A TALE OF TWO CITIES?: LANGUAGE, RACE, AND IDENTITY IN HOLYOKE, MASSACHUSETTS

by

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To all the people of Holyoke, thank you. Siempre Pa’lante.
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Holyoke, Massachusetts is not traditionally seen as a hub for immigrant experience. To the contrary, there is a rich history of diverse groups occupying Holyoke. For the purposes of this thesis, I focus on two pan-ethnoracial groups: Puerto Ricans and Indians. On the one hand, Puerto Ricans, a Latinx subgroup, comprise the majority of the downtown population of Holyoke, which is the site of the highest concentration of Puerto Ricans outside of the island. On the other hand, Indians, a South Asian subgroup, have very little visibility in the larger community fabric. Additionally, South Asians are undertheorized in the context of the east coast, and particularly in Massachusetts. Yet, despite these differences, both the Puerto Rican and Indian diasporas create their identity vis-à-vis the other. I analyze the sociolinguistic and sociocultural experiences of these two groups through a comparative, community-based examination. Through analyzing the experiences of two pan-ethnoracial groups simultaneously and in relation to each other and whiteness, I seek to bypass the white/black racial imaginary in the U.S. context.

My analysis is sharpened by paying attention to the ways ethnoracial and linguistic identities come to be enacted, reproduced, and transformed in the context of mass mediatization of language and identity. Examining the construction of identity in a comparative manner of two groups who are represented varyingly in popular media and everyday discourse illuminates the profound erasures that happen when experiences of a
particular group are homogenized. A theoretical lens on language adds to complexity of the analysis, as it is often a group boundary marker and through which differences are perceived.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Holyoke, *Pueblo Del Encanto*?

Walking down Dwight Street, it’s hard not to pause and marvel over City Hall—the large, passé gothic structure that adorns downtown Holyoke, Massachusetts. Just outside of city hall, on the wall, is an oversized mural of a license plate that is iconic of a Puerto Rican license plate; on the top, in black smaller print, it reads “Puerto Rico,” in the middle of the plate in large letters read “Holyoke,” and on the bottom of the plate, it reads “Isla Del Encanto,” or “Island of Enchantment.” This license plate is not only iconic, but rather a literal sign of diasporic Puerto Rican identity that so permeates the city, particularly its downtown environs. On the bottom corners of the license plate is the Puerto Rican flag, further signifying identification with the island. Publicly claiming space as their own, however, has not been easy for the city that has the highest concentration of Puerto Ricans in the U.S.¹ Take it from Betty², one of two Puerto Rican nonprofit executive directors in Holyoke:

You know, it’s again, history repeats itself. If we go back, 80’s, in the 1980’s, I don’t think it was the 90’s. If it was, it was in 1990, but it wasn’t, you know, late in the 90’s. There was a mural of the Puerto Rican flag that was put on Hamilton

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¹https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tablesServices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_5YR_B03001&prodType=table.
This is according to the 2015 American Community Survey of the U.S. census, and does not include data about the island. Of the estimated 40,342 inhabitants of Holyoke, 19,964 (49.5%) are Latinx, and out of that, 18,497 are Puerto Rican, or 45.9% of the Holyoke population. Additionally, there is a higher percentage of Puerto Ricans in downtown Holyoke, where my fieldwork was done. Downtown, according to my interlocutors, houses over 90% of the Puerto Ricans in Holyoke.

² I use pseudonyms for most of my interlocuters in order to maintain confidentiality and privacy. However, public officials and publicly recognizable personae do not have pseudonyms.
Street on the side of a building, and there was a city councilor, Kristine Kos, and she was an American veteran, and she felt that was inappropriate. And, I can’t remember if it was that they were putting the Puerto Rican flag and then the American flag, or if it was just the Puerto Rican flag... She then gathered a group of individuals that were going to come and paint over the Puerto flag because we are living in the United States. And so, there was an uproar on that. That was really an uproar. Nobody was going to stand for, at least, especially it’s downtown, it’s on Hamilton Street. Not going to happen. But, it was the threat of two communities. One was, not only is it Anglo-white, but it’s also about being American versus a group of students, because they were young teens, with the help of an artist that wanted to put up a part of their heritage. They wanted to identify with the Puerto Rican flag, but then the other side of the community was saying “you’re an American now, this is your flag.” So, that happened then. You would think that people learned that we can have two flags, individuals can have two, sometimes three, ok, four—depends on how you identify yourself. Then the very talented young man from UMass [University of Massachusetts Amherst] decides to do a mural of a license plate, which is something that we kind of showcase, you know? It’s a license plate from your town. So, it could be Cayey, it could be Cidra, it could be Ponce, it could be Bayamón, it could be Río Piedras. I mean that’s my town, ok? And, he has this mural, he wants it to be up, and everybody goes up in an uproar. And thank God that we have a progressive mayor, and he said “put it up here, right next to city hall.” And people still to this day, they go “I can’t understand why that’s up there. Cannot.” But meanwhile, it’s really interesting, is that the whole contrast against these as I call it two visions, two identities.
Betty, who has been living and working in Holyoke for nearly four decades, articulates the politics of identity that often divides Holyoke. The “two visions” or “two identities” of Holyoke that Betty referenced signify the public visibility of Puerto Ricans and Puerto Rican identity in downtown, a fact that many “Anglo-white” residents detest. Further, Betty articulates the racialization of the students as “others,” being relegated to an interstitial space opposed to the “Anglo-white Americans.” In this racializing of students as “others,” the intersections of race, age, citizenship, and occupation are inseparable.

The city councilor, an older white woman who fits the “ideal” citizen-subject, is opposed to the younger students of color, who are positioned as deviant citizen-subjects.

I mention interstitial earlier because of the ongoing colonial relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico, as the island is still officially (albeit ironically) recognized as a “Free Associated Commonwealth.” Since Columbus mistook the original inhabitants of the island in 1493 as “Indians” to Ponce de León’s seizure of Puerto Rico in 1508, the economic and political fate of the island has been in colonial hands (Bourgois 1995; Acosta-Belén and Santiago 2006; Black 2009). Initially a colony of Spain for nearly four hundred years, the Spanish-American War of 1898 relinquished Puerto Rico to the United States. Although U.S. citizenship was imposed upon Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans in the Jones Act of 1917, Puerto Ricans who occupy the mainland are “American now” to the Anglos, and have to adopt the U.S. flag despite how they can be at times positioned as “racial others.”

Nelson Roman, the Holyoke City Councilor for ward 2, the ward that comprises the neighborhoods in downtown Holyoke that houses the majority of Puerto Rican inhabitants, including South Holyoke, Springdale, Ingleside, and Churchill, echoed
Betty’s sentiments. “It is a tale of two cities (laughing). So, there is the upper Holyoke, which is the upper wards, that is affluence, that is rich, that is predominately white\(^3\). And, then, there is the lower wards, which is predominately Latino, and mostly Puerto Rican, poor, impoverished, really, totally different worlds and universes.” I was introduced to Nelson by Betty initially during my year-long AmeriCorps VISTA service with Enlace de Familias, him being brought on to Enlace for program development and community organizing. I took a year off in-between graduating with my undergraduate degree in anthropology and applying for graduate school partly to have a break in schooling and partly to gain some experience. I applied for a few AmeriCorps VISTA positions in Holyoke because I was familiar with the area and it served as a foray in relation to my interest in potentially conducting fieldwork in Holyoke. I ultimately ended up at Enlace de Familias, devoting my energies to grant writing and fundraising for their social services, including their Nurturing Fathers Program, which addresses a critical void that is created when local services solely focus on the needs of single or struggling mothers, preventing not only fathers, but whole family units from thriving.

Nelson, a self-described openly gay, HIV+ Puerto Rican, is a jovial figure with an amplitude of energy for social justice and change. During our interview at a local Puerto Rican-owned café, he described being formerly homeless whence moving to Holyoke, and his subsequent journey to being a prominent community organizer, nonprofit worker, and now city councilor. In his account, Nelson produces a social topography of Holyoke, detailing the escalation of socioeconomic “prestige” as one moves to the upper wards that

\(^3\) According to the 2015 American Community Survey, there is a “White alone” population of 17,517, or 43.4% of the Holyoke population.
are predominately white, and perhaps ironically, include wards that escalate up a mountain (a literal escalation).

On the one hand, the upper wards are characterized by the more affluent and rich, and who are more often than not white; “the doctors, the lawyers, the judges” in Betty’s estimations. On the other hand, in the lower wards, we have those who are primarily Latinx\(^4\). While we are coming into a clearer picture of Holyoke, its demographic makeup, and its politics, this ethnography is not about the historical cleavages and differentiations between “Anglo-whites” and Latinx communities. Although the influence and visibility of Puerto Ricans and Anglo-Americans is evident, who else inhabits the city? What sort of erasures are happening to imagine Holyoke as either Anglo-white and/or Puerto Rican? In this vein, I more broadly seek to contextualize the presence of South Asians\(^5\), more specifically Indians, in Massachusetts, and particularly in Holyoke.

1.2 Guiding Theories and Intellectual Stakes

This work is grounded in intersectional poststructuralist approaches that analyze diaspora and language, race and racialization, ethnicity and ethnicization, and identity and subjectivity. Scholars such as Ortner would claim poststructuralist approaches are “antihumanist” and deny “the workings of power” and “attempts of subalterns…to attain to the privilege of becoming subjects…” (2006, 109). On the contrary, I would argue that these approaches attempt to analyze the dialectics of the micro-practices of acting subjects and the larger political-economic, historical, and sociocultural structures and

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\(^4\) I use the pan-ethnoracial term “Latinx” as a gender inclusive term in lieu of Latino/a or Latin@.

ideologies that can constrain or enable action. In order to interrogate my claims, we will have to ask: how have scholars imagined and constructed the concept of diaspora diachronically?

The term diaspora, historically, conjures up images of a group, usually in pan-racial and/or -ethnic terms (i.e. African, Indian, Puerto Rican, etc.), displacement from the home country to a host country, and a “teleology of ‘return’” (Clifford 1994, 306). Similarly, Flores outlines traditional theorizations of diaspora, starting with the conceptualization of diaspora as the enumeration of defining qualities and preconditions thereof, and the limits and borders of one diaspora in relation to other diasporas and the larger community (2009, 15). These commonly held assumptions of diasporas are challenged in the works of Hall (1990), Clifford (1994), Appadurai (1996), Flores (2009), and Canagarajah and Silberstein (2012), all of whom foreground diasporic groups ability to question the boundedness and stability of nation-states.

Studies of transnationalism represent a paradigmatic shift in diaspora studies, as it challenges commonly held assumptions about the linear narrative of modernity. Khagram and Levitt state “human social formations and processes have always been trans-border and trans-boundary to varying degrees” (2008, 1), pointing to the ways that modern nation-states hegemonically construct “imagined communities” premised upon provincial models of belonging (Anderson 1983). Thus, we can see how inherent in discussions about diasporas, whether explicitly or implicitly indexed, is their transnational nature. Transnationalism, following Briggs et al., allows “us to acknowledge that the nation, like sex, is a thing contested, interrupted, and always shot through with contradiction” (2008, 627). Diasporas disrupt common-sense notions of the nation-state, delimiting its
presumed territorial boundedness and isomorphisms of space, place, and culture (Gupta and Ferguson 1992).

In this regard, Comaroff and Comaroff state that “The vision of modernity as a relentless advance marked by commodification and rationalization, by the dissolution of concrete particulars into abstract universals, has long been questioned” (2009, 23). This is so because concrete realities and local practices do not neatly map one-to-one with abstract universals. Ong (1996), drawing on Foucault, nudges us to consider how citizenship, imagined as abstract, universal rights, engenders subjects as different types of citizens and non-citizens. Ethnographically, the notion of liberal democratic citizenship as universal, abstract, and neutral has been challenged, pointing to how citizenship in “Western” democracies is ideologically constructed around a racially, religiously, linguistically and gendered normative subject (e.g. Fernando 2014; Weiss 2014). Those that deviate from the unmarked normal subject can result in a form of “dis-citizenship” (Ramanathan 2013). A modernist approach to apprehending diasporas also denies the agency of diasporic populations as they dialectically straddle macro-social, political, and historical factors in their micro-practices.

