

Sarah Mayorga Gallo

## ”Aquí Estamos a la Fuerza”. Interracial Relations in a New Latino/a Destination City

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# “Aquí Estamos a la Fuerza”

## Interracial Relations in a New Latino/a Destination City

by Sarah Mayorga Gallo

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### 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

On August 22, 2009, the City of Durham’s (North Carolina, USA) Parks and Recreation Department held its fifth Annual Durham Latino Festival. Upon my arrival at Rock Quarry Park I first noticed two food trucks selling Mexican food, including *tortas* (sandwiches), ziplock bags of *chicharrones* (fried pork skin), and *elotes con mayonesa y queso* (corn on the cob covered in mayonnaise and crumbled white cheese). Behind them a soccer match was in progress with a crowd around the field. Those not watching the game were focused on the salsa band performing on the opposite side of the park. In front of the stage dancers were moving to the music. The first pair was a white woman and a brown-skinned man. Their interaction seemed formal, with the man leading the woman’s movements to display his salsa skills. The second dancer was a petite black woman, dancing and singing to the music alone. She was wearing a Zumba tank top, and perhaps was there as part of the advertised “Zumba dance for children.” The last set included two brown-skinned women with matching t-shirts that read “Go Green! *Enverdece tu vida!*” The t-shirts marked them as part of the Parks and Recreation’s Department team assigned to the recycling stations.

<sup>1</sup> Portions of this manuscript have previously appeared in *Behind the White Picket Fence: Power and Privilege in a Multiethnic Neighborhood* (UNC Press, 2014).

Twenty years ago this scene would have only seemed possible in established Latin American immigrant gateways such as Miami, Los Angeles, or Chicago. Like many Southern US cities, Durham's population was comprised mostly of black and white residents until the early 1990s. Since then, Durham has experienced a demographic transformation. Thousands of Latino/a migrants have come to the area and established their own thriving communities. As of 2013, Durham's Hispanic population was estimated at 13.5 per cent of the total county population. This is a 128 per cent increase since 2000 and over a 1700 per cent increase since 1990 (see Figure 1). The recent arrival of Latino/a migrants, mostly from Mexico and Central America, provides an opportunity to see how a small city with a deeply embedded racial order adjusts to the introduction of a new group [Kim 1999].<sup>2</sup>

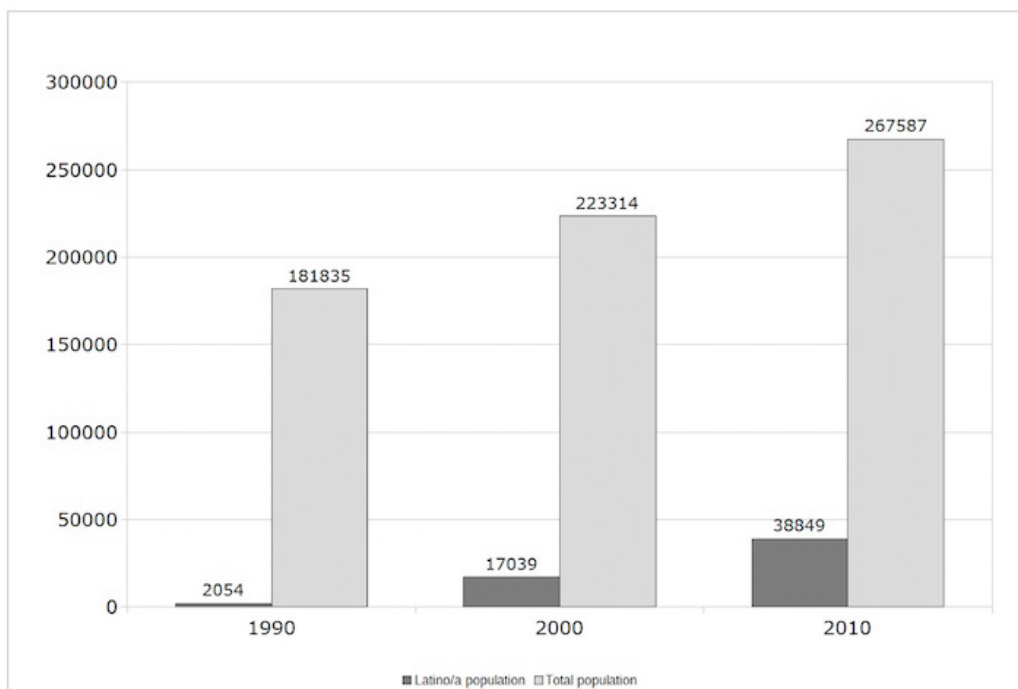


FIG. 1. Durham County Latino/a and Total Population Growth, 1990-2010.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

How might we best understand the incorporation of a new racial-ethnic group into a biracial community with a deep-seated history of racial segregation? How do Latino/a migrants characterize their lives in Durham? I attempt to answer these

<sup>2</sup> Latino/a includes individuals with origins in Latin America. Hispanic, the ethnicity category on the U.S. Census, refers to Spanish-speaking people with origins in Spain. I use Latino/a rather than Hispanic because Hispanic privileges the white/European/colonial lineage of Latin America over its indigenous and African histories.

questions through an in-depth study of a Durham, North Carolina neighborhood that I call Creekridge Park.<sup>3</sup> Studying Creekridge Park allows me to explore the relationship between spatial proximity, social interactions, and racial inequality and contribute to the literatures on residential segregation, multiethnic neighborhoods, and immigration.

