

EXPLORING THE RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITIES AND ASSIMILATION OF SOUTH
AMERICANS IN THE MIDWEST

By

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ABSTRACT

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South Americans, one of the fastest growing Latino and immigrant groups in the United States, are an understudied group. To examine South Americans' integration into US society, I focus on racial and ethnic identities as proxies of assimilation. Assimilation involves the absorption of one group into another group, denoting how people identify with and have solidarity to racial and ethnic groups (Rumbaut 2011). However, assimilation theories have neglected gender and thus, I utilized intersectionality to explore the ways selected South American groups racially and ethnically identify and assimilate into US society.

The dissertation adhered to a mixed methods approach. In the first stage, I examined the selection of racial categories by people of South American origin using the American Community Survey data. Secondly, I conducted semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with Colombians, Peruvians and Argentinians in Ohio. Ohio was selected because it is one of the states besides Illinois that have the largest population of South Americans in the Midwest (Pew Hispanic Center 2013). Through the mixed methods approach and intersectional analysis, I not only found that national origin, race, ethnicity, gender, class, documentation status and phenotypic differences in the selection of racial and ethnic categories, experiences of racialization, but also in the meanings and identities of South Americans. While their Latinidad is associated by others as foreigner, inferior, and Mexican, South Americans express their identities and group membership as culture, language, origins, unity, empowerment, and commonalities in experiences including racialization as a minority group.

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With all my love to mi familia.
Always my inspiration.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Currently, Latinos/as are the largest immigrant group, the largest minority group, and one of the fastest growing populations in the United States (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, and Cuddington 2013). The growing size and presence of Latin American immigrants and US born Latinas/os has generated many questions about their assimilation to US society. To understand this process, it is imperative to understand who Latinos are. Foremost, the term Latina/o is a US constructed panethnic label that encompasses people of Latin American origin that share common language, culture, and racial experiences. And yet, regardless of these apparent commonalities, Latinas/os comprise a heterogeneous group of differing national origins. As a result of the diversity within the Latina/o group, this dissertation focused on South Americans¹ for varying reasons.

First, while South Americans make one of the growing groups of Latinos, as well as challenge the scope of the Latino group, the meaning of Latino, and who is Latino (Espitia 2004, Falconi et al. 2007; Marrow 2007), they tend to be absent from the literature; a literature that has traditionally focused on Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans arguing that they encompass the Latino experience. It is unknown whether South Americans identify as Latino, maintain a country of origin identity, or regional or local identity from their country of origin. In addition, it is also unknown if those of South American origin use the term or identify as “South American.” Therefore, more scholarly work is needed to better understand the complexity of the South American population.

¹ In this study, South Americans refers to people from the countries of Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela, Columbia, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. Brazilians are excluded given their unique social, historical, and racial context in relation to the rest of South America. Their experiences are a study in itself. Consequently, this study focuses on South American nationalities that speak Spanish and had similar Spaniard colonization and historical context.

The complexity of the South American population lies not only in its size, but also the group's social location. For example, between 2000 and 2011, the South American foreign born population in the US increased by 41 percent making it the second highest foreign-born population increase of all groups just behind Central Americans (Motel and Patten 2013). Furthermore, among Latinos, between 2000 and 2010, the South American population increased by 105 percent making it the third highest increase among Latino groups in the US (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, and Albert 2011). In addition, South Americans' social location varies compared to other Latinos. While South Americans are a diverse group whose socioeconomic status varies by national origin, scholars have asserted that South American are better educated, have higher income (except compared to Cubans) and professional qualifications, and lower poverty and unemployment rates than other Latino groups (Espitia 2004; Oboler and Gonzalez 2005; Sabogal 2005). And yet, regardless of the higher socioeconomic status that they possess compared to most other Latino groups, they still experience racial and ethnic inequalities that are different from lower income groups. For example, past research has found that racial minorities with higher socioeconomic status are more likely to be in integrated schools, workplaces, and other settings and thus, more likely to experience face-to-face prejudice and discrimination. This type of prejudice and discrimination occurs because of the higher contact and competition they have with their white counterparts (Kasinitz et al. 2004; Waters and Kasinitz 2010). It is because of the higher socioeconomic status that South Americans possess compared to other Latinos that they may be more conscious of racial and ethnic differences and inequalities that may influence the way they assimilate and construct or reconstruct their racial and ethnic identities.

To begin to examine the experiences of South Americans, a population who is mostly foreign born or second generation, it is imperative to consider their assimilation experiences.

Rumbaut (2011) defined assimilation as the absorption of one group into another group, denoting how people are acculturated, integrated, and identify with other group members. Integration reflects feelings or the lack of feelings of belonging or solidarity towards as well as distance and alienation from racial and ethnic groups. One must understand identities as multifaceted social constructs that indicate a relationship and separation between groups reflecting who and what people think they are and are not (Cornell and Hartmann 2007; Rumbaut 2011; Waters 2001). Specifically, ethnic identities are a key component of assimilation because the use of an American identity is viewed as the ultimate act of becoming part of the dominant group and society (Parks and Burgess 1924). While most research on assimilation examines ethnic identities, racial identities are also imperative to South Americans' integration. The importance of exploring both racial and ethnic identities lies in that both of these identities greatly impact people's life experiences.

To understand the relationship between racial and ethnic identities and assimilation, it is important to define race and ethnicity. Foremost, race and ethnicity are stratified systems of power that shape and organize society, structures, allocation of resources, life chances, group relations, experiences, and identities. The social location of South Americans in these stratified systems of power impact the formation of their racial and ethnic identities in the US and consequently, their experiences. Interestingly, research has found that some Latinos do not distinguish between race and ethnicity and rather conflate and use the identities interchangeably (Flores-Gonzalez 1999; Golash-Boza 2006; Rodriguez 2000). Moreover, as immigrants living in the US, South Americans' experiences are shaped by racialization. Omi and Winant (1994) define racialization as the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group. In particular, South Americans are socialized to and internalize

dominant ideologies, identities, structures, as well as learn behaviors, rules, norms and others' expectations associated with particular racial and ethnic groups in the US (Itzigsohn 2009; Roth 2012). Unfortunately, regardless of citizenship status, Latinos are racialized as foreigners, undocumented, and thus non-American (Golash-Boza 2006; Rodriguez 2000; Telles and Ortiz 2008). Consequently, examining both racial and ethnic identities of selected South American groups provides rich details and a robust examination of their assimilation experiences into US society.

However, even when history has shown that there is interest in understanding the assimilation experiences of immigrant groups, these examinations have tended to ignore gender and intersectionality. And yet, research has found that the meanings of racial and ethnic identities vary by gendered experiences and socialization with the institutions of family, education and labor market (Bettie 2003; Feliciano and Rumbaut 2005; García 2004; Lasley Barajas and Peirce 2001; Lopez 2003; Smith 2002). Additionally, intersectionality is imperative because it details how intersecting systems of power of race, ethnicity, gender, and class are the foundations for privileges, disadvantages, and inequality that structure society and people's lives (Andersen and Hill Collins 2010) including their racial and ethnic identities and assimilation into racial and ethnic groups. Therefore, through an intersectional analysis, this dissertation focuses on how selected South American groups racially and ethnically identify and assimilate to racial and ethnic groups in the US.

Research Questions

The overarching objective of the dissertation is to generate a detailed, theoretically informed and intersectional analysis of the assimilation of South Americans into racial and ethnic groups in the US. Therefore, the research question driving this research are in what ways

do South Americans identify and assimilate to racial and ethnic groups in US society? To guide the analysis, three major questions anchor the dissertation.

- 1) How do South Americans racially and ethnically identify?
- 2) What do South Americans' racial and ethnic identities and experiences reveal about assimilation into racial and ethnic groups in the US?
- 3) How does gender and intersectionality influence South Americans' identities and assimilation in the US?

Each research question is addressed individually in chapters two through four. In chapter 2, "*Construction of South Americans' Racial and Ethnic Identities*" social identity theory, racialization, and intersectionality frame the examination of how South Americans' identify in the US. Additionally, this chapter addressed the meanings, saliency, and dialectic negotiation between the normative racial and ethnic social categories and South Americans' agency to self-define their identities. My second major research question intends to examine the scholarly discourse of assimilation by focusing on what South Americans' experiences reveal about the assimilation process. In chapter 3, "*Racial and Ethnic Identity Assimilation of South Americans*" I reexamine classical, segmented, and racialized assimilation theories through an intersectional analysis. Lastly, chapter 4 "*Exploring the Identities of South Americans from an Intersectional Assimilation Framework*" provides an intersectional analysis of gendered, racial, and class forces shaping the assimilation experiences of South Americans in the US.

Theoretical Framework

Assimilation discourse

Many theories constitute the scholarly discourse of assimilation —classical, segmented, and racialized assimilation theories— and examine the process of assimilation into racial and

ethnic groups. Foremost, classical assimilation theory is foundational to the conceptualization of assimilation. Classical assimilation theory proposes that that with each passing generation in the US, immigrant families and their descendants are integrated into American mainstream middle-class culture and group culminating in the adoption of an American identity (Gans 1992; Gordon 1964). Classical assimilation theory is premised on the upward social mobility of immigrants into an American middle class group and identity. On the other hand, segmented assimilation theory improved assimilation by addressing the complex processes into three various racial and ethnic groups. In particular, segmented assimilation theory emphasizes the economic focus of assimilation and highlighted human and financial capital, race, community, and the family resources of immigrant families (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes et al. 2005). The first outcome of assimilation explored is a path towards upward assimilation and mobility that characterizes middle class Americans; a path and outcome that is similar to that suggested by classical assimilation theory. The second outcome described is downward mobility or low socioeconomic status that results from the assimilation of groups into an oppositional racial and panethnic groups and identity of native born racial minorities (Portes and Zhou 1993). The third possible outcome refers to the preservation of immigrants' country of origin identity, cultural values, and tight solidarity within their immigrant community, which assists them in advancing economically (Portes and Zhou 1993). All in all, segmented assimilation theory addresses the interaction of structural economic, racial, ethnic, and sociocultural factors that impact assimilation.

Unfortunately, even when classical and the segmented assimilation theories address some of the complexity of assimilation, some of their assumptions remain problematic. These theories have focused on immigrants in ethnic enclaves and assume solidarity among co-national immigrants. Still, studies have found that racial, gender, and class inequalities are perpetuated

within co-ethnic relations causing tensions (Gilbertson 1995; Mahler 1995; Pérez 2009; Pessar 1999). Furthermore, South Americans are the most dispersed Latino group in the US (Oboler and Gonzalez 2005). They are less likely to live in an area that is predominately Latino and/or South American. As a result, assimilation described as country of origin identity within ethnic enclaves may not apply to them especially, those that live in the Midwest, a region with a predominately white population. Furthermore, another flaw of assimilation lies in the economic analysis that integration into a middle class and mainstream American group involves becoming white or having no affiliations with racial or ethnic minority groups (Agius Vallejo 2012). And yet, integration into middle class American culture and group is not always feasible as the cultural and structural context of reception is responsible for denying or allowing integration into racial and ethnic groups, reflecting the power of gatekeepers in the process of assimilation (Ganz 1997; Massey and Sanchez 2010). Still, immigrants have agency to negotiate, construct, and elaborate their identities and group membership (Massey and Sanchez 2010). While past assimilation theories did not take into account structural racial forces and agency, racialized assimilation theory improved the scholarly discourse of assimilation by including these elements.

Golash-Boza's (2006) racialized assimilation theory is a critical theory that revealed how race, phenotype, and discrimination shape assimilation. In particular, this theory highlights the agency of Latinos in selecting identities in response to racialization. Golash-Boza (2006) theorized that white or light skin Latinos tend to face less discrimination, are more likely to assimilate into white middle-class culture and thus, internalize a white identity than dark skin Latinos (Golash-Boza 2006). By doing so, racialized assimilation theory exposes an important factor that classical and segmented assimilation theories neglected, that whiteness is a prerequisite for assimilation into the dominant US culture. Nevertheless, racialized assimilation

theory acknowledges the importance of gatekeeping, racialization, and structures of power in the assimilation process, and begins to address the complexity of identity formation.

Identity formation process

To examine the racial and ethnic identities of South Americans as proxies of assimilation, one must acknowledge that these identities are also dynamic entities that are generated by people's experiences and in particular, the identity formation process. Identity formation –as described by social identity theory– is a dialectic process that is impacted by both structure and agency (Hogg 2006; Stets and Burke 2000). Structure refers to the power relations and hierarchies that socially construct categories and shape racial and ethnic boundaries, influence identification, and regulate group rights and opportunities (Nagel 1994; Perez and Hirschman 2009). One of these structural political forces, in the US, is the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The OMB has created the racial categories of Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, white, African-American and American Indian. Latinas/os are categorized as an ethnic group. These racial and ethnic categories are federally mandated classifications that have social and political ramifications. The categories impact data collection such as the Census, the allocation of federal program dollars, the number of seats in Congress for each state, electoral college, how districts are drawn, help monitor compliance with civil rights laws and are used in the private sector for investment strategies and hiring plans. Thus, the OMB's racial and ethnic categories are a public categorization system that shapes the social, structural, and cultural discourse of race and ethnicity in the US (Rockquemore et al. 2009; Snipp 2010). For instance, studies have found that these racial categories shape preferences for particular identities (Rodriguez 2000; Telles and Ortiz 2008) and thus, may influence South Americans' identities. And yet, given the lack of studies of South Americans, it is uncertain how South Americans

perceive the OMB categorization. Given that identity formation process is dialectic and also shaped by agency, these categories may not reflect the racial and ethnic identities utilized by South Americans.

The dialectic process of identity formation also includes agency, which reflects the meanings and saliency of an identity. Saliency refers to the commitment or attachment to an identity. It has been found that saliency to an identity implies that it will organize one's life and impact the willingness to act out an identity (Ashmore et al. 2004; Cornell and Hartmann 2007). While people select racial and/or ethnic categories within structural constraints, they may not affiliate to these categories. As a result, agency also includes the acceptance, internalization, or rejection of structural categories. Some studies have found that Latinos give meaning or use panethnic identity and reject the racial categories (De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003; García 2004; Rodriguez 2000; Roth 2012; Rumbaut 2009). Consequently, there are constant negotiations and dialectics between structures and agency in the identity formation process, demonstrating that identities are dynamic across time and space.

In the particular case of Latinos, the dialectic and dynamic identity formation process has been found to be shaped by certain macro-level structures and micro-level factors. Studies have found that Latinos' racial and ethnic identities are influenced by assimilation, gender, phenotype, racialization, national origin, experiences of discrimination or prejudice, class, age, education, community context, generational status, citizenship, language, region, and family socialization (Deaux 2006; Evans et al. 2010; Feliciano 2009; Flores-Gonzalez 1999b; Frank et al. 2010; Golash-Boza 2006; Niemann et al. 1999; Rockquemore et al. 2009; Rumbaut 1994; Rumbaut 2009). In examining the racial and ethnic identities of selected South American groups, a

contextual approach must examine the aforementioned macro and micro factors as well as other forces that may be unique to South Americans' identity formation process.

Gender and intersectionality

Whereas all assimilation theories have allowed us to better understand the complexity behind the assimilation process, they have neglected to acknowledge the significance of gender. Gender is a multidimensional and complex system of power that operates at multifaceted levels, organizes our social lives and social relations, and shapes all facets of our experiences including identity formation and assimilation (Acker 1992; Andersen 2005; Baca Zinn and Dill 1996; Connell 1987; Kang 2010; Nawyn 2010; Pascoe 2007). Gender, as a system of power, shapes people's interactions, group ties, perceptions of educational and occupational opportunities, as well as feelings of solidarity to racial and ethnic groups. For instance, studies have found that second generation girls used hyphenated-American identities to distance themselves from their parents' country of origin because of gendered restrictions while their academic success led them to feel hopeful about their occupational opportunities (Feliciano and Rumbaut 2005; Lopez 2003). In contrast, studies have found that second generation boys have more freedom than girls, but face issues of social exclusion, violent environments, and receive messages that they are unwelcome to mainstream society leading to the use of an oppositional racial identities (Smith 2002; Waters 2001). As noted in the example above, the assimilation process and identity formation is influenced by the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity and class. Consequently, implementing an intersectional analysis that critically addresses how gender, race, ethnicity, class, region, and generational status influence selected South American groups' racial and ethnic identities and assimilation is imperative.

Research Methods

Acknowledging the absence of studies on South Americans and the complexities of gender, assimilation, and identity formation, the dissertation adhered to a mixed methods approach, which facilitated an in-depth analysis. Data includes two stages of analysis. The initial stage consists of quantitative data analysis of American Community Survey data while the second stage consists of semi-structured face-to-face interviews with selected groups of South Americans in Ohio. Ohio, a state considered part of the Midwest region, was selected to conduct the interviews for several reasons. Foremost, Ohio has experienced a tremendous growth of South American and Latino/a population. Since the 1990s, there has been a dispersal of the Latina/o population from immigrant gateways to the Midwest and rural South (Ennis et al. 2011; Fry 2008; Saenz et al 2003). Moreover, the growth rate of Latina/o population was greater in the Midwest than non-Latina/o population in the Midwest since 2000 (Ennis et al. 2011; Kayitsinga, Post & Villarruel 2007). Before 1990s', Ohio was predominately white and African-American and now Latinos are more visible across the state (Solá 2011). Second, as discussed previously, South Americans are more dispersed in the US than other Latino groups (Gutierrez 2004). Thus examining their experiences in the Midwest could be generalizable to other locations. Third, studies that examine the experiences of immigrants and assimilation focus on the large and diverse cities in the South, West, and Northeast such as Miami, Los Angeles and New York. Consequently, research is needed on immigrants' experiences in the Midwest.

Furthermore, to thoroughly explore South Americans' experiences in the Midwest, a mixed method approach was conducted. The initial stage examines the selection of macro-level constraints whereas the second stage focuses on micro-level forces such as their agency. Given that South Americans are largely understudied, the data analysis in the initial stage provides

contextual information and general understanding of South Americans' selection of racial categories at the national level. Additionally, the analysis from each stage of the mixed methods approach uncovered the different ways in which South Americans identify with racial and ethnic groups in the US at multiple levels. Therefore, the second stage, which consisted of semi-structured and face-to-face interviews, enhances the findings from the initial stage by revealing a more detailed and in-depth understanding on the meanings and processes of South Americans' racial and ethnic identities and assimilation. The findings in chapters three and four only pertain to the data from the second stage or the interviews.

First stage: Quantitative analysis

The first research question—how do South Americans racially and ethnically identify?—is partially examined through the initial stage quantitative analysis. The initial stage, through multinomial logistic regression analyzes the selection of racial categories by South American region using the ACS data extracted from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series. The data set only includes those who responded that they are of South American ancestry and are 18 years or older (84,776). This first stage examines South Americans selection of racial categories at the national level, but other research is needed to examine their agency, perceptions of racial categories and their racial and ethnic identities.

Second stage: Qualitative approaches

Qualitative research is beneficial because it examines the meanings people give to settings, structures, identities, and everyday lives and can provide relational and specific understanding and stories of daily life from the respondents (Berg 2009). As a result, more weight is given to the qualitative stage of the study given the limitations of using Census data since Latinos are an ethnic group as well as the need to understand the meanings behind racial

and ethnic identities and assimilation. Consequently, the second stage examined all three research questions and provided the findings for chapter 2 and 3.

Specifically, the second stage consists of semi-structured face-to-face interviews with Colombians, Peruvians and Argentinians in Ohio. These, three groups make up the first, third and fifth largest South American national origin groups in the US, respectively. Furthermore, each country of origin represents a South American region. Colombians experiences may be telling of Northern Coast and Afro-Caribbean social and historical context, while Peruvians may reveal the context of the Indigenous region. Additionally, the social and historical context of European immigration in Argentina may shape their experiences and be reflexive of the Southern Cone region. Instead of homogenizing South Americans as one group, the emphasis on these three regions facilitates national origin comparisons.

During the interviews and interactions with South Americans, I used a feminist approach. Harding (1995) postulates that a feminist approach acknowledges one's subjective position and assists in the production of knowledge. Therefore, I attempted to maintain an open, reciprocal, and confidential relationship that allows the respondents to open up about their experiences as South Americans. For instance, in meeting the respondents, I informed them that I am a second generation Peruvian from northwest Ohio. Throughout the interview, I also shared personal information to develop a sincere relationship². Given my own social location and use of the feminist approach, I understand that I hold an insider status as a minority scholar conducting research in a minority community. The advantages of the insider status are gaining access to community, building rapport with the respondents, and it provides me with a unique lens to

² However, I do acknowledge the power I have as a researcher and the power dynamics within the interviews regardless of this feminist approach.

gather information. I do acknowledge potential bias, but I am aware of the differences in social location.

