RIGHTS, RECOGNITION, AND CHANGING BORDERS: LATIN AMERICAN ACTIVISM IN POST-BREXIT BRITAIN

Stephanie Aragao Medden

University of Massachusetts - Amherst

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2

Part of the Critical and Cultural Studies Commons, Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Communication Commons, International and Intercultural Communication Commons, Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons, and the Social Media Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2/1462

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Dissertations and Theses at ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.
RIGHTS, RECOGNITION, AND CHANGING BORDERS:
LATIN AMERICAN ACTIVISM IN POST-BREXIT BRITAIN

A Dissertation Presented

by

STEPHANIE ARAGÃO MEDDEN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 2018

Communication
RIGHTS, RECOGNITION, AND CHANGING BORDERS: 
LATIN AMERICAN ACTIVISM IN POST-BREXIT BRITAIN

A Dissertation Presented

By

STEPHANIE ARAGAO MEDDEN

Approved as to style and content by:

__________________________________________
Mari Castañeda, Chair

__________________________________________
Emily West, Member

__________________________________________
Jonathan Rosa, Member

Mari Castañeda, Department Head
Communication
DEDICATION

For my father, who made me curious. Que saudade.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation represents the culmination of many long nights of writing, too many deep and meaningful conversations with participants, mentors, friends, and family to count, a few bouts of self-doubt, many instances of amazing kindness extended to me by people in my life whose phone calls, emails and text messages went ignored, and an intense process of self-discovery that has been both, at times, harrowing and humbling.

I am very grateful to the faculty and graduate students in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, especially Professors Jacqueline Urla and Krista Harper. My first encounters with Latin American activist groups and community organizations in London occurred while I was working on an earlier project that was a part of the Culture and Heritage in European Societies and Spaces Program. My involvement in the program helped both build my network and knowledge of the field and helped sharpen my research and writing skills.

I must thank the wonderful faculty, staff, and fellow graduate students in the Department of Communication at the University of Massachusetts Amherst who, from the very start of my graduate studies, provided much support, many laughs and good memories, and the rigorous training that prepared me to embark on and complete this project. Special thanks to my dissertation committee members, Professor Jonathan Rosa for inspiring my work with his critical linguistic anthropology and supporting my ideas with his kind words and patience throughout the long process from prospectus to defense. Professor Emily West for guiding this project through several iterations from the very beginning and for many meaningful conversations along the way that helped me navigate through the often-isolating process of completing a doctoral dissertation. I could not have
completed this project without the consistent kindness and generosity of my committee chair, Professor Mari Castañeda who has the incredible ability to push me to achieve my best without pushing me over the edge. Thank you all for being wonderful mentors to me by supporting my work and by your example as amazing scholars and people.

I must acknowledge the incredible sacrifices of my family during the research and writing process. My husband, Rod, an absolute hero of a man and incredible dad who held down the fort when this mama did not have the time or energy to even try. Thank you, my love. To my daughters, Darcey and Kendall, I hope one day you will find it interesting, and perhaps even quite cool, that your mom challenged herself to push through and complete this project. I hope it makes you feel proud and even motivates you to start and even conquer something that seems a little too big or too tough. To my mother, Maria da Conceição, the most kind, patient, wise, and loving mother I could ask for who never stopped believing that I could do it. To my siblings, Paula, John, Renata, Michelle, and Jenn – thanks for the pep talks and for providing a tight circle of love and laughter that I can always come back to. To my nieces and nephews, in-laws, and extended family, friends, and colleagues over the years who have provided much love and light, thank you.

During the final stages of working on this dissertation I lost my father, João Correia Aragão. Dad, thank you for our many trips to the public library on Saturday afternoons. Thank you for encouraging me to imagine distant places, learn about other cultures, and understand and care about other people. Thank you for your endless imagination and silliness and for teaching me, through your example, that being unsure and asking questions is the only way to learn and grow.
ABSTRACT

RIGHTS, RECOGNITION, AND CHANGING BORDERS: LATIN AMERICAN ACTIVISM IN POST-BREXIT BRITAIN

SEPTEMBER 2018

STEPHANIE ARAGÃO MEDDEN, B.A., GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
M.Sc., LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE
Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Mari Castañeda

This dissertation explores the advocacy work and political activism of Latin American social movement organizations based in the United Kingdom. I examine how activists working in Britain as it prepares to exit the European Union, make sense of their collective agendas, strategize to achieve their goals, and evaluate the outcomes of their advocacy efforts. In doing so, this project provides insights into the ways that identity movements are negotiated and performed during periods of increased political and public hostility toward their constituents and agendas.

I illuminate the relationship between identity movements, immigration discourses, politics, and policy implementation and explore how major threats to activist groups and the communities they support influences collective action around rights and recognition. By analyzing public communication such as social media activity, advocacy campaigns, and public protests, along with in-depth interviews with activists at every level of multiple organizations working with members of the Latin American community in London, I describe how organizations were formed and are structured and discuss how activists construct, enact, and evaluate their agendas. I demonstrate how Britain’s planned
exit from the European Union, concurrent with the broader trend towards Nationalism in much of Europe, has had particular effects on the advocacy work and activism of Latin Americans in the United Kingdom. I argue that in the context of a profound national policy shift a stratification of collective identity politics has occurred which produces distinct positionalities in relation to ethnocultural identity and activists’ engagements with issues of race, legal status, and belonging. These distinctions represent and important division of labor within and across organizations that play out in moments of both contention and cooperation and have implications for the future of Latin American social activism in the U.K.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ............................................. v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT ........................................................ vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES ................................................. xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION ................................................... 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Purpose of this Study ........................................ 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Goals and Questions ................................... 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study ......................................... 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................ 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction ....................................................... 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is Something in the Air ................................... 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying Social Movements ...................................... 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is a Social Movement? ...................................... 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context Matters ................................................... 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnocultural Belonging and Latinidades ....................... 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin London ....................................................... 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion ......................................................... 53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. RESEARCH METHODS ............................................. 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction ....................................................... 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions ............................................... 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design ................................................... 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study Method ................................................ 59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of Participants ........................................ 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection .................................................... 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of Human Subjects .................................... 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis ....................................................... 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positioning Myself in the Research ............................... 73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological Limitations ...................................... 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ACTIVISM IN LATIN AMERICAN LONDON ......................... 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction ....................................................... 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin Americans in London ...................................... 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin American Organizations in the U.K. ....................... 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition of Latin Americans in the U.K. (CLAUK) ............. 86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Latin American Women’s Rights Service (LAWRS) ................................................... 89
Latin American Women's Aid (LAWA) ................................................................. 94
Indoamerican Refugee and Migrant Organisation (IRMO) ................................. 99
Latin American House ...................................................................................... 102
Latin Elephant ................................................................................................. 108
Latin American Disabled People's Project (LADPP) ........................................ 111
Collaborative Campaigns .............................................................................. 114
Conclusion ....................................................................................................... 119

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS .................................................................. 120

Introduction .................................................................................................... 120
Founding, Funding, and Structures ............................................................... 121
Collaboration and Strategy .......................................................................... 130
The Role of Allies ......................................................................................... 140
Recognition and Integration ....................................................................... 144
Future Research ......................................................................................... 150

BIBLIOGRAPHY .............................................................................................. 152
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>A pro-Brexit poster produced by UKIP</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Map of organizations</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Participant chart</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Participants in the #StepUpMigrantWomen campaign</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>LAWA intersectionality graphic</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1985 information bulletin by IRMO, then Chile Democrático GB</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>A Brexit comic strip by Latin American House</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>La Bodeguita restaurant in Elephant and Castle</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Development plans for 'Latin Boulevard' by Latin Elephant</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>LADPP promoting reflexology services to community members</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Children play at El Pueblito Paisa indoor market in Seven Sisters</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>A Facebook post from UNHRC supporting #SaveLatinVillage campaign</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Movimiento Jaguar Despierto supporting #SaveLatinVillage at a protest</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Post from CLAUK explaining political parties' position on Brexit</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Members of The London Latinxs participate in Your Borders Kill protest</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>LCC students protest plans to develop Elephant and Castle</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Community group, Up the Elephant's Twitter homepage</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Retweet of The London Latinxs post by Up the Elephant</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>CLAUK poster for 6th anniversary recognition celebration</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On July 22, 2005, Jean Charles de Menezes, a 27-year-old Brazilian electrician, was killed by London Metropolitan Police in the city’s Stockwell Underground train station. de Menezes was traveling to work when police pursued him, first on the bus and then onto a train, and shot him seven times in the head. Initially, official reports claimed that de Menezes was directly connected to a failed bombing that occurred a day before and two weeks prior to the July 7 bombings that killed 52 people. A subsequent review of communication between officers involved in the pursuit revealed that de Menezes was mistakenly targeted because, as one officer said, he had “distinctly Mongolian eyes”, while another officer claimed that de Menezes was “acting in a wary manner” and several officers claimed that he had resisted police when they attempted to confront him (“Jean Charles de Menezes inquest timeline,” 2008). Then Police Commissioner Sir Ian Blair claimed in a press conference that de Menezes “was challenged and refused to obey police instructions”, and Scotland Yard claimed that his “clothing and behavior at the station added to their suspicions” (Saleem, 2016). However, eyewitness reports, surveillance footage, and transcripts of police communication on that day, disputed many of the details of initial accounts from the police, local government, and media reports. de Menezes did not act suspiciously or resist officers, and, contrary to media reports, he was not in the U.K. illegally, and he did not jump over the ticket barrier and rush onto the train in an attempt to outrun officers in pursuit (Saleem, 2016). According to witnesses and some officers who reported their accounts to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) de Menezes was very likely unaware that he was being followed by
police at all, as officers pursuing him were undercover and in plain clothes. Like many London commuters that day, surveillance images show that he paid for his train ticket and calmly collected a free newspaper before walking onto the train before he was confronted and shot and killed (Cowan, Campbell, & Dodd, 2005).

Following his death, activists, community members, and family and friends of de Menezes organized protests in London and his native Brazil. Then Prime Minister Tony Blair offered an apology to the family saying he was “desperately sorry” that an innocent man had been killed, but urged people to support police dealing with such “difficult circumstances” following the London bombings earlier in the month (“Protest in Brazil after shooting,” 2005). With support from activists, community organizers, lawyers, and several left-wing politicians, de Menezes’ family launched the Jean Charles de Menezes Family Campaign in an attempt to “find out the truth about Jean Charles’ unlawful killing, bring those responsible for his death to justice, and to campaign against the rising tide of racism and attack on civil liberties in the U.K.” (“de Menezes Family Campaign Launch And Rally,” 2005). As a result of pressure from the family, activists, and others involved with the campaign, a coroner’s inquest was launched in 2008 and while the inquest jury rejected police accounts of the events on July 22, it declared an open verdict, after the coroner, Sir Michael Wright, had ruled out unlawful killing as a possible verdict (Edwards & Rayner, 2008). The family called the verdict a “whitewash” but eventually settled with the Metropolitan Police for a sum in excess of £100,000, plus the substantial legal costs they incurred leading up to the inquest (Dodd, 2009). After the settlement in 2009, small protests continued, with performance artists, activists, and family members holding vigil events to bring awareness to de Menezes’ death years after he was killed.
When I moved to London in 2008 to begin graduate school, I lived in the same building as a Brazilian lawyer who was very familiar with de Menezes case. One day in casual conversation he told me more about de Menezes’ story and about some of the activism that was ongoing not far from where we lived. I vaguely remembered hearing about the case as it unfolded while I was back home in the United States, but I was impressed by the extent to which the family, along with local activists, was still fighting on his behalf. They wanted to be recognized, they wanted Jean Charles’s story to be heard and they wanted justice beyond a monetary settlement, they wanted to see reforms to the system that not only allowed their loved one to be targeted and killed but justified by presenting his death as a casualty of George W. Bush and Tony Blair’s “War on Terrorism”.

When I attended a small vigil at Stockwell Station on the anniversary of de Menezes’ death, I noticed that there were representatives from a few different community organizations holding vigil along with a few members of de Menezes’ extended family. A few were from organizations supporting immigrant, migrant and refugee rights and one was from a local service that supported Portuguese and Spanish-speaking women with language lessons, legal advice, and job training. In speaking with one of them about de Menezes, they told me that his death and the false narrative around him and what happened that day was a turning point for many who felt like it was more important than ever to advocate for immigrant, migrant, and refugee rights. July 7, 2005 in Britain, much like September 11, 2001 in the United States, marked the beginning of what would become a retreat toward strengthening borders, both material and symbolic. Activists sensed this early on and began hearing from community members about more cases of
discrimination on the street, at work, and in school. It was clear to many that there was much work to be done.

I felt inspired by the collaboration between organizations with different agendas, all of which support diverse and disparate communities in different capacities, coming together to support the family that day. That event piqued my interest in understanding how diverse identity movements, form, shift, transform, and negotiate difference. In January of 2008, a cousin of de Menezes, who was living with him in London at the time of his death, was preparing to bring the case to the European Court of Human Rights arguing that under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, de Menezes’ basic human right to life had been violated by police the day he was killed on the train. I continued to follow the case closely, and once I finished by PhD coursework back in the U.S., I decided to explore some of the questions that my experience at the vigil had prompted years earlier.