In this paper, I argue that Latino/a immigration may lead to lower dissimilarity indices<sup>4</sup> in new destination cities, but it does not automatically produce positive or reciprocal interracial relations. Immigrant incorporation is a complex and nonlinear process. The qualitative data that I collected in Creekridge Park allow us to better understand the multidimensional experiences of Latino/a migrants and their black and white neighbors. For example, while Latino/a migrants in my study spoke of the antagonistic feelings towards Latino/as in the US at-large (e.g., “*aquí estamos a la fuerza*”), their perceptions of individual black and white Americans was mostly positive. Many Latino/a residents I spoke with discussed intra-Latino/a conflict as a new challenge they face in the United States. I argue that a key to understanding these micro-level patterns is acknowledging the broader racial context in which they take place, including their relative social isolation from non-Latino/as – even in multiethnic neighborhoods. Below I discuss the literature on Latino/a migration to new destinations and the relationship between spatial proximity and racial inequality. I then describe my data, methods, and findings.

### 1.1. *Latino/a Migration to New Destinations*

Durham’s population changes parallel those of other new immigrant gateways in the midwestern and southern United States [Winders 2012; Marrow 2009; Smith 2008]. Cities such as Atlanta and Nashville have experienced population growth that is distinct from traditional sites of immigration [Hirschman and Massey 2008]. The focus on new destinations and new migrant populations in the U.S. parallels work in Europe on “super diversity” [Meisner and Vertovec 2015; Hall 2015; Knowles 2013; Vertovec 2007]. Since these new destination towns in the U.S. had virtually no immigrant population prior to 1990 the incorporation of these new groups is particularly

<sup>3</sup> Creekridge Park is a pseudonym to protect the identities of the respondents.

<sup>4</sup> The dissimilarity index represents the percentage of people from one racial-ethnic group that would have to move from one subarea to another to create 100 per cent evenness within the larger area. Zero represents complete “integration” or evenness, and 1 represents complete “segregation” or unevenness. For example, a dissimilarity index of .3 would indicate that 30 per cent of White residents in Creekridge Park would have to move to another block within Creekridge Park to create perfect neighborhood evenness — a 0 on the dissimilarity index.

important to observe and understand. The vulnerability of immigrants entering an economy based on “labor-intensive production and low-paid, non-unionized foreign workers” is also crucial to the study of multi-group interactions and segregation, as it indicates differential access to power and resources among native and foreign workers [Hirschman and Massey 2008, 8].

Similar to research on “everyday multiculturalism,” my analysis identifies the multifaceted power relationships between established and new racial-ethnic communities [Wise and Velayutham 2009]. One cannot ignore the clear differences in power between native whites and Latino/a migrants, particularly those who are undocumented.<sup>5</sup> For example, a heightened sense of vulnerability in North Carolina is reinforced by stories of white officials targeting Latino/as.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, institutions such as El Centro Hispano, a nonprofit organization in Durham, have emerged to provide resources, community support, and a unified public face for the city’s Latino/a communities. In this paper I discuss the inclusion Latino/a migrants experience in Creekr Ridge Park and the exclusion they sometimes feel at the hands of fellow Latino/a/s. Both of these phenomena are products of the U.S.’s racial context.

## 1.2. *Spatial Matters*

Academic discussions about the relationship between spatial proximity and racial inequality in the U.S. have largely focused on residential segregation. Racial residential segregation continues to be a cornerstone of American sociological research. Spatial distance, social distance, social isolation, and racial stratification are some of the key issues the field addresses [Collins and Williams 1999; Massey and Denton 1989; Park 1950]. Northern US cities typically have higher levels of segregation than Southern US cities [Massey and Denton 1993]. This difference is often attributed to the persistence of residential patterns from the antebellum South, where blacks lived in close proximity to the white households they worked in [Massey and Denton 1993; Schnore and Evenson 1966].

The difference in dissimilarity indices between northern and southern U.S. cities is part of what makes Creekr Ridge Park an important study site. Although blacks and whites may live in closer proximity to each other in the South, studies have shown that they still lead segregated lives [Sjoquist 2000]. Racial segregation is reinforced

<sup>5</sup> In 2012, about 53 per cent of Durham’s Latino/a population was foreign born. Previous estimates indicate that up to 90 per cent of Durham’s foreign-born Latino/a population is undocumented [Parrado and Flippen 2005].

<sup>6</sup> Ex-Officer Pleads Guilty to Stealing from Hispanic Drivers. Capital Broadcasting Company, [http://www.wral.com/news/news\\_briefs/story/2118634/](http://www.wral.com/news/news_briefs/story/2118634/).

by codes of conduct about race and space. Studying Latino/a migration in Durham, North Carolina is a natural experiment that showcases what happens when a new racial-ethnic group is introduced into a city with deeply embedded racial norms.

Most research on Latino/a and Asian segregation hinges on a comparison to black and white segregation rates, often concluding that segregation for Latino/as and Asians is modest in comparison to black-white segregation [Charles 2003; Frey and Farley 1996; Iceland 2009]. Scholars attribute recent increases in Latino/a and Asian segregation and decreases in black-white segregation [Charles 2006; Maly 2005] to rises in immigration from Latin America and Asia [Iceland and Scopilliti 2008; Martin 2007]. New immigrant groups serve as a “buffer” between established racial-ethnic communities, moving into previously highly segregated neighborhoods.