Research sites

I conducted interviews with immigrant and second generation South Americans in Ohio. Ohio was selected because it is one of three states that have the largest population of Latinos and specifically South Americans in the Midwest. Minnesota also holds a very similar number and percentage of South Americans because of a large Ecuadorian community (Pew Hispanic Center 2013). While Illinois has the largest South American population, I chose to not do interviews there because Chicago is an immigrant gateway city that has a very large Latino population. In addition, most research on immigrant assimilation and Latinos focus on large gateway metropolitan cities.

Specifically, the interviews were conducted in the northwest, northeast and central regions of Ohio. The northwest area in particular includes the greater Toledo area while the central region includes Columbus, the state capital. A majority (56%) of the sample lived in the Northeast region including the small towns, suburbs, and cities of Cleveland and Akron area. Cleveland has a history of European immigrants as well as a large Puerto Rican population. Cleveland has also experienced economic difficulty because of economic restructuring from manufacturing to service-based industry (Badenhausen 2013). However, the city and economy are growing because of technology and health care industries (Badenhausen 2013). Forbes has declared Cleveland as one of the cities in the US that is poised for growth (CNN Fortune 2014). On the other hand, Columbus is a growing metropolitan area due to its growth in the educational (e.g. Ohio State University) and technology industries (Badenhausen 2013). Furthermore, since both cities are economically affordable (Badenhausen 2013) they have seen a 30% and 129%

increase in the Latino population in each city (Pew Hispanic Center 2013). Overall, Cleveland has a larger percentage of Latino population than Columbus and had experienced a steady increase of about 30 percent since the 1990s (Pew Hispanic Center 2013). In comparison, Columbus has had a larger increase in Latino population since the 1990s (129%) as well as larger Latino population in terms of numbers (Pew Hispanic Center 2013).

Data collection

Through snowball sampling, 43 in-depth interviews were conducted. The IRB approved the interview questions and the respondents received a \$15 gift card to a grocery store for their participation. I conducted semi-structured individual interviews with adults that were either born in Colombia, Peru, or Argentina or have at least have one parent that was born in Colombia, Peru, or Argentina. The interviews were conducted in either Spanish or English depending on the preference of the respondent. The interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and translated to English, when needed. Before the interview, the respondents also completed a short questionnaire to answer basic demographic questions whereas, the interview focused on group solidarity, assimilation, and the meanings of their racial and ethnic identities.

Limitations of Study

In conducting the research, there are several limitations. The first limitation is the use of the ACS data. Given that the ACS's racial categories are based on the OMB categorization, they may not encompass the racial identification of South Americans. It would be ideal if the ACS had an open ended question on race and ethnicity. Another limitation is the exclusion of the smaller sample sizes of South Americans that selected an African-American/Black, Native American, or Asian racial category. But the ACS is the largest data set—that I know of—on South Americans in the US. The second limitation is the specificity of South Americans living in

three regions of Ohio. And yet, the findings on South Americans' experiences and social location in Ohio were very telling of assimilation and identity formation in the US. Third, these identities and findings are based in a specific context of time and space; as identities and assimilation processes are dynamic and change. Lastly, the focus on Colombian, Peruvian and Argentinian respondents is not meant to homogenize people of South American origin or these regions rather to compare and provide details on the heterogeneous group of South Americans. Regardless of these limitations, the examination of South Americans identities and assimilation in the Midwest are needed given that they are largely understudied. Therefore, overall, this dissertation exposes rich details on South Americans experiences in the US and Midwest, the formation of their racial and ethnic identities and assimilation.

CHAPTER 2 CONSTRUCTION OF SOUTH AMERICANS' RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITIES

Even when migration from Latin America has slowed down in the past 5 years, it is one of the contributing factors to the increasing size of Latinos, the largest minority group in the US. Latinos are a heterogeneous group. They encompass over 20 Latin American countries including the region of South America and the countries of Colombia, Peru and Argentina. Since the 1990s, these three South American countries, the first, third, and fifth respective largest South American groups in the US, doubled or tripled in size in the US (Lopez and Patten 2015). In particular, in the US, since 1990, foreign-born Peruvians multiplied over 200%, foreign-born Colombians increased over 130% and the Argentinian foreign born population grew by 85% (Lopez 2015). And yet, regardless of this growth, there is a lack of studies on South Americans experiences in the US. The importance of this chapter not only lies in that South Americans make-up an important share of the Latino group, but they also shape the group, its meanings, and the perceptions that others have of Latinos. On this, Rodriguez (2000) noted, “[I]f we are to understand the growing diversity of this country, we must improve our understanding of how people view themselves” (p.176). Therefore, examining identities is imperative as it exposes the meanings people have of themselves, their social realities, and experiences (Niemann et al. 1999).

Indeed, identities are multifaceted social constructions that signify culture, membership with a social category or group, a set of meanings about themselves, and/or meanings others attach to them (Burke, 2004; Hogg et al. 1995). Racial and ethnic identities reflect racial and ethnic origins, group membership and boundaries around and between racial and ethnic groups in a society. In particular, racial identities are based on collective or individual perceptions of shared heritage with a group and similarities in physical appearance and characteristics such as

phenotype, hair, and other body features. Simultaneously, ethnic identities develop from belonging to group with similar culture, language, history, religion, geographical origin, heritage, attitudes, and values (Cornell and Hartmann 2007; Evans et al. 2010). Overall, racial and ethnic identities highlight not only how people racially and ethnically conceptualize themselves and others, but also signify the relationality between racial and ethnic groups within the boundaries and context of the racial and ethnic hierarchy in the US (Cornell and Hartmann 2007).

While within academia racial and ethnic identities are defined as separate entities with differing definitions, they overlap (Cornell and Hartmann 2007) especially for Latinos. In fact, research has found that some Latinos do not distinguish between race and ethnicity and rather conflate and use the identities interchangeably (García 2004; Rodriguez 2000; Roth 2012). This is further complicated when examining generational status. Immigrants, like most South Americans, have their own racial and ethnic understanding, although with time in the US, they are socialized to and internalize dominant ideologies, identities, structures, as well as learn behaviors, rules, norms and expectations associated with particular racial and ethnic groups (Itzigsohn 2009; Roth 2012). As a result, racial and ethnic identities can expose South Americans' position in the racial and ethnic hierarchy as well as behaviors and values in the US. And yet, it is unknown how South Americans racially and ethnically identify, their perceptions of their identities and thus, their place in the US racial and ethnic hierarchy. Consequently, this chapter examines how South Americans, specifically Colombians, Peruvians and Argentinians form their racial and ethnic identities.

Literature Review

To examine South Americans' racial and ethnic identities, social identity theory, a social psychology theory, is adopted. The social identity theory is a theory that recognizes how racial

and ethnic identities are socially constructed as the products of macro and micro level processes and dynamic entities that are negotiated and transformed over time, place, history, region, and context (Cornell and Hartmann 2007; Hogg 2006; Hogg et al. 1995; Nagel 1994; Rockquemore et al. 2009; Stets and Burke 2000). And yet, one significant factor that transforms South Americans' identities is racialization. Omi and Winant (1994) define racialization as the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group. Accordingly, racialization includes both the process of how groups come to be classified and how groups racially identify themselves (Arranda et al. 2009; Cornell and Hartmann 2007). Racialization designates people by race and group position in a racial hierarchy that perpetuates privileges and disadvantages (Duany 2009; Telles and Ortiz 2008). While racialization varies among Latinos, in general in the US, people of Latin American origin are racialized as a panethnic group, one that is associated with certain phenotype, ancestry, nativity, foreignness, language, accent, surname and legal status (Feagin and Cobas 2014; Golash-Boza, 2006; Jiménez 2008; Rodriguez 2000). However these characteristics have been racialized and stereotyped as inferior and a minority status and group. Therefore, ultimately, racialization creates and maintains racial and ethnic group boundaries within the racial and ethnic hierarchy of a society.

A prominent macro level force that not only influences the negotiation of identities but also racialization of groups is the racial categorization by the US government and specifically the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The OMB has created the racial categories of Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, white, African-American and American Indian. Latina/os are categorized as an ethnic group. These categories are federally mandated classifications with social and political ramifications. And yet it is unknown how South Americans perceive the OMB categorization.

Beyond race and ethnicity being impacted by macro level forces, they are also shaped by micro-level features such as the meanings, self-definitions, and agency of individuals. The meanings of the identities can reveal the saliency or reflect the commitment or attachment to an identity. Research has found that saliency organize one's life and willingness to embody the identity (Ashmore et al. 2004; Cornell and Hartmann 2007). Specifically, through people's agency, racial and ethnic groups and individuals have the ability to create new or differing meanings, categories, boundaries or identities (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Nagel 1994; Valdez, 2009). For instance, studies that have examined the influence of Census racial categories on Latinos' identity have found that whereas some Latinos reject the Census categories, others prefer to use "Latino" as their racial identities, while for others, the meanings of their identities conflate race, ethnicity, and country of origin (De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003; García 2004; Rodriguez 2000; Roth 2012; Rumbaut 2009). Consequently, agency enables Latinos to give meaning to their identities, internalize, use or reject racial categories imposed by structures. Therefore, based on the previous discussion one may observe South Americans constructing or reconstructing their identities strategically within the context and influences of macro and micro level factors.

Given the complexities of identity construction and to advance the understanding and address the nuances of racial and ethnicities among South Americans, an intersectional analysis is included. Intersectionality magnifies how race, ethnicity, gender, class, and other systems of power together pattern differing social location, which refers to a person's position within these intersecting hierarchies that causes differences in experiences (Hill Collins 2000). In the particular case of Latinos, the dialectic and dynamic identity formation process has been found to be shaped by various intersecting macro-level structures and micro-level factors including ethnicity, socioeconomic status, phenotype, experiences of discrimination or prejudice, age,

community context, generational status, citizenship, language, region, family socialization, and gender (Deaux 2006; Evans et al. 2010; Feliciano 2009; Flores-Gonzalez 1999; Frank et al., 2010; Golash-Boza 2006; Niemann et al. 1999; Rockquemore et al. 2009; Rumbaut 1994; Rumbaut 2009).

Gender is highlighted as an important system of power within intersectionality that must also be acknowledged as central to the construction of identities. Research has found gender differences in the meanings of racial and ethnic identities of Latinos/as because of their gendered experiences with their families and the institutions of education and labor market. Gendered experiences in these institutions provided more opportunities for Latinas to succeed because they are stereotyped as less threatening, which allows women to maintain positive panethnic identities. On the other hand, Latino men's marginalization and racialization as criminal is a key factor limiting their opportunities and shaping their oppositional racial identities (Bettie, 2003; Feliciano and Rumbaut, 2005; García, 2004; Lasley Barajas and Peirce, 2001; Lopez, 2003; Smith, 2002). In effect, the intersections of race, gender, and class not only shape the social location of South Americans, but also their agency and how they define their dynamic identities.

Methods

Acknowledging the complexities of identity formation and intersectionality, the chapter adhered to a mixed methods approach to better facilitate an in-depth analysis. Mixed methods approach includes the two stages of data analysis. The initial stage examines American Community Survey data and the second stage consists of in-depth face to face interviews with Colombians, Peruvians and Argentinians in Ohio. Both quantitative and qualitative methods allow for a more dynamic and detailed analysis (Ivankova et al. 2006) through a sequential mixed methods design.

First stage: Quantitative analysis

I used the 2007-2011 American Community Survey data extracted from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series. The data set only includes those who responded that they are of South American ancestry and are 18 years or older (84,776). The benefits of utilizing the ACS are trifold. First, the 2007-2011 ACS data has the largest sample size of South Americans. Second, the ACS uses the OMB racial categories and examines the structural influences on South Americans' identities. Additionally, the ACS includes the racial category of "Other Race," which is commonly used by Latinos in the Census. Lastly, while limitations in ACS prevent the comparison of third generation, the data analyzes immigrants versus US born or second generation or higher. Given that South Americans are mostly immigrants, the ACS data can adequately analyze their generational differences.

Measures

The dependent variable is race; it is categorized as Other Race, Multiracial (two or more races) and white (reference category). Given the small sample sizes of Blacks, Indigenous, and Asians, these categories were dropped. The analysis of these racial categories, which are mandated by the OMB, provides contextual information on how macro-level structures impact South Americans' identity formation. In addition, the independent variable is South American origin and is grouped by region, because of smaller sample size of certain countries. The regions include North Coast (Venezuela and Colombia) Andean (Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador) and Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay). These regions have similar socio-historical context and racial and ethnic groups and identities. The North Coast region is Caribbean-bordering countries. The Andean region is grouped together because it has the highest

indigenous populations in South America while the Southern Cone (reference group) has a socio-historical context of large European immigration and ancestry (Marrow 2007).

Many control variables are utilized to examine the varying features of identity formation. Gender is a dichotomous variable and women are the reference category. Instead of labeling the variable sex, which is based in biology, I have chosen to use gender because I conceptualize gender as a socially constructed multidimensional social structure that intersects with other structures. Region is categorized as Northeast, South, West and Midwest (reference category). Region is an important variable as it has been found to impact racial identities (Rumbaut 2009). I also controlled for several socioeconomic factors. Educational attainment is categorized as high school diploma, some college, college and advanced degree, and the reference category is high school dropouts. Household income is used as a logarithm and continuous variable. Poverty status is a dichotomous variable so that those respondents who are 125% below the poverty threshold are the reference category. Lastly, homeownership is used as a dichotomy and proxy of wealth and mobility. Additionally, to explore migration forces, I controlled for several factors. I used the dichotomous variable if they are born in the US (immigrant vs. second or higher generations) to explore generational differences. US citizenship is also a dichotomous variable and has been found to affect the formation of identities (Portes and MacLeod, 1996; Rumbaut, 1994). Language is also a control variable and categorized as those that are bilingual or only speak English.

In addition, I also control for metropolitan area, age, marital status, household variables and year of survey. Age is a continuous variable. Past research has found that age has varying effects on identity because of the complex and dynamic nature of identities throughout people's life course. Another control variable is marital status which includes the categories of married,

once married (divorced, separated or widowed) and never married (reference category). Frank et al. (2010) explains that a spouse can influence our racial identities because the process of dating increases interactions with others and the consciousness of racial boundaries. Also included in the analysis are several household variables including number of family members within the household and the dichotomous variable if own children live in their household. Research has found that having children increases the awareness of racial boundaries because of increased interactions and exposure with the education system, other US institutions and other children, parents and teachers (Frank et al. 2010). Lastly, the year of survey (2007-2011) and personal weights, composed by the ACS data, are controlled. Table 1 reflects the mean and percentages of the variables used from the ACS data for the total sample and by South American region.

Multinomial logistic regression is utilized to analyze how South Americans racially identify and four models were analyzed. In the first model, all variables are included. The second model includes the interaction of gender to examine gender differences by South American region. The third model analyzes the interaction of US born and compares the racial identities of South American immigrants with US born South Americans. In the last model, I focused on South Americans from the North Coast and Andean region to examine the likelihood of identifying as white, Other, Multiracial as well as combined category of Black, Indigenous and Asian. The smaller sample sizes of Blacks, Indigenous and Asians in the Southern Cone prevented the use of these racial categories in the other three models, but more South Americans in the US originate from the North Coast and Andean regions. The fourth model allows for a more comprehensive examination of South American experiences in the US.

Hypotheses

Research has found that in the Census, South Americans are highly likely to self-classify as white and Other Race (Ennis et al. 2011). Given the socio-historical context of the South American regions previously discussed, I hypothesize that those from the Southern Cone will more likely identify as white because of the history of European ancestry while those from North Coast and Andean regions will more likely identify as Other and Multiracial because the context of large indigenous, Black and Asian communities. Given the importance of gender and intersectionality, I also hypothesize that South American men will more likely identify as Other or Multiracial given the intersection of systems of power that disadvantage men of color and provide more opportunities to women of color. Finally, I hypothesize that South Americans born in the US will more likely identify as Other Race than white because of their increased time in the US and racialization as non-white.

Second stage: Interviews

The second stage examines the self-definitions of Colombians', Peruvians' and Argentinians' racial and ethnic identities through semi-structured face-to-face interviews in Ohio. The respondents mostly lived in communities near or in the northwest (greater Toledo area), northeast (Cleveland, Akron, and other smaller towns in the area) and central (Columbus) regions of the state. These areas varied from large cities with populations over 800,000 to mid-size, college based towns and to small rural communities with as little as 3,000 people. Cleveland, in particular, has a larger percentage of Puerto Ricans than Columbus and the northwest region which along with the state in general has a predominately Mexican-Latino population (Pew Hispanic Center 2013). The interviews occurring in these communities between March 2015 and January 2016 in either Spanish or English and by developing a snowball

sample. I followed a system of open coding and created codes based on existing literature and respondent comments, which was later coded and complied by Dedoose software.

Table 2 includes the means and percentages of descriptors variables of the respondents. In the total sample, over three-fourths of the sample are immigrants while 19% are 1.5 generation and less than 5% are second generation. Of the 1.5 generation, about half are Colombians and entered the US around 12-18 years old. South American immigrants in the sample, on averaged lived in US for 16.8 years. All in all, over half of the sample are women, married, Catholic, middle class, college educated and own their home. Also over two thirds of the sample have children and work full time while over three fourths of the sample is employed and is fluent in English (speak, read, comprehend, and write). Lastly, the average age of the sample is 43 years old and their average phenotype based on the Skin Color Palette (Telles and Steele 2012) is 4.2 out of 10 (darkest).

Findings

Tables 3 and 4 reflect the relative risk ratio from the multinomial logistic regression for models 1-3 and models 4, respectively.

Initial Stage: Quantitative findings

Analyzing the American Community Survey data and conducting the analysis proposes findings on South Americans at the national level. The first model found that controlling all the variables, South Americans from the North Coast region compared to Southern Cone were two times more likely to identify as Other Race and Multiracial compared to white. Andeans were 3.5 times and 2.9 times more likely to respectively identify as Other Race and Multiracial. Even though previous studies homogenized South Americans as more likely to choose a white census category, this analysis confirms my hypothesis that South Americans from Southern Cone are

more likely to select a white category. On the other hand, in the second model the interaction of gender was insignificant. Gender was also insignificant in all the models. In my analysis of ACS data, I found there are no gender differences in South Americans' selection of racial categories. While this finding refutes the proposed hypothesis, gender is complex and could be better explored in the second stage. Similarly, the third model rejects the hypothesis that US born South Americans identify as Other Race and rather finds that US born South Americans have a lower tendency to select Other Race, but also have a higher tendency to select multiracial category compared to white.

The similarities in variables used in models 1-3 found similar relative risk ratio for the control variables. In the following paragraph, I highlight certain significant control variables shaping the selection of racial categories such as region, socioeconomic factors, citizenship, marital status, and metropolitan status. South Americans living in the South compared to the Midwest increased the odds of selecting white category compared to Other Race by 52% and increased by 42% compared to Multiracial. However, there were no significant differences among those in the Midwest compared to the Northeast and West region supporting the generalizability of South Americans experiences in the Midwest. Perhaps the large and co-ethnic communities and context of race in the South increases South Americans likelihood to select a white racial category. Moreover, in examining socioeconomic status, educational attainment, homeownership, and income significantly impacted the likelihood of choosing Other Race. Respectively, homeownership, increasing educational attainment and income decreased the odds of South Americans selecting Other Race. Similarly, South Americans that live in a metropolitan city are more likely to select a white identity than Other Race and Multiracial identities. On the other hand, South Americans that are bilingual are more likely to choose Other Race and are less

likely to choose Multiracial than white. Lastly, the effect of marital status and citizenship status is limited to South Americans who identify as Multiracial. South Americans that are married or once married are less likely to self-identify as Multiracial while South Americans that are US citizens are more likely to self-identify as Multiracial than white. In sum in models 1-3, the selection of racial categories depends on South American region, generational status, region, socioeconomic status, marital status, citizenship, metropolitan status, and bilingualism.

The fourth model compared South Americans from the Andean region to the Northern Coast region and includes the combined racial category of Blacks, Indigenous and Asian, which I refer to as *combined*. In the fourth model, Andeans compared to Northern Coasters are more likely to identify as Other, Multiracial or combined category versus white. Given the similarities, among the variables in model 4 with the other models, I only describe the significant variables for the combined category. Gender, generational status, citizenship status and family size are not statistically significant. The effect of region is limited to South Americans living in the West region of the US, whose odds of using combined identity increases by 31%. On the other hand, South American that were ever married, bilingual, live in metropolitan city, own their home, and income increases respectively have higher tendency to select white than Black, Asian or Native American. However, Andeans and North Coasters that are in the labor force and poor are more likely to select the combined category. All in all, in model 4, the estimated effects of South American region on the likelihood of selecting the racial categories are dependent on region, educational attainment, bilingualism, employment status, homeownership, income, poverty status, and metropolitan status.

The initial stage of the mixed methods analysis reveals that nationally, South Americans from the Southern Cone are more likely to select a white category while North Coasters and

Andeans are more likely to select Other Race and Multiracial category. However, the selection of these racial categories is within the context of macro level forces that construct racial categories based on US government conceptualizations of race and ethnicity. The social constructionism of identities proposes the dynamics of identity formation and agency to create, reject, or internalize the saliency of these racial categories. However, in the second stage, in general I find that Colombians, Peruvians and Argentinians racial and ethnic identification and perceptions in Ohio varies greatly from these macro-level constructed categories.

