Hetrick-Martin Institute's official website: http://www.hmi.org/

eventually into the Village that he describes as a "big world" that was "exhilarating and exciting." In effect, the impact this first visit into the city had on Lucio, particularly the Village, was enormous in terms of how he felt he could be himself in that "big world" that exuded diversity of people from all walks of life, and tolerance, unlike in the repressive school public he had continuously faced.

By the time Lucio was at Elizabeth High School, students went into the Village often and during school time. In the quote below, he describes cutting with his classmates:

> [G]oing into ninth or tenth grade, um cause I had a class um at the high school
> and so I was in Jefferson, I started meeting some friends and then we started like
> cutting school and going into the city, you know. That was the best way to cut
> school and go to the city and go to Washington Square Park, hang out in the
> Village, walk around, you know.

Here, Lucio points out that his preference to cut was go to the Village with his friends who left together from E-High. For Elizabeth High School youth, it was easy to get to the Village by taking downtown New Jersey Transit to Newark, and from Newark, getting on the 33rd Path train line and stopping at Christopher St. or 9th Street. According to Lucio, the Village, in the early 1990s, was a world or counterpublic where youth felt they could be themselves, unlike Elizabeth High School's rigid and repressive school public.

Similar to Lucio' account, in *New Jersey Dreaming: Capital, Culture, and the Class of '58* (2003), Sherry Ortner devotes chapter 8 to students from that class frequently going to the Village or "breaking out into whole new worlds" (169) and being part of alternative or countercultural lifestyles and movements, like the Beat and radical/counterculture movements of the sixties (169), that were not in keeping with dominant values of success of the time. Ortner's study examines her classmates' high school experiences and performance and post-high school lives after they graduated from Mount Prospect High School in Newark, New Jersey. She points

out in this chapter how some students were "not necessarily unsuccessful and led unusual lives" (including being gay and lesbian in an arguably more repressive time than the early 1990s) compared to what was considered normative within the prestigious Mount Prospect neighborhood in Newark of the late 1950s. She offers interviewees' perspectives about living countercultural lives that complicate the rigid dominant views of success and failure within this context and that are comparable to how my participants disrupt them in the neoliberal context of the 1980s-1990s. Like Ortner's classmates, these LGBTQ youth were leaders in their own right and social visionaries in the ways in which they were critical of heteronormativity in their schools. Unlike Ortner's classmates, Elizabeth High's LGBTQ youth openly challenged symbolic power at times within the school public.

Even though Ortner is discussing a different time period, the experiences of Ortner's classmates and my interviewees with the Village are remarkably similar in terms of what this counterpublic represented in their everyday lived realities. Like Lucio and his friends, Ortner's classmates could easily get to the Village on a New Jersey transit bus that took them to the Lower Manhattan area within an hour. However, Ortner does not mention whether or not these kids cut during class time like my participants. Given the sense of inclusion for all students in Ortner's study and their identification with the high-quality educational curriculum and prestigious white middle to upper-middle class Newark neighborhood, her participants ultimately valued (and were contained by) their education and their place within the school public despite personal ideological differences, unlike my participants at Elizabeth High School. Without supportive services and resources at Elizabeth High School, Lucio and his friends were compelled to be in a world (as much as they could be) where they felt tolerated and accepted as LGBTQ subjects during school. In this way, my participants were even more rebellious than

Ortners' interviewees. For both sets of participants, proximity to the Village made it possible to sustain countercultural perspectives and desires in their everyday lives. Further, Ortner explains that, "The Village was very much part of some classmates' fantasies" (175), where it was possible to celebrate in a world of "Beat Culture as lifestyle-alternative sexualities; radical poetry, folk, music and political song; cross-racial relationships; bohemian dress styles; and other forbidden things" (175). Similarly, my interviewees escaped to the Village in the early 1990s to live out their countercultural fantasies and explore their queer subjectivities in the context "of a bigger world" (as stated by Ortner and Lucio) outside restrictive publics like their schools in New Jersey. Like Ortner's classmates' connection to the Village counterculture of the time, Lucio and his friends felt a strong connection to the Village's gay subculture.

In the earlier quote, Lucio explains how he and his friends "walked around" in the city during school hours, and it is important to consider the extent to which they found belonging in the Village as New Jersey bridge and tunnel youth commuting into the Village. His reference to "walking around" did not suggest a relational form of engagement with other gays on the street or any further connection to gay community organizations like the Hetrick Martin Institute. In effect, Lucio's reference could be interpreted as working class, bridge and tunnel youth of color "walking around" within the Village but in a in which they did not immediately belong nor were significant consumers of the neoliberal LGBT market. I asked him, "What kinds of things did you like to do when you were in the city?" He explained,

> Go to different stores, you know… Some of my friends were into goth and punk
> and did the whole grunge era that was the early 90s. So, there was Patricia Fields,
> which was a really cool store, the House of Fields. And some other stores,
> Forever 21, Canal Jeans, Antique Boutique. That was a really cool store. You
> know, have hot dogs at Grey's Papayas. Pizza. Go to Washington Square Park,
> you know?

Lucio describes more practices of consuming subculture clothing than of seeking engagement

and ties with other gay youth. The consumptive practices of eating Grey's Papaya and pizza

suggest the limited income these youth had that placed them outside the urban middle and

homonormative class and public. In effect, these youth of color "walking around" represent

"delinquent or marginalized youth" who are not in school (and are supposed to be) and whose

choices "do not comply to normative goals of capital accumulation, productivity, and

heteronormative [and homonormative] family units" (Cacho 2007, 202; Ingraham 1996 in

Ramos-Zayas 2012, 80). He mentions several clothing stores that sold the kinds of eccentric

styles youth wanted to build the personas that set them apart from the heteronormative students

at Elizabeth High School's public. Lucio brings up Patricia Fields, an expensive club kid and

drag accessory boutique, frequented by (and marketed to) homonormative queer white nightlife

club-kid promoters and clubgoers in the House of Fields. Even while these consumptive

window-shopping practices were important to him and his friends for ideas about their own

dissidentified personas, it was telling to not hear of any kind of substantial connection to other

gays or gay youth in the city during that time. In effect, Lucio and his friends internalized the

individualistic, consumptive, and depoliticized values of neoliberal ideology even amidst the

countercultural publics found in the Village.

The pier is one such notable non-white countercultural public at the edge of the Village,

and Lucio and other participants do not mention any substantial connection to the urban LGBTQ

youth of color there. In his chapter, "The Homeless Community of the Piers," in Arielle

Greenberg's book *Youth Subcultures: Exploring Underground America* (2006), Rob Maitra

explains that collectivism and connectivity at the pier became a form of permanent support for

many struggling youth of color who often faced mistreatment in their high schools and families

(66). In Lucio' case, he brought up spending more time walking around and window-shopping than being at the pier. At first, he did not mention his pastime at the pier, which suggests that this landmark was not a central aspect of his and his friends' visits to the Village. In a follow-up conversation, however, Lucio did confirm to me that he did hang out at the pier with his E-High friends and enjoyed watching gays congregate and vogue. But it was evident that he did not make ties with other LGBTQ youth at the pier. The insular grouping of the Elizabeth High School students somehow added to the heterotopia of the pier even while they simply walked around and identified (with a sense of distance) with other gay youth there.   Maitra explains that "many of these youth [at the pier] are homeless and sleep 'on the streets' [while others] are commuters who flee to this world on a daily basis only to return… to their homes in the outer boroughs of New York City or in New Jersey" (65). Thus, it is possible that Elizabeth Latino youth upheld social and class boundaries that maintained their insularity and kept them distant from less privileged and homeless New York youth of color at the pier.

Violence

       Hate violence and bullying against LGBTQ students was not far-fetched and did occur frequently, according to my interviewees.   In Haskell and Burtch's chapter on the "gentle violence" behind homophobic and transphobic bullying, they argue that such acts against LGBTQ students are actually aggressive and harmful forms of violence against people who embody sexual and gender difference in a heteronormative school public.   Their chapter documents the ways heteronormative anti-LGBTQ students become the agents that defend the heterosexist school public and commit acts of symbolic violence. These homophobic students monitor, police, and discipline LGBTQ students to "quietly reinforce" the school public's

dominant worldviews (of traditional gender roles, heterosexuality, and reproductive family values) (Haskell and Burtch 2010, 95). By "quietly reinforc[ing] dominant worldviews," these authors mean that students' acts are frequently "downplayed" and often justified as bullying acts that, "could have been worse" (Haskell and Burtch 2010, 95). The vignette at the beginning of this chapter describes an example of a lesbian student harassed for her sexual and gender difference from traditional heterosexuality. While Andy does not describe any physical violence done to the student, the derogatory act of writing 'dyke' on her locker and the emotional toll on this student should not be regarded as "gentle acts" of violence in the way that neoliberal and conservative educators assume they are, nor should they be shrugged off. Further, given the use of symbolic power to preserve a heteronormative school public against marginalized unworthy students, such (homophobic) acts were not seen as violent enough to report in the media because they defended traditional dominant views of family and sexuality. Instead, these authors argue that such an act is overtly homophobic and detrimental to the well-being of the victimized students. The act Andy describes conveys to the lesbian student that she will not belong if she does not conform to the standard codes of the school public. Subsequently, Andy explains that the student dropped out.

<center>Katia</center>

Katia, an LGBTQ alley, recounted to me an incident that she witnessed in which an effeminate gay male student was harassed and bullied. Unlike the first vignette in which the bullying of a lesbian student was more open, many incidents are often more quiet or subtle. Katia explains, "[H]e was totally getting bullied in the hallway because he was getting followed…and he was being mocked… and you know he was…by himself." In this incident, Katia says that she was the only one in the hallway to see the incident. Katia's witnessing of

how these students "mocked" this gay student refers to the discipline and policing of sexual and gender differences that were "lessons (often referred to as the hidden curriculum), teaching [them] which behaviors and associated identities are valued and which are not" (Haskell and Burtch 2010, 91). As part of the hidden curriculum, these bullying acts are quietly and frequently committed and downplayed as normal teasing (Haskell and Burtch 2010, 95) and left unreported, yet symbolic violence is fulfilled. Ultimately, these incidents offer us another look at vulnerable moments LGBTQ students experienced and how they were silenced.

Most of my interviewees did not express any memory of faculty at Elizabeth High School being unusually supportive, vocal or nurturing of LGBTQ students, which would have helped alleviate the stigma and discrimination against LGBTQ students of color. In particular, Andy explains his discontent about teachers: "In their personal lives, [some teachers] thought it was wrong so they were just being politically correct to accept us as students but on the other hand, some of the teachers that were gay were not allowed to interact with us because we knew that they were gay. They weren't allowed to interact with us or guide us in any way…" Andy shares here how a growing awareness of sexual and gender non-conformity was perceived as excess in ways similar to how racial and ethnic collectivism were negatively perceived from a liberal multicultural perspective. Teachers who were being "politically correct," as Andy explains, were not genuinely committed nor truly approving of empowering these students and centering their cultural capital and knowledge in classroom discourse or in extracurricular activities. In his essay, "The Politics of Insurgent Multiculturalism in the Era of the Los Angeles Uprising," Giroux writes,

> many conservatives…have been quite aggressive in rewriting the discourse of
> citizenship not as the practice of social responsibility but as a privatized act of
> altruism, self-help, or philanthropy. It is crucial to recognize that within the
> language of privatization, the disquieting, disrupting, interrupting difficulties of

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sexism, crime, youth unemployment, AIDS, and other social problems, and how
they bear down on schools, are either ignored or summarily dismissed as
individual problems… (Giroux 1995, 112).

In effect, Giroux explains here how this "language of privatization" (neoliberal ideology and

discourse) unburdens teachers and school staff of what Andy calls, "interacting [meaningfully

with us]…guiding us [about our everyday lives and struggles or about]" issues of social

responsibility. That is, according to Giroux, issues of social responsibility are left to the

individual to resolve on his or her own without any expense or liability to the state. Ernie's

earlier example of how he dealt with his sexuality conflicted with his family's expectations is a

case that illustrates his individual responsibility to resolve this situation without burdening the

school's resources. Andy explains below the potential of some of his dropout friends' cultural

capital and knowledge. If teachers and administrators would have defended, welcomed and

incorporated these students into the classroom, such compassionate acts of social responsibility

might have encouraged the students to stay in school. He comments,

> Some of [my friends] were E-High students and some of them, interestingly
> enough, hadn't made it to E-High because they had dropped out because they
> couldn't deal with the stigma of homosexuality within the school so they had
> dropped out by the time they were in the eighth grade. So, some of these people
> had very low education but were very talented dancers and very talented
> designers. They had learned from their grandma how to stitch or their mama how
> to stitch and things like that. So they were practicing their craft on the ground and
> they didn't even have a high school education.

In this quote, Andy reveals how his gay friends relied on their minority or black cultural capital

to survive and succeed with "their craft" instead of staying in school to deal with the violence of

homophobic stigma.   His testimony supports the idea that because most teachers and

administrators did not incorporate or advocate for alternative or black forms of capital that Prier

(2010), Neckerman, Carter, and Lee (1999) and Carter (2005) discuss, underperformance,

truancy, and dropping out were inevitable.

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Overall, my participants expressed that teachers streamlined their education in ways that left out their personal experiences and cultural capital, contrary to what a critical multicultural pedagogy is designed to do (Giroux 1995, 112). Further, Andy explains that teachers who were "gay" were discouraged from creating familiarity among these students because this would have meant building a collectivism of non-heteronormativity that went against the neoliberal curriculum. Gay teachers often felt too threatened to pursue any genuine familiarity with their LGBTQ students because it was strongly looked down upon in U.S. dominant and heterosexist society. Since the 1940s and 1950s, neoconservative politicians had developed discourses around the "homosexual menace" that was viewed as excess to nation-building and as weakening the country's "moral fiber" (Lee 1999, 160-161). In particular, in the *Radical History Review*'s issue, "Queer Futures," Kevin Murphy, Jason Ruiz and David Serlin (2008) explain that anti-gay political campaigns of the 1970s-1980s like the "Save Our Children" campaign developed "homophobic rhetoric" in which gay teachers were described as "threats to traditional family and national power" and recruiters to this condemned lifestyle and identity (2). These rhetorics and discourses created distancing between potential gay mentors and outspoken and questioning gay students in the school public that is an example of symbolic power and violence at play. Doubly and triply marginalized LGBTQ students faced more isolation without this open and professional engagement. In the next section, I show how students built counterspaces that established a sense of support, protection and belonging that reduced the risk of being bullied and were alternatives to getting any kind of substantial support from their teachers and other school staff. I show how LGBTQ youth came together as a grouping for everyday support amidst the lack of support, respect and visibility they faced in school.

Subculture, Eccentricities and Counterspaces in E-High School:
The Potential and Limits "Outside" the School Public

My informants' excerpts below reveal how they explored other ways of being outside

static and traditional state categories of race, ethnicity, class, sexual and gender

heteronormativity through alternative or counterspaces within the school. These spaces allowed

them to express their self-determination through their emerging groupings of possibility with

other students that challenged the dominant rigid space of the school and its symbolic power.

Their agency in building spaces of belonging outside the school public are what Robin Kelley in

his book, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (1994) terms

"infrapolitics," or a subtle yet valid protest from working class people (youth in this case) who

are not politically organized, although their groupings and embodiments are statements of non-

conformity and dissent from dominant ideologies and discourses. In this case, these

counterspaces were an infrapolitics for how LGBTQ students of color created alternative

groupings of possibility, politicized diversity and agency within a repressive school public. I

show how students used musical subcultures and sexuality that dominated several youth scenes

in the 1990s and created alternative spaces and subjectivities within the school, deflecting

traditional racial, ethnic, and culturalist markers that divided and categorized them under a white

cultural hegemony.

LGBTQ Gang in School known as the GAY HOUSE

One of the most vital LGBTQ spaces formed at the high school was the gay house.

Similar to the family structure of carnalismo, or brotherhood, that Munoz explores, the gay house

consisted of a group of students who built their own family structures outside traditional family

values of middle class whiteness and heteropatriarchy. The queer family fell outside the

expectations of the school public and was a counterspace to heteronormativity. This

family/kinship structure derived from a largely inner-city African American and Latino/a/ local

gay subculture (Bailey 2013, Livingston 1990, Hawkeswood 1992, and Rivera Colon 2013) in

ballroom culture that Elizabeth African American and Latino LGBTQ youth also adopted in their

everyday lives for community, support and loving relationships. Andy revealed to me that as

one of the first upperclassmen students to be out, he not only became a leader like Charlie La

Quack, but they both became gay mothers (and a father depending on the gender orientation of

"his child") in this queered/counterhegemonic family structure to support and protect LGBTQ

underclassman. This "mother" role is symbolic and celebratory of what Ferguson describes in

his book, *Abberations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (2004), as the matriarchy and

queer political economy of African American and Latino working class communities that were

often stigmatized and pathologized within dominant publics. Marlon Bailey, in *Butch Queen Up*

in Pumps: Gender, Performance, and Ballroom Culture in Detroit (2013), suggests that this is

actually a queered matriarchy with the help of one of his interviewees, Tim'm T. West, who

suggests that, "calling a biological man your mother was sort of a radical revision of

motherhood" (109). In the end, Bailey argues that between the mothers and fathers of the houses

and ball culture, it is the mother who has the final power and say, which reifies a queer black

matriarchy instead of a normative (hetero)patriarchy.

In the case of Elizabeth High School, certain LGBTQ youth became mothers and fathers

to other students, often in need of support over coming out. Andy explained after I asked him if

he was ever a mother or father in the house:

>Yes, I [am]! Several of my children [today] were my children [then]. They came
>to me because they didn't have anybody to look up to and what's interesting about
>it is that they were all different from one another (a plurality) in other words, I
>had a girl come up to me. She's like, "I'm having these feelings and I think I

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really like girls. I think I'm a lesbian but I can't come out. I was born and raised in the Pentecostal church." And she became my daughter…And then one of my sons, you would never think that he was the typical, stereotype of what a homosexual is, because he didn't vogue, he didn't dress up like a girl, he didn't mix gender clothes, or do any of that flavor and stuff …and he was the ultra masculine, all American, Hispanic boy and he came up to me and said I need to talk to you. He's my gay son until this day. And then I had others that were not so masculine but not so feminine and also were male and they also were my children. A lot of them looked up to me because they didn't have anyone to go to.

Andy discusses here the support and mentoring he offered within the counterspace of the gay house to LGBTQ youth, which they could not find in the school public. He describes how he performed the father role to what Bailey (2013) termed masculine "butch queens" in the gay house and ball scene. Because not all "coming out" and "questioning" youth at Elizabeth High School were directly involved with the local African American and Latino ball culture, as the leaders they were Andy, Belle Ebonaire and Charlie La Quack developed these family structures within the school. But because of the limited number of members and leaders within the school public at the time, Andy demonstrates here that he performed mother and father roles, depending on the gender orientation of his classmate.

In light of Andy's "daughter" whose family was Pentecostal, he similarly reflected on the pains surrounding the moral upbringing of these youth: "A lot of us came from conservative and religious families… [for example, a] Pentecostal mom does not let her son be out and claim his homosexuality.…Although, we learned to accept ourselves…we showed to the world that or to Elizabeth, NJ that we were proud of who we were. Deep inside a lot of us were hurting and… numb ourselves…." Andy's passage is reminiscent of Edgar Rivera Colon's essay, "Between Runway and the Empty Tomb: Bodily Transformations and Christian Praxis in New York City's House Ball Community," insofar as how members of the ball and houses perform, (re)narrate and affirm a queer faith at the balls; such moral articulations are a means to build and strengthen

this community that incorporates the religious upbringing and cultural knowledge of many ball and house members (Rivera Colon 2013). Ultimately, for these LGBTQ youth, these family/kinship ties helped them find belonging, support, and strength by articulating those moral anxieties and deep hurt over a homophobic and heteropatriarchal moral upbringing to mothers or fathers (and other members) who could relate and help them achieve "acceptance [of] ourselves" (as Andy explains), despite a sense of everyday condemnation. Outside the dilemmas these youth faced, their queer family at Elizabeth High School became an organized response to the heteropatriarchal and moral tensions and hostilities that they faced within the school public.

Lucio describes how being part of the gay family was instrumental in feeling supported and safe from tensions and hostilities that could erupt into potential violence and bullying. Below, he discusses the agency and familial groupings that gay students organized for themselves. He recounts,

> I think that we had it pretty good. Fortunately, I had my gay family, my gay mother. My gay grandmother, you know, we kind of called ourselves that…because, um, we wanted to let it be known. It's better to be like in numbers, you know? To be in numbers, you know to have more people. To be united. I know like my gay mother, one of my friends that I met in high school. He was already out. People knew of him. His mother which was Elizabeth Class of '89 early '90 ... As far as we can trace it back, she's one of the first persons that came out in the high school (interrupted)…She led the way and then came my gay mother and my gay aunt... By the time I rolled by they became friends of mine. Everybody in the high school respected us. The high school respected us.

Lucio describes how gay students used a (non-heteronormative) family structure as a survival network to engender an empowered sense of belonging and "unity" among gays and allies within the dominant space of the school. The fact is that by the time Lucio arrived in high school, the leaders or mothers who were upperclassmen had developed these familial and supportive structures to help the underclassman. I asked him what it meant for gays to be respected. He responded, "That means that nobody taunted us. Nobody messed with us. Nobody called us

names." Lucio emphatically suggests that these groupings gained respect from the rest of the high school student body, which helped to reduce bullying and other forms of violence. Similarly, Bailey explores views in his work among members who thought of their house as a gang for protection against homophobic and transphobic violence (102-104). In his essay about LGBTQ youth at the Village pier in New York City, Rob Maitra (2006) also examines how his participants described ways in which houses provided strong social and emotional functions for adolescents (67). In contrast to filmmakers and conservative politicians' reductive dominant representations of gangs and gangsta rappers (Jo Bright 1998) as innately criminal, violent, and a threat to national security, these gang-like collectivities of queer fictive kinship offer an anti-neoliberal counternarrative similar to how scholars point out that Latino/a gang culture is also a path to community, self-empowerment, self-determination amidst structural violence and economic inequality (Smith 2005, Cintron 2005; Guerra Vazquez 2005). Unlike other moments of Lucio's interview in which I found him soft-spoken, it was stunning to witness and sense a firmness and security evoked in his voice that reflected the sense of empowerment and protection he drew from this family structure in the school. For Lucio, these relationships were memorable and life changing, very much in the way that Andy described how sustaining his mother and father roles were to these LGBTQ E-high students. Unlike the bullying episodes I included in the earlier section in which the victimized students were alone, the gay family structure Lucio describes prevented LGBTQ students within this grouping from being targeted.

Further, the gay houses created a counterspace that challenged liberal multiculturalism or depoliticized, "good," and heteronormative racial and ethnic hierarchal state-designed groupings and categories (Melamed 2011; Lee 1999, 156-160; Maira 2009; DeGenova and Ramos-Zayas 2003, 18) that upheld hegemony and white supremacy and heteropatriarchy (Smith 2006).

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Instead, Andy explains how gender and sexual non-heteronormativity among LGBTQ students at

Elizabeth High School brought them together:

> When it comes to GLBT, the race thing goes out the window, for us, because whether we liked it or not we were thrown together, so it's like ok, what's more important we being Latino or dealing with our sexuality?...So [sexuality and gender difference] became more important than being Latino because we had already been ostracized from the [Latino and] from the African American community. We had been ostracized from…in other words, you have to understand it's like even though we have straight girlfriends and straight guy friends that were cool with us, the majority rules. So we kind of had been pushed out of those communities to a certain extent so we were kind of put together and it's like ok, we are all of different races so sexuality became more important to us [than race or ethnicity].

The gay houses were a prime example of genuine relationality and survival among minority

youth who were pushed out by their racial and ethnic communities given their non-conformity to

heteropatriarchal codes followed by African American (Bailey 2013, 80-88) and Latino families

and communities. Andy explains that among these non-white groupings, sexual and gender

variance became the center of their collectivity that they "dealt" with openly. In other words,

Andy hints at the politicized nature of these youth counterspaces that created a polysexual and

racial unity that was threatening to how local government officials and education administrators

used heteronormativity, race and ethnicity to categorize and organize students. In effect, these

students' counterhegemonic groupings challenged liberal multicultural codes or what Andy calls,

"the majority rules," that usually placed heteronormativity and racial and ethnic hierarchies at the

center and privileged a white(ned) heterosexual majority. Ultimately, this majority and its

status-quo within the school public double marginalized LGBTQ students of color. In the next

subsection, I explain how another counterspace also challenged liberal multiculturalism.

PORKCHOP CORNER

Lucio and other interviewees discussed how the "Porkchop" corner ("Porkchop was an ethnic slang term for Portuguese) was where a lot of youth interested in alternative music convened during the school day as a counterpublic from the school's dominant spaces and culture. With the changing sexual and gender visibility experienced within the high school in the early 1990s, it's important to consider the ways the Portuguese corner did not remain static but also continued to change with students' needs and the visions of queer relationality that flourished among them at the time. Marie, an alternative and goth girl, explains that the Porkchop corner was not ephemeral and that it was there before she attended Elizabeth High: "Those parameters were set before any of us got there. So that was already known that if you were this, you hung out here…" These "parameters" in fact actually suggest a static ethnic/nationalist and heteropatriarchal space privileged by liberal multiculturalism. Lucio further adds, "It was called the porkchop corner I guess because there were a lot of Portuguese people in the high school...I don't think they call it that now." While there were a lot of Portuguese students at the high school who, as discussed in the Elizabeth dance chapter of this dissertation, related to Latino youth socially and culturally, there were at times racial, ethnic and class hierarchies/distinctions. It is important to note here how this ethnic and racial space and turf was transcended by subculture because not only did Portuguese youth occupy it, but a mix of youth across racial, ethnic, sexual and gender variations. For example, Lucio explained that the Porkchop corner was where "the gays, the punks, and the skaters…congregated and met before and after school." In effect, the Porkchop corner, which was a seemingly contained and static ethnic-white and heterosexist space under the liberal multicultural curriculum, was actually a counterspace of sexual and gender plurality.

In light of that, Andy offers a description of how the Porkchop corner became a space of

LGBTQ tolerance and queer relationality and possibility where both LGBTQ and straight

students had the opportunity to connect with similarities and queer embodiments found in

musical and subcultural tastes:

> The Porkchop corner was where the Diwer entrance is. And a lot of goth kids and
> skaters, they hanged out there…They were very open minded that's why we just kind of
> fall in with them because some of them were in fact lesbians that were in the closet and
> they were into the whole new wave [scene]. They were open to know ok the front man
> for the Cure…Robert…he wears black lipstick, black eyeliner, he teases his hair out, he
> wears foundation. We idolize this   person so it's cool for me to be friends with so and
> so, you know what I'm saying! (laughing). It's very simple as that. And that's what's
> surprising about the early heavy metal kids, the early heavy metal bands were drag
> queens, transvestites like, you know, like Alice Cooper, Kiss, and all these people but
> when it came to the actual act of homosexuality that was a lot for them and hard to deal
> with. Some of them that were again, you can't generalize, some of them that were [?]
> and they were really into Freddy Mercury and Queen and they knew that Freddy Mercury
> was bisexual, they were very nice to me.

More than connecting, Andy describes that LGBTQ and straight students "fell in" with each

other to emphasize how multipositional boundaries between gay and straight students were

loosened within this counterspace. Pierre Bourdieu discusses how a citizen's taste is state-

controlled or naturalized and therefore predictable in his book *Distinction: A Social Critique of

the Judgment of Taste* (1984), and how such control perpetuates rigid boundary making and state

order between a (white) heteronormative bourgeoisie and a non-white non-heteronormative

proletariat. However, the fusions that Andy describes here of musical tastes and gender fluidity

illustrates the ways youth subcultures break down or denaturalize those boundaries in which

peers "fall in" with each other to create relationalities outside racial and class hierarchies and

heteronormativity. Further, in *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital* (1995),

Sarah Thorton refers to Bourdieu's concept of taste in subcultures that engenders an

unpredictable flow of cultural capital that disrupts the hierarchy and order of economic capital

(10). In other words, Thorton explains that the fusions behind tasting different subcultures is a cultural capital that distegrates the social order, normativity and hierarchy behind economic capital and its political economy. Andy explains the times that he as a gay Latino voguer student spoke comfortably to heterosexual white heavy metal male students over the similarities and overlaps of queer embodiments in their subculture tastes. Ultimately, he expresses how musical tastes and queer embodiments shared by different subculture groups became a bridge of possibility in which commonalities or a "unity in difference" could be achieved between LGBTQ and straight youth. Most importantly, these moments are "imaginary" (Cohen in Brake 1985, 22) or "imagined futures" (Tsolidis 2006) outside the demands of "good" neoliberal character within the school public. In the case of LGBTQ students of color at E-High, they forged space and potential relationship building amidst racial and cultural difference within a homophobic school public that did not guarantee them a future in which they belonged as first-class citizens.

Both Lucio and Andy express what Brake in his book *Comparative Youth Culture: The Sociology of Youth and Youth Subcultures in America, Britain, and Canada* (1985) suggests are meaningful alternative spaces of "style, values, [counter]ideologies and lifestyle" outside dominant publics like the school (24). Brake points out that working class students' creation of subculture spaces like the Porkchop Corner point to deficiencies in the dominant cultural ideology (1985, 21) that is the ideological foundation of school public. Further, he writes, "subculture offers something to working-class youth…This is a moratorium, a temporal and geographical space, which can be used to test out questions about their world and their relationship to it [and to others]" (Brake 1985, 26-27). In this quote, Brake points out that the subculture spaces working class youth create challenge the space and temporality of the school public by sustaining their own space where students can relate in critical ways outside state

markers and dominant curriculums, ideologies and discourses. His use of "moratorium" refers to the temporary nature of these counterspaces insofar as the constant and unpredictable relationalities of youth across race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality are not static but in-flux, momentary and changing. Similarly, Hall's discussion of cultural identity and diaspora suggests how (colonized or state-devised) ethnic or immigrant identities (in this case immigrant youth identities) cannot be boxed in without understanding how they change over time in their local lived lives and subjectivities (2006). One way to see this is by looking at how the Porkchop corner was no longer just an ethnic space but became a counterspace of plurality and queer relationality. However, given his own expectation about change and spaces or subjects not remaining static, Lucio pointed out earlier that, "I don't think they call [the Porkchop corner] that now."

HAITIANS AT THE FASHION SHOW

Andy explains that even amidst repressive homo- and transphobic behavior of most teachers, even if they were gay, some teachers showed their support for and approval of LGBTQ youth of color.   He explains, "But they really didn't have much for us at Elizabeth High School. Yeah, they had amazing teachers and some of them were open-minded and treated us like human beings." Here, Andy acknowledges that despite the limited resources for LGBTQ youth at the high school, there were "open-minded amazing teachers" who challenged the heterosexist climate. He reflects on an ally black teacher, "…One of the only [gay and trans friendly] programs we did have, we had an Arts Workshop and it was something where a black African woman, she was one of the teachers and she was running the arts workshop and she actually gave us positions within the Arts workshop so we can throw a fashion show in Elizabeth High School." Andy explains here that this "black African" teacher gave "us" (several LGBTQ youth)

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positions to run the fashion show.   In other words, the teacher allowed these youth to center their

sexual and gender subjectivities to choreograph the show. Even more, Andy explains how some

of the fashion show also had "…dancing, the runway…comedy. That era was the In Living

Color Era. Blaine and Twaine and Lawanda and stuff like that." Therefore, these youth

performed different skits of black mainstream comedy that they dissidentified with from their

own local positioning and subjectivity of sexual, gender, and racial difference. These youth were

comfortable enough with her to exercise their sexual and gender non-conformity and subculture

subjectivities in a fashion show within the school public.

Based on Andy's recollection, the audience attendance suggests that the fashion show

became a space of possibility in which students not exposed regularly or affiliated with the gay

youth subculture in the high school could interact with these youth in a formalized project within

the school public.   Andy recounts about the fashion show, "Well, we turned it, we packed the

house. I mean there were black, Haitian kids there and they were screaming our name like

hundreds of kids screaming our name. They weren't thinking about the sexuality part of it. They

were just thinking about wow, these people are amazing. These kids are amazing what they're

doing but we really didn't have that type of support." Andy brings up the fact that "black,

Haitian kids" were in attendance and "screaming our name," indicating the strong level of

comfort between heterosexual and openly gay students at this fashion show. He further goes on

to say that the black, Haitian kids "…weren't thinking about the sexuality part of it." Andy's

emphasis of "black, Haitian kids" raises the strong conservative and heteropatriarchal immigrant

and sexual identity presupposed among Haitians. Braziel (2008) raises a similar point about how

gay second-generation Haitian Assotto Saint was stigmatized among the New York Haitian

community. In other words, this fashion show became a temporal public that put aside gender

and sexual difference for youth to experience the possibility of critical multiculturalism outside

black and white heterosexist mainstream and immigrant spaces through the production of the

show within a liberal multicultural school public.

VOGUING AS COUNTERSPACE

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, some of the first gay youth that came out were

exposed to voguing, and they spent free time within the school and other spaces working on their

techniques. Some of these youths, like Andy, Belle Ebonaire and Charlie La Quack, were

voguing at house parties in Elizabeth, Newark, and New York City before Madonna had released

her hit song "Vogue," which brought voguing into popular culture. As "Vogue" became a record

selling hit, voguing among LGBTQ youth in the high school was common. Katia explains,

> In Elizabeth High School you have 4000 kids so anything and everything was in
> there. Umm for the most part they respect that and the majority of the kids didn't
> really seem to care! They enjoyed having them around. They laughed at it. It was
> great. Straight men. Straight boys had no problems hanging out with them
> because they were sure of who they were. You know but you had some other
> ones who were a little bit more on the I guess ignorant side or not even ignorant,
> they were kids, they were not exposed to that. Do you put everything in this one
> school locked together. I mean what could possibly come out of that you know
> because you did have students that lived…Most of the kids are products of their
> environment and are from certain neighborhoods that don't get exposed to many
> things and then they go to Elizabeth High School (laughing) back then especially
> where you had Madonna Vogue. Kids voguing in the courtyard, I mean, it's like
> what the hell! Back then it was a whole show, it was fun, it was cute, you know!
> You look back at it now and you're like, "Good for them!" All these kids trying
> to express themselves like that, you know?

Unlike the experience where she witnessed the bullying of a gay male student, discussed

earlier, Katia describes here a moment that shows tolerance from the heterosexual student body.

She mentions the moments when LGBTQ youth were voguing in the school's courtyard, putting

on a "show" for other students to watch. Katia notes how these voguers were now associated

with Madonna's "Vogue" and that their eccentric catwalking, pops, dips, spins and contortions

are less threatening, but "fun" and "cute" because the pop icon brought voguing to the mainstream. Even while these students were voguing after the release of Madonna's video and her numerous voguing performances, these youth disidentified with the mainstream form and production and were performing their local version of voguing as well as creating a counterspace. Mark, a heterosexual and honor student who expressed his respect for the LGBTQ students in the high school, also expressed that they were "funny and flamboyant," as in entertainment value. Though he told me that he was an ally, Mark was ultimately distant though familiar with these marginal youth subjects within the school. These youth were not only dancing or expressing themselves for shock value, but they were doing the "cultural labor…to not only survive but also to enhance the quality of their lives" (Bailey 2013, 16-17) by creating their queer counterspaces and incorporating themselves amongst normative and homophobic students "as they were."

Further, Katia also describes how these youth created what Mary Gray calls in *Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility* (2009) a boundary public (Gray 2009, 92-93) through their voguing performance, which blurred the lines between the school public and their counterspace. In the chapter, "From Walmart to Websites: Out in Public," Gray examines how rural LGBTQ youth came together and created their own counterspace in the form of a drag party within the dominant public of a Walmart. In the time that they take over the Walmart and "drag it up," they create a boundary public that is temporary, ephemeral and does not change the hegemonic culture and space of the Walmart. In the same way, Katia brings up the voguing in the courtyard as a boundary public. While it creates queer possibility and relationality, in the end, it is a temporary moment that does not change the school public and its existing symbolic violence. Katia hints that these LGBTQ youth were also met with intolerant and "ignorant" boys

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that did not approve of them or their performances yet did not or could not enact symbolic violence. Those moments are the voguers', which offered the possibility for some straight students to relate and familiarize themselves more with LGBTQ students through their dancing in ways that could create familiarity and ease the distance and rigid binary between gay and straight in the homophobic school public.

These youth were not simply reproducing what was familiar on mainstream television (as in Madonna's video productions, for example) but they were more importantly bringing their own self-production, cultural knowledge and self-expression of local subjectivity and existence into the school public. Even more, Darius Prier discusses in his essay, "Hip-hop as a Counterpublic Space of Resistance for Black Male Youth" how "many Black Male Youth have created and produced counterpublics through the cultural practices of hip hop culture…in response to the neoliberal cultural shift and shrinking public welfare state that excludes and criminalizes them" (112). Similarly, the student voguers at the high school were voguing as a counterpublic to express their cultural difference and excess that challenged the dominant ideologies and its privileged identities. Further, Prier explores ways educators must use hip hop as a "curriculum text…that energize[s] critical dialogue with Black male youth" (113) because the counterspaces they create through the music and cultural form "represent moments of resistance to 'deficit' theories in public schooling." (123). In comparison, these voguers brought this dance form to the school in response to the need for educators to incorporate their cultural knowledge and subjectivity within the inflexible neoliberal curriculum.

In another example, Andy revealed to me that one African American art teacher helped students put on a fashion show that included black and Latino LGBTQ dancers and voguers. Andy explained that this was really the only instance in which he recalled a teacher working on a

project within the school public that incorporated the LGBTQ and minority cultural capital of the students in such an empowering way. In his recollection of this fashion show, he describes how a largely African American and Haitian audience attended. He says, "Well, we turned it [in], we packed the house! I mean there were black Haitian kids there and they were screaming our names like hundreds of kids screaming our name." The image of a packed, black [and] Haitian kid audience illustrates a student performance that was outside of white cultural hegemony and one in which gay blackness was at the center of this counterspace. Andy goes on to say, "They weren't thinking about the sexuality part of it. They were just thinking about wow, these people are amazing. These kids are amazing what they're doing but we really didn't have that type of support." In other words, Andy is articulating that in this performance, the straight and gay students forgot for the moment all the boundaries that separated them from others who were different from them.   Like he said, the performance helped the audience come together as a collective in support of their talent and subjectivity. Ultimately, in both examples, these LGBTQ youth were creating with dancing and voguing what Jill Dolan describes as a utopian performative in her book, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (2005), or a moment outside of the present of everyday expectations and binaries of dominant ideologies and discourses (within the school public) to imagine and express a better future with queer relationality and new possibilities of social inclusion that includes their positioning. That is, these voguers invited their audience to familiarize themselves with them and their eccentric world and everyday existence by dancing to them in the courtyard or on a fashion stage in school. The LGBTQ youth were not waiting to be simply seen as marginal and vulnerable to symbolic violence, but wanted to be incorporated "as they were" within the school public.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I contextualized LGBTQ students and their fearless and legendary "cultural labor" (Bailey 2013) that challenged at certain moments a heteronormative neoliberal educational curriculum at Elizabeth High School. By examining local newspaper texts, I show the ways "bad" Elizabeth High School students, primarily working class students (of color) were reduced to index words like "truancy," "underperformance," "violence," and "failure." These texts are essentially evidence of neoliberal ideologies and discourses about minority youth and the preservation of white cultural hegemony in official publics. I used interviews with former Elizabeth High School student to offer three important findings. First, I examined their reflections and experiences to offer an understanding of youth LGBTQ of color stories that counteract those in the dismal and reductive newspaper texts. Second, I introduced and highlighted some of the courageous attitudes of the first out LGBTQ youth at Elizabeth High School. That section prepares us to understand the leadership of these LGBTQ students and allies who created out of necessity and urgency a supportive network that their educators did not (or could not) provide, and even discouraged. Even more, these counterspaces and youths' brave attitudes represented a fight for their visibility and dignity as students "as they were" within the neoliberal school public. These students fought individually and collectively in subtle and visible ways for a public school system based on social welfare values during a time of privatization, globalization, and homogenization. In this way, these students' brave fight to center their cultural knowledge and lived experience as gay minority youth must always be referenced and remembered. These stories offer an example for scholars to consider when they want to narrate the moments of agency and active cultural citizenship among doubly and triply marginalized

youth of color who are often viewed as defeated, disruptive or conforming to standing

educational curriculums and corresponding racist ideologies.