The emphasis on racial segregation as the “linchpin” of racial inequality in the United States has led many scholars to promote residential racial integration as a policy measure over the past few decades [Massey and Denton 1993]. Integration (measured by spatial proximity between racial-ethnic groups) is often presented as a process that improves racial attitudes and provides equal opportunities for all residents despite race [Carr and Kutty 2008; Maly 2005]. Studies on multiethnic segregation have argued that increased integration is possible in areas experiencing new waves of Latino/a and Asian immigration [Frey and Farley 1996]. My study of CreekrIDGE Park and its new Latino/a population contributes to these debates.

## **2. Data and Methods**

CreekrIDGE Park is located in Durham County, North Carolina and is home to more than 1,500 residents.<sup>7</sup> The neighborhood association describes the neighborhood as “diverse” and “mixed income.”<sup>8</sup> This description and its multiethnic character made CreekrIDGE Park an ideal space to investigate the relationship between spatial proximity and interracial social distance. On the 2010 Census, 34 per cent of residents identified as white, non-Hispanic; 39 per cent identified as black, non-Hispanic; and 26 per cent identified as Latino/a. The dissimilarity indices for 2010 were .12 for Latino/as, .31 for blacks, and .34 for whites. These are still on the low-

<sup>7</sup> In order to protect the identity of my respondents, I have slightly changed the demographic details included here. The percentages, however, are comparable.

<sup>8</sup> Neighborhood associations are volunteer organizations that organize social events and represent community interests in city matters. They differ from homeowner associations because members do not have to be homeowners. The CreekrIDGE Park Neighborhood Association had a small membership fee (\$5/person, \$10/household).

moderate end according to Massey and Denton's .3 cutoff [1993]. Creekridge Park is mixed income, with most respondents agreeing the "mix" includes working- and middle-class households. Housing values varied approximately between \$69,000 and \$201,000.<sup>9</sup>

I collected data using three methods: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and a household survey. For the purposes of this paper, I focus mainly on the data collected via in-depth interviews for which I used sociologist Mario Small's sequential interviewing method. Small affirms that "case study logic can be effectively applied to in-depth interview-based studies" and is better suited for qualitative work than the sample-based logic of quantitative methods [Small 2009, 24]. The central concern of the sequential interviewing method is on understanding the *how* and *why* of social phenomena rather than identifying the *what* and its rate of occurrence in the general population. This approach is more insightful than an attempt at random sampling because I can make inferences about the mechanisms of social distance in a multiethnic context and the meanings and values attached to these processes by residents. Each interview served as a new case, providing information about the variation within the neighborhood. Using each interview as an independent case facilitated the construction of data-driven theories that were modified throughout the interviews. Between 2009 and 2011 I completed 63 interviews with area residents.

Since Latino/as are a large proportion of the U.S.'s new migrant communities, recognizing how Latino/a segregation may work outside of or change the dominant black-white segregation dynamic is important to comprehending immigrant incorporation. By using methods in addition to traditional quantitative indices I was able to observe multi-group segregation outside the linear ranking model that situates one group as more or less segregated than another. In addition, the lived experiences of Latino/a, black, and white residents helped elucidate the relationships between spatial proximity, social interaction, and racial inequality.

### **3. Results**

#### **3.1. *Being Latino/a in the US***

Based on household survey data, Creekridge Park residents respond more liberally than the national average to racial attitude questions. While my study sample is not meant to be generalizable, I compare their attitudinal responses to a representative national sample to give a sense of where the Creekridge Park residents I spoke

<sup>9</sup> This estimate is based on respondent reported data and Durham tax records.

to fall on race and immigration. When asked why, on average, black Americans are worse off economically than whites, 57 per cent of my respondents said it was because of lack of opportunity, while 47 per cent of the national sample acknowledged lack of opportunity as an issue. None of my respondents said it was because of less in-born ability, while 10 per cent of the 2010 national sample did [Smith, Marsden, Hout, and Kim 2011]. Seventy two percent of my respondents also said that the issue of race relations was either important or extremely important to them. Additionally, over 66 per cent of my respondents believe that undocumented migrants help rather than hurt the economy, while a national poll from the same period shows that over 74 per cent of Americans believe undocumented migrants are detrimental to the economy [NYT/CBS News 2010]. Lastly, the most common label residents used to define CreekrIDGE Park when I asked them to describe the neighborhood to someone who was not familiar with the area was “diverse” or a similar term; diversity is a characteristic commonly praised by white homeowners in particular. Based on these data and that residents chose to live in this multiethnic neighborhood, one might assume that interracial interactions would flourish in CreekrIDGE Park.

So how do Latino/as describe living in CreekrIDGE Park? To better understand my findings, we first need to address the larger political climate for Latino/as in the United States. Some Latino/a residents described the general political environment in the United States in regard to immigration and Latino/as as antagonistic. For example, Diana and Marta, migrants from Honduras, framed the attitude toward Latino/as in the United States as fundamentally hostile:

Diana: “Well, they’re never going to accept Hispanics here” [*laughs*].

Marta: “*Aquí estamos a la fuerza.*” [We’re here by force.]

Diana: “They want to remove you from here however they can.”<sup>10</sup>

From the point of view of Diana and Marta, conflicts underlie their time in the United States because they are Latinas. Diana and Marta’s experience is supported by data on Latino/as in the United States, including American attitudes toward undocumented migrants (who are commonly seen as interchangeable with Latino/as). Interestingly, when asked specifically about their experiences with black and white Americans, Diana and Marta are more positive, while their pointed criticisms are reserved for other Latino/as. It seems that while they frame the abstract political context of the U.S. as hostile, they more positively view individual Americans with whom they have interacted. I discuss the relationship patterns between Latino/as and whites, blacks, and other Latino/as in more detail in the following sections.