Instead of imagining diasporic identities “as bounded, territorialized, static, and homogeneous,” a focus on language can reveal their dynamic, local, and ideological nature (Canagarajah and Silberstein 2012, 82). Identities, and meaning(s) by extension, are context-dependent, an insight Goffman (1959) afforded us in his analysis of the presentation of the self. The central Goffmanian insight was that there is no static, singular self, and that each instance of interaction is a performance. Using an analogy of a stage, Goffman suggested that there are multiple performances of the self during a
variety of social situations. In this sense, notions such as “authenticity” or “native” are not inherent, objective qualities of speech, but a performative category.

Conceptions of linguistic and gender performativity are indebted to the respective works of J.L. Austin (1962) and Judith Butler (1988, 1990[1999]). J.L. Austin’s speech act theory was remarkable when it was posthumously published for shifting conceptions of language as an abstract system of morphology, phonology, and syntax to one that accounted for how language constitutes social action. Austin, in *How to Do Things with Words*, outlined his speech act theory, noting how “When we issue any utterance whatsoever, are we not ‘doing something’?” (1962, 91). Of importance to this discussion, distinctions aside in his typology, are utterances that are illocutionary, or those utterances that do something by virtue of stating; there is a conventional force imbued in the utterance rather than just conventional meaning, thereby they are performative in nature (1962, 108).

Judith Butler, drawing on phenomenologists, philosophers, linguists, and anthropologists, suggests in theorizing the performativity of gender, that gender is constituted through the “*stylized repetition of acts*” (1988, 519; emphasis the in original). Meaning, gender is not something that we simply *have* as an essentialist category of identity; rather we are actively *doing* gender through stylized repetition of acts, i.e. through gendered ideologies associated with certain behaviors, actions, sartorial choices, linguistic choices and so on. Thus, gender is not something that is prior, unchanging, or interior to a person, rather it is something that is continuously (re)produced, presupposed, and potentially transformed by the very act of doing. In this vein, I extend both Austin’s and Butler’s conceptions of performativity to theorizations of diasporas.
Instead of imagining diasporic formations as taken-for-granted, diasporic identities are performative, nonessentialist, and polylithic. Clifford, in discussing the shifting conceptualizations of “diaspora,” critiques essentialist paradigms that have at their center “a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host (bad host?) country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship” (1994, 305). Canagarajah and Silberstein, also building off the work of Clifford, argue that “One has to ask whether it was ever true that all diaspora subjects always held a return to their homeland as their ultimate goal” (2012, 81)? Both Hall and Clifford allude to the destabilizing potential of diasporic populations, in that they contest hegemonic power relations that map nationalistic ideologies onto groups that do not neatly identify with monolithic identities. Similarly, Hall urges us to contest hegemonic ideologies of diaspora that ultimately deny the complexity and hybridity of diasporic identities. In his theorization of diaspora, Hall tells us:

\[
\text{diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return, even if it means pushing other people into the sea. This is the old, the imperialising, the hegemonising, form of ‘ethnicity’… The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined, not be essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by } \text{hybridity} \text{ (1990, 235).}
\]

Acknowledging the heterogeneity and diversity of diasporic experience entails an analytical focus on process as it pertains to notions of diaspora. Meaning, diasporas “…are not about fixed states of social being but about process— what is clumsily but usefully called diasporization, that is, how diasporas come into being and develop over time” (Flores 2009, 16).
Processes of diasporic formation in the U.S. context require an examination of the intersections of diasporization, race, and language. Claire Jean Kim’s (1999) formulation of the “field of racial positions,” in which “racial triangulation” occurs. Racial triangulation offers a productive bypass to the U.S. racial imaginary premised upon a black/white dialectic. According to Kim, racial triangulation, or the construction of a race and racial categories in relation to two other reference points, is constructed along two interrelated axes: superior/inferior and insider/foreigner (Kim 1999, 107). The field of racial positions is premised upon hierarchical notions of race, in which whites are perceived as the aspirational, unmarked norm. Kim argues in the racial triangulation of Asian Americans, that on the one hand they are simultaneously cast as morally superior on cultural grounds to blacks by those who are in power (whites), but morally inferior in opposition to whites. On the other hand, while blacks are seen as culturally inferior to Asian Americans (and whites), they are in relative insider status compared to Asian Americans, who are perpetually foreign. We can come to see how racial triangulation shapes processes of diasporization—in sum, how it is that diasporas come into being and develop are affected by racial categories that are premised upon their relation to two other reference points, a continual and ongoing process that changes with time.

Central to understanding racial triangulation are language ideologies. The notion of language ideologies, as conceptualized by Michael Silverstein, lends itself as a theoretical lens through which to view culture. Language ideologies can be defined as “a set of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (1979, 193). Deploying this articulation of language ideologies enables the apprehension of ethnolinguistic formations, or how
particular forms of speech come to be emblematic of whole groups. Ideological formations such as ethnolinguistic formations are based on “the Herderian assumption that the sharing of vernacular linguistic practice constitutes a population as an ethnic group.” (Eisenlohr 2006, 23). Herderian language ideologies, in essence the idea that a nation is “one language, one people,” contribute to the understanding of how differences are perceived and thereby regimented.

Within the field of racial positions in the U.S. context, perceived origin differences are framed in terms of race and ethnicity (Urciuoli 1996). Race is imagined and produced through essentialist tropes, as underlying biologically determined attributes or features of a group of people corresponding to presumed phenotypical appearance. Ethnicity, on the other hand, is usually imagined in cultural terms, usually a group who shares a language, religion, beliefs, or other practices. In her analysis of racialization and language, Urciuoli notes that “language differences are routinely attributed to origin differences and in the United States origin differences are framed as race and ethnicity” (1996, 15). Language difference, from mainstream perspectives, is highly indexical of race and ethnicity. At the center of race and ethnicity assumptions in the U.S. is the normative, unmarked white, middle class, American who speaks English.

Urciuoli (2001) argues that the racializing of language results in the remapping of race from biology on to language. Within racializing discourses, cultural and linguistic differences are managed and are imagined as inferior. In ethnicizing discourses, cultural and linguistic differences are lauded and not seen as racially inferior, but nonetheless managed and appropriate only in certain circumstances (Urciuoli 1996, 16). For example, speaking a “foreign” language in public spaces induces certain reactions of scrutiny,
whereas in state sanctioned markers of “cultural authenticity,” such as parades, speaking a foreign language is admissible. As a result, depending on the context, language as a sign indexes “foreignness” or “authenticity.” Furthermore, the competing and oftentimes contradictory processes of belonging to a nation-state, racialization and ethnicization, result in my usage of “ethnoracial” to signify the contextual nature of “reading race” or ethnicity (Chun 2011).

Chun describes “reading race” as the “explicate labeling of people or practices with race terms” (2011, 403). This practice is a form of racialization whereby race becomes a central logic of differentiation based on assigning racial meanings to cultural signs. These signs are read as racially significant, but could have just as easily been read in a different manner (2011, 404). Racial significance, in these instances, rely upon the cultural logics of “authenticity” and “inauthenticity,” whereby racial performances of “whiteness” or “blackness” are ascribed to particular semiotic modalities such as linguistic tokens.

Racializing and ethnicizing discourses result in “ideological bundles linking the United States, whiteness, and the English language, on the one hand, and Latin America, ‘brownness,’ and the Spanish language, on the other” (Rosa 2014a, 157). Processes such as these can better be understood through the formation of the modern nation-state. In an era of heightened ethnonational identity, the state ideologically deploys a standardized language as its measure of groupness in relation to the “other.” Silverstein aptly states “there is a structured and frequently stratified system of differences in which subjective identities emerge only diacritically, in mutually reinforcing acts that create and sustain an ‘us’ different from either ‘you’ or ‘them’—topologically, a we-centered disk of
difference, out to the limits of known humanity and beyond” (2003b, 534). He imagines the hegemony of English ethnolinguistic identity imagined through the metaphor of a “n-dimensional conically shaped social space-time, with a top-and-center and various dimensions of moving down and out” (2003b, 535). Thus, English ethnolinguistic identity is the unmarked norm at the top and center of the cone, whereas the relational and oppositional ethnolinguistic minority is a marked identity at various points down-and outward.

Ethnolinguistic identities ultimately coalesce as a consequence of the boundary making nature of semiotic differentiation (Irvine and Gal 2000). Semiotic differentiation involves iconicity, or the ways that perceived differences, such as linguistic forms, are emblematized, or the perceived one-to-one mapping of linguistic forms onto groups of people; fractal recursitivity, or the projecting of perceived oppositions onto “others;” and erasure, the flattening of complexity inherit in any given sociocultural setting. Semiotic differentiation and language ideologies such as Herderian ones result in profound erasures of linguistic and cultural diversity, not just across pan-ethnoracial groups, but also within subgroups. Undoubtedly, language is not always a straightforward signifier of unity and group cohesion, as is in the case of Spanish.

Zentella (1996) notes that in the “chiquitafication,” or homogenizing of U.S. Latinx linguistic and cultural diversity, the nation-state glosses over the complexity of the Latinx experience. Latinx in the U.S. hail from vastly different “socioeconomic, cultural, and political histories,” in addition to speaking “dialects” (Zentella 1996, 2). These various dialectal Spanish’s, through semiotic differentiation, serve to mark group boundaries. In the U.S. context, anglophones, through key institutions of standardization
such as schools, legitimate Castilian Spanish (Spanish language textbooks teach the Castilian variety) while demeaning other “dialectal” forms of Spanish (Zentella 1996; Silverstein 2003b). These language ideologies reflect claims of linguistic purity, i.e. where the “pure” version of a language purportedly exists.

Assimilation of Latinx in America is often indicated by the use of English over their “native” language. However, “The language ideologies that inform these views problematically… equate English with Americanness and Spanish with non-Americanness” (Rosa 2014b, 42). What these language ideologies also tend to obscure is that English is not a straightforward signifier of “Americanness” or belonging. Rosa (2014b) goes on to show that even when speaking English, Latinx can be perceived to be speaking with an “accent,” reflecting U.S. monoglot ideologies that value one variety of one language as the norm (Silverstein 1996). In this context, Standard American English is posited as the variety of English that has prestige whereas the perceived “accented” English of Latinx is marked as not conforming to the norm. These semiotic processes, or the manner by which a particular sign, English, comes to signify America, demonstrates how through the racialization of language, Latinx can be positioned as foreigners at any given point.

In popular media and elsewhere, Asian Americans, a pan-ethnoracial umbrella term encompassing South Asians—Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and other groups, have been long lauded as a “model minority” ever since the passing of the Hart-Cellar Act in 1965. The 1965 legislation allowed immigrants outside of northern and western Europe, specifically from the Asian, Latin American, and African continents to immigrate. Shalini Shankar notes that “Asian Americans were named a model minority in
1966 when both the *New York Times* and later *U.S. News and World Report* lauded Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans respectively for succeeding without government support, by relying on their families” (Shankar 2008, 13). Of note is the ways that Asian immigrants become romanticized as “rising” or “successful,” but in other particular moments are seen as outcasts or “forever foreigners.”

Asians and Asian Americans, Kim (1999) notes, are doubly elided when configuring and imputing racial categories. While Asians and Asian Americas are relatively valorized as “model minorities,” this very valorization entails civic ostracism; they are valorized by whites relatively to blacks, but are ostracized by whites in relation to blacks. Thus, differences in immigration trajectories and power relations are erased, and group differences are ignored. Tactics of relative valorization and civic ostracism, Kim claims, are deployed ultimately to keep the power and privilege of whites intact and institutionalized (Kim 1999, 126-129).