Chapter 2
Shadowing Angel Melendez:
Bridge and Tunnel Youth Club Kids at the Limelight

Elizabeth Latino youth were avid club goers in New York City's nightlife, arguably even more than they were within Elizabeth's own nightlife. Many were looking for an outside world in which they felt they could freely express their queerness and experience a sense of belonging and acceptance in ways that were difficult to find in their everyday local Elizabeth lives. After reviewing media texts and literature, I was struck by the very limited ways that journalists, filmmakers, and writers portrayed Latino youth clubgoers, many from Elizabeth, simply as members of an undesirable bridge and tunnel crowd (perceived to be lowbrow and potentially criminal or violent working class, brown, and black people from outside Manhattan—from either New Jersey or other NYC boroughs, particularly Long Island, Staten Island, Queens, and the Bronx) who were thought to be unfit and undesirable in the glamorous nightlife scenes unless they could successfully hide their racial, geographic, lower class, and cultural origins. In fact, their energies, values, eccentricity, and creativity greatly added to these nightlife scenes even when it was unwanted or labeled "wrong" (Drucker 2015) by influential club owner Michael Alig and his chosen white(washed) club kids. Journalists, filmmakers, and writers privileged Michael Alig and his club kids' homonormative queerness, or gay white(ned) middle and/or mobile class way of being (Murphy 2008; Duggan 2003; Hanhardt 2013; Drucker 2015), in which queer glamour and fabulousness were commodified and guaranteed capital in a neoliberal economy.

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In the case that will be analyzed in this chapter, Michael Alig and his chosen club kids ruled and defined impresario Peter Gatien's New York nightlife at three clubs: Limelight, Tunnel, and Club USA. These dance spaces were neoliberal(ized) nightlife publics, or spaces for a mainstream audience that privileged consumption and commodifiable subjects and groupings rather than a collective agency of social democracy and racial equality. In effect, Michael Alig and the chosen club kids were glorified as celebrities by alternative and mainstream media. In these nightlife publics, consumers were lured not to mix in with people of cultural and racial difference but to see and maybe rub elbows with celebrities, including the queer fabulous club kids. While these homonormative queer club kid scenes were affirming to many LGBT club goers, many queer of color youth did not fit the mold and were subtly or overtly not welcomed. In fact, this chapter explores how Elizabeth Latino clubgoers dissidentified with the club kid scene and made it their own outside the limits of liberal multiculturalism, whiteness, nationalism, and racism that devalued and marginalized the experiences of brown and immigrant stock working class Latino bridge and tunnel youth.

In particular, the chapter traces the experiences of Elizabeth's clubgoers through one of Michael Alig's famous club kids, Angel Melendez, who was actually from Elizabeth, according to my interviewees, though dominant media only acknowledged him as being a Colombian immigrant from Queens, New York. It's quite possible that in this New York nightlife world, Angel may have never mentioned that he was from Elizabeth because as a bridge and tunnel person, it is better to say that one is from Queens, New York and hide that you are actually from the U.S.'s industrial armpit: Elizabeth, New Jersey. The logic is that at least you are a "Hispanic" from New York City and not from New Jersey, which would make you even less attractive and more foreign. Further, in tracing Angel Melendez's life and rise as a club kid, I

disclose and examine the disturbing relationship he endured with Michael Alig and other

white(washed) club kids who perceived him as "less than" for being racially and culturally

different from them, and which led to his tragic and hateful murder in March of 1996 by Michael

Alig and an accomplice, Robert Riggs, aka "Freeze." I explore the ways Angel's positioning as

an Elizabeth youth within and outside New York's neoliberal nightlife public and Michael Alig's

club kid scene was similar to that of my participants and their sense of agency. Contrary to

mainstream and white subculture narratives, I argue that several local youth offer an alternative

narrative in which they remember Angel Melendez as an official yet dissidentified New York

City club kid from Elizabeth who affirmed his ethnic and immigrant identity and cultural

difference and practiced a competing and threatening vision of inclusion within an unforgiving

homonormative queer dance public. Rather than abandon his local ties, Melendez maintained an

open door to Elizabeth Latino/a youth that engendered sites of self-determination among them in

this exclusive scene, encouraging the shameless expression of their racial and cultural

subjectivity.

This chapter contains four sections that offer a context for the Limelight's neoliberal

dance public, which Angel and my Elizabeth participants consumed and engaged while also

simultaneously articulating their bridge and tunnel or counterpublic positioning. In the first

section, I focus on Angel Melendez's belonging and acceptance among the club kids as a 1.5-

generation queer Colombian-American immigrant who came to the U.S. at the age of 8. I offer

an examination of his exclusion by the club kids and his tragic fate at the hands of Michael Alig

and Freeze. I offer some analysis of a simplistic dominant narrative about Angel Melendez and

an out-of-control "drug-infested" nightlife scene that I complicate throughout the rest of the

chapter with attention to issues of race and exclusion.   Ultimately, I explore the hidden racist,

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nationalist, and xenophobic sentiments about Angel and others who could not perform and assume homonormative queerness.

In the second section, I offer a macro-level analysis of the power, characteristics, and racial and class dynamics of the club kid scene that I consider to be downtown New York City's and the Limelight's homonormative queer scene. By describing these, I situate the ways Alig and other homonormative club kids perceived brown skinned and immigrant-stock Angel and other racial or ethnic minority bridge and tunnel youth like my interviewees.

In the third section, I explore the ways Angel and my interviewees both assumed and criticized this neoliberal dance public while maintaining a liminality between the standards of this homonormative scene and their everyday relationality and belonging to non-heteronormative queer groupings and geographic contexts. In effect, this liminal positioning suggests how my participants, as non-heteronormative subjects, existed in tension with homonormative subjects in the scene who were not entirely convinced by the power and vision of the homonormative club kid scene but who more importantly brought their social positioning and self-determination into the scene and credited Angel with dignity and worthiness despite his being erased and undervalued in dominant narratives about Limelight and the club kids.

In the fourth section, I draw on selected texts, descriptions of activism and my participant interviewees' memories of Melendez, which reflect articulations from a subaltern counterpublic that defend and offer new insights about Melendez as well as strongly critique the racist and classist club kids and dance public. In some instances, the perspectives found in this section argue that Melendez's killing was racially motivated and not an accident caused by Alig's and his accomplice's drug use. These counterdiscourses humanize Melendez's story and disrupt the

reductive and colorblind neoliberal narrative about him that has been archived in dominant

media texts.

Fitting in with the Club Kids? The Case of Angel Melendez

Michael Alig and other promoters and club kids viewed most brown skinned Latino/a and

African American youth from New Jersey and the boroughs as a "bridge and tunnel" crowd.

Because Michael Alig was nightlife impresario Peter Gatien's right hand man, Alig virtually ran

New York City's nightlife and crafted a subculture that excluded racial democracy and cultural

difference. James St. James, Alig's confidante and roommate, says in his memoir *The Party*

*Monster: A Fabulous But True Tale of Murder in Clubland (*1999), "The worst drug calamity,

the worst case scenario, was that you accidentally took too much ecstasy and were actually nice

to a Bridge and Tunnel person" (67). Here, St. James suggests the overt and covert social

distance that chosen club kids maintained between themselves and clubgoers who were working

class to working poor racially brown or black people, including fobs or of immigrant origin.

Further, a reading of St. James' statement above suggests that he privileged a dominant

colorblind discourse in which drug use justified racist and classist actions and behaviors as

almost entertainment and as having humor value, and not as imminently dangerous to those who

were racially and culturally different. The same overarching drug and consumption narrative

covered the racism, hate and exclusions in the nightlife scene in a documentary, *The Limelight:*

The Rise and Fall of New York's Greatest Nightclub Empire (2011), despite a quick reference to

how police overwhelmingly profiled and discriminated against black youth in consumer spaces

such as nightlife publics, which doesn't include any mention of how Latino youth were also

significantly profiled. There was no substantial discussion of discriminatory racial profiling

policies regarding black and Latino clubgoers by promoters and security. This chapter uncovers

an alternative narrative of race and ethnicity that challenges the dominant colorblind ideologies

and discourses (Bonilla-Silva 2006) of a neoliberal nightlife public where actions of hate and

intolerance of racial and cultural difference rampantly exists but are downplayed largely through

drug and alcohol consumption.

In Angel Melendez's case, despite being one of Michael Alig's club kids, "chosen" to

represent the glamourous queer nightlife scene at Limelight, he was not really fit or

homonormative queer enough to successfully belong among Michael Alig's club kids. What I

mean by "homonormative queer" in the club kid scene is a gay white(ned) middle and/or mobile

class individual (Murphy 2008; Duggan 2003; Hanhardt 2013; Drucker 2015) whose queer

glamour and fabulousness is commodified and guarantees capital in a neoliberal economy. In

effect, this queer homonormative class achieves its incorporation (Luibheid 2008) in a dominant

linear narrative of time and space (Skott-Myhre 2008, 44) while non-heteronormative subjects

(or non-white persons of racial, ethnic, immigrant, and non-homonormative queer performances)

cannot achieve that same linearity, sense of belonging and neoliberal citizenship (Luibheid 2008

and Drucker 2015), as I will show through the texts and perspectives I examine in this chapter.

The main reason why Angel "belonged" to the famous club kid circle was that he was Alig's

drug dealer.   In fact, the dominant narrative about the Limelight's nightlife scene in the mid

1990s reduces Melendez simply to an immigrant drug dealer and wannabe club kid. In *Party

Monster: The Shockumentary* (1997), club kid king Michael Alig opens the documentary by

talking about directly about Melendez: "He was a copycat…one of those copycats we hate." The

homonormative queer class did not incorporate racially and ethnically marked bodies/subjects

like Angel, who were not in a privileged positioning of commodifiable glamorousness. That is,

Angel Melendez, who was a brown-skinned Colombian immigrant and drug dealer from Queens,

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of bridge and tunnel quality. Angel Melendez's racial, ethnic, linguistic and cultural excess were both voluntarily and involuntarily unwavering. Because Angel Melendez and other bridge and tunnel youth could or would not be whitened, they were truly not incorporable, and thus were viewed as "copycats" or "wannabes" within Alig's club kid circle and scene. Alig's use of "hate" to describe his feeling toward "copycats," and toward Angel Melendez in particular, is a reflection of the deep hostilities and potential for violence over racial and cultural difference that is often hidden or downplayed by colorblind ideologies and discourses.

Going to the Tunnel, one of Peter Gatien's nightclubs (located in the West Village across from the West Side Highway), from 1994-1996 as an undergrad NYU student living among other classmates in the university dormitories, I experienced deep-seated racism, classism, and xenophobia against working class people of color and of Latino immigrant origin. By then, I was in college, articulating my locally lived and ethnic and queer Colombian-American identity through research, writing, and poetry and questioning my surroundings and the politics of race (unlike in high school) amidst New York City's regime of commodification and consumption and my engagement with privileged white students on trust funds. Because of my strong connection to Elizabeth Colombian and Latino identity, which I would not pass off, I often felt unaccepted by most of the upper-middle class kids from NYU that I went clubbing with. In fact, some of the NYU Asian American classmates I hung out with were deep in the club scene with a major club kid promoter who was a colleague of Michael Alig's and was mentioned briefly in the documentary *The Limelight: the Rise and Fall of New York's Greatest Nightclub Empire* (2011). This promoter had his own VIP room at the Tunnel. Because I was friendly with the promoter and I had some of the same friends from NYU, I had access to this promoter's room, but I was not comfortable in this space where in my view people were intimidating and

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pretentious and drugs like Ecstasy (often laced with heroin) and Cocaine were openly consumed among the booth-size cushy leatherette seats. Ultimately, I never felt like I belonged among the upper-middle class and homonormative majority whites and Asians in this promoter's VIP room.

This white upper class promoter often dressed in Japanese-orientalist-pop-inspired wear that complemented the Japanese pop craze in NYC's nightlife. Several club kid names and characters were inspired by Japanese names and concepts, like Keoki, Sushi, and Kabuki, who became nightclub icons and main attractions that people came to see, according to Michael Musto in *Limelight: The Rise and Fall of New York's Nightclub Empire* (2011). My Asian and Asian American friends played on this Japanese pop craze for music, clothing, and fashion accessories to fit in and be desired among the dominant white homonormative club kids. Yet my Asian American friends of Filipino, Korean, and Japanese descent appreciated me because many of them came from immigrant families or were international students (who were not assimilating to dominant white culture but whose look reified the Japanese pop craze. I often sensed that my Korean and Filipino friends downplayed (and erased) their own ethnic identity to pass as Japanese-looking to uphold the pop craze within the club scene.

In my experience, the Japanese pop craze and commodifiable ethnic identity was a binary to the working class and inner city aesthetic of Latinos and African Americans. In a way, the nightlife scene pitted Asians against Hispanics and African Americans. Further, unlike me, from a Latino working class blue-collar background, most of my Asian friends were of upper-middle class stock, far from working class origins and therefore were welcomed into the homonormative queer circle. One Filipino-American club kid who was a close friend of mine turned on me in an instance when I told him that his looks could pass as Latino. Being from California, "Latino" to him was synonymous with a dark-skinned Mexican of working class and

immigrant origins. I said this to engender relationality with him, knowing the Hispanicity we shared. He immediately challenged my statement by saying, "I'm not a Mexican!" In effect, my friend's ability to look Japanese and pass in the club scene meant being commodified and essentialized in the Japanese pop craze, downplaying his Filipino and Hispanic identity and reifying divisions among other Latinos in the club scene. I often felt brushed off by my Asian American and Asian international friends when they engaged the promoters and other club kids at the Tunnel. I did not try to fit in because I knew that I could not fit in. My brown skin, working class aesthetic, and not quite right nightlife gear were "wrong" (Drucker 2015) and all too reminiscent of people of color who were unwilling or unable to conform to homonormative queer standards. So often while they were in the VIP room, I stayed on the main floor. At times, they would leave the VIP rooms and come to the main floor where everybody, including the bridge and tunnel clubgoers, was.

Ultimately, because I always said I was from Elizabeth, I became a reminder of being of bridge and tunnel quality to others even while I was dorming at NYU. One Filipino-American NYU friend of mine who was also from Hillside once yelled at me after hearing me tell a group of NYU students that my town Hillside bordered Elizabeth. He later told me in confidence, "Don't tell people that Hillside borders Elizabeth, tell them that Hillside borders Union!" In the mid 1990s, Union could still pass as a middle class majority white suburban town, unlike majority minority working class Elizabeth. In other words, my roommate understood that I would be perceived as "less than" on campus for being associated with Hillside's questionably bad borders with Elizabeth, Newark, and Irvington. In the Tunnel club scene, my frame for deep house and being exposed to the music and scene in Elizabeth first was something that I chose not to hide for the sake of gaining status within the club kids scene. That is, you had to hide that you

were from Elizabeth because if not you were seen as less than others. Yet, these experiences are often internal and suppressed within a colorblind and neoliberal dance space.

In Fenton Bailey's and Randy Barbato's film *Party Monster* (2003), Wilson Cruz's portrayal of Angel Melendez was ultimately contained by an official colorblind, drug-infested and liberal multicultural narrative that neither politicizes his murder in the nightlife scene nor humanizes him. Gay (Brooklyn-born) Nuyorican actor Wilson Cruz played Angel Melendez with his racialized brown and queer body as an immigrant club kid and drug dealer. While Cruz played Angel Melendez with some degree of compassion and empathy as a Latino gay male and marginalized subject, the character was not fully developed because he was not sufficiently politicized or treated as a lowbrow subject in the film but was contained in the colorblind homonormative queer nightlife narrative sustained in the film; race and class difference were not properly addressed. It is quite evident that the film producers oversimplified and missed Angel Melendez's Colombian-American and New Jersey hybrid origins. The film producers' casting of a Nuyorican second-generation male displaces Angel Melendez's ethnic and immigrant status as a 1.5 generation Colombian-American who identified as Colombian and not Puerto Rican. This incorrect characterization ultimately sustains an essentialization and homogenization notion (Oboler 1995) that all Latinos come from the same place, are of the same nature, and end up with the same colonized and defeated fate. The movie does not touch upon the racist implications of Angel Melendez's killing but portrays a naturalized fate of a brown skinned drug dealing working class youth. Further, the reduction of Hispanic youth lives and their futures to drug dealing, criminality, exclusion and eventual death in a neoliberal regime suggests most working class Latino youth and their fates do not matter, nor does their personal history. Simply put, showing Angel's life and brown racialized body as an eventual dead or imprisoned drug dealer

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and criminal is the view that matters, especially to media producers who easily frame the binary

of Latinos as either simplistically and dehistoricized good or bad representations that reify state

notions of Hispanics (De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003). In this case, Angel is the bad subject

whose drug dealing perpetuated Alig's drug addiction. In effect, the film producers, in my view,

humanize Michael Alig and criminalize Angel Melendez, despite Alig's and Rigg's hate crime.

Ultimately, Michael Alig and his accomplice, Robert Riggs aka Freeze, heinously and

hatefully took Melendez's life in March 1996 and disposed of his remains in ways representing

unimaginable violence and hostility toward this Latino club kid's brown skin, immigrant-

accented English, and Colombian origins. Yet, in colorblind narratives, they disguised this

hostility by describing the violence as a freak accident due to drug addiction, as portrayed in

Fenton Baily and Randy Barbato's *Party Monster: The Shockumentary* (1998) and *The Party

Monster* (2003). One of Alig's confidants, club kid Gitsie, is quoted as saying that "Angel was

tacky – He deserved to die." Gitsie's view that one could "deserve to die" for being different is

similar to that of other killers of gay Latino brown skinned men between 1990-2010, like Julio

Rivera[17] (1990), Eddie Garzón[18] (2001), and José Sucuzhañay[19] (2008) who brutally and fatally

beat their victims in hate crimes like Michael Alig and his accomplice; these killers perceived

their victims as foreign, unworthy and threatening to normative standards. Further, Alig and the

club kids ascribed numerous undesirable qualities to Angel's dark skinned body, such as being a

drug dealer, criminal, and wannabe, that justified his death as meaningless in their minds because

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[17] A New York Times article that covers Julio Rivera's murder:
http://www.nytimes.com/1991/11/21/nyregion/2-accomplices-guilty-of-murder-in-gay-bashing-case-in-queens.html?pagewanted=all

[18] A Gay City News article that covers Eddie Garzón's murder:
http://gaycitynews.nyc/gcn_527/manchargetin2001.html

[19] A New York Times article that covers José Sucuzhañay's murder:
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/07/nyregion/07hate.html?ref=topics&_r=0

he did not belong within their privileged and homonormative queer class of white(ned) and chosen club kids.

Similar to the police's indifferent and stalled reaction to another murder, that of Julio Rivera, Melendez's murder investigation was not taken seriously because of his perceived profile as a worthless and disposable member (or non-citizen) of society. In some cases, like Melendez's, murders not documented or archived as hate crimes similarly, which may perhaps be explained by Juana Rodriguez's discussion in her chapter on Afro-Brazilian asylum seeker Marcelo Tenorio in her book *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces* (2003). Tenorio discusses how U.S. sexual and gender based asylum claims are written and archived in ways that erase both the self-determination and subjectivity of the victims, and more broadly the U.S. violence of sexual and gender variant subjects, making the U.S. appear to be a sufficiently tolerant nation in comparison to "less progressive" third world countries with problems of sexual and gender violence. Similarly, the erasure of these New York City-based barbaric hate crimes expands a U.S. narrative of "optimal" racial and gay tolerance that ultimately reifies U.S. colorblind ideologies and discourses

Privileging Homonormative Queerness in the Neoliberal Dance Public

Alig and the club kids gained stardom through their residency in Peter Gatien's growing New York nightlife empire with the Limelight as their centerpiece. In the late 1980s through the early 1990s, they were invited to make numerous televised appearances and were discussed in countless local New York City and national newspaper and journal articles about the glamorous and countercultural nightlife and society they had created. The rise of the club kids' media visibility demonstrates the ways they gained power and influence from a commodifiable and

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glamorous homonormative queerness that was often advertised as being available for consumption at the Limelight.

Buckland (2002), Puar (2007) and Hanhardt (2013) analyze how homonormative men and women were privileged or exceptionalized in a national, neoliberal or economic context, which supports the idea that these homonormative queer club kids were invested in and perceived as capital for industry and development. I label the club kids "homonormative queer" to indicate that their middle class positioning, cultural capital, performances, and embodiments, while sexually and gender variant and glamorously eccentric, did not celebrate racial and ethnic (politicized) diversity. In *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007), Jasbir Puar points out how the U.S. government celebrates homonationalism that exemplifies homonormative men as defending and furthering U.S. nation and empire through their efforts. Similar to furthering a hegemonic project, Fiona Buckland suggests that homonormative men are often intimately tied to furthering capitalism in the entertainment industry and nightclubs (89). It is no surprise that Alig became a homonational figure within Peter Gatien's expanding club world in New York City, which was often described as a nightlife empire of local, national, and global influence and success. In *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* (2013), Christina Hanhardt explains that in the 1970s, before the advent of New York's neoliberal economization, "gay white men were extolled for saving declining cities as vanguard members of the vaunted back-to-the-city movement" (8). Hanhardt further writes that in the late 1990s and early 2000s, "gay populations were invoked as enticements for the creative class of workers to settle in, and thus revitalize, restructured regions" (8). Hanhardt argues that investors in hegemonic power and urban development had faith in white gay men and women to develop and transform post-industrial spaces into new sites of rejuvenated and commodifiable space for

consumption. Handhardt's description of these gay men and women as a "creative class" is

similar to notions of the glamorousness of the homonormative queer club kid society that became

profitable. Alig and his club kids were also part of this creative class, countering the "death of

downtown" of New York's post-disco and post-Andy Warhol nightlife. In a *Sunday Times*

August 24, 2003 article, "Disco Bloodbath," St. James writes that Alig's chosen club kids and

other freaks treated him "…like he was the second coming of Warhol" (12). This success did not

happen overnight and in the beginning it was unforeseeable. In William Bastone's and Jennifer

Gonnerman's *Village Voice* December 17, 1996 article, "Busting the King of the Club Kids,"

they write,

> The club kids were widely ridiculed as bratish outsiders by older trendies when they first
> appeared. The original Details magazine dismissed Alig and his crew as 'little boys in
> beanies.' Yet, Alig [and his club kid entourage] ended up revitalizing Downtown (first at
> Danceteria and the Tunnel, later at Club USA and Disco 2000) at a time when the rapidly
> aging scene was in desperate need of an injection of young blood (37).

Here these journalists point out how Michael Alig and his club kids were a creative class of

'little boys in beanies' that ultimately 'revitalized' a downtown economy of nightlife and

entertainment ultimately into a "nightlife empire," according to Billy Corbin's documentary,

Limelight: The Rise and Fall of New York's Greatest Nightclub Empire (2011).

Michael Alig's revival of downtown nightlife and lucrative success in the New York

nightlife industry occurred during a period David Harvey calls the "neoliberalization of New

York" in his book, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005). With respect to New York's

nightlife industry, Peter Gatien invested in Alig's and his club kids' "creative" and artsy

innovations using self-made financial investment and entrepreneurship.   Of course, there is

some goodness to the homonormative queer scene. What is inspiring and legendary about this

"creative class" of club kids was their ability to "…undeniably…[move] sexual liberalization

[forward] and expand sexual possibilities" of eccentrically gay and gender variant subjects within prior heteronormative-only and sexually repressive dominant publics, according to Peter Drucker (2015) in his essay, "Gay Normality and Queer Transformation." Even more, some queer of color youth like DJ Keoki, Ru Paul, Ernie Glam could integrate into this club kid society given their ability to assume effortlessly and loyally the whitewashed racial codes and proper cultural and linguistic capital that Angel Melendez would not and could not. With that said, Harvey explains how politicians, investors and developers promoted a neoliberalized culture that erased the collective memory of democracy "via artistic freedom and artistic license" and a demand for lifestyle diversification that promoted an environment of individualism and privatization (46-47). Political and economic power privileged sexual and gender diversity for purposes of profit, but in ways that depoliticized it and marginalized, erased, or criminalized racial, immigrant, and ethnic subjectivities. In terms of the nightlife, Alig's club kids' costuming and party ideas were racially depoliticized. Ideas about racial and ethnic diversity or black and brown situated knowledge were removed from the collective memory of downtown's (the Greenwich Village's) Civil Rights groups' struggle for racial and queer of color equality in Alig's club kid culture, which put commodifiable glamor and homonormativity at the center. Therefore, Peter Drucker (2015) explains, the lack of diversity among this homonormative class excluded those with "...the wrong bodies, the wrong clothes, the wrong sexual practices, the wrong gender or the wrong colour skin viewed [because it was] bad for marketing…[and] increased stigmatisation and marginalization for…LGBT people [of color]". Drucker helps us to understand the strong uniformity and homogeneity that ultimately represented a refined, mobile and monitored homonormative class who were exceptional to most "other" gays who originated from working to lower class and immigrant backgrounds and whose perceived-immobile bodies

and behaviors, like Angel Melendez's and the majority of bridge and tunnel consumers', were "wrong" for the club kid society. Similarly, as in the nightlife scene, Duggan's (2003) and Hanhardt's (2013) work argues that gay Civil Rights organizations and activism and gay niche markets (Quiroga 2000 and Chasin 2000) resonated with neoliberal values or consumer demands that ultimately disenfranchised racial, immigrant and ethnic subjects.

When considering Gitsie's use of "tacky" or Alig's use of "copycat" or "wannabe," we must consider these enunciations in the context of a neoliberal public that is really demeaning Angel as a non-white, racially-brown, undesirable immigrant who is not representative of the creative class. In his work, *The Tenets of Neoliberalism* (2004), Henry Giroux writes about "neoliberal racism" that blames individual persons and their "bad choices" as the problem and not the racist system and its ruling people. Further, Giroux explains how this neoliberal racism operates through a colorblind strategy of language to thwart perceptions of racism by producing less overt versions. Giroux writes, "[M]arketplace ideologies now work to erase the social from the language of public life so as to reduce all racial problems to private issues such as individual character and cultural depravity" (57). Here, Giroux explains how actual (colorblind) language used to describe "bad neoliberal subjects" is convoluted to hide racist sentiments and emphasize individual deficiencies to maintain institutions' political correctness. "Tacky," "copycat," and "wannabe" are examples of language that erases racist implications while focusing on Angel's lack of proper aesthetics to devalue him.

Another way Giroux explains that those in power hide racist intentions within neoliberal projects of development is by posing a "leave it up to the market" view that is also assumed by non-heteronormative subjects. Those in power justify projects of development by affirming that everyone has a shot at achieving success through individual self-sufficiency and effort. And

rather than blaming privileged people and the unequal and racist system at play, this ideology

places the burden on the market as to whether individuals and their efforts "make it" or not; such

is the case with Angel's liminal position. Giroux explains that neoliberal values celebrate

individual freedom, "a freedom…no longer linked to a collective effort on the part of individuals

to create a democratic society" (62). In other words, in a dominant neoliberal public, one's

individual character (and how one fares individually) is emphasized over collective markers of

race, ethnicity, and class, which hides the deep inequalities, hate and violence of those with

privilege and/or power. Yet my interviewees' racial and ethnic subjectivity and critical views I

show in this chapter were more complicated than simply being whitewashed in this

homonormative dance public, unlike other loyal and chosen Latino club kids who successfully

assumed Michael Alig's homonormative-queer club kid eccentric and depoliticized

performances of race, class, and ethnicity even after knowing about Michael Alig's murder.

According to Erik Meers' *Advocate* February 4, 1997 article, "Codes of Silence For months gay

'club kids' in New York City kept quiet about a grisly murder. Some people are saying it was

the price of belonging." The journalist quotes St. James as saying about Michael Alig's

entourage, "…It was a vampiric kind of thing. These people would follow him around and

worship him" (49). In effect St. James helps us understand how "individual freedom" sometimes

came with a price insofar as these chosen club kids sold their souls to Alig and his (nightlife)

industry in which he "gave them names, dressed them up and told them what their personalities

were going to be" (St. James in Meers 1997, 49).   Similar to St. James' labeling of these club

kids as "vampiric," William Anthony Nericcio details in *Tex[t]-Mex: Seductive Hallucinations of

the "Mexican" in America (2007),* what happened to Latino/a actresses like Lupe Velez when

they became "dehistoricized and whitewashed monsters" by complying with producers' demands

of turning them into stars when this meant adopting physical changes to look white, as well as other political and cultural accommodations to make it in the Hollywood industry. Giroux's quote is a reminder that individual "freedoms" were celebrated by all in the dominant public of the Limelight, which maintained it as a politically correct institution of market equality despite the colorblind and covert racist agendas behind it.

Similarly, Buckland (2002) writes about the ways homonormative and non-heteronormative subjects assume "economies of capital" or liberal multicultural values (or not) within nightlife spaces. She explains that subjects can have different ways of looking at homonormative dance floor spaces. First, she proposes that subjects can view spaces with a critique of capitalism (Buckland, 89), in which case they are not contained by the privileging or exclusionary practices taking place. Second, Buckland points out that both homonormative and non-heteronormative subjects do assume "the standards of beauty and conspicuous consumption" of such spaces (89). Even more, she writes, "Informants who enjoyed going to larger, more expensive clubs with their designer bodies and dress…seemed to articulate their politics through describing clubs as spaces of self-actualization and realization; be all that you can be, rather than destabilize normativity or make allegiances with other queers, people of color…" (89). Here, Buckland is writing about how both homonormative and non-heteronormative subjects assume, successfully or not, neoliberal codes. Similar to Giroux, she suggests here through her use of "self-actualization and realization" Giroux's concept of "individual freedom," celebrated within these spaces that entice non-heteronormative subjects to view themselves as equal to homonormative bodies irrespective of their marked racial and ethnic bodies. My participants never described feeling out of place or uncomfortable at the Limelight; they were there like everyone one else to explore the dominant nightlife public. Further, the individual freedom

celebrated in these spaces, according to Buckland, "stabilizes" normativity for non-heteronormative queers and people of color. Despite this stabilization in this neoliberal dance public, my participants show or express a liminality similar to Angel Melendez's insofar as they still exuded their associations with cultural excess, bridge and tunnel affiliations with translocal and underground minority house music counterpublic scenes.   As a result, non-heteronormative queers felt that they belonged, according to the universal value of individual freedom, especially if they could afford to or were invited with "comped" admission, which some of my interviewees shared with me.   For example, in his *New York Times* December 6, 1996 article, "Party Promoter at Night Spots is Held in the Death of a Clubgoer," David Kocieniewski interviews Johnny Melendez, Angel's brother, who explains how Angel wanted to be a part of this "interesting world" (1) where the values of "individual freedom" motivated him to integrate as best he could, even if the racial projects at play did not favor him. Therefore, it is important to consider how Angel and my interviewees were influenced by, enjoyed and assumed the values of individual freedom in this dominant and colorblind public despite their racially and geographically marked "bridge and tunnel bodies."

The Tensions (and Politics) Between Homonormative and Non-Heteronormative Queerness in the Dominant Nightlife Public

Angel had one foot in the homonormative club kid circle and one foot out of it because Alig and the other club kids felt his cultural and social capital and taste did not neatly fit with homonormative embodiments, performances, and styles. Angel, a darker-skinned Latino of working class immigrant origins from Queens and Elizabeth, became Michael Alig's and the rest of the club kids' main supplier of high quality drugs. Angel's role as Alig's Colombian immigrant drug dealer reified the negative, racist stereotypes that mainstream society had about

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Colombians, and in Frank Owen's (2003) words, "low-level" Hispanic drug dealers of the late 1980s and 1990s. Further, these stereotypes maintained him in bridge and tunnel, immigrant, working class to minority poor and "non-linear" origins of space and time, in contrast to his homonormative counterparts' linear space and time, according to Skott-Myhre (2008). Angel's "tackiness" stems from his excessively racialized and immigrant class embodiments and performances that racialized and politicized him as a foreign criminal and questionably legal 1.5-generation Colombian. Angel's spatial-temporal positioning is all too reminiscent of the ways minority queers are marginalized in neoliberal(ized) spaces and publics of the city (Haenfler (2010), Hanhardt (2008 and 2013), Rivera-Servera (2013). Further, Gitsie's use of "tackiness" refers to Angel's non-heteronormative embodiments and performances that complicated and disrupted the space and politics of the homonormative queer club.

Buckland (2002), Rivera-Servera (2011 and 2013), and David Román (2011) reflect on the tensions and politics of space that non-heteronormative queers faced with homonormativity. Buckland writes,

> [I]n relation to queer clubs, homonormativity – that is, the conservative and assimilationist dominant gay culture that seeks to alienate queerness produced social tensions between itself and queers that were not resolved in some spaces. Disposable income, whiteness, and ideal notions of physical attractiveness produced a sense of belonging and a sense of alienation in different individuals (89).

According to Buckland, there were "tensions" or racial hostilities between homonormative "white" queers who felt they "belonged" or were desired, and less privileged and "less moneyed" or disadvantaged racially marked non-white groups. The "alienation" Buckland refers to speaks to how these hostilities or exclusions tampered with moments of heterotopia in the space of the club. Further, Buckland suggests here that the homonormative subjects' utopia is restricted to non-heteronormative subjects. In his essay, "Dance Liberation," David Román describes this

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illusion of gay dance spaces as utopic despite the discrimination or exclusion non-white queers faced in these dancing spaces. Román explains that such discrimination "limits who gets to participate in these utopian yearnings" (291). Supporting Buckland's ideas about these hostilities toward non-heteronormative queers, Rivera-Servera's research offers a more focused ethnographic approach to non-heteronormative Latino/a queers in mainstream gay clubs he views as homonormative. He writes, "The complex nature of … exchanges is particularly significant when addressing minoritarian subjects who do not fit as easily into the dominant definitions and aspirations that shape the social realm of the club. Latino and Latino queer dancers in the United States enter the 'safe space' of the club with a marked difference" (261). In this quote, Rivera-Servera (2011) alludes to how Latina/o minoritarian or non-heteronormative queer subjects do not fit the homonormative aspirations of the club and subsequently engage in "complex exchanges" with homonormative subjects that I interpret as hostile yet covertly racist, anti-ethnic and classist. Rivera-Servera's use of "safe space" implies that under a colorblind ideology, gay mainstream clubs pretend but ultimately fail to be real institutions of tolerance and inclusion across intersectional markers. Rivera-Servera points out that these dominant publics or institutions seemingly embrace diversity and all queers. But in reality, he says, Latinas/os are viewed as having a "marked difference" from the [neoliberal] "aspirations that shape the social realm of the club," a covertly racist public space dominated by privileged homonormative queers.

Under these power constructs, in what ways are non-heteronormative queers able to enjoy and achieve belonging within homonormative queer public? In the previous paragraph, I quoted Román explaining the "limits of who gets to participate in these utopian yearnings." That is, whose utopia do we get to see? Román is explaining here that those who are privileged are

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the ones who get to "participate." Precisely, these utopian yearnings are the official narrative

that is exposed or celebrated while non-heteronormative queer articulations, performances,

embodiments, and collectivities are misrepresented, undervalued, simplified or erased entirely.

In the case of my interviewees, many were able to assume that utopia based on their neoliberal

aspirations, as I explained in the previous section and as I will show later. However, it is

important to distinguish between first-generation Latina/o queer immigrants and second-

generation Latinas/os whose marked differences can be read differently, and in the latter case be

more undesirable and threatening to profit-driven publics.

Scholars have written about how investors and developers view queer first-generation

immigrants in relation to first world globalization projects, which includes the building of gay

Westernized markets and an international LGBT Movement (Manalansan 1997, Murray 1995,

Patton 2002) and tourism and nightlife (Decena 2011, Cantu Jr. 2009, Benedicto 2008, Murray

1995) that privilege homonormativity and white cultural hegemony while marginalizing "other"

and non-heteronormative queers. Similarly, the Limelight's dominant public is the center of a

nightlife empire with a global reach that polices and disenfranchises non-heteronormative queers

like the Latino/a immigrants that Rivera-Servera discusses. Such positionalities can relegate

queer diasporic subjects to second-class status (though not in all cases) because they fail to adopt

(or accommodate) mainstream and globalization codes. Scholars have argued that these

subjects' race, ethnicity, homeland class, geographic positioning, embodiments and

performances are viewed as premodern (Benedicto 2008, Manalansan 1997, Decena 2011, Cantu

Jr. 2009) in a global (club)world sustained by global capital. Ultimately, these subjects are seen

as undesirable or threatening to U.S. (homo)normative assimilationist policies in line with global

projects. Their subjectivities are contradictory to globalization's investors and developers who

privilege the homogenization and depoliticization of LGBT identities (and erasure of local identities) like those of the club kids and the LGBT market, and that control production and packaging (of, for example, music albums, tourism, nightlife, clothing brands, and toys) for consumption and profit.

However, there are studies that suggest that queer immigrants have an impact on dominant publics. One anthology, Cindy Patton's and Benigno Sanchez-Eppler's *Queer Diasporas* (2000), describes this impact. Their book celebrates how the movement of queer immigrants allows them to realize desires they could not achieve in their homeland or current locality and create materiality and agency that can be read as counternarratives in dominant publics. In other words, queer embodiments and performances are claims of self that fall outside of or are uncontainable by nation and empire. These authors emphasize that queer immigrants are not silenced and marginalized subjects but that they also impact the locality or dominant public around them (Sanchez-Eppler 2000 and Manalansan 2000).

Buckland and Rivera-Servera both document how non-heteronormative queers articulate their utopias even though they are not represented in homonormative, neoliberal official narratives. Buckland expands on the ways in which non-heteronormative queers challenge homonormative queer publics in the clubs through lived moments of improvised dancing and mimesis, and queer embodiments, performances, and collectivities. Rivera-Servera specifically writes about Latino/a queers amidst the limits of this public,

> Their pursuit of experiences of sexual freedom is often intersected by a similarly intense desire to acknowledge, embody, and act out their latinidad. Dance, as an act of self-presentation and community building, becomes one of the mechanisms through which Latina and Latino queers negotiate their place and membership within and outside the club (261).

Here, Rivera-Servera explains how Latino/a dancers act out and embody their latinidad even while (homo)normative figures in control undermine their articulations of race and ethnicity, and how these dancers also relate to the sexual and gender freedom of this neoliberal public. Here, he says that that the act of dance is agency and materiality that happens simultaneously within the dominant public and its (homo)normative codes. Further, he emphasizes that these queers use dance as an "act of self-presentation" that is different from homonormative codes and an agency of "community building" that "negotiate[s]" or does not simply fully conform to this homonormative public. He explains that this dance "negotiate[s] [these Latino queers'] place and membership within and outside the club." In other words, the dance becomes reflective of non-heteronormative groupings outside the homonormative public of the club where such subjectivities thrive and are centered (Haenfler 2010, Rodriguez 2003, Rivera-Servera 2013, La Fountain-Stokes 2009). Ultimately, Rivera-Servera points out that Latino/a dancers do build their own narratives through their racial and ethnic subjectivity and groupings that either fit within the public or exceed it.