<sup>10</sup> Rather than use literal Spanish translations, I used interpretive translations to improve the readability of the quotations.



### 3.2. Relations with "Americanos"

#### 3.2.1. "Hola", How are You?

Most Latino/a residents that I spoke with described Creekridge Park as a friendly place. Very few Latino/as engaged in sustained conversations with their neighbors, so the friendly descriptor was based on a "hello" and "how are you?" between neighbors. Most neighbors who greeted Latino/as were identified as *americanos*, which directly translates to Americans, but is more commonly used to mean white Americans. For example, Héctor, a renter from Honduras, stated that he cannot communicate beyond preliminary greetings with his English-speaking neighbors, but that he appreciates their hellos:

Héctor: "For example, the ladies that live next door there [say] – 'Hey [*inaudible*]...' And I say, 'good,' we halfway greet each other. She has dogs and a lot of the time she tells me stories about her dogs, and it's like that, right? Well, it's not that way, but we greet each other, right? And with the others from over there it's the same, the people are very friendly, and there are others who don't speak. And those directly across [the street], those also are like that."

Sarah: "Okay, you greet each other, but you don't say much."

Héctor: "Well, no, no."

Sarah: "And they speak to you in English or Spanish?"

Héctor: "In English, they're American [white]."

Héctor characterizes his white neighbors as friendly because they say "hey" to him. Although they cannot communicate beyond superficial greetings, he appreciates their hellos. Martín, a renter from Mexico, also described similar patterns of interaction, which provides some evidence that this was a regular practice between Latino/as and non-Latino/as in Creekridge Park.

The characterization of Creekridge Park and its residents as friendly by Latino/a migrants echoes claims by white residents. The important difference is that the closeness described by whites in their relationships with other whites is not found in white-Latino/a relationships. For instance, white residents spend more time with each other than they do with their Latino/a neighbors; this includes activities in the neighborhood, such as having dinner, and activities outside the neighborhood, such as attending a minor league baseball game. Latino/a residents, however, do not identify this difference in closeness. Why?

I argue that Latino/as experiences of Creekridge Park and its "American" residents are greatly impacted by their social positions in the United States as Latino/a migrants – some of whom are undocumented. The scholarship of sociologists Rebecca Adams and Graham Allan explains that friendship and how individuals define

friends are based, in part, on their social and economic locations [1999, 12]. Within an unreceptive national context (as Marta and others described in their interviews), the greetings Latino/a migrants receive from white Creekr Ridge Park residents are perceived as a stark, “friendly” contrast. So although limited, these amicable interactions shape how Latino/as frame their white neighbors.

### **3.2.2. Party of One**

During interviews or board meetings, the predominantly white Creekr Ridge Park Neighborhood Association (CPNA) board members occasionally mentioned the need to involve the neighborhood’s Latino/a communities. After a year of repeating the same goals, however, no Spanish translation for the newsletter existed, and all board meetings and neighborhood events were held in English with no Spanish translation. I mention these practices specifically because the board stated them as future goals and/or ways to increase Latino/a involvement. This emphasis on the incorporation of the Latino/a community was part of a larger citywide narrative of inclusion across neighborhoods, universities, and employers. For example, the City of Durham’s Mayor’s Office created a Hispanic/Latino Initiative to address the disproportionate number of Latino/a victims of violent crime. Similarly, the Parks and Recreation Department for the City of Durham holds Latino Outreach events, such as the Durham Latino Festival described in the introduction.

Bilingual flyers for neighborhood events became a more common practice toward the end of my fieldwork. One neighborhood block party even included representatives from a local Latino/a nonprofit organization. A folding table with information on drunk driving, a practice commonly attributed to Latino drivers in Durham, and small plastic baggies were the extent of the nonprofit’s presence. These plastic baggies contained a bilingual pamphlet on drunk driving laws, a Spanish pamphlet on alcoholism, a business card for an outreach coordinator at the nonprofit organization, and two condoms. Based on the contents of the baggies, it seems unlikely that the nonprofit knew the purpose of the event, which was a family-oriented block party. This conspicuous display simultaneously reduced the nonprofit’s efficacy and stigmatized Latino/as at this event. In addition, within this predominantly white space, the narrative of Latino/a drunkenness is perpetuated and Latino/as are inaccurately marked with these negative behaviors. The number of local Driving Under the Influence (DUI) arrests for Latino males is not due to a higher rate of Latino/a drunk driving in comparison with other racial-ethnic groups, but to the gender and age composition of the Latino/a population in Durham, which skews younger and male.

Young men, regardless of racial-ethnic identity, are the most at risk for driving under the influence [Delcher, Johnson, and Maldonado-Molina 2013].

Only one Latino family was in attendance that day—they rented a home a few houses down from the party’s location on Central Street. When I later interviewed newcomer Juliana, the female family member, she stated that she was unfamiliar with the neighborhood association; she went to the block party because the flier was in Spanish and it said they were invited. She also said the presence of the Latino/a nonprofit organization positively influenced her and her husband’s decision to attend. At the event, Juliana and her husband stood by the nonprofit’s table while her son, Marcos, played. Juliana said her son and the other kids at the party had some trouble communicating, but Marcos was still able to play some of the games that had been set up by party organizers. This block party, which took place on the street rather than in a single home, seemed to attract a more multiethnic crowd than the annual picnic, although it was still predominantly white. As I was leaving, I noticed that a block party attendee, who I believe was a CreekrIDGE Park resident (there were some nonresidents in attendance), began to talk to Juliana, who had until that point stood quietly with her husband on the party’s perimeter. When I asked Juliana later on during her interview if she would attend the block party again, she said she did not know. She did not seem particularly enthusiastic about her experience, but she may have felt uncomfortable saying so since she initially assumed I was affiliated with the block party organizers.