Second stage: Qualitative findings

The respondents answered questions about their racial and ethnic identities on the demographic questionnaire and during the interview. I also inquired about the meaning of these identities as well as the selection of Census racial and ethnic categories. In the following section, I address the former and in particular the saliency of the racial categories in comparison to their racial identities and the dynamics and perceptions of their identities including the role of intersectionality, macro and micro level factors such as racialization in forming their identities.

Macro level structures and racial categories

During the interviews, I asked the respondents to answer the 2010 Census race question. The racial categories comprise of white, African-American/Black, Native American, Asian, and Other Race. However, a little less than 50% of the sample did not select a census racial category and rather stated a differing identity such as Latino/Hispanic/Hispano, mestizo, mulatto, none, guacho or Jewish. In particular, 50%, especially those of middle class status, selected a panethnic identity while the other 50%, mostly undocumented and Colombian or Peruvian, chose racial identities prevalent in South America such as mestizo or mulatto. The former suggests racialization in the US as a panethnic racial minority group while the latter reflects their racial

understanding and ideologies from their countries of origin. For example, a 43 year old undocumented Colombian man stated,

“The Latin-American race is quite varied, we are mestizos; we are. I would have to choose like a mestizo race, but you don’t have it here, right? It is not specified.”

Those that did not select a racial category stated similar identities during the interview illustrating that the racial ideologies from the racial structures in their countries of origins continued to influence the formation of their identities.

On the other hand, the other 50% of the sample selected Census racial categories and specifically, over 25% of South American respondents selected the Other Race category, 20% selected white, over 4% selected multiracial identity and 2% selected Black. Country of origin differences were also found in the selection of racial categories. As described in the literature, the social and historical context of European ancestry and migration in Argentina may explain why over 33% of Argentinians selected white, the largest percentage among all South Americans in the sample, while respectively 33% selected either Other Race or a differing identity. In comparison, most Peruvians proclaimed differing identities (48%) and 33% selected Other Race. Additionally, among Peruvians 13% claimed a white racial category and 6% stated a Black category. Among Colombians, most (54%) reiterated differing racial identities than the census categories. Twenty percent of Colombians selected Other Race and 13% selected white or Multiracial identities, respectively. Similarly in the quantitative analysis of South Americans, North Coasters or Colombians and Andeans or Peruvians were less likely to choose a white racial category. These findings support the literature on the regional, historical, and racial differences in South America.

Other significant intersectional forces that were examined in both stages are gender and class. In the initial stage, no gender differences were found in selecting census racial categories. However, gender differences were found in the self-definitions of South Americans' racial identities, which will be discussed further on. On the other hand, differences in class were found in each stage. In the initial stage, higher socioeconomic status decreased the odds of selecting Other Race, but in the second stage, middle class South Americans in Ohio regardless of national origin were more likely to select Other Race while slightly more working class South Americans proclaimed a differing type of identity. The findings on class supports Roth (2012) that college educated immigrants learn and apply US racial norms and ideologies more so than lower educated immigrants who maintained the racial ideologies and identities from their country of origin. The findings suggesting that varying macro level forces including the racial norms and ideologies from their country of origin and class shape South Americans' racial classification.

At the same time, agency and micro-level forces shape South Americans' selection of racial categories. These micro level forces are found in South Americans' perceptions of the racial categories and the significance of these categories. In general those that picked a white racial category were of a lighter phenotype (3) and conceptualized the category as imitating their phenotype. On the other hand, South Americans that selected Other mostly selected this category because the other categories were not reflective of their perceptions of race. For example, a 34 year old middle class Peruvian man responded,

“I don't know if a lot of [surveys] have a mixed option. It's either you're this-this-or-this, and that's it. And I'm not Caucasian, can I check multiple boxes? So I know a lot of other Latinos have issues with that. And I don't know if it's a very fair way, but it definitely doesn't provide the full explanation of what we are as a people.”

Feelings of exclusion, lack of group representation, as well as other macro level forces shaped the saliency of these racial categories. A little less than 75% of the sample professes that the racial categories were insignificant to their identities and even many (40%) of the sample confessed that they had not seen the Census question before. A majority of South Americans—mostly Colombians undocumented (70%) —had not previously answered the census racial question. In contrast, mostly middle class South Americans men and undocumented or working class women had partaken in the census or viewed the racial categories in employment, hospital, and/or education documents. These results reveal how class and documentation status impacts differences in interactions with formal macro level structures and institutions. For instance, undocumented immigrants are less likely to take part in the Census because of the fear of being deported while middle class immigrants have more interactions in mainstream society and learn the structures and meanings of Census racial categories. Examining the selection of racial categories reveals the interactions and understanding of the macro-level racial categories but these racial categories have little significance on the racial identities of South Americans.

Dynamics of racial identities

The racial identities of South Americans vary from the selection of racial categories. A variety of racial identities arose even though similarities were found among South Americans responses in the interview and questionnaire. Among Argentinians, about 25% racially identified as panethnic and 15% identified as white, which varies from those (33%) selecting a white racial category. The remaining majority of Argentinians specified an identity that was categorized as *Other* such as: “did not have a racial identity”, “depended on the context of the question,” “white panethnic,” Jewish, and Argerican (identity created to reflect Argentinian and Puerto Rican mixed origins). A mix of racial identities was also found among Peruvians. For example,

33% of Peruvians chose a Latino/Hispanic/Hispano identity, 45% described their identities as *Other* including “Latina or mixed”, mestizo, none and unsure. In comparison, amongst Colombians, about 40% used a panethnic identity, while 20% respectively identified as either white, none, or mestizo/a. In total, 33% of South Americans, identified with a panethnic label, while 52%, mostly documented South Americans, divulged identities as *Other* and 12% utilized a white identity (Argentinians and Colombians).

Varying factors impacted the conceptualization of South Americans’ racial identities. For the most part, many South Americans in the sample noted that their racial identities denoted their origins, background, family, geographical origins, and culture. Others respondents discussed how their phenotype, others’ perceptions of them, socialization, and racial ideologies from their country of origin and US impacts their construction and understanding of their racial identities.

In addition, prominent intersecting forces influenced the formation of South Americans’ racial identities including documentation status, educational attainment, and ethnicity. South Americans who entered the US with work, education, or family visas were more likely to select a racial identity that fell under *Other* reflecting continued influence of their country of origin’s racial structures as well as the respondents’ higher education attainment. For instance, the category of *Other* also includes no racial identity and of those that selected none, all but one had advanced degrees in the US. The perceptions of highly educated South Americans’ racial identities echoes academia’s conceptualization of race as a social construct. On the other hand, racial and ethnic structures and ideologies continue to form the racial identities of South Americans in the US.

While other studies have found that Latinos conflate race and ethnicity, this confusion is much more complex because by migrating to the US, not only are they being shaped by the racial

and ethnic structures of the receiving country, but they are also impacted by the racial and ethnic structures in their countries of origin. Within Latin America, the social and historical of race is reduced by emphasizing mestizaje, racial mixing of Europeans, Indigenous, and Blacks, national unity and cultural forces. For example, 75% of South Americans, regardless of national origin, SES and documentation status, preferred their ethnic identity over a racial identity while 25% of the sample (mostly Colombians) stated that their racial and ethnic identities are the same. In short, South Americans prioritize an ethnic identity over a racial identity and apply cultural elements to formulate their racial identities. At the same time, as illustrated by exploring South Americans' ethnic identities, intersecting forces with race and racialization shaped the conceptualization of their ethnic identities as well as their panethnic group membership. Both racial and ethnic structures, in the US and in their countries of origin, construct and shape their dynamic racial and ethnic identities. On the whole, exploring the formation of racial identities and selection of racial categories not only magnifies the role of racial and ethnic structures and understandings from their country of origin as well as the exposure to US racial and ethnic structures and racialization, but also the influence of intersectional factors such as ethnicity, education, and documentation status.

Dynamics of ethnic identities

Adopting a social identity theory to explore the ethnic identities of South Americans highlighted the complexities of macro and micro level forces in the identity formation process. In the Census, respondents are asked, "Are you of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin?" During the interviews however, the respondents had the option to specify their South American origin or state a panethnic identity. In particular, over a majority of Colombians mentioned their country of origin identity as Colombian, while less than 33% of Argentinians and a little less than 14% of

Peruvians also stated their country of origin. Slightly more men than women utilized their country of origin identity and over a majority had entered the US with work, higher education, or family reunification visas. The ethnic categories did not shape the ethnic identities of South Americans, but for some, in particular Colombians, exposed the attachment to their country of origin identity.

In comparison to the ethnic categorization by macro structures, respondents answered differently to questions about their ethnic identities. The most popular ethnic identity among over 60% of South Americans was the panethnic identity. The remaining South Americans selected a country of origin identity (20%) or *Other* identity (20%). The choice of *Other* reflects South Americans' agency as they exercised either a combination of identities, indigenous, or multiracial identities. The identities encompassed as *Other* indicates South Americans' agency and the racial and ethnic characteristics from their countries of origins.

However, as revealed by an intersectional analysis, variation by gender, national origin, class and documentation status were found. For instance, while no gender differences were found among the *Other* category, 60% of South American women identified as panethnic compared to 75% of South American men embraced a country of origin identity. Secondly, country of origin differences were found about 70 % of Argentinians who identified as panethnic, in comparison to 50% of Peruvians and Colombians, respectively. Colombians in comparison to Peruvians (20%) and Argentinians (15%) were slightly more likely to select a country of origin identity (25%). Lastly Peruvians (25%) were also a bit more likely than Colombians (20%) and Argentinians (15%) to prefer *Other*. Moreover, no documentation and class differences were found among the panethnic identity, but some variation was noted among country of origin and *Other* identities. For example, about 35% of undocumented South Americans identified as *Other*

compared to less than 15% of documented or middle class South Americans. On the other hand, slightly more documented South Americans identified as country of origin than undocumented South Americans. Similar to the findings on racial identities, ethnic identities vary by class and documentation status. While intersectionality highlights the variation among ethnic identities by national origin, gender, and documentation status, similarities were found among the perceptions of these identities.

Even though ethnic identities somewhat varied by national origin, South Americans in the sample had similar perceptions of their ethnic identities. A panethnic identity symbolized South Americans' origins and background which encompassed their family, culture, and Spanish language, country of origin, region of Latin America, and the continent of South America. A 20 year old Argentinian male college student affirmed,

“Latino, since it’s the culture I was steeped in for so long and since Spanish is my first language.”

Other components that shaped South Americans' conceptualization of their ethnic identities were others' perceptions, self-perception, appearance, context of the question, and the racial and ethnic understanding from their country of origin. For example a 43 year old, middle class Peruvian woman said,

“...I think that it’s how you view yourself or how others view yourself too...I think that with the years, what matters to me was I am who I am and I’m a mixture of everything and I am a product of all these different cultures and languages that I’ve been exposed to.”

As we can see, the perceptions of ethnic identities are dynamic revealing multiple conceptualizations that mirror the dynamics of identities and their agency. While insights into South Americans' ethnic identities denote cultural characteristics, few discussed racial forces

shaping their ethnic identities although racialization greatly shaped their identities and group membership.

Role of racialization at the macro level

Exploring South Americans' perceptions of the census' racial categories, the Latino group, and how US society portrays Latinos and South Americans demonstrates how racialization at the macro and micro levels formed and constructed their identities, panethnic group membership, and thus, racialized minority position. Primarily, the absence of a racial category signifying Latin American origin in the Census socialized and racialized South Americans to US racial and ethnic hierarchies, its group boundaries, and developed their sense of belonging to certain racial and ethnic groups. For instance, a 22 year old working class Colombian who recently migrated to the US stated,

“Well I do not think I am white because white here is something different. If I was in my country, I may say I am white. But here, I'm not African American, Indian nor Asian. I just do not want to identify myself. Why don't you put like Latino or something here?

We should have our race. There are more Latinos in every single place in this country.”

The Census racial categories, similar to other experiences in the US, left South Americans feeling neglected, excluded, and thus, racialized in a minority position. On this, a 37-year old middle class Peruvian said,

“I don't find myself in these categories. Also if I have to choose some Other Race, it made me feel like I'm being left behind and I'm not here question-wise. Because some Other Race means I don't feel as important as the other choices. So I don't feel like answering the question.”

Not only did South Americans who chose Other Race implore similar sentiments, but a majority of the respondents in the sample that selected a panethnic identity as their most important identity reiterated similar racialization by macro-level forces. In particular, racism played a key role paralleling their membership in a panethnic group as well as their status as a racial minority in the US. Over 90% of the sample believed that Latinos as a group face discrimination in the US. Many discussed how US society is racist and discriminates against all minorities. A 43 year old middle class Peruvian woman specified,

“Oh yeah all the time, all the time in the media, everywhere. You look at the media, you look at the polls. You see it every day. I don’t know if we’ll ever get into a moment in which people are going to be treated equally.”

Latinos’ marginalized position in the US was further apparent to South Americans given their racial fluidity. For example Argentinians of lighter phenotype testified that those that appear similar to the stereotype of Latinos are more likely to experience racism. A 46 year old middle class Argentinian woman emphasized,

“It depends but yes I think you are more prone to face discrimination if you’re a male, young and poor. It depends on how dark your skin is, if you have indigenous features and if people would identify you maybe as Mexican. I am dark skinned, dark eyes and dark hair, but I have a look people don’t associate with Mexico so I don’t often get discriminated against. I think many Mexicans are discriminated.”

For some South Americans, specifically lighter phenotype Argentinians, pass as white since the US racial structure, especially in the Midwest, stereotypes and associates Latinos as people of Mexican origin with certain features such as dark phenotype, hair and eyes. However, this racial privilege and the disadvantaged racial status of Latinos becomes cognizant as well as

further established as they are more likely to witness discrimination against other Latinos. A poor 44-year old Argentinian man affirmed,

“It’s a small town, there are many Latinos and they are very discriminated. The police would stop Latinos. They never stopped me, I don’t know if it’s because my skin color is white, and I don’t seem – there are many Mexicans.”

Consequently, the racialization of Latinos in the US and Midwest is in conjunction with the social and historical context of Mexicans. In particular, within Ohio, Mexicans are the largest Latino group transforming how South Americans are racialized as well as perceived by others. South Americans were adamant that Americans portrayed and homogenized them and all Latinos as Mexican. In particular, about two thirds were Peruvian and men while one third were undocumented and a little less than half are middle class. It is interesting to note that all the respondents lived in small towns or cities that are overwhelmingly white in the Northwest and in smaller communities around the greater Cleveland and Akron area. A 34 year old middle class Peruvian male confirmed,

“...they just go in with the stereotypes. People ask me if I like Mexican food or they’ll ask if I’m Mexican. Or they just assume something because of what I look like.”

Given the lack of and awareness of diversity in these communities, interactions perpetuate stereotypes and microaggressions that homogenize and racialize South Americans as Mexican. On this, middle class 35 year old Argentinian man (3) also avowed,

“...the US sees South America as Mexico, that’s it. Argentina, they have no clue where it is. They might think it’s in Europe. I’ve been told many times, “where is that? That’s like south of Spain?””

Many voiced frustrations that people in the US didn't know their country of origin existed or anything about their cultures and if they did it emerged as frivolous characteristics like famous figures, soccer, landscapes like Machu Picchu, tango, and coffee to name few.

South Americans are not only stereotyped and generalized based on frivolous characteristics and as Mexican, but other characteristics have been racialized and negatively attributed to Latinos. A little less than 50% of South Americans (mostly Peruvians, working class, and women) described how Americans stereotype Latinos as a threat, greedy, lazy, inferior, oversexualized, criminal, and undocumented. A 60 year old working class Peruvian woman reiterated,

“They are stealing their jobs. They are invading their country. That's why they want to build those big walls.”

The current context of the US and increasing xenophobia perpetuated by Donald Trump further guided their understanding of Latinos' social and racial status. An undocumented 56 year old Peruvian woman also asserted,

“Okay, sometimes the general concept of the [Latino] immigrant is that immigrants come to steal, they come to drive while drinking, they believe they are rapists and drug dealers. That's what Donald Trump said.”

Consequently, the stereotypes and homogeneity of South Americans as Latino and Mexican in interactions and by macro level forces illustrates the racialization, generalization, and categorization as a minority, disadvantaged, and excluded group. These macro level forces not only shaped how South Americans perceive US society, group boundaries and social status, but also the construction of their identities. And yet, racialization is also found in the micro-level interactions and self-definitions of their identities.

Micro-level racialization and agency

Foremost, about 75% of the respondents experienced personal accounts of discrimination, microaggressions, and stereotypes. In particular, no gender, documentation status, or class differences were found in relation to personal experiences of racism rather South Americans' experiences differed by national origin and phenotype. About 87% of Peruvians experienced racism compared to over 65% of Colombians and Argentinians. Argentinians' lower accounts of racism may signify their lighter phenotype and racial fluidity. In the sample, the average phenotype for Argentinians is lighter (3.5) compared to Peruvians (4.4) and Colombians (4.5). In contrast, about a quarter of Colombians stated they had not experienced racism. These Colombians further stated that they did not believe Latinos are discriminated against in the US. Instead they placed blame on Latinos. Interestingly, Colombians' perceptions of US society and their own experiences revealed their internalization of color-blind ideologies. Color-blind racism portrays racism as non-existent and rather minorities groups' social position is in relation to individualistic and meritocratic deficiencies. It is interesting to note that even with the internalization of color-blind ideologies, these Colombians still identified as panethnic. Regardless of phenotype, national origin and perceptions of racism in the US, discrimination is a part of South Americans' experiences.

Experiences of racism varied from, institutional discrimination, individual discrimination, microaggressions, and racial prejudice. For the most part South American women (mostly undocumented and working class Peruvians and Colombians) discussed institutional and individual discrimination at their work, by the police, at banks, schools, restaurants, and hospitals. In particular, middle class South Americans were slightly more likely to be denied promotions and discussed how they and their children experienced discrimination in educational

institutions. On the other hand, working class and undocumented South Americans were more likely to be ignored or experience English only policies at work and police harassment. Not only did South Americans experience institutional and individual discrimination, but in particular, mostly middle class Argentinian women, undocumented Peruvian women, and middle class Peruvian men revealed experiences of microaggressions. Specifically, Peruvians were more likely to encounter microaggression in interactions that stereotyped them as inferior, dumb, and excluded them, while middle class Argentinians were more likely to experience microaggressions in relation to their accents. For example a middle class Argentinian woman in her 60s echoed,

“Obviously, when I was young, the minute I opened my mouth, they would ask me where I was from.”

These experiences of microaggression—verbal or nonverbal offenses towards racial minorities that are subtle, unconscious or purposeful—especially those in which they were asked where they are from furthered racialized South Americans as immigrants and a minority status.

The portrayal of Latinos and South Americans as foreigners as well as their racial fluidity triggered a specific type of microaggression. Over 90% of the sample discussed how people have asked either, “where are you from?” or “what are you?” Primarily, Argentinian men and Colombians experienced these questions in relations to their accent. A middle class 35 year old Argentinian male confirmed,

“American people see me like this weird guy that is really white and has a really weird accent. He speaks totally perfect Spanish, but his English is a little bit off or sometimes very off actually. That’s how American people see me. They cannot figure me out. That’s what I get from American people. They can never figure me out.”

This statement illustrates how accents racialize South Americans as non-American and foreigner. While Argentinians are able to pass phenotypically as white or American, their accent racializes them as non-American. For instance an undocumented Colombian man remarked,

“They might not know exactly where I’m from, but they know I’m a foreigner.” On the other hand, racially ambiguous and darker phenotype South Americans are asked these similar microaggressions questions in relation to their appearance. Mostly

Peruvians and Colombians specified being perceived as Mexican, Asian, African-American, or Arabic because of the racial fluidity of their appearance including phenotype, hair, and other bodily features. An undocumented 56 year old Peruvian woman noted,

“Well, most of the people think we are Mexicans and we explain to them we are from Peru. But in a general concept they speak to us as Mexicans, they don’t say Hispanics, they say Mexicans and they are not talking just about Mexicans, but to all Hispanics living in this country.”

Once again racialization of South Americans as Mexican or Latino is not only prominent at macro level, but in micro level interactions such as microaggressions. In effect, South Americans interactions with in the US include individual discrimination, institutional discrimination, and microaggressions shaping their racialization as foreigners, Mexicans, Latinos and thus a minority social status. Consequently, these micro level forces influence how South Americans perceive group boundaries and identity formation.

As social identity theory proclaims, identities are dynamic and change over time, space and context. Examining agency, a micro-level attribute, reveals these complexities and dynamics of South Americans’ identities. A prominent force shaping the social location and identities of South Americans is migrating to the US. A 23 year old Colombian male college student said,

“Oh, absolutely, there was no concept of Latino in Colombia because you were there. So in Colombia I’m white basically, you know the majority mestizo. So I didn’t think about the concept of ethnicity and race I mean it’s not as predominant as it is in the US.”