From 2011-2013 I conducted research in London that explored how Portuguese speakers (Lusophones) negotiate the boundaries of ethnocultural identity. My research demonstrated how race and citizenship were often key signifiers in the boundary work participants engaged in when interacting with one another and describing themselves in relation to other Lusophones. While common language facilitates the strategic sharing of space and certain resources, when it comes to political organizing and activism, and mobilization around often shared economic and social subjugation, ethno-racial difference and perceived cultural superiority was used by many Portuguese to distinguish themselves from other Lusophones, especially Brazilians.
I found that most Portuguese, who benefit socially, culturally, and politically by their ability to claim whiteness and European citizenship, did not want to be aligned with other Lusophones, even though they often live in very close proximity, patronize the same small food shops and cafes, work together in similar roles, and face similar economic hardship. Since conducting this research, the context in the United Kingdom has shifted dramatically. As I write in February of 2018, preparations are currently underway for the U.K. to exit the European Union (hereafter E.U. and Brexit) after a June 2016 referendum resulted in a narrow vote in favor to leave the E.U. Many have suggested that the success of the referendum was largely due to the ‘leave’ campaign’s effective use of anti-immigrant propaganda (Bulman, 2017). A week before the vote, Nigel Farage, then a leading member of the ultraconservative U.K. Independence Party (UKIP) who advocated strongly for Brexit, unveiled a public campaign that featured images of crowds of what was characterized as refugees and migrants in line to the U.K. These tactics, explicitly connecting a leave result with a rejection of opening Britain’s borders to migrants and immigrants, were ultimately effective in dominating the debate around Brexit and achieving the leave result (Taylor, 2016). The response to Brexit, and the subsequent increase in anti-immigrant abuse and violence in London and throughout the U.K., from immigrant and migrant community members and advocacy groups has been loud and clear – we will fight back. For many, solidarity has become a necessity in times when more than cultural ostracization is at stake. The livelihood and rights of many are in question, and a growing number of active organizations are heeding the call to action by doing advocacy work and providing support services.
While conducting research with the Lusophone community, I met many people who worked for or relied on organizations supporting the Portuguese-speaking community in London, most of which also support Spanish-speaking populations due to proximity in space and shared language, culture, history, religion, and national/regional origin. These organizations help locate resources, provide language and job training, childcare services, legal aid, advocate for rights and recognition to local councils and the federal government, and organize community and civic activities. Knowing what I did about the cleavages that existed within the Lusophone community in London from my previous work, I became interested in exploring how the Latin American community there was negotiating similar challenges related to collective identity and collective action, especially considering the backdrop of Brexit and the increased discrimination and hostility often felt by members of immigrant and migrant communities.

**The purpose of this study**

The purpose of this study is two-fold. First, it will illuminate how activists working with and on behalf of Latin American immigrants, migrants, and refugees define their agendas, collectively strategize, and evaluate their own advocacy. Second, it will provide insights into the specific ways that broad and traumatic political projects, such as Brexit, impact such movements, and specifically how Brexit has influenced the ways agendas are set, campaigns are organized, and outcomes are evaluated. How sociopolitical projects such as Brexit impact the manner in which collective identity and action coalesce is important to understand as it provides insight into power dynamics at the center of collective identity and collective action. Traumatic moments provide a
context within which boundaries must be drawn in order for actors to resist. Activists are
drawn to particular issues and causes for a myriad of reasons, but when activism is in
response to violence enacted by the state, agents must define themselves clearly in order
to resist the opposition. Social movements, by necessity, must define themselves in order
to present a cohesive agenda; in fact, presenting a cohesive identity – as in the case of
gaining recognition and rights as an ethnocultural identity movement – often is the
agenda.

Melucci defines collective identity as, “an interactive and shared definition
produced by a number of individuals (or groups at a more complex level) concerning the
orientations of their action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which such
action is to take place” (1996: 70). While using this understanding of collective identity is
useful to critically exploring negotiations of identity, it is important to remember that the
products of collective identity do not represent a ‘true’ document of the community in
question. Identities are fluid and under constant transformation. Frames used to represent
any group are not distilled versions of something essential or pure but rather simply
represent a moment of practice in constructing what one group (or multiple related
groups) hopes to achieve. In the instance of Latin American social movements in London
who are organizing around rights, visibility, and recognition - collective identity operates
as a strategic resource that is specifically crafted to say, “here we are”. In fact, one of the
central goals shared in narratives of formation of all five of the organizations I explored
was Latin Americans’ “invisibility” in the U.K. until very recently.

The Latin American population in the United Kingdom is one of the fastest
growing yet least visible migrant communities (Hill, 2016). As of 2016, the estimated
population of Latin Americans living in the U.K. was around 250,000, of which around 145,000 live in London (McIlwaine & Bunge, 2016). The same report found that just under 40,000 individuals who came to the U.K. from Latin America between 2012 and 2013 had a European Union passport. Two-thirds of Latin Americans living in London arrived after 2000. More than half of the Latin American population living in the U.K. is college educated; yet almost half work in low-wage jobs in the service, healthcare, and administrative roles. On average, Latin Americans experience economic deprivation more than other Londoners, including other migrant groups due to low-wage work, long work hours, overcrowded and unaffordable housing, and high cost of living (McIlwaine & Bunge, 2016).

In the 1980s, following an increase in migration from Latin America to the U.K., several community organizations were started to carry out advocacy work. These organizations were involved in campaigning for human rights issues related to conflicts going on in their home continent, but also provided support resources to Latin Americans living and working in the U.K. (McIlwaine, Camilo Cock, & Linneker, 2011). Over the last several decades, these organizations have grown and transformed based on the needs of the community and changes in immigration policy. While some important work has been done to accurately document the size of the population and point to some of the institutional factors that contribute to the disproportionate subjugation of Latin Americans as a migrant community in the U.K. (McIlwaine, Camilo Cock, & Linneker, 2011; McIlwaine & Bunge, 2016), much less is known about the qualitative aspects of the experiences of Latin Americans living in U.K. While a broad study of these experiences is certainly warranted, this study provides some insight into issues impacting
Latin American migrants by exploring advocacy work that is being done by and on behalf of Latin Americans.

**Research Goals and Questions**

My research goals are to first, to map the landscape of increasingly collaborative Latin American advocacy organizations in Britain, and second, understand the process and consider the implications of forging collective Latinidad while Britain prepares to exit the European Union.

My work is guided by the following questions:

- How have organizations been founded, funded, and structured and how do they collaborate?
- How do activists make sense of their agenda, strategize and collaborate and evaluate their own work?
- How has Britain’s planned exit from the European Union and related rhetoric, discourses, and policies around immigration and migration impacted advocacy efforts?

**Limitations of the Study**

The goal of qualitative research is to provide in-depth insights into particular phenomena; therefore, making generalizable deductions is not a primary goal (Lindloff & Taylor, 2010). However, researchers should consider how the scope and design of a study help or hinder its role in providing useful contributions to the literature on said phenomena. By analyzing public communication, including social media activity, knowledge campaigns, and public protests of five distinct organizations serving the Latin American community in the U.K., this study provides valuable insights into this the
broader processes of collective identity and collective action in response to state violence. In addition, by unpacking how activists engage in strategy, collaborate to mobilize activism and resources, and evaluate their own advocacy work, this study adds to social movement literature on collaborative identity movements and how they negotiate, form, transform and shift based on internal and external factors.

In order to control potential self-bias and include the perspectives of activists working on the ground, I incorporate in-depth interviews along with an analysis of texts, campaigns, and protest actions. In qualitative research, by conducting interviews and performing interpretive analyses the researcher is often the primary research instrument (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The researcher must be aware of the ways language is socially constructed, and should build into the research agenda ways to apply rigor to interpretations and opportunities to be reflexive (Bourdieu, 1992). How this design incorporates these factors is discussed in Chapter 3 on Research Methods. In Chapter 4, I map the organizations that are subjects of this study and describe three current campaigns that help demonstrate the ways that activists are negotiating identity and facing challenges presented by late capitalism and a retreat to nationalism in the U.K. along with the uncertainty of Brexit. In Chapter 5, I conclude with perspectives from advocates and activists and present an argument about how the particular context prompts a stratification of positionalities in relation to migration issues and collective identity. I end by discussing implications of my work and suggestions for further research in this area.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter discusses how social movements emerge and often transform within particular structural conditions such as changes to public policy and law, shifting political discourses, and social and cultural transformations. As Blumer (1969) states, “social movements can be viewed as collective enterprises seeking to establish a new order of life. They have their inception in a condition of unrest and derive their motive power on one hand from dissatisfaction with the current form of life, and the other hand, from wishes and hopes for a new system of living” (99). The chapter aims to understand in theoretical terms how social movements and collective identity emerge and impact diasporic communities. In addition to explicating the literature review, the chapter also describes the particular context in the U.K. leading up to Brexit and discusses how scholars have explored Latin American communities in the U.K.

There is Something in the Air

Social movements often begin as a response to inequality and oppression imposed on marginalized groups by the state and society at large. The grounded contexts they emerge from are important to consider, as they provide a particular set of conditions that inspire action. From women’s movements, civil rights activism, and LGBT movements, marginalized groups – when well organized, energized, and persistent in their activism – can change local, state, and federal policy, inspire social change, and incite new movements to continue advocacy around important issues. In 2018, as President Donald Trump (himself accused of sexual harassment and assault by a number of women)
occupies the highest office in the United States, many women are standing up against sexual violence and gender inequality, sharing their experiences, marching on Washington, and running for political office in record numbers (Caygle, 2018). As I write, the #MeToo movement, an anti-sexual harassment and sexual assault movement which began with a MySpace post by social activist Tarana Burke in 2006, has altered and amplified public discourses around sexual violence. What began with a hashtag campaign to raise awareness of gender violence and promote solidarity between victims of sexual abuse and their allies has turned into a major social movement, with millions of women worldwide using the hashtag to share stories of rape, assault, and sexual harassment in the workplace (Burke, 2017). #MeToo was successful in creating a productive space to shed light on deeply personal and painful experiences and humanize abuse in ways that continue to inspire a long-overdue public conversation on sexual violence. It was while working with young women of color and hearing stories of sexual assault and the lack of supportive reporting mechanisms in place, particularly for women of color, that Burke was inspired to start the #MeToo movement.

Like Burke, Patrisse Cullors was inspired by systemic injustice to found #BlackLivesMatter (BLM) in 2013 along with Opal Tometi and Alicia Garza (“Patrisse Cullors”, 2018). BLM is an international activist movement that highlights and protests police killings of black people and organizes regular demonstrations and actions on a range of issues related to racial injustice. For BLM’s founders, the acquittal of George Zimmerman, the Florida man who fatally shot 17-year-old Trayvon Martin while he walked back from a convenience store to a friend’s home, was the turning point in their activism and the catalyst for starting #BlackLivesMatter (“Patrisse Cullors”, 2018).
While BLM originated in the U.S., ally organizations in Australia, Canada, Brazil, Colombia, and the U.K. have held anti-racism demonstrations using #BlackLivesMatters slogans in solidarity with the group. In May 2017, the University of Sydney in Australia awarded its three founders of BLM with the Sydney Peace Prize, an award for social justice efforts that promote peace, which is heavily financed by the Sydney city government (Wahlquist, 2017). In August, 2017, BLM organized a large counter protest at the Unite the Right Rally organized by white nationalists in Charlottesville, Virginia. While BLM counter protesters marched along with allies, James Alex Fields, Jr. a 20-year-old Nazi sympathizer who had travelled from Ohio for the rally deliberately drove his Dodge Challenger into the crowd, killing Heather Heyer, a local woman who had been marching in solidarity with members of BLM (Pearce, 2017). For members of BLM, this was another turning point in their activism in the era of Trump’s presidency: “The attack in Charlottesville changed everything. We saw the racist fringe that usually hides in the corners of the Internet emerge to show its power. They were American terrorists sending a message to the nation – we're here, we have numbers, we have weapons, be afraid” (Touré, 2017). To date, BLM has twenty-two chapters in the U.S. and Canada alone and several more outside of North America.

During a recent action at London City Airport, Black Lives Matter U.K. blocked the runway and halted flights in order to draw attention to the difficult routes migrants take in order to flee desperate situations. In addition, in a statement issued about the protest highlighting deportation practices, BLM U.K. wrote, “We note that the U.K. is willing to charter special flights to remove black people from the country based on their immigration status. We call on our supporters to join the demonstration against this”
(Weaver & Grierson, 2016). According to their Twitter and Instagram pages, Black Lives Matter U.K. is made up of “a coalition of people from across the UK who believe deeply that #blacklivesmatter. The struggle is global, and so must be the solution.” Members of the group have been involved in a number of direct action protests involving racial, ethnic, and legal status discrimination. They often post articles about U.K. Home Office immigration and enforcement policies and share posts from pro-migrant groups such as Right to Remain. They employ methods and discourses similar to that of the U.S. based Black Lives Matter, but speak to a broader range of issues impacting people of color in the U.K. The group’s alignment with the U.S. Black Lives Matter, use of the #blacklivesmatter hashtag, employment of similar imagery, and common framing of stories involving issues of racial injustice represent intertextuality, where movements take up messages and meanings and apply them in another context expanding, and sometimes transforming, their meaning. Black Lives Matter has inspired a wide range of activism against racial inequality with activists using their platform and hashtag to highlight issues and gain publicity for demonstrations and campaigns. Young people have been especially effective at leveraging the space that the #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter movements have created and have been integral to both movements using their digital savvy to capitalize on the progress of these older movements and start their own (Pate, 2018; Uyehara, 2018). For example, high school students from Parkland, Florida, where a gunman killed seventeen people including fourteen teenaged students, have received wide media coverage protesting for gun reform in the United States. Less than a week after the shooting, a group of students at the high school had already created a website and organization called Never Again MSD (for Margory Stoneman Douglas, the high
school where the shooting occurred) and began to organize high school walkouts across the country. They used the hashtags #NeverAgain and #EnoughIsEnough to identify posts related to their movement. They appeared on national television, faced politicians and pundits with confidence and, with the help of ally organizations, rallied in Washington, DC, with sister #NeverAgain protests in more than 800 cities worldwide, at the March For Our Lives demonstration, which was attended by over 800,000 demonstrators in the U.S. capital alone (Shabad, 2018). Shortly after the protest, Florida Governor Rick Scott, a longtime supporter of gun rights, signed a $400 million dollar bill into law that raised the age to purchase a firearm from 18 to 21, placed a ban on after-market devices that turn firearms into full automatic weapons known as “bump stocks,” and imposed a three-day waiting period for handgun purchases (Holpuch, 2018).

The long-term impact of the Parkland protests on the contentious issue of gun rights in the U.S. remains to be seen but young people, who felt marginalized by state policies which allow citizens to acquire weapons and commit mass murder at levels unrivaled by any other developed nation, mobilized and effectively leveraged tactics used by previous movements to bring attention to an important issue deserving of attention and public debate. Critics highlighted how the Parkland protests received much wider attention and public support than Black Lives Matter whose goal is also to bring attention to gun violence, only at the hands of police. The Parkland students garnered attention from millions on Twitter with follows, likes, shares, and comments, their hashtags were widely shared, and Oprah Winfrey, who publically criticized BLM for not having a clear agenda, was one of many celebrities that donated a large sum of money to the #NeverAgain movement (Glanton, 2018). So while activist organizations often share
similar strategies, sometimes have similar agendas, and very often inspire one another with tactics and repertories, how they are received, how they have an impact and the extent to which the issues they raise become a part of larger conversations is not equal.