Part of the difficulty Juliana faced at the block party was due to a language barrier, since she did not speak English and most white residents did not speak Spanish. It is also a structural issue at the city level. Since El Centro Hispano is one of the only local organizations that focuses on Durham’s Latino/a communities, they are called upon even when they may not be the best fit for the event. New destination cities are particularly at risk for these types of resource limitations since they do not have the established infrastructure and support system of traditional immigrant locales.

### **3.2.3. Food and Fun**

During her interview, Julie, a white homeowner and newcomer to the neighborhood, mentioned her appreciation for the Latino/a community in CreekrIDGE Park:

“So what I love about, like, the CreekrIDGE Park, like, most of the people around here, um, and most the people I know, like, love the fact that we have such a huge Latino population. Like, they love the restaurants, they love that the Food Lion [a regional grocery store generally located in lower middle-income neighborhoods] is stocked with, like, spices that you wouldn’t normally get at a Kroger [a regional grocery store generally located in upper middle-income neighborhoods], and... that’s

like, a neat part about living here and not a drawback. And that most people in this neighborhood think that's fun."

The use of the word "fun" to describe the existence of the Latino/a communities in CreekrIDGE Park is an excellent example of commodification. Julie and "most people" in CreekrIDGE Park are pleased by the presence of Latino/as in the neighborhood because they influence what products are available at the neighborhood grocery store. CreekrIDGE Park Latino/as provide both literal and figurative spice to the neighborhood.

I asked Adrienne, a white homeowner who returned to Durham after briefly living out of state, whether she would describe the neighborhood as mixed-income and diverse—as the neighborhood association does. She responded that while she was not sure she would describe the neighborhood as mixed-income, she does think the neighborhood is diverse. She explained:

"definitely diverse. And that was one thing that I loved about it when I came. I came from Virginia, which is not diverse at all and I just – I really missed it. Um, and I love the fact that there are two – two neighborhood Mexican restaurants and at least two Mexican stores or, I don't if I should say Mexican, Hispanic stores. [...] I really like the diversity."

The Latino/a restaurants and stores in CreekrIDGE Park represent diversity to Adrienne and, like Julie, she appreciates that she can consume Latino/a products in her neighborhood.

The use of non-white residents by whites to designate neighborhood space as distinct from racially segregated suburbia is an important commodifying and classifying practice of this white, urban, middle-class habitus. I argue that CreekrIDGE Park is characterized by a white, urban, middle-class habitus. Bourdieu defines habitus as "homologous to the position they themselves occupy in social space" and includes both "the capacity to produce classifiable practices and works, and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products" [1989, 19]. While Bourdieu addresses the homogenizing effects of class on habitus, I am interested in the intersection of race, class, and geography on common practices for CreekrIDGE Park residents. This shared white, urban, middle-class habitus, which delineates certain behaviors and ways of being as acceptable, dictates many interactions in CreekrIDGE Park – particularly those across race and class.

Important to note here is that in CreekrIDGE Park very few white residents have relationships with their non-white neighbors. The commodification of blacks and Latino/as occurs when non-whites are viewed as objects; in this white, urban, middle-class habitus, non-whites serve as evidence of an idealized diversity. Rather than

exist as individuals with varied interests, needs, and ways of being who may connect with white residents across a multitude of points, non-whites become objects and symbols that represent an ideal (e.g., neighborhood diversity). This commodification is a product of diversity ideology and its limited conceptualizations of diversity. I argue that diversity ideology, much like color-blind racism [Bonilla-Silva 2013], helps individuals who live within an increasingly multicultural environment reconcile a national emphasis on egalitarianism with pervasive racial inequality. As part of this reconciliation, diversity ideology dictates that intentions, as opposed to outcomes, are what truly matter. As a result, those who value diversity as a concept are associated with humanist principles of equity and justice. Focusing on good intentions, however, can obscure issues of inequality. If we are truly interested in equity, we cannot ignore inequitable outcomes – even if they are the result of well-intentioned actions. Non-white presence becomes the measuring stick for diversity rather than reciprocity, power-sharing, and other benchmarks of equity. By idealizing diversity without understanding power relationships, we objectify blackness and Latinidad, simultaneously valuing and devaluing them.

### 3.3. *Relations with “Afro-americanos”*

#### 3.3.1. **Warnings from Family**

Juliana, who is Mexican and whose husband is Salvadoran, moved to CreekrIDGE Park from Virginia and relied on her sister’s help to find housing in Durham. As a newcomer, she explained that there were certain areas in Durham her sister warned her against. When I asked what specifically was the issue with these other areas she said:

“It was because they [Juliana’s sister] told us that it is a very bad, bad, bad place because there are a lot of... There are people that... Sometimes the people – there are a lot of black people, that a lot of black people live there and that it’s [the area’s] bad. Well, could it be true, no? Since we didn’t know the area, we had just moved here, so they just tell you that. But this – right now, now that we live here and we are familiar with many things, we know a lot of areas and all that; but we like living here.