In migrating to the US and Midwest, a new racial structure and hierarchy that homogenizes and racializes as Latino as well as a region that is predominately white and lacks co-patriots prompts some South Americans to develop a panethnic identity. Whereas the context of migration altered South Americans’ identities, other factors reflect the dynamics in their identities. For instance, their identities shifted depending on the type of question asked, interaction, language spoken and even their mood. A middle class 33 year old Peruvian man exposed,

“I guess, I will say that I’m Latino. If people will ask me to be more specific, then I will say South America just because sometimes people don’t know where Peru is located. If they still want me to be more specific, then I will say Peru or Lima, Peru. I don’t really have any preferences. It’s much easier for me to say Latin America. It’s more safe.”

Through racialization in the US, South Americans not only form a plethora of panethnic identities in response to others’ ignorance, but also as a coping mechanism in response to racialized interactions and microaggressions. Moreover, South Americans empower themselves by utilizing a panethnic identity to cope with racialized experiences. Regardless of national origin, South Americans and specifically women defined their panethnicity as reflecting similarities in culture, unity, and experiences in the US. A 37 year old undocumented Colombian woman reiterated,

“Our culture, our race, the culture here is very different to what we know. Latinos are more united, the family is more united even the relationship with the neighbors is different. We are very united, but Americans are very different. They are all very independent.”

These conceptualizations of a panethnic group and identity created a strong sense of belonging and positive self-perceptions empowering South Americans in face of racialization. Despite these similarities, differences, and conflict occurred in panethnic groups because of nationality, class, documentation status, generational status and language variations.

Conclusion

The analysis of the racial and ethnic identities of South Americans, a significant and growing portion of the Latino group, described their solidarity and group membership, their social status in US society and racial and ethnic structures, and perceptions about themselves, other racial and ethnic groups, and US society. Adopting social identity theory and intersectionality highlighted how various and intersecting macro level structures such as race, ethnicity, gender, and class as well as racialization, agency, and saliency at micro level produce dynamic racial and ethnic identities. To examine these complex and intersecting factors, a sequential mixed method design was employed. The initial stage analyzed a national sample of South Americans using the American Community Survey data while the second stage consisted of in-depth interviews revealing Colombians', Peruvians' and Argentinians' perceptions of their racial and ethnic identities in Ohio. These stages revealed a more thorough analysis of South Americans experiences in the US and the dynamic identity formation process. In particular, the mixed methods design implied that macro level factors such as the census racial categories and micro level features such as agency and saliency shape identities.

The initial stage of the mixed methods analysis disclosed that South American region, socioeconomic status, bilingualism, and metropolitan status significantly influenced South Americans' selection of racial categories. In particular, South Americans from the Southern Cone are more likely to select a white category while Andeans and North Coasters were more likely to select Other Race and Multiracial. Intersectional analysis also suggests that country of origin and region of South America does shape the selection of racial categories as well as class differences steers the interaction, socialization, and internalization of US racial structures in comparison to their country of origins racial structures.

Furthermore, the mixed method analysis also reveals another intersectional component shaping the selection of racial categories. The national data analysis in the initial stage found that among South Americans, 72% selected white, 23% Other Race and 4% chose a multi-racial identity. Although the interviews found similarities in percentages among Other Race and Multiracial categories only 20% identified as white and a little less than 50% chose their racial identity rather than the census racial categories. The difference between the two stages implies the influence of their country of origin racial and ethnic structures as well as the regional racial context in the US. Most South Americans live in the Southern region of the US and in the South the racial context is structured in white and black hierarchy, which could guide South Americans to select a white racial category. Through the interviews, the findings propose that in the Midwest, South Americans are racialized as a panethnic group and homogenized as Mexican, which could decrease the likelihood of selecting a white racial category. In sum a mixed methods analysis signified that along with the US government imposed racial categories that excluded Latinos, varying macro and micro level forces including racial structures in their country of

origin, US and region in the US as well as phenotype and socioeconomic status shaped South Americans' selection of racial categories.

On the other hand, in the second stage, in general I find that Colombians, Peruvians and Argentinians' racial and ethnic identification and perceptions in Ohio varies greatly from these macro-level categories, which for most respondents the categories were irrelevant in their lives. By examining South Americans' decision making process choosing racial categories and identities signifies their understanding of racial and ethnic structures in the US and their country of origin as well as the role of intersectional factors such as ethnicity, education and documentation status. In this process, additionally, the findings suggested that South Americans prioritized an ethnic identity over racial categories and identities, apply cultural elements to formulate their racial identities as well as applied racial elements to their ethnic identities. Consequently, race and ethnicity is conflated in the formation of South Americans' racial and ethnic identities.

Initially, examining their ethnic identities exemplifies how various forces such as national origin, gender and documentation status shape the formation of their identities. While 60% of South Americans identify as panethnic, the remaining 40% of South Americans identify as their country of origin or Other. Even so, the study shows that Argentinians are more likely to select a panethnic identity, but also over 50% of Peruvians and Colombians did as well. Additionally Peruvians were more likely to select an Other identity while similarities in selecting a national origin identities was found among Peruvians and Colombians. While up to this point gender has had minimal or no influence in the quantitative analysis or racial identities, examining the formation of ethnic exposes that South American women are more likely to utilize a panethnic identity while South American men choose a country of origin identity. Even though differences

among national origin and gender are found, a simple examination of the perceptions of their ethnic identity exposes similarities in cultural conceptualization. However, ethnicity functions in similar ways as a racial identity in that South Americans also experience racialization, discrimination and racism. A more complex analysis of the formation of South Americans ethnic identities further reveals how racialization shapes their ethnic identities and conflates race and ethnicity.

Important characteristics of racialization that play an important role in the perpetuation of racialized processes are social structures, institutions, and social relations (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Telles and Ortiz 2008). Exploring South Americans' perceptions of US racial structures like the Census as well as interactions of discrimination and microaggressions demonstrated that macro and micro level racialization and its influences on their panethnic identity. In US society, Latinos are perceived to be foreigners or undocumented and thus non-American or non-white (Golash-Boza 2006; Rodriguez 2000; Telles and Ortiz 2008). Therefore, South Americans are racialized as a racial minority in the US by racial structures in the US and Midwest that excluded, stereotyped, and generalized as Mexican as well as other negative stereotypes. Nevertheless, in lieu of racialization and the complexities of macro and micro factors forming dynamic and multiple identities, South Americans also maintained positive and empowered perceptions of their identities.

Overall, the study reveals that identity formation and experiences of South Americans are framed by intersectionality and racialization at macro and micro levels. The intersectionality analysis not only found that national origin, race, ethnicity, gender, class, documentation status and phenotypic differences in the selection of racial and ethnic categories, identities and perceptions, but also in South Americans' experiences of racialization. In general, South

Americans have internalized the racialization from their country of origin and the US which is based in the homogenization as Latino or Mexican. Ultimately, the formation and saliency of their racial and ethnic identities and categories exposes their social status in the US as a disadvantaged minority group. While their Latinidad is associated by others as foreigner, inferior, and Mexican, South Americans express their identities and group membership as culture, language, origins, unity, empowerment, and commonalities in experiences including racialization.

CHAPTER 3 RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY ASSIMILATION OF SOUTH AMERICANS

Numerous scholars conceptualize assimilation as the absorption and restructuring of immigrant groups into majority or minority groups (Alba and Nee 2003; Gans 1997; Massey and Sanchez 2010; Rumbaut 2011). In addition, assimilation also involves “the cumulative changes that make individuals of one ethnic group more acculturated, integrated, and identified with members of another” (Rumbaut 2011:189). Integration into racial and ethnic groups includes a sense of belonging or solidarity towards as well as distance and alienation from whites, Americans, Latinos, Blacks, national origin groups or other groups. To that end, a key component of assimilation is racial and ethnic identification. Racial and ethnic identities are multifaceted social constructs signifying people’s culture, membership with a social category or group, a set of meanings about oneself and others, meanings others attach to us, status in society and location in social structures (Burke, 2004; Cornell and Hartmann 2007; Hogg et al. 1995; McConnell and Delgado-Romero 2004; Rumbaut 2011; Waters 2001). As such, the use of an American identity is regarded as the ultimate act of becoming part of mainstream culture, group, and society (Golash-Boza 2006). Hence, to examine the assimilation process into racial and ethnic groups in the US, this chapter focuses on the racial and ethnic identities and experiences of selected South American groups.

Theoretical framework

Assimilation discourse

Research on identity assimilation conceptualized four main types of ethnic identities: American, panethnicity, hyphenated-American, and country of origin (Rumbaut 1994; Portes and MacLeod 1996). In the following section, I will convey how within the discourse of assimilation, these ethnic identities and their meanings denote processes of integration and identification to

ethnic and racial groups. I also discuss how they may illustrate the assimilation of South Americans.

The discourse of assimilation is premised with the assumption that with each passing generation in the US, immigrants and their descendants will assimilate into mainstream American culture and identity experiencing upward social mobility (Gordon 1964). Individuals, who identify as American are assumed to discard their non-American roots and become part of the American mainstream. This ethnic normality assumes feelings of inclusion and acceptance as well as access to opportunities and privileges (Golash-Boza 2006; Gordon 1964; Rumbaut 1994; Tafoya 2004; Trieu 2009; Vasquez 2010). An American identity, a staple of the assimilation discourse, ceases the assimilation process. And yet, this depiction is founded on European immigrants in the early to mid-1900s; an issue that is problematic in today's understanding of immigrants. While European immigrants also faced discrimination and xenophobia, structural assistance (e.g. national economic prosperity, governmental policies, and access to higher education and suburban communities) as well as European immigrants' racialization as whites facilitated their social mobility into mainstream white middle class. This simplistic linear process based on a privileged path of assimilation conjoined socioeconomic status with ethnic identities neglecting the varying forces that impact identity and group membership. Today, whereas the higher socioeconomic status of South Americans supposedly gains them access to an American identity and group, I argue that their racial distinctiveness could impede this process. Decades after, in a distinct social and historical context of racially and economically diverse immigrants, segmented assimilation theory presented how structural and community level factors shape integration into three groups.

Segmented assimilation suggests that the context of reception including the existing economic structure, human and financial capital at individual, family, and community level, and the race of immigrant families affect their assimilation to one of three groups in US society (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes et al. 2005). In conjunction with the discourse of assimilation, the first form of assimilation that the segmented assimilation theory proposes takes place when immigrants assimilate into an American group and identity through upward social mobility into the middle class. The second form of segmented assimilation occurs when the dearth of capital and low-wage occupations of immigrants center their contact and integration within poor inner cities (Portes et al. 2005). This form of assimilation is labeled as downward assimilation, as it is assumed to lead to the internationalization of the norms, values, and oppositional identity of poor native minorities (Portes and Zhou 1993; Rumbaut 1994). Panethnic identities are portrayed as oppositional identities, but the conceptualization of downward assimilation neglects the perceived meanings of a panethnic identity. For instance, the US Census Bureau created and implemented the Hispanic panethnic label in 1976, to categorize people of Spanish origin and Latin American population. On the other hand, a Latino/a category was constructed by people of Latin America origin in critique of the Hispanic category that emphasized European origin and omitted indigenous origins and populations (Deaux 2006; Portes and MacLeod 1996; Tienda and Mitchell 2005). Even though the Latina/o and Hispanic panethnic labels were socially constructed as statistical terms, they have come to be accepted and internalized by many reflecting a common culture, language, and even a minority and/or racial group statuses (Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000; Portes and MacLeod, 1996; Rumbaut 2009; Tienda and Mitchell 2006). Segmented assimilation's portrayal of what have come to be perceived as downward and oppositional panethnic identities not only homogenizes and stereotypes racial and

ethnic minorities as poor underclass groups, but also neglects to take into account the meanings attached to the identities and the negotiations involved in identity formation (Itzigsohn et al. 2005).

Finally, within segmented assimilation, a third form of assimilation is described. This third form occurs when immigrant groups maintain their cultural values, country of origin identity, and solidarity within immigrant enclaves which end up assisting them in advancing economically (Portes and Zhou, 1993). A country of origin identity is viewed, within the assimilation discourse, as a response to post migration experiences which proclaim a sense of community consciousness and a connection with the homeland (Portes and MacLeod 1996; Rumbaut 1994). The studies that discuss country of origin identity fixate on immigrants who are located in ethnic enclaves. As such, they fail to address the case of South Americans who are the most dispersed Latino group in the US (Oboler and Gonzalez 2005). As such, I suggest that if solidarity with ethnic enclaves maintains country of origin identities than segmented assimilation theory may not apply to South Americans. Segmented assimilation, in sum, provides three groups of assimilation into an American, panethnic, or country of origin identity, but these identities are strictly associated with their socioeconomic positions.

The tie between socioeconomic status and ethnic identities within the assimilation discourse neglects complex forces shaping identity formation and the integration of immigrants. An identity that classical and segmented assimilation theories omit is a hyphenated-American identity. Hyphenated identities are perceived as dual cultural identities that people feel are compatible and integrated creating a sense of belonging to their country of origin and US cultures (Deaux, 2006; Rumbaut 1994). Even so, the assimilation discourse stresses that an American identity has no affiliations with racial or ethnic minority groups, thus perpetuating

Anglo-conformity, the disappearance of immigrants' culture of origin, and bi-culturalism. In fact, the Anglo-conformity and linear model proposed in the classical assimilation theory is further linked to social mobility by generalizing American identity as a white middle class status. And yet, Agius Vallejo (2012) found that middle class Mexicans experience racism and exclusion from white middle class and thus, assimilate into a minority middle class culture and structure. Therefore, assimilation into a white middle class culture and identity through social mobility may be unattainable given the existing racial structures and inequalities. Race must also be included within assimilation, similar to racialized assimilation theory.

The study on racialized assimilation theory, as proposed by Golash-Boza's (2006), exposes how race—phenotype and racism—and discrimination impact the identity assimilation of Latinos. It is important to note that phenotype and how Latinas/os and their racial or ethnic markers—accent, surname, and appearance—are perceived not only shapes interactions, but also triggers experiences of discrimination. As illustrated by racialized assimilation theory, Latinas/os who are of a white or lighter phenotype tend to face less discrimination and thus, may be more likely to assimilate and identify as American. On the other hand, Latinas/os who are perceived a darker phenotype, and/or experience discrimination may be more likely to embrace a Latina/o identity. The advantage of this theory in comparison to classical and segmented assimilation theories is that it exposes that whiteness is a prerequisite for assimilation into the dominant US culture and American identity. It does so by acknowledging the importance of gatekeeping, racialization, and structures of power in influencing assimilation. And yet, while the racialized assimilation theory centers on race as a system of power, it neglects other intersecting systems of power.

Gender and intersectionality

In this dissertation, I have noted that all assimilation theories evaded the centrality of gender and intersectionality. Consequently, I argue that assimilation and identity formation are influenced by the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, class and other systems of power. The matrix of domination, a principal component of intersectionality, exposes how these systems of power operate with and through each other impacting major forms of oppression and privilege that together, stratify, deny and/or give groups access and control to the resources, privileges and opportunities of society (Collins, 2000; Martin, 2004). Therefore, it is by implementing an intersectional framework, I examine South Americans' racial and ethnic identities and assimilation into the racial and ethnic groups in the US.

Methods

Data for this chapter comes from the second stage qualitative analysis. The analysis includes the 43 in-depth, semi-structured face-to face interviews conducted with Argentinians (13), Colombians (15) and Peruvians (15) in Ohio, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Findings

Mode of entry and socioeconomic status among South Americans

In the analysis of the interviews, it became apparent that their documentation status, mode of entry, and reason for migrating greatly impacted their socioeconomic status, life experiences, and incorporation in the US. Regardless of national origin, in the sample about 50% of South Americans were US residents or citizens, graduated college, and middle class. The other 50% of the South American sample were undocumented and were more likely to work part time in low-wage jobs. The majority of undocumented South Americans entered the US with a tourist visa and overstayed the visa. On the other hand, many South Americans in the sample

migrated with visas for higher education, occupation, or to reunite with family members such as an American spouse or immigrant parent. Even though the mode of entry was bifurcated among South Americans, all of the respondents migrated to improve their economic status. And yet, national origin differences were also found among mode of entry.

The majority of Argentinians, for example, migrated to pursue higher education for themselves or because their parent or spouse had moved to pursue higher education or an occupation. In comparison, the documentation status among Peruvians and Colombians is similar as about 50% of the sample migrated with visas to reunite with family or to pursue higher education while the other 50% were undocumented. However, undocumented Peruvians migrated to Ohio because extended family member informed them of the cheaper standard of living and plentiful job opportunities. Colombians, however, were more likely than Peruvians and Argentinians to migrate for political asylum and to flee violence. Whereas there are some national origin differences among mode of entry and documentation status, similarities across national origin were found in shaping the socioeconomic status of South Americans.

In particular, South Americans—mostly Argentinians and Peruvians—who entered the US to pursue higher education have white collar occupations, were middle class, own their homes and live in middle class neighborhoods. On the other hand, Colombians in the sample were more likely to be poor and working class; a characteristic that could be attributed to various factors including them fleeing violence, their shorter time in the US, their undocumented status, and smaller social networks. These characteristics differentiate them from undocumented Peruvians who while being mostly poor and working class and have small number of family members in the US have developed more extensive social networks. Ultimately, the findings suggest that documentation status and mode of entry seems to be correlated to South Americans’

socioeconomic status. In the following sections, I address how elements of classical and segmented assimilation theories are supported, although in more complex and nuanced ways.

Ethnic identity

To examine the ethnic and racial identities of South Americans, I asked the respondents on both the demographic questionnaire and during the interviews about their race and ethnicity. I probed for the meaning of these identities as well as other identities, including American, which will be discussed later on. It is interesting to note that while a majority of South Americans effortlessly answered the question pertaining to ethnicity, less than 20% of the sample, mostly Colombians and undocumented Peruvians were unaware of ethnicity and needed clarification. Regardless, over 60% of South Americans in the sample identified with a panethnic label of Latina/o, Hispanic or Hispano/a. The remaining South Americans selected a country of origin identity or *Other* identity (20% respectively). The *Other* category includes a combination of identities, indigenous, or mixed identities, which reflects how they exercised their agency. *Other* identity is not included within the identity assimilation framework, but is an important component reflecting the incorporation and perceptions of immigrants. Through an intersectional analysis, no gender differences were found among the *Other* category. However, about 60% of South Americans that identified as panethnic were women and a little less than 75% of South American men embraced a country of origin identity. Besides gender, national origin and documentation status differences were also found in the selection of ethnic identities.

In particular, about 69% of Argentinians identified as panethnic, while 15% were designated as *Other* (combination of identities) identities and country of origin identity. In comparison, a little less than 47% of Peruvians selected a panethnic identity, 27% declared a country of origin identity and over 27% claimed an *Other* identity (Incan, multiple identities,

mestizo). In addition, over 67% of Colombians identified with a panethnic label, over 20% utilized a country of origin identity, and 15% identified as *Other* (white, panethnic-American identity and none). Only slight differences were found in the responses in the questionnaire compared to the interview and mostly these identities fell under the *Other* category. For example, in the questionnaire some wrote down Americano, Argerican (combined parents' country of origin of Argentina and Puerto Rico), mestizo, or the combined identities of Latina and Asian, Mestizo-Peruano, and Latino Colombian. Lastly, differences among documentation status were only found among *Other* and country of origin identities. For example, undocumented South Americans were slightly more likely to identify with the *Other* category, whereas South Americans with documentation status were also slightly more likely to identify as country of origin than undocumented South Americans.

Even though ethnic identities somewhat varied by national origin, gender, and documentation status, South Americans had similar perceptions of their ethnic identities. South Americans (a little less than 50% were Argentinians) that selected a panethnic identity denoted their origins and background, which encompassed their family, culture, and Spanish language, country of origin, region of Latin America, and the continent of South America. For instance, a 48 year old middle class Argentinian woman stated,

“I always mark Hispanic or Latina. Definitely I consider myself part of Latin America. I was born there and I just always look Latina.”

South Americans not only perceived their panethnic identities as their cultural and regional origins, but many also conceptualized their country of origin and *Other* identity mainly in reference to their origins and family background. To describe and affirm their ethnic identities, South Americans designated multiple meanings. Other components that shaped South

Americans' self-definition of their ethnic identities were others' perceptions of them, self-perception, appearance, context of the question, and the racial and ethnic understanding from their country of origin. A 30 year old, Colombian man who recently immigrated to be a graduate student affirmed,

“In Colombia, just like in most of South America, the origin is from Spain, but there's a native part, and the Black people in Colombia. My ethnic origin isn't Black, but native and Spaniard.”