Latinx, on the other hand, are seen to have a “culture of poverty” (Lewis 1959), a model of identity that also obscures the lived experiences of the different ethnic groups. The “culture of poverty” narrative, or pathologizing perceived underlying cultural traits, is eerily similar to the pathologizing of blacks in *The Negro Family: The Case For National Action*, more commonly known as the Moynihan Report (1965). Latinx and South Asian diasporic experiences are of analyzed separately despite the aforementioned resemblance. Both groups are homogenized and racially triangulated against normative ideologies of blackness and whiteness. Furthermore, language is central to diasporic coalescence and (trans)formation, particularly in Holyoke where both of these groups occupy overlapping locales.
I contend, with this theoretical foregrounding, that in the context of Holyoke, Massachusetts, and in the U.S. more generally, we must go beyond the black/white binary that structures experiences of minority groups. More specifically, the diasporization of Latinx and South Asians identities requires an understanding of racial triangulation—of how racial categories are constructed in reference to normative ideologies of whiteness and blackness. Furthermore, an analytic of language is crucial to apprehend processes of diasporization and racial triangulation, as “language lies at the center of imagined and contested pasts and futures, mediating desire and identity” (Brown and Silberstein 2012, 2). Thus, a focus on language as it pertains to the intersections race and identity points to a more dynamic conceptualization of U.S. diasporic experience.

1.3 Anthropological and Contextual Backdrop

While there have been anthropological studies that have focused on U.S.-based South Asian diasporic populations in general, and Indians more narrowly, they are few and far in between. Shalini Shankar’s Desi Land: Teen Culture, Class, and Success in Silicon Valley (2008) examines familiar topics of immigration, multiculturalism, language, and diaspora in relation to the politics of identity construction for Desi teens in California; Junaid Rana’s Terrifying Muslims: Race and Labor in the South Asian Diaspora (2011) analyzes how transnational Pakistani laborers in the “Middle East” are racialized in the U.S. through a globally connected racial system amidst the “Global War on Terror;” as well as the works of Maira (2002), Sharma (2010), and Afzal (2014). However, despite these notable exceptions, there is still a dearth of ethnographic work on this population, and to be more precise, in northeastern U.S. This lack is even more
pertinent considering how “Since 2013 India has become the second largest source of immigrants to the United States after China, followed by Mexico” (Mishra 2016). Representative ethnographic works of diasporic Puerto Ricans are more expansive, particularly in northeastern United States, as detailed in works such as Phillipe Bourgois’ *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* (1995), who analyzed the experiences of Puerto Rican crack dealers in East Harlem, New York following the crack epidemic in inner-cities during the late 1980’s and early 1990’s; Timothy Black’s *When a Heart Turns Rock Solid: The Lives of Three Puerto Rican Brothers On and Off the Streets* (2009) who examined how the effects of the shift from an industrial to a post-industrial society and the larger impacts of neoliberalism affected Puerto Ricans in Springfield, Massachusetts; and Ana Celia Zentella’s *Growing Up Bilingual: Puerto Rican Children in New York* (1997) looks at the complexity of bilingual Puerto Rican youth in New York and their socialization through time and space.

Thus, my ethnography is positioned to add to the discussion of east coast Indians as well as Puerto Ricans and the complexity of building intra- and inter-diasporic relations and identity. Larger cities such as Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles have received the bulk of attention when it comes to (im)migrant narratives and research, meaning “…more research is needed in small cities and communities…” that accurately reflect the changing demographics in a globalized and globalizing world (Carey Jr. 2009, 2). Although it is not my purpose to give an all-encompassing account of Holyoke, Massachusetts nor is it necessary to include a detailed history of the city, nonetheless it is important to have some contextual information.
Holyoke is not traditionally seen as a hub of immigrant experience. To the contrary, there is a rich history of immigration to Holyoke, resulting in the coexistence of multiple groups. The history of Holyoke is inextricably tied up with the history of Springfield, Massachusetts, a neighboring city “founded” by William Pynchon in the mid-17th century, one of the founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Up until the mid-19th century, Holyoke had been a part of the larger Connecticut River Valley, but upon the arrival of Irish immigrants in the mid-19th century, the area had been renamed Holyoke. Successive waves of European immigration marked the settlement of Springfield and Holyoke, each immigrant group seeking better livelihoods, fleeing political or religious persecution, famine, war, or otherwise hostile conditions, similar to recent waves of (im)migration.

The earliest waves of immigration following the initial English settler-colonials included German, French-Canadian, Italian, Irish, Polish, Greek, and Jewish immigrants. These early immigrants were typically met with disdain from the erstwhile inhabitants that preceded them, often being excluded from schools, jobs, and housing. Whereas earlier waves northern and western European immigrants where racialized as white, southern and eastern Europeans such as the Irish were racialized as white only with the influx of other “non-white” immigrant groups. As Chakravorty et al. note, “The East

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6 For the historical overview of Holyoke, I rely upon Springfield Technical Community College’s (STCC) project “Our Plural History,” a project that was coordinated by faculty and personnel from colleges such as STCC, UMass Amherst, and Amherst College; http://ourpluralhistory.stcc.edu/index.html. According to their website, “‘Our Plural History’… is an examination of the idea of pluralism in the United States. The website focuses on immigrant and ethnic groups in the Connecticut River Valley of western Massachusetts” which Holyoke is a part of. The team at “Our Plural History” aggregated data from “local libraries and museums, community organizations and neighborhood associations, church histories, local monuments and historical markers, newspaper archives, historical and family photographs, cultural festivals, buildings and street signs, memoirs and interviews,” thus from many primary and secondary sources.
Coast saw a large inflow of Jews, Italian Catholics, Greek Orthodox, and other religious groups, creating apprehensions among Protestant elites…In particular, the arrival of millions of eastern and southern European Catholics” including Irish Catholics (2016, 9). The “Hindu Problem” on the West Coast created such apprehensions from the majority white population, even though Hindu’s were legally considered a part of the “Aryan” and “Caucasian” stock (Chakravorty et al. 2016, 1-18). Later arrivals, such as Puerto Ricans, have also been perceived as racially “other,” not eligible for incorporation into whiteness by prevalent racial ideologies. The intersections of U.S. settler-colonial history, arrival to New England (Massachusetts specifically), and ideologies of whiteness contribute to the ongoing logics of Holyoke as a white space.

Puerto Rican migration to the northeast, and specifically Holyoke, occurred during the mid-20th century following Operación Manos a la Obra, or Operation Bootstrap, “an economic incentive program aimed at industrializing the economy by attracting foreign investment…” on the island (Carey Jr. 2009, 13). While Operation Bootstrap did initially improve the economic and social conditions of the island, there was much displaced labor for those in the countryside. As Timothy Black writes, “Mass migration and declining numbers of workingmen was the story left untold as many heralded Puerto Rico as an ‘industrial miracle’” (2009, 11). This abridged history brings us to the contemporary period where Puerto Ricans comprise nearly half of the population of Holyoke, and is the site of the highest concentration of Puerto Ricans outside of the island. While Puerto Rico has a long-standing colonial relationship with the U.S., Indians also occupy a complex relationship with the U.S. dating back centuries,
although documentation of Indian indentured laborers and stowaways is scarce (Prashad 2000).

The history of South Asians in the United States is deeply entwined with the histories of colonialism, decolonization, and U.S. immigration regimes that dictated who could come, when, and how (Prashad 2000; Mishra 2016; Chakravorty et al. 2016). Indians have been emigrating to other places since at least 1833, when the once British Empire ended the institution of slavery, opening up the demand for cheap labor in prior colonies. Many Indians ended up in other locales within South and Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, only later making their way to the U.S. (Chakravorty et al. 2016). This early 19th and 20th century presence of Indians in the United States, like many immigrant groups, is marked by denial of citizenship, racial hostility, and exclusion. While Indians were considered to be “Aryan” and thus white based on racial taxonomies of the time, they were nonetheless excluded from naturalization and property holding for the early part of the 20th century.

It was not until 1965 with the passage of The Immigration and Nationality Act (also known as the Hart-Cellar Act) that quotas on the Indian subcontinent and many other areas were removed, leading to the influx of Indians in the U.S. This removal of quotas was due to the intersecting interests of the Cold War, including the arms race and the image projected around the world of U.S. race-relations during the 1960’s (Chakravorty et al. 2016). Many Indians professionals, including those in computer science, engineering, and technology were given temporary H1-B visas, a move considered by Prashad (2000) connoting how we value people’s labor but not their lives. These early Indian professionals influenced the publics’ perception that gave way to what
is now considered the “model minority” myth. Later waves of Indian immigration have
changed the socioeconomic profile of this heterogenous group, as many from
Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan have diversified the makeup of South Asian professions,
immigration motivations, and reception in the country (Mishra 2016).

However, in the context of Holyoke, both the Puerto Rican and Indian diasporas
create and negotiate their identities vis-à-vis the other. Analyzing the sociolinguistic and
sociocultural experiences of these two groups comparatively will be of benefit and is of
increasing importance as inter-diasporic relations increase. Through analyzing the
experiences of two pan-ethnoracial groups in relation to each other, to whiteness, and to
blackness, I offer a productive bypass to the U.S. racial imaginary premised upon a
black/white dialectic by anchoring Claire Jean Kim’s concept of “racial triangulation”
(1999). With the large movement of people across geopolitical boundaries, populations
are always in flux. This is true in the United States, as minority groups reflect the realities
of lives that do not fit into the black/white imaginary. Additionally, examining the
construction of identity in a comparative manner of two groups who are discursively
represented varyingly in popular media and other such institutions will illuminate the
profound erasures that happen when all experiences of a particular group are
homogenized. A theoretical lens on language adds to complexity of the analysis, as it is
often a group boundary marker and through which differences are perceived.

1.4 A Note on Methods and Positionality

This thesis is premised upon a comparative, community-based examination of the
enactment, (re)production, and (trans)formation of ethnolinguistic diasporic identities
among the South Asian, namely Indian, and Latinx, namely Puerto Rican, communities in
Holyoke, Massachusetts. The methods carried out for the fieldwork portion of this thesis consisted of a mainly qualitative approach, relying on ethnographic methods; primarily participant observation, formal, as well as informal interviewing. I also supplement my qualitative analysis with quantitative measures, such as information from the U.S. Census.

My results and analysis rely on seventeen interviews I conducted with various community members, Adult Education personnel and students, business owners, and nonprofit leaders from diverse backgrounds, as well as participant observations to understand intra- and interminority identity construction and performance of South Asians and Latinx communities. Interviews lasted anywhere from six minutes to over an hour. During the course of my research that was conducted from June 2016-August 2016, I immersed myself within the community by volunteering for a summer class for adult HiSET (High School Equivalency Test) students in Holyoke called “Hot Jobs in IT,” spending time at various community organizations and local businesses, and attending community events. Within the South Asian community, I interviewed six interlocutors (all men) from the Indian subcontinent—five of Gujarati descent and one of Punjabi descent. In regards to the Latinx community, seven interlocutors (four women and three men) were of Puerto Rican descent and one man of Mexican descent. Also interviewed were three Anglo-Americans (two women and one man), all of whom worked for

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7 Social categories such as gender, class, or caste are important when conducting qualitative analysis in terms of accounting for a wide range of interlocutors and experiences. Thus, my analysis takes into consideration I did not interview, nor did the chance appear, to interview Indian women. Meaning, my argument could be bolstered by this lack and the experiences of my Indian interlocutors do not serve to account for all Indian experiences.
nonprofits in various capacities ranging from executive director to ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher to program director.

Having worked within the Holyoke community for a number of years as a student liaison during my undergraduate studies, volunteering as an adult HiSET tutor/mentor, and finally as an AmeriCorps VISTA at a grassroots nonprofit, I have forged and maintained relationships with members in the community. I relied upon the snowball method to find informants due to my history and anchoring within Holyoke as well as the time limitations of data collection. Furthermore, having grown up and being socialized to the Indian diaspora within Western Massachusetts, family and family friends provided invaluable resources for Holyoke connections and information.