Juliana’s stop-and-start quotation indicates her hesitance in sharing the housing advice her sister gave her, perhaps because of its basis in anti-black prejudice. Many researchers that study Latino/as in the United States and race in Latin America have documented the prevalence of anti-black attitudes and structural racism [McClain *et al.* 2006]. These studies remind us that migrants, regardless of their country of origin, come with already formed ideas about race when they arrive in the United States

[Rodriguez 2000; Wade 1997]. An important facet of the experience of Latino/as in Durham, however, is their relative social isolation from other racial-ethnic groups. So while some Latino/as share negative views of blacks in Durham, their social isolation along with their limited resources and power inhibit their ability to restrict or affect the life chances of blacks. This is in contrast to the power white homeowners hold in CreekrIDGE Park. According to research by political scientist Michael Jones-Correa, Latino/as similar to the majority of my Latino/a respondents – who have mostly Latino/as friends and coworkers and are foreign born – are less likely to feel commonality with blacks and whites [2011, 84, 90]. A sense of commonality with blacks in particular is more likely to emerge among Latino/as who speak English and are U.S. citizens.

### 3.3.2. Neither Friends nor Enemies

During their interview, Lawrence and George—two young black renters in the CreekrIDGE Park area – discussed their ambivalent relationship with their Latino/a neighbors:

Lawrence: “Next door are the [*inaudible*], Rodrigo and Juana, and he works in construction and she’s an advocate for the Latino community. So we had a rocky start with them and you’re [George] not into them much. [...] One of their dogs got and killed the cat.”

Sarah: “Oh wow, okay.”

George: “They’re not the most responsible pet owners, let’s say that. Other than that they can be halfway okay sometimes. Individually I think they’re fine, but there seems to be other people so they have at least two children, two school-age children living there, but there are often other people there, too, and I don’t know if they live there or if they work there or what, and they have also other adult children as well. I don’t know if they live there, work there, or renting rooms in there or what, so there’s – and I don’t really [want] to get into it, I don’t care to really know what exactly is happening over there. But there’s a variety of people who spend considerable amount of time there. So that’s them.”

George’s comments about the actual event were minimal, and most of his response was about how many people lived next door. The number of Latino/a residents living in particular homes was a trope a few non-Latino/as called upon during their interviews. Even though several people lived next door and he was not sure who lived there, the connection George drew between the number of residents and their roles as pet owners was unclear. Although he could have just mentioned the death of his cat to justify his ambivalent feelings towards his neighbors, his use of this trope seemed like an attempt to discredit his Latino/a neighbors.

### 3.3.3. Stalled progress

Cheryl, a black homeowner, also shared a story about her interactions with her Latino neighbor Óscar. She recounted that their rapport was initially positive; when Óscar and his family moved in, they invited Cheryl to their son’s birthday party. She then recapped how their relationship shifted when another neighbor reported Óscar to Neighborhood Improvement Services:

“And I thought we were going to have a great relationship. And actually, we always spoke. Something happened and I speculated about what in the world could have happened that all of a sudden the mother is still speaking but the husband don’t speak, even when I speak and it’s apparent I’ve spoken. And one of the things that happened was they used to keep a lot of junk in the front yard and at some point I saw a city truck over there and shortly thereafter that junk was gone. I suspected somebody complained and I wondered if he assumed I was the one who complained. And one day, our neighbor down the street, a white guy, happened to be going by, complimenting me about some of the stuff I was doing in my yard and somehow or another, he ends up saying to me he was the person who complained and had that stuff cleaned up ’cause he said something like, ‘You know, it’s wonderful that you are doing these things to your yard. It looks great.’ And he said, ‘And of course, the house across the street doesn’t look that great, but at least it looks better.’ And I said, ‘Yeah, I know that they moved a lot of that stuff.’ He said, ‘Actually, I was the person who complained t’hey got it done.’”

After Cheryl spoke with her white neighbor she followed up with Óscar to see if she had done anything to offend him. He insisted she hadn’t and she proceeded to assure him that she was not the person who called the city to complain about him, although she knew who had. She then explained to me that she is a strong advocate for immigrant rights and feels badly because she does not believe Óscar knows that about her:

“I said, ‘first of all, I respect the fact that this is your yard. You can keep in it whatever you want.’ I said, ‘But the other issue is, I want you to know that if I had a issue with something in your yard, I would talk to you before I would call the city.’ He seemed to be fine with that. He still doesn’t speak. I can’t do anything about that. So I feel bad about it.”

Unlike the white homeowners who actively participated in social control practices, including the white neighbor who told Cheryl he reported Óscar to Neighborhood Improvement Services, Cheryl was not interested in policing her neighbor’s lawn. Her priority was maintaining a positive relationship with her Latino/a neighbors and, in the case of a conflict, communicating directly with them. Cheryl also shared that she wanted Óscar to know she is an ally and can be called upon if he

is ever in crisis. She seemed most upset that their relationship would not flourish after this point. This example illustrates how power differences (e.g., homeownership status, English fluency) can also inhibit black-Latino/a alliances from forming.

### 3.4. “Entre Nos”: Inter-Latino/a Relations

When I asked Latino/a residents about their experiences with other racial-ethnic groups, they generally gave vague but positive statements about black and white residents. In fact, my respondents were more likely to speak candidly about their negative encounters with other Latino/as. This difference is likely due to the fact that Latino/as spend most of their time with other Latino/as. For example, Diana and Marta relayed stories of their mistreatment at the hands of individuals from both Latin America and the United States:

Diana: “Well, blacks are friendly.”