The examples of #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, and #NeverAgain demonstrate several important things about social movements and activism within the current cultural and political climate. First, they all demonstrate the effective use of social media, and particularly hashtags, to not only align content with a particular campaign and gain attention, but also to create digital spaces for sharing, supporting, and aligning with particular causes. Individuals involved in each movement are able to find spaces online to perform their own identities, share experiences, connect with likeminded individuals, and in many cases, find events that they can take part in. While hashtags function to index data, they also create discursive networks that often transcend digital spaces and are taken up in other contexts, where they can be applied, debated, and transformed (Rambukkana, 2016). These hashtag publics demonstrate new forms of collective identity and power that can have major implications for modern social movements, their effectiveness, and their longevity. #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, and #NeverAgain also demonstrate the power of modern social movements to engage in meaningful contentious politics, which Tilly (2008) defines as, “interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else’s interest, in which governments appear either as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties” (p. 5). Outcomes for such movements vary and sustained collective action is difficult to achieve.

For example, the #MeToo movement has been very successful in engaging public dialogues around sexual violence but, to date, any potential for systemic change is hard to
predict. However, when the #MeToo movement first came about it was hard to imagine that just a few years later two powerful, high profile men in media, film producer Harvey Weinstein and veteran comedic actor Bill Cosby, both facing dozens of claims from women for sexual harassment and assault, would face consequences. Cosby was convicted of sexual assault in April 2018 and Weinstein appeared in court in May 2018 to face a class action suit filed by three women who claim he raped them (Mandell, 2018; Maddaus, 2018). It is too soon to tell what the longterm implications of the #MeToo movement will be, but activists are optimistic that meaningful change is on the horizon.

Similarly, BLM has elevated the topic of racial injustice to new heights and energized activists and allies on the streets and on Twitter, but as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “a social movement that only moves people is merely a revolt. A movement that changes both people and institutions is a revolution” (King & Carson, 1998). By raising the profile of these issues, BLM has helped bring attention to the need for more training for police officers and has had a direct impact on community and law enforcement conversations around policing standards. In March 2018, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel signed an agreement with advocacy groups including Black Lives Matter Chicago and American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) that would include activist involvement in planned reforms of the troubled Chicago Police Department (Hinkel, 2018). Members of Campaign Zero, a policy-focused activist group affiliated with Black Lives Matter met with presidential candidates in 2015 to articulate their agenda (Foran, 2015). Finally, #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, and #NeverAgain demonstrate the often messy and uneven ways that movements are constructed and emerge online, and how depending on how they are framed, who is engaged in that framing, and how the issues that are raised fit
into the current social and political context, they receive different levels of media coverage, public support, and engagement from policy makers.

This project seeks to understand how Latin American social movements have emerged and transformed in the context of post-Brexit United Kingdom. While Latin American social movement organizations have operated in the U.K. since the late 1970’s, the current social and political climate, rife with anti-immigrant sentiment, has transformed how organizations are doing activism. In addition, technology has facilitated more alliances between and across movements in the U.K, and major events have energized activists to reframe their agendas and engage in new tactics. In order to approach this issue, I had to delve deeper into understanding the current context, looking at some of these major events, and considering how scholars have approached the study of social movements and considered the role of technology in new social movement research.

Social movements across the world have mobilized around issues of social injustice and inequality. Many have been motivated by the increasing popularity of nationalist politicians in many parts of the world whose politics rely on both inclusion and exclusion. A.D Smith defines nationalism as, “an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of self-government and independence on behalf of a group, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’” (1983, p. 171). Nationalism relies on a particular set of ideas of what constitute a nation and who belongs to it. Nationalist rhetoric is by nature divisive and, in many contexts, racist and the recent amplification of divisive nationalist rhetoric has motivated many activists to engage in a range of protest tactics on the ground and online. In September of 2015, over
100,000 people marched in a pro-migrant rally in London organized by the group *Solidarity with Refugees*. Labor Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, who had been elected just hours before the demonstration, told the crowd, “The demonization of people in need that’s gone on in this country is not the kind of Britain I grew up in – that everyone who’s in need is a scrounger and all refugees are terrorists. It’s not the compassionate society I want Britain to be seen as around the world” (Khomami & Johnston, 2015).

According to the United Nations Human Rights Council, by the end of 2014, more than 60 million people were forcibly displaced from their home countries, the largest number since World War II (Global Trends, 2015). Many fled to the European Union (E.U.) in search of asylum because their home cities had either been decimated or made unsafe by war, while others sought economic opportunity and a secure livelihood. Migration flows often reflect the uneven impact of neoliberalism with some economies, such as the U.K. able to rebound from the 2008 economic crisis more quickly than countries like Spain, Italy, Portugal and many countries in Latin America which account for an increasing number of non-U.K. migrants entering the U.K. in the last decade. Despite the U.K. governments’ attempts to distinguish between the recent wave of economic migrants from “genuine asylum seekers”, the motivations of most entering the U.K. is the same. According to the Overseas Development Institute’s (ODI) *Why People Move* report, “Asylum-seekers and economic migrants often have similar reasons for choosing to make the dangerous journey to Europe and one person may fall into both of these categories at the same time” (2016, p. 5). The same report found that the common reason for migration between all migrants surveyed was the search for a secure livelihood.
In the northern French ferry port town of Calais, a makeshift refugee camp was home to thousands of refugees, mostly Kurds from Iraq and Syria, who arrived during the influx of migrants in 2014 and 2015 (Norland, 2015). The migrants of Calais were of mixed status: some able to provide the necessary proof required to apply for asylum while others left their homes with very little in hopes of new opportunities in the E.U. The pro-migrant march in London took place at the height of overcrowding at Calais, with videos of the squalid condition posted on social media and just ten days after the release of a photo of three-year-old Alan Kurdi, a Syrian boy whose dead body washed up on a Turkish beach after he drowned attempting to reach Turkey with members of his family. While E.U. heads of state, including U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron, then French President Francois Hollande and then Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Enda Kenny shared the public’s shock over Alan’s death, action to address the refugee crisis was limited. The U.K, for example accepted around 35,000 refugees per year in 2014-15, 85,000 fewer than its 'fair share' according to the number of incoming refugees relative to the U.K.’s overall population (Lambert, 2016). In September 2015, the Irish Government agree to accept 4,000 refugees and asylum-seekers under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, however by late 2017, only 1,272 have arrived in Ireland ("Ireland to take extra 330 refugees in 2018", 2017).

German Chancellor Angela Merkel was a notable exception. Three days after the photo of Alan brought international attention to refugee suffering, Merkel said, that in Germany there would be, “no limits on the number of asylum seekers.” Merkel called upon E.U. member states to join the effort to respond to the refugee crisis saying, “Europe is based on common values, and help for those in need of protection is one of
them” (Germany’s Merkel, 2015). In 2017, facing backlash from the German public, who voted in members of the far right, along with pressure from the Bavarian Christian Social Union, the conservative bloc of her own party, Merkel would change course and limit German intake of refugees to 200,000 per year (Eddy, 2017). In 2015 at the height of the refugee crisis in Europe, with conflicts raging in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and other parts of the Middle East, approximately 890,000 applicants sought asylum in Germany. By 2016, that number fell to 280,000; shortly thereafter the government imposed the limit of 200,000. In 2017, the number of registered asylum seekers had dropped to 186,644 (Chase, 2018). The sharp decline is due to several factors. First, the closing of the so-called Balkan route, a long and treacherous journey that millions of displaced migrants took starting in 2015 which began in Turkey, over the Aegean Sea, through Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, and Germany (Mandić, 2017).

Second, because of a controversial deal made between the E.U. and Turkey that secured billions of Euros and visa assistance for the Turkish government if they control their borders and retain an estimated 3-3.5 million migrants living in Turkey (Peel & Pitel, 2018). The goal of both measures has been to curb migration from outside of the E.U. Merkel’s about face on migration represents one important tension that E.U. nation-states must navigate between their national interests and internal political pressures and the policies of the E.U. that they are beholden to as member states. Although an agreement was reached in September 2015 to relocate 120,000 migrants from camps like Calais to places across the 28-nation E.U. bloc, individual member states protested when pushed back when the time came to accept migrants into their borders. For example, after gunmen affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) killed 130 people
in Paris in coordinated attacks in November of 2015, Konrad Szymanski, Poland’s European Affairs Minister said that Poland would not accept the 4,500 migrants as previously agreed due to security concerns (Cowburn, 2015). Consequently, those migrants were held in holding centers, paid to return home, or relocated to other E.U. nations.

Despite the lack of robust support for migrants by most E.U. member states, a strong network of pro-migrant activism is thriving in the U.K., and across much of Europe, where waves of migration caused by ongoing conflict in the Middle East and North Africa continue to bring the causalities of war to E.U. borders. Groups like the NGO Migrants Rights Network, which launched in 2006, are engaged in lobbying and campaigning, media and online activism, and organize rallies and demonstrations in the name of migrants’ rights. Feminist groups, who recognize the intersectional dimensions of discrimination that impact women of color, particularly those who are not U.K./E.U. citizens, often join in demonstrations. In March 2018, Sisters Uncut, a black feminist organization based in London has organized demonstrations against the U.K. government policy to detain migrants with irregular status at Yarl’s Wood Immigration Removal Centre in North London while they arrange for deportation. In an online post about the demonstration, Sisters Uncut says, “state violence is domestic violence and Sisters Uncut stands in solidarity with ALL survivors” (“Shut Down Yarl's Wood,” 2018). This protest included several advocacy groups including The London Latinxs, a group led by young Latin Americans living in London who have participated in a number of demonstrations around migrants’ rights. Additionally, human rights organizations, including the British Red Cross, Amnesty International U.K., UNHCR, Oxfam, Refugee Council, Help
Refugees, and Star Network have recently campaigned for relief for child refugees and received support from several U.K. Ministers of Parliament on a 2018 bill that would allow refugee children to sponsor relatives that could enter the U.K. to reunite with them (Elgot, 2018). Yet every hard-fought small victory is, at best, incremental in its impact on institutional or state level policy.

In the section that follows, I will describe how social movements have been approached by communication, political science, sociology, and critical/cultural studies scholars, and trace some of the historical roots of social movement theory to earlier social theory. I will highlight key debates and define important terminology. I will also discuss how my approach is informed by both historical and contemporary theories and will demonstrate how my work advances the existing literature in new social movement theory. The section is divided into five parts. First, I discuss how the study of social movements has evolved over the last century. Second, I define social movements according to existing literature on new social movements. Third, I describe the specific context in the U.K. as it relates to the development and transformation of Latin American social movements. Fourth, I describe how Latina/o scholars have explored collective identity and collective action and situate myself and describe how my research adds to the existing literature. Finally, I describe some of the limited scholarly work that has explored Latin American communities and spaces in the U.K.

**Studying Social Movements**

Scholars approach social movement research with divergent agendas and frameworks, however much of contemporary social movement theory is rooted in the
work of Karl Marx, whose critique of capitalism and vision of a working-class revolution serves as a foundational intervention in social theory and contentious politics. Marx, as a classical structuralist, did not closely consider the resources required to engage in collective action, nor did he emphasize its cultural dimensions and the role of politics (Tarrow 2011). For Marx, only when the contradictions of capitalism were fully revealed would the working class identify its antagonists and engage in a revolt. But Marx underplayed the role of leadership in any such revolt and did not anticipate how certain political economic conditions would divide workers and align them not with worker allies, but with capitalists. Gramsci provides an important addition to Marx’s work, by considering the role of hegemonic culture – the ruling class worldview that becomes the dominant norm - in maintaining the status quo. While Gramsci engaged very little with the “how” of resource mobilization, he provided an important bridge from materialist Marxism, that dealt little with culture, to a constructivist perspective that has influenced many neo-Marxists who study social movements (Tarrow, 2011).

While moments of collective action have a long history, scholarly interest in social movements is relatively recent. From the first half of twentieth century social psychologists provided some of the earliest academic writing on social movements, in which they described forms of activism as random occurrences based on individual grievances (Carty, 2015). Classical approaches focus on individual disadvantage, the breakdown of the social order, and the prevalence of dominant ideologies as preconditions for social movements to develop. Early work in social movement theory was concerned with preventing the rise of authoritarian mass movements, and research included fascist movements, along with communist movements and considered
movements that were both oppressive and liberating (Mayer, 1991). In the early 1900s, The Chicago School developed a distinct version of sociology by blending behaviorism and pragmatism. Influenced by the pragmatism of John Dewey and George Herbert Mead, scholars working on early theories of collective behavior saw “human behavior as a problem-solving and emergent rather than controlled and shaped by external forces” (Gusfield, 1978, p. 129). A distinct approach to sociology emerged by combining pragmatism and behaviorism, or the idea that human behavior is not simply based on biological factors but rather influenced by external forces. Behaviorism emphasizes the importance of close observation of human behavior and pragmatism focuses on the ways that meaning operates as an interactive process of negotiating symbols. Robert Park was a leading figure in The Chicago School and in using this approach to understand collective behavior. His 1904 dissertation The Crowd and the Public distinguishes between features of crowds - temporary, spontaneous, fleeting forms of association that are highly sensitive to emotions (e.g. a mob) versus what he termed publics - groups of individuals engaged in debate whose actions can be better sustained because of their distinct discursive capacity. For Park, both crowds and publics can produce social change because they exist outside of institutional forces that have particular structure and guidelines (Buechler, 2016). In 1921, Park and Burgess published An Introduction to the Science of Sociology, which contained an entire chapter on collective behavior that, according to Buechler (2016), sets the stage for decades of work on collective behavior. Park and Burgess (1921) define collective behavior as, “the behavior of individuals under the influence of an impulse that is common and collective, an impulse, in other words, that is the result of ‘social interaction’” (p. 865). For Park and Burgess the basis of
collective behavior is social unrest. Moments of social unrest are necessary for collective behavior because they disrupt the established norms of everyday life and allow for transformation (Buechler, 2016).