With that said, I return to the issue of how certain versions of utopia occur simultaneously on the same dance floor even though the official or homonormative queer narrative is privileged and therefore more visible. In *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope in the Theater* (2005), Jill Dolan writes about how there are a variety of publics occurring at the same moment and argues that it is limiting to consider that there is only a dominant public in a given context/space even if it appears this way. Further, her discussion of a "utopian performative" at a theater focuses on the engagement of audience members who temporarily come together, experience, and are moved by critical ideas that invoke their imagination of being outside the present in a better world. Dolan suggests that theatrical performances (in this case

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dancing) invoke a "temporary public" among heteronormative, homonormative, and nonheteronormative audience participants. In the same way, Buckland (2002) expands the use of theater to imagine how the dance scenes she explores bring a multitude of people of different publics into a queer lifeworld or a third space outside work and home that is impermanent and crosses different communities and where the referent is ultimately (homo)normative queer rather than heteronormative. Even while Buckland explores the exclusion of non-heteronormative subjects in particular moments, she explores the ways they achieve belonging in other moments within these queer lifeworlds through acts of dance choreographies that entice queer groupings and mimesis with other dancers, similar to the way Rivera-Servera explained how the "act of dance negotiates place and membership within…the [(homo)normative space of the]club." Like in the theater, these utopian performative moments also take place in the club scene among different people who exchange desires, kinesthetic energy, and groupings that challenge or exceed the dominant public. In essence, this queer lifeworld brings people from many different walks of life to connect through dance even amidst the boundary work of homonormativity.

Using Dolan's lens, I suggest that this mix of Latino/a clubgoers is able to produce new meaning to varying degrees, whether subtle or subversive, that challenge the dominant public. Rivera-Servera adds more depth about latinidad to this potential mixing within the temporary public. He writes,

> I share Dolan's vision of performance. I similarly propose Latina/o queer dance practices as exercises of 'intersubjective understanding' among Latina and Latino communities that differ greatly in their experiences of entry into the United States, but who share similar experiences of racism, cultural marginalization, and homophobia (265-266).

It is useful to consider the range of different subjectivities and generational differences among my Latino/a participants and Latino/a clubgoers in general. We cannot essentialize the experience of non-heteronormative Latino/a queers as a single kind of experience. Their

proximity to or distance from power in light of their immigrant generation, whether first, 1.5, or second, and their intersectional markers provide varied and nuanced experiences within the dominant public of the nightlife.

Rivera-Servera, Román and Buckland often refer to working class, first- and 1.5-generation Latino/a queer immigrants that exude "wrongness" (Drucker 2015) or racial and cultural difference. Such is the case of Angel Melendez, a 1.5-generation Colombian who identified as a Colombian immigrant. Alig and the club kids viewed Angel as excess because of his Colombian background and pronounced working class latinidad that could not be whitened. Similarly, gatekeepers (like Michael Alig, the club kid society, and promoters "at the door") can view second-generation Latinos/as as embodying and performing racial and cultural difference, given their diasporic (homeland) ties and/or cultural ties to Latinidad. In contrast, some may assume (homo)normative codes well given some distance from these aforementioned ties.

Because my second-generation Latinos/as interviewees came of age after the ethnic movements of the 60s and 70s and before the Latin pop explosion of the early 1990s, they grew up in a society that privileged white cultural hegemony and during a moment in which popular culture marginalized, depoliticized and dehistoricized Latino identity and culture. Yet, as David E. Hayes-Bautista points out about 'retro-assimilation' in the period between 1975-1990 in his book *Nueva California: Latinos in the Golden State* (2004), "…the growth of Spanish language media…had provided reinforcement for [U.S. born Latino young adults to] speak the language [and]… bec[o]me increasingly engaged in the Spanish-speaking world as opposed to leaving it" (111). Similarly, many Elizabeth Latino/a youth grappled with Spanish language and Latino culture in ways that remained present through their everyday lives in their local and family contexts and not simply abandoned or rejected. Elizabeth youth were also exposed to working

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class Latino music scenes of house and freestyle that were layered with different

Latino/Caribbean Spanish lyrics and Latino/Caribbean rhythms and instrumental sounds that

helped maintain these youth's Latino diasporic identities even while these musics were not at the

center of mainstream dominant publics outside Elizabeth and Newark. We appreciated and

belonged to minority-majority dance and music scenes in Elizabeth and Newark without

understanding the politicalized nature and agency of these counterpublics and without having the

vocabulary to express it as we came of age. At the same time, we felt compelled to belong and

assume the codes of dominant publics like the Limelight because belonging reflected our ability

to incorporate within a select dominant neoliberal public and move further up the social ladder

than our first-generation parents. In other words, most of my interviewees did not describe

alternative spacemaking or subversive posturing, but a liminality between belonging and not

belonging within the Limelight, even while thinking critically about it.   That is, as second-

generation immigrants, by assuming the homonormative codes of the Limelight, they were

exercising their desire to belong within a dominant public of the club kids that had achieved

power and visibility.

Liminal at Limelight: Being In-Between Homonormative and Non-Heteronormative

In this subsection, I examine my interviewees' reflections about going to or being inside

the Limelight. Do their-experiences reveal that they were worried about being discriminated

against or excluded? What do their experiences within this dance space reveal as far as the ways

in which they were contained or not in the scene? I highlight the experiences of three females

and two males who often went to the Limelight but also enjoyed the multiplicity of African

American and Latino majority scenes in New York's nightlife that were not homonormative

queer.   This access to different scenes had an impact on the value they placed on the Limelight's

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scene and Michael Alig's club kid society. Because Peter Gatien had the means to buy the media

and advertise his parties, the Limelight was often the first iconic image that came to mind for tri-

state (translocal) natives and residents when thinking about New York's nightlife, but this does

not necessarily mean that it was the most valuable to them. Further, unlike many aspiring club

kids' loyalty to the glamour and status within this club scene, my interviewees often revealed a

critical perspective that undermined the greatness of it and noted limitations they found in non-

heteronormative underground scenes.

One interviewee, Norma, describes how she found inclusion among the crowd at the

raves in Limelight and other NYC rave parties like NASA.   She explains, "A lot of the rave

scene was about joy and just having a good time. The more that we went, the look…It mattered

to us to like show visually being a part of the scene and that scene was not about exclusion. I

never felt that that scene was about exclusion. It was about inclusion, joy…"

Norma is explaining here that the rave scene blossomed throughout New York's nightlife and not

just at the Limelight.   She points to the larger rave scene and not specifically to the Limelight's

own rave scene that was organized by Michael Caruso and DJ Repete and supported by Peter

Gatien and Michael Alig. Thus, even while she went to the Limelight's rave parties, her sense of

inclusion and joy derived from the universal message of the rave scene that came not from club

kid society but from England's initial rave parties. Norma does not mention anything specific or

memorable about being within the Limelight's dance public. In fact, her thought about

"exclusion" could be read as a critique of Alig's and the club kids' exclusive practices. In the

case of the techno rave craze of the early 1990s, Alig and Caruso bring up the fact that Caruso's

audience was undesirable to the club kid society yet demonstrated great profit potential to the

Limelight. In effect, Norma's reference from outside the Limelight challenges the club kids'

society's "reign" over New York City's nightlife and rave parties. In the documentary,

Limelight: The Rise and Fall of the Greatest Nightlife Empire (2011), there is a segment in

which the producers interview Caruso about his Future Shock parties in the Limelight, which

were of interest to Michael Alig and Peter Gatien because of their profit potential. A voice-over

comes on and describes the founding or universal values of the rave scene that started in

England. The voiceover says, "[The] 80's rave scene was enterprising but certainly it was

idealistic, anti-establishment and not profit motivated. Parties were held in warehouses and

fields." Caruso comes on again and says, "It was irrelevant whether you were good looking and

dressed a certain fashion. It was more or less just enjoy the music." Norma and other

interviewees' references looked beyond the Limelight's dominant public of profit, beauty, and

appropriate dress and instead incorporated their own perspectives and social democratic values

and understandings of the techno scene.

Caruso raises the value of " just enjoy[ing] the music" that was also applied to other New

York City underground scenes. In particular, Norma reflects on one party she showed great

fondness for, which was Giant Step. She explains,

> Giant Step parties were different. They would have different events that would
> span different venues, um, Soul Kitchen, SOB's, Groove Collective that I loved,
> loved...just their sound, their instrumentation, the dancing I mean I see that as I
> [have] gotten older, the party scenes are about seeing and being seen. It wasn't
> anything like that, it was just the music. Going out for like good music.

In this quote, Norma points to how Giant Step parties were about "going out for good music" or

enjoying the counterpublics that valued good music over profit and social capital. In these

counterpublics, Norma expected these venues to be multi-classed and significantly African

American and Latino in contrast to white majority parties at the Limelight. The music ensemble

of Afrocentric musics like funk, soul, disco, Afro-Latino jazz, gospel house that attracted African

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American and Latinos was a setback for Alig's homonormative queer parties because it placed

blackness at the center and not middle class whiteness. Even more, she suggests that she valued

these parties because they were not about "seeing and being seen," which is certainly the kind of

"rubbing elbows" audience and club kid glamour mix Peter Gatien and Michael Alig promoted.

Another interviewee, David, discusses the same kinds of values Norma points to at Giant

Step with NYC's deep house parties featuring Puerto Rican DJ Little Louie Vega and other

Master's at Work (MAW) DJs. David reflects on his craze for the house music scene during his

early teens in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He explains,

> I was a devout Master at Work Little Louie Vega fan. I couldn't get enough. He
> was Latino. He was young. He was making dance music…What it represented
> was that everyone was together in one house, roof, it doesn't matter if you're
> black, white, Spanish, gay, straight. Whatever it was, come in, have a good time.
> Let's embrace this experience together…You had your drag queens, you had your
> straight kids, you had your…it was black, it was Spanish. But it was dancing!
> Nobody cared what you had on or what you didn't have on…it was all about the
> music. It was about music, coming together, and enjoying in this beautiful
> experience…

In this quote, David echoes Norma's thoughts about how this scene was not about "seeing or

being seen" but enjoying the "experience" of "coming together" across race and sexuality

through music. Further, he articulates the anti-neoliberal values of this counterpublic regarding

"not caring what you had on or what you didn't have on" given that this scene was not about

showing one's individual value or worthiness but about experiencing unity, or critical

multiculturalism, across race, class, and sexuality.

Similar to Norma, when I asked Lucy about her clubbing at Limelight and the Roxy,

Lucy did not mention anything particular or memorable about the Limelight. Like Norma, Lucy

was not particularly loyal to one type of scene in the city.

> Y: What kind of scene when you were going to Limelight and Roxy? What kind
> of music were you interested in?

N: It was mostly house music and what they considered techno but we really didn't consider techno... Mostly like underground house music that you would dance [to]. I remember like we used to go in like sneakers, in jeans, in like vintage types shirts and I used to go with my hair kind of like tied back because I knew I was gonna sweat my ass off dancing and I loved it! I used to dance all night, all night!

Y: I remember doing a whistle! Did you do a whistle?

N: No, I didn't do a whistle! Yeah, I didn't do whistles but people did. You know the stupid glow sticks.

Y: Did you do glow sticks?

N: Yeah…Yeah! Cause it was cool, it was dark and you just see the lights.

Y: What was it about dancing? What was it about that scene and dancing? Where did it take you?

N: I don't know you would just kind of like get lost in it. It's like anything you had on your mind would like kind of go away. Yeah, I remember my parents used to be like ohhh, they used to think I was going out to meet guys and stuff. I was like no I am going to go dance.

Here, Lucy prioritizes why she went dancing with her friends. For Lucy, "going out" was not so much about seeking belonging in this public but more about finding herself and being free from her parents' and her local dominant society's policing of her gender and sexuality. Lucy lucidly describes that rather than dressing like a club kid, she asserted a butch and working class performance in her dress to go dancing. The act of dressing like a tomboy and dancing "in sneakers, jeans, vintage shirts, with her hair tied back" is asserting her own desire and will without anyone's approval of how she will be perceived. In effect, the "act of getting lost" in the music was setting her own terms within that public and temporality where she defied all sorts of expectations about belonging, whether in her everyday life or in this homonormative queer public.

Similar to Lucy, Edwin is upfront about his musical tastes, which exceeded the more

European techno house musical taste of Alig and the club kid society. Instead of conforming to

the taste of those in power, Lucy and Edwin are upfront about their deep, Afrocentric, Latin

underground house tastes that were often associated with working class, bridge and tunnel, and

tacky or thug racial and ethnic subjects. I asked Edwin, "What parties did you go to into the

Limelight? Into the Tunnel?"

> Basically Friday and Saturday nights I would be there. But it depends because
> like some nights you know were kind of like crazy like they would have like a
> rock night or something on a Friday night usually like the nights are like club
> nights. But it depends, I would go there feel the crowd feel the DJ's. They're like
> too you know like crazy stuff from Europe starting coming like that crazy
> industrial (makes noise). Ah no! I like my shit soulful, with meaning, you know,
> that Barbara Tucker[20], Martha Walsh, the divas of house, you know that kind of
> stuff.

Like other interviewees who did not make sharp distinctions about the Limelight's parties,

Edwin also fails to make a distinction between the Limelight's and Tunnel's parties, which

suggests that he viewed these clubs' music quality and styles similarly. Here, Edwin asserts his

preference for "soulful" or deep house that represented a working class Puerto Rican, Latin, and

African American referent and was not Alig's or the club kids' style of choice. Edwin shows

here his critique of the homonormative queer club scene as "too European," and in his opinion

having less meaning to him and his preferred dance crowds than the list of soulful house

vocalists he mentions. In a way, Edwin was paying attention to the visibility of non-whiteness in

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[20] One "soulful" dance song that was very popular in the deep house scene at the time was
Barbara Tucker's "Beautiful People." The lyrics of this song are very much about bringing
people together across race and class difference, as in this sample: "When space and race and
colors not the same, it's time that we start to open our eyes and love one another." Tucker is
pushing for her dance audience to create a space of sameness and critical relationality despite
race and space[s] of class divisons in the audience's everyday lives. Another lyric, "It's not what
you wear, it's just who you are," suggests that listeners should appreciate people for who they
truly are and not for value or worth related to consumption in neoliberal societies.

this public. Specifically, he brings up here that this European quality had less "meaning" and

ultimately did not address a multiracial and multiethnic audience, and that the techno scene was

for a majority white audience and did not speak to him.

Similar to Edwin, Mark attended the Limelight several times but preferred the music and

dance crowds at Sound Factory Bar. He explains,

> When I went to Sound Factory Bar, I was like I'm at home. That was my favorite.
> Because it was that…then they started bringing out the congels. Then they started
> bringing out the drums.   It was more like that Nuyorican Soul thing and I was
> like yo that's dope, you know that's when the dancing got to another level and
> people were doing dancing very beautifully in this tight area, you know. That's
> when the Louie Vega sound, I was like wow, this is awesome.

Here, Mark says Sound Factory Bar was "home" to him, clearly suggesting the strongest sense of

identification with the music and crowd. He describes how the layering and emphasis of the

congels and drums with the music was what made the scene "his favorite." Further, texturizing

the dance music with these typical Afro-Latin instruments further emphasizes the centrality of

Afro-Latin culture in this space. With that said, Mark politicizes this scene by referring to it as a

"Nuyorican Soul thing" that is not at the center of other dances scenes, the Limelight's in

particular.   In this case, we can consider Sound Factory Bar's scene a Nuyorican-centric scene

that is a counterpublic to the Limelight's homonormative dance scene. Further, Mark adds a

sense of good kinesthetic energy among the club goers in the dance space by acknowledging the

"beautiful" dancing going on. He articulates a utopian performative within this temporary

(counter)public where the "dancing got to another level," emphasizing a sense of unity and not

division or exclusion among all the dancers in the "tight" space of the club.

Andy had a similar critique about the Limelight's music sounding too European, yet

unlike Edwin, he stressed a wider variety of musical tastes across race. He explains,

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I like Keoki. I liked Timmy Regisford. He was DJing at the Shelter. I liked Keoki. He was DJing at the Red Zone. He was DJIng at the Limelight. I liked Junior Vazquez. He was DJing at Sound Factory and then Twilo. So, I didn't particularly follow anyone because of race. When it starting getting into that whole breakbeat, I was like with some other techno, it was a little too European for me but some of the early techno, I really, really, really, really liked a lot. And some of the gospel house that was black people music. But of course, it works always. I went to the Shelter and people looked at me and what the fuck are you doing here?

His tastes in DJs show an eclecticism that did not prioritize the Limelight's club kids' musical tastes. While he asserts that he did not listen to anyone because of race, he was aware of certain spaces that were coded as white, Latino, or black. Andy explained more clearly after I asked him whether or not he felt that there were token or high profile blacks at Limelight: "Absolutely…There was always segregation…within the club scene. So, basically, if you're Latino, you go to Sound Factory, if you're white, you go to Limelight, if you're black you to go the Shelter. Well guess, what? I went to the Shelter, I went to the Sound Factory Bar and I went to the Limelight because I was never that type of person…" The fact that he enjoyed going to all of these scenes reveals his openness and enjoyment of all of these racialized scenes. Andy's preference for visiting different scenes across race, class, and ethnicity suggests that no scene contained him. Yet, as a light-skinned Latino, Andy was more favored in the homonormative public than many of my brown skinned interviewees. His experience reflects that of many Elizabeth youth who explored different scenes irrespective of race and power. Further, as a light-skinned Hispanic, Andy describes how when going to the Shelter, a predominantly African American crowd could be intimidating through his words, "what the fuck are you doing here?" This suggests that he felt that race was openly politicized. Interestingly, Andy does not mention any racial hostility in the Limelight's homonormative queer public, which is consistent with colorblind or covert strategies of racial exclusion, as I have demonstrated earlier.

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Disrupting the Official Narrative: Mixed Critical Views around Angel Melendez

      The next section of this chapter offers counternarrative and critical perspectives that either place race and ethnicity at the center or undermine the power and influence of the Limelight's nightlife and club kid culture. Most importantly, the chapter highlights Elizabeth Latino youth in this scene and the ways in which they perceived Angel, interpreted his murder, and/or assumed (or not) the homonormative values of the Limelight scene. This section explores three sources. First, I examine Frank Owen's *Clubland* (2003) discussion of racist implications of the Limelight club kid scene. Second, I examine Colombian-American Queens-based LGBT activist Andres Duque's response to a Latino/a magazine's article on the club kids (ten years after Angel Melendez's death). Third, I analyze transcribed segments from my participants' interviews that suggest liminal moments of feeling in-between belonging and not belonging, reifying and consuming while critiquing the scene from their subject position of racial, ethnic and cultural difference.

Frank Owen's *Clubland*

Most of Frank Owen's *Clubland* (2003) reads similarly to the official narrative in the *Limelight* and *Shockumentary* films. Owen, who is also interviewed in *Limelight*, does not offer a racial and ethnic critique of the Limelight scene, but he does describe the racist and ethnic loathing of Angel by Michael Alig and the club kids in overt ways, which the documentaries did not convey. Owen explains, "Many of the club kids looked down their powdered noses at Angel, not just because he made them pay for their drugs but also because he was a Latino. A pronounced streak of racism ran through the club kid scene, which was made up largely of the pampered offspring of middle class whites" (159). In this quote, Owen breaks the silence of covert racism

by articulating that racism toward Latinos was pronounced. Further, Owen highlights Angel's

racial, ethnic, and class difference from the majority of middle class white club kids.

Owen further details the general "pronounced" racism that Alig and the club kids

practiced inside the neoliberal public of the Limelight. He quotes Screamin' Rachel, another club

kid in a liminal position given her ties with African American and Puerto Rican house music

producers:

> 'Behind the scenes, the club kids were very racist,' said Screamin' Rachel. 'They
> wouldn't let me put the term house music on the party invitations because they
> thought it would attract blacks, even though they played house music at the club. I
> would want to invite Afrika Bambaataa to deejay, but they always said: 'We don't
> want that crowd.' Once, Rachel invited old school hip hop legend Melle Mel – the
> voice on Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's rap classic, 'The Message' – to a
> party at the Tunnel. Alig turned him away at the door. 'We don't want stupid niggers or
> lowlife spics coming to the club,' Rachel claimed Michael said. 'Black people aren't
> cool. When the niggers start showing up, you know your club is over.'

In this excerpt alone, Screamin' Rachel is an example of the "excesses from within" that

homonormative queer club kids had that often had to be suppressed. Screamin' Rachel had

started in the early house scene in Chicago and New York, where her voice was sampled for one

of the first house records produced by African American and Puerto Rican producers. In effect,

this quote not only shows the deeply racist sentiment that Michael Alig and his other club kids

held about African Americans and "spics" and their urban underground subculture scenes, it also

illustrates how Alig policed African American and Hispanic entrance in groups that might

devalue the depolicitized and homonormative queer club culture of the Limelight's whitewashed

parties.

After Angel's disappearance and murder, Screamin' Rachel was one of the few club kids

who did not remain silent but wanted to know the truth. In *Party Monster: The Shockumentary*,

Screamin' Rachel was portrayed as the only club kid who spoke sensitively about Angel and was

concerned about his disappearance. She said on film, "I was friends with Alig but I was also friends with Angel." She expresses this in a way that emphasizes the unlikeliness that Angel was respected by and friendly with other Alig-branded club kids. To express her concern, she wrote a club song entitled "Give me my Freedom/Murder in Clubland[21]" (Owens, 82). Even though the song was a flop, it did circulate throughout the clubworld and media, helping engender awareness and concern about Angel's disappearance and whereabouts.   Michael Alig explains in *Party Monster* that on a trip to Chicago during his breakaway from the feds, who were looking for him to serve against Peter Gatien, he visited Screamin' Rachel, which turned out to be what he said in an interview from jail that was featured in the documentary, "a big mistake."   Alig's visit to Screamin' Rachel in 1995/6 drove her to write and produce this song, which gave visibility and importance to Angel and his story, which Alig hoped would be trivialized by the drug crackdown on Peter Gatien and his nightlife empire.

Andres Duque's Critique of a Latino Magazine

The year 2006 was the 10th anniversary of Angel Melendez's murder and death. In 2006, *Un Chin Magazine*, a New York Latino magazine that celebrates "brown pride," featured an article about the New York club kids entitled, "Club Kids: A Take on the Bizarre." In response to the article, Andres Duque, a longtime queer of color and Colombian American activist from Jackson Heights, Queens and a founding member of COLEGA and the Audre Lorde Project and director for the Latino queer of color umbrella organization Mano a Mano, offered a critique in the form of a letter to the editor. Duque has been a notable human activist for gay rights and anti-gay discrimination among Latino queer men living in New York City. In particular, Duque

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[21] Here's a clip of Screamin' Rachel song:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxvlMgyxQJg

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played a leading activist role regarding the police investigation of gay Colombian Eddie Garzon, who was gay bashed and murdered on August 15, 2001. Duque's response to the erasure of Angel's murder in his letter to the editor represents part of his effort to never forget and to re-center the racist and xenophobic nature of this unofficial hate crime toward a Latino queer of color.   Announcing his gay, Colombian, and Queens native perspective, Duque's voice displaces (if just for a moment) a persistent official narrative of drug glamour (among a Latino/a audience) that often leaves out non-heteronormative views like Duque's. On June 20, 2006, Duque posted his letter to the editor on his own highly acclaimed blog site *Blabbeando* (http://blabbeando.blogspot.com/2006/06/dear-un-chin-magazine-angel-melendez.html#.Vl96X8qm28U). His post received 18 comments that were either supportive of Angel or Michael Alig, which I examine following my discussion of the letter.

Duque discussed the racist, anti-ethnic and immigrant queer hatred that he relates to from his own positioning, similar to the late Angel's, which made his appeal more compelling. He incited other commenters to respond to his critique of the magazine article in ways that illustrate what Isabel Molina Guzman in *Dangerous Curves* (2010) argues are either symbolic rupture (challenging the dominant ideology) or symbolic colonization (reifying the dominant ideology) of a colorblind club kid narrative and murder in clubland. In an excerpt from his commentary to Ms. Rodriguez , the editor of *Un Chin Magazine*, he writes,

> Unfortunately I must take issue with [names article and issue]. The article takes a look at Manhattan's infamous 'club kid' culture and does acknowledge the scene's underbelly by mentioning that club kid Michael Alig is 'serving time for the murder of a drug dealer.' But then the article stops short of mentioning that the crime for which Alig is serving in prison remains one of the most heinous murders committed against a Latino gay man in the city of New York (an unfortunate oversight considering that the piece then launches into a 9-page 'club kid' fashion spread).

In this quote, Duque is pointing out that the editors of this Latino magazine have not only missed or disregarded Angel and his full story but have reduced him to a drug dealer, which sustains the dominant narrative about Angel as a worthless and criminal Latino. Duque is suggesting here that despite publishing a magazine that seemingly celebrates "brown pride" and can therefore be expected to have a politicized edge, the editors failed to ask and center the discussion on the racial and ethnic politics of Angel's murder but instead celebrated the homonormative queer and consumer culture of the club kids. In essence, the magazine editors chose to reify the white supremacist nature of this scene instead of fully taking into account what Duque describes as the "scene's underbelly," which I suggest means those racially and ethnically marked individuals such as Angel and their counternarratives that were not representative of homonormativity and were therefore excluded.

Further, Duque ends his letter by explaining the problematic nature of devoting a spread in a Latino magazine to a majority white club kid culture while overlooking Angel's murder. Duque writes, "By avoiding mention of the details of his murder while trumping up the fabulousness of the scene in a fashion spread, it only helps to glorify certain aspects of 'club kid' culture while dismissing things that should never be forgotten." In this quote, Andres suggests that the writers in this magazine "glorified certain aspects of 'club kid' culture" yet "dismissed" or "forgot" Angel's death, which should be critically examined and condemned. He challenges the "fabulousness of the scene" by proposing that it was anything but fabulous due to the violence against Angel, which other commenters supported or refuted to different degrees.

Some commentators were not sympathetic to Angel and reified the official narrative. Anonymous commenter (11:42 AM) says, "[L]et's not start demonizing one person without demonizing the cause too. Michael killed Angel while high on the drugs Angel gave him. They

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were both wrong and both victims of the same thing. Drugs…" This commenter focuses on how both parties are to blame for Alig's actions and the tragedy. This commenter puts drugs at the center of the discussion without considering other potential root causes. Kajmera (5:09 PM) says, "Does the fact that Angel was both latino and gay matter in this situation? It wasn't a hate crime, it was all about the drugs…" Kajmera's reaction to Duque's appeal suggests that race or ethnicity did not play a role in this murder. Rather than being a crime of racial and ethnic hatred, Kajmera suggests that the violence escalated because of the drugs. Also, Kajmera brings up Angel's gayness to dispute Duque's reasoning that this murder was one of the most violent committed against a Latino gay man of double marginality. Even though Duque responds to Kajmera to refute his ever saying that this had been a hate crime, Duque points out that a homonormative subject inflicted violence on a non-heteronormative subject. In fact, it is Kajmera who brings up the topic of a hate crime. The hate crime here stems from Alig's sense of superiority and entitlement for being glamour king and homonormative-white. A third commenter, E (9:56 PM), shares the view that "the club kids were not bad people …[but that]…they lived a life of drug induced fantasy…" Elsewhere in E's comment, E characterizes Alig's and the club kids' "extremities" as due to the glamour of "acting out and being themselves" but says that the scene is "incredibly superficial." E writes, "[Alig] is not a monster. He is a victim of his own lack of self-control [because of the drug consumption]." E's reaction preserves Alig's and the club kids' glamour by supporting the view that the overuse of drugs impaired his and the other club kids' good judgment, a perspective that weakens the idea of Alig and his club kids practicing racial and ethnic hatred.

Several sympathetic responses to Duque's appeal challenged the dominant narrative and argued that drug use was not the root cause. First, an anonymous commenter (12:12 AM) wrote,

"Alig is sick and it is gross how some people want to make him an idol. When will people understand he is mental[l]y ill he enjoyed the killing and told many of us (sic) afterward that the only thing he regret[t]ed was the smell." Anonymous (12:12 AM) condemns Alig for the killing, explaining that it was more disturbing than just a tragic mishap resulting from drug abuse. Further, the commenter asserts that Alig's "sick" values that resonate with racial and anti-ethnic hate bar him from being an idol or a model of the kind of glamour that should be idolized. Another anonymous commenter (2:06 PM) explains, "Yes, [Alig] is an amusing character and unfortunately [fell] into the drug scene, but drugs should not be an excuse; especially not for murder." The commenter rejects making drug the excuse and believes that there is more to the story.   The same commenter writes, "As far as Angel is concerned, I just want to know more about him."   Here, he/she is not conforming to the reductive approach to Angel in these dominant narratives (as we have seen in the two films I analyze in this chapter) but wants to know more.   Alex (10:56 AM) offers a personal memory about Angel and his family that we do not see in the dominant narrative. Alex writes, "But I still remember Andre as when he arrived to the U.S…His siblings, his parents who are great people…" In other words, Alex continues remembering the anti-neoliberal details of Angel's story his (immigrant) arrival and his connection to other friends in that context. Further, Alex signs his comment with "Eliz-NJ…AV" or Elizabeth, New Jersey, suggesting that he-she is 'AV from Elizabeth, NJ' and/or he knew Angel and his family from there. In effect, Alex responds to Anonymous (2:06 PM) by offering a new context for Angel's story. Several of the commenters are of Latino origin and either knew Angel or identified with him as an immigrant, a Colombian, a family member, a person from the neighborhood, or a person of color.

Another commenter, Anonymous (3:39 AM), details the hostilities against Angel within

the club's dominant public that were not glamorous nor worthy of idolization.   This commenter,

who claims to be a former club, kid explains,

> The majority of us all first felt kind of sorry for Angel when he first came into
> our 'scene' he was always alone and didn't have a group to fit in with. A few of
> my friends told him about the Club Roxy and that's when he fell in with
> 'Michael's group' a bunch of spoiled, sociopathic, drug addict snobs who thought
> they were truly better than everyone else. We told Angel to stay away from
> Michael, but Michael was one of his main customers.

Here, Anonymous (3:39 AM) describes the liminal and excluded position Angel was in relative

to this white majority and homonormative club scene.   Even more, we learn how this self-

proclaimed "ex club kid" told Angel "to stay away from Michael" and many of the club kids

because of their destructive attitudes and behavior as "spoiled, sociopathic, drug addict snobs

who thought they were truly better than everyone else." Thus, this commentator also shows how

he or she was critical and not fully at the mercy of Alig and his club kids. Ultimately, Angel's

murder justifies to this commenter how right he or she was to warn Angel from the beginning.

He or she writes, "There is NOTHING fabulous about Alig…He should have gotten life in

prison really!...He was Shallow, Cruel, Heartless…. R.I.P Angel." In this quote, the commentator

is suggesting "shallow[ness], cruel[ty], heartless[ness]" over racial and ethnic difference (not

discussed in the official narratives) that blossomed into a hatred for Angel and resulted in his

murder. In effect, this commenter's reflections suggest the hate crime nature of Angel's death

and contradict Kajmera's assertion that Angel's death was not a hate crime.

These commenters support Duque's argument that Angel was more than a drug dealer

and should also be remembered for "being someone's son…brother…boyfriend" and also for

being a good person who was not exclusivist. In effect, some of these commenters suggest that

Angel did not have the individualist and snobbish attitude to be a club kid but that he was a

modest and genuinely nice person despite his criminal record with drug dealing. Similarly, in the next section, I reflect on how my interviewees viewed Angel in positive and affective ways that challenge the reductive narrative.

Furthermore, the sympathizers with Duque's argument are also critical of Alig's fame and glamorousness, arguing that it should either be seen for what it really was or condemned. Anonymous (5:13 AM), whose Spanish-written response suggests his Latino immigrant non-heteronormative queer subjectivity, is very explicit about his disqualification of these white homonormative queers as making a good contribution to society. Anonymous (5:13 AM) titles the response, "The Club Kids" Legacy of a Generation?" This commenter writes[22], "Was [Angel's] death part of all of our culture that we lived in New York during the 80s through early 90s? Was it the Club kids who played an important role in our lives…when we went to clubs at night and we had a better time at The Saint, The Monster, and West Street piers?" This commenter asserts that the club kids and their legacy did not pertain to all queers during the height of their fame in the 80s and early 90s. Instead, he brings up that he and other queers like him (non-heteronormative, immigrant queers of color) preferred other, more social democratic dance publics or counterpublics, over the Limelight.

Remembering Angel: Andy's, Manuelito's and Ernie's Perspectives

One of the most valuable discoveries I made through my interviewees was that Angel was not only from Queens but that he was schooled and raised in Elizabeth, though nowhere in the official narratives does it suggest this. These participants shared with me the Angel they

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[22] I have translated the commenter's entry from Spanish to English. The original written Spanish entry is: "¿Fue su muerte parte de la cultura en que vivíamos todos en New York en la década de los 80 y principios de los 90?¿Fueron the Club Kids una parte tan importante de esta etapa de nuestras vidas , cuando trabajábamos como dementes, íbamos de disco todas las noches y la pasábamos de lo mejor en The Saint , The Monster y los piers de West Street ?"

came to know not only at the Limelight but also in school, among friends, and on the streets in Elizabeth. I examine the ways these details amplify the official narrative circulating about Angel to give us more insight into the positive impact he had among other queer youth in Elizabeth, despite his ordeals with drug dealing.

A couple of my informants reflect on the Angel they came to know at Elizabeth High School. Andy and Ernie were underclassmen to Angel while they were at the High School, although they identified with him in specific ways. I asked, "At E-High, though, you didn't have much of a relationship with him, he was a year ahead of you?" Ernie recounts,

> He was a year ahead of me but like I was saying, due to his eccentricity, he had his own clique, one of which I clearly remember was Julie[23] and um there were a few others. There was a girl I remember, she used to do her makeup. Like all black, like Halloween black. All black and her hair was green. She's very tiny and petit. Very dressed in black. Leather chains. Black tights and he was part of that clique. But you know, he was much more of a leader than he was a follower. If anything, he had an entourage…

In this quote, Ernie is reflecting on Angel's eccentricity within the dominant public of the high school. Further, he describes here that Angel belonged in a clique with other queer students who built a counterpublic space for themselves within the high school. Ernie describes Angel as a leader and not a follower, which implies that he was a role model for the counterpublic and culture he paved within the dominant public of the high school. In a sense, Ernie suggests that Angel was the reference point for an alternative to the heteronormative norm of Elizabeth society. That is, when I asked him to explain what or who he meant by "entourage" he explained, "Of an entourage of people and admirers. Club kids. People that wanted to be like him. Admired him."   Here, Ernie further describes Angel's leader-like quality among Elizabeth High School students, especially those who were in the club kid subculture. He also states that

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[23] Julie and Angel Melendez were childhood friends and neighbors according to Ernie.

these students "admired him" because of their view that he was successfully incorporating himself as an NYC club kid within the homonormative queer public. This also shows how Angel, like Michael Alig, was building his own audience that enjoyed the club scene and that came from non-heteronormative origins like Elizabeth and not a predominately white middle class society.

Similarly, Andy, another underclassman, reflects on the impact that Angel had on him in high school, particularly during the time he and a couple of friends were coming out. Andy explains,

> The other person that you want to talk about which was Angel Melendez who was also another gay man but he was a little more eccentric. He was not a drag queen but he wore a mohawk and things like that.…I never had a class with him but he was older than me. I was actually like a sophomore and he was a senior and I met him in the cafeteria. And as soon as everybody started seeing that I was talking to these people that were openly gay which were very few...

Andy is reflecting on how Angel, along with other openly gay and eccentric upperclassman who were both in the club kid scene and local gay ball culture, were building a firm counterpublic of queerness among Elizabeth High School students. Andy suggests that Angel was "more eccentric" than other gay men through his reference to Angel's mohawk, or in other words, that his presence, subjectivity and embodiment was helping to build a visible space for him and other gay students who were "coming out." In this quote, Andy shares that if he was associated with Angel, other students and faculty perceived him to belong in this counterpublic.

Yet even with winning moments of queer agency in the school public with Angel's and his other LGBT classmates' bold leadership, he did experience moments of gay symbolic violence (See Chapter 1) at Elizabeth High School. As told by one participant, Manuelito, a Puerto Rican-Bolivian classmate and ally to Angel,

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...My locker was next to his only in gym class. Never spoke one or two words to each other. We nodded to each other. I acknowledged him as a person and I think he respected that. The one thing I never forget I don't remember he either got looks or got called something from a group of kids that were walking away and [Angel] said something along the lines of, "these idiots or these assholes. They think they can insult you but they don't know the world. The world is so much bigger." I'm sure he must have been at the Limelight definitely [by now].

Manuelito describes above how Melendez faced rejection from homophobic students and bullies in school who associated him with a gay counterpublic, or subordinate minority of eccentric youth (Gray 2009; Fraser 1992; Warner 2002). Yet, Manuelito describes a confrontation in which Angel articulated an empowered agency and refuted instead of submitting to and internalizing symbolic violence. Even while Manuelito and Melendez did not share much, according to him, the nods they exchanged were enough to convey a "respect," or alliance, with him and his queer eccentricity amidst a hostile school public. And to Melendez, as Manuelito suggests, the school bullies' world (of a heterocentrist and liberal multicultural high school and town) was "smaller" when he compared his own understanding of the world with a larger and more powerful dominant New York City nightlife public that he navigated, profited from and in which he gained fame.

Andy further describes how the dominant heteronormative culture began to change among Elizabeth High School students with students like Angel participating in this powerful New York City club scene. Andy explains,

I would say Angel, the person that I mentioned earlier the gay man that exchanged phone numbers with me and my gay mother who was a drag queen at the time. When people saw that I was actually interacting with them even though there were some people like Wally and Ivo (I don't know if I'm supposed to mention those people's names). Some guys like Wally and Ivo who were very popular because they were part of the club networking scene. They actually spoke to Belle Ebonaire because they saw that in New York things were more open. It didn't matter if you were gay or straight, what mattered was that you were all interested in the same type of music and the same type of scene so they actually spoke to him.

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Even while Andy reflects here on his own insecurities about other students making judgmental calls about his heteronormativity, he also considers how other gay-affirming students like Wally and Ivo, who were active in the New York club scene, were helping to sustain a counterpublic space of inclusion and tolerance in the high school based on their attitudes toward the eccentricity they experienced in New York's nightlife. According to Andy, the club scene in the high school brought people together across race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and gender because what mattered was the fondness for the music, dance and dress that became eccentric in the dominant public of the school. Even more, these Elizabeth High School queer student groupings had similarities to the homonormative queer culture of the club kid scene. However, Melendez and these youth drew from and were affiliated with emerging African American and Latino majority ball and non-heteronormative queer scenes and contexts. These groupings were dissidentified with homonormative club culture, given their greater connection to local ball scenes and their local gay families that my interviewees described.

With that said, Angel remained connected with non-heteronormative queers even during his involvement with the majority-white club kid society. In other words, even through his own neoliberal aspiration of being "in with the club kid stars," he maintained his ties to non-heteronormative queer subjects and groupings. Not only a queer leader in high school, Angel became a legendary figure in the club and ball scenes to queer youth in Elizabeth High School who graduated after him. Andy explains, "And by the time I had graduated, he was already deep into the club scene. And when I got into the club scene, I was a statement and he was already a star. He was already growing high." Andy reflects here that Angel became a reference for him (with admiration) as he climbed up the ball scene ladder among the houses. Even while Angel faced hostility from New York club kids, queer Elizabeth youth viewed him as a mentor who

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was successfully incorporating himself into different groupings and scenes. Andy says, "[Angel] was known everywhere. But he was known for being among the celebrities in the nightclub scene. So he knew the Fields. He knew the Extravaganzas. He knew the Ninjas. He knew all these different people." During the interview, Andy explained the racial groupings among the gay houses, explaining that the Fields were white, middle class queers. Essentially, the Fields (named after Patricia Field's) were Michael Alig's club kid society. He further explained that the Extravaganza, Ebony, and Ninja house balls were largely composed of people of color in the New York City area (many of whom appear in *Paris Is Burning*). In effect, Angel demonstrated to Elizabeth Latino youth his versatility in not only being a "celebrity in the nightclub scene" among the club kids but also being affiliated with non-heteronormative queer houses and ball scenes among people of color.