Marta: “Rather, sometimes – there’s all types, because there are times when you find – Because one time I went to, I was cashing in a WIC [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children] and I encountered an American woman there and she said a lot of things to me. But I was with a neighbor, he took me, he, how do I say this, he spoke a lot of English, and she was telling me that we came here to take food from them, that I don’t know what, she said a lot of things. And I have met other Americans that are very nice. Yeah. And there are some Hispanics also that are very racist, bad, as if they didn’t come from our same country. There’s all types.”

When I asked them if this was also the case in Honduras, where they are from, they both responded “no” and that in the US other Latino/as may mistreat you as follows:

Diana: “...there are Latinos that also treat you poorly in the stores, or they say to you – because you don’t speak English and they tell you that they only speak English, that they don’t speak Spanish, and maybe that Latino is from the same place as you. So, for me, that is racism.”

Marta: “Look, you’re passing on the street and there are times when some Americans will stop for you so you can pass and they will say hello and everything. There are times when a Latino, one of your own, and he’s–he’s almost running you over with his car and they’re beeping and beeping. That’s ugly.”

Diana and Marta did not use anti-black prejudice in describing their encounters with Americans in the United States. They acknowledged that there are all types of people, including friendly blacks and less friendly Americans. It is unclear if the woman who confronted Marta in the store was white or black, although *americana*



is generally used to refer to whites. Diana and Marta also identified ill-treatment at the hands of their compatriots and fellow Latino/as. They used the word "racism" to characterize any mistreatment they connected to their Latina identities. Marta and Diana's definition of racism is more similar to sociological definitions of prejudice since it does not take into consideration issues of power, an important part of scholarly definitions of racism.

The experiences of my respondents with other Latino/as are particularly relevant when we take into account the social network data of Latino/as. All of my Latino/a respondents indicated that they spent the most time with other Latino/as, generally other compatriots and family members. The importance and strength of ethnic community networks, especially for first-generation immigrants, is a well-established finding in the immigration literature [Portes and Rumbaut 2006]. The behaviors of immigrants, however, do not take place in a vacuum. Language is an important part of this pattern, and documentation issues are also relevant for Durham's Latino/a population.<sup>11</sup> The interethnic patterns of conflict also show that the panethnic Latino/a label imposed on migrants from Latin America may ignore important nation-based boundaries. Research has shown that national-origin labels are more relevant to recent immigrants than panethnic labels [Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000; Sears, Fu, Henry, and Bui 2003]. The intergroup relations my respondents discussed illuminate the limited applicability of official Census categories, such as Hispanic.

During our interview, Martín explained to me how Latino/as who think Americans are racist are wrong. Martín continued to positively frame Americans, with an implicit connotation of *white* Americans, even giving a caveat that those who are most unfriendly are black Americans. He also chastised Latino/as who complain that Americans (here, presumably referring to whites again) are unfriendly. Martín gave two examples of how Latino/as are actually to blame for their current positions, since they fail to properly engage with whites; from his point of view the social isolation and position of Latino/as in the labor market is a result of their improper behavior. Martín insists on the importance of following customs and rules to get ahead in the United States – a somewhat contradictory stance, considering he is undocumented. His responses must be viewed through his framing of me as *americana*. His portrayal of life in CreekrIDGE Park as "perfect" despite many complaints about the difficulties of his life leads me to believe that he wanted to portray himself as the right type of immigrant—one who acts according to neighborhood norms of *americanos*, unlike other "inappropriate" immigrants.

<sup>11</sup> For more on Durham's migrant community, see Parrado, McQuiston, and Flippen [2005].

Like Marta and Diana, Martín also mentioned how his fellow Latino/as are racist toward one another. He expands on this point below:

“For example, you’re working in a place and you’re – let’s say it’s all Mexican workers and in walks a Salvadoran. ‘Ugh, look, no a Salvadoran is here.’ ‘No, Hondurans don’t work hard enough, Hondurans aren’t like Mexicans.’ Here the... look Sarah, I’m gonna tell you something: the biggest part... the laziest people are Hondurans, I don’t know why. And almost nobody likes them amongst us, amongst Latinos. Tell me that that isn’t discrimination.”

There are obvious contradictions in Martín’s comments. Martín, a Mexican migrant, criticizes the discriminatory attitudes that exist between Latino/a communities by matter-of-factly expressing prejudiced attitudes toward Hondurans. He continues:

Martín: “And so I’m telling you amongst us there’s also that [racism], because of our races. And not from – let’s also talk about Mexico. They don’t like us, Sarah, they call us *chilangos*, those of us from Mexico City. They call us *chilangos*. Realize that they do not like us. It’s that – look, we have another standard of living, we come from a city. You understand me? We didn’t come from a town. And unfortunately things are very different in a town than in a city. And so they think that we’re ‘clowns,’ and I don’t know how you say it in English, that we’re arrogant, you understand me? But it’s not like that, it’s because of our way of life. You have to learn how to live in a city, if not the city will devour you, you understand me? And so they don’t like us, imagine that, tell me that there also isn’t racism there. There’s a saying in Guadalajara, it says: ‘Be a patriot and kill a *chilango*’” [*laughs*]. Imagine that, kill a *chilango*. What else can I say.”

Sarah: “And have you seen that here? That people treat you that way?”

Martín: “Oh, yes! ‘Oh no, look, there comes a *chilango*.’ Between us it’s the same [racism]. But I think you need to take those types of things well, not believe in these kinds of things, talk to people; here in my neighborhood everybody greets us.”