By the 1950s, social scientists, seeking to understand collective behavior, developed social movement theories to explain how groups form, access resources and develop strategies, use communication tools and techniques, and mobilize action (Fuchs, 2011). A well-known 1951 reprint of Herbert Blumer’s book on collective behavior theory became a defining text for The Chicago School. While Blumer’s intervention provided a better-developed application of symbolic interactionism than earlier works on the topic of collective behavior, like Park and Burgess, he believed that social unrest caused people to act in random, irrational, aimless, and excited ways (Buechler, 2016). The civil rights, anti-war, women’s and black movements of the 1960s, would demonstrate the explanatory shortcomings of classical approaches like those of Park, Burgess, and Blumer, and by the 1970s scholars had shifted away from the earlier individual grievance models and towards resource mobilization (Mayer, 1991). Based on the rational choice theory, resource mobilization theorists argue that social movements are the result of successful mobilization of actors who make rational choices about whether or not to protest based on a range of internal and external factors (Fuchs, 2006). Resources include knowledge, publicity, labor, solidarity, organizational structure, and external support from policy makers. According to resource mobilization theory, social movement actors engage in a cost benefit analysis in order to decide whether or not to proceed (Carty, 2015). One critique of resource mobilization theories is that they do not consider external political context and instead focus on action as a strategic activity actors engage in based
on their goals. The political process model addressed this omission by asserting that external factors, such as the political environment, play an important role in which repertoires a social movement will deploy and what allies its actors will seek (McAdams, 1982 in Carty, 2015).

In line with the “cultural turn” in the humanities and social sciences in the 1970s, which placed culture and meaning at the center of scholarly debate, social movement research shifted from its focus on how movements formed and operated and turned attention to understanding why they form (Fuchs, 2006). Walter Runciman’s (1966) classic work on relative deprivation provided important insights into how groups emerge and coalesce and distinguished between egoistic and fraternistic deprivation. Egoistic deprivation has to do with an individual’s perceived lack of resources relative to others, while fraternistic deprivation refers to that which involves deprivation of an entire group relative to other groups. Deprivation alone did not explain how groups emerge. Members of a particular minority may recognize that their group is subjugated, but only a small percentage of that group will engage in collective action (Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990). Foster and Matheson (1999) argue that rather than relative deprivation, it is group consciousness raising, an approach popularized by feminists in the 1960s, that better predicts whether individuals will act. For individuals who identify with a group and a cause to feel compelled to collective action they must see the personal as political. Collective identity, for many scholars, provides a key answer to the “why” question around social movements. However, the term collective identity is notoriously slippery and has been defined in contrasting ways by social movements scholars (Snow, 2001). I
will now explore how collective identity has been theorized from multiple perspectives and discuss how these debates have transformed scholarship on collective action.

Melucci defines collective identity as “an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals (or groups at a more complex level) and concerned with the orientation of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place” (1989, p. 793). Melucci’s theorization of collective identity is shared by many including Whittier (1995) who writes, “I conceptualize…collective identity as located in action and interaction-observable phenomena-rather than in individual self-conceptions, attitudes, or beliefs” (p. 16). However, Poletta and Jasper (2001) see collective identity quite differently. They argue that rather than an interactive and shared definition produced by individuals, collective identity represents, “an individual’s cognitive, moral and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution” (p. 285). They go on to suggest that rather than a direct, shared experience, collective identity can be a perception of shared meaning and status. The debate around collective identity is not isolated to social movement theory, and collective behavior is an area of interest for scholars from disciplines across the humanities and social sciences. Which is to say it is still an area that merits continued scholarship, specifically when considering how technology impacts collective identity and collective action. Scholars who explore what is termed new social movement theory, approach collective identity from a different perspective which I will now describe further.

The cultural turn represents a turning point for what scholars refer to as new social movement theory, however there is no consensus on what new social movement theory inhabits (Carty, 2015). Most agree that new social movement theory represents an
alternative to earlier theories of resource mobilization and political process and progress toward understanding the complex relationship between the social, cultural, political conditions that influence collective identity and collective action (Fuchs, 2006). New social movement theory encompasses a wide range of theoretical approaches applied to collective identity and collective action. Much of the work being conducted on new social movements focuses on the primacy of technology in advancing particular agendas. This focus has shifted theoretical concerns towards understanding what Bennett & Segerberg (2012) call “connective action” in which social action is highly individualized and flexible and more dependent on sharing networks than sharing a particular set of characteristics, attributes, or political concerns. Proponents of the connective action approach find it useful in explaining how seemingly disparate individuals and groups can organize around the same issues, such as the Occupy Movement, without requiring the symbolic construction of a united “we” (2012, p. 748). Additionally, a central critique of the contemporary usefulness of exploring collective identity is that is does not address the way digital technology has fundamentally changed the organization of protest movements (Bennett & Segerberger, 2012; Loader & Mercea, 2012). While this contribution has proved fruitful in explaining the influence of digital technology on mobilizing action, it falls short in fully addressing the processes of collective identity. By emphasizing the role of networks to explain the coherence of social movements, it does not adequately explain how certain groups unite and mobilize (Gerbaudo & Trerè, 2015).

Gerbaudi and Trerè (2015) point out that collective identity was theorized by Melucci (1996) and others to explain the emergence of social movements in the 1970s and 1980s, such as the student and environmental movements that developed largely in
opposition to larger more formalized social organizations. They argue that collective identity forms the basis for creating a cohesive agenda and mobilizing collective action, often outside of highly formalized mass membership structures. Because of this, understanding the micro-dynamics of collective action allow us to unpack with nuance and detail, how social movements negotiate identity and attempt to achieve coherence in their agendas. This view of collective identity recognizes that belonging is a complement, rather than a contradiction to the increased individualization and flexibility of the digital era. Collective identity in this view becomes the basis for establishing an agenda by drawing boundaries between “us and them” and mobilizing resources to support that agenda (Gerbaudi and Treré, 2015).

Another interesting debate within the field is whether collective identity represents a product or a process. Epistemological differences explain how scholars have viewed this issue quite differently, and studies that see collective identity in both ways have been highly influential in the field of new social movement theory. Scholars who ascribe to the “product” view of collective identity see it as a something generated by movements that is visible to people outside of a movement and can be engaged with, such as a protest or vigil. The “product” view of collective identity focuses attention on what is produced by social movements rather than the processes of negotiating meaning that occurs within groups. On the other hand, Melucci (1995) is a key proponent of the “process” approach given his interest in social movements as engaging in dynamic reflexive processes of identity negotiation. Melucci’s work addressed what he saw as a gap between the two dominant approaches to collective action, the objective approach which seeks to understand the structural conditions that motivate action and the
subjective approaches which hope to gain insight into people’s underlying motivation to act. For Melucci, by focusing instead on the process of collective identity, scholars could bridge the gap by understanding both how social actors come to identify with and join a group and how that group interacts with external factors and sustains itself over time. In contrast to Melucci, Snow (2001) argues that “it is questionable and unnecessary to contend that the process is more fundamental than the product to understanding the character and functionality of collective identity” (p. 4).

Given what I have found in my own research, I argue that both “product” and “process” are essential to understand how groups form and function, particularly when considering the current context within which individuals and groups are so closely engaged with technology in their everyday lives. Technology fosters the dynamic reflexive processes that Melucci emphasized more than two decades ago as groups are now constantly engaging with events as they occur. This became clear to me several times during the interview phase of this project when participants would have to cancel and reschedule interviews because they needed to work on a response to a breaking news event, announcement from a state agency, or statement from a policy maker. While following organizations on Twitter and Facebook, I encountered a consistent flow of tweets, retweets, posts and shared posts, likes, and comments on a daily basis. Of course, some organizations utilize technology more than others and even those that use it regularly employ different repertoires, but the process through which they negotiate meaning and develop strategies provides an important site for understanding the movement itself and collective identity as both process and product. Examining the products of these processes – the tweets and their content, the hashtags used, the
comments and likes, the public demonstrations, the pamphlets and vigils – are all vital to understanding the scope of a movement, its goals, its coalitions, its reach, and its place within the large context of a particular movement (e.g. migrant rights). Because this project is concerned with both mapping the current state of Latin American identity movements in the U.K. and considering how a geopolitical shift like Brexit is impacting movements, exploring both processes and products is essential. In order to approach this topic it is important first to define what a social movement is and describe some of the key features that distinguish movements from other forms of collective behavior. In the following section, I provide these definitions and describe how they relate to my work.

**What is a Social Movement?**

For clarity in how I approach my work, it is important to define what constitutes a social movement. Melucci (1985) writes, “I define analytically a social movement as a form of collective action (a) based on solidarity, (b) carrying a conflict, (c) breaking the limits of the system in which action occurs” (p. 795). According to De la Porta & Diani (2006), social movements are, “involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents; are linked by dense informal networks; and share a distinct collective identity” (p. 20). Collective action, shared identity around a cause, and active demonstration of an agenda are common elements to most academic definitions of social movements. In terms of how social movements operate, Tilly & Wood (2016) write that there are three main components to active social movements: “1) a sustained, organized public effort making collective claims; 2) a variable ensemble of performances [such as meetings, public statements, rallies, vigils, or protests]; and 3) concerted public
representations of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment on the part of themselves and/or their constituencies” (p. 4). Fuchs (2006) identifies important aspects of social movements, including: resistance, dissatisfaction, goals, communicative practices, perception of social problems, and mobilization (p. 110). Dissatisfaction is an important aspect of most social movements, which often act, as part of civil society, to disrupt state systems. As Fuchs (2006) writes, “social movements are an expression of fear and dissatisfaction with society as it is and a call for changes and the solution of problems” (p. 113). Mobilization strategies, defined by McAdam et al., 1996) as, “those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action” (p. 3), are key to any social movement. How a movement mobilizes and organizes is contingent upon the cultural, political, and economic context within which it operates (Carty, 2015).

Take for example, movements like #MeToo that capitalized on social media platforms’ inherent capacity for disseminating compelling stories. In another era, the message would not have been shared the same way, most likely would not have been so widely distributed and would not have had the same impact without the effective use of technology to mobilize support. Tilly (2006) uses the term “repertoires of contention” to refer to the strategic ways social movement actors can choose from a range of practices to engage in activism. Repertoires include civil disobedience, public vigils, armed struggle, teach-ins and demonstrations. According to Tilly actors will choose different repertoires based on the situation and dependent upon a range of internal and external factors. For example, when separate organizations with similar agendas collaborate, they may have to resolve differences in repertoires in order to create and communicate a cohesive message.
The way groups coalesce and collaborate is largely based on the particular context within which they emerge. I will now describe how scholars have considered context in the study of social movements and describe the circumstances that undergird the specific context that my work is situated within the U.K.

**Context Matters**

Early social movements theories overemphasize dissatisfaction as a root cause of social movement formation and mobilization (Carty, 2015). The problem with this viewpoint is that it neither adequately explains the “how” of social movements, or how actors form groups, create coalitions, and mobilize resources. Nor does it explore the “why” of social movements, or why actors with their own complex subjectivities construct and engage in collective action. In sum, having a group of angry, disenfranchised, and/or frustrated individuals is not enough to produce a social movement (Slater, 1991). It is the combination of factors – the particular political and cultural moment, the combination of particular subjectivities, the availability of certain resources, and the reflexive processes identity movements engage in – that impact whether a movement will form, the repertoires it will deploy, and how long it will survive (Tilly, 2006). Constructing a movement is complicated business, and to imply otherwise underplays how the articulation between a dynamic set of factors energizes and often transforms movements. A major focus of this project is the impact of Brexit as a major geopolitical shift with significant implications for migrant communities in the U.K. broadly, particularly for those with ties to Latin America.
Surveys show that the most significant concern for Britons who voted to leave the European Union was increased anxiety around immigration (Bulman, 2017). A study conducted after the vote found a correlation between voting to leave the E.U. and having ideas of British collective narcissism (a belief in national greatness), supporting agendas aligned with right wing authoritarianism, and more general xenophobia (Golec de Zavala, A., Guerra, R., & Simão, C., 2017). Leave campaigners consistently purveyed an anti-immigrant agenda as part of their campaign. One poster released days before the Referendum vote by the far right United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), depicted a line of refugees crossing the border from Croatia to Slovenia in 2015 along with the bold red heading “BREAKING POINT The E.U. has failed us all” (See Figure 2.1). The same poster urged voters to vote leave on June 23 with the caption, “We must break free of the E.U. and take back control of our borders” (Safdar, 2016). The poster was widely shared by supporters online and condemned by critics who compared UKIP’s tactics to anti-semitic Nazi propaganda (Stewart & Mason, 2016). In the weeks leading up to the Referendum vote, discourse on both sides of the issue was amplified with those in the remain camp securing endorsements from economists, statesmen, and celebrities for a “stay” vote and those in the leave camp ramping up their attacks on immigrants, migrants, and refugees.

Figure 2.1 A pro-Brexit poster produced by UKIP
On June 16, 2016, Labour MP forty-one-year-old Jo Cox, a long-time advocate of refugee issues and vocal supporter of the Remain campaign, was shot and stabbed to death while on her way to meet with community members in her constituency. Thomas Mair, a 52 year-old gardener from Scotland who carried out the murder had targeted Cox because of her pro-immigration and pro E.U. positions. Mair shouted “Britain First!” during the attack in an apparent pledge to the far-right Fascist political organization Britain First, known for conducting “Christian Patrols,” during which members hand out anti-Islamic leaflets while patrolling areas around London mosques (Moore-Bridger, 2014). Those who knew of Mair’s extreme political views dismissed him as harmless, but his fascination with far-right literature, Nazi memorabilia, and pro-white movements was on prominent display inside of his home and his links to far right groups in both the U.S. and South Africa was well documented (Cobain, Parveen, & Taylor, 2016). The UKIP poster depicting a line of refugees as a siege on Britain had been released just days before Cox was killed. Leave campaigners, including the UKIP leader Nigel Farage, warned that if Britain remained in the E.U., apparent sex attacks, similar to reported assaults that occurred in Cologne, Germany months earlier, might occur in the U.K. In regards to his suggestion that an increase in migration would lead to sex attacks he responded, “it depends if they get E.U. passports. It depends if we vote for Brexit or not. It is an issue.” (Elgot & Mason, 2016). The vote would eventually be in favor of Britain leaving the E.U., with 17.4 million people, or 52 percent of those who voted electing to leave (Erlanger, 2016). Leave campaigners were able to successfully galvanize a voting block
around the issue of migration, and ultimately secured a vote that exposed already vulnerable populations to further abuse from those who felt empowered by the result.