In light of Angel's aspirations, Ernie's reflections demonstrate how even while Angel had more access to these homonormative queer spaces and publics than others, he navigated them without denying his racial and ethnic subjectivity. Ernie, an Elizabeth native of Puerto Rican descent, explains the following after I ask him why was Angel "well respected":

> I would assume that it's because of the same reasons why I respected him. He was generous. He was down to earth. He was not at all the part that he looked. He looked insane by the standards back then. But he acted completely sane. Like I said, he was generous, carried on a conversation, was pleasant, never forgot where he came from. He was not just one of the people who gave you the "hi" and goodbye when he felt like it. You know there's a lot of that. His reading was always consistent and he always spotted me. Chances are he always spotted you before you spotted him and went out of the way. Some of my fondest memories of Angel were actually were not so much at the club but actually were on Christopher Street in the Greenwich Village were we just crossed paths late at night. He would see me from across the street and come across the street and we would shake hands and make small talk for about 5, 10, 15 minutes. Maybe even go into a nearby bar and just have a quick drink. Or share a cigarette or whatever.

Here, Ernie offers reasons to be convinced that Angel did not downplay his non-heteronormative racial, ethnic and class positionings in order to potentially blend in more effectively within a homonormative queer public. First, he explains that Angel never changed his attitude like the club kids, even while he looked "insane" or intimidating like them. Instead, Ernie says, "he never forgot where he came from," even while entering or exiting dominant publics and spaces or at the crossroads between dominant and minority (counter)publics. Ernie explains above how within these intersections between homonormative and non-heteronormative spaces and publics, Angel was still approachable and communicative despite his more privileged or celebrity status. By mentioning that Angel was generous, Ernie is referring to the fact that he always gave him " free drink tickets" at the Limelight, which also shows the tangle between being a friend and being an interested promoter bringing consumers into the club to elevate his club kid status among those of his racial and social positioning. On the other hand, Angel was smart to maintain these ties as a promoter who brought profit into the club. Ernie makes us understand, however, that Angel was ultimately more of a friend "from the way" and not just a promoter; he would not overlook his friends but proceeded to genuinely regard them in these mixed spaces and publics.

Ernie's account of Angel is not what is expected of a club kid in terms of being inviting to bridge and tunnel people and non-heteronormative subjects. Club kid James St. James (Michael Alig's roommate, portrayed in *Party Monster: The Shockumentary*) describes the exclusive approach that club kids practiced in his memoir (not a novel), *Party Monster (Disco Bloodbath)*. As noted earlier in this chapter, James St. James wrote about the spatial distance the club kids placed between themselves and bridge and tunnel and non-heteronormative club goers: "The scene was still very oh so social. The worst drug calamity, the worst case scenario,

was that you accidentally took too much ecstasy and were actually nice to a Bridge and Tunnel person." Here, James St. James describes the rigid and hostile spatial dynamics club kids practiced to avoid intermingling with "bridge and tunnel" people because of their sense of superiority to them. He explains that the only way any intermingling happened was by accident, most often when they were overly drugged and not coherent enough to distance themselves. Unlike Alig, James St. James and the other club kids, it is evident that Angel did not distance himself from the bridge and tunnel crowd, immigrants, or other people of color.

Ernie's account is similar to that of Anonymous (5:13 AM), with his or her response to Duque's appeal (in the earlier section) suggesting Angel's approachable and inviting disposition toward non-heteronormative subjects. This commenter was the only person who wrote his or her comment in Spanish, which suggests that he or she was a New York Latino first-generation immigrant resident who later moved to Los Angeles. This strongly suggests that Angel and Anonymous spoke to each other in Spanish and shared similar cultural perspectives as Latino immigrant men. Anonymous (5:13 AM) writes, [Cite original and then translation] "We never spoke about drugs, sex, or anything out of the ordinary" (translated from Spanish to English). Anonymous (5:13 AM) supports here the idea that Angel was, or remained, as Ernie put it earlier, "sane even though he looked insane," in that he did not come across as intimidating or superior to others or hide behind a narrative of progress or neoliberal personhood. That is, Angel chose to remain at bay with his immigrant subjectivity rather than elide and assimilate to homonormative queer codes for a chance at mobility and incorporation among middle class white(ened) queers.

Looking back at Angel's life, my Elizabeth interviewees hold Angel in high esteem for unforgettable qualities and disregard Angel's identity as a drug dealer, imposed by the dominant narrative. For example, Andy reflects,

> He was just a very talented musician and very persistent young man who wanted to make his dream come true. But he felt the only way he could survive and continue the path of being a very well nightclub promoter and up and coming whatever he was going to be. He was into the music that he was going to sustain himself by being involved in drugs. And it was very common for people to either do drugs or deal drugs. So, he was a drug dealer and he ended up in a really bad situation…

Here, Andy shows the value in Angel as a "talented musician" who was "persistent," which he interprets as admirable qualities. Further, Andy undermines Angel's criminal, drug dealer depiction to put into perspective the good qualities that he should be remembered for, including how he empowered the lives of other students within the emerging queer counterpublic of the high school. Similarly, Ernie also takes a moment to share his sense of grief and loss over Angel as a contributing member to society. Ernie shares, "[H]e was just well respected all around. He was just a great guy. Non-judgmental, generous… I mean, I never had a bad word to say about him. I don't know exactly the repercussions. From my understanding what came between him and Michael Alig was drug induced. I don't know exactly what it was there but it's just very sad to say." In this quote, Ernie explains Angel's value of being "non-judgmental and generous" in inclusive ways within publics and counterpublics. The fact that he begins with his feeling that Angel was "respected" all around shows Angel's value outside reductive portrayals as a loser drug dealer.

In this chapter, I have examined the official narrative of the Limelight's neoliberal public to disrupt its power, centeredness, colorblind ideology and salient white(ned) depictions. I placed race and ethnicity at the center of this narrative to situate marginalized, simplifed or

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liminal experiences of racial and ethnic subjects. In order to offer a more complex understanding

and critique of this official neoliberal and colorblind narrative, I examined and centered several

texts and perspectives that help us view this dominant public in another way, revealing what

longtime queer of color Colombian American activist Andres Duque referred to as the scene's

"underbelly." As he suggests, Angel Melendez is representative of the Limelight's underbelly

given the racial, ethnic, and geographic markings that ultimately excluded him while placing him

in a liminal position of belonging and not belonging.   Further, Angel's violent murder is

undeniably the product of racial and ethnic hate toward an individual treated and perceived as

second class, who was unwanted in an exclusive public of white, mobile, middle and first-class

citizens. His undisclosed or unknown origins in Elizabeth, New Jersey is telling of a larger

Latino/a and queer of color counterpublic within the dominant public I examined in this chapter.

Further, Angel's "desire" to be fully integrated into the club kid society, as framed in this official

narrative, does not speak to his everyday connection and sense of affirmation, connectivity and

belonging with other non-heteronormative subjects and groups that I explored here. Clearly,

Angel Melendez did not deny his ethnic and racial excess to move ahead in a narrative of

progress and abandonment of social ties and geographic roots to relate better with white(ned) and

homonormative club kids.   I sought to expand in this chapter a counternarrative of nuanced

perspectives (starting with Angel) vis a vis the Limelight's "influential" gatekeepers like Michael

Alig and the club kid society and their dominant neoliberal public. Angel Melendez's liminal

positioning among the homonormative club kids gave him the ability to (re)define and challenge

club kid subjectivity while embracing the non-heteronormative personas of his translocal

Elizabeth and NYC metro queer Latino/a and second-generation Latino/a friends' and

acquaintances.

Therefore, this chapter also included Elizabeth and its bridge and tunnel Latino counterpublic, which were erased from the official neoliberal narrative given their peripheral positioning relative to New York City's neoliberal economy and nightlife.   By placing Elizabeth and its clubgoers at the center, I offered a nuanced critique of race and ethnicity that reveals the similarity between Angel's subjectivity and that of his Elizabeth native peers, even while his high profile case may seem dissimilar to theirs. That is, an official narrative would emphasize the distance between Melendez's supposed high profile status and that of his peer from Elizabeth rather than a genuine and sustained connection with his "bridge and tunnel" friends and customers. My interviewees confirm that Angel was accessible and did not exude a sense of superiority, achieved whiteness, or social distance with them. Because Angel and most of my gay interviewees were associated with non-heteronormative queers or minority youth groupings or collectivities throughout their lives, they were all in the same liminal positioning even while assuming and identifying with homonormative queerness to some extent in light of the "market freedom" of neoliberal ideologies and discourses I discussed early in this chapter. Unlike the official club kids who proved themselves and demonstrated their loyalty to the "king," Angel and my informants belonged to a broader non-heteronormative context and other queer scenes that celebrated racial, ethnic, and class diversity, decentering and trivializing Alig's and Gatien's "power" and "control" over New York City's nightlife.

Chapter 3
Queer and Latino/a Goth and Skater Masculinities, Femininities, and Spaces

My goth and skater interlocuters' testimonies diversify our understanding of what it meant to be politically queer Latino/a outside dominant conventions of Latino/a youth working class masculinity and femininity in the 1980s-1990s. In this chapter, I analyze how, more than simply exuding a depoliticized weirdness as whitewashed freaky goths and anti-social skaters, they complicated dominant expectations of Latino/a racial, gender, and sexual performance, but more importantly exercised forms of active and polycultural citizenship. I am referring to often subtle yet politicized actions and groupings of active citizenship, or "constructive social participation…promot[ing]…social cohesion and community-building" (Smith, Lister, and Middleton 2005, 161), and of polycultural citizenship that challenges the neat ethnic and racial borders and hierarchies found in everyday liberal multiculturalism by "…embed[ing] in the messinesss and nuances of relationships of different groups with each other…that allows for a political, not just cultural, resonance" (Maira 2005, 70-71). In other words, Latino/a goths and skaters centered a critical multiculturalism that encouraged (the possibility of) multivocal groupings across race, class, gender and sexuality and that broke down racial, class, sexual and gender divisions, boundaries and hierarchies engendered by state liberal multiculturalism. This chapter, therefore, will uncover how Elizabeth Latino/a goths and skaters defied – at certain moments – assumptions of a limited future and the racialized youth masculinities, femininities, and sexualities available in dominant Latino/a youth hip hop and rap subcultures. I argue that these goth and skater youth performed a dissidentified whiteness and non-heteronormativity that

challenged liberal multicultural ideologies and discourses and asserted claims of active and polycultural citizenship that contributed to their subjectivity and spacemaking, which exceeded the limits of state racial projects for Latino youth and their relationality with others in translocal Elizabeth.

In the first section, I offer a brief history of the goth and skater subcultures as separate scenes to keep in perspective that while there are some similarities and interaction between the two, they were also distinct While I examine what appears to be innately white about both of these subcultures, I also point out how scholars have begun to decenter this perception by considering Latino/a youth in these scenes. The latest developments among Latino/a cultural, queer and feminist scholars are a rudimentary precursor for acknowledging how Elizabeth Latino/a youth decentered and contributed to assumedly dominant white subcultural scenes and made them their own in their subjectivity outside state boxes and identity politics.

In the second section, I conduct a local macrosocial analysis of the impact of hip hop, house and rap as dominant and heterosexist subcultures among Elizabeth Latino/a youth. I offer an understanding of how these subcultures influenced a political and countercultural positioning among Latino/a youth that resisted white cultural hegemony in translocal Elizabeth. In that politicitized counterideology of dissent, Latino/a hip hop and rap aficionados viewed goths and skaters as strange, potentially gay, ashamed of who they were (their cultural roots) and pretending to be white. Instead, I found among my goth and skaters that while their core identities were goth and skater, many acknowledged a continuous enjoyment or foundation of dominant subculture musics, counterideologies and styles. Ultimately, this section outlines presumed social boundaries between local dominant subculture scenes and goths and skaters and

then considers the actual nuances, hybridities, cultural continuities and messiness among youth that existed outside these simplistic binaries.

In the third section, I examine the ways Latino males reflect on their youth genders and sexualities as goths and skaters. Interviewees reflect on moments when their masculinity was questioned, emasculated, and queered by dominant or local forms of Latino youth male masculinity and heterosexuality. For example, I show how heterosexual goths and skaters entered into moments of relationality or polycentric citizenship with LGBTQ subjects that allowed them to position themselves outside the limits of liberal multiculturalism. While I point to how these youth reified or struggled with dominant and mainstream constructs of Latino male gender and sexuality, I focus on moments when they defied such constructs and articulated male genders and sexualities of an individualized queer subjectivity of critical multiculturalism.

In the fourth section, I examine the ways Latinas reflect on their youth genders and sexualities as goths. These interviewees reflect on the moments when their embodiments and performances superceded conventions such as the "good girl" Latina, goth female (unmarked white) sexuality, and dominant white female sexuality. In one case, I examine the ways a plus-size Latina goth positioned herself in a dominantly white goth scene that privileged the frail and waif "death chic" (Brill 2008 and Gunn 2007). Even while the goth subculture offered these Latina youth agency and self-empowerment regarding their queer sexualities and genders, as well as relationality with LGBTQ subjects that was not possible in more masculinist local dominant scenes, I also show the ways the goth scene reified dominant conventions of female gender and sexuality.

The final section explores the ways my male and female goth and skater participants formed counterspaces – at a diner, skate park, and cemetery – all within the context of (or along

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a boundary with) Elizabeth. I show how, in these spaces, these youth challenged ethnic and

dominant notions of failed and heteronormative Latino/a youth masculinities and femininities

that in some ways applied to all Latino/a youth as racialized and working class subjects of

neoliberal ideology and discourses. In the skate park, I show the ways youth Latino skaters

resisted this racialization project by maintaining a space that provided connectivity to other

skaters in the scene outside Elizabeth. In another example, I examine cemetery Halloween

parties thrown by a goth youth who not only brought goths together but meaningfully

engendered queer relationalities and groupings across race, class, and subculture that ran counter

to liberal multiculturalism.

Ultimately, this chapter moves us away from the more typical subcultures (house, hip hop

and freestyle) most Latino/a youth identified with in Elizabeth and other urban working class

contexts. Instead, it provides an account of goth and skater scenes and the ways Elizabeth

Latino/o youth made these white subcultures their own and considers this, too, to be a

memorable part of Elizabeth youth's coming of age story in the 1980s-1990s. The spectrum of

youth spaces I explore suggests that these spaces in particular were marked as white within the

Elizabeth context where hip hop, house, and rap dominated Latino and minority subculture

scenes. Yet, these goth and skater participants articulated moments of youth agency and

relationality against state ideologies and discourses, taking into account how their uncanny and

dark styles, performances, and embodiments often isolated them ways that were both similar to

and different from those of LGBTQ youth of color.

Skate and Goth Subcultural Histories: Towards A Racial and Decentered View

Because this chapter focuses on trends or patterns of queer masculinity and femininity among goths and skaters, it is important to keep in mind the separate subculture histories, styles, and idiosyncrasies of goths and skaters despite the similarities I discuss regarding how these youth experienced being marginalized. According to J. Gunn, quoted in Dunja Brill's book *Goth Culture: Gender, Sexuality, and Style* (2008), "The Gothic subculture emerged in Britain in the early 1980s, in the wake of a musical genre originally referred to as Post-punk" (Gunn 1999 in Brill, 3). In *Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture* (2002), Paul Hodkinson writes, "David Bowie's androgynous glamour and deep voiced vocals of the 1970s became an important precursor to goth as did the somber, depressing angst of Joy Division…" (35). Further, Hodkinson writes that among influential goth bands from the late 1970s into the mid 1990s, like Siouxie and the Banshees, Bauhaus, The Cure, and Sisters of Mercy are, "…distinctive themes…pervade[d] the goth scene, from macabre funereal musical tone and tempo, to lyrical reference to the undead, to deep-voiced eerie vocals, to a dark twisted from of androgyny in …appearance" (36). Brill explains that, "Traditional goth chic is…black clothing…and stylistic inspirations from Victorian era dress…thick black eye make-up with white grounding, and lots of silver jewelry" (3-4).

Unlike the musical-bent and "fashion chic" of the goth scene, the skateboard scene is sport-driven and has distinctive cultural and spatial qualities to it. In terms of the cultural values of skaters, Ian Borden suggests in *Skateboarding, Space, and the City: Architecture and the Body (*2001) that skateboarding is not only a sport but also "a critical lifestyle of romanticism… to live out an idealized present" (138). He further writes that, "As a 'total' activity, skateboarding is inwardly as well as outwardly directed through all aspects of everyday life, a style that finds significance in the slightest things" (138). Borden suggests here the politicization in this sport

whose skaters "live by the board" as a way of life and whose culture is critical of hegemony, its racial and social order, and its arrangement of urban space that impedes free movement. Borden describes how skaters categorize and manipulate found and urban spaces for themselves outside a neoliberal map (Sawyers 2004). Such a "romantic" way of life and movement often poses vulnerabilities for skaters (and also for goth males for their androgynous presence) in the form of aggression by heteronormative and conforming males of dominant society and mainstream culture who object to skaters' "…failure of heteronormative masculinity" (Ramlow 2005, 193). In her book, *Skate Life: Re-Imagining White Masculinity (*2010), Emily Chivers Yochim notes that her male peers had been called 'skater fags' in their middle school and high school years during the late 1980s and 1990s, which led to physical and verbal assaults by jocks and other homophobic bullies (7).

While the chapter specifically explores the subjectivities, groupings, and spaces of Elizabeth Latino/a goths and skaters in Elizabeth and translocally, it also takes into account these youths' positioning in unmarked or inherently white subcultures of middle class orientation (Haenfler 2010, Wilkins 2007, Lopez 2012, and Yochim 2010, Brill 2008). This is not to say that all goths and skaters were of middle class orientation, particularly the latter group (Brill 2008; Goodlad and Bibby 2007; Borden 2001; and Beato 2007), which had a strong white working class context. However, irrespective of class positioning, skateboarding and goth scenes were associated with white cultural capital and middle class values that translated to urban minority youth as aspiring to be superior (or white) or denying one's racial identity and therefore attempting to assimilate or achieve whiteness (Ogbu 2003). The fact is that North American and British popular culture depicted these alternative scenes as unmarked white or inherently white (Hodkinson 2002, Danesi 2010, Yochim 2010, Goodlad and Bibby 2007).

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In the past, pioneering studies and narratives of goths, skaters, and punks have offered a subculture narrative about these scenes that implicitly include Latino and African American youth in their studies but without a sufficient racial and ethnic lens to understand the participation of racial subjects in these dominantly white spaces (Borden 2001, Willard 1998, Brill 2008, Hodkinson 2002, Beato 2007). Other studies offer narratives in which Latinos/as and other minorities contribute to different degrees (as pioneers and consumers) and belong to these predominantly white scenes as Latino/a or racial subjects (Lopez 2012, Munoz 1999, Nguyen 2007, Habell-Pallan 2005, Vargas 2012). In light of that, this chapter explores the ways Latino goth and skater youth articulated and embodied their local Latino/a subjectivities in these subculture scenes that made their goth and skater sexual and gender performances unique within the local context "and not quite white," even while they followed dominant gothic trends. However, outside the goth and skater scenes, these Latino/a youth from Elizabeth were viewed as outsiders to the larger hip hop and house subcultures that dominated youth scenes in Elizabeth and other urban New Jersey contexts and defined Latino/a youth identity.

Goths and Skaters: Performances of Race and Gender Outside Dominant Subcultures

The goth and skate scenes placed these Latino/a youth in a liminal or marginal position in relation to more common Latino subcultures with a strong affinity to hip hop, rap, and house music because their performances of race, gender, and sexuality were perceived as "whitened" or trying to be white and "individualized" by a majority-Latino/a minority with a strong affinity to the black and Puerto Rican counterspaces of hip hop, rap, and house. To most Latino/a and black youth, goth and skater performances and skater styles were marginal because they were viewed as too white and strange (Ogbu 2003) compared to Elizabeth's dominant minority youth

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subcultures. Also, scholars point to how the goth and skate subcultures are relatively apolitical

and individualized (Haenfler 2010; Brill 2008; Borden 2001 and Wilkins 2007) instead of

relating to their urban context or "hood." These qualities suggest how Latino/a goths and skaters

often exuded an aloofness or even a sense of superiority among their minority peers due to their

inherently white subcultural capital (Thorton 1996.) However, I show the ways goth and skate

performance should not be simply interpreted as just trying to be white, apolitical, and

individualized within inherently white subcultures but should also be seen as defying the deep

racialization or anti-black coding of working class Latino/a youth.

In contrast, rap, house, and hip hop African American and Latino youth collectivities

from working class and inner city communities embraced non-whiteness, similar to their early

embrace of house music as an urban music project of heterotopia with an African American-

centered subculture space (Rietveld 1998; Currid 1995; Thomas 1995; Pacini Hernandez 2010).

Scholars Lipsitz (2005), Rose (2005), Gelder (2007), and McLaren (1995) discuss hip hop

collectivities, gangs, movements, and posses as either local, nationalist, diasporic, or global

urban black groupings outside a white mainstream and cultural hegemony. Puerto Ricans were

centered in early community-driven hip-hop, rap, and house countercultures (McLaren 1995,

Rose 2005, Lipsitz 2005, Rivera 2002, Rivera 2003, Flores 2000, Flores 2008) that affirmed

working class Black and Puerto Rican/Latino racial, gender and sexual embodiments and

performances that defied white middle class heteronormative sensibilities and good neoliberal

citizenship. Even more, these subcultures' styles were often associated with affirming one's

connection to and identification with inner city, working poor and working class blackness

(Rivera 2002, Rivera 2003, Jo Bright 1998, Flores 2008 and Flores 2000). Scholars discuss how

youth's affinity for and lifestyle choice of hip hop were politicized sentiments and forms of

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collectivism against racism, colonialism, aspiring whiteness, the status quo and conformity

(Haenfler 2010, Rose 2005, Lipsitz 2005).

Crucially, it is not surprising that some Latinos/as (including Puerto Ricans) moved away

from this dominant subculture and preferred or had a taste for goth and skater subcultures to

articulate their gender performances and sexuality. For example one skater, Danniyal, explains

that being a skater was an alternative to being a "Puerto Rican or black hip-hop aficionado."

That is, non-Puerto Rican Latinos/as in Elizabeth used skating and goth subculture to articulate a

non-Puerto Rican(ified) hip hop and rap subjectivity. Some male interviewees referred to Latino

youth skaters as, for example, "a Colombian skater," "an Ecuadorian skater" or "Peruvian

skaters" not only to emphasize their national identity but to also make a distinction in how their

local and disaporic non-Puerto Rican identity also shaped their performance of race, gender and

masculinity. Although I do not look at how these youth actively took part in similar youth

subcultures from Latin America, my interviewees hint at how such subculture scenes could have

informed these second-generation immigrant youth during their summer visits to the homeland.

In *Youthscapes: The Popular, The National, The Global* (2005), Maira and Soep draw from

Arjun Appadurai's term "youthscapes" to offer a typology of how youth self-organize or are

impacted by global and disporic youth "flows" outside a nationalist or imperialist frame of race,

gender and sexuality.

Desiring to be White? Emasculating Latino Goths and Skaters

Mark and Peter

During our time together, Mark, a 1.5-generation Colombian American, explained the

limitations he faced in his early daily teenage life given that his single mother raised him and his

younger brother on her bi-weekly paycheck working in an assembly line while his father was non-existent for a good part of their teenage lives. Mark shared that during his middle school years, his classmate friends were not headed in the right direction. His association with some of his classmates was not helping him make the right choices to perform well in school and stay out of trouble. He explains,

> What we did in middle school, all my friends in middle school ended up in jail and stuff like that so I was like, "Wow, if I keep going like this in this direction, I am in trouble…So, I always knew consciously, I was hanging around with these kids and doing bad things that it was only that. That it was a temporary thing in middle school.

Although Mark does not openly say it, he implies here that there were expected norms for him to behave in his urban context that would grant him acceptance by other male kids. Mark was performing standard racial, gender, and sexual codes that, while they gave him a sense of camaraderie, were not helping him get ahead. Authors Lopez (2004), Smith (2006), and Carter (2005) show the ways Latino ethnic youth are expected to perform an urban working-class masculinity among their male peers that perpetuates underperformance in school and a distancing from their family, in contrast to "good" Latina girls. He explains here that even as a child he knew then that he had to choose better options for himself, insinuating above that his actions were a "temporary thing."

After giving up his expected behaviors among his peers, he was singled out when he turned to skateboarding. After I ask him "if he was bullied for being a skater," Mark says, "Yes, in the urban communities, yeah! Because, it had the stigma of being a whiteboy's sport. Because that's what it showed in TV and everything. You saw the movies like Thrashin'[24] and stuff. So you thought it was a white boy thing. People used to be like, well, the kids used to be like, um, yeah, it's a whiteboy's sport…" Mark reflects his experience in an impersonal form to emphasize

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[24] Information about the movie: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0092085/

that he and others were singled out by peers as different given his affinity to skateboarding, a "whiteboy's sport." Scholars like Borden (2001) and Yochim (2009) examine how skateboarding was portrayed as a white male's sport that left minority youth and females on the margins. In particular Emily Yochim argues in her monograph, *Skate Life: Re-Imagining White Masculinity* (2009), that the perceptions of skateboarders changed largely because of its commodification in the late 1990's by marketers, media and advertisers who portrayed skateboarders as nationalist representations of "able" white and heteronormative male gender and sexuality that left behind negative (mis)representations of minority skateboarders. Because he did not offer a more personal experience here, this could be interpreted as his vulnerability about sharing how his own masculinity was questioned. In this quote, Mark comments on how others viewed him and other skaters as "wanting to be white" and moving away from the more urban minority macho persona. John Ogbu writes about a similar situation in his book, *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb: A Study of Academic Disengagement* (2003), about how African American students in the DC area who performed well among their African American peers were chastised for "acting white," being different, and being disloyal to their African American community. Despite the difference in class context between these more privileged African American youth in the Shaker Heights area of DC and Elizabeth working class youth, a significant number in the latter group underperformed and resisted a pedagogy of white cultural hegemony. In *Children of Immigration* (2001), Carola Suarez-Orozco and Marcelo Suarez-Orozco examine how underperforming Chicano/a identifying youth viewed overachieving students as "acting white" and exuding superiority and distancing from their cultural Chicano/a identity. These findings suggest how some students singled out the "good students" and (mis)perceived them as trying to be successful neoliberal subjects and being

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disloyal or embarrassed about their minority cultural capital and identity. Mark's comments suggest that he and his skater peers were bullied for being perceived as acting white at a time when these subculture embodiments and performances were seen as white, foreign, and disloyal to urban youth of color dominant subcultures. Mark was antagonized for trying on marked white(ned) forms of cultural capital (whether successfully or not) that led his peers to view him as desiring to be someone (or somewhere) else and wanting to be different from them.

Dealing with a sense of rejection from many of his Latino/a peers, Mark remained adamant about crafting his skateboarding, which became a form of expression that for Mark was outside of race and expected codes. He explains, "And it wasn't, it was more of a cultural thing, you know? It was about expressing yourself kind of what Bruce Lee talks about… cause he talks about honestly expressing yourself. Finding a way to honestly express yourself, not hiding. He used martial arts to express himself, you know?" By emphasizing here that skateboarding was more of a "cultural" thing, Mark conveys that his interest was not claiming whiteness but choosing a cultural lifestyle that was beneficial to him and his values. Even more, Mark acknowledges the complications in his choice by saying that his view of culture was not about assimilating to whiteness but was a thoughtful, self-deterministic approach to defying stereotypical mainstream views and popular culture portrayals imposed on working-class Latino/a youth.

Mark highly regards Bruce Lee as an anti-racist figure who fought in his career to challenge U.S. imperialism by promoting the diverse/post-national/diasporic representations of Asian Americans. In this quote, Mark affirms that he modeled his skateboarding after Bruce Lee, an ultimate counterhegemonic icon whose artistry invokes subversion of U.S. dominant racist narratives of nationalism, imperialism, and model minority status among hybrid Americans. In

his book entitled, *Everybody was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (2001), Vijay Prashad discusses the ways in which Bruce Lee defied and refused to play racist and imperialistic acting roles that portrayed an Asian American contained by US hegemonic power. In the same way that Bruce Lee fought for his self-representation and self-determination in acting roles, Mark unapologetically expresses a queer male Latinidad outside of dominant representations of predictable inner-city male gender and sexuality. In the words of this interviewee, Bruce Lee would not "hide" his desires, political views, or subversions by practicing either expected forms of "good" or "bad" nationalism and ethnicity.

Peter, another Latino skater, offers another way of understanding how pursuing skating helped explore an identity outside the dominant subculture that defined many Latino male youths' personas, sexuality, and gender identity and performances. In the same way that Mark discussed how skateboarding led him to express his "true-self," Peter describes how he was in a similar search of self. In my ethnographic notes of our interview I write,

> …By eleventh grade, …he was in search of his identity. More of his flashblacks made him recall of several LGBT students who he said gave him a frame to search for his identity. Searching for his identity in his view meant finding things that were not of popular or dominant (sub)culture but were outside of popular and dominant (sub)culture. He explains, "…it was all about finding your true-self, being you or finding your identity." Specifically, he noted several of the well-known gay and lesbian out students in the high school who gave him a frame to search for his own identity.

Peter expressed how his friendships and socializing with his gay classmates helped him to achieve finding his self outside of dominant (sub)culture.   Similarly, Mark said that his reference to gay out youth in the high school helped him to feel like he did not have to be overly masculinist and conform to expected sexual and gender roles as a male Latino youth. Like Mark, Peter also enjoyed and identified with rap and hip hop styles and music (Public Enemy in particular). For both Mark and Peter, their exchange with other youth outside masculinized and

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heterocentrist dominant subcultures influenced them to tone down their performances of Latino male gender and sexuality. Scholars Rands, McDonald, and Clapp in their chapter, "Landscaping Classrooms toward Queer Utopias," discuss the importance of "queering the classroom landscape," through a guided pedagogy reform (Jones 2013). Through the same concept these authors use, Mark and Peter show how out-gay students themselves queered the classroom landscape with their gay subcultural capital and eccentricity that did a lot of the cultural work within a school public that lacked a sufficient gay affirming pedagogy of critical multiculturalism (Kanpol and McLaren 1995). Peter's reflection is also reminiscent of Lucio, in the opening vignette of this chapter, in as far as how he could relate with straight males who were in similar marked-white subcultures as "basket cases" (according to Lucio) in Elizabeth. That is, queering the classroom landscape or school public was about inviting mainstream students to explore their subjectivity through queer relationality among other students. Please see more about this in chapter one.

Aside from skateboarding being a validating way to genuinely express oneself outside dominant notions of Latinidad, Mark shares how it became a way of gaining discipline that was not necessarily encouraged in his everyday life and lived context or promoted to Latino students in the neoliberal setting of dominant educational institutions. For example, when I asked him, "What would have been the alternative for you if you had not been a skater?" He explained that it would have been about "getting into trouble, being a thug[25]." Precisely, these are negative and racially reductive outcomes for working class youth in a neoliberal city and its institutions where most working class to lower class and darker skinned Latinos and Latino youth remained at the

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[25] Please refer to "Out Youth in the High School" on page 32 where I explore this term more closely. Thug is a colorblind term to refer to a racialized Latino or African American subject who is deemed an imminent criminal, innately violent and/or a failure in society.

bottom or close to the bottom of the racial and economic ladder where mobility was very difficult to achieve. In an essay entitled "Boxing and Masculinity: The History and (Her)story of Oscar de la Hoya," Gregory Rodriguez discusses how a Mexican American and Chicano audience perceived Oscar De La Hoya as not truly being of Chicano working class stock but more of a professionally seasoned, middle class and white(ned) boxer (Habell-Pallan and Romero 2002, 256-257). Rodriguez's examination shows how an ethnic community can look down upon mobility and question one's ethnic membership in it. The fact that skateboarding served Mark as a form of discipline that may help him move ahead from the limited choices of being a "thug" meant risking being perceived as becoming whitened or being ashamed of his Latino/a identity and culture.

Mark further explains to me the valuable tools he felt he received through skateboarding that have helped him move forward as an individual in life. Mark explains, "…It's a sport that no one teaches you. It's a sport that teaches you about life. It's a sport that teaches you about falling down, hitting the concrete, and having to get back up." In this quote, he suggests how this sport is not relational but more of an inward and individualized process of self-learning where he does not expect institutional structures or his surrounding community to formulate him. Similarly, Peter also discusses how he chose to skate rather than try out for an organized sport. Ogbu (2003, 156) points out that African American and other minority youth went into (school) sports because it was one of the only ways to get ahead. Peter's choice to not play in an organized or school sport represented a refusal to be socialized and racialized by having to assume the expected masculine performances as an urban working class Latino male youth athlete in a post-industrial and mainstream economy (Ogbu 2003, 156). Similar to Mark, Peter chose to express himself and his athleticism through skateboarding as an individualized sport and

not through a team-building effort. Skateboarding has taught both of them that each must depend on himself to persevere and move forward.

Mark's and Peter's choices resonate with Gregory Rodriguez's discussion of how Oscar De La Hoya took an individualized and inward approach to his boxing career and training, unlike other Chicano or Mexican American boxers, who were vocal about dedicating their loyalty to their ethnic identity and winning for the community. According to Rodriguez, De La Hoya never articulated his loyalty to the Chicano/a and Mexican American boxing audience and community. That is, De La Hoya distanced himself from paying tribute to his ethnic identity and community, unlike other Chicano/Latino boxers such as Julio Cesar Chavez (Rodriguez 2002, 257-258). Further, De La Hoya's middle class upbringing (his grandfather's remunerated hard work as a restaurant owner and small businessman) placed him in a different economic and more privileged positioning than most working class Chicano and Mexican Americans (Rodriguez 2002, 253). Overall, Rodriguez shows how De La Hoya's masculine and gender performance was perceived as different, refined and even feminine or queer compared to that of Chicano-identifying boxers like Julio Cesar Chavez (Rodriguez 2002, 257-258 and 261-262). In a way, such loyalty to ethnic identity and the respective ethnic audience preserves nationalist and masculinist forms of Latino/Chicano masculinity that are also portrayed in dominant and ethnic media.

In the same way, Mark's individual approach to self-improvement through skateboarding resonated with middle class values that to some peers may have whitened him in ways that suggested he was not connected with his ethnic or racial community. Unlike De La Hoya (Rodriguez 2002, 253), Mark and most of his Elizabeth skater peers did not have economic privilege. In a segment of his interview, I point to an underlining of self-perceived racial

difference that shows he is not whitening himself for belonging when visiting a skate shop in a

middle to upper middle class white majority town, Westfield, New Jersey[26]. Mark recounts,

…We felt like Skate Rats, we felt like rats in comparison. We felt like rats and those skater kids [from Westfield] there were beautiful gooses, you know, if you had to compare the two. It's like we went over there with used sneakers. We used to wear this, um, this thing called shoe goo. Shoe goo is an adhesive that you put on top of your sneaker so when you're doing the trick the olie, it doesn't tear up the sneaker completely. Or you already have a hole and you just put shoe goo to repair that section. So we would show up there with messed up sneakers, dirty. We bought our clothes from CH Martin[27] because that's where we could get cheap Dickies and cheap stuff and whatever. And then you show up and these kids have brand new outfits on, you know like something straight out of a magazine, you know what I mean. So, yeah, you felt the difference.

Given that he and his friends could not afford to buy all the accessories that would enhance their

skateboarding skills, they were placed at a racial or class disadvantage. Socially speaking, Mark

is saying that he and his friend were "skate rats [from Elizabeth] in comparison" which denotes a

kind of marginal and distasteful positioning relative to middle class white skaters from

Westfield.

Many subcultures, including not only skating but also hip hop and rap music, became

commodified, which diverged from the original intent of sucbculture as a social movement

(Lipsitz 2005). Scholars Prier 2010 and McLaren 1995 describe a later, more commercialized

form of hip hop rap music and lyrics that featured expensive clothing styles and material items

that reified neoliberal values of individualism, competition and consumption. These tensions

occurred in other subcultures as well. For example, another interviewee, Lucio, explained how

terrible he felt for having his parents pay about $100 for Doc Martens that complemented his

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[26] During the mid 1990s, some Elizabeth youth enjoyed going to a downtown Mom and Pop café called Lucca's. For more information about Westfield, check out this link: http://www.westfieldtoday.com/

[27] CH Martin was a discount department store on Broad Street in Elizabeth. Shopping there was a pastime for many of my interviewees with their parents. The store had a working class aesthetic.

black goth wear while they worked in hourly low-paying jobs. Oliver explained to me how his

mother had a very modest clothing allotment for school clothes. When he wanted an expensive

brand name item that basically ran up the entire allotment his mother would say, "Ok, you could

get that one thing but that's all you'll be wearing." There was constant pressure for working class

youth to wear the marked accessories that were often truly unaffordable to them and their

families. Thus, the fact that Mark raises how they modestly wore cheap brands that marked them

as underprivileged compared to others in both the skater and hip-hop and rap scenes suggest their

visible and everyday anti-neoliberal subjectivity outside conformism, competition and

consumption.

Yet, Mark emphasizes in the quote above the wish to wear expensive clothing from an

inherently white subculture more than wishing to be whitened and be in a middle class

positioning. Garcia Canclini writes,

> …we need to be more attuned to the new forms that citizenship takes in an era where
> relations of social belonging are 'steeped in consumption,' acknowledging the ways in
> which young people, among other social actors, may express political motivations or
> aspirations through their use of the media rather than assuming, a priori, that the space of
> consumption is opposed to that of citizenship. (Garcia Canclini in Yochim 2009)

In effect, Garcia Canclini's quote here suggests how Mark and these skaters are not necessarily

denying or ashamed of their Latino identity and geographic and class positioning. Instead, they

are aspiring to consume what they believe will empower them to defy practices that were

imposed on Latino male youth in their everyday lives in Elizabeth.

Even more, Mark further expresses how as a skateboarder, he was emasculated or

effeminized when compared with dominant portrayals of virile Latino male modes of

consumption in Elizabeth. He explains, "The girls were hilarious, the girls would say stuff like,

'oh so you skateboard that means you're never going to want to get your license,' meaning we

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used it for transportation." In effect, the girls in Mark's quote are questioning his and other skateboarders' masculinity for depending on a skateboard instead of a car. In Elizabeth's political economy, the girls question shockingly Mark's and other's skaters' ability to be adequate providers ("You're never going to want to get your license?") for basing his/their masculine appeal and virility on a skateboard and not a car.   In contrast, hip hop and rap Latino and black youth often exuded their black and Latino subjectivity, masculine appeal and virility with urban-designed cars and lowriders (Sandoval 2014, Jo Bright 1998, Stone 1990) that also defined their local hip hop and rap culture (Haenfler 2010, Viesca 2005, and Jo Bright 1998). This distanced Mark and other skaters from these girls not only as racially white wannabees but also as having foreign and strange (sub)cultural tastes.

More than strange though, Ramlow's essay, "Bad Boys: Abstractions of Difference and the Politics of Youth Deviance," in Maira and Soep's edited book *Youthscapes* (2005), examines how society at large and dominant media view male youth who deviate from standard norms of gender and sexual performance as deviant and pathological within "dominant discourses of disability" instead of critiquing larger "social processes and policies" (Linton in Ramlow 2005, 204). Further, Ramlow also suggest the monitoring of disabled masculinities from dominant subcultures of rap and hip hop through his opening vignette about homophobic lyrics by Eminem about those whom the rapper considers failed men (that are not necessarily gay but queer or failed men) (192). Moreover, Ramlow discusses how society at large and the media offer sweeping and "abstract" perceptions of male youth as synonymously queer, disabled and effeminate (192-194) without remotely grasping the more pertinent issues of state racial and class inequalities. Specifically, Ramlow's essay focuses on how dominant discourses of disability center on "pathological white masculinity" and avoid "questions of racial and class

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mobility" (193). In effect, Mark and other male skaters and goths are viewed as social outsiders

who do not perform or embody the normalized forms of (Latino) masculinity within mainstream

or dominant subculture contexts. Mark understands his sense of imminent alienation and offers a

counterhegemonic critique ("the girls were hilarious"). He also emphasizes "how the girls would

say stuff like" to convey the sense of social exclusion he felt for not performing acceptable forms

of dominant and racialized masculinity in their translocal context. Instead, he performed a

deviant form of white masculinity that queered him and alienated him from peers who assumed

dominant performances of Latino/a gender and sexuality. That is, Mark, Felipe, and other skaters

and goths in this chapter were unwilling to conform to the standard local dominant codes to be

viewed as "normal" because of their deep values of "being yourself" or defying standard

racialization and sexualization "social processes and policies" of Latino/a youth that would not

let them get ahead.