Based on his comments, Martín believes “racism” (he uses the term in the same prejudice-based way Marta and Diana do) among Latino/as exists and has shaped his experience in both Mexico and the United States. At the end of his comments, however, he states that one should not believe in racist characterizations of others and that it is important to talk to people. He then asserts how everybody greets him and his family in Creekrige Park. This last statement is particularly noteworthy since Martín had just spent a considerable amount of time speaking about intra-Latino/a prejudice. Since he views his neighborhood as predominantly white/American, his final statement may be an attempt to fit in with the *tranquilo* [quiet, easy-going] neighborhood he has described. So while he defines the common practices of intra-Latino/a relations, he attempts to socially distance himself from them at the end of

his statement. Again, his framing of me as "*americana*" may help contextualize his responses.

## Conclusion

In this paper I have laid out Latino/as' various and sometimes seemingly contradictory modes of inter- and intra-racial interactions. For example, I argue that their positive framing of Creekridge Park despite limited interactions with non-Latino/as is dependent on how Latino/a residents frame the U.S.'s racial context. My data also help illustrate the limitations of using dissimilarity indices to comprehend interracial relations in multiethnic neighborhoods. Creekridge Park captures the multifaceted, nonlinear social life of racial-ethnic communities in new destination cities.

Immigration and processes of neighborhood change (e.g., gentrification, white flight, and aging population) have made multiethnic neighborhoods much more common than they used to be in the U.S. That is the story of Creekridge Park. At the same time, analyses of these spaces must be based on a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding than the presumption that statistical integration mandates equity across groups. While the migration of Latino/as to new destination cities in the United States may decrease dissimilarity indices, scholars and policy makers should be cautious in their interpretations of these numbers. My study of Creekridge Park shows that spatial proximity between racial-ethnic communities does not necessarily result in positive interracial social interactions between white, black, and Latino/a residents. In fact, the experiences of Latino/a migrants in Creekridge Park is one of relative social isolation, despite general descriptions of neighborhood friendliness. This finding, which counters common claims of segregation scholars, necessitates a reassessment of the state of theory and methods in both segregation and racial stratification research.

Both mainstream segregation studies and immigration research are rooted in the assimilationist paradigm made famous by sociologist Robert Park's race relations cycle [1950]. In residential segregation research, spatial distance serves as a proxy for social distance. For Park, and others working within the Chicago School tradition, social distance maintains the current order of race relations [Park 1924]. Therefore, if blacks keep their social distance from whites, for example, the current order of racial inequality is maintained. Subsequently, challenges to the norms of social distance, like interracial relationships and integrated neighborhoods, are necessary to create egalitarian race relations. Segregation scholars theorize that by minimizing spatial distance, social distance and racial inequality would decrease, too.

Sociologists who study residential segregation, however, rarely state Park's assimilation theory and its corollaries as the basis for their research. Most studies present the relationship between segregation and other topics like education, health care, and crime as justifications for analyzing segregation [Collins and Williams 1999; Massey and Denton 1993; Peterson and Krivo 1999; Williams and Collins 2001]. Sociologists now seem to presume residential segregation is what causes racial inequality, without recognizing the theoretical assumptions underlying that relationship. In fact, if we understand Park correctly, spatial distance is not the root cause of racial inequality. Segregation facilitates racial inequality as a spatial manifestation of the racial structure. It is an issue of correlation versus causation; sociologists have documented the relationship between segregation and racial inequality for so long that many now treat it as the cause of inequality, rather than vice versa.

This theoretical distinction matters because segregation research underlies much of our contemporary housing policy. US federal programs, such as HOPE VI,<sup>12</sup> are based on studies that present integrated residential arrangements as the crux of reducing the economic and social marginalization of communities of color. Social mix policies are also shaping contemporary European cities. The rich data produced by my multi-method neighborhood study provide insight into how integration in a multiethnic community can actually maintain racial inequality. Racial segregation is but one way by which racial inequality manifests itself. Studying the incorporation of an immigrant community in a new destination city helps us unfold the complex and nonlinear relationships between spatial proximity and racial inequality and better understand the mechanisms of marginalization at work.

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<sup>12</sup> HOPE VI is a US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program to "eradicate severely distressed public housing" partly through "promoting mixed-income communities" (US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Home and Communities).

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## “Aquí Estamos a la Fuerza”

### Interracial Relations in a New Latino/a Destination City

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**Abstract:** This study explores the experiences of Latino/a migrants in a multiethnic neighborhood in Durham, North Carolina (USA) – a new destination city for Latino/a migration. While low dissimilarity indices point to their spatial inclusion in this neighborhood, interview data indicate the multifaceted and sometimes contradictory ways that Latino/a migrants experience life in a new destination for immigration. For example, their positive views of their neighborhood and “*americano*” neighbors belie their social isolation. I identify Latino/as’ inter- and intra-racial patterns of interactions in this neighborhood, which highlight the nonlinear relationship between social and spatial distance.

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*Keywords:* Interracial Relations; Immigrant Incorporation; New Destinations; Participant Observation; US.

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**Sarah Mayorga-Gallo** is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Cincinnati. She joined the faculty in 2012 after earning her Ph.D. in Sociology from Duke University. She is the author of *Behind the White Picket Fence: Power and Privilege in a Multiethnic Neighborhood* [UNC Press, 2014]. Her research interests include racial and ethnic stratification, neighborhoods, and Latino/a migration.