The objective of any ethnographic endeavor is to get an “emic” point of view of the language and culture. To get an “emic” point of view is perceptibly more “objective” than an “etic” point of view. Of course, “objectivity” is linked to positivistic thinking that excludes subjectivity—our emotions, political, moral, and other stances. This leads to a poor ethnographic experience of the language and culture, and is untenable; equally untenable is a “native” point of view, thus descriptive adequacy calls for a middle ground between these poles (Duranti 1997, 85). Following Kirin Narayan, I believe it is crucial to foreground the ethnographers’ positionality to “take responsibility for how our personal locations feed not just into our fieldwork interactions but also our scholarly texts” (1993, 681). Meaning, one’s social location is imbued within a larger matrix of power relations, and this positionality affects who one can and cannot interact with. My role as a researcher from a large university, being raised within the Indian diaspora in
Western Massachusetts, and having worked in Holyoke for a number of years affords me access to certain people and populations and can preclude me from others.

Lastly, it is productive to question the binary logics of “native” vs “foreign” anthropologist, and moreover, the “us” vs “them” mentality that is rooted in the colonial epistemes of anthropology (Narayan 1993; Gupta and Ferguson 1992). As Gupta and Ferguson state “We are interested less in establishing a dialogic relation between geographically distinct societies than in exploring the processes of production of difference in a world of culturally, socially, and economically interconnected and interdependent spaces” (1992, 14). Instead of taking the world for granted as static, bounded, and territorialized, we can attend to the dynamic, fluid, and context-specific articulations of the production of difference. These points are crucial because “Which facet of our subjectivity we choose or are forced to accept as a defining identity can change, depending on the context and the prevailing vectors of power” (Narayan 1993, 676), pointing to the complexity of identities.

In terms of analyzing interviews, I rely upon discourse analysis “… a research method that provides systematic evidence about social processes through the detailed examination of speech, writing and other signs” (Wortham and Reyes 2015, 68). Narratives, whether occurring in an interview or “natural” setting, are central sites for discourse analysis. This brings us to a related and relevant point— any meaningful analysis of language and culture cannot strictly rely on the referential content (denotational in Silverstein’s terms) of what is said, rather, attention should also be directed to the interactional content (Silverstein 1993). Briggs defines the referential function of language as “…its ability to point to persons, objects, events, and
processes…” in contrast to the indexical function which “… is dependent on some feature(s) of the context in which the expression is uttered” (1986, 42). The meaning accrued by referential or denotational content amounts to factors that semantically signify irrespective of contextual parameters, thereby failing to capture the indexical, and hence pragmatic, effects of language-in-use. In other words, “…referential functions evince much less variation along the lines of class, ethnicity, geography, social situation, and the like than do indexical ones” (1986, 43).

The denotational and interactional content are also often called narrated and narrating (or narrative) events or frames per Jakobson (1957[1990]). Wortham and Reyes describe narrated events and narrative frames:

The narrated event is what is being talked about, while the narrating event is the activity of talking about it. Narrated content includes more than just narratives. Jakobson uses ‘narrated event’ to refer to any denoted content, and we use ‘narrating event’ to refer to any discursive interaction among participants, whether or not the speakers tell stories (2015, 3).

I will use the term narrated frame when discussing the explicit content of what is being discussed and narrative frame to discuss what participants are doing with the language, signaling the indexical modality of signs. Following Nakassis, I agree that while language is of analytical import, it is the indexicality of language that attention should be directed ethnographically (2015, 2). An indexical sign can be defined as the “the relationship, or semiotic ground, between some material sign token and its putative object based on an existential relation (e.g., of causality, co-presence, or contiguity)” (Nakassis 2015, 2).

Deictics are an important type of indexical, as they position our understanding of the linguistic and sociocultural context of any discourse and discursive interaction of participants. Words such as “this” and “that” are example of deixis, in which the nature of the sign is contingent upon the context of occurrence (Silverstein 1976; Mertz 1985).
For example, let’s suppose the sentence “I once owned a house in London. This house was blue” is used in a discursive interaction. The phrase “this house” is only meaningful with some contiguity with a previous utterance of “house.” Otherwise, the phrase “this house” becomes indecipherable without some previous indication to its usage in the context of the speech event.
CHAPTER 2. LANGUAGE, RACIALIZATION, AND IDENTITY AMONG THE LATINX AND SOUTH DIASPORAS IN HOLYOKE, MASSACHUSETTS

2.1 The Helping System of Holyoke, Underrepresentation, and Racial Discord

As I have mentioned in the introduction, Betty is one of two Puerto Rican executive directors in Holyoke, both whom are woman, in a city with nearly 50% Latinx population. Like Betty, Nelson is also in the minority as a city councilor—he is 1 of 4 Latinx city councilors out of 15. The Holyoke School Committee similarly consists of 2 Latinx and 1 African American out of 9 members. Indeed, this is a general trend within the city I have noticed in my years working, volunteering, and now researching. On the one hand, a majority of the teachers, executive directors, and program directors that I encountered, including some that were interviewed, where white. On the other hand, the primary demographic that is targeted and is a part of and engage in social services are Latinx.

Historically, as I’ve laid out, Holyoke has been an (im)migration hub as successive waves of (im)migrants have fulfilled the city’s once industrial needs. Once the shift from an industrial to service-oriented economy occurred, many Puerto Ricans lost their jobs and did not have sufficient cultural capital to work in other sectors or were actively discriminated against (Bourgois 1995; Black 2009). The institutional hegemony of Anglo-Americans in Holyoke results in unequal power dynamics between the wealthier Anglo population and the underrepresented Latinx population. Indeed, power-relations in Holyoke were expressed by many of my interlocuters from Puerto Ricans, to Indians, and even my Anglo interlocuters.
As described in the introduction, many of my interlocuters expressed this narrative in terms of “a tale of two cities” or “two visions, two identities,” connoting the racial and spatial divide and politics of Holyoke. Mike, the executive director of Careers in Holyoke, a nonprofit in Holyoke that provides Adult Basic Education (ABE) and workforce development, is a white, elder man who has been working in Holyoke for about as long as Betty, nearly four decades. He articulates the power dynamics as:

Well, you have the largely, the largely white, wealthy portion of the city, and you have the impoverished Latino portion of the city. And, there’s…look this has happened nationally and not just in Holyoke. The concern in the Caucasian world of you know we’re gonna lose our majority and we’re gonna lose control, and that’s what’s happening here, is there is a concern about that. And, I think that the wealthy, Caucasian population in Holyoke is really happy with the way things are, and they’re not necessarily inclined to make any sacrifices to help their Latino brothers.

Mike expressed the inequity in representation of Latinx community members on boards (nonprofits, city council, schools), and in local decision-making. Instead, he says, business interests often override community interests, leaving little recourse for those that are caught in systemic oppression. Part of the problem is that a majority of the “helping system,” as Betty refers to it, is made up of Anglo-Americans when in fact the majority of recipients of this system are Latinx. The helping system consists of coalitions (Holyoke Unites/ Holyoke Se Une and now the South Holyoke Safe Neighborhood Initiative) between nonprofits, community providers, the Holyoke Public Schools, the police and fire departments, and healthcare providers in order to bring “service providers and families together to affect direct and indirect change.”8 These power dynamics were apparent when I attended the Western Mass Puerto Rican Parade.

8 http://www.enlacedefamilias.org/about-enlace/
El Festival de La Familia Hispana or Hispanic Family Festival took place in mid-July, in which the Western Mass Puerto Rican Parade occurred on the last day of the overarching festival. It was a sunny, humid day around noon when the parade started. I arrived just as the festival was about to start, sweating while I walked down to the street where the festival was going to begin. The street soon began to be adorned by vendors selling U.S. and Puerto Rican flags and other merchandise, local community members and prominent figures such as the mayor and city councilors, dancers, and cars that displayed license plates and paint that signified the island hometowns of those car owners. There were many onlookers, primarily Puerto Ricans, conversing with family and friends and enjoying cool drinks and food on the sidewalks. It was a beautiful display of staking community space as their own.

I mention this event because while the Holyoke St. Patrick’s Day Parade allows the spray-painting of shamrocks on roads and sidewalks, the spray-painting of coquí’s, a national symbol for Puerto Ricans, is not allowed. Both Betty and Nelson expressed their frustration of not being allowed to display extensions of their identity in the form of spray-paint, whereas the white majority, and Irish specifically, can physically display their identity in the heavily Puerto Rican-populated downtown environs.

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9 http://www.lafamiliahispana.org/aboutus.html
According to their website, their purpose involves “fostering community betterment for all of the people of Holyoke, with special emphasis on the Hispanic community and on youth, through events and programs that foster the enrichment and development of Hispanic culture and civic knowledge, including but not limited to organizing and implementing a yearly Festival de la Familia Hispana, developing a library of Hispanic literature and Hispanic films, developing a Hispanic Family Pageant, collaborating with other civic and cultural organizations, creating a charter school and helping to develop scholarship funds for Latino students; and the conducting of such other activities and programs in furtherance of such purposes as may be carried out by a corporation organized under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 180.”
While the Irish and Anglo population, racialized as white, have the ability to display or downplay ethnic affiliations indexed through signs such as shamrocks without recourse, Puerto Ricans are simultaneously racialized and ethnicized, resulting in their “subjectification,” vacillating between desirable and undesirable citizens (Ong 1996). On the one hand, Puerto Ricans have the ability to celebrate their identity publicly in the form of a parade, thus their differences are lauded. On the other hand, there are certain limitations to their public display of Puerto Ricanness indexed by their inability to spray-paint coquí’s on the sidewalk.

I asked Nelson why staking community space was still so controversial. “It’s again, it’s institutional racism, it’s systemic. So, it goes back to the founding of this city, you know, like this, Holyoke was where, it was Irish, it was Ireland’s Parish of
Springfield. So, it’s where the rejects from Springfield, the Irish, were shipped off to. The Irish moved up, white flight, they moved up, they moved up the hill literally. And then, the Latinos came in the 40’s and 50’s and 60’s, so we became the new class of immigrants that were then seen as less than. So, that’s just the way the city was founded, and that mentality level has continued.” Nelson foregrounds the continuing systemic and institutional racism and racialization of Puerto Ricans that plagues Holyoke. The “subjectification” of nonwhite populations are an inherent part of Holyoke’s history—the white elite discursively imagine, produce, and reify the types of citizens they deem desirable or not. Puerto Ricans nonetheless display agency even with these structural barriers, as they have continually fought to publicly claim space and display their identity.

2.2 Who’s “Very Smart” and Who’s “Ghetto”? Racial Triangulation Amongst the Diasporas

A key central analytic and purpose of this thesis is to question and push back against EuroAmerican racial epistemes that are premised upon a black/white binary. Binaries such as black/white or nature/nurture harken back to structuralist paradigms accredited to Claude Lévi-Strauss, whose work on myths, religions, and kinship ushered in positivistic notions of culture and society (see Lévi-Strauss 1962[1966], 1964[1969] for examples). Instead of taking the black/white binary as a “natural” and “objective” underlying structure of culture, racial triangulation offers a more capacious understanding of racial formation in the U.S. that incorporates experiences of populations that are neither black nor white, but nonetheless who are triangulated against normative ideologies of whiteness and blackness (Kim 1999).
Following Alim and Reyes (2011), I seek to bring discussions of race to the fore in light of “colorblind” and “postracial” ideologies that seek to obscure the centrality of race. In Holyoke, Latinx and South Asians are triangulated against naturalized racial ideologies of whiteness and blackness. Whereas Asian Americans, and South Asians by extension, are considered morally superior on cultural grounds to blacks (but inferior to whites), Latinx in Holyoke, from Anglo perspectives, are considered culturally inferior to whites and South Asians, akin to blacks. From in-group perspectives, Puerto Ricans are less unanimous in beliefs of their cultural status. Depending on the person within the Latinx community, common discourses of “Latino Threat,” “culture of poverty,” and “Latino Spin” were apparent (Lewis 1959; Dávila 2008; Chavez 2008).