Felipe

Unlike Mark and Peter, who did not dress in gender transgressive ways, Felipe's mode of

dress reflected androgynous goth fashion that to dominant subculture codes of hip hop and urban

wear in Elizabeth feminized and emasculated him. Felipe is a 6'2 tall and naturally muscular,

Colombian American whose body structure alone invokes a masculine presence. Felipe also

expressed his enjoyment and identification with hip hop and rap music like Cypress Hill, Wu

Tang Clan, and Public Enemy, which informed his masculine performance, particularly among

other hip hop and rap youth he associated with, and helped him pass as firmly masculine and

unquestionably gay at certain moments. He mentioned hanging out after school or cutting school

with hip hop and rap aficionados, indicating his belonging at times among male groups within

that scene. Yet when he articulated his goth core, it was a different story. When I asked him about the "creative ways" he dressed in high school he explained, "Shaving my hair to the side of the skin and having a big ponytail. My combat boots with my white fish net stockings and my black leather army jacket. And a times, here and there I just keep to myself." Felipe's mode of dress, deriving from European goth scenes, particularly his white fish net stockings, resembled the androgynous wear among males in this subculture (Hodkinson 2002; Haenfler 2008; Brill 2008). Also, Felipe's emphasis on a "big" ponytail and "shaving his hair to the side" hint at an excess that is outside masculine haircuts and styles of mainstream culture and dominant subcultures. Both the haircut and hairstyle Felipe described accentuated an androgyny that made him and other similar goth boys queer-looking within the Elizabeth context.

Even more, Felipe combined his androgynous wear with an outcast attitude or introverted nature that further brought attention to his queer or disabled masculinity. Throughout the interview, Felipe articulated how he was quiet, alone, and "dark," which was often interpreted by non-goths as being mysterious while in fact these qualities were typical among goth boys (Hodkinson 2002, Goodlad and Libby 2007, Wilkins 2007). In Haenfler's essay, "Goth – Stigma and Management," he explains that goth boys tended to look androgynous and be soft-spoken or demure, which is very much how Felipe describes himself. Scholars recognize how goths' gender-bending performances and embodiments are about "playing with what it means to be a man or a woman" (Haenfler 2008, 90, Hodkinson 2002 and Gunn 2007). In contrast, the dominant subcultures of hip hop and rap often make steep and heterocentrist distinctions between the performances and embodiments of the sexes (Danesi, 2010 Haenfler 2008), even while female hip hop and rap artists have challenged the misogyny and sexism in the hip hop and rap scenes (Danesi 2010, Tim and Wood 2008, and McLaren 1995). Further, Hodkinson

explains that, "Goth's generally feminine aesthetic created a space for men to express themselves in a way considered taboo by the larger culture" (Hodkinson in Haenfler 2010, 84). In other words, in the larger social context and dominant youth subcultures of Elizabeth, goths' androgynous characteristics and male performances, from the perspective of urban hip hop male genders and sexualities, were queer and gay.

Felipe describes how he was often perceived by non-goth Latinos/as as being effeminate or (a closeted) gay who didn't participate in the bold "in your face" and virile Latino heterosexist masculinities of the hip hop, rap and house scenes. He explained to me in two separate moments that, "…in high school, I liked to stay to myself a lot." In Gunn's essay, "Dark Admissions: Goth Subculture and the Ambivalence of Misogyny and Resistance," he describes how this sense of "social alienation" is another way of understanding goth boys' "dark" quality (45). Further, Gunn writes, "This sense of feeling alien to or shunned by mainstream culture also bleeds into the perception that goths, particularly male goths, are gay…" (45). Homophobia was rampant in a predominantly hip hop and rap youth-driven subculture in Elizabeth, which also suggests why Felipe kept a quiet and low profile in high school and on Elizabeth streets given potential violence and bullying. Felipe brought up the bullying potential that existed when he specifically mentioned how black hip hop male youth looked at him in a "smartass" way so as to intimidate and disqualify his (queer) masculinity. In effect, this shows the binary between perceived "white(ned) goth Latino males and black Latino and African American hip hop male youth rooted in their race and ethnicity. When I asked him, "Did anyone ever think you were gay or straight or questioning?" he said, "A couple of people. I felt I was open-minded. I was like dude, that's totally fine. You're not the only one. I get asked that a lot but I am straight. I'm not in the closet. But at the same time, I show my respect to them. I respect you, you respect me." In

this segment, Felipe offers the moments when he has been asked whether he was gay or not. But more importantly, he is conveying his ability to often stay open-minded and not feel pressured to fit within the norms of Latino masculinity as a Latino goth within the Elizabeth context or dominant subculture spaces.

During our time together, Felipe expressed his fondness for hip hop and rap music. He said, "I could listen to everything but my heart is industrial, heavy metal, and good old school rock and roll music." These blends of music are typical of what gothheads primarily enjoy. Further, he disclosed to me that he frequently hung out with several friends in the rap and hip hop scene, too. This shows that he gained genuine respect ("I respect you, you respect me") despite his goth core subjectivity, embodiments, and questionably gay queer male gender performance. His back and forth between a coded-white and coded-black subculture shows a genuine and personal identification with these different racialized scenes. For example, he explained to me his deep appreciation for the beats in hip hop and rap music that scholars Rivera (2002), Flores (2008), and Lipsitz (2005) suggest are evident of a connection and identification to an Afro-diaspora that are rooted in African American and Latino youth. His associations with hip hop and rap heads also show that he was not always socially-alienated from blackness or black masculinity but could relate with other male youth amidst the dominant hip hop and rap scenes despite his queer embodiments and performance as a goth.

Felipe explained that he related well to LGBT folks given his queer sensibilities as a goth. I write in my fieldnotes, "...He explained that people thought he was gay. This was partly due to what he wore. His rebellious, misfit nature was viewed as being non-straight. His dark side and love of being different helped him to connect with gays and lesbians who did not conform to dominant/ mainstream sensibilities." In the earlier quote above, Felipe says that

regardless of the misunderstandings over his sexuality and gender, he was not willing to change

his demeanor/tastes for the sake of being perceived as masculine. Also, he was unwilling to

change his support for individuality and sexual diversity; he defied dominant subculture and

mainstream sensibilities of heterosexism. Haenfler writes that goths, "...push no political

agenda, insisting only on respect for individuality and a tolerance for diversity…" (Haenfler

2010, 84). This assertiveness can be viewed as an "in your face" queer masculinity by which

Felipe claimed his individualist subjectivity and forged his space.

"I almost became somewhat gay": Felipe and the Bisexual Referent of the Goth Scene

      Felipe described a homoerotic experience at QXT's[28] that suggests how this popular and

historic goth club in downtown Newark, New Jersey was a safespace for non-heteronormative

sexual and gender variance. Brill's monograph, *Goth Culture: Gender, Sexuality, and Style*

(2008), addresses the universal bisexual referent of the goth scene that tolerates sexual and

gender diversity of individuals and spaces. The bisexual referent of the scene also allowed for

men and women to explore their possible bisexuality in these spaces or flirt with the same sex,

which is not typical in heterosexist spaces. Further, Brill's ethnography shows that male goths

mostly explored open flirtation among men, not bisexual or homosexual relationships among

men. In his book, *Goth: Identity, Style, and Subculture* (2002), Hodkinson raises an

interconnection between femininity and (sexual) ambiguity that points to the possibility of

bisexual tendencies (Hodkinson 2002, 48-55) in these spaces. Given the misperception about

goth men, they often relate with the stigma that the LGBTQ community experiences. Below,

Felipe admitted to me his questioning over his sexuality and shared how every time he went to

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[28] Check out QXT's website: http://qxtsnightclub.com/

QXT's a gay goth male approached him and came onto him. He opens up about an incident at QXT's, "…To be honest with you, dude, I almost became somewhat gay. Some gay…ahhh, he was cool…But ahhh, it's like a quick reaction…I just can't. I just couldn't do it. That's why I have a lot of gay friends." In this case, one must consider at least two different ways Felipe approaches his sexuality. Above, I explored a largely inherently white and European narrative of male sexual and gender variant performance within the goth scene. In this case, the inherently white narrative suggests that heterosexual goth men often flirt with men but that it's not customary to pursue long lasting emotional ties or homosexual relationships (Brill 2008). But as a Latino and second-generation Colombian American male, this inherently white narrative misrepresents or falls short of factoring in Felipe's ethnic and diasporic orientations and how they also inform his gender and sexuality. I want to consider how his local Latino and second-generation diasporic Colombian American subjectivity inform his anti-patriarchal and anti-machista posturing in his retelling above of how he attempted to let this homoerotic experience take him and impact him. Ultimately, he concludes that "I just couldn't do it." This experience is contrary to how Latino men are frequently viewed as rigidly masculinist, heterosexist and homophobic. Further, I want consider how his daily lived "from below" (Smith and Guarnizo 1998) or "third space" (Rutherford 1990; Bhabha 1994; Vargas 2002) positioning as a transnational or diasporic subject outside a mainstream context has informed his queer sexuality or intimacy with men that must also be considered in this homoerotic experience. Scholars Decena (2011); Marquez (2007); Cantu Jr. (2009); Pena (2005) and Mananlansan (2003) examine the ways immigrant queer subjects are bound to diasporic and ethnic immigrant local contexts that privilege heteropatriarchy, nationalism, and heterosexuality. I consider the ways that a second-generation immigrant subject's gender and sexuality is shaped by the ethnic and

diasporic context and memory of his everyday life. Ultimately, Felipe's experience preserves his

male, heterosexual positioning yet his almost willingness and desire to connect physically and

emotionally with this man says something about his diasporic memory of Latino male sexualities

of Latin America that center Latin(o) American and not white European male sexualities.

I continued to ask him about this incident and he did not retract to defend his

heterosexuality but proceeded to confidently talk about that moment. Felipe offered his

homoerotic experience at QXT's. After I asked him, "What drew you guys to each other?" he

shared,

> We were friends. Back then we knew each other, I haven't spoken to him in ten years. I
> never saw him again. Before that, we knew each other for three years. We met at QXT's.
> We were just chillin and talking and all that. I don't know maybe his look. He had a kind
> of a babyface look and all that. You know, we were just hanging out and bullshitting. I
> don't know, I thought but ummmm…it just never escalated. He understood. He had no
> problem whatsoever. He said, "Dude, I like you a lot but I totally understand your
> wishes. I understand that you want to…you are not ready to go that way." And I just
> wasn't ready. Ah, I was a little bit scared. Ah, it's like man…It was like a big fucking
> question mark. It was really big you know? It took me a while to think about it.

Felipe's experience complicates the sexual and gender variant dynamics of the dominant and

inherently white gothic scene. Felipe's narrative here amplifies these narratives from his

perspective as a Latin(o) American heterosexual male. First, we can assume that the sexual and

gender models these authors use are Eurocentric/First-World/nationalist models of gender and

sexuality that do not capture Felipe's subjectivity as a second-generation Colombian-American

whose gender and sexuality are arguably also influenced by queer sexualities of Latin(o)

America and the third world. Here, Felipe suggests in this homoerotic experience that he plays

the masculine/active role in comparison to the half Puerto Rican and German effeminate/passive

man with a "babyface." In using a gender/behavioral model that Latino/a scholars like Murray

(1995) and Almaguer (1993) have used to describe queer Latin(o) American male sexualities,

Felipe plays the active role in this exchange while the other man performs the passive role and is the actual homosexual. In the gothic subculture, Felipe is still viewed as heterosexual or potentially bisexual and that these verbal exchanges between the two male youth are flirtation in a culture of gender bending and androgyny.

Scholars Decena, Roque-Ramirez, Carrillo, Almaguer in their published interview, "Revisiting Activos and Pasivos: Toward New Cartographies of Latino/Latin American Male Same-Sex Desire" find errors with how Latino male sexualities have been essentialized and call for the need to reinterpret the gender model of Latin(o) American male sexualities outside the gender/behavior model (Vidal-Ortiz, Decena et al. 2010). These scholars would argue that Felipe's Latin(o) sexuality could not just be dismissed or simplified as gender normative for performing the top role but that his individual sexuality offers us an understanding about a non-normative sexuality from his different geographic and spatial positionings (U.S. dominant society, diasporic context, subculture context) that must be taken into consideration. These scholars would argue that Felipe did feel some kind of connection to the other man that makes him queer in this exchange even though there was not a sexual act.

In effect, Felipe's sexuality is not the one in question according to the standing gender and behavorial model despite a U.S. gay identification model that may point to a different conclusion. In effect, the U.S. gay identification model (Miller in Epps, Valens, and Johnson 2005) defines both men in the homosexual act as gay and not only the gay subject playing the passive role. Further, the gay identification model does not impose top or bottom roles on homosexual subjects based on their gender performance. Rather, the model relies on what the subjects seek to perform irrespective of their gender and behavior. In Felipe's case, it is obvious that he was anxious: "I was a little bit scared." Yet, in claiming that, "he wasn't ready," actually

he suggests the imagination and possibility of actually being ready. The gay identification model may read Felipe as being "in the closet" or as heterosexual since nothing substantial has happened. In other words, he was open and attracted to this passive male even though he did not go through the queer act.

Therefore, Felipe's experience could not be read only from a white, first-world narrative because it would not factor in his positioning as an ethnic and diasporic subject. These subculture authors might claim that Felipe was a typical heterosexual goth sporting androgyny or was bisexual. According to a white, first-world narrative, the goth scenes were still relatively heterosexist and masculinist despite their greater tolerance for sexual and gender difference and androgyny (Brill 2008). However, when we use a Latin(o) American model of gender and sexuality and the critique of it as I addressed above briefly, we are able to see that as a heterosexual man, Felipe was crossing boundaries and attempting to relate with another friend through homosexual desire within the space of the goth scene.

Articulating Latina Gender and Sexuality in an Inherently White Goth Scene

Katia

Katia is a 1.5-generation Cuban American who immigrated from Cuba to Elizabeth at a young age. Throughout her high school years, Katia also followed some of the dominant Latino scenes, particularly the house and freestyle scenes, while going to an Elizabeth parochial high school. To go to these scenes, she always had to go with her older DJ brother who was an avid club goer in the Elizabeth freestyle and house scene. In one instance, Katia expressed that she "loved all those house and freestyle records" but the actual scenes never grabbed her attention in the way the goth scene would later in her late teens and early twenties.

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In my fieldnotes, after meeting with her for dinner, I wrote some afterthoughts regarding her exposure, self-agency and the appeal of the freestyle and house scene in Elizabeth through her brother:

> I appreciated Katia's discussion about how she would go with her older brother to the Palace, a famous Latino nightclub in Elizabeth where several freestyle artists performed and house and club music was played DJs. She mentioned in the recorded interview that her brother was a regular who went to these freestyle and house music parties at the Palace. To express her brother's love for freestyle music, Katia explained that he still has all those promotional pictures of the freestyle artists and some of them signed by them. One of them is from Judy Torres, who signed her promotional card for him and wrote her number on the back of it! She wanted a date with him! Her brother is good looking and dated a lot of girls in that scene. Katia expressed that she enjoyed the scene (with her brother) and really enjoyed the music but in the end, it really was not her scene. Ultimately, it was free time away from her home and parents even though she was with her brother. The fact that Katia wasn't deep into the scene suggests her slight discontent with the performances, embodiments, and popular images about the production, aesthetic and display of Latina female gender and sexuality. Even more, the largely Latino/a heterosexual freestyle and house Elizabeth crowd at the Palace can be read as homogeneously masculinist and heterocentrist. Her move into the goth scene explains that Katia looked for something different than the expectations conveyed in the convention gender performance and sexuality of the freestyle scene at the Palace.

In these fieldnotes, one important matter to explore is how Katia was exposed to this freestyle scene because her older brother accompanied her always. She suggests her genuine fondness of freestyle music by shadowing her brother in this youth Latino dance scene of the mid 1980s into the early 1990s. In Deborah Pacini Hernandez's monograph, *Oye Como Va!: Hybridity and Identity in Latino Popular Music* (2010), she offers a genealogy of freestyle music that was a product of hip hop, rap, house and Latino popular music. Further, she describes freestyle as a subset of hip hop, as Latin hip hop. In this way, we can understand that freestyle was a Latin(o) and African American cultural hybridity. Her examination suggests that while Latin freestyle primarily became a Latino music subculture, its musical and diasporic sounds were also black. In effect Katia's own musical history does not start or end with goth and industrial music that many would perceive as white(ned) but also with the cultural and social engagement around

freestyle music that could be coded as a product of Latin(o) and African American cultural hybridity and referent in freestyle scenes and groupings. Similarly, Felipe, a little older than Katia, suggested his fondness for freestyle music and his outings to the Palace nightclub even while he had defined himself as primarily goth. Both Katia and Felipe are examples of Latino youth moving between a Latin(o) and African American cultural hybrid music form and a white/Eurocentric musical form that must be considered in their every day lives or cultural repertoire. In terms of gender and sexuality, their goth tastes offered queer conventions of masculinity and femininity to a Latin(o) masculinist and heteropatriachal scene. In particular, Katia's goth taste would become her way of self-defining a more liberated gender and sexuality relative to her brother and parents.

In several moments of the interview, Katia made clear that her parents were too overprotective of her during high school. It was during her last year in the high school that her parents allowed her to make more of her own choices and be herself. Katia's "tagging along" with her brother demonstrates the ways "good" Latina girls are often sheltered from bad influences, especially from urban male youth of color who exhibit strong signs of not getting ahead (Lopez 2004, Carter 2005, Smith 2005). In this case, Katia was a "good" Cuban/Latina girl. Further, these authors also point out that immigrant families allow their male youth out on the street while female youth sexualities are monitored at home. In effect, boys are allowed to explore their gender and sexuality at liberty, unlike girls. It is the female youth's gender and sexuality that is in constant question and about which the parents have anxieties over deviance. Therefore, Katia had to shadow her brother in order for her to go out. Under the supervision of her protective brother, she was constricted to express her gender and sexuality in the

conventional and masculinist space of the freestyle scene under her brother's watchful gaze over her body and performance.

Towards the end of her senior high school year, Katia's musical tastes had shifted to a more alternative scene. She was not quite exactly becoming the " good girl" Cuban-American princess that her parents anticipated with her black goth and fetish-like dress. She became the freakier goth version of the Cuban American Princess.   By "freaky," Haenfler 2010 explains that youth's "strange" goth gender performance and dress are easily perceived as outside normative dress codes and gender performance, yet in the end these youth do not necessarily want to stray so far away from traditional conventions. Further, Haenfler suggests that these goth youth still maintain middle class normative values. While Haenfler writes this from an inherently white narrative, I want to consider his discussion within the context of Katia's Cuban and Latina upbringing in Elizabeth. Agreeing with Haenfler (2010) and complicating his findings, I add that Katia wanted to remain connected to middle class normative values of Cuban and Latino immigrants even while her goth dress and performance allowed her to express herself in ways she could not as a traditional Cuban American and Latina 1.5-generation female.

During her early college years, while living with her mother in Elizabeth, Katia's musical and dress taste for goth blossomed. Because Katia's father suddenly passed away and her brother eventually got married and moved out of the house, there were fewer eyes to constantly watch over her. Katia's love for dark goth wear was a stark contrast to the normative "trendy" and even hip hop-inspired wear of Elizabeth youth. I remember when Katia began dressing in corsets in her everyday life (not just in the goth scene), a key staple of the goth subculture (Hodkinson 2002).   Even more, her goth dress ultimately became her personalized form of

gender and sexual expression that defied mainstream expectations of heteronormative Latina

dress in the Elizabeth context.   Katia explains,

> …I have a thing for the Victorian[29] period and also the corset to me are amazing and beautiful. They make the body look amazing. Even though it's probably not the best thing for a woman, you know because you are so constricted in this thing but yeah. My favorite outfit would probably be I have this long corset that would go up to my hip area and right underneath the bust and I would normally wear a chiffon skirt like a hard chiffon shirt so that it sticks out. And ahh, the chiffon had two or three layers but I would just wear pantyhose. So, you could kind of see through but you couldn't really see through. I would just wear like some black tights some high-heeled boots. A black bra so it looks like it's a tank top. A big necklace of some sort…My hair would probably be in sort of curls? Halfway up, halfway down with a hat in my hair. Some sort of bowl with feathers coming out of it. My make-up definitely lots of glitter and fake lashes.

Katia describes an outfit that she typically wore when going out to a goth club but also in her

everyday life. Unlike the standard and masculinist dress of Latina women in the freestyle scene

of tight spandex or waist-cut and pleated whitewashed stretch jeans with chunky-gold plated

belts, flowery or electric-colored or polka-dot print rayon blouses, hair bows and hoop earrings

that accentuated women's bodies sexually, Katia exuded a non-normative gender and sexuality

with her less revealing "Victorian" goth wear.

 In a certain way, her embodiment and performance can be read not only as queer but also

as self-empowering relative to masculinist/patriarchal codes of Latina gender and sexuality. In

effect, Katia is "freaky" to society around her while actively seeking self-expression through

goth wear in her everyday life. Unlike Fiona Buckland's interviewees in the second chapter of

her book, *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making* (2002), who dress up

"fabulously" in the third space to exude their transgressive gender and sexuality only in the

dance spaces at night while dressing appropriately at home and work during the day, Katia

dressed up in her eccentric goth wear during the day too.

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[29] Dunja Brill raises the importance of the Victorian aesthetic among goths on page 3 of her book *Goth Culture: Gender, Sexuality, and Style* (2008).

Furthermore, Katia wore her goth clothing during the day because she appreciated how it worked to her advantage given her heaviness. While Katia could be self-conscious about her weight, she gained a positive self-image from the goth pieces of dress she choses to wear that made her feel sexually attractive and feminine despite her overweightness. She explains above that "the corset makes the body look amazing [for her]," unlike more normative wear for Latina women that might not work to her advantage. This is similar to another discussion to how one of Buckland's male interviewees becomes a confident nightlife persona with outrageous costuming in the queer dance scenes he enjoys in New York City that positively accentuates his weight despite a weight conscious dance subculture.

Similarly, Katia's bigger body frame places her outside the idealized androgynous body frames and the death chic (Brill 2008 and Goodlad and Bibby 2007) of the goth scene. This alone reveals how her corporeality as a curvaceous and pudgy Latina goth is remarkably different and marginal from the corporeality of this inherently white subculture that privileges the death chic. Her body marks her as a Latina diasporic subject "from below" (Smith and Guarnizo 1998) with curves outside middle class white standards of female corporeality. In her book, *Dangerous Curves: Latino Bodies in the Media* (2010), Molina Guzman suggests how dominant media engender white mainstream society to view the Latina body as sensual, threatening and hypersexual compared to white female bodies. Molina Guzman examines how Latina bodies like Jennifer Lopez's are racialized as the bad other to white female bodies in ways that they are constantly in question and viewed as excess to U.S. conventions of heteronormative female gender and sexuality. In effect, the Latina remains a racially marked body that cannot assume a white assimilated female gender and sexuality. In comparison, Deborah Vargas' essay, "Representations of Latina/o Sexuality in Popular Culture," documents how film tropes like the

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spitfire are traced back to Latinas like Lupe Velez and Carmen Miranda, whose gender and

sexuality were viewed as primitive, uncontrollable, and lusting for the white male (Vargas 121-

122). According to Vargas, Katia's curvaceous body could be read as racially marked,

sexualized and viewed as aggressive in this goth scene.

Yet, she also marks her space securely within this translocal goth scene given her female

attractiveness (and star resemblance) that is weighed highly in the goth scene according to Brill

(2008). As a white Cuban Latina within a white subculture, her whiteness may help her pass and

not be viewed as a racial other. In fact, Katia was often referred to by many of her friends as the

Cubana/Latina version of Gwen Stefani[30]. Because Katia's looks were compared to a white

celebrity who has an ideal white female corporality, such an association helped Katia be

desirable within this space despite her excessive weight. Through her goth friends' viewing

Katia as white like singer Gwen Stefani, her racial and ethnic identity was "tropicalized," a term

coined in Francis R. Aparicio's and Susana Chavez-Silverman's book, *Tropicalizations:*

Transcultural Representations of Latinidad (1997), to denote depoliticized or whitened images

for a mainstream white audience to preserve either a white cultural hegemony or the inherently

white subculture and space. On another note, her inability to assume the expectations of goth

corporeality as a marked Latina subject explain her individual self-agency over belonging within

the norms of white cultural hegemony in the translocal goth scene.

At the same time however, her embodiments and performance while queer still conform

to Latino/a heteropatriarchal sexual and gender codes. Her valuing of the Victorian resonates

with good white female sexuality. In effect, this works perfectly with an inherently white

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[30] It was another public figure that most of my interviewee's friends said she resembled. In order
to reserve her privacy, I am using Gwen Stefani, former band leader of No Doubt, as a similar
comparison.

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subculture like the goth scene. Similar to film tropes of male and female Latina/o sexualities that

Rodriguez (1997) and Vargas (2010) explore, the Victorian image can be seen as a subculture

persona or trope that reifies pure white female sexuality at certain moments and marginalizes or

stigmatizes non-white female sexualities and genders.   However, in light of Latina gender and

sexuality, the Victorian also reifies pure "good girl" Latina embodiments and performances that

strongly resonate with simplified and strict nationalist and heteropatriarchal female gender roles

in Latin American/Mexican/Chican@ culture (Zavella 2011; Roma-Carmona, Alma, Moraga

1983; Moraga and Anzaldua 1981). Even while Katia's dressing up in this Victorian goth

persona can be hyperfeminized to articulate transgression, it can also reify traditional

conventions of female gender and sexuality (Brill 2008, Haenfler 2010). For example, while

interviewing Katia I asked her how her mother felt about the way she dressed. She replied, "She

loved it. It's funny, yeah. But it's surprising. She'd help me tie up my corsets."   The fact that

Katia's mother helped her dress up reveals her mother's approval of her queer embodiment and

performance which still reified dominant codes of Latina gender and sexuality. Haenfler

discusses how some parents viewed their goth kids as "heteronormative" because they articulated

"good" middle class values despite their transgressive look.   According to Brill's ethnographic

study of goth culture, the scene is not always as "queer," "anti-establishment," and

countercultural as it appears to the mainstream or dominant culture. Katia's mother picks up on

that her daughter's "rebellious and gender and sexual transgression" reifies heteronormative

dominant and sexual heteronormative codes (Brill 2008 and Haenfler 2010).   Thus, while

Katia's embodiments and performances disrupt some mainstream expectations of Latina female

gender and sexuality, they ultimately still conform to mainstream codes of gender and sexuality

as far as standards of (white) beauty and heteronormativity.   In the next section, I will show how

these female goths and their groups remain heteronormative yet tolerant in spaces of queer and bisexual referents and sexual trangression.

Katia, Julie and Marie: Gender Eccentricity and Queer Outings

Marie, a second generation Cuban-American, was one of Katia's closest friends since high school. Both of them often enjoyed exploring the goth scenes in Newark, Lyndhurst[31], and New York City with their friends in common like Julie, a second-generation Colombian lesbian goth punk, and Darren, a third-generation gay femme Italian American.   However, these goths were also interested in visiting gay subculture scenes outside the goth scene because, unsurprisingly, gays and lesbians were placed in a marginal positioning relative to heterosexual and bisexual goths (Brill 2008 and Schilt 2007). However, this crew had their own gay and lesbian core even at the margins of the goth scene. Katia and Darren often visited different balls in the city in their goth dress where such spaces were gay and lesbian referents.

Katia said, "Darren was pretty much my partner-in-crime because he loved to dress up as well." Katia explains here how Darren's eccentricity through dress helped her express herself through her hyperfeminine wear. However, whether at the goth scene or at a drag party like Jackie 60s[32], this queer group of goths were each other's partners-in-crime by helping each other build up their dress and gender transgressive performance. While Katia often wore her corsets, Darren, who had a slim build, also wore one and accompanied it with either tight black leather or velvet pants. Katia's persona in the goth scenes and balls was more hyperfeminine yet sexually aggressive. Marie had an average body frame; she was less hyperfeminine, androgynous and

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[31] Lynhurst is a majority white town in Bergen County, New Jersey. Lynhurst's goth scene added to Elizabeth youth's translocal experience and also opportunities for social capital outside Elizabeth. The bar that my interviewees often went to in Lynhurst was called Aldo's Hideaway. According to this source (http://www.ovguide.com/aldo's-hideaway-9202a8c04000641f80000000055cc140), it burned down in 2004.

[32] For more information, check out: http://www.jackie60.com/

tended not to wear corsets. Instead of wearing stilettoes like Katia, Marie always wore her Doc

Martens. Katia had long hair past her waist while Marie had a more boyish bob cut. On the

other hand, Julie dressed more butch like Darren's boyfriend. His simple and masculine goth

black outfits, with black or red velour blazers, matching oxford dress shirts, and a simple chiffon

gave him a butch-male persona.   Like Marie, Julie always wore her Doc Martens and tended to

keep her hair short, gelled and cropped to exude her butch persona.   Darren's cross dressing and

petite frame did not exude androgyny but resonated more with his gay femme and transgender

orientation.

   Katia discussed how she frequently accompanied Julie to Henrietta Hudson's[33], a lesbian

bar in New York City's West Village. As a heterosexual Latina goth, Katia experienced

subculture spaces outside a traditionally male dominated bisexual referent. The gay subculture

spaces like Jackie 60s were gay male dominated.   However, while they both went to Henrietta

Hudson's, they experienced a lesbian subculture space that was outside the gay and bisexual

male-dominant referent of the goth and gay subculture scenes. Meanwhile, these outings gave

Julie and Katia the opportunity to be not only in a lesbian-centered subculture but in an all

inclusive female and feminist space that scholars like Enke (2007), Schilt (2007), Haenfler

(2010) describe as outside the male gaze. However, the space at Henrietta Hudson's represents a

white female, lesbian, feminist subculture space that contains racialized markers of Latina

subjectivity. Scholars Vargas (2012), Cepeda (2010), Habell-Pallan (2005), Zavella (2011)

discuss feminist diasporic Latina articulations in these inherently white and/or nationalist and

heteropatriarchal subculture scenes.

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[33] For more information check out the bar's website: http://henriettahudson.com/

At Henrietta Hudson's, Katia was not the hyperfeminine Victorian girl; her gender

performance changed in this space outside a heterosexual white male gaze. Katia's reserved and

lower tone while recounting her past time at Henrietta's suggested a more subdued position

within this lesbian and feminist subculture than in the goth scene. This also shows that her

outings were not always in function of finding attraction (or getting the attention) from a (white)

heterosexual male. Entering this space in the way Enke (2007) and Schilt (2007) describe the

female spaces they study was about embracing support and friendship among an inclusive female

space across gender and sexuality. Several women hit on Katia, though she never pursued it but

appreciated the attention not coming from a male. Julie, as a lesbian punk butch, was

reminiscent of riot grrrl punk subculture (Haenfler 2010; Marcus 2010; Anderson 2014) that

paved a separate "DIY" space for female punkers that articulated a feminist politics and self-

positioning not tied to a male dominated punk scene. The fact that she continued going with Julie

shows that Katia was open to this female/feminist centered space as well as being the object of

desire and attraction of lesbian woman too, and not just of men. In this way, Katia's

conventional sexuality is queered and her gender performance is nuanced in this space. Further,

Katia did not exude her hyperfemininity for a male gaze but took on a more feminist butch

performance influenced by this space. However, she remained feminine in contrast to Julie's

lesbian butch performance in this bar.

Black and Blue Balls

Among the balls that Katia and Marie went to, it was clear that some New York scenes

were outside the goth aesthetics of gender and sexual performance. For example, I asked Katia if

she went to fetish clubs and she shared,

> Yeah and not because I was ever into it or anything that was just one of the things…Any opportunity for me and Darren to dress up, we'd go to it. I mean anything that had ball next to it, were there because we knew that…it was an opportunity for us to get creative. We used to go to one every year, called Black and Blue Ball…It was a lot of fun. There were a lot of like visual effects and a lot of people like swinging from their nipples. It was kind of disturbing and very unsettling to us but you know it's New York. That's part of New York and it's great to experience it.

Here, Katia explains the vastness yet personal limits she experienced with balls in New York that were "disturbing" in her and her group's experience that would not occur within the goth scene. Even while outside her/their limits, she mentions that these spaces served as an "opportunity for us to get creative" or in other words, that these black and blue scenes allowed this group to further express their sexual and gender eccentricities in a gay-centered subculture.

However, Marie more openly reflects on one outing in which she went with Katia and other friends that quickly became tasteless and too excessive. I had known at one point of Katia's curiosity about fetish and S and M clubs. In her early to mid 20's, Katia, Marie, Julie and Darren, along with other friends, had visited some of these clubs. In their gothic-influenced wear of black leather, corsets, black leather boots and fish-net stockings, they could easily blend into fetish scenes as scholars Hodkinson (2002), Brill (2008), Goodlad and Bibby (2007) note. After I asked Marie if she went to fetish clubs, she responded,

> We went to this party once. We went to a couple of parties, actually. Katia used to go to the black and blue balls. But it was like a party. So you would get all dressed up and dance. Whatever, It was to be seen. Like, there was nothing going on. So, our friend, Faye, her boyfriend was in a band. So, they're playing at a place in New York. And like, oh, it's like a fetish thing. So, I'm thinking, it's like the black and blue ball and stuff like that where you just get dressed up and you walk around and wanna be fabulous. No, huuuney! No, oh my god! We get there and it's like a real fetish dungeon thing. Like a real one. There are NO fabulous people there. These people are freaking scary. (Laughing) So, we're walking around. What the fuck, man! Our friend, Jose, is walking around with his hands in his pocket. He's like, "Don't touch anything! Don't touch…(laughing). They had like a bowl of candies. He's like, "Don't eat that candy!" (Laughing). It was too much. There was this lady butt naked getting whipped.

Above, Marie reflects on how this experience was over the limit for the entire group.   She

accentuates the group's expectations about going only to a "fabulous scene" in which people

dressed up creatively to express themselves outside the normativity of their everyday lives.

Marie says that it was only about "being seen" within the kind of queer lifeworld and gay-

centered subculture that Buckland (2002) explains is a third space in which partygoers from

different social and political contexts gained pleasure from belonging, kinesthetic dance energy,

and "having currency" in the dance scene of the nightclub they consumed in that moment.   In

contrast, this actual club was not fabulous to them but instead an actual fetish scene where men

and women explored pleasure through sexual dominant and submissive roles and power

dynamics. In effect, being in this space engendered anxieties among the group given that they

were not interested in exploring that kind of pleasure. It is also telling how this crew was

contained by conventional sexual and gender identities.

Counterspaces of Latino/a Goths and Skaters in Neoliberal Elizabeth

Second Generation Skaters at the Grind Station

Both Mark and Danniyal explain the transformation of vacant retail space into a park that

local Elizabeth skaters used for their groupings and practice. Mark explained about the space,

> The Grind Station was an abandoned gasoline station [near] the Pathmark Supermarket
> [in Elmora]. It got the name Grind Station because once it became abandoned, the curves
> were all painted and some skaters came in and put extra wax on the curves which made
> them super slippery. So if you put your board on it you could sssslide easily.

Here, Mark describes how these local skaters worked together to convert this abandoned retail

space into a youth project of renewed and imagined space similar to the early skate parks of the

1960s and 1970s that Borden (2001) and Beato (2007) describe that were outside the purview

and dominant narrative of capitalist urban development (Willard 1998). Some of these parks

became renowned national skate parks after the commodification of skateboarding in U.S.

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popular culture (Yochim 2009, Beato 2007). With respect to Elizabeth, Mark explains that it

was earlier skaters who built that park in the 1980s. He explains, "…The park was already there.

(Names a particular skater.) All these guys. They are the ones that created it. And then (x

skater) is another name I remember. They are all 80s skaters. Then when we went back there in

the 90s, me and my boys took it over, you know…" Here, Mark makes a distinction between an

earlier generation of skaters in the 80s and the younger generation, which he belonged to. Mark

and Danniyal are among the later generation of skaters who inherited the space of the Grind

Station. It is the later generation that carried on this youth subculture into the 90s and received

the torch from the pioneering first generation of skaters.

Earlier, Mark recounted how these skaters labored to get the right curves necessary to

create not only an efficient but an excellent skateboarding experience that engendered pride and

ownership in the later generation. That is, Mark emphasizes the importance of "me and my

boys took it over." His words say something about the meaning and agency this park had for the

later generation of skaters. I want to suggest here that the Grind Station was an anti-neoliberal

youth project of movement, resistance and space in a post-industrial Latino-majority city of

increasing racial and ethnic discrimination and profiling of minority youth. For example, Borden

(2001) and Williard (1998) discuss how the act of manipulating the rigid angles of the built

environment into curves is a subversive way of proposing disruptive movements that defied

social order of a city (de Certeau 2005 and de Certeau in Willard 1998). Aside from disrupting

social order as described in de Certeau's discussion of walking outside formal planned mapping

and movement of a city, these skaters specifically critiqued the racial structuralism of Latino/a

youth in their imminent immobile futures as workers in dead end service jobs through the use of

their unofficial skate park on their time (often during work or school time). Mark further

explains what this generation of skaters did when they returned to the park: "Then when we went back [to the park] in the 90s, me and my boys took it over, you know, and that's the spot where we just hung out. We just hung out. It wasn't so much about skating anymore. It was about hanging out there." In effect, Mark expresses here that skating did slow down in the park in the 90s unlike in the 80s. What social, subcultural and economic reasons could have slowed down the skating among these youth in the 90s in the park as Mark points out? One way of understanding it is that these youth were coming of age during a time of Elizabeth's urban enterprise renewal and beautification city project. Such a project also demanded that Elizabeth residents assume the social and racial order to attract outside business investors and shoppers to invest in the city. Ultimately, these skaters are an example of youth that did not assume nor conform to those aesthetics and social order that supported this beautification and renewal plan. Most youth I spoke to wanted to leave Elizabeth because they did not see any promise in the city nor believe in its progress or the impact that such progress would have on them. Instead, "hanging out" in an abandoned public space signified their uncontainable countercultural performances of "bad" youth.

In early to mid 1990s, Elizabeth's Mayor Chris Bollwage and his administration advertised his city beautification plan that would add thousands of jobs for a docile labor force for the city's growing retail economy. Bollwage's urban enterprise zone[34] plan promised to provide new opportunities for many Elizabeth residents, including youth in the city, for example with the building of the Jersey Garden Mall after IKEA's retail success and revenue contribution to the city. Scholars Lipman (2007), Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters (2008), Itzigsohn (2009), and Menjivar (2000) consider these service sector jobs to be dead-end jobs that do not promise job

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[34] For more information on Elizabeth urban enterprise zone project, check out this website: http://www.elizabethdevopportunities.org/urban-enterprise-zone/

security, job growth, or mobility for most youth workers of color, including Latino/a youth.