In the week following the vote to leave the E.U., police reported a fivefold increase in reports of hate crimes (Payton, 2016). Community organizers reported a “significant” increase in race and faith-based hate crimes and asked the Government to take “urgent” action to address the issue (Bulman, 2017). In the face of inadequate responses from politicians and policy makers, community organizers and activists working on behalf of targeted groups took urgent action themselves, offering a wide range of support services and resources and developing strategies to educate members of government of their constituents’ plight, organize publicly to oppose oppressive policy and politics, and form alliances with groups with similar interests and goals. A few of the Latin American social organizations highlighted in this dissertation project have been doing advocacy work on behalf of migrant and immigrant communities in the U.K. in some capacity for over thirty years. However, in the last five years, several new youth organizations have emerged to join the fight with their own energy, fervor, protest methods, and agendas.

The rising interest of young people to participate in Latin American social organizations points to the ways in which periods of political instability often prompt and reenergize collective mobilization (Alberto Simões & Campos, 2016). Over the last decade, youth movements have been at the center of progressive resistance politics around the globe. The Occupy movement, for instance, provided a robust response to the 2008 financial crisis just as the Arab Spring large scale protests of 2010, were largely organized and carried out by young activists. It is no surprise that young people feel
particular energized and outraged given how policies of economic deregulation, costly war campaigns, and increases in economic inequality directly impact young people’s ability to fund their education, find stable work, earn a living wage, and secure affordable housing. At the same time, the ubiquity and improved efficiency and mobility of communication technologies in many places allow activists to share information and develop and strengthen alliances across space and time (Juris, 2012; Banaji & Buckingham, 2013).

There is an ongoing scholarly debate about the role of technology in social movements, with some emphasizing the positive and even emancipatory aspects of new media technologies like Facebook and Twitter (Castells, 2012) and other, more critical, perspectives which see social media as a space where power can be disrupted, but also reified and reconfigured in ways that obscure it (Fuchs 2011, 2014). The often-referenced digital revolution, with the introduction of communication technologies like Skype in 2003, social networking platforms like Facebook in 2004, and user generated content platforms like YouTube in 2005, allows people to connect and communicate about their ideas like never before. For some collective movements, the use of digital technology is relatively secondary where work is conducted largely offline – such as providing local community support and resources.

On the other hand, for other groups, collective actions are inextricably linked to digital spaces where the interplay between offline and online activism is centrally important to the way agendas are developed, alliances are negotiated, and campaigns are evaluated (Posthill, 2014). For many young activists, the connection between technology and collective action has been naturalized and functions as an everyday practice (Juris,
2012; Banaji & Buckingham, 2013). Activists must make choices about how to construct their online presence, especially when working with multiple organizations that, while sharing somewhat similar goals, employ different repertoires to achieve those goals. In my initial research for this project, I found distinct differences in the ways groups and individuals constructed their public profiles. Earlier social movement research focused on hierarchical models that included formal organizations with horizontal top-down structure, but new social movements often operate more horizontally, sharing leadership duties (Carty, 2015). Technology and shifts in how organizations are structured is significant to social movements for many reasons, according to Castells (2001). Individuals can now share and engage with peers on political topics and technology provides researchers a space to explore how certain frames are deployed, how campaigns are disseminated, shared, and engaged with and how alliances are negotiated publically between and across groups. The “electronic grassrooting of civil society” (Castells, 2001) creates the potential for connection, identification, and a perceived sense of belonging.

A young participant told me during an interview, “I honestly did not know that this community existed in London until I found it online, and I grew up here” (Interview I, 2018). Although born in Britain to Colombian parents, she was surprised to find that the community was as large and active until she found a Twitter and Facebook pages for one organization in 2015. “Once I found one, I found the other groups that were linked to them and found out there were people I actually knew following them…then I could ask them, ‘what is this all about?’” She described finding Latin American community groups on Twitter, “it was a way to follow what was literally going on at my doorstep and I
found out on Twitter!” She went on to do some volunteer work, assisting in a literacy program and providing translation services with a few organizations. As a young woman born and raised in London, like many young Londoners, she lives in a diverse area with neighbors from different parts of the world. “I never felt different because everyone is from somewhere different,” she told me, “but I never felt the same as anyone else until I found other people from Colombia and other Latin countries”.

Thus, for this participant, technology provided a space to make connections that she did not know existed in her community. This experience was shared by other participants who also had parents that did not use any of the services provided by Latin American community organizations, did not engage in advocacy work or activism, did not participate in many Latin American cultural events, and therefore never established a network of other Latin Americans. This participant had visited Latin American shops with her mother on occasion and knew of a couple Colombian restaurants but never really thought about community building, cultural activities, or advocacy work before she found the groups on Twitter and started following events on Facebook. Technology provided a space for her to learn more about a community she felt closely connected with and to do work that she found meaningful. Lastly, her identification as a person of Latin American heritage in London became materialized. Her desire to connect with her Latinness was a common theme for several British-born, second-generation Latin American participants. When I asked her what it meant to be Latin American, she told me: “It’s hard to explain but there is definitely a connection…the language, obviously but also just the way of understanding things and connecting. I don’t connect with British people the same way…there are certain foods and that sort of thing but it is more than that.” I will now
describe some of the ways scholars have engaged with Latinidad, or Latin American panethnicity and discuss some of the key debates in Latina/o studies as they relate to my work.

**Ethnocultural Belonging and Latinidades**

Latin American panethnicity has been explored by scholars in multiple contexts from several perspectives. Padilla (1985) and Fernandez (2012) describe how Mexican and Puerto Rican groups formed alliances in post war Chicago to protest employment discrimination. Mora (2014) describes how through the 1970s and 1980s activists, census officials, and media executives, collaborated, and often clashed, to promote and institutionalize a panethnic Hispanic identity. Panethnicity is often associated with the idea that there is power in numbers, even when associations are difficult, messy, or even fraught. As Mora (2009) describes, panethnicity for Hispanic/Latinos has been neither straightforward, nor always welcomed. Early attempts between Mexican and Puerto Rican groups to form alliances at a 1971 Washington “unity” summit in the U.S. were unsuccessful due to resistance to panethnicity. Scholars have recognized that national affiliations often trump panethnic identifications (Jones-Correa & Leal, 1996; Fraga et al., 2009).

However, for many, panethnicity provides a means to identify in ways that reject racial labels like white or black that they feel essentialize their identity (Itzigsohn & Dore-Cabral, 2000). For solidarity groups, like Latin American social movement organizations, the need to manage both diversity of subgroups while presenting a cohesive panethnic front presents a challenge (Okamoto & Mora, 2014). While this is a challenge, the structural conditions within which organizations and movements emerge is
a central factor in how well they can converge and operate as a panethnic movement. Lopez and Espiritu (1990) argue that groups that share similar structural conditions, such as economic or political discrimination, are more likely to achieve cohesion than those that simply share a common language or culture. According to recent scholarship, the connection between panethnicity and racialization, the elite practice of ascribing racial and ethnic categories to subjugated groups, has been the focus of important work that unpacks the complex ways panethnicity often emerges (Lao-Montes & Davila (2001). While some have argued that panethnicity is simply a means of assimilation that erases nuance between subgroups, others contend that panethnicity provides an alternate pathway for individuals to adapt to societies in which they are not seen as full members (Okamoto & Mora, 2014).

Diaspora studies provide ways to understand the complex negotiations that migrants and second-generation individuals face in navigating a culture they may feel is not fully theirs. The concept of diaspora has been the subject of debate by cultural theorists who quarrel with its historically essentializing application. Cultural theorists such as Hall and Gilroy, whose well-cited works explore black diasporic experiences in the U.K., call for an approach to diaspora that considers the complex nature of cultural hybridity. As Hall writes, “Not by 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 hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference” (Hall 1990, p. 235). In his seminal text The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness (1993) Gilroy argues, like Hall, that black people living in postcolonial
spaces must negotiate a complex process of reconciling hybrid identities. Gilroy uses W.E.B. Du Bois’ concept of double consciousness to describe the difficulties of negotiating both Black and European identities and living in a society that calls for you to act in alignment with it, but has contempt for you and excludes you as ‘other’ at the same time. Gilroy argues that recognizing the duality of a Black European identity is a political act against the project of modernity, which works to naturalize the displacement and disposssession of black and other minority ethnic people.

Along similar lines, Appadurai, (1991) calls for a rethinking of “landscapes of group identity,” due to the fact that “groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogeneous” (p. 191). Klimt and Lubkemann (2002) provide a useful “discursive approach to diaspora” which disrupts the idea that pure or essential characteristics, or “products” of diasporic experiences exist and rather see diaspora as, “a particular way of imagining, inventing, constructing, and presenting the self” (p. 146). This is a view that sees identity as a process of being and becoming that is often complex and sometimes messy, but always occurring within the context of a particular set of geopolitical conditions. This view aligns with Melucci’s (1985) assertion that identity movements engage in dynamic reflexive processes of identity negotiation. While shared experiences of deprivation may draw some people together, I have described how group deprivation alone is not adequate to explain group formation and collective action. My previous work with the Lusophone community in London demonstrated that this was, in fact, the case for Portuguese speaking people living and working in close proximity. Rather than connect in deep and meaningful ways to address issues facing Portuguese speakers from different racial and geographic
backgrounds, people with different immigration status were less likely to come together and act against employers, landlords, or the state because they did not identify with one another in ways that facilitated collective action (Aragão, 2013). Indeed, while shared experiences of deprivation can motivate action, identification must occur first and the context within which identification occurs will influence the kind of collective actions that take place.

In terms of how product and process are studied by scholars, the product of social movements, that is, the public communications, rallies, demonstrations, and social media campaigns are often the object of study and movements the unit of analysis. The problem with this “movements-as-actor” approach, according to Roggeband & Klandermans, (2017), is that in order to avoid a functionalist approach we must understand how doubts, motivations, aspirations of individuals play into the polyvalent and multilayered nature of most movements (p. 95). My work addresses this by engaging directly with individuals to understand their motivation for getting involved with movements, their aspirations for the movement moving forward, and their understanding of their own identity in relation to Latinidad. Latin American scholars have long debated the politics of Latin American identity. I will now describe some of the key elements of this debate as it relates to my work and situate my work within this debate.

Many Latin American scholars have critiqued essentialist views of diaspora and collective identity, particularly when exploring the role of the state in imposing racial and ethnic categories and corporations who rely on commodified versions of ethnocultural identity to construct and target audiences. Dávila (2008), referring to the diversity of individuals who share a connection with Latin American heritage, describes Latinos in
America as “a group that is at once living and socially imagined” (p. 161). Working in the U.S. context, Dávila (2008) argues that Latinidad has been co-opted by advertisers as well as by politicians and pundits into two contrasting stereotypes – for conservatives and political pundits, Latinos apparently represent a cultural and economic threat through their alleged resistance to assimilation, tendency towards illegal work, and frequent use of social services like welfare. In response to such fears, Dávila notes, Latinos are presented by immigration, equality and Latino advocates as ‘ideal immigrants’ whose top agenda is achieving middle class status and living a quiet, family life. The problem with these two opposing depictions of Latinos is two-fold for Dávila. First, panethnicity as a political neologism does not recognize the internal diversity of Latinos, which includes a wide range of ethnic, national, generational, and racial difference. Second, because in attempting to oppose negative stereotypes about Latinos, advocates actually sanitize and normalize Latinidad, thereby homogenizing representations of Latinos and creating a sense that they are a cohesive body to be courted by politicians, policy makers, and marketers (p. 73).

In the U.K. context, where commercial versions of Latinidad are small scale and mostly local and politicians do not yet court the ‘Latino vote’, Latinidad serves as a resource for individuals who are otherwise marginalized to find spaces to connect, resources to thrive, and meaningful ways to oppose state oppression. Many Latin Americans living outside of Latin American negotiate the complex duality that Gilroy (1995) pointed out in his work on hybrid Black Europeans. Latinidad, which Gutierrez (2016) defines as, “the communal sense of membership in a group tied to Latin America through ancestry, language, culture, and history” (p. 16) provides a means for individuals
from incredibly diverse context to identify and coalesce around a set of political, economic, and cultural histories that together have implications for Latin Americans in all parts of the world. Scholars have recognized both the power in numbers and problems with unity, which remains a central debate in Latina/o scholarship. At the center of the debate is to what extent we should critique the imposition of homogenous categories from above by state and commercial forces and recognize the power of panethnic identity when enacted from below.

In the case of Latin American social movement organizations in the U.K. cultural identity is a means to connect with other Latin Americans while raising consciousness about issues that disproportionately impact Latin American and other minority ethnic individuals living in the U.K. and Europe at large. Collective identity is a strategic resource to build a coalition large enough that local government would listen, and eventually recognize the group as an ethnic minority on the Census in five London boroughs with large Latin American populations. At the same time, participants recognized that they felt a need to connect with Latin America while living in the U.K. as a means to fulfill their own need to belong, engage, socialize, and feel validated within their communities. The specific context of anti-immigrant sentiment and political and public discourse leading up to Brexit seemed to amplify for many, the drive to find other Latin Americans and get involved in activism. This demonstrates not only the process of negotiating hybrid identities, but also the simultaneous ways that collective identity can be assumed by social actors and imposed as a means to categorize a group by the state. However, in the case of Latin Americans living in the U.K. the desire to be categorized grew out of the feeling of being previously invisible (McIlwaine et al., 2011). It was
within this particular context, of wanting to claim space and resources, that Latinidad provided a means to achieving the official status necessary to acquire resources from the state and be seen, while also fulfilling the need to belong. And rather than being imposed from above as a means of control, it was achieved from below as a way to gain visibility.