On the one hand, anthropologist Leo Chavez demonstrates how discourses of the “Latino Threat” racialize Latinx groups as populations that need careful management, whereas anthropologist Arlene Dávila demonstrates how Latinx groups are “white-washed” and portrayed in contradictory ways including “illegal, tax burden, patriotic, family-oriented, hard-working, and model consumer” (2008, 1). This ethnicization of Latinx as hard-working and model consumers attempts to reproduce normative American values, attempts that are not rooted in empiricism. On the other hand, South Asians were often portrayed as “model minorities,” relatively valorized by whites, indexing their tentative insider and culturally superior statuses in opposition to the shifting nature of Latinx insider or outsider status.

Consider the following passage from Betty explicating how Puerto Rican youth negotiate their identity and their tendency to try to assimilate to whiteness or blackness:
I’ve seen now here four generations of Puerto Ricans, and so when there isn’t the celebration of culture and the historical narrative which most of our young people don’t have a clue about Puerto Rican history, you then try to assimilate with something that is not your identity. There are a lot of Puerto Ricans that go ‘I’m white, I’m American,’ and they’ll always say, when you ask them, ‘I’m American.’ They don’t say ‘I’m part of the Puerto Rican diaspora,’ or they don’t identify with their heritage whatsoever. So, they try to assimilate with white or with black, and so, you’re not of either of those worlds.

Betty continues on to say: “And so yea, there’s that issue that kids don’t have those role models, and again it goes back to the assimilation. You are either black or white. It’s not I want to be like Isabella. You know?” Part of the problem, for Betty, is that there is no diasporic consciousness for Puerto Rican youth, a problem worsened by not having proper role models. She explains later that there is a “brain drain” in Holyoke—those that do obtain their college degrees or doctorates move to big cities like New York or Chicago, or even perhaps move to Puerto Rico. Thus, there are no Puerto Ricans who exhibit outward signs of “professionalism” such as suits, or the parent that is a basketball coach dressed up in basketball gear. What these youth do witness is the white professional who more often than not is the executive director, teacher, coach, or conversely, the “cool” black rap artist and associated signs of “coolness” such as particular sartorial choices, registers of talk, and so on. Essentially, there are not enough Puerto Ricans who reproduce normative American values.

Bianca draws upon the “culture of poverty” (Lewis 1959) and “Latino Threat” narratives (Chavez 2008). Bianca, a ESL student at Careers in Holyoke, doesn’t like the city of Holyoke because “it’s so ghetto…well it’s not all Holyoke, it’s just the Flats.” The Flats, mentioned in the introduction, is a neighborhood in ward 2, the ward with the highest concentration of Latinx. Bianca clarifies that there is a diversity of “nice” and
“bad” people, but it’s still a “problem area.” Dolores, described Indians as “very smart” based off of what she had heard others say and her limited experience interacting with what she perceived to be Indians who owned deli or convenience stores. Dolores, another ESL student at Careers in Holyoke, is a mild-tempered, easy-going woman in her late fifties who has children, grandchildren, and great-grandchild most of whom were born in the U.S. Being born in Puerto Rico, Dolores initially came to Philadelphia in the mid-1970’s for economic opportunities due to the unavailability of jobs on the island. She then found her way to Springfield, Massachusetts, finding a factory position, an occupation that she has been involved in since 1986. She has worked in Holyoke as a factory worker as well, however, Dolores enrolled in ESL classes hoping to finding a better job outside of factories.

If Indians are “very smart” in Dolores’ estimations, then Puerto Ricans are “ghetto.” She says of Anglo perceptions of Latinx in Holyoke: “I think sometimes they hate them. Because sometimes, there’s a good and a bad. But they’re so loud. Sometimes I get ashamed. I go to the stores and I listen to them. They say bad words. I understand because I’m Spanish. Sometimes I get ashamed of them, you know? The way they act, they don’t behave. We call them ghetto people. Our own nationality. That’s what we call them, ghetto people.” For Dolores, the homogenization of Latinx subgroups as “Spanish people,” which include Colombians, Dominicans, and Puerto Ricans from her experiences, are differentiated from the socioeconomically well-to-do Indians. The intersections of race, language, and class are reflected in the characterization of Latinx as “ghetto people” according the “the way they act.”
The model minority myth was often brought up amongst my interlocuters when discussing South Asians, and specifically Indians in Holyoke. Mike, for example, said in his “limited experience with Indians folks, as it is with Asians, is that they take it upon themselves to learn. They’re incredibly motivated, they’re incredibly bright, and you know, they work independently to a large degree.” While Mike did acknowledge the “situation in Puerto Rico,” meaning the large financial debt and depravity of jobs, his analysis of Puerto Ricans and Indians was devoid of the larger historical and political-economic structures that facilitated immigration trajectories and economic dependence upon the U.S. For Indian emigration to the U.S., it was not until the liberalization of immigration in Hart-Cellar Act of 1965 that allowed large numbers of Indian professionals to come. These Indian professionals were brought on H1-B visas to work largely in engineering and IT jobs, and possessed advanced degrees and command of the English language prior to immigrating (Prashad 2000; Shankar 2008).

Prashad (2000) suggests that the model minority myth is a functioning of neoliberal discourses which obscure crucial contextual factors and place blame on individuals; one must pull oneself up by their bootstrap so-to-speak. Furthermore, the model minority is leveraged to regiment “problematic populations,” such as blacks and Latinx, who “complain and ask for handouts” instead of “simply” working hard to obtain upward socioeconomic mobility (2000, 7). Indian professionals economically benefitted from U.S. immigration policies and the arms race of the Cold War, whereas Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans would soon feel the negative effects of neoliberalism and economic globalization.
The neoliberal restructuring and economic globalization of the world engendered by Reagan and Thatcher in the late 1970’s and 1980’s resulted in flexible capital accumulation, decreased taxes for the wealthy, industrial deregulation, the retrenchment of welfare, attacks on labor unions, and structural adjustment programs; in sum changes in the composition and spatialization of capital (Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Trouillot 2001; Stiglitz 2002; Harvey 2005). The most affected by these policies were minority and marginalized groups, i.e. Puerto Rico. These broader structural changes resulted in the immigration of many Puerto Ricans to the U.S. mainland to seek opportunities.

Amongst my Indian interlocuters, the model minority myth was also a common narrative. Ron mentioned to me how many Indians don’t have “traditional” jobs, rather they are business owners, doctors, IT workers and other sorts of entrepreneurs and professionals. Additionally, Ron is aware of the educational attainment and selected processes of immigration to the U.S. of Indians:

S: Others feel about Asians in this area? So not you, but other people. How do you think they feel about Asians in this area?

R: I mean, they've been good. We are all hard-working community. I have not seen any crimes among our community, and we are friendly because we are here to work hard.

S: Yea.

R: So, it's always good to know each other, but I mean I haven't encountered anybody who said that “oh Asians are bad.”

S: (laughs) Nobody said that?

R: On the contrary, they are interested in knowing our culture, our religion, and they take more interest. And sometimes when we talk, they search on the internet, they find out and come and tell our thing.

S: Yea, so there's positive image of Asians in this area, and probably within the United States as well?
R: Yea, I think so. When I, whatever, say if I like go to Indian Association, or if I go to the Gujarati Association, very few people are in a job. Most people are having their business, hotels, motels, gas stations, restaurants, and lot of doctors, IT engineers. So...

S: Why do you think that is? Why is it that so many Asians and Indians are business owners, or doctors, or engineers?

R: Most of them are immigrated after they have achieved something way back in the country. And they came here on the basis of their merits, so that's why say he became doctor there, so he came here and he became doctor here, that's why he's doctor here.

Ron, a Gujarati man in his early sixties, owns a convenience store on the border of Holyoke and Westfield, a suburban town with a majority white, middle-class population. While Ron encounters Latinx often at his store, like my other Indian interlocuters, they are seen merely as customers, people to profit off of. Unlike many of my other Indian interlocuters, however, Ron came to the U.S. in 2001. He and his family moved close to some kin in Massachusetts who leveraged their cultural and economic capital to help Ron and his family enter the business world.

In our dialogue above, Ron describes the perceptions of Asians as a “hard-working community,” not involved in any crimes, as entrepreneurs and professionals, and ultimately, those who reproduce normative white, middle-class American values. Also apparent in his analysis of Indians in the U.S. is the notion of meritocracy, that Indians are here because of their merits. Elided in Ron’s analysis is the larger historical backdrop to U.S. immigration trajectories, and the context in which Indians, specifically professionals, were allowed to emigrate to the U.S. There is also a gendered component to who it is that is the doctor that came on his merits. Indeed, from my encounters with Indians in Holyoke, business was a male dominated space, as all my Indian interlocuters were male. There were certainly instances where the wives of these men were present or I
had the chance to interact with the wives, but the men were the primary individuals running and attending to the business.

If Indians are these well-to-do immigrants, then what about Latinx? In Ron’s estimations Latinx are family-oriented individuals who are deeply tied to their culture and language, a sort of “Latino Spin” (Dávila 2008): “Latino? Many are also like a close community. Mostly they are remaining in their own community. They love to speak their language. A lot of people don't even know proper English also. So, they are happy, they are also having a big family culture in them. And they take care of their family. I've seen that older people, younger people, their children, they do have different culture, but they are in family mostly.” In opposition to Indians, who presumably have “proper” English language skills, Latinx “love to speak their language,” in which many “don’t even know proper English.” Language ideologies that position Latinx as groups who use “unproper” English serve to stigmatize an entire population of language users who may not identify with the separation of English and Spanish in straightforward ways (Silverstein 1979; Rosa 2014b).

2.3 Language, Racialization, and Identity

Perhaps Betty has the most pointed example of how language, race, and class intersect in the formation of identity. Processes of linguistic racialization, “…or the sociocultural processes through which race – as an ideological dimension of human differentiation – comes to be imagined, produced, and reified through language practices” (Chun and Lo 2016, 220), are critical to understand the ways particular language ideologies are imagined to index race. Betty reflects upon how Puerto Ricans are racialized as having a “culture of poverty” and how language is central to processes of racialization:
There are Latinos and there are Latinos, and depending on who you are as a non-Latino, you will have your own point of reference. There are some Anglo-whites who are wanting very much to be a part of the Latino community, and there are others that see the Latino community as those who have, who cause the trouble, those who drain the system, those who don’t want to do anything with their lives, those who are disrespectful, get in the way and shouldn’t be here. And if they could buy them the airline ticket, they will send them somewhere very far. So, it all depends on who it is. I think people today are still scared of us just by the way we look, that we do not look like them. They also take a lot of how the media portrays us, but if you speak English, if you are somewhat educated and are able to articulate yourself, and you are respectful, and whether you work or not, they wouldn’t necessarily know that. But, if you have that, they just sort of kind of like “ok.” So, reflect back like when I was running for school committee, it was election day and I actually was driving around giving my poll workers a rest. And so, I remember standing in front of the Elderly Towers on Maple Street, and there was someone from another camp, and so we were there and it was like “hey, how are ya?” And, so, they slowly approached, and then we started talking and they go “wow, you’re really educated and you’re Puerto Rican?” And it was like “yea.” And so, that’s the way, you know it’s like, also really you can be educated, really there’s only a few of you.