Bollwage's city plan was persistently advertised in local newpapers and billboards throughout

the city. Further, Bollwage's plan promised progress to city residents insofar as rebuilding the

city from its post-industrial and impoverished state. IKEA's success in bringing outside

shoppers and revenue into the city only assured more jobs to Elizabeth residents. Also, IKEA

was a sign that the mayor's plan of rebuilding the city was a hopeful one. IKEA's "European"

aesthetic when it first came into the U.S. market in early 1990s offered Elizabeth residents a

sense of contact with Europeanized middle class aesthetics. The building of the Jersey Gardens

Mall promised thousands of retail jobs to Elizabeth residents. In effect, Bollwage's city plan

also meant turning its largely racial and ethnic minority service workers into a soft skill

workforce to attract outside shoppers.   However, these retail jobs did not offer most Elizabeth

youth a secure future. Thus, these skaters "hanging out" at the Grind Station was subversive of

social order and the local dominant narrative of Elizabeth progress via urban renewal and

beautification.   As Danniyal put it to me, people believed "we were derelicts hanging out at the

park or skating for hours on the street thinking we were wasting our time or up to no good."

Instead, these youth were creating their counternarrative of youth subjectivity outside Elizabeth's

progressive dominant narrative of the early to mid-1990s.

The space of the park was invaluable to these second-generation skaters and represented

a countercultural grouping that challenged the hegemonic racial and social order of Elizabeth

society. Mark recollects his best day at the Grind Station:

> One time we were at the Grind Station. They put a truck there. They put a truck there
> and um we were able to take pictures like we were jumping from the truck. I don't know
> if you know Jason Light. Jason Light is a photographer…He has pictures of us jumping
> from the Grind Station jumping from that truck unto the roof of the Grind Station. So, I
> looove that whole day because it didn't make the Grind Station seem like a waste. Like
> there's pictures of us. Even though we weren't actually doing the stunts…

Here, Mark shares the deep connection he felt to the Grind Station and its legacy, which was so strong that the pictures represented a celebration of a youth subculture legacy that was not a "waste" in his personal view. He emphasizes here that the station should not be forgotten but should be a celebrated space of meaning, everyday life, and agency for Elizabeth skaters, more so than the town's narrative of progress. Mark provides evidence here for a worthwhile historical counternarrative between two generation of youths he claims tell us about local male youth self-empowerment and (anti-neoliberal) agency amidst Elizabeth's progressive narrative for working class people of color, including Latino/a youth. Even more, I show in the next section how this Elizabeth skate park and "seedy space" based on a narrative of progress was actually put on the map of other skateboard parks on statewide and national-levels.

Putting the Station and Elizabeth on the Map

Danniyal and Mark share how this former gasoline station became a recognized skate spot on state and national levels. According to my notes after speaking with Danniyal,

> Ultimately, Danniyal explained that famous skateboarders came out to the park. The kids built their own ramps. This reminded me of how there could have been a cultural exchange of the scene, dress, and imagined ideas with Elizabeth kids and these famous skateboarders. Underprivileged and (largely) working class Elizabeth youth of color informed these privileged skaters of styles and techniques that furthered their careers and the skateboard scene in general.

These notes bring up the fact that these "famous" skateboarders put Elizabeth youth skateboarders at times at the center of their own skating experiences and learned from them too. Similar to how Elizabeth Mayor Bollwage put Elizabeth on the retail map of the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area that mattered, Latino/a youth put Elizabeth on the map of the national skateboarding scene. In contrast to the way the state worked to erase non-white subjects from a

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map of a neoliberalized Ecuador and its largely indigenous communities, as Suzana Sawyer (2004) discusses in her book, *Crude Chronicles: Indigenous Politics, Multinational Oil, and Neoliberalism in Ecuador* (2004), I suggest here that local Elizabeth Latino skaters actually added and highlighted a racialized subculture space that was the Grind Station to a white (middle class) national tour map of skateboarding parks or spaces. Further, similarly to (yet somewhat differently from) the way white, often middle class and educated men and women come to urban centers like New York City and become a creative class (Florida 2002 and Hanhardt 2013) because their ideas and visions are commodified for capital (see dance chapter), I propose here that these youth were an (anti-neoliberal) creative class within Elizabeth due to how their spacemaking offered Elizabeth a space of possibility and relationality with the outside instead of it simply being perceived as an unworthy and dangerous place or post-industrial ghetto. Danniyal reveals here how these Elizabeth skateboarders did not feel "less than" in the skating scene but that privileged skateboarders came to learn and relate with them by skating on Elizabeth youths' self-built ramps. Mark adds, "…[The park] become actually one of the skate spots in Jersey to go to. Actually [well-] known skaters. One of the most notable skaters that skated there that actually is an actor now is Jason Lee. I was there one time when he was there skating."

Mark shares above a memorable experience between Elizabeth skaters and famous skaters. Even more, Mark describes these visits from these famous skaters yet emphasizes how very approachable they were to Elizabeth youth. I asked Mark, "How did the skaters organize for these famous skaters to come? Mark shared, "They would just have demos in Westfield. They would have demos made by T-Shirt Emporium in Westfield. That's when the skater of the day would come. And so since they're in the area, [they'd say,] 'let's go skate the famous spots around the area.' And one of the famous spots was the Grind Station." Mark explains here a

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skating tour that begins in Westfield and eventually ends in Elizabeth. Previously mentioned, Westfield is a white middle to upper middle class neighborhood also located in Union County along with Elizabeth. While there could be class and social tensions and boundaries in this skating tour, Mark does not bring this up except for what I brought up earlier regarding his comparing of Westfield youth impeccably wearing expensive skateshop gear they could more easily afford than the youth from Elizabeth. However when it comes to the skating tour, Mark is not hindered here and proudly emphasizes that the Grind Station was a famous skate stop. Mark tells us here that at a particular moment Elizabeth's Grind Station becomes the center of this skate tour where its youth scene, ramps, and curves are celebrated for their particularity. By celebrating Elizabeth's particularity, Mark also describes an atmosphere that is without boundaries but is still more of a subculture relationality that is inherently white (Yochim 2010 and Borden 2001). Even more, such a skate tour deconstructs the racial and class hierarchies between Elizabeth and Westfield. When I asked him, "What do you think it was for these guys to come to Elizabeth?" he shared, "No, they really didn't care. They were also teenagers. They really didn't care. They were also outcasts in their own right…It's almost how comedians are…They have tragedy in their life. Skaters are the same way. Most of them are white skaters. They were overcoming some family issues themselves." Mark points out here how these white and minority youth related with each other through this skate tour. The skate tour lessened the racial and social distance between the white Westfield skaters and the minority skaters and created new translocal connections and networks though impermanent groupings through occasional touring in these Union County towns. Even more, part of the cultural exchange between these "famous" skaters and local Elizabeth youth skaters was their sense of struggle as "outcasts in their own right." Mark also acknowledges that these youth come from "tragedy," as

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explained by Borden (2001). As Mark notes, "They were overcoming some family issues themselves." Mark's use of "themselves" reveals his shared identification and genuine relationality with these skaters' tragedy and struggles. In effect, these white youth from the outside did not exude white privilege but instead approached Elizabeth youth through shared circumstances and struggles. However, this is the problem with an inherently white narrative that does not recognize white privilege and keeps such a power construct untouched: it likely erases non-white and/or non-white ethnic subjectivity, in ways similar to those noted by the queer color of critique around U.S. homosexual mainstream identity and community.

Mark's and Danniyal's accounts show how Elizabeth youth were connected to the outside skating world, which gave them access to connect and network with others meaningfully. Both accounts express the legacy of the skate park and how they related with other male youth through the art and discipline of skateboarding. Finally, these accounts demonstrate how the skate park was an imagined space of youth innovation, agency and heterotopia that put aside race, ethnicity, and class power constructs for meaningful relationship building outside dominant neoliberal ideologies, discourses, and narratives of progress. The next section examines how male trangressive sexualities belong (or not) within this already queer male subculture space.

Looking up to Ralphie: Queer Masculinity among the Skaters

I did not interview Ralphie although he came up extensively in Mark' interview. Ralphie, a Colombian 1.5 generation immigrant, was one of the older skaters in town. He was bisexual and was known to "dabble," or have sex with men, according to Mark. He became a hardcore club kid after graduating from Elizabeth High School. When I asked Mark if the skaters were uncomfortable with him because he dabbled he replied firmly, "No, we looked up to

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him." He hung out with some of the younger club kid gay students at Elizabeth High School (mentioned in the school chapter). Ralphie sometimes tagged along to skate with the boys on the streets in Elizabeth. Mark reveals why he and the other skaters looked up to Ralphie:

> …The second time around when I started skating, we skated with him for a little bit. But before the skating, he was heavy into the rave scene. Heavy. Heavy…We were always fascinated with him because he would tell us his stories. And he used to do ticket scalping you know. [He] was living in the city, you know. [He] was very independent. So we were like, whoa, we looked up to him.

In effect, Mark suggests that even amidst Ralphie's sexually transgressive tendencies, the guys revered his ability to live in the city and be economically successful. Mark stresses this economic sufficiency in this quote because it was unusual for Elizabeth youth to achieve this, especially in ways that accentuated good ethnicity or good (abled) citizenship. Even more, Ralphie's economic status placed him in the category of being able to fulfill heteropatriarchal expectations that Latinos/as (parents and youth themselves) viewed as unlikely among many working class to lower class Latino male youth. Other than fulfilling such expectations, the skaters aspired to this achievement of having the privilege to be permanently in the city and be "independent." By being independent, Ralphie was able to move away from his heterosexist family and social structures in Elizabeth that would impede him from engrossing himself into the subculture scenes and countercultural lifestyle of "the city." Even more, these skaters looked up to a non-heteronormative figure and his illicit way of affording to live in Manhattan because he did not conform to good ethnicity. Yet, Ralphie's presence troubled these skaters' heterocentrist and homosocial skating space even though he did skate and socialize with them.

Ultimately, Ralphie's out bisexuality was an anomaly to the heterocentrist groupings and spaces of skaters in Elizabeth. When I asked Mark if other skaters "dabbled" among his friends, he replied that, "there were close-minded skaters." In other words, Mark hints that these "close-

minded" skaters were not necessarily LGBTQ-friendly and as a result they set the tone for the

sexual and gender (normative) dynamics of their groupings and spacing. Ian Borden in his book,

Skateboarding, Space and The City: Architecture and the Body (2001), describes the homosocial

and homophobic subculture of skating and the anxieties about misinterpretation of homoerotic

gesturing among the boys (146-150). This pushed skaters to exude strict heterosexual

performance in an already questioned sport and homosocial grouping of presumed emasculated

male performance. In her book, *Skate Life: Re-imagining White Masculinity* (2009), Yochim

addresses how white skaters who emulated white middle class masculinity and heterosexuality

often derided and perceived sexually transgressive and queer of color subjects as backward or

premodern. In effect, there was an expectation among male youth in this skate subculture that

they should put down sexually transgressive males who could interrupt the strict codes of

heterosexual performance in a homosocial subculture.

Borden's and Yochim's narratives of white skater heterocentrist and homophobic space

fall short of examining Latino male sexuality in Latino subculture spaces in largely Latino

working class contexts like Elizabeth. Unlike the way Borden (2001) and Yochim (2010)

present a stricter homosocial and heterosexist positioning among white skaters, Mark offers us

the possibility of relationaity between this bisexual and questionably gay skater in the local

Elizabeth context. Mark points out that local male youth were experimenting with sex with other

male youth, particularly among the gay and bi-sexual friendly subcultures of the house, techno

and rave music scenes (Danesi 2010, 136-139). He explains that back in the day, youth males

were dabbling "…but [were] full-blown heterosexual…it was like the style," indicating here the

possibilities that male youth skaters had to dabble or socialize with dabblers, unlike in more

putatively rigid heterosexist white skater subculture circles. In effect, Ralphie's inclusion at

times with these skaters shows us that he was respected despite strict heterosexual codes. In his book, *Tacit Subjects: Belonging and Same-Sex Desire Among Dominican Immigrant Men* (2011), Carlos Decena writes that gay Dominican immigrant subjects were understood as being gay among friends and family members but it was not verbalized, nor did their transgressive sexuality and gender change the heteropatriarchy of their living space among family and social context among friends. Similarly but differently, this "tacit" incorporation of a bisexual subject among mostly heterosexual Latino/a youth forces us to consider the diasporic dimensions of Latin(o) American male sexuality of second-generation immigrant youth.   Ralphie's sexuality did not necessarily change or queer the social and heterocentrist context among Latino youth skaters even though there was room for the homosexual or bisexual subject among them. That is, among the Latin(o) American boys, Ralphie's bisexual sexual orientation or his "dabbling" was "tacitly" understood. In fact, if a sexual relationship would have occurred between Ralphie and one of the other skaters, it would likely have been kept quiet and tolerated as long as both preserved the heterocentrist culture of their skate space.

The fact that Ralphie was incorporated with the rest of the boys, however, brought possibilities of relationality to other sexually questioning male youth including skaters. In Ralphie's case, Mark reflects on his frequenting of the Grind Station: "He never skated at the Grindstone. Though, he was part of that scene, when I started skating with these guys or whatever. But he was in and out. He wasn't like hanging out with us all the time." Here, Mark shares that although Ralphie was "part of the scene," he was "in and out."   Given Ralphie's open bisexual tendencies and potential effeminacy, he had to find other spaces and groupings in the way Brill (2008) notes gay and lesbian goths had to seek gay subcultures where they could act on their sexual and gender subjectivity and desires. Ralphie's need to be "in and out" of the skating

scene most likely dealt with feeling out of place due to a masculinist, heterocentrist and tacit

approach to queerness or gayness among the Latin(o) American skater boys.

The Goth Den at Betty Lind's Diner

Marie offers her recollection about her and her friends' afterhours at Betty Lind's after

spending the night at Newark's goth club, QXT's. She shares how Betty Lind's became the

afterhours spot for Elizabeth and local goths coming back from QXT's. Even more, Marie is

especially emphatic about her and her friends' entrance into the diner:

> …'what a sight!' It would be me, Katia… What a sight! (Y.A. laughing)! Our friend
> Kim and sometimes it would be my other friend Sharon. Sigh! Tsk. As soon as we
> would walk in like errrrrrrrrrrrr (noise and giggling). It was like a needle across the
> record. Everyone would turn and look at us cause Katia would look like she was fllll-
> oating. She used to wear these BIIIG [chiffon] skirts and like these corsets and like her
> boobs are up to here. This huge necklace and she has this red lipstick on. All like all
> three of them kind of looked like [that] that but then I would dress like a little more
> industrial. So, I had these huge boots on with like this skirt with all these chains and like
> these drrrreads (grinning). People would just look at us and like oh my god! (laughing)

Here, Marie reflects on how the people in the diner reacted to her and her friends. By imitating

the sound of a record being scratched, Marie is articulating the steepness of her and her friends'

excessive appearance that is strange to the contained staff and customers. Even more, Marie

describes Katia as floating (and not walking) along with similarly dressed friends. This act of

floating represents an unpredictable or subversive movement that is unlike walking, or similar to

the ways skateboarders produce excess movement to expected or conditioned social order in

public and policed spaces noted by scholars Borden (2001) and Willard (1998). Further, Katia's

"boobs up to here" pressed against her corset accentuate her Latina hyperfemininity within the

diner and Elizabeth. Katia and her other friends' hyperfermininity are also Victorian and

conventional (or set for the male gaze) but they are excessive in this dominant local context. In

contrast, Marie's skirt, chains, and dreads accentuate her butch performance to Katia and the

other three friends' hyperfeminine personas. Marie's "huge" boots and "all these chains"

accentuate an excessive butchness that also disrupts the gender codes within the diner as a

dominant public. Marie's recounting of their entrance suggests a sexualized yet uncanny

performance that is intimidating and powerful to the mainstream male gaze in the diner.

However, Marie and her closest friends were not the only "sore" sight; she describes

other goths there that also disrupted the diner as a dominant public. Marie shares after I ask her,

"Who do you think was staring at you?"

> Everybody! The whole place. I felt like the whole place was looking at us cause you
> know, oh my god, it's like you're coming from a club where everybody is kind of dressed
> like that and then you go out into the real world in a diner where it's really bright. There
> would be a lot of people from QXT's there afterwards that we knew so it wasn't
> completely like everybody was like 80 and we're walking in dressed like that (laughing).
> But there was lots of other people that lived in the area that would go to QXT's…Yeah,
> definitely, what a sight!

Marie describes here that the diner's culture and space was dominated by the majority influx of

goth customers on certain days and hours. In her quote above, we can interpret

"us" to mean Marie's crew and/or the other goths at the diner also adding to the sore sight that

clashed with the usual public of the diner. Marie's specific reference to the "brightness of the

diner" represents a dichotomy to the darkness or the goths forming the scene of the after-hour

macabre den. According to Mary Gray's monograph, *Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and

Queer Visibility in Rural America* (2009), these goths created a boundary public that took over

the dominant public of the diner and made it their den for several hours. Ultimately, the diner

became a queered ephemeral counterspace for these Elizabeth goths during afterhours, and non-

goth customers assumed the takeover would occur during certain times of the week.

Further, Katia stresses here that all the non-goths were "like 80" to emphasize that they were not really that old but to suggest that they had reached what Hans Arthur Skott-Myhre in his book, *Youth and Subculture as Creative Force: Creating New Spaces for Radical Youth Work* (2008) explains as reaching an adult phase that contains people in normative mainstream culture. In effect, Katia is further describing boundary-making between these contained subjects and youthful goths in the diner who represented a less contained subculture in which these young subjects exercised and expressed their excess and resistance to mainstream culture and expectations. Essentially, Katia is describing this seemingly trivial den of goths at the diner as a "creative force" of "radical youth work" that provides a counterspace of queer gender and sexual self-expression outside the limitations of their local mainstream context.

However, there is a double standard to Marie's articulation of "us" above, which could either stand for the whole goth scene at the diner or specifically her female crew, which I would like to focus on here. Marie's (re)narration of her female crew, at the beginning of this discussion, placed this grouping at the center of this sore sight. While Brill's (2008) and Brake's (Brake in Schilt 2007) studies discuss how goth spaces are male-dominated and women spaces are secondary, Schilt's 2007 study in her essay, "Queens of the Damned: Women and Girls' Participation in Two Gothic Subcultures," refutes this with her ethnographic study of goth dance and social spaces that can become or already are female dominated at certain times or in certain circumstances (ie. a female goth hangout in which males do not participate or a dance floor becoming homosocial-female) (Goodlad and Bibby 2007). However, whether a space is determined to be male or female dominated, Marie's (re)narration prompts us to think about how this perspective matters too, and can be centered. That is, even if Betty Lind's afterhours goth den tends to be male-centered, Marie is clearly not describing it that way. She is describing her

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and her all female crew's experience at the center of both the dominant and the counter spaces

and not at the margins.   Other scholars explore how female and queer subjects (re)narrate what

often are spaces of male domination or white (heteronormative) cultural hegemony to argue that

they are not at the margins necessarily but at the center too in their own self-empowering way,

whether individually or as a grouping (Rivera Colon 2013, Habell-Pallan 2005; Vargas 2012;

Munoz 1999).

The Gravedigger's Halloween Party:
The Cemetery as Interzone and Queer Life-Making

Felipe's core is being a goth.   During our interview, we sat one late May spring day in his

apartment. As we began to small talk, I glanced at the human skull fixtures placed on his living

room table. Throughout his living room, he had wall-sized posters of midnight scenes of wolves

wandering through rows of cold moon-lit tombstones.   These living room adornments

complement Felipe's employment in a local cemetery for 18 years and counting.   He was hired

to do gravedigging and maintain a nearby cemetery. Given his "dark side" and love for macabre

elements of the goth scene, it's no wonder that working at the cemetery is very appropriate for

him. After Felipe told me that he has been working at the cemetery for so long, my stare of

disbelief led him to justify why he would work in such a place so close to death for so long.   I

quote Felipe in my fieldnotes as saying in a justifying tone, "Hey, I get paid vacation, benefits…I

can't complain…" Suddenly, Felipe's occupation is a "normal" job that it is in fact tied to the

state. It is a low-skilled labor job within Elizabeth's post-industrial service economy whose

workforce is greatly staffed by Latinos/as.

Even more unusual to me, Felipe added that he had lived in the cemetery for three years.

What kind of future is there for someone working so long in a cemetery seems to be a rational

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question for anyone who does not spend as much time there as Felipe. Felipe started this job during high school, which was an opportunity for him given his academic underperformance in school. "Felipe deserves to live in a cemetery" given his underperformance and non-heteronormativity is representative of most Latino/a youth in neoliberal ideology and discourse. Felipe's laboring job is representative of the kind of lower end service jobs that Latino/a youth and other youth of color end up getting, without much chance for mobility. Therefore, Felipe in some ways represents and conforms to the dominant neoliberal narrative for the future of Latino/a youth. Nowak (2007) in his essay, "'To Commit Suicide in Buffalo is Redundant': Music and Death in Zero City, 1982-1984," uses the term "necro-ideology" in an urban post-industrial context in which the future of its mostly white working class citizens is death; goth bands articulated necro-ideological discourses in their music. Nowak's discussion of necro-ideology is similar to and different from Giroux's (2004) and Lipman's (2007) discussion of the dismal future or non-future for Latino and African American youth under racist neoliberal ideology and discourses in majority minority urban working class and poor contexts. That is, Nowak's necro-ideology remains grounded in a white dominant narrative, unlike Giroux's and Lipman's discussion of imminent death of African American and Latino youth. Despite the limited opportunities and life chances of minority youth in these contexts, I show below how Felipe's cultural work of social unity and collectivism in his parties (within the space of the cemetery) is an anti-neoliberal critique of necro-ideology or death that inspires hope, possibility, and change in his invitees despite everyday neoliberal social and structural forces at play.

Even while Felipe's fate is pre-determined under both a neoliberal and necro-ideology, it is important to recognize the anti-hegemonic value and self-agency he finds in his occupation as a gravedigger and in living in the cemetery as a goth subject. As Ana Ramos-Zayas explores in

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her book, *Street Therapists: Race, Affect, and Neoliberal Personhood in Latino Newark* (2012), "bad" neoliberal subjects destined or racialized for failure can redefine or self-define neoliberal values according to their life plans and motivations and (re)narrate their own destinies despite dominant neoliberal racial structures and discourses of success and failure (Ramos-Zayas, 80). For example, the management offered Felipe a living space at the offices for him to stay onsite most nights and days of the week. His parents and relatives strongly discouraged him and were embarrassed over Felipe living there. Felipe explains how he was the black sheep and non-conformist among his siblings, which resonated a lot with his goth persona. He said, "My brothers would never go this far…I'm different than my brothers [and sisters]." What would society think of Felipe's decisions and his fate? What would his future be as a gravedigger?

Despite the criticism from family and friends, Felipe was unreservedly happy because of his love for death, isolation, and darkness, or what most goths idealize. However, for most middle class white goths isolation is never quite "idealized," as Amy Wilkins discusses in her essay, "From Geeks to Freaks: Goths and the Middle Class," because they eventually grow up and are incorporated as middle class citizens in the U.S. institutions (Wilkins 2007, 102). As Haenfler (2008) and Wilkins (2007) explain, most young middle class white goths are intellectual and well-read in ways that often secure them a middle class position in their future. Haenfler's (2008) and Wilkins' (2007) discussions center an inherently white middle class youth narrative that does not include non-white and working class perspectives like Felipe's and the neoliberal economic and educational policies he and other Latinos/as and African Americans in a largely working class context confront that lower their life chances (Lipman 2007; Ward 2012; Giroux 2004; Prier 2010). This is why his parents and family are distraught over his choices to be a goth and perform a queer masculinity that further harm his life chances, in addition to his

decision to live in a cemetery as a gravedigger. In contrast to white middle class goths, Felipe's isolation as a goth subject is different and illegible in the dominant narrative about goths given how Latinos/as and African Americans in a working class context do not have the same shot at a future. According to Wilkins, middle class goths practice "isolationism" as an aesthetic (Wilkins 2007, 100). To Felipe, is his practice of isolationism simply an aesthetic, or an actual consequence of structural racism, assimilation and self-hate? Thus, Felipe's sense of isolation is different and means something else than it would to middle class white goth youth given the substantially lower chance he had at mobility and belonging in the national community as a second-generation diasporic and immigrant subject.

Aside from school experiences and (neo)liberal education policies that shaped Felipe, there are familial experiences that also informed his sense of isolation and queerness, as in non-normative and disabled masculinity of immobility (Ramlow 2005). Felipe idealizes isolation not only as whitened subject but as a Latino and second-generation Colombian American goth, which makes him an example of the nuances in Latino/a youth goths in an inherently white subculture narrative. He explains below his sense of distancing from his family members and ethnicity:

> …[Unlike my] Brothers and…[family], I just had a little different lifestyle. Sometimes I didn't feel like I belonged. I would tell that to my brothers and my parents. No (they said) bullshit. With my Spanish, I wasn't a 100 per cent so here and there and I didn't like I belonged even though I love them to death and all that, I am Colombian at heart. I love my [family's] country. But sometimes I felt like I just didn't belong. I belonged with my friends and all that stuff…

Among his four first-generation brothers and sisters, Felipe was the youngest and only one that was actually born in the U.S. While growing up, this placed him in an oddly privileged position, yet he faced cultural distance with his parents and siblings because he did not speak Spanish sufficiently well to keep up with everyone. Though he deeply appreciated his Colombian ethnic

identity and family in his individual way ("I'm Colombian at heart."), his parents and siblings often viewed him as too Americanized. During his teenage years, Felipe often felt greatly misunderstood by the rest of his family. His anti-social and individualized nature and affinity to the somber, macabre, and death starkly contrasted the lively and bright Latino/Colombian culture and the familial and communal lives around Colombianidad of his immigrant family. In effect, a home at the cemetery was ideal for him. It was evident that he felt peace at the cemetery and removed himself from the perpetual social judgments and expectations of the outside diasporic and national contexts. Felipe preferred to be in the iron-gated world of the cemetery and be social there, which worked well with the individualized approach to life and gothic subjectivity.

Geographically speaking, the cemetery borders three racially marked and policed towns: Elizabeth, Hillside, and Newark. Hillside residents and police racialized darker skinned and poorer Hispanic and African American Newark and Elizabeth immigrant and minority youth that loitered along the Elizabeth-Hillside border where mostly white families lived. The Hillside police force patrolled the streets of the white part of Hillside to detect racial outsiders and delinquent youth, deepening the racial tensions between the three cities. Growing up in this exclusive area of Hillside, I recall the anti-black, anti-Hispanic, anti-gay, and overall anti-diversity or white supremacist sentiments, particularly among white youth and passing Hispanic youth living in the white section of the town. Even more, in the late 80s and early 90s, it was rumored that skinhead and KKK youth groups met in Hillside's Conant Park (in the remote trails along the Elizabeth River) and Elizabeth's nearby orphanage to rally against the browning of the white parts of Hillside and Elizabeth by racially brown Hispanic immigrant families. This impacted Hispanic youth living in the neighborhood to rid themselves of their cultural excess

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such as speaking Spanish and expressing their immigrant-origin pride derived by their parents' nationalism to their homeland.

Elizabeth and Newark were on the adjacent and opposite side of the cemetery from Hillside. In contrast to Hillside, Newark and Elizabeth comprised working class to lower class neighborhoods of multi-dwelling houses and public housing apartments of Latino and Black-majority neighborhoods on the Elizabeth-Newark border. While growing up, I remember the surveillance of Elizabeth police and residents of black and Puerto Rican youth from the nearby Newark projects for theft, vandalism, and mugging. Further, Elizabeth and Newark urban youth were policed and profiled as trespassers to the white one house tree-lined blocks of Hillside.

Unlike the surrounding racially marked and policed towns, the space of the cemetery can be seen as a third space or a deterritorialized area. Here, identities can come together from these three cities in what Kevin J. Mumford terms "interzones" in his book *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century* (1997). That is, Mumford discusses how certain spaces became interzones where people of different racial, ethnic, class and sexual and gender variant positionings come together in ways that defy the racial and social boundaries of dominant mainstream society and culture. While Felipe lived in the cemetery, he had yearly Halloween parties to which he invited his friends and hosted them in the space of the cemetery. Felipe's parties were in this interzone, which became a space of possibility where people from these three contexts (Elizabeth, Hillside, and Newark) could meet outside racial, ethnic, and sexual policing that occurred in these contexts.

However, Felipe was not the person who started these Halloween parties. According to his older brother, Rogelio, who attended Hillside High School, Rogelio actually started these parties. Further, Rogelio had first started living at the cemetery. Unlike Felipe, Rogelio was not

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a goth but was more of a straight-edged and college-bound subject. However, Rogelio actually

started these cemetery parties, although his were more exclusive than Felipe's parties. Rogelio

said, "Unlike my brother, I would not just let anyone come into the party. When my brother

threw them, he had very long lines and let almost everyone in." Based on Rogelio's reflection,

Felipe was more socially adventurous, queerer, looser and less afraid to encounter and welcome

people from different bordering towns. Rogelio appears to have been more reserved about

whom he invited and let into these parties, which therefore limited the social possibilities that

could take place.

One might suspect that Felipe's Halloween fest was an exclusively goth affair among

white and passing Hispanic youth in an appropriate inherently white gothic setting.

Surprisingly, Felipe, the goth host, described to me the diversity of his Halloween parties,

demonstrating that these gatherings were not homogeneous in anyway. In my fieldnotes I wrote,

> He invited people mainly from Hillside, Elizabeth, and Elizabeth and Hillside High
> Schools. He had a DJ there spinning house, gothic, industrial, hip-hop and Latin music.
> Even more his immigrant parents came to these parties. The fact that he could bring all
> these different kinds of people together suggests Felipe's ability and intent to bring
> different people together. Felipe even invited cops to the parties.

Contrary to what one might assume, Felipe was not insular to only other goths.   As mentioned

earlier, Felipe was like a cultural worker, similar to the gay ball mothers and fathers Marlon

Bailey describes in his book, *Butch Queens Up in Pumps: Gender, Performance, and Ballroom

Culture in Detroit* (2013), in their attempts to build spaces of community and agency for their

sons and daughters for a better future and for their everyday lives amidst racism, inequality, and

homophobia.   Felipe's space was the cemetery, in which he envisioned a deathly goth dance

scene lined by beer keg adorned caskets. However unlike the gay balls' longstanding vision of

social enhancement, Felipe created an impermanent utopian performative (Dolan 2005 and

Rivera-Servera 2011) that invited his party guests (as an audience) to explore together a better

tomorrow through unity, diversity and dancing kinesthetic energy in an interzone of queer

relationality (Buckland 2002, Rivera-Servera 2011, Rivera-Servera 2013).

Even more, these parties became what Buckland (2002) terms "queer life world making"

that brought together people of not only different subcultures but different social, class, and

political positionings, as well as sexual and gender non-conformity. In these groupings, police

officers, enforcers of state control and monitoring, partook in these heterotopic groupings of

mostly Elizabeth and Hillside youth coming together in this queer goth(ic) interzone or in-

between space between Elizabeth, Hillside, and Newark. Further, Felipe also commented on the

significant gay/LGBT presence at his parties given his connection with out gay youth in

Elizabeth. In my fieldnotes I wrote, "The party was a also a space for queers to hang out

especially if they were comfortable being there and being themselves." My fieldnotes suggest

that gay invitees could articulate their sexual and gender variant excess and subjectivity in this

interzone. It is notable that Felipe, as a cultural worker, provided a safespace in the Elizabeth-

Hillside border given that Hillside's border exuded a homogenously white political economy

discouraging not only racial and ethnic difference but also those of sexual and gender difference.

Growing up in that Hillside border, I can also recall the anti-gay sentiment of Hillside youth in

dominant spaces. Felipe's first-generation immigrant parents also came, and their youthful salsa

and cumbia music was also played. Their cultural/diasporic excess in the parties' space

evidently does not deny their subjectivity in a patrolled and assimilative context outside the

cemetery. Through the DJ spinning different subcultures of music, including those that

resonated with specific groups – queer, gay, immigrant and non-white – the invitees experienced

a shared space of polyculturalism and "choreograph[ed] queer politics" through dance (Buckland

2002 and Rivera-Servera 2013) in this lifeworld that was not easy to achieve outside this interzone. Felipe is a seemingly outcast figure as a gothic subject and host but it is evident that his queer masculinity and values of racial and sexual and gender variant tolerance as a marked Latino subject made him a cultural worker and heterotopic visionary of social promise and a better tomorrow. Leaders and visionaries are known to live an isolated existence.

In this chapter, I have examined the ways Latino/a goths and skaters performed and articulated a queer masculinity and femininity within the (trans)local Elizabeth context. Further, I offered a context that compared these marginally white queer subcultures in Elizabeth to the dominant subcultures of hip hop, rap, house, and freestyle, which are coded as racially black heterocentrist scenes among majority Latino/a and African American youth audiences. In contrast to these dominant subcultures, I exposed how these inherently or marked queer white goth and skate subcultures became a binary to dominant heterocentrist black subculture scenes in Elizabeth. This binary among local subcultures engendered a strong sense of racial, gender, and sexual difference among Elizabeth youth according to the subcultures they primarily belonged to. Yet, I complicate the goth and skater subculture narrative that shows some familiarity with black subcultures despite the latter's defiance of Latino/a or minority youth racialization and sexualization in popular culture. Ultimately, Elizabeth's dominant and marginal youth subcultures shared their non-conformity with state racialization ideologies of Latino/a youth even though their groupings, performances and embodiments were vastly different.

Yet, even while these subcultures were certainly distinguishable and often brought a sense of difference among Latino/a and minority youth, these goths and skaters show familiarity with dominant subcultures in their articulation of local and diasporic subjectivity outside white cultural hegemony and identification. First, I incorporate my participants' second-generation

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Latino/a ethnic and/or diasporic subjectivity in their everyday lives that should not go unnoticed and that therefore amplify an often Eurocentric or nationalist white American subculture narrative. To a lesser extent, secondly, I examine the slippage among some of my participants in different scenes and read them as not only goths or skaters but as connected to or identified with black or racially diverse scenes at particular moments that complicates the "desire of being white" assumption about goths and skaters. The counterspaces I examine are evidence of these youths' critical multiculturalism and anti-neoliberal cultural work in their (trans)locality around gender and sexual stereotyping of Latino/a youth, homophobia, and forging racial, ethnic, and pan-sexual diversity that complicate the simplified notion of them desiring to be white or belong to an inherently white subculture.

Therefore, I visited some of these goth and skater counterspaces that seem trivial and unmemorable to show how they were truly meaningful and cutting edge. Even while these counterspaces seemed too marginal or too ephemeral, I show the powerful impact and critique they made at the moment, whether in a dominant space, interzone, or counterpublic. In this chapter, I make the case for the ways these spaces provide agency for Latino/a youth who find themselves in liminal and disempowered positionings between dominant subcultures and mainstream culture in (translocal) Elizabeth. These counternarratives offer a case study to scholars about how working class Latino/a youth subjectivity should be incorporated into seemingly all-white and middle class subcultures. Finally, I help scholars analyze the connectivity between marginal and dominant subcultures in a given majority-minority context despite an assumed binary or sense of racial, sexual and gender difference.

Chapter 4
Elizabeth's Nightlife Scenes:
Strategies, Tactics, and Youth Dance Counterspace

Latino LGBTQ youth did not always face downright exclusion in the youth dance scenes

between the late 1980s and mid 1990s, even amidst a strongly heterosexist and homophobic

climate. Instead of perceiving Elizabeth's nightlife simply as a perpetually tough and working

class urban minority dance scene, my interviewees describe how there existed some possibilities

in which LGBTQ and heterosexual youth danced and came together across race, class, and

ethnicity in an expanding "LGBTQ friendly" popular mainstream culture despite repressive state

and local discourses of liberal multiculturalism, white cultural hegemony, and heterosexism. In

this chapter, I examine how non-heteronormative youth, specifically LGBTQ subjects of the

early 1990s, challenged the heteronormative nightlife scenes in New Jersey in two ways: through

subtly queering masculinist dance publics from their everyday social positioning within

expanding yet monitored dominant dance spaces, and through building dance counterpublics.

Ultimately, I argue that these local youth engagements in dance subcultures allowed partygoers

to exercise a queer cultural citizenship and offered moments of social diversity that eased

everyday local hostilities and prejudices.

In this section, I explain the contents of this chapter. First, I outline the concepts of de

Certeau's strategies, or controlled spaces occupied by worthy or admissible people (according to

the state's needs such as nation-building and profit), and tactics, or ways in which individuals

hide or downplay what would be perceived as their unworthiness according to state codes and

values of acceptability in these strategies. Strategies and tactics foreground the tensions between

hegemonic order and queer enunciations I examine in Elizabeth's dance publics. I then define

queer cultural citizenship as youth expressions of strategies and tactics explored in this chapter.

In the second section, I focus first on how the strategies, or regimented spaces or publics

of state ideologies and discourses of local Latino immigrant dance publics in civic institutions,

sustained neoliberal values of individual ethnic competition, "model minorities," and liberal

multiculturalism. These civic dance publics or strategies that I examine at the Cuban Club or the

Portuguese Club, in particular, were "good" spaces of social distancing that civic leaders

patrolled for imminent violence and stigmatized behaviors from bad subjects. Initially, sexual

and gender heteronormativity dominated these masculinist dance floors and in that climate

interviewees expressed homophobic and transphobic attitudes toward sexual and gender variant

minorities.

In the third section, I show how strategies began shifting and amplifying through popular

mainstream culture as LGBTQ youth incorporated themselves through tactics that were not quite

conforming, but were neither threatening nor abject (De Genova 2010). These youth

performances allowed them to subtly belong in local Elizabeth dance spaces and publics. In

particular, I examine how mainstream or popular representations of voguing changed dance

publics to incorporate LGBTQ youth, but in limited and depoliticized ways that reified

heterocentrism and liberal multiculturalism. That is, even while these youth were able to move

into changing strategies through their tactics, their gay subcultures, cultural work and agency

were potentially compromised due to the energy used to incorporate in these dominant publics.

To understand my participants' positioning, hidden in their tactics, I also examine the gay

subcultures that informed their way of being outside of the mainstream. In effect, I show how

their tactics actually expanded the strategies of Elizabeth dance publics through non-normative

sexual and gender subjectivities and behaviors despite mainstream representations and aesthetics of voguing, homo- and transsexuality.

In the last section, I describe a separate counterpublic dance space that was youth-driven and outside state strategies. In effect, I examine the ways youth experienced freer forms of sexual and gender subjectivities, heterotopia, and unified self-determination despite their social status as "ill-fated" working class (delinquent) Latino/a citizens.

Strategies and Tactics in the Elizabeth Dance Publics

In this section, I will analyze a number of the ways media producers normalized certain state ideologies and values and/or invited incorporable subjects into dance publics. This process of normalization is what Michel de Certeau describes in The Practice of Everyday Life (1984) as strategies of social order and conformity within state-controlled publics that have the power to "…produce, tabulate, and impose these spaces" (de Certeau 1984). In the first section, I describe how Latino youth consumed civic dance publics that were strategies of regulating good citizenship, liberal multiculturalism, and ethnic hierarchies among immigrant communities. That is, according to Mosarrap H. Khan's blog piece, "Michel de Certeau's The Practice of Everyday Life," how "the dominant economic order … imposes its rational order and employs…disciplinary techniques to make users conform to the demands of institutional power." I address the ways representations of sexual and gender diversity circulating in U.S. mainstream media and popular culture impacted my LGBTQ interviewees, specifically how voguing was incorporated in strategies that normalized some not-quite-normative dance styles and behaviors which were aestheticized and depoliticized through dominant popular and subculture media representations. Further, in these strategies, local meanings of voguing among youth were erased

and displaced within standing dance publics through ahistoricized and simplified dominant

media representations. Quoting de Certeau in his essay, "Outside/In: Crossing Queer and Latino

Boundaries," Luis Aponte-Parés (2001) discusses these strategies as "the calculation (or

manipulation) of power relationships that become possible as soon as a subject with will and

power…can be isolated…serv[ing] as the base from which from which relations with an

exteriority composed of targets or threats…can be managed" (de Certeau in Aponte-Parés 2001,

365). In other words, voguing became acceptable mainstream behaviors in dominant publics

"manipulated" by dominant media producers but were starkly different in gay counterpublics,

and the actual meaning and historical context of these behaviors derived from the spaces in

which they were enacted. According to Kanai and Kenttamaa Squires (2015), these strategies

or "broad-scale political demobilization of LGBT youth…[or an] increasingly

acceptable…heterosexual mainstream" (387) sustain liberal multiculturalism and dislocate or

"decenter" oppositional and subversive groupings and meanings among marginal and

countercultural youth in "traditional gathering places" (387). In other words, these youth ran the

risk of devaluing or ruining their gay subculture spaces and collectivities by becoming too

focused on incorporating themselves into these publics. Specifically, the state wants to

"manage" (De Certeau in Aponte-Parés 2001, 365) non-heteronormative subjects by luring them

to conform to strategies that can "decenter" (Kanai and Kentaamaa Squires 2015, 387)

threatening and politicized subcultures and counterpublics as a result. This "decentering" or

dislocation suggests how gay subcultures are diluted by these strategies and can lose their value

and agency in dominant publics. Even though they may have represented a step toward inclusion

and tolerance, these strategies were ultimately not liberating for LGBTQ subjects whose

subjectivity and identification with counterpublics were often deemed excessive and threatening

and therefore always ran the risk of being "disciplined" by aversion, stigma, and violence.