In her study of the Ecuadorian diaspora in Italy, Cuesta (2015) describes how as diasporic subalternized cosmopolitan subjects, those seeking to connect with their “traditional and given identities” and who participate in collective action become more empowered to “talk back to the state” then they were before their translocation. Like the case of Ecuadorians living in Italy, Latin Americans living in the U.K. are together more empowered to talk back to two “states”, both the U.K. local and national governments and supranational governing bodies, including the European Union and United Nations, both of which have heard cases from London-based Latin American activist groups regarding both sexual violence and reporting mechanisms and gentrification respectively. Thus, while the critique of the essentializing nature of Latinidad provides an important means to analyze how identities can be strategically commoditized and racialized categories can be imposed from above, we must also recognize how collective identity operates as a strategic resource to gain recognition and rights in certain contexts. Indeed, scholars argue that when structural conditions, including forms of state violence and discrimination put pressure on identity groups, individuals in those groups are more likely to identify with panethnic labels in order to gain visibility, collectively fight for rights, and achieve recognition (Okamoto & Mora, 2014). Nonetheless, critical approaches to the construction, production, and maintenance of Latinidad, in divergent contexts is essential as it allows scholars a means to understand how the shared
experience of certain political and economic circumstances has impacted Latin American people as whole and continues to impact many unevenly under neoliberalism.

Writing about the reconstruction of Latinidad, Aparicio (2016) describes how Spanish as a common language initially provided grounds for connection and as wider coalitions of Latin Americans emerged, communities needed to participate in translingual and transethnic negotiations and hybrid languages. In diverse diasporic communities, such as in the case of Latin American diasporas, national identities are reorganized in increasingly hybrid spaces creating new “interlatino subjectivities” where the umbrella terms of Latin American or Latino providing a way to label hybrid subjectivities and coalesce around a collective identity in strategic ways (Aparicio, 2009). Latinidad, as Rodriguez describes it, is “the sociohistorical process whereby various Latin American national-origin groups are understood as sharing a sense of collective identity and cultural consciousness (in Beltran, 2010, p. 4). Aparicio calls for scholars studying Latinidad to reimagine it, and rather than reproduce national or geographic segmentation or outright reject hybridization, to look to emerging communities to produce more nuanced knowledge on cultural identity and identity in general (p. 62).

Scholars have looked critically at the way commercial and political forces construct Hispanic/Latino audiences as commodities. In the U.S. where, as of 2016, Hispanic/Latinos make up more than 18 percent of the population and advertisers commit entire conferences to the growing purchasing power of Hispanic/Latino consumers (Wentz, 2016), advertisers argue that the growing number of transborder campaigns that appeal to both Spanish-speakers in the U.S. and south of the border represent a form of increased choice and cultural recognition. However, Latina/o scholars have long pointed
out that this optimistic viewpoint is highly problematic. Instead, as Castañeda Paredes (2001) argues, the increased targeting of Spanish-language audiences reflects the exploitation of these audiences and “perpetuates old patterns of dominance and resentment” (Orme, 1996, p. 256 in Castañeda Paredes, 2001, p. 132). For scholars, there is an important distinction between panethnic labels as either assumed or imposed. When advertisers, census officials, politicians, and media executives are constructing audiences as commodities to tap into Hispanic/Latino purchasing power, the question of exploitation is an important one. Scholars unpacking the complex negotiations of identity groups assuming panethnic labels should consider whether these actions represent efforts at assimilation, which align with the hegemonic nature of racialization, state classification, and surveillance. Latin American community organizations in the U.K. provide a unique case to explore these questions. According to Okamoto and Mora (2014) “although research at the micro level has primarily focused on how people identify themselves and what meanings they attribute to their identities, there is little research about the mechanisms that drive interethnic cooperation and collective action, which is needed for understanding panethnicity” (p. 231). By considering the way that activists make sense of their goals, strategize, evaluate agendas, form alliances and deploy repertoires of contention, I hope to provide a valuable contribution to the literature on studies of Latin American collective identity and the construction of Latinidades.

**Latin London**

With an estimated population of nearly nine million as of 2016, London is a major metropolitan hub in Europe. Latin Americans represent a small percentage of the total
population. As of 2016, the estimated population of Latin Americans living in the U.K. was around 250,000, of which around 145,000 live in London (McIlwaine & Bunge, 2016). Unofficial estimates, however, are much higher, with the number of Brazilians in London alone estimated at somewhere between 150,000 - 200,000 (Sheringham, 2013) and some unofficial estimates, which take into account individuals with irregular status who have overstayed on expired visas, place the total number of Latin Americans in London as high as 700,000-1,000,000 (McIlwaine, 2007). Latin American generally refers to peoples from any one of at least twenty countries that have, at one point, been subject to Spanish, Portuguese, or French colonialism. The term Latin refers to the connection with romance languages such as Portuguese, Spanish and French that derive from Latin and were spoken in former colonies of the Spanish, Portuguese and French empires. Latin America is hugely diverse, with predominantly Indigenous, African, and European people making up its combined population as of 2016 of over 639 million.

Similarly, diasporic communities from Latin America are also diverse, which is the case in London where the population has grown four-fold since 2001 with Latin Americans from southern most countries, particularly Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, Ecuador and Bolivia, make up the highest concentration of new migrants (McIlwaine et al., 2011).

The influx of migration to the European Union can be explained by both political and economic disruption in many parts of Latin America which motivated individuals to leave and the increased ease of migration to the E.U. via connections many individuals have to member states like Spain and Portugal due to former colonial ties. Many migrants are able to acquire passports via Southern Europe and have moved to the United Kingdom to live and work. Others arrive on tourist or student visas and may overstay and
become undocumented or irregular status. For some Latin Americans, the Latin American diaspora in London is very familiar. According to one participant, who has worked with the community in multiple capacities, including in leadership roles at two Latin American community organizations, “if you ask a Latin American where Latin Americans are in London, they say, ‘Elephant and Castle’” (Interview H, 2018). Elephant and Castle is an area in the South London borough of Southwark where the largest documented concentration of Latin Americans reside, do business, and gather. “What made Elephant and Castle great was it was grimy, underground, and nobody really wanted to be there, it provided a refuge for a lot of people from Latin America with unsecure status” (Interview H, 2018). Elephant and Castle, referred to as London’s ‘Latin Quarter’ by some, is home to a commercial center with stalls, restaurants, cafes and meeting spaces. Loud, boisterous, full of alluring scents and bustling with activity and conversations in multiple languages, it is home to 150 Latin American and ethnic minority owned businesses. The market, cafes, shops, nightclubs, and community centers have been central to the construction of Latin American identity in London, as they provide spaces for Latin American identity to be materialized (Roman-Velazquez, 1999; Cock, 2011).

In addition, these spaces provide a means for Londoners who are not Latin American to engage with Latin American identities as the growing number of shops, restaurants, cafes and nightclubs change the local landscape (Roman-Velazquez, 1999). According to the last census in 2011, Latin Americans made up nearly 9% of the borough’s population, or 7,398 people (Roman-Velazquez & Hill, 2016). Latin Elephant is a small advocacy group that has been doing incredible work to fight a regeneration
project that will threaten the livelihoods of many Latin American and other ethnic minority owned businesses as well as local residents and change the landscape of the Latin Quarter which has been in Elephant and Castle since the early 1990s (Hill, 2016). Other groups have formed to fight similar projects, such as one in Seven Sisters, an area in North London where regeneration plans will displace Latin American, black and other ethnic minority owned businesses and new housing will increase the cost of living for many area residents who will be forced to leave the area. These forms of collective action have been mobilized around Latin American identity and leverage networks that were formed decades before in community groups that mostly provided language, labor, and legal resources to Latin American migrants. However, the strains of neoliberalism and the gentrification that comes along with it has created new opportunities for a highly professionalized, sophisticated and reflexive response from many community members and advocates turned activists.

**Conclusion**

This project explores the work of London-based Latin American social movement organizations within the context of geopolitical shifts that threaten individuals and groups, marginalize subjugated communities and threaten the spaces in which they have formed diasporic communities. In the following chapters, I will describe migration flows from Latin America to the U.K., some of the history behind the formation of Latin American community groups in the U.K., explain how they have changed in recent years, and consider how current political, economic, and cultural conditions impact collective identity and vital forms of community activism. Ultimately, I hope to point to the ways
activists negotiate challenges and movements are transformed when presented with
shifting contexts where their agendas, campaigns, and goals are under threat.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This chapter describes my research approach and design as well as explains the selection of organizations and individual participants, and the methods used to collect and analyze data for the dissertation project. In addition to discussing how I position myself in the study and my efforts to be reflexive throughout the research process, I also conclude by describing how I considered the ethical implications of research involving human participants. As a critical/cultural studies scholar, it is important for me to consider both how my work can further knowledge of the subject matter I engage with, but also how it can be used by those who participate in reciprocal and meaningful ways.

The purpose of this study is to qualitatively map the growing network of social justice movements engaged with issues relating to Latin American migrant and immigrant rights in the United Kingdom as well as understand how these activists make sense of their agendas, collaborate, strategize, and evaluate the outcomes of their work. I use qualitative methods in this project because it allows researchers to discover and unpack the meaning that people ascribe to their life experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Additionally, qualitative research “focuses on lived experience, placed in its context,” (Tracy, 2013: 5) therefore its methods and strategies allow me to understand how activists – living and working in the U.K. – construct their agendas, negotiate meaning, and work together. Consequently, the project utilizes a qualitative case study approach, which incorporates semi-structured interviews and various forms of textual analyses. Doing so enables me to both map the ongoing movement as well as provide
insights from activists themselves on their constantly evolving work. By hearing the voices of activists, we are better able to grasp how significant geopolitical shifts impact individuals working on the ground and how they strategically adjust to these circumstances, often by adapting communication strategies and developing new and stronger alliances with other groups.

Before moving onto the next section, I would first like to provide an outline of the chapter. There are eight sections and each describes the various methodological components for conducting qualitative research. The sections are: research questions, research design, research methods, selection of participants, data collection, protection of human subjects, data analysis, and positioning myself in the research.

**Research Questions**

Given that the goal of my study is to both map the landscape of increasingly collaborative Latin American advocacy organizations in the U.K. and understand how Latin American rights activists make sense of their work in post-Brexit U.K., my research will be guided by the following research questions:

1. How have Latin American advocacy organizations operating in the United Kingdom been founded, funded, and structured?
2. In what ways do these activists make sense of their agendas, collaborate, strategize, and evaluate the outcomes of their work?
3. How has Brexit and related rhetoric, discourses, and policies around immigration and migration impacted Latin American activism in the U.K.?
Not only do these questions get at the heart of the matter, they also allow me to think historically, politically, and culturally about the intersections between macro issues and the micro experiences of activists as they grapple with a changing geopolitical context and the materiality of advocacy.

**Research Design**

Qualitative research is often an iterative process, which means the researcher often moves back and forth between parts of the process rather than operating in linear steps like most quantitative research designs (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The iterative and recursive nature of qualitative case study research requires that the researcher remain reflexive throughout the process in order to guard validity and maintain rigor (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). I was able to conduct and complete this project because of my ability to reflect on events as they occurred and make necessary adjustments to my (preconceived) perceptions, approaches, and methods. The ultimate scope and focus of this study represents a significant shift from its original form. After experiencing difficulty with both access to participants and because of the impact of unanticipated events, such as Brexit, I had to reevaluate my agenda, methods, and research questions. Initially, I was interested in understanding the ways that activists and others were constructing Latinidad, or Latin American cultural identity, in several major cities in the United States and United Kingdom. I was hoping to perform a comparative analysis of the different and similar ways individuals were constructing and performing cultural identity and explore how this was related to the global flow of modes and methods of ethnocultural production, the professionalization of activism, and practices within the
culture industries. However, in addition to experiencing difficulty with access to participants working in the culture industries for in-depth interviews, it was through my deepening social relations with activists and the broader conversations taking place that a more compelling (and slightly different) story began to emerge.

As I grappled with the difficulties and major challenges within my original project, I became aware of how shifting my focus could provide an opportunity to tell the story that the activists wanted to tell, and that I wanted to represent with accuracy and care to my participants’ lived experiences. In order to unpack and consider how my own biases could impact my design and approach, I needed to engage with what Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992) call “reflexive sociology.” This involves careful consideration of some of the misguided notions of how easily one can carry out a research project while also being willing to confront the shifts and turns in the political and cultural context that often occur while the research is taking place. Regarding this dissertation project, the election of Donald Trump to the presidency in the United States, the increasing popularity of far right politics in the U.K. and across much of Europe, the Brexit vote, and increased anti-immigrant/migrant public discourses, all play a role in the way Latin American activists in the U.K. are developing agendas and launching campaigns. It became apparent that the more important question was how they were adapting to these changes, and in order to report what was occurring with accuracy, I too needed to adapt my research inclinations. While many external factors were out of my control and may have been difficult to forecast, in the end I had to consider how these factors impacted my research questions, the process of data collection and the recruitment of participants,
the research questions I would emphasize, and the methods I would employ to collect and analyze the data.

My initial design involved traditional participant observation, some textual analysis, and in-depth interviews, some of which I used and others which were dropped. As a side note, I informally tracked the social media activity of the advocacy organizations I was centering since at least 2015, thinking it would be helpful in identifying trends, connecting with potential participants, and staying abreast of developments. Yet in the run-up to the Brexit vote and after the successful referendum, I noticed a shift in what I was reading on social media, especially when it came to the collaboration between and across different activist organizations. Although tracking this social media activity was not part of the initial research design, the strength of qualitative methods is the way in which it allows researchers not only to become aware of their own biases and shifts in their understanding, but also to thoughtfully apply that knowledge to their research design in situ. In doing so, a researcher can both conduct an internal validity check as well as perform an ongoing assurance that what is being conveyed in the reporting is the most accurate portrayal of the phenomenon being studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Tracy, 2013).

Consequently, reflexivity was an important part of each stage of this project. In the early stages of data collection, it became obvious that I should explore social media activity more closely, particularly with how activists use social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook to communicate their agendas, share information, and engage with each other’s content. In addition, I needed to consider the performative aspects of posting, liking, commenting, and sharing particular campaigns. Realizing this was an
important aspect of how activists identify themselves, communicate campaigns, share knowledge with one another, and support each other’s agendas, I was able to add another dimension of the textual analysis by making social media activity a central component of my research design and incorporate questions related to social media activity in my interviews with activists.