Interestingly, the internalization of racial and ethnic ideologies of their country of origin continues to shape the construction of their identities in the US. In general, South Americans' perceptions of their ethnic identities reflect their agency to self-define their identities. And yet, the agency of immigrants to define their ethnic identities is neglected with assimilation theories. As a result, the findings on South Americans' ethnic identities suggested somewhat contrary findings to identity assimilation (Rumbaut 1994; Portes and MacLeod 1996). Foremost, none of the South Americans in the sample identified as American and rather most of them identified with a panethnic label. Additionally, only 25% of sample utilized a country of origin identity and only a couple respondents employed a hyphenated-American identity which was then categorized as *Other*. Furthermore, the findings exposed another category of identities, *Other*, neglected in identity assimilation, reflecting South Americans' agency and racial and ethnic understanding from their country of origin. For instance, many used a mestizo, mixed or Incan identity. Furthermore, regardless of socioeconomic status, national origin, and mode of entry into the US, South Americans are more likely to identify and self-define as panethnic. The findings exposed that the meanings immigrants signified as their panethnic identities challenged segmented assimilation's downward integration into poor minority and panethnic group. Rather

the panethnic identity reflects their immigrant experience in Ohio with limited co-ethnic populations. A 56 year old Peruvian undocumented woman points out,

“Nowadays I believe it is much more important to be Hispanic for me because I identify myself not only with Peruvian people, but with every Latino and the Hispanic community in Akron. There are people from different countries, Mexico, Peru, Colombia and I really like to share music, traditions, culture and the program we have in the church and the program for kids.”

Many South Americans, regardless of socioeconomic status, described their panethnic identities as signifying unity and commonalities with people of Latin American origin, culture, values, language and similar experiences in the US. South Americans’ assimilation into panethnic group and identity exposed their reaction to migrating to the US and to a region that has few co-ethnics. In sum, the findings on South Americans’ ethnic identities refuted the assimilation discourse that middle class status facilitates an American identity. Instead, the findings suggest that South Americans exercised their agency to apply their nuanced racial and ethnic understanding to embrace a panethnic or *Other* identity.

Racial identity

Whereas, the assimilation discourse portrayed immigrants as ethnic groups, this overlooks how racial identities also signify varying aspects of immigrants’ experiences and integration into US society. In particular, the findings exposed a variety of racial identities that arose even though similarities were found among South Americans responses in the interview and questionnaire. Among Argentinians, about 25% racially identified as panethnic and 15% identified as white. The remaining majority of Argentinians specified an identity that was categorized as *Other* such as: “did not have a racial identity”, “depended on the context of the question,” “other”, “white panethnic,” Jewish, and Argerican (identity created by the respondent to represent his Argentinian and Puerto Rican mixed origins). Similarly among Peruvians, over

45% described their identities as *Other*. The identities included no racial identity, “Latina or mixed”, mestizo, and unsure. Additionally, 33% of Peruvians chose a panethnic racial identity. In comparison, 40% of Colombians chose a panethnic racial identity and *Other* (mestizo and none), respectively, while 20% identified as white. In sum, Argentinians were more likely to identify as *Other* whereas Colombians were more likely to identify as panethnic. Moreover, both Argentinians and Colombians were more likely than Peruvians to select a white racial identity.

Other similarities were found in the perceptions of South Americans’ racial identities. Regardless of national-origin, their racial identities denoted their origins, background, family, geographical origins, and culture. Some defined their racial identities in relation to their phenotype, others’ perceptions, socialization, and racial ideologies from their country of origin and US. A working class, once undocumented Argentinian woman of 42 years affirmed,

“...My skin is white, and I think my answer should be white, but then they include Latino, and we have to see what does that mean, are we involved in the same race? So that’s what my documents say Hispanic or Latino because Americans are whites, African Americans are Black. I would say white because that’s the color of my skin, but I’m Hispanic.”

As discussed by Golash-Boza (2006), the US racial structure influenced Latinos/as’ racial identities. Simultaneously their racial identities are constructed in conjunction with the internalization of the racial ideologies from their country of origin. For instance, in Latin America, the significance of race is reduced by emphasizing mestizaje,—racial mixing of Europeans, Indigenous, and Blacks—national unity, and cultural forces. For example, regardless of national origin, SES and documentation status, a majority of South Americans preferred their ethnic identity over a racial identity while 25% of the sample, mostly Colombians, stated that their racial and ethnic identities are the same. In short, South Americans prioritized an ethnic identity over a racial identity while simultaneously constructing their racial identities through

cultural elements. Exploring the formation of racial identities suggested the roles of the racial ideologies from their country of origin, the exposure to US racial structures and racialization, and intersectional forces.

For the most part, the most prominent intersectional forces shaping the formation of South Americans' racial identities are race, mode of entry, educational attainment, and gender. South Americans who entered the US with work, education, or family visas were also more likely to select an identity that fell under the *Other* category. Moreover, all but one South American who stated no racial identity had advanced degrees in the US and echoed academia's conceptualization of race as a social construct. On the other hand, undocumented South Americans, mostly women were more likely to select a panethnic identity as emulating their origins and culture. Overall, examining South Americans' racial identities suggests the continued impact of racial ideologies from their country of origin and complex and continuous process of acculturation, incorporation, and racialization into US society and groups. While the ethnic identities of South Americans reflect the assimilation towards a panethnic group with common origins, culture, and language, their racial identities as well as American identity, which will be addressed next, illustrates how racialization molds their assimilation, identity, and group membership.

American identity

Given the significance of American identity within assimilation discourse, respondents were also asked if they felt American, since none identified as American. In particular, a little less than 50% of the total respondents (mostly women, Colombians, US resident or citizen, and working class) remarked that they did not identify as American. Furthermore, a little less than 33% of the sample said that they did identify as American, however, they noted that the meaning

of American varied. None of the respondents prioritized an American identity over their racial and ethnic identities. In particular, South Americans who identify as American were mostly men, US residents or citizens, middle class, and Argentinians. These findings somewhat support a main tenet of assimilation discourse that people holding a middle class status identify with an American identity, although the meanings of American dispute solidarity with an American mainstream middle class group.

Many of the respondents that did identify as American associated the identity with living in the US and reported that an American identity encompassed working in the US, contributing to US society, and having their immediate family in the US. For example, a middle class 45 year old Argentinian man that identified as American elucidated,

“To me, it's being tied to a place. I live here, and I intend to live my life here. I am a citizen, too. I vote here. I'm invested in this country for myself and for my children. That, to me, is what makes me an American in a way that I'm not an Argentine. I'm concerned about Argentina, but I'm not invested in Argentina because [me] and none of my children are going to live there. I feel more American than Argentinian, in that sense.”

Consequently, living in the US reflected the importance of creating a sense of belonging to the current context and location of immigrant South Americans. Another common response from the South American respondents, regardless of national origin, class, documentation status, and gender, believed that an American identity encompassed geography and the continent of the Americas, including the US and South America. Therefore, many respondents who identified as American also questioned the meaning of American as solely part of the US, which suggested a coping response in the negotiation of a sense of belonging in the US. For instance, a US citizen and working class, 42 year old Argentinian woman recounted,

“I'm an American, but not from North America. I'm a South American. I have discussions with the American people, because they say, "You are in America. You need to be an American." And I tell them, "I'm an American." And that's my answer to everybody, "I'm American, I'm South American. You are from North America, I'm from

South America and other people are from Central America." We are all from America because we live on this side of the sea, and people on the other side of the continent are Europeans, so that's something people don't know."

People that identify as American affirmed their identities and agency through the negotiation of boundaries around certain segments of the American category, especially as a response to racialization. A 61 year old middle class Peruvian man affirmed,

"There are different types of Americans. I don't identify with the mainstream America.

However, I am American of a particular type. I identify with the [founding] values of this nation that are not the values that the nation has right now."

South Americans who identify as American have differing meanings than that conceptualized within the assimilation of discourse. Due to racialization, South Americans must negotiate the boundaries of particular parts of an American identity and group to create solidarity.

Not only does racialization shape how South Americans perceive and identify as American, but also hinders them from identifying as American. For instance, mostly middle class and documented South American that did not identify as American had varying perceptions of Americans that reflected racialization. Additionally, several, mostly young respondents, discussed how American was synonymous with being white and how others perceived them. A 1.5 generation, 23 year old Argentinian woman, who recently earned her associate's degree pointed out,

"I know I'm not North American because I wasn't born here. I'm South American but I live in North America...They always say that you're so foreign and I'm like, "no," Just because sometimes I don't know how to say something. It still happens, I will say a word [incorrectly] then my supervisor, she is white of course, blurted out, "You're foreign."

The racialization of Latinos as foreign is further depicted in how South American women of varying national origins, implored that an American identity signified being born in the US.

Consequently, experiences of racialization, created a contextual sense of belonging to certain segment of an American group and identity. These findings supported not only Golash-Boza's (2006) findings that race and whiteness shape and hinder assimilation into American identity, but also shaped their perception of an American group.

Negotiating identity formation and the complex sense of belonging to the US

The findings highlight how South Americans' negotiated and constructed their identities to particular segments of the racial and ethnic groups (e.g. American or Latino). As a result, these findings demonstrated the significance of agency within the assimilation of immigrants into racial and ethnic groups in the US. As a result, we see immigrants as active agents negotiate, construct and elaborate their identities, which lend support to a collaborative assimilation process affected also by US natives (Massey and Sanchez 2010). In turn, South Americans' negotiated boundaries to define the context and meanings of their identities and group membership, including elements they accept and/or deny. Whereas access to certain US racial and ethnic groups is hindered, South Americans asserted their identities to accept and attach to certain elements of US society and groups. In particular, the findings suggested that South Americans negotiated boundaries to create a sense of belonging to segments of the US by embracing their decision to migrate and live in the US as well as parts of US culture.

As illustrated by the agency of South Americans, they are satisfied with migrating to the US and felt a certain sense of belonging to the US even though they did not identify as American. All respondents stated that they were satisfied with migrating or living in the US. However, about 20% of the sample (no gender and national origin differences) had mixed emotions about migrating to the US. About 50% of those respondents were middle class and had migrated for either higher education or a job. And yet, while they appreciated the opportunities

and lifestyles in the US for themselves and their families, they preferred to remain in their country of origin. And yet, the other 50% of these respondents were undocumented and discussed the difficulties of their social location. An undocumented 56 year old Peruvian made know that,

“The ideal situation would be to have the opportunity to work in our profession. We are happy because we can support our family but at the same time we feel restricted by not having the opportunity to develop our professional career.”

Likewise, about 36% of the sample perceived the US as home and of these respondents about two thirds were woman and a little less than half were Argentinians. In particular, all of the respondents proclaimed that their lives, friends, and immediate family in the US created an attachment and a sense of belonging to the US. A 42 year old working class Argentinian woman declared,

“Nowadays I can say the US is my home. A long time ago I would have said Argentina, but now I can say this is my home. I’m very proud of my country, but you want the best way of living and safety for your children...After a while, you get used to this country, and I remember when I went to visit my family in Argentina after ten years and everything was so different.”

Many South Americans specified that raising their families in the US as well as the opportunities for them in relation to their country of origin negotiated boundaries around a sense of belonging in the US. However, attachment to the US did not deter people’s attachment to their country of origin, rather it negotiated boundaries. Many South Americans were proud of their country of origin, which to them signified their origins, culture, ancestry, family, self-perception, and values. Therefore, many maintained the attachment to their country of origin by developing biculturalism. Over 40%—a little less than 50% were Colombian—stated that both countries felt like home magnifying their upbringing in their country of origin, better opportunities, and

establishment of theirs and their families' lives in the US. A 57 year old, undocumented, Colombian woman avowed,

“Well, oh my God, both places. I love my Colombia because I was born there and my family lives there, but I love America because they have helped me a lot, Americans are very kind.”

At the same time, many of the South American women –who said both countries felt like home– were more likely to articulate biculturalism even though they did not identify as hyphenated-American, thus, reflecting the negotiation of boundaries to define the context of their ethnicity. A middle class Argentinian woman in her 60s elucidated,

“I feel very much at home here, but I also can say that when I go to Argentina, I feel very much at home there. So I think I can adjust. I know both cultures very well now. So nothing surprises me. When I'm there, I know how to live there and when I'm here, I also know how to live here.”

Exploring South Americans' attachment to their country of origin and the US demonstrated the negotiation of boundaries around elements of biculturalism and also US culture.

Negotiating boundaries around parts of US society and culture

Assimilation not only involves becoming part of racial and ethnic groups, but also the acculturation or internalization of a receiving society's culture. In particular, the findings proposed that South Americans negotiated boundaries around certain aspects and values of US culture. A prominent feature of US culture and society that a majority of Colombians and one third of Peruvians (no gender, class or document status differences) felt attached and enjoyed were the food, music, diversity of cultures, social relations among friends, privacy or personal space, values of freedom and equality, and certain US behaviors. In particular, Colombians

mentioned they admired that Americans were friendly and generous. A 50 year old working class Colombian woman assured,

“I like the quiet. Americans are very calm. They are very respectful and most of them are.”

Moreover, Colombians, in particular those that are citizens and working class, remarked that they appreciated everything about American culture and had no qualms. Colombians admiration of US society and culture could allude to the social and political conflict in Colombia. Moreover, other aspects that South Americans—mostly women, undocumented and Colombians—admire were the values of individualism, opportunity, and meritocracy in US society. A 38 year old, undocumented, Colombian woman professed,

“I like that there are opportunities, there’s no discrimination for the people in the sense that a person who wants to get ahead can do it. There are many opportunities and opened doors. And if you meet the requirements for what they’re looking for they won’t put excuses like if you’re disabled; that’s what I like the most.”

The attachment to the values of meritocracy and individual reflects the acculturation and internalization of ideologies within US society including the ideologies of color-blind racism. Color-blind racism claims racism is nonexistent and suggests that disadvantages are a result of individual’s inability to succeed. Consequently, some South Americans that described these individualistic and color-blind ideologies were also quick to blame Latinos and other racial minorities for their disadvantages. While some South Americans acculturated to color-blind ideologies, most South Americans negotiated boundaries and accepted certain aspects of US society and culture.

For instance, some South Americans discussed their appreciation for the structures in the US. In particular, South Americans (majority women, Colombian and working class) accepted the economic stability, punctuality, organization, developed infrastructure, and the adherence to

rules, laws, and authority in the US. For example, a middle class Argentinian woman of 49 years expressed,

“The adherence to rules because I come from a highly disorganized, corrupt, anything goes type of country... I would say that when I came here from a broken country, I had so much like what I call PTSD from, for example, not being paid and things like that. When the checks would come, whenever there were supposed to it was like a revelation and if they were a day late, I would flashback into, "Oh my god." "What's happening?" Then, over time, I calmed down, and the facts that I could approach a police officer without being in fear because in my country, the police were really discredited and were an instrument of the repression. This is timing [because what's] happening right now with the police.”

And yet, South Americans in the sample were also critical of the US. A 45 year old Argentinian man revealed,

“It's very diverse. Once you get to know it better, you realize that, by definition, the culture is very diverse, even though you have a lot of assumptions about other groups. It is embedded, in the cultural DNA that it's a diverse culture, even though we have Trump.”

Furthermore, Argentinians and Colombians, mostly women and middle class, respondents elucidated their dislike of the discrimination, xenophobia and racism in US society. Whereas, South Americans negotiate boundaries to certain parts of US society, they also simultaneously negotiated and created a stronger attachment to their panethnic identity. Specifically, they asserted panethnic pride and commonalities with Mexicans experiences of racialization. This racialization is specific to the context of reception in Ohio, which has a large Mexican immigrant population that consists of seasonal migrant workers especially in the northwest region of the state. Some South Americans, regardless of phenotype and socioeconomic status, chided the harsher treatment that Mexicans and Central Americans experienced. A 58 year old undocumented Peruvian man who lived in the northwest region of Ohio observed,

“...my wife and I we went to a restaurant. And we went in, and there was a Hispanic family and to be even more specific, they were Mexican. They were there. We were all there, and we saw the way in which they were discriminated and they didn’t do that with us. It was specifically with them. Why? Because they had more of the Hispanic appearance. That’s the huge difference.”

South Americans not only personally experienced racialization and discrimination, but also witnessed other Latinos being discriminated against. The racialization of people of Latin American origin facilitated the negotiation of boundaries into a panethnic group and even prompted integration into tolerant and accepting local communities.

For instance, some South Americans cautioned against generalizing all Americans as racist and specified how others in their daily interactions are friendly and kind. Thus, they negotiated boundaries at the local community level thus, furthering their sense of belonging to US society. However, this led mostly Argentineans and Colombians to downplay their own experiences of discrimination as a coping mechanism. A 23 year old, working class Argentinian woman elaborated,

“When we are in public places, I like to talk English because I don’t want to feel awkward or I don’t want everybody else to think that I’m talking about them when I’m not. I’m just having a conversation. I do like talking English just for that, but I’ve never been discriminated or anything like that or looked at funny because you can’t tell... you don’t know if I’m Hispanic or white unless they hear me talking Spanish.”

To manage stigma, South Americans exercised their agency and racial ambiguity to prevent experiences of discrimination by speaking English out in public or going to certain places that they knew were welcoming. These examples portrayed how in their assimilation to racial and ethnic groups, South Americans negotiated boundaries in face of racialization and racism.

Not only did South Americans reject racism and racialization, but simultaneously detached from certain segments and values of American culture and group. In particular, middle

class Argentinians renounced authoritarianism, culture of violence, guns and militarism, materialism, arrogance, celebrity infatuation, individualism and ignorance. In contrast, Peruvians were more likely to scorn the social relations of families and the overwhelming focus on work in the US. A 56 year old undocumented Peruvian woman recounted,

“I don’t like how they are focused only at work and not with the family. So I believe those values have to become stronger and family should be more important and have more time. And another aspect is in regard to technology that is something very positive if we know how to use it, but now more than ever family relationships are becoming harder. There’s no communication, everybody is with their iPods, telephone, with a computer and I believe that is affecting us.”

Overall, the assimilation discourse has neglected the agency of immigrants to assimilate to other segments of American culture and society especially parts that are accepting of their race and ethnicity and group. Nevertheless, the findings demonstrate that South American immigrants exercised their agency and negotiated which values and aspects of American culture and society they wished to internalize and acculturate to. In sum, the negotiation of boundaries towards certain parts of American culture and group reflected the role of racialization and agency of South Americans to form panethnic identities and sense of belonging to certain segments of US society.

Conclusion

The analysis of the racial and ethnic identity assimilation of South Americans, a growing population with a complex social location and higher socioeconomic status compared to most other Latinos in the US, made this chapter not only an important contribution to the limited scholarship on South Americans, but also provides support and critiques of the assimilation discourse. Primarily, the identities specified in assimilation discourse are American, panethnic, hyphenated-American, and country of origin. The basis of classical and assimilation discourse stresses how immigrants and their descendants culminate through social mobility into an

American group and identity that is generalized as mainstream white middle class. However, the findings reject this premise, the homogenization of racial and ethnic groups and identities, and reveal far more complex processes. On the other hand, the findings also support the contributions of segmented assimilation theory in addressing how the context of reception, mode of entry, capital, and resources shape assimilation. Moreover, this study also found some support for racialized assimilation theory, which notes that racialization influenced South Americans' assimilation into Latino/a groups.

Another important contribution of this study is the importance of utilizing an intersectional framework to better understand the complex and dynamic identity assimilation of South Americans. In particular, gender and intersectional differences were important forces in revealing similarities and differences among South Americans. As discussed, South American women were more likely to identify as panethnic and create attachments to biculturalism while South American men were more likely to identify as country of origin and create attachments to aspects of an American group. Intersectionality not only disclosed gender differences among South Americans, but also the similarities among documented South American women and men in contrast to undocumented South American women and men. By implementing an intersectional exposed the complexity of South Americans assimilation into racial and ethnic groups in the US.

In sum, this chapter found that South Americans' mode of entry into the US, a component featured within segmented assimilation, shapes their experiences in the US. In particular, regardless of national origin, mode of entry greatly shape and bifurcate South Americans' socioeconomic status in the US. In general in the sample, documented South Americans that migrated to pursue higher education, a job or to reunite with families were more

likely to have a college degree, white collar occupation, work full time, and be middle class while undocumented South Americans were more likely to work part time and work in low-waged manufacturing or service jobs. National origin differences were also prominent in South Americans' mode of entry into the US. For example, in this sample, a majority of Argentinians migrated with documentation status and those that entered the US undocumented had already achieved residency or citizenship. On the other hand, about half of Peruvians and Colombians respondents were documented when entering the US and the other half were undocumented. However, on average, Peruvians and Argentinians in the sample lived in the US for longer time (19 years) than Colombians (9 years). Another main difference among Colombians is that besides searching for more economic opportunities, some migrated in response to violence. Argentinians' and Peruvians' migration was mostly economically driven. Lastly, migrating to Ohio was purposeful. Most respondents in the sample have small social networks, including extended family and work colleagues that informed them of the benefit of moving to Ohio for numerous opportunities and cheaper cost of living. These findings support the framework of segmented assimilation that proposes that context of reception, capital, and resources of immigrants shape their assimilation. However, the findings proposed that South Americans have differing identities, self-definitions, and thus, attach or reject certain parts of racial and ethnic groups.