Having said that, it is important to understand the ways marginalized LGBTQ youth in

these strategies of rational order still articulated their marginal subjectivities or counterpublic

positionalities through tactics, hoping to gain space as they were, even amidst the greater force of

the state. In the section, The Local Dance Public and Race, Sexual and Gender Exclusions, I

discuss the ways LGBTQ youth were approximated to black gay counterpublics, which were

telling of their situated knowledge and relationality with local marginal gay African Americans

and Latinos/as that were considered cultural excess in these strategies. I examine how LGBTQ

formed what de Certeau defines as tactics as ruptures (similar to Skott-Myhre's discussion of a

linear narrative) or "cracks in chance offerings that become opportune moments to seize [or

transform space to their benefit]" (de Certeau 1984). The tactics in these strategies represent a

surprise or unpredictability (Skott-Myhre 2008 and de Certeau 1984) or what Khan describes as

"the creative subversion of the rational order," specifically in these local Elizabeth dance publics.

Khan's word "creative" is reminiscent of Skott-Myhre's (2008) description of youth's natural

ability to engage in creative performances that shock and fall outside dominant order and linear

narratives imposed on them while inside these strategies. Aponte-Pares raised how tactics are

"calculated actions 'determined by the absence of a proper locus…The space of the tactic is the

space of the other'" (de Certeau in Aponte-Parés, 365), in which groups of counterideologies and

counterdiscourses can also form parts of strategies through tactics or empowered spaces of non-

heteronormativity or non-conformity. Aponte-Pares looks at the ways Latino queer organizations

sometimes work with white queers of power and their strategies, while in other cases they use

tactics to forward the agendas and empowerment of Latino queers outside white queer strategies

and power (Aponte-Parés 2001, 371-379). In effect, I show how some youth dance publics like the Police Athletic League (PAL), the ELKS, and the Polish Falcons that I mention in this chapter became a mix of strategies and tactics in which these spaces lost a heteronormative locus. Having said that, I perform a reading of these dance publics as strategies but also consider how Latino/a LGBTQ youth formed tactics for their own benefit that were also not necessarily marginalized even where there may have been "a proper locus" of symbolic order after all. As Jose Munoz (1999) explains about disidentification, for some it "…is a survival strategy that works within and outside the dominant public sphere simultaneously" (5). Similarly, in her chapter, "Queer Diasporas," Braziel (2008) reminds us how these strategies and tactics should not be treated as binaries but "…may also be mutually constitutive sites or material-political formations" (116). That is, through my interviewees' reflections, I consider and reveal the ways that LGBTQ youth simultaneously formed tactics of meaning and self-determination within these strategies and necessarily not outside or separate from them. In effect, these tactics were ways that LGBTQ youth claimed their own space amidst policing of unworthy groupings and the development of commodified space that shrank post-industrialized found space (Borden 2001) and even spatial entitlements such as those found in Wally and Ivo's parties (see last section of chapter) in Elizabeth that otherwise "created new [post-national or self-determined and queer] collectivities… articulations, new sensibilities, and new visions about the place of Black, Brown, and working-class people n the local and national landscape" (Johnson 2015, Preface X).

My participants Andy and Ernie discussed how friends' homes became sites of gay or queer subjectivity and countercultures where group making and queer community could also occur outside dominant publics and strategies (Avivi 2015; Marquez 2007; Mananlansan 2003). Homes are ideal for avoiding shrinking publics and the policing of youth of color. In some

cases, gay and queer youth of color may not want to be in "mutually constitutive sites," or strategies and tactics whose boundaries are ultimately defined by the limits of diversity imposed by the state (Braziel 2008), but prefer to be in the freedom of their (or another's) home. Ernie described how a bunch of friends and friends of friends held a voguing ceremony for an event called the Charlie La Quack Awards and slept over after the awards were given out. Andy described how gay and queer community among African American and Latino/a young adults often occurred at friends' home parties and barbecues.

When we consider how and to what degrees these LGBT youth articulated their youth subjectivity within these strategies and tactics, it is important to take into account their need to claim their queer cultural citizenship rather than assume their conformity to projects of assimilation and national belonging in these spaces. Authors Flores and Benmayor, in *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights* (1997), center expressions of Latino/a cultural citizenship to put into perspective the ways Latinos/as claim their own sense of U.S. citizenship through their own self-determination, space-making and demand of rights outside the dominant model of U.S. citizenship based on assimilation. Horacio Ramirez Roque's essay, "Claiming Queer Cultural Citizenship: (Im)Migrant Acts in San Francisco," builds on how Latino/queers cultural citizenship falls outside national and heteropatriarchal projects of Latino/a cultural citizenship that often do not represent the self determination, space-making, and rights of queers. Thus, his work offers insight into how Latino/a queers articulate a subjectivity of queer cultural citizenship outside heteronormative ideologies and discourses through cultural independent Spanish-language films like El Otro Lado (1999), in which he examines the struggle of a queer HIV positive undocumented migrant "Alejandro" to arrive and live in the United States in search of a better life as a diasporic or transnational queer HIV positive immigrant

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subject. In her essay, "The Intimate and the Imperial," Sunaina Maira points out both the value and the dearth of research on the "critical possibilities" [through performance and spacemaking] of youth queer citizenship of color as transnational subjects amidst the limitations and exclusions of state-sponsored and privatized citizenship bounded by U.S. empire (67). Sunaina Maira also points out how Flores and Benmayor's (1997) analysis of Latino/a cultural citizenship is a social movement approach as opposed to a reading of cultural texts (67). I examine how Latino/a youth social space of dance and queer performance can be interpreted as a social movement of abject agency (De Genova) within strategies and tactics to expand a Latino/a queer cultural citizenship.

Latino/a and Minority Youth in Immigrant Civic Dance Publics

Before the rise of Latino youth-inspired and profitable nightclub parties in Elizabeth, several of my informants share how civic spaces organized "dances" and parties that helped build the Elizabeth nightlife scene into a diverse crowd. However, my informants' articulations support how these ethnic spaces were a model of good ethnicity, ethnic distinction and a service of entertainment to their community. As a result, civic leaders and board members strongly policed these dance spaces that protected youth from bad and delinquent youth. In effect, they expected their crowd to behave and embody markers of good ethnicity that discouraged excess embodiments, eccentricity, and "hard" behavior. In this section, I will explore what some of my informants reported about the Cuban Club and the Portuguese Club and what they remember about their dance spaces with their friends and families. It's important to consider how the Cuban Club was pioneering in hosting dance parties that the Portuguese Club used as models; yet, the former was more restrictive of outsiders and non-Cubans than the Portuguese because of ethnic tensions within Elizabeth neighborhoods that still existed in the late 1980s.

Two informants, a male and female, who were members of the Cuban Club, share two varying perspectives about the club's dances. Their different gender and social economic positioning are evident in their perspectives. Juliette, a second generation Cuban-Venezuelan American, comes from a lower middle class positioning and attended a suburban parochial high school outside Elizabeth. She persistently articulated in her reflections how her parents sheltered her from urban violence and delinquent youth in her neighborhood. Andy, a second generation Colombian-American whose Cuban stepfather raised him Cuban, came from working class means, attended the Elizabeth public school system and frequently faced run-ins with youth violence. He shares a much less sheltered view (even though he considered himself to be a Mama's Boy) of his experience at the Cuban Club.

Juliette's recollections about the Cuban Club's dances suggest that they could not evolve into a youth-centric party. However, I must point out that Juliette is also two years younger than Andy and age plays a factor in why Andy was exposed more to youth-driven parties in the Cuban Club than she was. She explains,

> No, I don't know if there were dances for the young. I always remember everything being family oriented. It was always with, you know, you'd rent a table with your family. And my aunt would go with her husband and my mom would go with us and then everybody most of the people in Elizabeth were from the same town in Cuba. Let's say 60 per cent of the people in Elizabeth were all from this one town. So, they all knew each other growing up. It was kind of like we all know each other, we're all here, it's safe, it's cool, this is the place to [be].

She recounts that the dances she remembers going to included only Cubans originating from the same town in Cuba. This describes the scene as being homogeneously Cuban and particular only to that ethnic community in Elizabeth. She says that, "we all knew each other," and "our" origins. In essence, this dance party was not about relating with those of racial and ethnic difference but it was about being in proximity to others of the same background. Also, she

emphasizes that these dances were not youth-centric in any way but were family oriented and publicly displayed good ethnicity and heteronormativity being passed down from an older generation to a newer one. Finally, she shares the sense of "safety" that this space created as a buffer from outside racial and ethnic difference that could be dangerous and unwanted.

Unlike Juliette's account, Andy's account posits that the Cuban Club did host youth-centric house music parties. Andy was also active earlier than Juliette in the Cuban Club. He recounts,

> The space that was used to do the tae kwon do class was the same space that was used for my first club in New Jersey. And, on Friday night, at the Cuban club after everybody finished class the boys went and they changed out of their white tae kwon do uniforms. And somebody went in there and swept everything up, a DJ came and put up the lights, and that was a nightclub. And that was my first time going to a club, from what I remember there was no alcohol being served at the time but most of the kids that were going there were 13, 14, 15 and it was a very safe, very innocent time and that was in 1987. And that was my first exposure to house music because some of the kids that were bringing the records in, were also attending Jefferson High School and they were attending Elizabeth High School and I was only in Roosevelt Middle School and that's how I learned about house music.

Andy shares how the Cuban Club built a "safe" space that felt "innocent" for youth there who were exploring this musical subculture. It's interesting how this dance was "another youth activity at the club" after tae kwon do that kept youth close to protect them from urban violence and bad youth on the streets. Even more, this account reveals how these youth explored this musical subculture in a heterocentric space of "good ethnicity."

Although these parties were heterosexist and perceived to be "good" ethnic spaces, Juliette's account suggests how some girls may have been policed by their parents to prevent early sexual activity that may have been viewed as inappropriate for younger, heteronormative teenage girls. She could not recall that the Cuban Club hosted such "nightlife-like" parties that Andy recalls above. This reveals the gender and class dynamics between my two informants

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such that Juliette's parents were overprotective of her, as typical Latino immigrant parents are over their daughters (Smith 2006; Smith 2002 Lopez 2004; Carter 2005).

While Juliette explains the "safeness" and "simplicity" of the space from a non-sexual point of view, Andy's male privileged point of view also includes his sexual exploration at the Club. Andy explains here why the Cuban Club Board was interested in entertaining youth,

> I would say that because around that time a movie was out called, "Back to the Future," I don't know if you remember. The movie? Yeah! Yeah! The 80's was like people were very reminiscent of the 1950s in the 80s. It was very youth oriented and they wanted to have for the young generation to be able to experience a lot of what the kids experienced in the 50s. What made everything so innocent in my opinion was again they weren't serving alcohol because they were between the ago of 13 and 20. There were people that were supervising that were the administrators of the Cuban club. That's all that I remember. But, other than people making out.

While Andy's recollections are youth-centric, unlike Juliette's, both of them suggest safety and innocence as contained spaces of good ethnicity and sexual citizenship. According to Andy's experience, the board allowed sexual exploration to happen around good ethnic embodiments and performances of youth and their sameness.

Andy curiously draws a parallel between the 1950's (backdrop) setting of *Back to the Future* and the space and temporality that the board members wanted to offer their Cuban youth amidst a city of good and bad ethnics and urban violence. He states subtly, saying, "to allow the young generation to experience what the young kids in the 50's did," suggesting that dominant production circulated certain expectations about good citizenship in the 1980's. Andy suggests that dominant texts/films like *Back to the Future*, a highly televised mainstream film among youth coming of age in the 1980s and 1990s, is an example of national media production that revisited dominant ideologies of red (communism), black (anti-ethnic assimilation) and white (homosexuality) scares, (Lee 1999, 153-161), which engendered containment against militancy

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of youth and citizens of color by invoking uniformity and conformity to national projects of race, ethnicity, sexuality, imperialism, and colonialization. Johnson writes, "Radio and television enacted the imperatives of consensus culture by targeting middle class suburbs as ideal sites of consumption…[becoming]…a powerful agent for the nationalization and homogenization of U.S. culture" (72). Andy conflates the peaceful, suburban-like homogeneous and contained 50's setting of *Back to the Future* with the space of the Cuban Club, where members aspired to achieve the American Dream of middle-classness, especially as model minority immigrants who consumed these media-conforming images and ideologies of U.S. nation-building.

The innocence that Andy speaks of here precisely suggests a time when ethnics more readily conformed to American imperial values while the government monitored for "scares" of racial and cultural difference and militancy. The innocence here also relates to a sexual and heterocentrist one because it harkens back to the how the post-WWII nation cultivated good and conformist citizens to abide by a family economy that subverted and pathologized sexual and gender variance. As such, under the red scare, to not be "innocent" also meant to be sexually and gender deviant. Again, while Andy's recollection reveals a sexually energized account in contrast to Juliette's middle class and family-centered perspective, both of them reveal the club's heterocentrist dance space in which the gay subculture was non-existent. Andy explains that at the Cuban Club, "…was my first exposure to house music…and that's how I learned about house music. I didn't even know that house music was created by gay people or anything like that, it just clicked."

Andy recollects that in fact there was diversity among Latino youth at the Cuban Club but under a heterocentrist space of good ethnicity, where Cuban Club leaders policed for non-heteronormativity and delinquency among this Latino youth grouping. He explains, *"…When*

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you went to… the Cuban Club,… [it had] Latino parties. And they played house music." Andy

alludes to the fact that many kinds of Latinos, not just Cubans, were going to the Cuban Club,

such as Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Peruvians, and Salvadorians. In Andy's case, he was

actually half Colombian even though his Cuban stepfather raised him Cuban. His narrative is an

example of how non-Cuban Latino youth assumed affiliation with another ethnic group and its

civic space. House music, Andy points out, was bringing Latino youth together and creating

relationality among them outside of ethnic markers, yet spaces like the Cuban Club policed this

Latino grouping to embody and perform nonthreatening markers of ethnicity and

heteronormativity. Other Latinos of non-Cuban origin participated in civic events and family-

oriented dances I saw documented in several local Cuban American newspapers in which

journalists reported on community events, including dances at the Cuban Club.

Racial mixing between Latino, African American, and Caucasians, according to several

informants including Andy, did not start happening until the very late 1980s and outside most

Latino/a ethnic spaces. Several of my informants Johnny, Mark, and Lucy suggested that most

dance parties were predominantly populated by Latino youth or that they were Latino parties.

Even after the late 1980s, when we began to see more integration among Elizabeth youth at

parties, the fact that they remained predominantly Latino raises questions about how far

Elizabeth youth had actually racially integrated. Yet, this chapter challenges and complicates a

dismal view of virtually minimal racial integration to focus on and describe youth

counterideologies and counterdiscourses on several dance floors in Elizabeth, discussed toward

the end of this chapter. When it came to the actual house dance parties at the Cuban Club around

1987, Andy explains that that heterosexual whites and African Americans did not go,

> …because Italian kids were not into house music at the time. They were into rock and
> roll. They were into heavy metal. And the black kids were into hip hop so they didn't

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have no business going there. I'm not saying they weren't welcome because I'm not a racist and I get along with everybody but it hadn't crossed over yet. In NYC, it had crossed over but in NJ it was still a Latino thing.

Andy describes in other accounts how in the mid 1980s, ethnic and racial groups were still geographically and systematically segregated in Elizabeth. Here, he articulates how these groups were culturally distant from each other. According to Andy, whites and African Americans were not interested in going to Cuban Club youth parties because they did not enjoy that music yet. But, it's important to consider here how this ethnic space was a training ground of "good" ethnicity within a contained dance space that distanced Latinos from whites and blacks.

With white Cubans at the top of this ethnic hierarchy under a white cultural hegemony, non-Cuban Latinos were taught good ethnicity and citizenship in this Cuban-American-centric space. Similarly, In *Salsa Crossings: Dancing Latinidad in Los Angeles* (2013), Cindy Garcia discusses the ways Latinos/as' value and worth are lowered based on how their dance techniques are racialized within an ethnic hierarchy in a neoliberal and global economy.   Having being taught by different dance instructors, Garcia discusses one experience in particular in which she felt the instructor attempted to erase black or ethnic articulations to "retrain" her to dance commodified and whitened dance techniques (30). Garcia (2013) says, "I could see…his attempt to educate me about mambo was also his way of integrating me into the scene, to help me assume a higher ranking" (30). Similar to Cindy Garcia's experience, I see Cuban and Portuguese Club leaders as instructors mentoring or monitoring non-Cuban youth to strive for a "higher ranking" in the ethnic hierarchy by practicing their performances of good ethnicity and whiteness under the direction of a chosen model minority class of white exiled Cubans and ethnic white Elizabeth Portuguese-Americans under a white cultural hegemony.

That is, these leaders provided an institutional space tied to a white cultural hegemony for Latino youth to dance house in a "safe" "model minority" and "white(ned)" dance public. In light of Garcia's work, we can also consider how these leaders also practiced a Latino dance or music sensibility among Latino/a youth, similar to Ken Gelder's discussion in *Subcultures: Cultural Histories and Social Practice* (2007), concerning the whitening of jazz and its audience, or Frances Aparicio's and Susana Chavez-Silverman's (1997) discussion in *Tropicalizations: Transcultural Representations of Latinidad* (1997) of how Cuban American Cristina Garcia's novel *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) tropicalized or whitewashed Cuban culture by "deforming the African based elements of Santeria" that removed or erased black origins and epistemology of this rite (12). Similarly, these civic leaders minimized relationality with African American youth in their local immigrant dance spaces for the advancement of their youth in an ethnic and racial hierarchy.

Unlike the Cuban Club, the Portuguese Club, however, began hosting parties that were more inclusive of racial and ethnic diversity but still operating according to a vision of good ethnicity and ethnic hierarchy and competition paving a space of liberal multiculturalism in line with dominant ideologies of depoliticized groupings. Andy explains about the Portuguese Club,

…[The Portuguese club] took off from the Cuban club in the sense that they followed in the steps of the Cuban Club as far as throwing parties. And you know what…the Portuguese club was that very club that said ok wait, there are now Portuguese people now that are listening to house music. Well, Portuguese is very close to Italian so it's like Portuguese people can go there so Italians can go there. So now the Portuguese club was not just Latinos it was Portuguese people, it was Italian people, it was Latinos, and it was blacks. The Portuguese club was a very influential place because that was one of the first places that had people of all races together. Whereas with the Cuban Club, I don't remember seeing any black kids or any white kids at all…

Andy shares here that the Portuguese Club was more inclusive than the Cuban Club and that its youth parties brought youth from different ethnicities together. Even more, Andy suggests that the Portuguese Club became one of the first spaces in Elizabeth to bring youth from different

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ethnicities and neighborhoods together under one roof. In essence, he suggests that the

Portuguese Club dances disrupted the ethnic boundaries that had occurred throughout Elizabeth.

However, Johnny, another interviewee, reminds us that even while Portuguese Club

parties included ethnic and racial mixing, the standard of good ethnicity and ethnic and racial

differentiation still penetrated in this space. He recalls, "They used to play that Portuguese

music. They played that chicken dance." Johnny's reflection here suggests that as a half Puerto

Rican and half Dominican American amidst a diverse youth crowd, there were moments in

which he was reminded that this space was Portuguese and he was the other. In effect, those

moments of ethnic particularity reminded all of the crowd that they were welcome yet were

visitors in this ethnic community's space. Instead of a sense of ethnic coalescing or unity of a

brown or working class Elizabeth, these moments raised binaries between one ethnicity over

another. In "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of

Color Organizing," Andrea Smith reminds us of the ethnic and heteropatriarchal order that pits

people into hierarchies of race and sexuality where non-heteronormativity is virtually non-

existent.   The Portuguese song and dance remind Johnny and other youth that the civic space of

political economy is owned or administrated by an older generation that interrupts the agency of

a youth-centric audience, which would not happen in youth-built spaces.

Karla offers a view that suggests that her perception of the Portuguese Club as an ethnic

civic club is a dichotomy of good ethnicity and good order. She explains,

> The funniest thing is the Portuguese Club. It's the Portuguese club, right? How funny
> is that? It's a Portuguese Club but like Judy Torres performed there. I remember seeing
> her there. Um, oh my God, George Lamond, remember? Him. Like he performed there.
> It catered to so many different people that again it must be an Elizabeth thing because
> people would hang out in New York, right? But those same people that were hanging
> out in New York had no problem going to a Portuguese Club. That's basically a rotary
> club, right? Think about it. It's like the ELKS club or the ELKS club in Elizabeth, right?
> So, that in itself should tell you how confident these people were that they were happy.

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Yay! I could go to Limelight on Thursday and then I'm going to go. And then the next party is behind the 7-11… Woooo! Right?   As long as it was a good vibe and a good party it didn't matter.   Was it in NY? Was it NJ? It didn't matter!

In effect, what Karla conveys here is that even under the policing and contained space of good ethnicity and liberal multiculturalism of the Portuguese Club and its first-generation board and owners, youth managed to have a good time among themselves and make it their own "even behind 7-11" based on their imaginary of New York City nightlife. Even more, she suggests that her circle of friends hung out in New York, where they were exposed to other ideologies, spaces, and a (future) temporality that helped them question and disrupt these good ethnicity and liberal multicultural projects in local Elizabeth, lodged in civic (dance floor) spaces. She explains that her friends "had no problem" going to the Portuguese Club despite the strict ideological expectations in the dance public that limited youth subjectivity.

Even more, like Johnny, Karla also suggests that the Portuguese youth identified with Latino youth through the house and freestyle and music that the Portuguese Club's DJs spun. She explains,

> The Portuguese that I knew they did like house. They weren't differentiated by, "well, I'm Portuguese so I can't like freestyle or house."   We all grew up in Elizabeth. We're all listening to at that time we're listening to 103.5. So, we all like the same music whether you were Portuguese or Colombian, Puerto Rican so…It wasn't a matter well, yeah, there Porkchops. But one thing you'd know about them is that they all got Volkswagons. They all have Volkswagons. Everybody [who is Portuguese] in Elizabeth. The Porkchops are gonna get their Volkswagons from their parents. It's true there were certain things that certain ethnicities were known for but it wasn't like a class level like they were a different class than us. Maybe they thought so but at the end of the day, we're all hanging out at the Portuguese Club.

Aside from her Latino friends who enjoyed dancing at the Portuguese Club, she also discusses how the Portuguese youth related with other Latinos (Colombians and Puerto Ricans) through music even while she admits to some kind of ethnic hierarchy and distinction: "they all have Volkswagons." Karla's suggestion here is not random at all; it is true that most Portuguese

parents bought their children their first Volkswagon cars, which under neoliberal ideologies and discourses put them ahead in the race among other less privileged ethnic youth. This display of material wealth to other Latino, African Americans, and white working class youth was a display of ethnic and racial distinction that was constantly acknowledged about the hard-working and self-sufficient Portuguese (similar to Cubans) in local newspapers and that was also internalized by other ethnics like Karla. Yet, she downplays this ethnic distinction and "hard work" by also recognizing that she felt that her Portuguese friends didn't really come across as being superior to their brown skinned Latino friends due to their shared interests and musical subculture groupings. While from a macrosocial optic Karla is right to suggest that the Portuguese at the end of the day were of the same class as their brown-skinned Latino friends, there were subtle class differences between them especially in regard to their white privilege.

Even while Karla sounds reassuring like Johnny at one moment that her Portuguese friends didn't differentiate themselves, she did express another moment of doubt by saying above, "Maybe they thought so [that they were superior] but at the end of the day, we're all hanging out at the Portuguese Club." In effect, Karla acknowledges that this sense of superiority had become local discourse among Portuguese youth and their families. This sense of achievement and purchasing power indeed can be regarded as a class distinction in the neoliberal context of ethnic competition and liberal multiculturalism, though she pushes back her suspicion with an anti-neoliberal sentiment that "we are all hanging out at the Portuguese club" with youth ideologies and discourses that undermine or disregard first-generation values and thinking. Below, Karla emphasizes this sense of superiority came from first-generation parents, who include civic and political leaders, and not the 1.5 or second generation: "Their parents. I'm sure their parents. Maybe the Portuguese people. I'm pretty sure that their parents thought they were

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a higher class than Hispanics. I'm absolutely sure they did the Portuguese people." Here she is asserting that her friends' first-generation parents and [older] Portuguese like family friends, mentors, and club owners "thought they were a higher class than Hispanics." While she shares her experience of her Portuguese friends breaking away from these local ideologies, these first-generation civic spaces conveyed those ethnic distinctions under a white cultural hegemony that were inevitably internalized by Portuguese, Latino, and African American youth that visited the club.

The Local Dance Public and Race, Sexual and Gender Exclusions

In this section, I offer attitudes from participants that suggest constricted dance publics in which African American and Latino/a LGBTQ dancers were either unwelcomed or undesired in order to sustain a non-black, masculinist and normative dance public in Elizabeth. Because I am working with cultural memory, one must be critical over selective memory and which ideas are remembered and presented to me as the interviewer. Sherry Ortner posits in *New Jersey Dreaming* the importance of examining the larger (counter)ideologies and (counter)discourses over the inaccuracies of what is remembered and forgotten in these cultural memories. Among the interviewees in this section, some (may) share a complicity with preserving a white(end), heterosexist and masculinist dance public that is comparable to heteronormative and nationalist publics in middle class white contexts.

Andy, one of the first Latino Elizabeth High School youth to come out, recounts in his interview how he became exposed to and was influenced by African American gay subjects who ventured into largely heterosexist and Latino dance floor spaces in Elizabeth. But first, he describes that before Latino Elizabeth youth were coming out in the high school, only Elizabeth

African American men were socially known to be gay: "There was no gay culture that I knew of in the late 70s and the early 80s in Elizabeth until maybe like '89, I found out that there was gay men in Elizabeth but these [flamboyant] men [on the street] were predominantly African American and I had no association or ties with them at all." Andy raises the idea here that by 1989 gay culture in Elizabeth was associated with black men and not Latino youth. According to Andy, gay African American men were the center of non-heteronormativity and bad citizenship in the way that Ferguson (2004) documents the policing of working class to poor gay African Americans through dominant white and black public ideologies and discourses that viewed them as bad and threatening to dominant society and its moral fabric. From Andy's positioning, these men became a binary to his own sexuality, worth and good citizenship despite the fact that he was coming to terms with his sexuality in the context of Elizabeth. Yet, Johnson 2015 offers important insight that eases a black and white binary by suggesting how "disenfranchised groups" like the gay African Americans Andy mentions here, "…claimed the kinds of spaces that were available to them [like street space], and in those spaces often created important democratic and egalitarian visions and practices" (65). In effect, Andy acknowledges that at the time he saw these gay African American men on the street he was impacted by their cultural work at play despite having no ties with them. Andy's account is a reminder of the Latino community's effort to preserve heteronormativity and a patriarchal family structure that preserved good sexuality that distanced Latino/a youth of aspiring Latino families from relationality with poor African American youth and especially poor and gay African American youth. That fact that Andy suggests that the fact that these men were flamboyant suggests eccentric queer performances and embodiments frowned upon and stigmatized by the larger neoliberal projects of an aspiring Latino community. These men took up space "on the street" as

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counterpublics while offering a counterideological vision of democracy through threatening

flamboyant performances that challenged heteronormative expectations.

In a more descriptive account, Andy mentions a particular African American queer and

how his performance and embodiments on the street were directly threatening to Latino parents

and their aspirations of heteronormativity. He explains,

> …I would say that the first person that I saw that was a gender variant person
> associated with being an openly gay individual. I would say that there was a black
> drag queen that lived right down the street from me on Marshall Street. And she was
> very well known. It was a man dressed as a woman or lived as a woman and everybody
> just kind of shunned that person because that was the person you didn't let your kids
> see cause you didn't want your kids to question the gender of that person. The first
> time that I saw that person of course I went into shock because I said to myself what
> the hell is that? And I said to myself, well that's a faggot.

It is important to note that in this passage Andy is being more specific and describing an actual

gay or transgendered subject that was "very well known" on [Marshall] street. Similar to gay and

transgendered performers on stage discussed by authors Habell Pallan 2005 (Luis Alfaro),

Munoz 1999 (Vaginal Davis), and Braziel 2008 (Assotto Saint), who talk about how these

artists' performance work challenged their audience members' racial, gender, and sexual

boundaries and privileging of heteronormativity in their lives, this black subject was a gay street

persona who courageously dressed in drag on his [street] stage and delivered a message of

tolerance of sexual and gender nonconforming existence to his [street] audience. Similar to these

performers who sought belonging, space, and dignity within their local ethnic, diasporic, or

subcultural communities, this subject along with other eccentric LGBT African American street

walkers claimed a queer cultural citizenship to expand the notion of diversity for sexual and

gender deviant African Americans while demanding space, respect and inclusion in Elizabeth "as

they were."

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This quote is also a clear example of the ways older gay/queer African Americans challenged the heteronormative projects of aspiring Latino ethnic families in the context of neoliberal became Elizabeth.   Andy says "everyone" actively "shunned" this gay subject in the overall heterosexist publics of Elizabeth, whether white or black (Johnson, 64). His use of "faggot" denotes an extreme form of eccentricity and stigma of sexual and gender deviancy that defied, especially to aspiring Latino immigrant parents, dominant expectations and neoliberal models of citizenship. During his teenage years, Andy's parents, particularly his father, policed and disciplined him for signs of being a faggot (to use his father's words), particularly in the way his father caught him several times dancing in front of his mirror in his room. His father perceived the dancing, which was inspired by his gay black voguing peers , to be very effeminate.

Mark says of another party at the Police Athletic League (PAL) in Elizabeth, "…they were afraid of gay dudes. They would have been afraid of gay dudes…not even afraid, they would have just not understood, you know. They would have seen a drag queen and it would have scared [them]." Mark suggests here how gay youth had formed tactics in these parties. Because his peers did not "understand" these "gay dudes," it would not be surprising that his friends' fear could lead to confrontation and violence. Even while these gay youth formed their tactics, Mark's friends felt they did not belong in heterocentrist spaces. Mark's use of the word "dude" itself is telling of their heterocentrist mentality with the use of "dude" that resonates with homosocially homophobic skate (Borden 2001) and (Yochim 2010) culture and space. In effect, the fear that Mark brings up emphasizes how these gay subjects queer the dance public to the extent that they may no longer be on the fringes.

On the other hand, Bert has a slightly different view and explains how dance spaces, including the PAL, did not attract social diversity and were not places for tactics, which intensified and concentrated a masculinist hip hop culture as the dominant culture of those parties. He recounts, "I think like parties at the PAL or parties at the Polish Falcons or different spots within the city where they had these parties I think they didn't attract diversity, they attracted just the regular street kids you know. You didn't attract kids that were interested in going into the city. You attracted the Elizabeth crowd, the straight up, 100 per cent pure Elizabeth crowd." Bert points out that because these parties did not attract diversity, he often felt that this predominantly inner-city Elizabeth largely hip hop crowd was the town's dominant masculinist and sexist youth culture (Danesi 2010; Haenfler 2010; Strode and Wood 2008). By explaining that other youth enjoyed going into the city to experience and belong to other musical, (sub)cultural, and sexual sensibilities, he is pointing out that there were Elizabeth youth who avoided an Elizabeth dominant party scene and spaces and who were looking for queer, countercultural and less masculinist spaces, instead.

Lucy and Andy

Lucy and Andy reflect on the erratic behavior of young men who went to the dance clubs that involved a social distance rather than a peaceful social engagement with racial, class, sexual and gender difference. Under these social tensions, it was unlikely that sexual and gender variant subjects felt comfortable being themselves or feeling safe in these dance spaces. Lucy comments,

> You know like always looking to start a fight with somebody. 'Oh like, what are you looking at me like that?' And it could be like them just squinting cause I can't fuckin' see, you know? (Laughing). 'Why you looking at me hard, you know?' And it's like you don't want to go to a party, you want to go to a party to hang out and meet people and not to like to not be able to look at somebody because you're looking at them hard, you know?

Lucy explains here the racial/ethnic/class/sexual and gender variant tensions that existed between at some the dance floors. She articulates how those scenes intensifies those differences and tensions among clubgoers that frequently led to violence. Further, Lucy also explains the hard urban affect and masculinist performance of largely working class Latino/a youth among men and women in these dance spaces.

Similarly, Andy explains about the erroneous perception of African American kids deteriorating the predominantly Latino dance clubs,

> And…to put people in a box and say oh because when the African American kids start…but it was usually particular people like there was people that were notorious and known for staring fights…And they would literally walk into a club and start walking around and looking to sneak somebody, you know. You looked at me the wrong way, boom.

Andy, here, denounces the everyday discourse about African American youth ruining the safety and peace of Latino majority dance parties to maintain the separation between these racial and ethnic groups. Instead he articulates that the actual problem was specific people that perpetuated their hostilities with others. Andy's explanation offers a more nuanced explanation than the racialized and classed narrative of underprivileged minority and working class youth of post-industrial secondary cities. Even further, Andy's own sexual and gender variant subjectivity (which we will explore further in the next section) is removed from this space that otherwise could invite homophobic and transphobic aggressions. Therefore, the kind of masculinist and homophobic affect that some young men brought with them to some of these dance spaces, according to Lucy and Andy, discouraged LGBTQ youth from developing tactics there.

Further, Lucy expresses the sense of stigma for gays in local dance publics that could unsurprisingly lead to intimidation and aggression. She comments,

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It was that hardcore era where everybody was hard you know in like the hip hop era. People were like quick to drop the fag word…But it wasn't like that when we were hanging out that [our] crowd that I was with like everybody accepted everybody for who you were like as who you were, who you were dating. You know, none of that mattered.

Here, she is reflecting on experiences in past dance spaces in which she had a strong sense of homophobia and transphobia. As she suggests, she distinguishes her crowd and spacemaking that was gay affirming. Ultimately, Lucy's view describes a hostile environment for LGBTQ youth in which they could face violence or exclusion. At the same time, it was easy for social hostilities and imminent violence to be perceived first among working class and racialized minorities given the circulating simplistic textual representations of them as aggressive, gang-ridden, and criminal. For example, Ramos-Zayas (2012) explains how in nearby Newark, "…'anger' and 'aggression' became dominant emotions, or 'meta-sentiments,' inscribed through the interpretation, narration, and policy outcome…in Newark's urban landscape" (46). Similarly, these stories above suggest that in Elizabeth social hostilities and 'aggression[s]' came to be the dominant meta-narrative of Elizabeth youth. While violence did occur, the next half of the chapter explores moments both in local publics and counterpublics in which these social hostilities were eased and youth assumed or welcomed tolerance, resolution and difference.

Andy in Gay Counterpublics before Voguing Goes Mainstream

It was during the time Andy began to go to dance parties in Elizabeth that he was exposed to the performances and embodiments of gay African Americans that he could identify and find such dances liberating and inspiring. He shares how at the Elks in 1989 he saw and was struck by, "…a black queen…voguing [to house music] with another queen who was a butch queen. And they were battling each other so on and so forth." He further explains,

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> I saw two guys and they were competing with each other and I said, 'I'm gonna do that. (laughing)…I don't remember if it was the second or third time that I was there but when I saw that I was mesmorized by that…I had no idea that it had something to do about gay culture. I just knew that that was the music that attracted me to those venues.

Andy, who was a teenager and avid Elizabeth nightlife goer, experienced how some of the dance spaces began to be queered by African American gay subjects performing on the dance floor. During that time, Andy was still coming to terms with his sexuality. His exposure to these black queers' performances and dance further encouraged him to not only come to terms with his own gender and sexual subjectivities but also to relate with black queer subjects outside a heterosexist and masculinist majority local and immigrant public and nightlife culture. Andy's mention of "gay culture" begs the question here about whether the gay culture he referred to was white or non-white, though evidently he references the latter in the way that Manolo Guzman discusses in his book *Gay Hegemony/Latino Homosexualities* (2006), about how pre-Stonewall New York Puerto Rican gay culture was homoracial, or distinct, and outside a gay white hegemony. In Andy's post-Stonewall and neoliberal time, it is important to consider the significance of an anti-neoliberal and underground or separatist non-white gay culture that local Latino/a and African American youth identified with that shaped their subjectivities and allowed them not to just conform to a growing mainstream, commodifiable, and homonormative gay white culture. Similarly Martin Mananlansan's essay, "In the Shadows of Stonewall: Examining Gay Transnational Politics and the Diasporic Dilemma," offers a spatial analysis of the ways New York City queer Filipino immigrants contest diasporic homoracial space and politics between white gay mainstream space and a heteropatriarchal Filipino immigrant space through their queering of the Santacruzan, the country's most watched traditional Catholic procession during the Flores de Mayo, which honors the Virgin Mary.   Andy's and many of his gay Latino friends'

connections with local black gay ball and dance cultures were their main references to a gay

subjectivity, and not mainstream white gay culture. Yet as Latino queer youth, their ethnic and

immigrant backgrounds also influenced their diasporic gay subjectivity.

Andy raises the idea below that there was an overlap between ethnic and immigrant

straight and queer youth dancers of the time, which alleviated the cultural and sexual difference

between gays and straights. Andy shares,

> One guy that as dressed like a guy and a guy that was dressed somewhat like a girl
> but not all the way like a girl, ponytail, foundation, and like a blouse, and they were
> battling, they were doing like these strange positions, and poses, and popping and
> dipping and spinning. And it kind of reminded me of break dancing. And in the 80s,
> I was all into the popping thing.

He points out more similarities between voguing and breakdancing, conveying that there was

more similarity than difference between the two dance forms in which masculinists and queers

could relate with each other outside strategies. Similar to masculinist-oriented breakdancing,

Manalansan's discussion of how Filipino queer subjects exposed their gay counterpublic to a

heteropatriarchal Filipino context in their commonality of the devout Catholic procession did

create some overlap or dismantle existing binaries between immigrant and queer immigrant

Filipino subjects outside a Filipino nationalist strategy. Andy's description of the dancers' cross-

dressed embodiments, particularly the "guy that was dressed somewhat like a girl," denotes an

in-betweenness that dismantled gender binaries yet affirmed queerness that was boldly eccentric,

performing "…strange positions, and poses, and popping, and dipping…" that were unfamiliar to

mainstream strategies and different from yet similar to breakdancing. Andy's description

suggests that the couple still emulated breakdancing in a masculinist form of street dance despite

their somewhat non-normative characteristics. His descriptions are also telling of the early

queer embodiments and performances of gay/queer African American and Latino voguers entering dominant heterocentric and masculinist dance spaces.