When it came to analyzing the data collected, I took to heart the advice of committee members and included in my research practice what Saldaña (2011) refers to as analytic memos where I would write a reflection, highlight an apparent pattern or emerging theme, note a personal challenge related to the process, and point to any issues surrounding ethics that I had encountered. This enabled me to consider the implications of what was occurring and bring these concerns to my dissertation committee for feedback and guidance. In being reflexive, I was able to overcome many challenges, adapt my approach in the field with a rapidly changing context, and adjust my methods accordingly. While the project changed considerably in scope and focus, the iterative process allowed me to confront challenges as they arose and adapt accordingly, identify patterns throughout the process, and produce a more meaningful outcome through a case study approach that will hopefully deepen our understanding of Latin American advocacy organizations and activists in (post-Brexit) U.K.

**Case Study Method**

Snow and Thom (2002) define case study as, “a research strategy that seeks to generate richly detailed, thick, and holistic elaborations and understandings of instances or variants of bounded social phenomena through the triangulation of multiple methods
that include but are not limited to qualitative procedures” (p. 151-52). Some of the defining features of the case study method are the triangulation of mixed methods, often multiple theoretical considerations, and providing in-depth description and analysis of a not just a particular phenomenon, but also the specific context within which said phenomenon occurs (Yin, 2018). Because of my interest in mapping Latin American social movements in the U.K. and understanding how activists are responding to and coordinating activism after the vote for the U.K. to leave the E.U., I needed to spend a good deal of time tracking activity and speaking with activists. As Swanborn (2010) notes, case study refers to the study of social phenomenon “by monitoring the phenomenon during a certain period or, alternatively by collecting information afterwards with respect to the development of a phenomenon over a certain period” (p. 13). Toward the end of my pre-dissertation fieldwork in 2013, I began to connect with and track many of the organizations I would eventually include in this study, relying on social media posts by organizations and activists (especially Twitter and Facebook), and via events and narratives posted on organizational websites and related stories in the news. The case study method is best suited when the object of study is ongoing, developing, and the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not readily apparent (Yin, 2009). Unlike histories that typically consider context but look to the past as well as experiments that attempt to remove phenomena from its context, case studies allow researchers to unpack phenomena as they occur within context and “rely on multiple forms of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion” (Yin, 2009, p. 18).

Snow and Thom (2002) outline the basics for conducting case studies of social movement organizations as provided by Lofland (1996, p. 25). These include: “(1)
selecting a case, (2) collecting data on the case, (3) asking questions about the case, (4) answering the questions raised” (152). For this project, my interest in the case of Latin American social movement organizations in the U.K. developed from previous research conducted with the Portuguese-speaking community in London. While conducting pre-dissertation fieldwork, I developed relationships with community members who relied on the services of some of the organizations that were eventually included in this project. Over several years, I collected data through ethnographic observations, informal and semi-structured interviews, and created an archive of social media activity. I eventually developed questions based on what I encountered in the field, particularly what I was hearing from participants following the referendum vote, and developments around successful campaigns to gain recognition and halt the approval of regeneration projects that would displace many Latin American and other minority ethnic business owners and residents in Southwark and Elephant and Castle and North London. Not long after the Brexit vote, I noticed, first anecdotally, what seemed like a marked increase in activity on social media pages of organizations that I had been following for at least two years. This increased activity coincided with efforts by activists to bring attention to large regeneration projects that would affect minority ethnic communities. These multi billion-pound projects aim to rebuild commercial centers, office space, and modern housing in areas of London that for decades have been home to (what is by London standards) low-cost retail space and housing that is largely minority owned and operated.

After the referendum vote, I noticed increased interest from a broad range of progressive activist groups I was following on social media in addressing threats migrant and immigrant communities have long-faced from outside groups, such as commercial
developers. These noticeable shifts led to the added focus in this study on the impact of Brexit on movements in London and how activists and allies were responding on the ground. With a desire to provide an in-depth and holistic exploration of Latin American social movements’ advocacy efforts in post-Brexit Britain, I designed a methodological approach that allowed me to explore the areas most relevant to the case: social media activity, actual protests and protest literature (protest reports, flyers, pamphlets, and posters), and activists’ perspectives on organized and outside events. According to Snow and Thom (2002) in order to provide holistic and richly detailed elaborations of social movements, case study research should follow four directives; it should be “(1) open-ended and flexible, (2) multiperspectival, (3) longitudinal, and (4) triangulated in terms of researchers as well as methods” (155). My approach has by necessity been open-ended and flexible, as often in the case of studying social movements, events are constantly shifting and activists are responding to challenges and changes as they occur.

In the paragraphs above I discussed how my project shifted over time and how I adapted by being reflexive throughout the process. As Snow and Anderson (in Feagin, et al, 1991) note with regards to social movement case studies, “unexpected observations often lead to the formulation of new questions and foci for investigation, making for a dynamic, recursive research process” (p. 162). Accordingly, I began informal explorations of social media content, organizational websites, and news coverage of protests in order to determine whether the Brexit vote was a significant moment in the movement. I also asked activists whether the referendum played a role in the way they organized and collaborated. After discovering that activist responses to the referendum vote were strategic and more collaborative than in previous efforts, I determined that
including activists’ responses to the Brexit vote in my research questions not only contributed to the timeliness of the project but was necessary in order to provide a detail-rich account of the movement during a very challenging period.

Selection of Participants

The careful selection of participants is important for creating a robust qualitative case research design (Yin, 2009; Swanborn, 2010). Because this project is concerned with mapping the network of Latin American advocacy organizations in the U.K. and understanding how activists make sense of their work, it was important to incorporate a broad and diverse range of individual organizations and participants for both analyzing texts and conducting interviews. The first step of most research, whether quantitative or qualitative in nature, is a demarcation of the population one hopes to explore (Swanborn, 2010). While it would be impossible to identify every organization and individual doing advocacy on behalf of Latin American populations in the U.K., providing a descriptive account of the most active organizations can provide a mapping of the central network and organizations performing much of the advocacy. As Swanborn (2010) notes, if one of the primary goals of a project is to provide a description of a particular domain, the goal may be to describe population scope in the outcome of the project rather than identify and approach it in the design (p. 47). In identifying potential organizations and individuals, I wanted to include as many perspectives as possible, while confining potential participants with reasonable base criteria. The base criteria were that only organizations and individuals who are actively and publically engaged in advocacy work on behalf of Latin American populations in the U.K. could be included. It is important that advocacy is
ongoing, and as much as it would be ideal include overall immigrant and migrant advocacy efforts, I wanted to specifically understand how the shifting context was impacting activists’ work in Latin American migrant/immigrant communities.

My initial research identified more than twenty organizations in London who met the above criteria. However, many of these organizations were either defunct or did not engage in recent advocacy efforts publically. After identifying an umbrella organization called Coalition of Latin Americans in the United Kingdom (CLAUK), I was able to identify several member organizations that were very active: Indoamerican Refugee Migrant Organization (IRMO), Latin American Women’s Rights Service (LAWRS), Latin American Women’s Aid (LAWA), Latin Elephant, and Latin American House. All of the organizations are based in London with some doing remote work in U.K. cities and towns outside of the city. In order to cross-check the organizations that I had selected, I approached two London-based academics that had respectively conducted recent and extensive work with the Latin American community in the U.K. I asked for guidance on the list of organizations that had been included and whether I should consider exploring any others. I received feedback from one participant early on in the interview phase of my project that that I should also include the Latin American Disabled People’s Project, so I added that organization to my list, bringing the total number of organizations that were included in my study to six.

The selection of the six organizations included in the dissertation project was strategic and purposeful. Due to the broader goal of mapping the network of activism, I wanted to represent a diverse range of advocacy. In order to accomplish this goal, I reviewed at the long list of organizations and considered several factors. First, their
geographic location was important to consider (see Figure 3.1). While all of the organizations I identified on the longer list were located in London, the city is extremely diverse and members of the Latin American diaspora in different areas often have different concerns, even when broader agendas overlap. For example, Latin Elephant, which is located in Southwark, Central London, works primarily on education of land rights and focuses its advocacy on ensuring Latin American shop owners and residents in Elephant and Castle, a section of Southwark, understand their rights while under threat from commercial regeneration plans that would likely displace them. On the other hand, Latin American House, located in Kilburn, Northwest London, provides space and support for Spanish and Portuguese speakers and its main services are immigration and labor law workshops, English language and employability classes, and drop in service for those seeking council on a range of issues. A second consideration was the different agendas of advocacy organizations. For instance, Latin American Women’s Aid, located in Hackney, Central London, is focused on providing support to Latin American, black and other minority ethnic women and children who have been victims of domestic violence. Their fundraising and services are largely focused on providing support to women who have been victimized and they frame their approach as being rooted in intersectional feminism and open to a wide range of subjugated populations. By thinking strategically about diversifying the perspectives included, while focusing on the “core group” of organizations, I aim to provide an adequate mapping of organizations and range of experiences.
The range of foci, services, support, and types of advocacy apparent within this relatively small group of organizations represents a concerted effort to include a diverse range of cases and perspectives rather than a random or convenient selection of organizations that fit the base criteria. The same care was taken when selecting individuals that might participate in in-depth interviews; this was an attempt to “best represent the diverse landscape of the social and cultural setting” (Saldaña, 2011:33). However, the process of selecting individuals to reach out to with interview requests was more straightforward. Once I had narrowed down my list of organizations, I was able to focus my efforts on finding individuals who worked for those organizations. After speaking with a few individuals, I was able to develop a network and could leverage some of the connections I developed to identify and approach potential participants who met my base criteria. This method, of relying on a social network to identify potential participants, is known as snowball sampling (Given, 2008) and can be highly effective in securing interviews with the appropriate participants and overcoming the common
challenges of access. Participants could reassure others in their network that I could be trusted and my work was focused on producing knowledge as well as helping tell the underrepresented story of Latin American community activism.

**Data Collection**

The two modes of data collection employed for this study were collecting textual material and conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The textual material included indexing text from organizational websites as well as social media activity on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Like Fairclough (2003), I use the term “text” in a broad sense to refer to any assemblage of images, words, sounds or gestures that have been constructed within a specific context and its associated conventions and presented in any medium of communication. I focused mainly on words and images, but also examined videos. I investigated the public websites of each of the organizations and compared the menu information available on each site. In order to consider internal validity, I first categorized textual information so it could be appropriately indexed. Each site followed the common conventions of website menu navigation and included a section which included information ‘about’ x organization or ‘about us’. Information in this area on each site described the history and/or organizations, what they do, to whom they provide services and resources, and information about their leadership and staff.

I also indexed images on the main page of each website and filed them according to theme (people/persons, symbol/logo, landscape/cityscape, activity/activism). I took note of the types of events being promoted and indexed them according to type of event (workshop/education, social/cultural, protest/organizing). I collected data from social
media activity, including content in posts, content in videos, and forms and level of engagement with content (likes, shares, comments). I utilized what Bonilla and Rosa (2015) refer to as “hashtag ethnography” whereby I selected two specific campaigns and analyzed the hashtags associated with those campaigns, which aggregates posts using them, to compile an index of social media activity. I used the hashtag and keyword tracking service Keyhole (keyhole.co) to search relevant hashtags and keywords and compile an archive. I also developed an archive of videos that were produced by and shared by the seven organizations in this project. Embedded videos were shared on several platforms, including YouTube and Facebook, and links to videos were shared on other social networking sites such as Twitter. Videos were categorized thematically (informational/educational, public meetings/protests, social/cultural). In addition to systematic collection and indexing of textual material, I also performed purposeful keyword searches, such as Boolean searches on Google, and keyword searches on Facebook and Twitter to locate relevant news pieces that might provide additional context. Beginning in January 2016, I also set Google alerts with relevant key terms to track news events in real time.

Interviews provide the researcher with an opportunity to gain access to participants’ experiences in their own words. Because my research is concerned with understanding how activists organize, strategize, collaborate, and evaluate their own work, speaking directly to as many individuals directly involved in Latin American advocacy work in the U.K. was my primary goal. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) discuss the challenges of conducting interpretive research and the importance of recognizing how one’s values inform their own research approach, analysis, and outcomes. I employed
what Chirban (1996) calls “the interactive-relational approach” which, in line with my goals toward reflexivity, involves the awareness of my own feelings, dispositions, needs, and opinions, and how they might impact the recruitment of participants, the interview process, the preliminary and final analyses. Chirban provides strategies for balancing what he calls “potentials for action,” which he refers to as the human/social connections, common background and/or interests that help facilitate connectedness with appropriate distance between interviewer and interviewee. These strategies include being honest and open about one’s goals for the interaction before the interview takes place (see appendix for introductory email that was provided to participants) and maintaining contact with individuals interested in reiterating or clarifying their point of view. I offered each interview participant the opportunity to receive a draft of my work so they could provide feedback. Of the eleven interviews I conducted, two participants asked to see drafts of my work before it was published so they could provide comments on what I had written.