These findings suggest that South Americans identify differently as compared to Rumbaut (1994) and Portes and MacLeod (1996) findings on identity assimilation. Foremost, none of the South Americans in the sample identified primarily as American, rather they identified as country of origin, *Other*, as well as in panethnic terms. Differences in documentation status among country of origin and *Other* identities were found; none were found

among the panethnic identity. Many South Americans, regardless of socioeconomic status, defined their panethnic identity to signify unity and commonalities with other people of Latin American origin, culture, values, language, and experiences in the US. Consequently, their identities reflect how structural inequalities and forces like documentation status hinder South Americans' mobility rather than their panethnic group membership and identity. These findings rejected downward segmented assimilation's and led me to conclude that panethnic group consists of middle class, working class and poor South Americans. Rather, South Americans that identify as Latino/a aim to integrate into US society by implementing their panethnic culture, values and support system. Therefore, as we can see, South Americans negotiate their understanding and sense of belonging to certain segments of racial and ethnic groups in US society.

Argentines, Colombians and Peruvians actively participated in the construction of their identities by negotiating boundaries to define the context of their ethnic identities in relation to their origins and commonalities with Latina/o and American groups. For example, a little less than 33% of the sample said they did feel American, but none of the respondents prioritized an American identity over their racial and ethnic identities as well as the meaning of American varied. Those that did feel American were mostly men, documented, middle class, and Argentines, whom created a sense belonging around citizenry, their families, living and working in the US, and the geography of the Americas. These findings further opposed the mainstream middle class white American group and identity proposed by the assimilation discourse. Rather, this chapter supported Massey and Sanchez (2010) in that South Americans negotiate boundaries, to define the context of their identities and group membership by rejecting and accepting varying aspects of racial and ethnic groups.

As can be seen, South Americans create a complex sense of belonging to the US by embracing their decision to migrate, their lives in the US, and by negotiating the boundaries of US culture. By examining these elements, South Americans exposed varying levels of belonging to American, bicultural, panethnic, and country of origin groups. In particular, South Americans create a sense of belonging to an American and bicultural groups through attachment to certain values of US society, diversity, social relations, norms, structures as well as the opportunities and lifestyles they achieved for themselves and their families in the US. On the other hand, South Americans' upbringing, origins, culture, values, family and experiences of racialization strengthened their attachment to their country of origin and panethnic identities. At the same time, differences in attachment were also found by national origin and mode of entry. In particular, Colombians, undocumented and working class South Americans were more likely to have an increased attachment to parts of US society while highly educated and middle class, mostly Argentinians and Peruvians rejected elements of US society and culture such as the discrimination, xenophobia and social relations. Consequently, examining the agency and identities of South American immigrants revealed how they negotiated boundaries and meanings to assimilate to particular segments of racial and ethnic groups in the US.

A few limitations have arisen in the study. First, we know that identities are contextual and dynamic depending on a specific social context, question, and who asked. Therefore, to provide the larger story or an encompassing portrayal of South American experiences in the US, it would be beneficial to compare the findings to South Americans in Chicago and Miami. Chicago is a large Midwestern immigrant gateway city in comparison to Miami, which has the most South Americans in the US. Regardless, this study found that the racial and ethnic identities

of immigrant, 1.5 and 2nd generation Argentinians, Colombians and Peruvians in Ohio signified their complex assimilation into varying parts of racial and ethnic groups in US society.

CHAPTER 4 EXPLORING THE IDENTITIES OF SOUTH AMERICANS FROM AN INTERSECTIONAL ASSIMILATION FRAMEWORK

Baca Zinn, Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner (2005) defined gender as “organized and experienced differently when refracted through the prism of sexual, racial/ethnic, social class, physical abilities, age and national citizenship differences (1).” Gender is a multidimensional and complex system of power that operates at multifaceted levels, organizes and shapes our social lives, social relations and all facets of our experiences including identities and assimilation. As such, gender, together with race, class, and experiences with the institutions of family, education, and labor market, shape racial and ethnic identities and assimilation (Bettie 2003; Feliciano and Rumbaut 2005; García 2004; Lasley Barajas and Peirce 2001; Lopez 2003; Smith 2002). Consequently, to analyze gender and its relationship with racial and ethnic identities and assimilation, it is critical to adopt an intersectional framework (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill, 1996). Therefore, this chapter highlights how gender and intersectionality shape the identities and assimilation of South Americans in the US.

Literature Review

Classical assimilation and importance of race

Whereas many theories have been developed to understand people’s assimilation, the discourse of assimilation is premised upon classical assimilation theory. This theory proposed that that with each passing generation in the U.S., immigrant families and their descendants are integrated into the dominant group (Gordon 1964). Integration into the dominant group culminates on an American mainstream middle-class culture and identity (Gordon 1964; Gans 1992). Adopting an American identity not only reflects access to opportunities and privileges, but more so feelings of inclusion and acceptance as immigrants and their descendants supposedly discard their other ethnic roots (Golash-Boza 2006; Gordon 1964; Rumbaut 1994; Tafoya 2004;

Trieu 2009; Vasquez 2010). Accordingly, an American identity, a staple of the assimilation discourse, ceases the assimilation process of immigrants and their descendants.

And yet, this depiction of assimilation and American identity is founded upon European immigrants as ethnic groups in the early to mid-1900s; an issue that is problematic in today's understanding of racially diverse immigrants. While some European immigrants also faced discrimination and xenophobia, structural assistance (e.g. economic prosperity, governmental policies, and access to higher education and suburban communities) as well as racialization as whites facilitated their social mobility into mainstream American middle class. The simplistic linear assimilation process in classical assimilation is based upon a privileged racial path that conjoined socioeconomic status with ethnic identities neglecting intersecting forces of race and gender. As immigrants live in the US and assimilate, they take their social positions within a society that is based in a racial hierarchy that historically racializes US born and immigrants into racial groups and structures (Saenz and Manges Douglas 2015). Today, whereas the higher socioeconomic status of South Americans supposedly gains them access to an American identity and group, their racial distinctiveness and gender could impede this process. Therefore, although classical assimilation theory has overlooked race, it must also be included within gendered and intersectional analysis of assimilation.

Segmented assimilation and importance of agency

Decades after the development of the classical assimilation theory, in a distinct social and historical context of racially and economically diverse immigrant US society, segmented assimilation theory suggested integration into three groups and identities. In particular, segmented assimilation theory magnified how the economic structure and human and social capital of immigrants, their families, and immigrants' communities of reception affect their

internalization of particular identities (Portes and Zhou 1993). In conjunction with the discourse of assimilation, the segmented assimilation theory proposes that immigrants assimilate into an American group and identity through upward social mobility. And yet, it also suggested that a second form of assimilation could occur. This form of downward assimilation involves the internalization of norms, values, and oppositional racial and panethnic identities assumed to be characteristic of poor native minorities (Portes and Zhou 1993; Rumbaut 1994). Lastly, a third form of assimilation suggested that immigrants would remain in immigrant enclaves. These enclaves were believed to provide solidarity, sustain a country of origin's identity and culture and offer social mobility through ethnic niches in occupations (Portes and Zhou 1993). Segmented assimilation, in sum, provides three groups of integration into an American, panethnic, or country of origin identity, but these identities are homogenized and strictly associated with their socioeconomic positions.

In this chapter, I suggest that the conceptualization of American, panethnic, and country of origins identities within classical and segmented assimilation neglects the agency and self-definitions of immigrants. For example, downward segmented assimilation homogenized panethnic group as poor native minority group. However, research has shown that immigrants actively participate in the construction of their identities and negotiate boundaries by accepting and/or rejecting elements of the racial and ethnic groups and identities (Massey and Sanchez 2010). In particular, studies have found that a panethnic identity signifies how merging heterogeneous ethnic groups that attach to the similarities in culture, language and experiences as a racial minority (Brown and Jones 2015; Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000; Portes and MacLeod, 1996; Rumbaut 2009; Tienda and Mitchell, 2006). Therefore, South Americans have agency to accept or reject aspects of an American, panethnic, or country of origin identity as well as to

define their identities irrespective of socioeconomic status. Overall, I propose that the classical and segmented assimilation theories tied immigrants' socioeconomic status and mobility with the merging into American, panethnic, or country of origin groups and identities. And yet, I suggest that the focus on socioeconomic status or class neglects the intersections of gender, race, and ethnicity as well as the agency of immigrants shaping their identities and assimilation. While the analysis of race and agency highlighted the oversights of assimilation theories, using a gendered and intersectionality analysis will further strengthen those criticisms and reveal other forces shaping identities and assimilation.

Intersectional examination of assimilation

Even in the significance and necessity of gender analysis within assimilation, gender must also be examined through intersectionality. Intersectionality magnifies how gender, race, ethnicity, class and other systems of power together pattern differing experiences and social location (Collins 2000). Rather than the focus be on one main effect (e.g. class or gender), the matrix of domination refers to the multiple (gender, race, ethnicity and class) intersecting systems of power that work through and with each other (Collins 2000). Therefore, the following paragraphs not only further the critique of assimilation discourse for neglecting gender and intersectionality, but also highlight how intersections of race, class, and gender shape assimilation and identities.

In short, within classical and segmented assimilation, identification with American is linked to immigrants' socioeconomic status and upward mobility into the middle class. And yet, the attainment of socioeconomic status and social mobility is shaped by intersectionality of race, gender, ethnicity and class. For instance, during the past couple of decades in the U.S., the economic restructuring has increased the female-intensive service sector and employment while

male-intensive manufacturing decreased (Pessar and Mahler 2003). The economic structure shapes the social and economic positions, networks, human and social capital, and the labor experiences of immigrant men and women (Gabaccia 1994; Gilbertson 1995; Hagan 1998; Lopez 2002; Menjívar 2006; Smith 2002). Consequently, the economic structure is bifurcated and while there was an increase in low wage employment with low human capital, the economic restructuring also increased opportunities for immigrants with higher human capital in white collar occupations. And yet, these changes in the economic structure were more beneficial for women of color than men of color as the economic structure not only intersects with gender, but also race. It is believed that racial and ethnic minority women benefit from greater ease of engagement and entry into institutions than racial and ethnic minority men (Smith 2002). Smith (2002) found in her study that Mexican women were twice as likely to have professional occupations while Mexican men were twice as likely to work in low-paying miscellaneous jobs in immigrant industries. As a result, this research reveals how intersections of gender, race and class shape immigrants' differing socioeconomic status.

In addition, within classical and segmented assimilation, mobility into socioeconomic status is believed to influence the identification with racial and ethnic groups. This simplistic linear process based on a privileged path of assimilation conjoined socioeconomic status with ethnic identities neglecting the varying forces that impact identity and group membership. Whereas the higher socioeconomic status of South American women would supposedly gain them access to an American identity and group, their racial distinctiveness could impede this process, as it does for men of color. In particular, research has found that the intersections of race, class and gender shape the interactions, group ties, perception of educational and occupational opportunities, as well as feelings of solidarity to racial and ethnic groups (Feliciano

and Rumbaut 2005; Lopez 2003; Smith 2002). One manner in which this has been exposed in studies is through the examination of how racial gendered roles shape the identities of second generation.

In particular, racial gendered roles generalize femininity as obedient and nonthreatening while masculinity is associated with dominance and in particular for men of color, masculinity is stereotyped as threatening (Feliciano and Rumbaut 2005; Lopez 2003; Smith 2002). These racial gendered roles pattern interactions and relations in educational institutions causing differences in not just educational experiences, but also differences in their educational and occupational future (Feliciano and Rumbaut 2005). For instance, studies have found that second generation girls used hyphenated-American and panethnic identities. These identities were to distance themselves from their parents' country of origin because of gendered restrictions while their academic success led them to feel hopeful about their occupational opportunities (Feliciano and Rumbaut 2005; Lopez 2003). In contrast, studies have found that second generation boys have more freedom than girls, but face issues of social exclusion, violent environments, and receive messages that they are unwelcome to mainstream society leading to the use of an oppositional racial identities (Smith 2002; Waters 2001). Furthermore, these racial gendered roles vary are not only internalized by immigrants, but also enacted in interactions and shape the construction of racial and ethnic identities.

Furthermore, studies have found that gender differences were found in the negotiation and construction of identities. For instance, Latinas and other immigrant women of color were more likely to use a panethnic or hyphenated-American identity whereas Latino men and immigrant men of color utilized a country of origin or American identity (Siber Mohamed 2015; Smith 2002). Moreover, exploring their agency exposes how the meanings attached to the

identities also vary by gender and intersectionality. Barajas Lasley (2001) found that Latinas' identities reflect their positive valuation and stress their group membership by building supportive and positive relationships especially through mentoring younger Latinos. In comparison, Latino men's panethnic identity reflected their membership to a cultural group but had less positive definitions and exercised meritocratic and individualistic ideologies to resist racialization. Additionally, while some Latino men are able to resist the racialization, others are unable to and internalize the stereotypes. Smith (2002) found that second generation Mexican boys felt pressure to embody "Mexican-ness" and masculinity by participating in a gang, being nonchalant about school, and resistive of authority. Therefore, second generation boys of color also have more racial oppositional stance towards their identities given the prominence of racial discrimination and racialization. Examining the intersections of gender, race, immigration, and class reveal the differences in experiences and how these experiences shape identity construction. In sum, women of color experience more employment opportunities and positive group self-definitions even though they are racialized and stereotyped while men of color experience racialization as criminal and threatening shaping their racial self-definitions.

Overall, implementing a gendered and intersectional analysis improves the analysis of assimilation. Gendered and intersectionality highlight how classical and segmented assimilation theories homogenized American identity, race, class and gender experiences, middle class status, agency and formation of racial and ethnic groups. All in all, South Americans are mostly immigrants of color that are racialized and experience intersections of gender, ethnicity and class shaping their assimilation and racial and ethnic identities. In this chapter, I implement a gendered and intersectional analysis (matrix of domination of gender, race, ethnicity, class, region and generational status) to analyze South Americans' racial and ethnic identities and assimilation.

Methods

Adopting an intersectional approach, I examine how gender shaped assimilation and identities of South Americans. I do so by utilizing the second stage, 43 in-depth, semi-structured face-to face interviews with Argentinians (13), Colombians (15) and Peruvians (15) in Ohio.

Findings

National origin identity and gender

Among the one-fifth of South Americans that identified with their country of origin, two-thirds were men as well as middle class. They were also mostly Argentinians and Peruvians. Country of origin identities were defined as reflections of who they are and their origins. For example a 57 year old middle class Peruvian man elucidated,

“So in terms of ethnicity, I always say Peruvian. I never understood that when I came here, Hispanic or others. I said no, none of those. I am Peruvian. It doesn't matter. 50% of that or 50% of this, I don't care about that. I was born in Peru and that's what I am.”

Not only was the formation of their country of origin identities based on their origins and its significance, but it was also formed in relation to how they perceive the panethnic group and identity. About 90% of South Americans with a country of origin identity revealed that they neither relished nor accepted the panethnic identity. A 68 year old working class Colombian affirmed,

“I will have to say that Colombian because there is quite a difference, right? There are many differences. The Mexicans are very different from us, the Hondurans, the Peruvians. Yes, we are very different. We are the same, we are Latinos, and we are here for the same reasons and we are doing the same things but there are some very evident differences.”

Furthermore, gender differences were also found in the conceptualization of the country of origin identity. On the one hand, all the South American women that identified with a country

of origin identity discussed differences among Latinos as well as their discontent towards the panethnic categorization. On the other hand, South American men that identified with their country of origin noted how they are racialized and homogenized as Mexicans. And yet, this racial and gendered conceptualization of South American men's identity was also found in relation to their panethnic identity demonstrating how South American men are racialized and homogenized as Mexican in Ohio and the US. Once the focal point of assimilation shifts from economics to intersectionality, the agency of immigrants of color exposes how the intersections of race and gender influence South Americans' country of origin identities and thus, group membership in US society.

Gendered and intersectional analysis of panethnic identities

The most popular racial and ethnic identities among the respondents were the panethnic identities of Latina/o, Hispanic and/or Hispano. The micro-level forces of agency and self-definition reveals how South Americans conceptualize their panethnic identities. Two of the main forces shaping the formation of South Americans' panethnic identities are their cultural origins and migration. The cultural conceptualization linked their panethnic identity with their origins, culture, and language. An undocumented 56 year old Peruvian woman exemplified,

“Well, I said Hispanic because for me, it's is a number of things, cultural aspects, the land where you live, all that. So I'm Hispanic because we also have to consider the language, costumes and any other aspects.”

The importance of South Americans' origins emphasizes their immigrant position. Likewise, the other half of the sample that identified as panethnic, regardless of national origin, gender and class discussed that migrating to the US shaped and changed their identities. A 60 year old working class Peruvian woman said,

“Yes, it is. I realized when I came here more where I come from... I value more my roots. I think that I have to leave my country to come up here and to recognize how precious and valuable is my country and roots.”

Even so, intersections of race and gender also shape this conceptualization of panethnic identity. About half of these respondents, mostly middle class Argentinians and Peruvians and slightly more men discussed that migrating to the US made them aware about the significance of race in the US. South American men's differing experiences of racialization in the US compared to their country of origin impact their panethnic and country of origin identities. Additionally, the difference for South American men in selecting either identity is their acceptance or rejection of similarities and differences among people of Latin American origin. These findings expose how theories of assimilation neglected micro level race relations and individual level perceptions of their identities and groups. Nonetheless, by exploring the individual level self-definitions of South Americans' identities through the intersections of gender and race further supports Massey and Sanchez (2010) findings that immigrants negotiate boundaries of race and ethnicity towards elements of the group that facilitate a sense of belonging.

Implications of intersecting macro forces on identities

Equally important within an intersectional analysis, are the macro level forces specifically, the economic, gendered, and racial structures transforming the identity assimilation of South Americans. Foremost, gendered macro level forces of the economy patterned the employment opportunities of South Americans. In the study, a little less than 66% of South American women work in service occupations that assist the Latina/o community and/or they utilize their bilingual skills in their jobs in comparison to 23% of South American men. However, South American men were not devoid of the influence of the economic structure and

rather for some it intersected with their mode of entry. 33% of South American immigrant men, regardless of national origin, that migrated to the US with a higher education visa had higher salaries and white collar occupations such as an engineer and college professor. On the other hand, 25% of South American women migrated with higher education or job visa while an additional 25% migrated because their husbands either had a visa or were American. The global economic structure privileges South American men's mode of entry leading to white collar occupations and higher SES, while South American women (regardless of mode of entry) find service employment opportunities given the changes in the gendered economic structure. While changes to a global economic system made bilingual skills an asset for South Americans, the economic changes also increased employment opportunities for women in service occupations. For instance, over 33% of South American women had occupations in various social service related occupations such as clinical social worker, legal aid, and interpreter.

While this study is unable to expose the causation between gender, economic structure, and race, the study proposes that given the economic opportunities for South American women to employ their bilingual skills or work with the Latina/o community influences their identity assimilation. Foremost, over 77% of South American women identified as panethnic compared to 57% of South American men. As discussed earlier, studies have found that Latinas are more likely to identify as panethnic than Latino men (Siber Mohamed 2015; Smith 2002). Many of these South American women revealed that their conceptualization of a panethnic group is connected to their economic opportunities. A 53 year old working class Peruvian woman professed,

“I think it's interesting. It's polemic. It's sophisticated, it has an interesting aura. And well, with the progress and growth of everything that entails being Latin-American in this country, we're even important now. That's the reason I haven't lost my job because they don't want to fire me because of [my] Spanish [skills].

Additionally these findings dispute the downward segmented assimilation process. Even though service occupations are generally paid less, their employment opportunities, rather than socioeconomic status, assist South American women in creating a sense of belonging in the US.

A 49 year old Argentinian woman proclaimed,

“Actually, I always say that Cleveland because it's a rather small city and it's underserved as far as professionals serving the Spanish-speaking community, worked out for me. So, I never experienced joblessness and I got offers many times being employed because there weren't many people with the same expertise and the language.”

For the most part, South American women feel part of the US society by negotiating boundaries around aspects they accept of US society such as economic opportunities, panethnic identity, and group as well as the city or town they live in. Moreover, in the sample, about 68% of South American women said that the city/town they lived in was welcoming towards Latinos in comparison to about 75% of South American men who scorned the city or town for being hostile toward Latinos. Additionally, as discussed earlier, within the individual level and conceptualization of South American men's identities, the findings reveal that experiences of racialization transform the identities of South American men. Consequently, differences in boundary negotiation are found among South American women and men because of their differing social location in the matrix of domination.

Not only did the gendered economic structure increase South American women's employment opportunities and occupations, but this process was also shaped by race. In particular, many of these service occupations were created because of the influx of Latinos, mostly Mexicans and Central Americans in Ohio in the past two decades and the need for social services to this mostly Spanish speaking immigrant group. While gendered analysis reveal more opportunities in service type occupation for South American women at the national and local level, an intersectional analysis exposes that the gendered service type occupations are also

racialized and specific to assisting the Latina/o community. These findings also support the literature review and other studies that found gender differences in the construction of identities given economic, gendered, and racial forces. However, one aspect that is overlooked is the intersections of immigrant women's experiences with racialization.