Aside from these queer embodiments and performances, Andy expresses what it meant for him to find and connect with voguing before, as he says, "it became en vogue to vogue." It is obvious how connected Andy is with voguing since he still vogues and is influential in the national ball scene, in which voguing is very much the center of community, organizing, and self-empowerment. He discusses what for him meant to be a "faggot" before finding vogue:

> I think that was the turning point of my life because I got to associate something other than sex with my sexuality because my sexuality was linked to one thing, AIDS. You know what I'm saying? AIDS had just come out in '83. Ok, you're gay? You have AIDS. You're a faggot and you have AIDS. It was like something that you didn't talk about. And there wasn't really any type of role models for the GLBT community so I associated the particular person that lived down the street from me not just being black, but gay, in drag, and having AIDS. I didn't even know what the word drag was. It was a man dressed in women's clothes. But I went to a club and I saw voguing.

In this quote, Andy explains how voguing added a positive dimension to the sense of stigma that being gay had for him in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In effect, voguing gave him a mode of self-expression and mobility that allowed him the possibility to relate with both gays and straights outside the "AIDS carrier" label of the time. Voguing became the medium through which he could talk to others and define himself outside the dominant HIV-AIDS discourse in which gay men (especially gay men of color) were automatically perceived as having or imminently contracting HIV. In effect, moving into strategies through voguing tactics was self-empowering, especially in the pursuit of building bridges and connectivity with those in dominant publics.

"Strike a Pose…There's Nothing to It?" Voguing as Tactic

Johnny, speaking from a later moment than Andy, also expresses more similarity than difference between voguing and breakdancing to emphasize the ease between gay/queer and straight dancers in dominant dance spaces. Johnny explains as a heterosexual dancer,

> …I remember as a kid you had your king tut. So, basically, it's like the same moves. Basically, you're voguing to a straight kid he's not gonna like really pick up on it because it's almost like the same dance style and back then it was more of a feminine style. But back then, it was more robotic almost, edgier, so it didn't look so feminine, you know what I mean?

According to Johnny here, while voguing was in fact "feminine" compared to breakdancing, he describes elements of the dance form, "robotic" and "edgier," that made them quite similar. These common elements of both dance forms allowed a "queer politics of choreography" of relationality through dance and mimesis (Buckland 2002 and Rivera-Servera 2013) between straight and queer dancers on masculinist and heterocentric dance floors. Such bold and futuristic movements and space among both dance forms and bodies tells of youth, whether gay/queer or straight, articulating expanded notions of diversity outside dominant and heteronormative expectations. This exchange also articulates a possible tomorrow of critical diversity outside state order and boundaries of gender and sexuality.

Yet, Johnny suggests that because Madonna brought voguing into the mainstream, it helped destigmatize the dance as this marginal, urban, and gay African American dance form. Johnny shares about his own view and experience,

> …Voguing was popular back then cause they didn't make it so gayish. You know like you had Madonna videos. It was more mainstream so it was more accepted like you didn't think, 'oh, he's voguing, that's gay!' Even straight kids were voguing. I was voguing back then and I'm straight…It kind of blended in. It wasn't like cause you're voguing, you're gay.

By mentioning Madonna's video production of voguing, Johnny is raising the idea that the aesthetics behind television production do not make the dancing look "so gay." Whether in artistic or music production (Garcia 2013, Gelder 2007 and Aparicio and Silverman 1997) or in media or textual production (D'Avila 2008; Molina-Guzman 2010; Valdivia 2008), Johnny's example of the commercialized form of voguing dislocated it and cleansed it of its underground counterpublics and subjectivities (Munoz 1999, Rodriguez 2003, Quiroga 2000). Johnny is unlike other straight men because he also hung out with other gay Latino men to vogue. Thus, Johnny assesses this dominant production of voguing from his own countercultural positioning and what he experienced and gained from his relationality with others in gay counterpublics. He is coming from a more unique perspective than most straight men as a Puerto Rican homeboy that went to gay balls with black, Puerto Rican, Latino gays/queers in Newark and New York City, which was uncommon among Latino male straight youth. He developed strong ties and friendships with these gay youth. Dominant productions of Madonna and her dancers voguing dehistoricized how poor to working class queer of color youth were using the dance form for everyday self-empowerment and community building that would detract from heterosexual white middle class consumption in the way that a similar audience vilified disco in July 1979 in Chicago's Comisky Park. According to Frank Mastropolo's online article, "'It was Like a Riot': The History of Disco Demolition Night," 60,000 people showed up at the baseball stadium to riot against disco. Many were white male rockers who felt that US rock-based mainstream music and popular culture could disappear thanks to gays', Latinos', and blacks' growing disco appeal. Such a "riot" was a reminder to gays, Latinos, and blacks that their racial and cultural excess was a threat to white cultural hegemony.

Even more, Johnny explains that LGBTQ youth entering dance publics also dressed and behaved in ways that did not necessarily make them conspicuous within a majority masculinist and normative audience of these dance publics. Johnny explains,

> I don't know it's weird it's just like they blended in back then. It was like I said it wasn't like flamboyant. They dressed how like I dressed so like you couldn't pick up on it, you know? That they were gay or something like that. But some you kind of knew but you weren't suuure... But, ah, I guess you know I'll see them voguing but like I said back then that was the in thing. It was like breakdancing or you know so you wouldn't think that was a gay thing back then, you know?

Above, Johnny offers a couple of insights. He first describes how these LGBTQ youth "blended in" within these dance publics despite their potentially transgressive subjectivities. Secondly, he posits that their dressing styles were contained within dominant expectations. In other words, Johnny had mentioned that many gay voguers like Andy dressed at times in hip-hop and "hood" masculine wear consisting of oversized polo or T-shirts, baseball caps, slicked hair, and baggy jeans that ruffled at the bottom to sneakers or construction boots. (What gave it away were Andy's large silver or gold hoop earrings in both of his ears! Ernie told me he wore those once in a while!) Third, he asserts (again) that their voguing was aestheticized in ways that looked similar to breakdancing so as to be incorporable within the dance public.

Over time, however, these gay/queer clubgoers exuding sexual and gender transgressions became notable and part of the dominant Elizabeth nightlife.   Andy recounts,

> …Because Latinos started to participate with African American gay men and Latinos [gays] were already attending heterosexual parties, they decided to bring the circus into the straight world. So, you know, there was that whole element, a little bit of everything in this party and all of a sudden out of nowhere there's somebody on the DJ booth with a microphone and they're calling out legends, statements, and stars. The straight people just loved it. They wanted to see us on the floor doing runway. They wanted to see on the dance floor popping and dipping and spinning and stretching and clicking and all that stuff like that. It attracted more crowds and Mellie Mell [a local and influential house, freestyle, hip hop music party organizer and promoter among a Latinos and African Americans audience who worked at different clubs and radio stations] was aware of this

and he wanted us to promote so we could bring more people in. And so that just moved on into other venues that were bigger venues like the Palace of Beauty, Hugs Not Drugs…

Here, Andy shares how these gay/queer spaces were welcomed into these dominant spaces as forms of spectacle and entertainment the heterosexual crowds "just loved." He further explains that for club owners and promoters, gay/queer eccentricities at certain venues "attracted more crowds" and bought profit. Their gender and sexual trangressions and embodiments were commodified. In particular, he notes how gay/queer subjects brought "the circus" to a heterosexual audience. As a result, these gay/queer subjects were treated as "an other" and not really a part of the dominant space that these nightclubs/dance spaces represented. Yet the gay/queer dancers sought the attention and engagement, Andy says, especially among peer friends in the crowd that cheered them and give them a nod of respect but would not hang out with them socially. Their performances could be read as tactics of cultural work for critical diversity and tolerance around issues of homophobia and transphobia among the crowd, including their male straight peers there, who Andy says would not hang out with them socially but would engage them in their spectacle act.

In other venues, LGBTQ voguers were not just mere spectacle but were building a strong presence at presumed heterosexual-majority house music parties. Mark, a light-skinned Colombian who identified as heterosexual discussed the music and social scene at the PAL. He recounts that many African American and Latino youth and young adults who were already out or coming out were making spaces for themselves at the PAL. He explains that, "mad guys [were] voguing and wearing stomps." In particular, Mark referred to Elizabeth High School Latino youth that were coming out at the time. By saying that the guys were "mad guys voguing" and "wearing stomps," Mark is articulating how their obviously queer performances

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(voguing) and embodiments (stomps) were forcibly disrupting the larger African American masculinist and heterosexist dance floor space at the PAL. His implication of "mad" in particular affirms that these gays/queers garnered enough of a presence and collectivity to effectively build a space there.

Another informant, Danniyal, suggests that these gays were building their own spaces within dominant publics while not interested in belonging among the majority. Danniyal explains, "Yeah, funny enough, there was a whole crew of them! There's a whole scene for everyone, you know? …That's awesome, dude.   These are kids, you know? These are little kids that are carving out [spaces], that are just being themselves. They are not afraid to be themselves." Danniyal is articulating that this "crew" of LGBTQ youth was "carving out" spaces and "being themselves" unapologetically.   In effect, he is affirming that these spaces, even while within dominant publics, were their own, in which case they exuded subjectivities that exceeded state identities and were not readable by dominant audiences but were readable among themselves. Again, this is similar to the boundary making that Gray (2009) describes between dominant publics and counterpublics, or the ways Aponte-Pares describes how Latino/a LGBTQ Latinos/as "carve" queer spaces for themselves amidst "arenas of social conflict" in which they "challenge" dominant institutions and publics through their spacemaking and queer imaginary. Andy explains how promoters began to merge "everything" into dance parties for their benefit yet the gay dancers in the local ball scene made the space useful for themselves: "You had [straight] people dancing and then at a certain time somebody came on a mic and started calling legend, statements, and stars and people would come out and start battling and straight people had no idea that that was gonna happen because they just thought they were going to a party." These spaces became "sites of contestation" or "mutually constitutive sites" (Braziel 2008),

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which is evident in Danniyal's impression of how these youth made these spaces while not "afraid to be themselves" and in light of their assuming counterideologies and counterdiscourses of black gay and transgender culture.

Wally and Ivo's Parties: Youthful Queer Pan-Latino Spatial Entitlements

Most of my informants remember the space where Wally and Ivo ended up holding several parties at a warehouse on Grand Street, which was adjacent to Elizabeth's downtown in a geographic position that placed it outside Latino ethnic turfs and low-income neighborhoods. Grand Street resonated too much with Elizabeth's post-industrial downturn with vacant lots and abandoned buildings. Karla writes about Wally and Ivo's parties on Grant Street, that the party "…could be [in] an abandoned building…who knows… but it was fun and it was [a lot] of great house music." According to several of my informants, including me, the music at Wally and Ivo's was a mix of house, techno, hip hop and disco that brought different translocal youth audiences together in Elizabeth's post-industrial context. In this section, I advance Gaye Teresa Johnson's concept of spatial entitlement to suggest how Elizabeth youth "…created new collectivities based not just upon eviction and exclusion from physical places but also on new and imaginative uses of technology, creativity, and spaces…[that] created new articulations, new sensibilities, and new visions about the place of Black, Brown, and working-class people on the local and national landscape" (2015, Preface X). Even more, Karla brought up how Latino/a youth and other ethnic youth who were constant goers to Wally and Ivo's parties and similar ones were "confident" (Karla's word) about their own local Elizabeth dance and queer collectivity. In other words, Karla is expressing a local youth-driven pride for their spatial entitlement to musical creativity and collectivity outside neoliberal and nationalist belonging that merits historical significance.

In effect, I offer a historical narrative of Wally and Ivo's parties dance spaces as social critique, vision and queer unity (of partygoers' self-determined futures challenging social order) amidst forces of exclusion, stigmatization and racialization of Latino/a youth in translocal Elizabeth. Further, Johnson posits that such spatial entitlement is a spatial claim that helped youth perform or define "…an alternative understanding and construction…of citizenship" among Elizabeth youth outside the values of neoliberal citizenship (xi). In effect, this alternative youth-driven citizenship through exceeded nationalist and neoliberal forms of citizenship that complicate Latino/a history.

Unlike older business owners who had invested in nightclub spaces like El Balcon and the Palace, Wally and Ivo were young promoters who held parties anywhere they could but where they found the place would be appealing to youth following the underground house, disco, and hip hop scenes of the mid 1990s. It wasn't about going to an established or new club that had certain sexual/gender/class expectations but about enjoying a youth-led music movement that as Karla said, "…[was] all about the music...and everybody trying to get together." These youth – both the promoters and partygoers alike – were anti-establishment in their local spaces and similar to participants in early house and techno scenes in the sense that they were being critical about "economies of capital" and the constant privileging of flashy clubs, centralized and commodifiable locations, and "looking right" or "all that you can be" imposed by a neoliberal market (Buckland 2002). They were proud to find an enjoyable anti-neoliberal/anti-consumerist youth-led music scene in their own town. Given Karla's earlier description of creating these parties in buildings that were abandoned or imminently to be demolished for retail or development space, Johnson writes, "…it may be impossible to see how a[n abandoned building]

becomes a weekly venue for music performances…it may be even more difficult to distinguish why those spaces would hold spatial and historical significance" (123).

Further, Bert brings up the importance and meaning of Wally and Ivo's parties binding with African American hip hop youth culture. Bert explains about the parties, "It was a music studio…I don't know whose it is but Big Daddy Kane, Biz Markie used to use that studio…That was the studio in the 80s when people were going to the cheapest studio they can, I know Big Daddy Kane would go into the studio." According to Bert, the fact that Wally and Ivo were able to utilize this African American hip hop space for their parties reveals how these youth-led promoters broke away from the usual white(ned) and immigrant narratives, whether it be a civic organization or business, to house their parties in a black space. Johnson writes, "…spatial entitlement occurs when people articulate the right to situate themselves within particular spatial histories" (124). That is, Johnson helps us understand here how these promoters and partygoers "situated themselves within [a black counterspace and challenged] spatial histories" of social order. What's important to consider is how Wally and Ivo's parties meaningfully used African American counterspace of rappers of golden era hip hop within neoliberal space that cemented their pan-ethnic collectivities outside social and economic order. In effect, these spatial entitlements helped us to appreciate the "shared geography" and proximity between local African American rappers and Latino/a youth that is distorted in neoliberal mapping (Sawyers 2004) and white cultural hegemony.

Even while hip hop often has a connotation of being masculinist and heterosexist, the values around pan-ethnic unity promoted by golden era hip hop helped create a space of pan ethnic community among Elizabeth Latino youth. The youth-built space on Grant Street counteracted civic/market/private spaces of the first-generation adults of Latino ethnic/immigrant

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communities. Unlike the policing and homogeneity of Latino ethnics in particular turfs in Elizabeth, Wally and Ivo's parties became a space of racial, sexual and gender diversity. These parties contested the first generation's inhibitions about intermingling with other Latino ethnics and racial groups, which suppressed intense and effective forms of Latino pan-ethnic and pan-racial community in the city. For example, when asked about the mix among race and sexuality Norma immediately said, "The diversity in the types of Latinos that would go." However, Norma was not as exposed to publicly out gay Elizabeth youth and so she did not have the strong ties that other interviewees had then. Lucy comments on the Latino diversity at Wally and Ivo's parties, "…We just like, we were who we were. And like oh yeah, over time, this person is such and such race, nationality, or whatever. So, it was like a nice melting pot of different types of people. We had Spain, Portuguese, Brazilian, Uruguayan, again I was the only Uruguayan (laughing)." Even while she doesn't list more ethnicities, Lucy articulates here that the space of this party broke the racial and ethnic hierarchies among Elizabeth Latinos. In these parties, the Latino youth who went there found relationality across class, sexual, racial and ethnic diversity through this underground disco and house youth music movement, which was community driven and anti-neoliberal.

Aside from the pan-ethnic unity among youth witnessed at Wally and Ivo's, it also became evident that there were more racial and sexual mixes in the crowd where no one was commodified nor othered but became a part of the family. Bert explains that at Wally's and Ivo's parties there were, "…Gay kids, black kids, white kids, Hispanic kids. It was just a bowl of mixed nuts." Bert's use of "mixed nuts" suggests that all these attending Wally's and Ivo's parties were equally part of the party where no one was treated like an outsider nor put on a spectacle like at other parties. Andy notes how the promoter, Wally, and another friend well

known by the partygoers practiced a sexual openness that also suggested racial tolerance rooted

in NYC house music scenes:

> …Some guys like Ivo and x friend were very popular because they were a part of the club networking scene. They actually spoke to Belle (Ebonaire) because they saw that in New York things were more open. It didn't matter if you were gay or straight, what mattered was that you were all interested in the same type of music and the same type of scene so they actually spoke to him…

What Andy explains here is how the organizer and promoter of the club was known to value

sexual tolerance, and how this impacted the party space and the attitudes of all the partygoers in

it. Even more, Andy reveals here that both the organizer and a popular friend of this party scene

were known to talk with Belle, an African American black queen who was part of the scene. In

effect, the organizers and promoters of the party welcomed black queers in a party mostly

attended by Elizabeth Latino youth. Lucy shares about the gay crowd at Wally and Ivos, "…We

used to have a good time with them! Laughing. They were chill! They would come sometimes

dressed up like drag. Everyone was just friends." In effect, Lucy's use of "they were chill,"

demonstrates how the gay crowd in these parties did not stand out as spectacle nor forced

themselves into the space among the crowd goers. Her use of "drag" here shows how LGBTQ

youth were more loosely eccentric here than in other spaces in which they dressed to blend in

more with masculinist norms and had to be more subtle about displaying their sexual and gender

orientations for fear of hostility and violence toward them.

Lucy goes on to further describe how LGBTQ youth were incorporated into this dance

counterpublic in ways in which they were like everyone else and added to what Johnson

describes as "spatial democracy." She recounts,

> Everyone was just friends. Everyone got along with everybody and that wouldn't and that type of atmosphere wasn't really accepted amongst like hip hop crowds and stuff. You know they used to be like, "Oh, the fags!" It wasn't like that with the group I was with. Everybody was just like, "Whatever." Everybody accepted that it was like nothing,

> you know. …They were more open.   They accepted you more for who you were not because you were gay or not. They wouldn't talk shit about you if you were gay.

In this quote, Lucy makes a comparison between masculinist hip hop spaces and this counterpublic to suggest how LBGTQ subjects were distinguished as different there while being viewed as indistinguishable here.   She ends her thought by articulating how this grouping was about being accepted "for who you were" or "as you really were," which describes a space that is liberated from dominant discourses, ideologies, and values.

Lowering the Guard: Class Boundaries and Masculinity

These youth promoters also built a space of tolerance around racial, ethnic, and cultural difference that brought Elizabeth youth from different neighborhoods to dance in communal, utopian unity at night outside the everyday social divisions in Elizabeth. Lucy explains that unlike the tensions among thugs in certain dance spaces, the party scene at Wally's and Ivo's was different.   She does say that there was the "occasional fight" at Wally's and Ivo's, but not in the same way that caused alarm for her in spaces where "thugs" were more concentrated.

Instead, the "vibe" at Wally and Ivo's appeased those tensions and thus mixing among the partygoers was mostly peaceful and not violent. For example, Karla explains when I asked her who went to those parties,

> A mix of people. You and I…There could be guys, I wanna say hoodies or like thugged out…you know like the hardcore downtown Elizabeth guys would sometimes be there. And then there's like the trendy preppy guys, you know…a thug will be friends with this preppy motherfucker best friends with a gay guy and it's not weird. All these different types of people will hang out and it's not weird. It's like, "he's gay, that's a gay crowd." No everybody's just hanging out. It wasn't that cliquish. Everybody just vibed, you know what I mean? That's the difference.

Here Karla describes the "vibe" at these parties where everyone came together and that gays got along with macho thugs. In effect, Wally and Ivo's parties helped break down sexual and gender

tensions and anxieties among different youth groups and brought them together safely and

peacefully within the space of the party.

In a second example, Bert describes how Wally and Ivo's parties eased any existing

tensions of street beefs between machos and thugs. Bert recounts,

> …The last party that I went to…on West Grant at that studio and there was this kid and
> we had a problem over some bullshit that was from Franklin Street. I'm sitting there.
> This kid's there. My friends' are there. His friends' are there. And if it was another
> setting. We probably would have fought. But instead, you know I'm going to get beer
> from a keg and he comes up to me and he's like, "Can I talk to you for a minute." And
> we talk. And from that point on me and him never had a problem. I don't know why in
> that setting me and him didn't have a fight as opposed to some other place but we didn't.
> Maybe it was because the crowd was more diverse there wasn't the peer pressure from
> others to be macho from other groups, 'oh these guys, you know, form this neighborhood
> is watching us, we can't look like punks.' But in that setting you know you had all
> different diverse kids.

In this case, Bert shows here how a potential fight is avoided given the dominant peaceful scene

that compels these macho, "thug" youth not to disrupt. Even more, Bert says that, "from that

point on" he "never had a problem," as almost if this peaceful space helped to work out these

street beefs. These macho thugs' exposure to out of town and parochial high school youth

helped them to tone down their aggressive and "ready–to-fight" attitude because the space was

not designed with those expectations like others were. He explains how this diversity "diffused

everything," or in other words "diffused" the violence. He also adds, "…what you did like is

that you did get a lot of out of town people. You got out of town girls. Girls you didn't go to

high school with that you might have seen that were going to private school…So you did get a

different vibe at those parties as opposed to some of the other parties that were all public school

kids." By bringing up that private school girls and "out of town people" also came out to these

parties, Bert is hinting at social-economic markers that created "different vibe" or diffused thug

culture and violence at Wally's and Ivo's. These girls and out-of-towners from higher social

economic backgrounds came into this space to be part of this hip, peaceful, sexually plural, and subversive youthful musical scene that overlooked racial, gender, sexual, and class difference. Further, this demonstrates that Latino/a youth were an anti-neoliberal creative class that enticed non-Elizabeth "out of towners" to appreciate this scene's heterotopia, otherwise too often perceived as an undesirable all-minority working-class town of post-industrialization and subtle white flight between the 1960s-1980s.

These macho and thug boys, based on Bert's view, were compelled to be on their best behavior and exude a good affect to mix with outsiders for social or romantic possibilities. Unlike in other spaces where one had to prove their macho or thugness or therefore be "punks," a space like Wally's and Ivo's discouraged those attitudes and projecting that image or volatility could mean not being welcomed in this communal youth movement. Even more, Lucy explains,

> I don't know I think I liked [at Wally's and Ivo's] the not having to feel like you had to be some kind of way. You just were who you were, you know? Like the freedom to be who you wanted to be and it's kind of like you started discovering yourself at that age. I'm comfortable being around gay people, I'm comfortable doing this or that. It's who you are, it's whatever.

Wally's and Ivo's scene was different from thug culture or putting up a front and acting hard in ways that reified generalized notions or racialization of Latinos/as; instead it was about bringing down those walls and being open to others and being yourself in light of these queer musics that promoted queer collectivities and subjectivities across race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and gender. However, Lucy emphasized feeling "free to be who you wanted to be" at Wally and Ivo's, which is similar to what Mark Gottdiener raises when he explains that, "space…[is] simultaneously an existential freedom and mental expression" (Gottdiener in Flores and Benmayor 1997, 15) which in effect supports how this dance space provided an opportunity to partygoers to be themselves and feel unchained to social and class boundaries or pressed to

follow racial and gender expectations. Further, Lucy affirms "being comfortable around gay people," during that time, which is telling of how this space was about finding commonality with gay/queer subjects "as they were" (that most immigrant parents would not condone) and not view them as other or spectacle. Ultimately, echoing Flores and Benmayor's book *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space and Rights* (2004) and queer cultural citizenship is a term that focus on the claims of belonging, spacemaking and citizenship among LGBTQ subjects (Roque Ramirez 2005 and 2011), Wally's and Ivo's parties are an example of a claimed youth space of an alternative Latino/a cultural citizenship in which rights or "freedom" for racial, sexual, and gender diversity are articulated and where partygoers felt "safe" or at "home" (Flores and Benmayor, 15).

Adding to Lucy's generalized view of Wally and Ivo's parties, Johnny describes the overall impact of the music and kinesthetic energy from his perspective as a local Elizabeth DJ in such a dance counterpublic. He explains after I ask him what was the message behind the deep soul movement that impacted Elizabeth youth: "Togetherness. I don't know how else to put it. Togetherness. Not even just like house but hip hop too. It was more educational. It was more like let's get somewhere. Let's just build on something…Moving forward, let's stop being ignorant. Let's stop shooting each other, stuff like that…" Johnny points out here how Wally and Ivo's was allowing youth to express their own youth culture of tolerance and self-worth amidst divisive neoliberal ideologies and discourses. In particular, Johnny emphasizes a "togetherness" amidst Hispanophobic and racist discourses that invite conflict, competition and (street) violence. This counterspace of Elizabeth youth celebrated safety, mutual understanding, dignity, and tolerance for their own in ways that created homemaking, or what Rivera-Servera (2013) explains as (the ability to create a meaningful) space of self-determination and agency amidst a

highly racialized, commodified, gentrifying and white homo-and heteronormative neoliberal world. Further, Johnny asserts a sense of control of their own future (despite the ill-fate for most working class Latino/a youth) through his use of "moving forward" regarding their own self-determination and notions of critical multiculturalism and democracy.

In this chapter, I explored a spectrum of local Elizabeth dance publics and counterpublics that youth came of age in and consumed during the late 1980s and early to mid 1990s. First, I examined how immigrant dance spaces of civic organizations like the Cuban Club and the Portuguese Club were strategies of good ethnicity, political economy and white cultural hegemony that served to contain youth from bad influences, including non-heteronormative dancers, street performers and countercultural ideologies and discourses local youth were identifying with through translocal music scenes. Having said that, the growing visibility of eccentrically gay African American and Latino youth during that time began to slowly diversify a local masculinist and homophobic Elizabeth dance culture at parties at places like the Police Athletic League, Polish Falcons, the Elks and the Rotary Club, which were still civic organizations of white cultural hegemony yet where a queer dance contingent could engage either allies or intolerants through tactics. Overall, these subtle developments came with time in the different ways I examined. Youth approached certain strategies or used tactics that either began engendering more possibilities of queer choreographies in local dance publics, or at least gave LGBTQ youth the opportunity to co-exist safely among heteronormative dancers with the advent of a more tolerant post AIDS sexual and gender tolerant U.S. popular culture. In light of the investment of creative energy into these strategies through tactics, one must recognize the inevitable weakening or dislocation of gay youth counterpublics.

Finally, I examined a youth-built counterpublic at Wally's and Ivo's to consider the ways in which this dance space broke away from a liberal multicultural dominant ideology, creating a local anti-neoliberal youth unity and agency that embraced racial, sexual, and gender diversity. First, this youth space was established in a translocal black hip hop space that was different from the containment of Latino youth to black spatial histories in Elizabeth. Second, the vibe at Wally's and Ivo's brought down social and heteropatriarchal expectations among the partygoers, which eased anxieties and hostilities over racial and social difference and sexual and gender non-conformity to achieve a homemaking (Rivera-Servera 2013) of youth agency that embraced a diversity of critical multiculturalism unlike the standing liberal multicultural ideologies of that time. Finally, the abandoned-looking space where Wally and Ivo held many of these parties was inside an imminently condemned building, yet a studio of golden era hip hop that reflected youth counterpublics within post-industrialized space. The brown and black partnership among these youth made an unforgettable and meaningful creative space despite the powerful neoliberal narrative of a privatized economy of retail and real estate (re)development. The space where the music studio and parties once happened is no longer there but the memories live on.

EPILOGUE
BRINGING ELIZABETH BACK:
THE VIBE IN A DIFFERENT TIME

During the summer of 2015, my friend Kenny and I were talking about the momentum at VIDA Bar in Elizabeth. DJ Alex Technique, a co-owner of the establishment, had brought in famous DJs for several weekends to mix 90's style deep house and hip hop. In particular, as a DJ himself, Kenny was electrified at the thought that some of his idols, like Roland Clark[35] and Todd Terry[36], would come and play in Elizabeth. That summer, another well-known deep-house local DJ David Vibes, who was the resident DJ for Elizabeth mid-town bar and lounge Dolce[37], invited the famous and pioneering DJ Little Louie Vega[38] from Master's at Work (MAW), whose long-time residency has been at the world-renowned Cielo[39] in New York City's meat packing district near the West Village. The fact that these famous underground house DJs moved out from the center and came to spin in Elizabeth was a firm nod to the town's historical significance to the deep house and hip hop underground scenes whose house and hip hop aficionados and established local DJs like Alex Technique and David Vibes helped build.

Before these summer sessions took place at VIDA, I had the opportunity to sit down and speak to DJ Alex Technique, who offered his perspective about the vision and future of the bar.

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[35] See: https://www.traxsource.com/artist/1326/roland-clark
[36] See: https://www.discogs.com/artist/4116-Todd-Terry
[37] Ad for Dolce: http://www.goelizabethnj.com/elizabeth-businesses/dolce-lounge-and-restaurant/
[38] Clips of DJ Little Louie Vega spinning at Dolce in Elizabeth: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytXwdrqSnLs and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lf0SORyoDEE
[39] Website for Cielo: http://www.cieloclub.com/

Now in 2015, (I cannot help but think how) twenty-five years later, this DJ's vision for VIDA speaks to some of the values and spacemaking of the 1990s in Elizabeth, reminiscent of those youth underground parties like Wally and Ivo's, or of gay dance counterpublics. VIDA is competing with the latest commercialized nightclub culture of Europeanized and progressive Latin house and techno and merengue/bachata/reggaeton/rap mixed dance scenes in Elizabeth, which can be found at Coco Bongo[40], Sho[41] or Chupitos[42], for example. In one conversation, Kenny said he felt apprehensive about VIDA surviving amidst a majority Latino immigrant dance public that was hung up on current reggaeton and more commercialized forms of house and techno that had no similarity to deep house and 90's golden era hip hop and its "unity through dance" or "one love" concept. Furthermore, Kenny commented that while most second-generation Latinos were trying to or had left Elizabeth, the town was now filled with a replenished younger first-generation wave of Latino/a immigrants who listened to DJ Alex Sensation's Latin music set on the LaMega 97.9 FM[43] radio station, for example, and/or were drawn to today's contemporary dominant and commercialized musics in Latin(o) America that have no connection to the underground deep house and hip hop movements of the late 1980s and 1990s.

Unfortunately, VIDA closed before the end of 2015. Even though I did not speak to DJ Alex Technique again before that, I suspect that the establishment closed largely due to financial reasons. The bar was not generating enough profit. DJ Alex Technique mentioned to me that in order to make ends meet when the profit was not great, he worked for UBER while also producing his own music. VIDA sits on Elmora Avenue, Elizabeth's historically more valued

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[40] Website for Cocobongo: http://www.clubcocobongo.com/
[41] Website for Sho: http://www.shonj.com/events.php
[42] Website for Chupitos: http://www.chupitosusa.com/
[43] Website for La Mega: http://lamega.lamusica.com/djs/

marketplace and neighborhood where the values of property and retail stores are more expensive than in other parts of the city. Unlike youth spatial entitlements of the 1990s dance counterspaces like Wally's and Ivo's, or what Johnson (2013) refers to as "new and imaginative uses of technology, creativity, and spaces that created new and counterhegemonic collectivities despite the persistent threat of physical eviction [of post-industrial or abandoned space] or exclusion," (Johnson 2013, x) it's important to recognize that VIDA was not in an unworthy or disposable space. That is to say, the ability to put VIDA on a retail map (Sawyer 2004) of a neoliberal market suggests that in order to survive, the owners had to make sure that they made sufficient profit from their clientele's consumption to sustain themselves and the bar. Like Wally and Ivo and the youth skaters and their skate park, DJs Alex Technique and David Vibes are also examples of this anti-neoliberal creative class of youth in the 1990s. Unlike a homo- and heteronormative creative class like Michael Alig and club kids recognized by empresarios or investors for their ability to attract consumers within a neoliberal context, instead, this anti-neoliberal creative class brought an audience from outside Elizabeth through their subculture spacemaking that challenged dominant ideas of worth and profit-making by viewing Elizabeth not as a post-industrial, undesirable and dangerous ghetto, but as a place where relationality could happen through values of critical multiculturalism. Their creative energy and spaces offered a different experience of an Elizabeth of worth and incorporation (instead of a marginalized and undesired post-industrial Elizabeth) through subculture scenes on translocal and national levels that developed a genuine proximity and engagement with otherwise "failed" inner-city working-class Latino and other minorities.

Similarly, then, DJ Alex Technique's vision for the future of VIDA was to draw not only a loyal and native old-timer crowd of house and golden era hip hop aficionados but also a new

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generation of youth, university students and tourists consuming the greater New York City metro area's music and entertainment industry. While DJ Alex Technique did spark the interest of a New York City deep house crowd among all the boroughs and NJ natives around the state, VIDA partygoers faced challenges to simply arriving there. Many without cars, especially those coming from New York City, had no easy access to public transportation. Secondly, the lack of parking spots, Kenny suggested in one conversation, discouraged others from coming regularly. Ultimately, because VIDA had an anti-neoliberal vision (as I will bring up momentarily) and meant to be more community-driven than consumption driven, the owners faced some philosophical challenges to staying open. The bar did re-ignite vibes from the past of a 1990s local youth spacemaking around anti-consumption, self-determination, and worth for Elizabeth that must not be left unrecognized but be viewed as an important reference to Elizabeth's Latino/a and minority subculture youth's history that is meaningful to those who came of age then.

Most Elizabeth privately owned nightclubs do what they can to make a profit, which often includes sitting VIP sections, steep cover charges, and an assortment of expensive trendy drinks. VIDA, in contrast, did not have this kind of club culture. For one thing, DJ Alex Technique noted to me as I wrote in my ethnographic notes that "…the bar was not part of a scene that was 'in it' to profit." He did not sell "bottle drinks." He explained that unlike most establishments that sell overpriced bottle service, he did not practice this because he did not want his spot to be about making money or forcing clients to pay steep prices, but to be a relaxed place where the legacy of 90's music could be truly enjoyed and valued. In effect, DJ Alex Technique conveyed his desire for his space to not resonate with neoliberal values of sufficiency, boundary making and individualism. That is, he did not want his customers to perform status by

purchasing expensive bottled service that engenders distance and hierarchy with others but to instead forge a connectivity with others at the bar and tight dance floor space to relive the musical legacy, their self-made past and queer politics of 90's music in 2015. Therefore, he was challenging the consumer culture of a neoliberal market by doing away with social boundaries, status markers, and class hierarchies, and creating an open and accessible space among newcomers.

With that said, DJ Alex Technique is attempting to pave a space of self-determination in today's Elizabeth through the music and 90's underground vibe and scene of VIDA that moves away from the dominant images found in today's leading dominant U.S. Latino and American pop and dance musics. Written in my fieldnotes he explained, "The 90's music scenes maintained groundedness…and transcended everyday life; today's music is over-commercialized, plastic people and less intellectual and creative quality." Instead, his dance counterpublic allowed VIDA-goers to revisit and reclaim the vibe of the 90's scene that had an "intellectual and creative quality" and to be critical about and resist dominant consumption trends and say the phrase from back in the day, "that's sooo mainstream!" Alex Technique was bringing back that groundedness from the messages of the scene's past and current music to inspire unity through self-determination of shared existence and struggles in the neoliberal present. Alex Technique used the phrase "plastic people" to critique the appearances of success, progress and superiority or "be-all you-can-be" in economies of capital in the nightlife industry (Buckland 2002). Alex Technique wanted to not only revisit a past but spark a meaningful connectivity in the present with older and new generations of youth among VIDA-goers.

Similar to DJ Alex Technique's critique of today's music's "creative and intellectual quality" and his urgency to revisit the 90's scenes and messages, Johnny, who is also a local

Elizabeth DJ, was deeply critical about where the dance and hip hop industry has gone and its impacts on youth thought and spacemaking. Regarding commercialized music, Johnny stated, "There's no soul to it. It's all marketing. Let's make money, type of thing, you know, you don't feel it." Further, he describes what this kind of music does to potential youth subculture and/or countercultural spacemaking: "Now this [commercialized] shit is like so ignorant. There's no meaning in their shit …it's like what they portray how dumb can you get, how ignorant can we get you to be…today's culture is self-absorbed. That's the system…the way it is now." In effect, Johnny described a present moment in which a "self-absorbed" and "media controlled" culture prevents original and self-made agency, spacemaking, and collectivity unlike what he experienced in the 1990s. The issues that Johnny complained about touch on the reasons why DJ Alex Technique was inspired to revive the vibes from the 1990s with older and younger VIDA-goers.

Along with the celebration of self-determination amidst what Alex Technique and Johnny perceive as the dumbing down by the music industry, VIDA's scene was also a celebration of worth for Elizabeth that not only placed it at the center of an NYC translocal underground scene but also invited a youth self-made past to move from not being forgotten to a narrative of progress. In his career outside Elizabeth, Alex Technique has lived in several European countries. Instead of being "forward thinking" and moving ahead into new things and leaving the past of his once less privileged life in Elizabeth buried, he finds himself coming back and seeking home. To him, Elizabeth "…is a bubble like if it's trapped in time." Alex Technique's statement could be read to actually mean that Elizabeth is behind or outside linear time or a narrative of progress. However, the bubble he refers to could also be interpreted to mean a force of agency from a non-linear geographic context that "grounds" one in the anti-

neoliberal sense against linear time or a narrative of progress. That is, Alex Technique found worth in Elizabeth for what it was and not what it should be or wasn't in comparison to other highbrow contexts. Far from working class Elizabeth, he shared that the DJ scenes in Europe and New York City he played in were often filled with drug use and superficiality that he did not partake in and that invoked in him a strong craving for his life and family back in Elizabeth. That is, Alex never felt like he had to be someone else and downplay his roots or where he came from as he navigated first world, globalized, homonormative and heteronormative contexts. In contrast to how youth changed and whitened themselves to become Alig's club kids as in William Nerriccio's (2007) concept of monsters or dehistoricized and whitewashed subjects that complied with physical changes to look whiter and make political and cultural accommodations for hegemonic projects or the profit of those in power, Alex Technique's self remained tied to Elizabeth no matter how successful he got and where life took him. Therefore, Elizabeth was forever worthwhile to him and for other young and old VIDA goers, particularly in their lived moments of refusal to simply assimilate or conform to dominant values and expectations of progress, mobility, and whitening conveyed in today's U.S mainstream, pop, and overly commercialized "Latin" music culture.

DJs Alex Technique and David Vibes will be back to revisit that youthful past with others whether (re)opening an establishment or throwing a party in Elizabeth. In a youtube clip (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Jg2U57uuI0) that shows Roland Clark performing his song from the early 1990's, "Alright," you see the dark black main room with rows of candles in a tightly packed space with pressed bodies swimming in human warmth and house vibes. Clark is in the center of this intimate space, slightly raised above the audience, singing his song "Alright" and leading the way in this experience of unity and hope. His African American body

also reminds us of the deep house scene as a queer- and black-centered space. The music doesn't sound too loud, almost allowing others to communicate (or react) verbally with each other. The candles in the background offer a spiritual presence that complements the human warmth from this unity on the dance floor; the VIDA-goers are experiencing a shared sense of hope for their lives to be, "Alright." At the end of Clark's performance, he addresses DJ Alex Technique and his audience by saying, "I will see you all on stage in ten more years. (Boo and cheer from audience) In ten more years, I'll do that again. (Clark laughing and audience too). We gotta be good, Alex." In effect, Clark is leaving the stage with a declaration that the deep house movement in Elizabeth must continue bringing people together. While the cheering suggests the audience's ovation for Clark's performance and praise for his hope that the music scene here will persist, its booing is an indication of their disappointment over having to wait for another performance to happen in ten years and the interim destabilization of the shared unity through music that is being built. Clark's use of "good" here emphasizes his way of pushing Alex to keep the deep house momentum alive though this could mean at the cost of having to survive in a neoliberal economy of the present. In both Alex Technique's and David Vibes' efforts to revive these deep house scenes into the present, they will have to make philosophical decisions to stay open and running. What is clear is how DJs Alex Technique's and David Vibes' musical projects are historical (re)occurrences of a youth subculture that convey to the world the urgency of keeping these music scenes alive and bringing people together meaningfully in their everyday survival and agency.

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