Monoglot language ideologies that correlate English (what is often referred to as Standard American English) with Americanness (Silverstein 1979, 1996), as to speak English and be articulate as a Puerto Rican, to certain Anglo-whites, is indexical of educational attainment and socioeconomic standing. Spanish, then, would be viewed as a “foreign” language practice equated with Latin America and brownness (Rosa 2014b, 157), evidenced by the ways in which Betty was racialized as a woman of color who could “articulate” herself in English, much to the surprise of her interlocuter. Betty also expounds upon the “Latino Threat” and “culture of poverty” narratives (Lewis 1959; Chavez 2008) expressed earlier, seen in “those who cause trouble, drain the system, those who don’t do anything with their lives,” and the ways in which people are scared “of us just by the way we look.” These narratives are dominant in enregistered mediatized portrayals of Latinx as the drug dealers, criminals, and gangsters (Agha 2005, 2011) that serve to racialize and homogenize entire populations.
Like Betty, Bianca relayed a story to me when we met up where she takes her ESL classes in an instance where she felt that her Anglo teacher unjustly racialized her and her friend according to their linguistic practices:

I feel like Americans, the shitty Americans, gringos, white people, have problems with Americans, with Puerto Ricans, or people that speak Spanish, and I’mma tell you right. Because in here, I’m not gonna say her name, there is a person that she’ll see me talking Spanish to someone else and she’ll pass by you and be like “you’re not allowed to talk Spanish.” Even if we’re in break. And, I’m like, the other person I be talking to, she gets mad and she’s like “yo hablo español sí yo quiero.” She’ll be like “I’ll talk Spanish if I want if we’re not being in class.” She’ll pass by again and she’ll get mad and she’s like “you’re not allowed to talk Spanish, you’re only allowed to talk English.” But, she talks “Russia,” but she’s allowed to talk “Russia” to other people. So, then my friend gets mad and she starts over here talking shit. She’s like “that’s not fair. Just because she’s a teacher and she could talk in “Russia” doesn’t mean we’re not allowed to talk in Spanish.”

In this instance, Bianca and her friend were targeted for conversing in Spanish with each other during a break in one of their ESL classes. This presumably Russian teacher had the ability to converse with others Russian speakers without recourse, however, for Bianca and her friend, speaking to each other in Spanish was derided. The “gringos,” a Spanish term that equates to “white people,” albeit with negative connotations, have problems with Spanish-speaking people in Bianca’s experiences. The linguistic racialization in this excerpt can be amounted to the ways the Anglo teacher can carry on conversing in her native tongue without any problems, whereas the two women of color, Bianca and her friend, are chastised for speaking in Spanish with each other.

Of note also is how “race is read,” or the ways particular cultural signs are assigned racial meanings (Chun 2011). On the one hand, the Spanish linguistic practices of these women of color are attributed racial meaning—they are not appropriate practices for a classroom. On the other hand, the “Russian” linguistic practices of the Anglo woman are not attributed racial meaning, and is ok within the classroom and institutional
setting. This speaks to the ways “white” as a racial category is unmarked and normative (Waugh 1982), and can nonetheless deploy signs of ethnic identity, like language, without recourse.

While the linguistic racialization of Latinx were more apparent during my time in Holyoke, there was an instance of racializing Asian American linguistic practices. I was a volunteer for a free summer program titled “Hot Jobs in IT” at Pan Center, a nonprofit that provides many services, but primarily ABE services. Pan Center has a computer lab on the first floor, where I spent a few hours a couple of times a week from mid-July to early-August helping out with the summer program. While this program was free and open to the public, although with a limited number of seats, the class was primarily comprised of men, with just a few women. The composition of the class was diverse, with a Mexican, a Dominican, a couple of Puerto Ricans, a man from Mali, a Jamaican woman, and an Anglo man. I participated in the activities run by a few white men, two who ran a basic commuter programming course, and one who was a college professor at a nearby community college who ran an introductory computer networking, web design, and security class. Additionally, I would go around and help if anyone had questions or needed assistance with their work, something I was familiar with as I had been a tutor/mentor at Pan Center for a number of years. In fact, I knew a couple of the students who participated in this summer programming, as well as many of the personnel in the building.

During the “Hot Jobs” program, I met Joe, a younger Puerto Rican man who had recently graduated from community college and was the assistant coordinator for the technology center where the program took place. We had many similar interests, which
we found out during the initial stage involving commuter programming, including our interest in video games. Joe was open to interviewing, which took place in his office next door. I asked Joe about his experiences with Asian Americans and South Asians in the area, admittedly not having much exposure besides a couple of foreign exchange students in high school. Curious as to how non-Asians felt about Asians, Joe confessed “There’s, there tends to be, not, how do I say this, not exactly like a discrimination, but there’s always like ‘oh Jackie Chan.’ You know, there’s always that joke. Or, like, if somebody is speaking ‘Asian,’ they’re like ‘oh, they’re talking Jackie Chan again.’ I don’t know why, but that tends to be the go to.”

Joe, in homogenizing Asians as speaking “Asian,” relies upon narratives that linguistically racialize Asians as speaking “Jackie Chan.” Of course, Jackie Chan is the famous Chinese actor who has American mainstream appeal, but of importance here is the ways that “Yellow English” or “Mock Asian” (Chun 2009) as an enregistered performance of identity is circulated and reproduced. “Mock Asian” entails language ideologies that position Asian American English linguistic practices as a foreign accent utilized for comedic performances similar to the racialized performances of “brown voice” of Indian Americans (Davé 2013). Furthermore, “Mock Asian” assumes stereotypical connections between a population, linguistic practices, and nationality, thereby reproducing isomorphisms of space, place, and culture (Gupta and Ferguson 1992).

Through the sociocultural processes of linguistic racialization and “reading race,” we can come to see how language, race, and identity intersect in the diasporization of Latinx and South Asians. The power and normative status of Anglo’s serve to ostracize
linguistic practices and phenotypical features that are not white nor Standard American English (SAE). In relation to the Latinx diaspora, speaking “proper” and “unaccented” English indexes educational attainment and class status, signs that surprise some Anglo individuals. On the other hand, in the limited cases of linguistic racialization in the Asian and Asian American diasporas, enregistered mediatized identities circulate and are reproduced discursively in interactions. More broadly, these instances demonstrate the how language functions not only to abstractly refer to things in the world, but is a tool to claim action upon the social word.
CHAPTER 3. MEDIATIZATION, GLOBALIZATION, AND IDENTITY POLITICS: CIRCULATIONS AND CONTESTATIONS OF MODELS OF IDENTITY

3.1 Intersections of Mediatization, Globalization, and Identities

Scholars have been increasingly paying attention to the role of media and the mediatization of language and identity in the contemporary period of mass communication (e.g. Shankar 2004, 2008; Eisenlohr 2007, 2011; Agha 2011). Mediatization refers to “institutional practices that reflexively link processes of communication to processes of commoditization” (Agha 2011, 163), practices that can facilitate and/or constrain relationships in varying ways with host communities and diasporic homelands. The role of media and mediatization involves a consideration of how identities come to be enregistered, or the “processes whereby distinct forms of speech come to be socially recognized (or enregistered) as indexical of speaker attributes by a population of language users” (Agha 2005, 38). Enregisterment allows for the apprehension of the joint creation of social and linguistic categories.

When identities become enregistered, the mediatization of these identities are often deterritorialized and reterritorialized in locales around the world; they are potentially consumed, reproduced, and transformed in multifaceted ways. Globalization, or the movement of people, culture, commodities, and knowledge across space and time, is a major contributor to this process. Jacquemet, for example, emphasizes the role of technology in processes of globalization and identity formation, so that we must pay attention to “the intersection between mobile people and mobile texts – an intersection no longer located in a definable territory, but in the deterritorialized world of late modern
communication” (2005, 5). However, some scholars are skeptical of globalization, as it was in marketing that discourses of “global” and “globalization” first originated, naively denoting the emergence of “a world without boundaries” (Trouillot 2001, 128). In this regard, analysis of language and diaspora should consider the commodification of linguistic and cultural difference (Dávila 2001; Comaroff and Comaroff 2009; Cavanaugh and Shankar 2014).

Nelson, for example, expressed the influential role of the media in shaping discourses of minoritized populations, and how the enregisterment of racialized identities then come to be consumed and imagined in wider publics. He also explores how larger institutional and politico-economic structures reinforce harmful stereotypes of groups, and how they then get reproduced in local city politics. When I asked Nelson how populations that were non-Asian and non-Latinx felt about Latinx populations in Holyoke, our conversation was as followed:

S: How do others feel about Latinos in this area?

N: So, it just depends on who you ask (laughs). If you ask another Latino, we would say that we think of ourselves highly. But, there’s still again a stigmatization around here that the Puerto Rican Latinos—we’re like Mexican, or like you know just trying to live off of welfare, we never want to get out of the system of poverty, and you know, just keep having babies young, we’re drug dealers, we’re thieves, we’re this, we’re that. So, I think it’s also a negative connotation side by side. That we’re all illegal immigrants, like those are things…

S: Where do you think those ideas come from?

N: Partially again I think media, you know, there’s never been a female lead Latina who’s not played a maid or the help in like a lot of major shows or media or TV like…

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10 Words that are underlined are important terms that represent the evocation of recognizable figures and attitudes towards those figures, either by the participants or by others. Words that are in bold are important deictics that show alignment or disalignment between the narrative and narrated frames, where the co-participants emerge as particular figures.
S: Yea.

N: When we have major Latinas who are presidents of other countries, you know, in Latin America but you won’t see that portrayed. Or, you know, I love the show, but you know Desperate Housewives or The Maids or like all these shows that perpetuate that going forward. And, men are criminalized in movies and TV, and like they’re the gangs, the drug dealers, the…

S: Absolutely.

N: Drug lords. So, those are where all the stereotypes start from. And, then, it doesn’t help that there’s this whole conservative, crazy wing of the country that, you know, says they’re going to kick out every Latino. Or, Puerto Ricans are the worst kinds of Mexicans, like that was a direct quote from someone running for president, like Donald Trump, like literally say that Puerto Ricans are his favorite Mexicans. Look it up, it’s a crazy quote. Those are the things that perpetuate who we are, and on a local level, it shows like… you know we have the local city councilor who tried to pass and put in the fact that the police department needed to let ICE [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement] come into the city to stop and check people for their immigration status. Like, those are the kinds of things that keep it going.

Interestingly, Nelson anticipated, or presupposed, Donald Trump and the “conservative crazy wing” of the country as particular models of identity who entail—or the “‘creative effectiveness’ in context” of indexicals—stigmas and stereotypes (Silverstein 2003a, 193-4). The mediatized narratives of Puerto Ricans as Donald Trump’s “least favorite Mexicans” where in fact satire, “fake news” so-to-speak, first reported by the satirical website The Farce Report11. “Fake news” introduces another layer to the mediatization of identities, in which satirical websites, commentators, and “fake news” circulate models of personhood that are read as factual and then are further circulated, presupposed and entailed.

Throughout our conversation, Nelson and I, in terms of the narrated frame, were talking about how certain (i.e. white, mainstream society) publics presupposed Latinx and

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11 http://www.snopes.com/trump-mexicans-puerto-rico/
The original weblink to the article is now removed, however, it is clear that the website The Farce Report is satirical in nature, and that these remarks were not in fact made by Donald Trump.
Asian and South Asian groups. Nelson was explicit about what he was referring to—the stigmatization of these groups, and the subsequent stereotypes and discourses perpetuated by media portrayals. The mediatization and homogenization of Asians and South Asians as restaurant owners and convenience store owners, exemplified by popular media such as *The Simpsons*\(^{12}\), was qualified by Nelson’s statement “I think there’s the general stigmatization that they are either Chinese restaurant owners or they’re owning a Kwick-E Mart or 711. So, there’s still that stereotype within it…”. However, Nelson followed up with “but I know it’s a much more broad and vast and diverse culture,” accounting for the ways that stereotypes are misleading and partial. Latinx ethnoracial subgroups were also homogenized, conflating Puerto Ricans and Mexicans as living off of the government, having many babies young, being “illegal” immigrants, drug dealers, and involved in gangs. These hegemonic portrayals are then further reproduced and institutionalized by larger political and economic regimes, such as by the current president, which then “trickle down” into local city politics.