Even though employment opportunities appear vast increasing South American women's sense of belonging to the US, other intersecting structures influence their perception of opportunities. Past research that has examined gender, assimilation, and identities centers on second generation adolescent and young adult women in gateway immigrant cities just beginning their work experience or careers. However, South American women experienced sexism and racism not only in their employment, but also in their interactions with other mainstream institutions throughout their life course. Mostly undocumented and working class Peruvian and Colombian women discussed institutional and individual discrimination by the police, at their work, banks, schools, restaurants and hospitals. In particular, middle class South American women were slightly more likely to disclose they had been denied promotions and along with their children experienced discrimination in educational institutions. Even though South American women benefitted from the opportunities of employment related to assisting the growing immigrant Latina/o community, many faced discrimination within those jobs as well as in interactions with other institutions. In turn, these experiences of racialization and discrimination shape the conceptualization of their panethnic identities. For example, a 46 year old Peruvian working class woman states,

“Well, the positives are many Latinos who come here and who move forward and they are excellent parents, and their children move forward too and usually they become professionals. I think it's a good contribution for the United States because they are generations of professionals rather than people with no education. The negative is some Latinos are related to groups that rob or are part of drug cartels.”

The positive perception of Latinos centers on gendered occupational opportunities while the negative perception of Latinos reflects the racialization and stereotypes of Latinos in US society. Ultimately, these findings on South American women support Aguis Vallejo (2012) in that Latinos experience racism and are excluded from majority white middle class and American group. The intersections of race, gender and economy provide varying benefits and disadvantages shaping the identity assimilation of South Americans. In sum, macro level forces of race, gender, and economic structure at the global, national, and local level intersect influencing South American's employment opportunities as well as, the formation of their racial and ethnic identities, sense of belonging and thus, assimilation to US society. At the same time, these intersecting macro level forces are found in the relations and interactions of South Americans at the micro-level.

Intersecting micro level implications

South American women's social location in the economy and service occupations assisting their Latino/a communities also guided their social relations including friendships further framing their panethnic identities. Whereas over 65% of South Americans had diverse friends and no differences by gender were found and yet, a quarter of South American women only have Latinos friends. Additionally, half of the women working with the Latino community had partners that were of a differing Latino origin. Additionally, South American women were more likely than South American men to be married or in relationship with someone of Latino origin such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Venezuelan. For instance, a 42 year old working class Argentinian woman reveals,

“So I spend my time with Mexican people, so a lot believe I'm Mexican. And I say, "I'm not". But I know about their culture because my partner is Mexican, I live with him, so I share his culture, and he also shares my culture. There are more Mexicans in this country and they have stores. I know their food and everything, but we don't have anything here.

So what can we do? For example, I used to love maté (popular Argentinian tea) and now I'm not able to drink it because I don't have the product nearby. When I go to New Jersey, I buy bags and I used to drink it every day and now just once per year."

In this case, being in a relationship with a Mexican partner augmented her interaction with Mexicans as well as increased her knowledge about panethnic culture. While her and many South Americans see cultural and other similarities with other Latina/o groups, they are also aware of the differences. South Americans are not only aware of the presence and culture of Mexicans, but are also aware of the lack of presence of their compatriots and culture, which makes it more difficult to take part in their country of origin cultural traditions and identities. This could lead South Americans to strengthen their panethnic identities and focus on similarities between people of Latin American origin. Consequently, about 20% of South Americans that identified as panethnic, whom were mostly Colombian working class and undocumented women, revealed their identity formation reflected commonalities and unity with other Latinos. A 1.5 generation working class and part time Colombian woman college student remarked,

"I like it because you can meet new people, you can help people. There were two kids that were new at the high school. They were from Mexico and I helped them when I started to understand more English."

The similar experience she had as a 1.5 generation immigrant learning English and navigating a predominately white high school bestowed her capital to aid other Latinos. South Americans' interactions with other Latino groups reveal their similar experiences as immigrants and racial minorities created a sense of solidarity towards a panethnic group. A 37 year old undocumented Colombian woman reiterated,

"Our culture, our race, the culture here is very different to what we know. Latinos are more united, the family is more united even the relationship with the neighbors is different. We are very united, but Americans are very different. They are all very independent."

These conceptualizations of a panethnic group and identity created a strong sense of belonging towards a panethnic Latina/o group and positive self-perceptions as well as rejection of American culture and group. In general, the findings suggest that South American women's micro level experiences is impacted by their occupation opportunities with the Latino communities, which increased the likelihood of having only Latino friends, being married to someone of Latino origin and promoted a panethnic identity based on cultural similarities. While these interactions are positive, racialization further affected their micro level experiences.

South Americans (regardless of national, origin, and gender) discussed how Latinos are also racialized by gender. Specifically, they mentioned how Latinas are not only racialized as non-threatening, but also sexualized and stereotyped as beautiful, domestic or motherly. In comparison, South American men elucidated that Latino men are stereotyped and racialized as threatening and criminal. It is interesting to note that both South American men and women were aware of the racialization and stereotypes of the opposite sex. And yet, these varying gendered racial stereotypes have differing impact on how South Americans perceive their experiences. For example a 42 year old, a working class Argentinian woman stressed,

“I feel good because people perceive us in a better way and different. Some people say Latinas are more intelligent and prettier than Americans, we are different. It is satisfying to hear [those] beautiful things.”

Nevertheless, other South American women were more critical of these gendered racial stereotypes. A middle class 43-year old multi-racial Peruvian woman acknowledged,

“Well, I think that, women in any circumstances we're going to be treated less. I think that even with race and ethnicity. I think that it's another kind of standing block. It's almost like, “oh not only you're a woman but you are also Latina.” I think that many times I have to prove myself. Especially when it comes to leadership positions or leadership roles, you constantly have to prove yourself. You have to sometimes be tough. Sometimes we have to yell so that people can look at you. It's hard.”

Some South American women had more positive perceptions of racialization and others were more critical revealing differences in the acceptance and rejection of elements of a panethnic group and identity. On the other hand, South American men face gender specific racialization as criminal and threatening as well as experience discrimination. A 43 year old undocumented Colombian man asserted,

“Yes, men will always be seen differently than women. Women will always maintain a low profile. For example if a police officer sees them driving they are not going to pull them over, right? But if a man drives, they stop you. Well, at least in my case the police know I am Latino because of my skin tone so they pull me over. When my wife started to drive they thought she was American. They never pull her over, they don’t bother her.”

In midst of the racialization of South American men as Latino men, it further molds their panethnic identities. For instance, about a quarter of South Americans, mostly 1.5 generation Colombians and Peruvians men, revealed in the formation of their panethnic identities how their social location includes experiences of discrimination and homogenization of themselves and other South Americans as Mexican. For instance, a 34 year old, 1.5 generation middle class Peruvian man informed,

“Yes, pride and sometimes scared. With Black Lives Matter and the way the police are you have to be careful sometimes. Every now and then, it feels like people are looking at you funny, but that's something I've dealt with all my life. Being in Ohio where that's not the norm, you're an outsider... They'll ask my name, and they're like, “is that Mexican?” ...Or maybe sometimes people ask me if I want to eat Mexican food at work, and I'll be like, "No," even though I love Mexican food. And I don't know if it's just to prove people wrong, throw them off or keep them on their toes. Sometimes I'll do that, just to break a mold.”

The current racial context in the US includes increased awareness of police brutality towards men of color and the predominately white context in Ohio and larger Mexican-Latino population have racialized South Americans and in particular South American men as Mexican or Latino and threatening. Racial structures in the Midwest and US greatly shaped South American men’s panethnic formation and sense of belonging to where they live. For instance,

South American men were more likely to say that the city they lived in was not welcoming towards Latinos because of racism. A 22 year old working class Colombian man asserted,

“Here people are more close-minded. Sometimes, a lot of people are racist when they hear you with your accent and everything.”

Given the intersections with gender, the racialization and homogenization of South American men as Mexican, criminal and threatening transforms their panethnic identities into vehicles that reveal similar racialized experiences. In sum, South Americans conceptualize their identities in response to their racialized social location in the matrix of domination in the US and Ohio.

Conclusion

One of the main and essential influences in the ever-changing racial and ethnic diversity of the US is immigration. To examine immigration, assimilation began as a tool to analyze racial relations that concluded in ethnic immigrant groups merging into the dominant society and group, by identifying as American (Park and Burgess 1924). Indeed, the root of assimilation examined how immigrants and their descendants became part of and identified with majority or minority racial and ethnic groups. And yet over time, the discourse of assimilation employed socioeconomic status and mobility as central components for immigrants and their descendants to identity as American (Gordon 1964). This focal point in assimilation disregarded multifaceted systems of power such as gender and the intersections with race, ethnicity, class and others. As a result, this study implemented an intersectional—race, ethnicity, gender and class—analysis of South Americans’ assimilation into racial and ethnic groups in Ohio. The significance of the findings of the study is two-fold. First, the study revealed the assimilation and racial and ethnic identities of the understudied, but noteworthy Latino subgroup, South Americans. In particular,

South Americans have a heterogeneous social location of varying classes, ethnicities, and races. Second, applying intersectionality exposed the dynamics of South Americans' identity assimilation.

Foremost, this chapter focuses on influence of gender on the ethnic identities of South Americans. Among a quarter of the respondents, mostly middle class Argentinians and Peruvians and slightly more men conferred that their ethnic identities changed because migrating to the US made them aware about the significance of race in the US. South American men's experiences of racialization in the US greatly shaped their panethnic and country of origin identities, assimilation, and experiences in the US. Additionally, among South Americans that ethnically identified with their country of origin, 66% were men as well as middle class and mostly Argentinians and Peruvians. On the other hand, South American women also negotiate boundaries to construct their country of origin identity by rejecting the homogenization and categorization of panethnic groups while South American men rejected the racialization and homogenization as Mexicans and Latinos; in fact, even South Americans' country of origin identities reflected both racial and ethnic dimensions.

In the midst of external racialization, South Americans have agency and negotiated boundaries to reject or accept elements of the racial and ethnic groups and in particular the racialization as a panethnic group. On the other hand, some South Americans negotiated boundaries around the panethnic groups and identities by accepting cultural similarities of origins, values and language among people of Latin American descent whereas other South Americans negotiated boundaries because their immigrant social location altered their identities. All in all, the identities of South Americans propose that racialization occurs as soon as South Americans live in the US. This study further supports the inclusion of racialization within

assimilation theory because South Americans' identities reflect their social location in a society premised on a racial hierarchy. And yet, racialization varies by gender as South American men and women are racialized into identities through their differing experiences at varying levels.

Indeed, the findings propose that gender influences assimilation. On the one hand, South American men are more likely to identify as country of origin while South American women are slightly more likely to indicate a panethnic identity. Not only were gender differences prevalent among the selection of identities, but also in the conceptualization of the identities. In implementing an intersectional analysis, the study highlighted how the matrix of domination—gender, race, ethnicity and class—at the macro, micro and individual levels transform the racial and ethnic identities of South American women and men. The macro level forces includes race, gender, and economic structure at the global, national, and local level which guides South Americans' class social location. In particular, most South American women work in service occupations that assist the Latina/o community and/or they utilize their bilingual skills in their jobs in comparison to a quarter of South American men. The changing economic structure from male dominated manufacturing to female dominated service occupations as well as the increasing Latino population in the Midwest provided economic opportunities for South American women in service occupations that assist Latino immigrants.

In addition, South American women's and men's interactions and relations differ at the micro level given the effects of the matrix of domination at the macro and individual level. For instance, over a quarter of South American women have only Latinos friends and they are more likely than South American men to be married or in relationship with someone of differing Latino subgroup. Moreover, half of the women working with the Latino community had boyfriends or husbands that were of other Latino origin. Consequently, some South Americans,

mostly women, revealed that their identities reflected commonalities and unity with other Latinos. While these findings cannot reveal causation, they suggest that increased contact and relations with Latinos may transform South American women's panethnic identities. Additionally, racialization intersects with gender shaping South American women's micro level experiences and panethnic identities. Interactions of individual and institutional discrimination and stereotypes as docile, domestic and sexual marred their experiences and further shaped the social location of South American women as Latinas. Although racialization negotiated boundaries around their panethnic identities reflecting a role of macro level racialization, South American women also responded to the external racial categorization. They positively perceive their panethnic identities as reflecting commonalities and unity with other Latinos as well as a beneficial for employment opportunities. Along with other research (Barajas and Lasley 2001; Bettie 2003; Hill Collins 2001), these findings suggest that immigrant South American women, similar to other women of color, self-value, define, and empower their Latina identities to resist racialization.

In comparison, South American men who identified as panethnic were more likely to discuss experiencing gendered and racial stereotypes as criminals and threatening as well as discussed being homogenized as Mexican. Additionally, South American men were more likely to say that the city they lived in was not welcoming towards Latinos because of racism. And yet, about one third of South American men's migration was privileged in that their higher education or job visas resulted in middle class occupations. Nevertheless, their class social location did not transfer to inclusion within a mainstream middle class American group or identity. Alike other immigrant and men of color, regardless of class, the findings suggest that intersections of race, gender, and class seem to transform their assimilation and racialization as Latino men or men of

color in the racialized class system in Ohio. Similar to other studies (Barajas Lasley 2001; Lopez 2002; Smith 2002), South American men experienced racialization as Latino men, which included racial exclusion and having less positive definitions and identities. These experiences of racialization could be heightened in Ohio and the Midwest because of the increase in immigrant Latino population over the past couple of decades. It has been found that increases in immigration in the US are met with xenophobia and rise in anti-immigrant rhetoric (Portes and Rumbaut 2006). As a result, South American men negotiated boundaries around their panethnic identities in response to migrating to the US, a society fixed in a racial hierarchy. Overall, implementing a racialized, gendered and intersectional analysis highlighted many factors that influence the identity assimilation of South American men and women in Ohio.

Whereas the discourse of assimilation centered the analysis on socioeconomic status and social mobility, the findings of this chapter challenged the presumed benefits of SES and support Aguis Vallejo's (2012) findings that racial exclusion shift assimilation to a Latino group. While Aguis Vallejo (2012) centered the Latino group as a middle class group, the findings are unclear on the class component within the Latino group. Rather more research is needed to examine the class components of group membership for South Americans. Regardless, the findings suggest that South Americans assimilate into a panethnic Latina/o group within the racial hierarchy of US society. Consequently, utilizing an intersectional analysis and examining multiple levels reveals that the social location of South Americans in US society includes differing macro, micro, and individual level experiences of gendered and racialized economic opportunities, relations, interactions and experiences of racialization, discrimination and stereotypes. Therefore, this study not only further supports the call that assimilation refer to immigrants as racial groups and assimilation as racialization, but also proposes that the matrix of domination or the

intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, and class shape the identity assimilation of immigrants in the US. And yet, the study also proposes the significance of the individual level—agency and self-definitions—which varies because of immigrants’ social location in the matrix of domination. Finally, this study further supports Massey and Sanchez (2010) that assimilation is a two-way process in which immigrants are active agents and negotiate boundaries of race and ethnicity towards elements of the group that facilitate their identities.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

The premise of the dissertation was to generate a detailed and intersectional analysis of the identity assimilation of the understudied, growing, and mostly immigrant South American group. The examination of South Americans' unique social location in the United States' Midwest through an intersectional analysis provided new findings to support and/or challenge past findings on identity formation and assimilation. To examine and address the social location of South Americans, each chapter focused on a specific literature of identity construction, assimilation, and intersectionality uncovering a fragment of the multifaceted experiences of South Americans in the US. For example, chapter 2, through an intersectional analysis, examined the formation of South Americans' racial and ethnic identities. By adopting a social identity theory, this study highlights how varying macro level structures such as census racial categories and micro level agency and self-definitions construct South Americans' racial and ethnic identities. In addition, to capture the dynamics and complexities of identity formation and intersectionality, this chapter employed mixed research methods of national-level data from American Community Survey and interview data gathered in Ohio.

In addition, the discussion provided in chapter 3 centered on the assimilation discourse and the examination of identity assimilation. In this chapter, I discuss how even though the basis of assimilation theories was rooted on racial relations and immigrant ethnic groups becoming part of the dominant American group, it has transformed into an economic model. If immigrants and their descendants are upwardly mobile into the middle class, it was proposed that they would assimilate into American group and identity. And yet, in this discussion, I note how the segmented assimilation theory improved the standard economic model by including 1) downward mobility into a panethnic group and 2) mobility opportunities through ethnic enclaves

signified a country of origin identity. Nevertheless, I also argue that a gendered and intersectional analysis highlights the flaws of these theories that homogenized racial and ethnic groups and overlooked racialization and agency.

Whereas in the previous two chapters, gender and intersectionality were included as significant components of identity formation and assimilation, in chapter 4, I provide a more centered and detailed explanation of how gender and intersectionality shape immigrants' experiences. For instance, this chapter addresses the significance of examining immigrants as racial groups through a racialization process, as well as highlights the components of intersectionality including matrix of domination, social location, and multiple levels of macro, micro and individual levels. In sum, the theoretical emphasis of each chapter revealed a facet of identity formation, assimilation, and the role of gender and intersectionality on South Americans experiences.

Similarities and Differences among South Americans

In the following sections, I specifically address the overall findings and what they say about South Americans, specifically, their identity construction and assimilation experiences. Foremost, the analysis of this dissertation is premised on the experiences of Argentinians, Colombians, and Peruvians. These countries of origin were chosen as they make up 3 of the 5 largest South American groups in the US. Additionally, each country of origin facilitated a comparison among the regions of the North Coast (Colombia), Andean (Peruvian), and Southern Cone (Argentinian) even when in the comparison of these South Americans countries, the contextual differences in region were only supported for Argentinians. Furthermore, I noted how through the examination of differences in social location of South Americans that one is better able to understand their differences.

For the most part, Argentines had a differing social location and experiences compared to Peruvians and Colombians. In particular, Argentines in the sample had lighter phenotype, greater likelihood of entering the US with an education or occupation visa, and higher socioeconomic status in the US. The standard model of assimilation suggests that these factors of social mobility and middle class status would facilitate upward assimilation into American group. However, the racial fluidity of Argentines facilitated their observation of the mistreatment and discrimination of other Latinos. Nevertheless, Argentines were not exempt from discrimination, as they experienced other forms of racialization such as microaggressions because of their accents. Consequently, the unique social location of Argentines shaped their identity construction being more likely to identify as panethnic (70%) while 15% identified as Argentinean or *Other*, respectively.

In the case of Colombians, given their unique social location, over 67% identified with a panethnic label, over 20% utilized a national-origin identity, and 15% identified as *Other*. Despite the slight differences in identities compared to Argentines, Colombians' social location in the US varied for several reasons. Colombians in the sample were more likely to be poor and working class; a characteristic that could be attributed to various factors including them fleeing violence, their shorter time in the US, their undocumented status, smaller social networks, and little to none family living in the US. What is interesting to note about Colombians in comparison to Argentines and Peruvians, they had more positive perception of US society and Americans. Consequently, Colombians (mostly undocumented and working class) were more likely to have an increased attachment to the improvement of opportunities for themselves and their families, the culture and values of US society and the generosity of Americans. In turn, Colombians were more likely to reflect bicultural views as illustrated by their greater likelihood

to state that both the US and Colombia felt like home. Even in the specifics of Colombians' social location, some similarities were also found among Peruvians.

Similarly to Colombians, about 50% of the Peruvian sample entered the US to reunite with their families, pursue higher education or an occupation while the remaining Peruvian sample was undocumented. And yet, the social location of Peruvians varied; 50% of the Peruvian sample was middle class holding white collar occupations and owning, in their majority, their home. The other half of the sample of Peruvians was undocumented, mostly poor and working class. And yet, in comparison to Colombians, Peruvians had more extended family members in the US; a factor that assisted in their migration to the Midwest. Moreover, Peruvians were more likely than Argentinians and Colombians to discuss experiences of racialization, racism, and discrimination. Furthermore, the social location of Peruvians facilitated the construction of their racial and ethnic identities of panethnic (47%), country of origin (26%) and *Other* identity (27%).

Overall, whereas these are important findings, more research is needed to further explore the differences in racialization –as well as other factors–that shape the differing social location and identities among Argentinians, Colombians, and Peruvians. All in all, the distinctive social location of Argentinians, Colombians, and Peruvians shaped their dynamic identity construction. And yet, these findings propose that not only are there differences, but also similarities among South Americans' identity construction and experiences.

