

Finding Community and Opportunity:

Navigating Assimilation and Racialization as Second-Generation Immigrants Living in Ethnic Enclaves

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Research Question

How do second-generation young adult immigrants living in ethnic neighborhoods perceive belonging and opportunity in their residential communities?

Theoretical Framework

Assimilation

- Classical assimilation: describe as an upward, linear process towards the white, middle-class
- Segmented assimilation: life outcomes may be better, just as good or worse than mainstream
- Spatial assimilation: process in which immigrants settle from ethnic, low-resource areas into white, high resource areas

Racialization:

- Process of social undesirability
- Promotes stratification and socioeconomic exploitation

Data & Methods

- Participants recruited via social media and snowball sampling techniques
- 26 interviews were conducted with second-generation immigrants of Latin American heritage, living in the Chicagoland area
- Ages 18-26
- Each interview lasted between 45-90 minutes and was qualitatively coded for themes
- Participants were compensated with \$40 online VISA gift card
- Most participants happened to be the first in their families to attend post-secondary school

Results

Belonging

- Experienced exclusion in white spaces; experienced policing by institutions and white neighbors
- Experienced ethnic solidarity with community members in the face of exclusion through organizing and mutual aid

Opportunity

- Defined resource rich communities as those with quality schools and white-collar career opportunities
- Viewed ethnic communities as resource deficient, expressed desires to move to resource rich neighborhoods in the future

Discussion

Results demonstrate nuance as participants want to maintain cultural ties (while facing racialization) yet desire socioeconomic advancement.