In terms of the narrative frame, or the discursive social action represented by the accumulation of indexicals, Nelson goes against the grain of media portrayals of Latinx groups. Deictic forms such as “we,” “they,” and “I” provide crucial contextual information about alignment and disalignment between narrative and narrated frames. Bakhtin’s concept of voicing (1975[1981]) is central to understanding the relationship between narrative and narrated frames. Wortham and Reyes describe voicing as “the characterization of a narrated person as occupying a recognizable social position” (2015,

\(^{12}\) *The Simpsons* is an animated comedy T.V. show based on the fictional Simpsons family. In the show, there is a stereotypical characterization of an Indian convenience store-owner, Apu Nahasapeemapetilon, who is characterized by his “brown voice” and professional status as a Ph.D. in computer status.
In the narrated frame, participants evoke certain recognizable figures, such as Nelson’s invocation of Latinx men as drug dealers or gang members, and in the narrative frame co-participants emerge as particular figures, signaling potential alignment or disalignment across these frames.

Nelson’s invocation of Latinx ethnoracial groups as homogenized, represented in the narrated frame as gang members, drug dealers, maids, and so on, result in the disalignment in the narrative frame of this characterization, where deictics such as “we”, “they’re”, and “those” challenge these grand narratives. If you ask other Latinx, “we would think of ourselves highly,” according to Nelson’s estimations, in contrast to “those” mediatized representations of Latinx. From an in-group perspective, Latinx are people who deserve high esteem embodied in people such as Latin American female presidents, whereas from an out-group perspective, they are criminalized and relegated to subordinate positions in society.

The narrative and narrated frames are crucial to understand the performativity of identities and the social action represented by such performances. Language does not simply refer to things in the world (Jakobson’s (1958[1990]) referential function), or is not simply an abstract system of grammar. The paradigmatic shift in the philosophy of language, mentioned in the introduction, was speech act theory initially theorized by J.L. Austin (1962) which argued that any instance of language represents social action. Linguistic anthropologists have further expounded upon this, such as in the works of Silverstein (1993, 2003a), a student of Jakobson, Wortham and Reyes (2015) and others. The essential takeaway of these scholars is that to meaningfully analyze “language as culture” (Duranti 2003), attention needs to be paid to what is called interactional text or
narrative frame, as I’ve detailed. Discourse is central to analyzing the relationship between what is said (narrated frame) and what co-participants are doing with what they’re saying (narrative frame).

The mediatization of Latinx ethnoracial subgroups is contrasted with that of Asian and South Asian subgroups, indexed by deictic forms such as “there’s” and “they’re.” The differentiation of these groups is also reflected in the alignment and disalignment of figures of personhood in relation to the narrative and narrated frames. While there is a homogenization of Asians and South Asians, the narrated frame suggests that stereotypical representations of these groups are more positive than that of Latinx groups. Instead of being criminalized, although the potential to be racialized as “Middle Eastern” and criminalized as Muslim is there (Rana 2011), Asians and South Asians are represented as restaurant and convenience store owners. These claims are qualified by Nelson afterwards by the deictic “I,” suggesting in the narrative frame that there is a disalignment with the voicing of these groups as certain models of personhood.

Comparing Nelson’s analysis with Yogi, we can see parallels as well as divergences of representations. Yogi is a middle-aged man from Gujarat, India, a province in the northwest bordering Pakistan. Yogi moved to the U.S. in the mid-1980’s as a part of family reunification, having married his wife in India and then emigrating afterwards. He was near to completion of his master’s degree in permaculture, however, due to his marriage and subsequent move, he never got the chance to finish. Initially settling in New Jersey, he and his family soon moved to Massachusetts for business opportunities. I was introduced to Yogi by my father, who is very involved in the Western Massachusetts and broader Gujarati diaspora. I met up with Yogi at his liquor
store in a neighboring city of Holyoke, as he had sold a liquor store he owned in Holyoke
previously, and his tax office he currently owns in Holyoke is a seasonal business. When
I asked Yogi about how he and other non-Latinx feel about Latinx in Holyoke, he replied
by saying:

I mean, it’s again like I said it’s mixed opinion. You know, lot of people, you
know, whose living in that neighborhood is ok with it. I don’t hear much of a
negative. But, in surrounding area or other people I meet, they are definitely not
happy because I think percentage wise they meet the people whose more
problem. There are a lot of nice people, nice customer I meet, which are very
good people. But, I think the percentage is a little high seeing a problem customer
or problem people, so. That’s why I don’t see much of a positive opinion from the
people. I don’t think it’s very safe community to live in. Because very often I see
the crimes like shootings or killings, or you know…there’s all kinds of problems.
There is a lot of drug issues in that neighborhood. Even though when we had a
business, we all the time we see all these kind of incidents happening. Especially
shootings, there is a lot of shootings, you know?

Yogi points to his perception that there are “mixed opinions” of Latinx in Holyoke. The
people who live in “that neighborhood” are generally ok with their living conditions. The
people who occupy “that neighborhood” are voiced as people who engage in crimes,
shootings, killings, and the drug trade. These stereotypical representations of Latinx echo
Nelson’s assessments of out-group perspectives. Similarities also arise from in-group
assessments, evinced by Yogi’s proclamation that “I don’t hear much of a negative.”

Yogi does similar work when asked to assess how non-South Asians perceive
South Asians:

I don’t know. I will say it’s a mix opinion. A lot of them really appreciate, we
work hard, you know, a lot of businesses owned. Most of the time people are nice.
Every so often we run into the people who don’t like Indians because either you
own a business, you’re all set. And, not only that, every so often we run into the
people, if they are asking for something, and if you are not doing what they are
asking, they will get mad and they will call you names, this and that kind of
things. But, mostly, I don’t have a too much of a bad experience. Sometimes a
new customer, a little tough, but as they get used to it, they are pretty friendly and
they are good. And, sometimes they try to act like they are hard and give you a
hard time. But, you know, working long time in that neighborhood, I know how
to deal with them, and I never have trouble. But, once in a while you come to an argument with somebody, which is normal.

In both instances, Yogi demonstrates that there are mixed opinions of Latinx and South Asians. However, Yogi voices contrasting enregistered personhoods for these groups. On the one hand, Latinx ethnoracial subgroups are homogenized as stereotypically drug dealers, killers, and involved in shooting, even though “there are a lot of nice people.” On the other hand, Indians, while homogenized, are voiced as business owners who work hard. There is an alignment of narrative and narrated frames for Indians in Yogi’s estimations; Indians work hard and own businesses, and are generally perceived to be in line with myths of model minorities. There is also an alignment of narrative and narrated frame for Latinx groups; they are the drug dealers and criminals. Deictics such as “I” and “we” are contrasted with “they” and “them” to position a differentiation of “us” vs “them.”

Thus, Indians (the “I” and “we”) emerge as particular types of figures, namely as business owners and hard workers who do not participate in the community dynamics of downtown Holyoke. Contrastively, Latinx (the “they” and “them”) are largely positioned as being involved in shootings, killings, and drug dealing. The voicing of socially recognizable personae by Nelson and Yogi index the pervasiveness of mediatized identities that are presupposed and entailed in dynamic ways. Nelson is more reflexive in his analysis of stereotypes, as he qualifies his statements with clarifications of stereotypes, whereas Yogi relied upon stereotypes in his moral evaluation of racialized identities.

Ideologies that associate Puerto Ricans in Holyoke, Massachusetts with criminality, as non-citizens, as burdensome, and as those who just leach off of the system,
ultimately coalesced and circulated by powerful Anglos, have been a point of contention within the diaspora. Latinx have been civically ostracized on the grounds of culture, while on the other hand, South Asians have been relatively valorized by Anglos. Although Kim (1999) argues that relative valorization and civic ostracization co-occur in the racial triangulation of Asian Americans, South Asians in Holyoke perceptibly do not get ostracized. Thus, how do we reconcile Nelson and Yogi’s discursive representations of Latinx and Asian and South Asian populations? Who gets to purport models of personhood that then come to be presupposed and entailed in dynamic ways?

3.2 From Multiculturalism to Super-Diversity: Power Dynamics of Hearing and Listening Subjects

This analysis of Latinx and Asian and South Asian groups is related to one set of narratives within discourses of globalization: how particular (im)migrant groups and cultural and linguistic practices are positioned as “super-diverse,” a notion that supersedes an earlier era of multiculturalism (e.g. Vertovec 2007; Blommaert and Rampton 2012). Multiculturalism, according to Prashad, is a state sanctioned management of difference, or more precisely, a form of biopolitics whereby the state exerts power over and manages lives that are “multicultural” as a disciplinary mechanism (2001, 61; Foucault 1978). What is or is not multicultural depends on those cultural forms that are consumable (Prashad 2001, 61). However, by this logic, “multiculturalism adopts an idea of culture wherein culture is bounded into authentic zones with pure histories” which then “is to pretend that our histories are not already overlapping, that the borders of our cultures are not porous” (Prashad 2001, 61).
Super-diversity, like multiculturalism, also relies upon an idea of culture as static, bounded, and territorialized. Blommaert and Rampton characterize super-diversity succinctly as “a tremendous increase in the categories of migrants, not only in terms of nationality, ethnicity, language, and religion, but also in terms of motives, patterns and itineraries of migration, processes of insertion into the labour and housing markets of the host societies, and so on” (2012, 7). Thus, in this framework, there is a proliferation of “categories of migrants” and distinctive linguistic repertoires that results in the erasure of previous historical moments of (im)migration and displacement.

Reyes, in response to discourses of super-diversity, argues for an account of power that considers those that are authorized to speak on behalf of less-powerful “others.” She argues that the “...speaker focus neglects a thorough conceptualization and interrogation of the listening subject: how change may not in fact begin with speaking subjects (migrants) but may be brought into being by listening subjects (those authorized to speak about migrants) and whatever anxieties and desires motivate the circulation of representations of speakers” (2014, 368). It is important to interrogate who purports an increase in the flux of migrants, and what counts as “super-diverse.” For the purposes of my argument, previous eras of perceived stable multiculturalisms associated with “legible” populations give way to a proliferation of diverse and super-diverse populations and practices.

Dolores explained to me how her neighborhood was changing from the time she arrived at Springfield in 1986 to the present. She explained to me that in 1986, “you didn’t see so many Spanish people,” whereas now there are “only Spanish people everywhere.” Latinx only lived on Main Street in the past, and now they are more
widespread. Dolores mentioned that with the purported increase in “Spanish people,” she noticed that her “community” is moving away. When I asked her what she meant by who’s disappearing, she whispered to me “White people,” conscious of white flight as well as her surroundings of Anglo teachers and administrators at Careers in Holyoke. According to Dolores, in addition to Latinx, “everybody else is Russians, a lot of Russians.” Bianca made similar comments about the perceptibility of Russians in Holyoke, in terms of her ESL teacher and other administrators.

Mike, in describing the nature of the grants he receives for ESOL and job training, he says that Careers in Holyoke serves a “pretty diverse group of people.” For example, of the 11 students in a particular ESOL and job training class, there are “5 different cultures represented.” A major factor in the attraction of so many groups, according to Mike, is that Holyoke is a gateway city, meaning it is an industrial hub. Holyoke was the first planned industrial city, relying on the manufacturing of paper, thus its nickname as “The Paper City.” However, the shift from manufacturing to technology and a service-oriented economy has severely impacted the job prospects of once agricultural laborers and factory workers in the Latinx community, and has collapsed the once profitable paper industry (Bourgois 1995; Black 2009).