The Role of Micro-Level Agency

In attempts to not homogenize people from South American countries, the analysis of the identities and experiences of Argentinians, Colombians, and Peruvians began as a comparison among the three groups. And yet, many similarities were found between these groups because of

gender, race, class, mode of entry, and experiences in the US. While research on people from South American countries is categorized with the regional term of South American, the findings propose that the term may be useful as a marker of some similar experiences. In particular, national origin similarities were found in the conceptualization of ethnic and racial identities. For the most part, ethnic identities were constructed based on their origins and background, which encompassed their family, culture, Spanish language, country of origin, region of Latin America, and the continent of South America. Other components that shaped South Americans' conceptualization of their ethnic identities were others' perceptions, self-perception, appearance, context of the question, and the racial and ethnic ideologies from their country of origin. Additionally, the analysis of micro level factors expose the dynamics of identities as they vary based on the type of interaction and question, language spoken, and even mood. These findings exposed the agency and self-definitions of South Americans, which are significant forces in their identity construction.

The significance of agency is further reflected in the examination of South Americans' racial identities. In sum, over 50% of South Americans' disclosed racial identities as *Other* while 33% identified with a panethnic label. Moreover, regardless of national-origin, similarities were found in the perceptions of South Americans' racial identities denoting their origins, background, family, geographical origins and culture. Others discussed how their phenotype, others perceptions, socialization, and racial ideologies from their country of origin and US impacts the formation of their racial identities. Regardless of these factors, examining the racial identities of South Americans exposed how the ideologies from the racial structure in their country of origin continued to impact their agency and identities. For instance, generally within Latin America, the significance of race has historically been reduced by emphasizing mestizaje—racial mixing of

Europeans, Indigenous, and Blacks—national unity and cultural forces. Consequently, South Americans prioritized an ethnic identity over a racial identity, apply cultural elements to formulate their racial identities, as well as applied racial elements to their ethnic identities. Similar to other Latinos, South Americans conflate race and ethnicity in the formation of their racial and ethnic identities. By examining the micro level agency and self-definition of South Americans, the complexities of their identity formation is highlighted. Ultimately, the examination of identity construction and the meanings of racial and ethnic identities exposes several details not only of South Americans’ social location and agency, but also their racialization in the US.

Significance of Racialization, Gender, and Intersectionality

As discussed throughout the dissertation, a prominent force in the lives of South Americans in the US is racialization. Racialization designates race and social position in a society. As an immigrant group, through the process of racialization, South Americans become classified as panethnic and given a racial minority status. The findings discuss the role that migrating to the US, as well as the racial and ethnic structures in the US, the Census’ racial categories and experiences of discrimination shaped South Americans’ identities. For example, one significant force racializing South Americans is the Office of Management and Budget racial categories. Primarily, the absence of a racial category signifying Latin American origin in the Census, socialized and racialized South Americans to US racial and ethnic hierarchies, its group boundaries, and developed their sense of belonging to certain racial and ethnic groups. Other forces of racialization shaping their identities include racism, xenophobia, institutional and individual discrimination, stereotypes, and microaggressions at the national, regional, and local

level. In the midst of this racialization, the Midwest region and local Ohio level patterned particular experiences for South Americans.

In Ohio and in general in the Midwest in the past couple of decades, the Latino population has grown tremendously. In particular, within Ohio, a state that is predominately white, there are a smaller percentage of South Americans and co-patriots. Additionally, Mexicans are the largest Latino group in Ohio and in the Midwest, including a visible presence of Mexican migrant workers especially in the Northwest region and smaller communities in the Northeastern region of Ohio. Whereas, the racialization of South Americans in the Midwest is in conjunction with the social and historical context of Mexicans, it also is reflective of the perceptions and relations among Latino and other racial and ethnic groups. South Americans were adamant that Americans portrayed and homogenized all Latinos as Mexican. Consequently, this racialization is specific to the Midwest and transforms how South Americans are racialized as well as perceived by others. Therefore these findings highlighted the variation of race by state and region and significance of local and regional racial contexts.

Overall, South Americans are racialized as a panethnic group and their Latinidad is racialized in the US as foreigner, inferior, and Mexican. Nevertheless, South Americans expressed their panethnic identities and group membership as culture, language, origins, unity, empowerment, and commonalities in experiences including racialization. Although South Americans are racialized and homogenized as Latino, they positively perceived their identities and group membership. Through agency, South Americans accepted, but also rejected elements of the panethnic group. As illustrated by the conceptualization of country of origin identities, some South Americans rejected racialization, homogenization and thus, panethnic identities. Specifically, South American women negotiated boundaries around their country of origin

identity by rejecting the categorization of panethnic groups while South American men rejected the racialization and homogenization as Mexicans and Latinos. And yet, racialization is not only specific to the US and the identities of South Americans. The *Other* category exposed the internalization and negotiation of racialization from their country of origin. For example, *Other* identity included multiple identities, mestizo and Incan, which echo not only the racial and ethnic understanding of their country of origin, but also their agency to create and define their identities. Furthermore, the findings highlighted the significance of the individual level—agency and self-definitions—and the negotiation in response to racialization. As a result, this dissertation further supports that assimilation is a two-way process in which immigrants are active agents and negotiate boundaries of race and ethnicity towards elements of the group that facilitate their identities and sense of belonging in the US (Massey and Sanchez 2010).

And yet, the dynamics of agency and racialization in shaping South Americans' identities also intersect with gender altering the differing social location and identity construction of South American women and men. In particular, South American women were slightly more likely to identify as panethnic while South American men were more likely to select a country of origin identity. While there are similarities among South American women and men in the meanings of their identities, the intersections of gender, race, and class at multiple levels including macro, micro, and individual framed varying experiences and identities. Foremost, South American men were more likely to discuss how racialization influenced their identities. In particular, they discussed how they were more likely to experience gendered and racial stereotypes as criminals and threatening, as well as homogenized as Mexican. These experiences of racialization could be heightened in Ohio and the Midwest because of the increase in immigrant Latino population over the past couple of decades. It has been found that increases in immigration in the US are met

with xenophobia and rise in anti-immigrant rhetoric (Portes and Rumbaut 2006). The intersections of racialized and gendered systems of power categorized South American men as Latino men shaping their social location of racial exclusion as well as forming less positive definitions and identities.

On the other hand, South American women formed their panethnic identities in relation to similarities with other Latinos because of their occupations and increased contact, friendships, and intimate relationships with other Latino groups. While causation is unable to be captured in the data, the findings suggest that the increased interactions with Latinos possibly contributed to their service occupations that assisted the growing Latino population and/or utilized their bilingual skills. Therefore, the social location of South American women is shaped by the national economic structure, which increased employment opportunities in female-intensive service sector as well as shaped by the regional context. The context of the Midwest and Ohio has not only seen an increase in the Latino immigrant population, but also an increase in demand for services for this group. The plethora of employment opportunities for South American women and increased contact with other Latinos increased their sense of belonging to US and shaped their identities. Even though South American women discussed gendered and racialized stereotypes and individual and institutional discrimination, they positively perceived their panethnic identities as reflecting commonalities and unity with other Latinos as well as a beneficial for employment opportunities. Along with other research, these findings suggested that immigrant South American women, similar to other women of color, self-value, define, and empower their identities to resist racialization (Barajas and Lasley 2001; Bettie 2003; Hill Collins 2001). In turn, the intersectional analysis and findings of South American men and

women revealed the significant contribution of intersectionality and its components of social location, matrix of domination and multiple levels to address immigrants' identity assimilation.

Differing Focal Points of Assimilation

In addition to the significance of gender and intersectionality, these findings also provided support and critiques of assimilation theories. Foremost, South Americans' socioeconomic status is shaped by their mode of entry, context of reception, and capital, which are components featured within segmented assimilation. Regardless of South Americans' national origin, mode of entry bifurcated their socioeconomic status in the US. In general in the sample, undocumented South Americans were more likely to be disadvantaged and have lower wages, and work in manufacturing or low-wage service jobs whereas, South Americans that migrated to pursue higher education, a job or to reunite with families were more likely to have a college degree, white collar occupation, and be middle class. And yet, regardless of the middle class status and social mobility, South Americans did not identify as American. The findings support Aguis Vallejo's (2012) findings that racial exclusion shapes their assimilation to a Latina/o group. Rather these components of segmented assimilation reveal South Americans' socioeconomic status in the US rather than racial and ethnic identities.

Interestingly, none of the respondents in the sample identified as American. The social location and experiences of racialization negotiated boundaries and understanding of an American identity and group. And yet, the negotiation and agency in identity construction not only shaped boundaries to specific elements and segments of panethnic, national origin, other, but also American group. About one third of the sample revealed that they did feel American; however the meaning of American varied. Some associated American to the aspects of living and working in the US, their contribution to US society, having their immediate family in the US,

and the geography and continent of the Americas encompassing both the US and South America. Indeed the meanings and saliency of an American identity was contextual and depended on a specific segment or component of an American group. And yet, South Americans negotiated a complex sense of belonging to the US by embracing their decision to migrate, their lives in the US, and their improvement in opportunities. Ultimately, the findings challenged the culmination of assimilation as an American group and the homogenization of an American group as white mainstream middle class group.

Overall, examining the racial and ethnic identity assimilation of South Americans, a growing population with a complex social location and higher socioeconomic status compared to most other Latinos in the US, exposed a detailed and intersectional analysis of their identity assimilation. All in all, the identities of South Americans proposed that racialization occurs as soon as South Americans live in the US. As explained before, South Americans become part of the Latino panethnic group and minority position. These findings also support scholars call for the shift in the study of immigrants to racial groups rather than ethnic groups (Bashi Treitler 2015; Saenz and Manges Douglas 2015). When South Americans live in the US, they take their positions within a society that is based in a racial hierarchy that historically racializes US born and immigrants into racial groups and structures (Saenz and Manges Douglas 2015). Ultimately, the findings support the inclusion of racialization within assimilation theory because South Americans' identities reflect their social location in a society premised on a racial hierarchy. And yet, racialization varies by gender as South American men and women are racialized into identities through their differing experiences at varying levels. In the midst of racialization, South Americans have agency and negotiate boundaries to reject or accept elements of the racial and ethnic groups and thus assimilation into US society. Hence, this dissertation refers to

immigrants as racial groups, assimilation as racialization, as well as the matrix of domination or the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, and class shape the identity assimilation of immigrants in the US.

Future Research Suggestions

As the findings exposed the significance of intersectionality and identity formation for assimilation, they also offered several suggestions for future research. The examination of South Americans' provides a framework to examine not only other Latinos, but other immigrants groups in the US. Additionally, it is essential to compare these findings to South Americans in Chicago and Miami, gateway immigrant cities that have the largest percentage of South Americans in the Midwest and US, respectively. Additionally, given the prominence of their country of origin ideologies in their identity formation and panethnic identities, it is imperative to examine the influence of the sending society. For example, to strengthen these findings it would be helpful to do a comparison in specific South American countries to explore the meaning of Hispana/o and racialization. Lastly, the findings on the negotiation to parts of the American group, calls for research to examine how immigrants and their descendants create a sense of belonging to US society and racial and ethnic groups. Overall, the intersectional identity assimilation provides a more detailed and all-encompassing analysis of how immigrants become more integrated and identified with racial and ethnic groups in the US.

APPENDIX

Table 1: Means and percentages of all variables by total and South American Region

Variables	Total	North Coast	Andean	Southern Cone
South American Region				
North Coast	41.32			
Andean	41.54			
Southern Cone	17.14			
Racial Categories				
white	72.34	76.79	62.17	86.24
Other Race	23.4	19.18	32.66	11.14
Multi-racial	4.26	4.03	5.17	2.62
Gender				
Women	54.98	58.08	53.09	52.08
Men	45.02	41.92	46.91	47.92
Generational Status				
US born	16.13	15.97	15.08	19.03
Immigrants	83.87	84.03	84.92	80.97
Region				
Midwest	5.04	4.61	5.10	5.92
South	43.82	55.47	33.28	41.31
Northeast	34.24	28.89	43.27	25.26
West	16.9	11.04	18.35	27.51
Age	43.39	43.23	42.90	44.97
Marital Status				
Married	57.72	57.72	56.33	61.08
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	17.6	18.91	16.59	16.90
Never Married	24.68	23.37	27.08	22.01
U.S. Citizenship	57.9	58.82	56.06	60.14
Educational Attainment				
Less than high school diploma	14.83	12.74	17.67	13.00
High School Diploma	24.26	22.83	25.97	23.57
Some College	30.07	29.95	31.05	27.96
College degree or more	30.84	34.48	25.31	35.46
English Fluency				
Speaks only English	10.85	10.36	9.51	15.26
Does not speak English	5.63	5.59	6.76	3.00
Poor	66.64	16.13	20.00	11.13
Well	16.88	67.93	63.73	70.61

Table 1 (cont'd)

Variables	Total	North Coast	Andean	Southern Cone
Employment Status				
Not in labor force	25.5	25.78	24.57	27.06
Employed	68.39	67.91	69.11	67.80
Unemployed	6.11	6.31	6.32	5.14
Homeownership	59.69	62.49	55.63	62.81
Log of income	10.87	10.83	10.87	10.95
Poverty/Income below	15.6	15.11	16.93	13.55
Live in Metropolitan City	96.01	96.07	96.48	94.70
Family Size	3.1	3.02	3.37	2.91
Children living in the household	48	47.79	49.33	45.28
Year of Survey				
2007	16.94	17.40	16.60	16.69
2008	19.8	20.01	19.57	19.86
2009	20.78	20.67	20.75	21.09
2010	21.97	21.58	22.46	21.72
2011	20.51	20.34	20.62	20.64
Total	82,957	34,276	34,463	14,218

Table 2: Means and Percentages of Descriptor Variables for Interview Sample

	Total	Colombians	Peruvians	Argentnians
Number of Participants	43	15	15	13
South American country				
Colombia	34.9			
Peruvian	34.9			
Argentinian	30.2			
Gender				
Women	51.2	53.3	53.3	53.3
Men	48.8	46.7	46.7	46.7
Generational Status				
US born	4.7	0	6.7	7.7
Immigrants	76.7	73.3	86.7	69.2
1.5 generation	18.6	26.7	6.7	23.1
Average years in US	16.8	9.4	19.8	20.4
Region of Ohio				
Northwest	34.9	20	33.3	46.2
Northeast	55.8	80	53.3	38.5
Central	9.3	0	13.3	15.3
Age	43	37.6	49	43
Marital Status				
Married	60.5	53.3	93.3	30.8
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	16.3	13.3	0	30.8
Never Married	25.6	33.3	6.7	38.5
Educational Attainment				
Less than high school diploma	2.3	0	0	7.7
High School Diploma	6.9	13.3	0	7.7
Some College	30.2	66.7	6.7	23.1
College degree or more	60.5	20	93.3	61.5
Household status				
Middle Class	53.5	20	53.3	69.2
Working Class	48.8	80	46.7	30.8
English Fluency	79.1	53.3	93.3	92.3
Employed	93	73.3	80	76.9
Occupation status				
white Collar	37.2	13.3	46.7	53.8
Service	53.5	60	33.3	46.1
Unemployed	9.3	26.7	0	0

Table 2 (cont'd)

	Total	Colombians	Peruvians	Argentiniens
Homeownership	44.2	26.7	53.3	61.5
Religion				
Catholic	51.2	40	60	7
Other	25.6	53.3	26.7	0
None	23.3	6.7	13.3	6
Phenotype	4.2	4.5	4.4	3.5
Have children				
Yes	65.1	8	80	8
Number of children	2.18	1.9	2.4	2.1
Household size	2.9	2.9	2.8	3

Table 3: Relative Risk Ratios from Models 1 Through 3 Predicting the Selection of Racial Categories by South American Region

Variables	Model 1		Model 2	
	All variables		Interaction with gender	
	Other Race	Multi-racial	Other Race	Multi-racial
South American Region				
North Coast	2.06***	1.99***	1.95***	2.04***
Andean	3.54***	2.88***	3.46***	2.92***
Gender				
Women	0.97	0.95	0.87*	1.01
Interaction Region * Gender			1.05	0.97
Generational Status				
US born	0.78***	1.21***	0.78	1.21***
South American Region*US Born				
Region				
South	0.48***	0.58***	0.48***	0.58***.
Northeast	1.01	0.93	1.01	0.93
West	0.99	1.05	0.99	1.05
Age	0.99***	1	0.99***	1
Marital Status				
Married	1	0.79***	1	0.79***
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	1	0.88*	0.99	0.88*
U.S. Citizenship	0.97	1.12**	0.97	1.12**
Educational Attainment				
High School Diploma	0.92**	0.86*	0.92***	0.86*
Some College	0.81***	0.95	0.81***	0.95
College degree or more	0.65***	0.9	0.65***	0.9
English Fluency				
Does not speak English	1.54***	0.82*	1.54***	0.82*
Poor	1.38***	0.81**	1.38***	0.81***
Well	1.33***	0.78***	1.33***	0.78***
Employment Status				
Employed	1.10***	1.02	1.10***	1.02
Unemployed	1.07	1.08	1.07	1.08
Homeownership	0.88***	0.98	0.88***	0.98
Log of income	0.97***	1.01	0.97***	1.01

Table 3 (cont'd)

Variables	Model 1 All variables		Model 2 Interaction with gender	
	Other Race	Multi- racial	Other Race	Multi- racial
Poverty/Income below	0.98	1.03	0.98	1.03
Live in Metropolitan City	0.88**	0.56***	0.88**	0.56***
Family Size	1	1.01*	1	1.01
Children living in the household	1.08**	1.05	1.08**	1.05
Year of Survey				
2007	1.86***	0.93	1.86***	0.93
2008	1.06*	0.99	1.06*	0.99
2009	1.10**	0.94	1.10**	0.94
2010	1.01	1.03	1.01	1.03
Personal Weight	1.01***	0.99***	1.01***	0.99***
Constant	0.34***	0.11***	0.35***	0.11***

Table 3 (cont'd)

Variables	Model 3 Interaction with generational status	
	Other Race	Multi- racial
South American Region		
North Coast	2.06***	2.14***
Andean	3.54***	3.00***
Gender		
Women	0.97	0.95
Interaction Region * Gender		
Generational Status		
US born	0.78***	1
South American Region*US Born	1	1.15*
Region		
South	0.48	0.58***
Northeast	1.01	0.93
West	0.99	1.05
Age	0.99***	1
Marital Status		
Married	1	0.79***
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	1	0.88*
U.S. Citizenship	0.97	1.12**
Educational Attainment		
High School Diploma	0.92**	0.86*
Some College	0.81***	0.94
College degree or more	0.65***	0.9
English Fluency		
Does not speak English	1.54***	0.82*
Poor	1.38***	0.81**
Well	1.33***	0.78***
Employment Status		
Employed	1.10***	1.02
Unemployed	1.07	1.08
Homeownership	0.88***	0.98
Log of income	0.97***	1.01

Table 3 (cont'd)

		Model 3	
		Interaction with generational status	
		Other Race	Multi- racial
Poverty/Income below		0.98	1.03
Live in Metropolitan City		0.88**	0.56***
Family Size		1	1.01
Children living in the household		1.08**	1.05
Year of Survey			
	2007	1.86***	0.93
	2008	1.06*	0.99
	2009	1.10**	0.94
	2010	1.1	1.03
Personal Weight		1.01***	0.99***
Constant		0.34	0.11***

***= Significant at 0.001 level

**= Significant at 0.01

*=Significant at 0.05

Table 4: Relative risk ratios from models 4 predicting the selection of racial categories of North Coasters and Andeans

Variables	Other Race	Multi-racial	Black, Asian and Native American
South American Region			
Andean	1.72****	1.45****	1.24****
Gender			
Women	0.97	0.94	0.93
Generational Status			
US born	0.78	1.13*	0.97
Region			
South	0.48****	0.56	0.90
Northeast	1.03	0.92	1.19
West	0.98	1.03	1.31*
Age	0.99****	1.00	1.00
Marital Status			
Married	0.99	0.78****	0.73****
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	0.99	0.86*	0.77**
U.S. Citizenship	0.96	1.08	1.12
Educational Attainment			
High School Diploma	0.92**	0.86*	0.73****
Some College	0.82****	0.95	0.72****
College degree or more	0.68****	0.93	0.68****
English Fluency			
Does not speak English	1.59****	0.70*	0.64**
Poor	1.42****	0.79**	0.55****
Well	1.40****	0.78****	0.57****
Employment Status			
Employed	1.08**	1.02	1.19**
Unemployed	1.04	1.10	1.36**
Homeownership	0.89****	1.00	0.83**
Log of income	0.97****	1.01	1.00
Poverty/Income below	1.00	1.05	1.32****
Live in Metropolitan City	0.92	0.56****	0.79*
Family Size	1.01	1.01	1.03
Children living in the household	1.08**	1.05	1.03

Table 4 (cont'd)

Variables	Other Race	Multi- racial	Black, Asian and Native American
Year of Survey			
2007	1.84***	0.88*	1.03
2008	1.05	0.97	1.12
2009	1.09**	0.94	1.04
2010	1.01	1.00	1.03
Personal Weight	1.01***	0.98***	0.99***
Constant	0.62***	0.24***	0.10***

***= Significant at 0.001 level

**= Significant at 0.01

*=Significant at 0.05

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