Mary, who is the coordinator of the technology center at Pan Center, like Mike mentioned during our interview the diversity of her ESL classes that she once taught. I’ve known Mary for a number of years, having initially met her around the time I first started to tutor/mentor adult HiSET (formerly G.E.D.) students in 2013. Mary has worked at Pan Center for years, working in various positions during her tenure, and having been

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13 http://www.creatingholyoke.org/exhibits/show/industry/paper
promoted to coordinator after receiving her master’s degree. We met up at her office in Pan Center, a spacious room with accommodating views from the third floor of the building. Mary, an Anglo woman in her early thirties, previously lived in Holyoke, but since has moved to a neighboring town, much like many of my Anglo and Indian interlocuters.

Having taught ESL classes before, Mary reported that she’s had Korean, Portuguese, Chinese, and Cambodian students in addition to the majority Latinx. While Latinx subgroups, and Puerto Ricans specifically, have been in northeastern United States since at least the 1940’s, striking to Mary was their interactions with Portuguese students. Mary had received a number of Portuguese students that were referred to Pan Center for ESL classes once the factory that the students had been working at was closed. Mary noted that both Puerto Ricans and Portuguese students could understand each for the most part, due to the “similarity” between both languages. She also noted that the differences in languages introduced miscommunication. Mary also commented on one of her Chinese students who had an “interesting” perspective on American cultural practices of education. This student had stayed behind during a fieldtrip the class had taken, electing instead to do paperwork, reflecting on her differential valuations of “proper” education.

These instances of “diverse” or “pretty diverse” (im)migrants introducing cultural and linguistic practices supposedly supplant previous historical trajectories and practices. Thus, while the linguistic and cultural practices of Latinx are relatively normative for Mike and Mary, the introduction of difference from Portuguese, Chinese, and other students are marked. Moreover, the relative ubiquity of Latinx linguistic practices and
adherence to American cultural and educational norms are unmarked in relation to the introduction of linguistic and cultural difference from certain (im)migrant population
CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Summarization

Ethnographic scholarship on South Asian diasporic phenomenon in the U.S. is too few and far in between, with my thesis situated in this lack of scholarly engagement. Furthermore, while there is an abundance of ethnographic works on Latinx diasporic populations, and certainly in northeastern United States, most of this scholarship focuses on large cities that have received the bulk of attention. Holyoke, Massachusetts is a small city with less than 50,000 inhabitants, making it a prime ethnographic locale, not only because of the dearth of research in small cities or towns, but also because of its settler-colonial context and waves of (im)migration that shape local dynamics of Latinx and South Asian diasporization.

Moored in poststructuralist approached to diaspora and language, I have shown how my Latinx and South Asian interlocuters have constructed and performed their diasporic identities vis-à-vis each other. I denaturalized signs of “foreignness” and “indigenousness” by paying attention to the contextual nature of semiotic processes and demarcation of boundaries. Rather than taking diasporas as taken-for-granted, static, and bounded, I have shown how processes of diasporization reveal their contextual, dynamic, and fluid nature. Significantly, I have shown how racial triangulation is central to understanding how Puerto Rican and Indian identity formation can only be understood in a field of racial positions, where these identities can only be understood against normative ideologies of whiteness and blackness. A focus on language illuminates the dynamic and fluid nature of diasporization, or the process of becoming a diaspora over space and time.
Larger historical, political-economic, and cultural ideologies facilitate (im)migration trajectories and processes of diasporization. Power dynamics as engendered by macro-institutions of the State and state like effects can enable and/or constrain the agentive capacity of the micro-practices of individuals in multifaceted ways. In the settler-colonial context of Holyoke, Massachusetts, waves of European immigration and logics of whiteness have produced and imagined Holyoke as a white space. Whereas the minority white population are allowed to display their identity publicly without recourse, as in the spray-painting of shamrocks on sidewalks and streets, Puerto Rican public displays of identities are racialized and need careful management. Institutional power plays a large role in determining who and who does need management, witnessed by the underrepresentation of Latinx community members and professionals on local boards, committees, and city council.

Racializing and ethnicizing discourses, in the U.S. context, are competing and contradictory modes of inclusion and exclusion. On the one hand, South Asians, and Indians in particular, are depicted as “model minorities,” a homogenizing discourse that produces a docile, hard-working, and individualistic entrepreneurial spirit. On the other hand, Latinx—Puerto Ricans specifically—have a more contested ideological rendering. Recurrent narratives were “culture of poverty,” similar to the “Latino Threat,” and the “Latino Spin.” These contradictory and competing narratives were contested within the Latinx diaspora while out-group perspectives, at times nuanced in power dynamics, relied upon homogenizing discourses nonetheless. The role of media and mediatization was an integral part of (re)producing and circulation naturalized and hegemonic models of identities.
Mediatization reflexively links commodification and communication, thus, language is an important facet of the mediatization of identities. Rather, language ideologies that shape enregisterment, or the perceived link and joint production of linguistic and social categories, circulate and further reproduce institutional models of identities. “Mock Asian,” as described in Chapter 2, is one such hegemonic enregistered model of identity that serves to homogenize and racialize Asian American populations in the U.S. context. Bakhtin’s (1975[1981]) concept of voicing, in terms of discourse analysis, allows us to analyze the social action taking place in any dialogue. Social action is achieved performatively by the potential alignment and/or disalignment between the narrative and narrated frames.

Bakhtin’s concept of voicing was used to examine how mediatized identities of South Asians and Latinx are circulated, particularly paying attention to deictics, a type of indexical. Indexical signs are critical to determining context, grounding the relationship between a sign and its object dependent upon contiguity or co-presence. I examined deictic forms such as “I,” “we,” and “they” to show alignment and disalignment between the narrated frame, or where certain socially recognizable identities are invoked, and the narrative frame, where co-participants in any discursive interaction emerge as certain type of figures. For Nelson, Latinx are disaligned, meaning they are a more diverse community than the voiced figures of criminals and drug dealers, whereas for Yogi, Latinx are aligned, meaning they are commensurate between narrated and narrative frames.

South Asians, in contrast to Latinx, emerge as particular types of figures, specifically as “model minorities.” Although their diversity is acknowledged by Nelson,
popular perceptions of South Asians as hard-working, contributing members of society were apparent. Most of my interlocutors, if they had encountered Indians, expressed their occupations as business owners and entrepreneurs of various capacities. In other words, Indians were racially triangulated against normative ideologies of whiteness and blackness, emerging as morally superior on cultural grounds to Latinx from Anglo perspectives. Latinx were cast as culturally inferior in relation to whites and South Asians, however, this supposed inferiority was contested within the Latinx diaspora. In terms of insider/outsider status, Indians were relegated to relative insider status, reproducing normative American values. Latinx were imagined differentially as relative insiders or outsiders depending on context.

4.2 Implications and Future Directions

Language is often conceptualized as an integral component of modernity and nation-state building, of developing the spirit of a nation. Central to any effort to institutionalize a national language is the standardization of a particular variety of that language. For example, in the United States, monoglot language ideologies are widely embraced. That is, the positioning and acceptance of one variety of a language, Standard American English, is hegemonically constructed as the norm (Silverstein 1996). Even notable scholars of nationalism such as Benedict Anderson (1983) cited the importance of language and literacy practices in the imagining of a national community, in which language is ideologically positioned as the unifying factor of the nation and its inhabitants. Such assumptions are anchored in what linguistic anthropologists call Herderian language ideologies that posit “one nation-one language-one people” (Bauman and Briggs 2003; Irvine 2006), identified earlier as an integral part of modern nation-state building. To the
contrary, scholars have shown that these language practices as naturally occurring are just as imagined and taken-for-granted; instead, these language practices should be understood as dialectic counterparts of rather than precursors to the nation-state (Silverstein 2000; Makoni and Pennycook 2005).

It is even more perplexing when we denaturalize language as a category of analysis; that is, language is as objectified as any other category (Makoni and Pennycook 2005). By bounding homogenizing ideologies of “a people” and “a language” together, “linguistic scholarship itself played a major role in the development of the European nation-state as well as in the expansion and organization of empires… and the factuality of named languages continues to be taken for granted in a great deal of contemporary institutional policy and practice” (Blommaert and Rampton 2012, 11). The factuality of named languages has dire consequences for the language practices of populations such as diasporas that are imagined as “foreign” or “illegal,” as language often functions as a sign of difference.

The idea that the United States is and has always been a monoglot nation centered around English language practices can only be understood through the erasure and elision of history and power relations. To the contrary, Rumbaut and Massey (2013) have shown how the United States historically has been a polyglot nation, meaning that linguistic diversity has always been the norm. Monoglot language ideologies have been most notably espoused by Official English advocates who push for English-only policies. These language ideologies result in the erasure of pre-colonial contact indigenous languages, Spanish language practices, and the language practices of colonized subjects that either predate or accompany the emergence of English language practices in the U.S.
Thus, the U.S. has amassed a “language graveyard” of immigrant and indigenous languages, resulting in a form of “epistemic violence” (Spivak 1988; Rumbaut and Massey 2013).

Furthermore, as Betty demonstrated in the introduction, individuals can identify with more than one flag, or language, nation, or any host of other identifiers. Blommaert notes that “imposing a strictly national order of things on people who are denationalized or transnationalized is not likely to do them justice,” and in fact, does them harm (2009, 425). Taking into consideration the role of language ideologies in issues of migration helps to recognize the complexity in the coalescence (im)migrant identities.

With modernity came underlying universalistic assumptions about the nature of humans; for example, the assumption that in “Western” democracies, citizenship is an abstract universal right that is equitable no matter one’s positionality in society. More poignantly, there are claims that we live in a “postracial” U.S., where race is not a meaningful category of analysis, or that one’s circumscribed “race” does not matter in issues related to housing, education, or work opportunities. As I have demonstrated, race is very much a meaningful category, both analytically and as an identifier that is fluid instead of common-sense notions of race as an essentialistic, bounded category. Importantly, relying on Kim’s (1999) racial triangulation, I have shown that racial categories are not (per)formed in a vacuum. Rather, racial categories in the U.S. context are triangulated in relation to normative ideologies of blackness and whiteness. An account of language is critical to racial triangulation and the performance of identities.

As Goffman (1959), Austin (1962), and Butler (1988; 1990[1999]) have demonstrated, identities are not monolithic or singular; instead, identities are
performative, fluid, and context-dependent. The performative nature of language means that language is a tool for social action—each and any instance of language use constitutes a claim upon this world. Demonstrated earlier in the thesis, indexicals and deictics help us understand the sociocultural processes underlying discursive practices. Indexicals ground the sociocultural and linguistic context, making a text coherent and decipherable. This point is important because as signs, indexicals can facilitate the denaturalization of presumed categories, such as how and why particular linguistic tokens can be understood as “indigenous” or “foreign,” “American” or “non-American.”

Although larger macro-institutional, ideological, and politico-economic frameworks can and do act as conduits of identity formation and as structural barriers, individuals in everyday micro-practices of performing identities can act as agents of change. The dynamics of history and power relations are central to any understanding of the contemporary conditions of diasporization, and particularly for my analysis, South Asians and Latinx. Part of understanding U.S. diasporic populations involves decolonizing racial epistemes premised upon a black/white binary. The decolonization of problematic epistemes involves destabilizing analytic categories such as “model minority” or “Latino Threat,” and understanding the ways in which language is a mechanism for social action and change. Particularly, instead of focusing on difference as espoused in neoliberal efforts to create tensions between communities (discourses of model minorities, Latino Threats, and Latino Spin), a focus on similarity between diasporic experience can help to understand commonalities in (im)migrant narratives.

I strongly believe that for a more equitable, just, and vibrant community, the multicultural “divide-and-conquer” strategy must be negated by inter- and intra-diasporic
community-building and activism. Prashad (2001), Gaines (2006), Wu (2013) and others have demonstrated the historical roots of inter- and intra-racial and inter- and intra-diasporic activism and community-building as it related to anti-racism and decolonization. In Holyoke, where nearly half of the population is Latinx and has the highest concentration of Puerto Ricans outside of Puerto Rico, and where South Asians who do live, conduct business, and interact with the community, can bridge the perceived “tale of two cities” by working together to fight oppression in all its manifestations.
REFERENCES