Interviews were semi-structured, allowing for participants to provide feedback in their own words to the open-ended questions that were strategically designed to gain important insights. In some ways these were also standardized so that during my analysis of data, they could be used for comparing, connecting and contrasting responses. Most of the interviews that I conducted took place after I left London in 2015 and therefore many were conducted via video conferencing using Skype. Interviews took place from March 2016 to March 2018. While face-to-face interviews are often seen as the “gold standard” in qualitative interviewing, new and constantly improving technology provides the opportunity to bridge geographical gaps between researchers and participants. For researchers conducting work away from their field site, “synchronous online interviewing
provides a useful supplement to face-to-face interviews” (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014: 603). All participants were fluent in English, and all interviews were conducted in English, recorded, and then transcribed.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

Before beginning my research, I submitted a research proposal to the UMass Amherst Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that appropriate measures were in place to protect research participants. All participants provided informed consent and received my contact information should they wish to contact me with any questions or concerns. Participants are referred to using pseudonyms and are coded as such in both archived data and reporting, to ensure privacy and confidentiality. A list of participants can be found in Figure 3.2, which also includes, gender identity, age range, and roles that participants occupy or have recently occupied. All of the participants have occupied multiple roles and many have worked for more than one Latin American organization in the U.K. In order to ensure privacy and confidentiality, I refer to participants by a designated letter. For example, when speaking about the insights of a young woman who has worked in different capacities for two separate organizations, I refer to Interview K. If in another section I want to refer to information relevant to a certain participants’ role in an organization, I would use their role, such as “a participant who once served on the board of trustees” without referring to the specific letter designated to particular information like gender identity and age. This method provides an extra layer of privacy for members of this relatively small and well-networked community. I provided the opportunity for participants to review drafts of my writing in order to provide feedback,
and those who did provide feedback focused on clarifying and further contextualizing particular remarks around why organizations were founded, and/or funded. This form of qualitative research engagement is an attempt to practice relational ethics, which “recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched” (Ellis, 2007:4). Consequently, I do not see participants as objects of study or a means to report on a particular phenomenon, but rather as individuals with valuable experiences and insights that can further understanding. While a project of this nature serves to add to knowledge on a particular subject and, in my case, demonstrate my ability to conduct sound and rigorous research, relational ethics mean that as a researcher I consider what I can offer to participants. In being open and transparent, seeking and incorporating participant feedback and sharing my findings, I seek to tell an important story and enhance knowledge production around the challenges, victories, and opportunities activists face during a particularly difficult historical moment for the subjugated communities that the represent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender Identity</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Roles currently/recently occupied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview A</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>Trustee, board member, researcher, academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview B</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>Chair of trustees, campaign founder, researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview C</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>Organization founder, media producer, campaigner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview D</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>Trustee, volunteer, campaign co-founder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview E</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>Trustee, writer, campaigner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview F</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>Organization staff, campaign founder, volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview G</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>Organization co-founder, organization volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview H</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>Former Board Member, researcher, academic, organization volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview I</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>Organization leader, campaign volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview J</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>Volunteer, campaigner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview K</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>Organization volunteer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.2 Participant chart**
Data Analysis

The purpose of data analysis is “to reveal to others through fresh insights what we’ve observed and discovered about the human condition” (Saldaña, 2011: 89). The process used to analyze data for this study was iterative. It involved what Srivastava & Hopwood (2009) describe as “a reflexive process in which the researcher visits and revisits the data, connects them to emerging insights, and progressively refines his/her focus and understanding” (p. 77). An iterative analysis is one that begins during data collection, as the researcher collects, indexes, categorizes, and codes data, ideas, patterns and themes emerge that eventually guide aspects of the analysis (Tracy, 2013). My careful indexing and categorizing of data collected and consistent practice of writing analytic memos allowed me to go back and consider patterns and themes, adjust or regroup data accordingly, and question my tactics and assumptions. As already mentioned, analytic memos proved a helpful way to not only reflect on my positionality and the research process, but also as a site where themes and patterns emerged, bridging the gap between “coding” data and writing a draft of the analysis (Saldaña, 2011; Tracy, 2013).

For example, in some interviews, a theme emerged about the impact of a recent change in leadership across multiple organizations. In one of my analytic memos, I reflected on how this continued to come up and thus made a note to circle back to some of the data I collected from organizational websites about their history and leadership structure. My note was to review interview transcripts where references to leadership changes, and their impact, were made. I discovered that there was a distinct shift in the ways participants discussed forms of activism based on this change. Where early activism
went from being focused on a politically left trade-union inspired advocacy from the U.K. that focused on what was going on in parts of Latin America (in the 70s, 80s, and 90s), a new generation of activism was being lead mostly by younger (under 40) women living in London, who now looked for (and dare I say, demanded) recognition and rights in the U.K. Noticing this pattern allowed me to cross-reference with my participants and ask questions related to shifts in leadership, politics, and approaches to coming up with organizational agendas and collaborative efforts between organizations. I also utilized concept mapping, a form of visually representing patterns and themes and their connections to particular concepts. “A concept map is a schematic device for representing a set of concept meanings embedded in a framework of propositions” (Novak and Gowin, 1984, p. 15) and they can be useful during both data collection and analysis. Saldaña (2011) calls concept maps a form of “think display” or way to “cognitively and conceptually grasp the essence and essentials of your findings” (133). By reviewing themes that were fleshed out in analytic memos and cross referenced within the data collection, I was able to create a visual representation of how certain words, phrases, and insights were interconnected, which facilitated the process of writing the analysis.

**Positioning Myself in the Research**

Self-reflexivity refers to the ways in which a researcher must consider how their own background, experiences, and biases impact their approach to their object of study, the scene where they are conducting research, and the interactions with participants in their research project (Tracy, 2013). Qualitative researchers often directly acknowledge how their own experiences are likely to impact their research, and my use of analytic memos allowed me to reflect and adjust my approach as necessary. Considering our
positionality is important for many qualitative researchers. Positionality in relation to scholarly inquiry is defined by Qin as “delineating his or her own position in relation to the study, with the implication that this position may influence aspect of the study, such as the data collected or the way in which it is interpreted” (2016, p. 675).

The nature of this work is, in many ways, highly personal. As a first generation American born to Portuguese immigrants with ancestral roots in both Latin America (Brazil) and Spain, I have first hand experience with and affinity for the diverse people, cultures, geographies, histories, and languages of Latin America. But any one individual’s experience is limited and throughout the process of data collection and analysis, I both anticipated and was often reminded of the limitations of my experience and understanding. While I had some understanding of certain cultural, linguistic, ethnic, national, and religious heritage, the diversity of the imagined community of “Latinidad” is far ranging and any individual experience is, by necessity, relatively narrow (Dávila, 2008). These limitations were not insurmountable in order to conduct this research, but certainly required extra preparation and additional support at times.

For example, while I speak Portuguese fluently, my Spanish-speaking ability is basic. If I came across a word or term that I did not fully understand, I sought assistance from participants to explain with further context during interviews and consulted with Spanish-speaking family or friends to explain terms I encountered in my textual analyses. Gender, age, and racial and ethnic identity also play a role in how participants relate to researchers (Qin, 2016). As a younger woman in the beginning of my academic career, I often find that, when approached, participants are often willing to speak to me on the basis that they can be of assistance in furthering my educational goals. This seems
especially true of other women, where gender solidarity provides an especially strong connection (Amrita, 2017). In terms of my ethnic and racial identity, I find that many people I speak with in person initially read my appearance as Latin American or at least culturally ambiguous. When I explained my background, participants were interested and sometimes inquired further about my family, upbringing, and experiences. Sometimes they could relate very closely, other times our experiences were very different, but in most cases, participants could connect some aspect of my background with their own, whether as children of immigrants, immigrants themselves, or as minority ethnic women interested in progressive politics and social justice. While not having specific cultural experiences or linguistic skills can be limiting, a degree of difference in social proximity is often an advantage in gaining understanding. This is common to migrant interview research where, as Ganga and Scott (2006) found, “insiders” often find that when an interview occurs between members of a shared imagined community, social differences are emphasized and power imbalances inherent to interviewer/participant interactions are brought to the fore. From my experience, having a degree of difference in my cultural background to participants is an advantage for other reasons as well. Because there are knowledge gaps, participants do not assume I understand things implicitly and often explain their insights in greater detail. Not having very closely aligned knowledge of participants’ experience also provides me with the opportunity to ask for clarification that increases the reliability of my work.

**Methodological Limitations**

Like many qualitative research projects, this study transformed significantly from proposal to final draft. During that time I learned many lessons about how to most
effectively gain access to participants, how to collect and catalog data, and how to work with digital technology tools and platforms. Initially, I hoped to include a range of organizations that were diverse in agenda, location, and resources. I accomplished this goal in the organizations I chose to explore, but nonprofit sector workers are often overworked and under resourced, making it difficult for many juggling multiple jobs, projects, and responsibilities to participate in academic research. While I contacted over 30 individuals at multiple levels of all five of the organizations I explored, I was only able to secure 11 interviews. While the entire community of recent staff members and volunteers is relatively small, I hoped to conduct more interviews, but was told by several potential participants that they simply did not have the time to participate. Others did not respond. I used web searches and e-mail to reach out to the initial set of potential participants, however, after realizing that LinkedIn and Twitter were more dynamic (potential participants could see who I was in both my photos and get a sense of my identity through the information I liked, commented on, and shared) I had much more success connecting with willing participants on those platforms. By the time I realized this, it was already months into the data collection phase of the project. Had I known earlier that LinkedIn and Twitter would be a more effective means to reach out and make connections with participants, my interview set would have been larger. A lack of gender diversity was also a limitation. While I was able to speak with a diverse group of participants of varying ages, who worked at different organizations, occupied roles at different levels, came from diverse backgrounds, and had differing agendas, nine out of 11 of my participants identify as female. In recruiting participants, I attempted to reach out to as many men working with Latin American organizations in the U.K. as possible,
and, in fact, I asked participants if they knew of men they worked with who may be willing to participate. However, despite my attempts to include more gender diverse perspectives, the majority of people working with Latin American organizations are women and overall, women were more receptive to engaging with me and my work.

To conclude, this chapter aimed to lay out the methodological framework of the dissertation project. The three primary research questions emerged from conducting preliminary research and taking into account the unfolding geopolitical changes that were now affecting the Latin American social movement organizations and the advocacy of activists. By emphasizing a qualitative approach, the project aims to uncover the depth of these questions and contribute to the literature on Latin American activism and social movements more broadly. We now turn our attention to the next chapter, which will describe the current political and cultural moment in the U.K. leading up to Brexit, and provide in-depth descriptions of the organizations I explored, along with activists’ own perspectives on their work and the changing context of migrant activism in the U.K.
CHAPTER 4
ACTIVISM IN LATIN AMERICAN LONDON

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of activism and activist practices in Latin American London and the potential impact Brexit will have on the social justice work taking place in the U.K. It will also discuss the Latin American population in the U.K., along with the overall profile of that population, patterns of migration from Latin America to the U.K., and some projections of the community’s future. Lastly, the chapter will review the Latin American migrant/immigrant organizations that are the subject of the dissertation project. These include the Coalition of Latin Americans in the U.K. (CLAUK), Latin American House, Latin American Women’s Aid (LAWA), Latin American Women’s Rights Service (LAWRS), Latin American Disabled People’s Project (LADPP), and Latin Elephant. All of these organizations were selected because they are the most visible and active organizations that specifically target Latin American communities with their advocacy and activism and because they represent a diverse range of agendas.

As noted in the methods section of the dissertation, the data gathered for this project relies on information available to the public, including website and social media content, annual reports and briefs, published census data, secondary data from scholars who have conducted research on the Latin American diaspora in the U.K., and semi-structured interviews I conducted with individuals involved with the aforementioned organizations. Since one of the central goals of this project is to map the field of organizations that support the Latin American community in the U.K., and specifically in
London, I describe the formation, objectives and goals, and ongoing transformations of the major organizations selected for this study. I also discuss the services they provide and some of the major campaigns they are engaged in. I focus on three particular recent campaigns and how these campaigns have been constructed, engaged with, and promoted in digital spaces. The campaigns include protests of large scale commercial regeneration projects in London, one in Seven Sisters (#SaveLatinVillage), and another in Elephant and Castle (#LatinElephant) and a related human rights campaign that aims to raise awareness of the relationship between immigration status and domestic violence reporting (#StepUpMigrantWomen). All three campaigns represent moments of collaboration between activists and organizations and – because they reflect responses to neoliberal shifts that continue to displace, disenfranchise, and subjugate minority populations disproportionately – are important to consider given my interest in considering the implications of Brexit on activism, especially from underrepresented communities. I include insights from participants who have worked with and for these organizations and have worked in some capacity on one or more of the three campaigns.

Ultimately, this chapter demonstrates the complex nature of forging collective identity movements and doing activist work, particularly in a hostile environment when policies, laws, and discourses present a constant threat. In the next section, I discuss the demographics Latin American community in London and describe some of the patterns of migration over the last four decades.

**Latin Americans in London**

The Latin American population in the U.K. has grown four-fold since 2001, with current estimates of the total population in the U.K. at just over 245,000, of which
142,000 people reside in London (McIlwaine & Bunge, 2016). According to the 2011 census, Latin Americans represent the second fastest growing non-E.U. population in London, after Chinese migrants. The highest proportion of migrants arriving to the U.K. from Latin America come from (in order of arrival) Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Argentina, Venezuela, Mexico, and Peru (McIlwaine & Bunge, 2016). While these represent some of the best official estimates that include government census data and statistical projections based on the census, unofficial estimates place the total population, including Latin Americans with irregular status as high as 700,000 which is nearly triple the official estimates (Roman Velazquez, 1999). Since the 1970s, Latin Americans have migrated to the U.K. and there’s been several significant waves. Earlier migrants were political exiles fleeing Chile’s Pinochet regime and seeking asylum from Uruguay and Argentina. However the largest flow of migrants came from Colombia beginning in the mid 1970s. This first flow of migration from Colombia was primarily made up of individuals who came to the U.K. on work visas. A second flow in the early 1980s included relatives of the first migration wave. The third significant wave of Colombian migration to the U.K., the largest of all three, occurred over several years beginning in the late 1980s and was a result of Colombians fleeing guerilla and paramilitary violence and destabilization. Many of these early-wave migrants came to the U.K. legally to work in the hospitality, catering, and domestic work sectors. Later waves of migration in the 1980s came primarily from Colombia and Ecuador, some of whom were seeking asylum while many others were reuniting with family members who had migrated to the U.K. in prior years (McIllawaine, et al., 2011). With the growing number of Latin Americans in the U.K. in the 1980s, largely concentrated in London, came the formation of many
migrant organizations to support these communities, such as the now-defunct Carila, Latin American Women’s Rights Service (LAWRS) and Latin American House (formerly known as Casa Latinoamericana). These organizations provided a range of support services, from English language education and employment training to advice on immigration and labor law (McIlwaine & Bunge, 2016).

From the 1990s and into the 2000s, flows of migration continued with a mix of refugee and economic migration, this time with a wider range of Latin American countries than previous patterns of migration. This period saw an increase of migrants from Peru and Bolivia, and especially after 2005, from Brazil. While this period coincided with the beginning of a decade long economic turnaround for the Brazilian economy, it was preceded by decades of high inflation, budget deficits, and political instability. During the same period, Peru continued to be the site of ongoing internal conflict between the Peruvian government and violent resistance groups. Once in London, these growing populations became concentrated in areas of Central, Northwest and South London and subsequently commercial areas developed, such as two larger markets in Elephant and Castle in Southwark, Central London and Seven Sisters in Haringey, North London. In addition to commercial spaces and cultural spaces such as cultural clubs, cafes, small shops, and the larger commercial markets in Elephant and Castle and Seven Sisters, the period of the 2000s also marked the emergence of several Latin American print publications and community groups sharing news and events as well as networking online (Cock, 2011; McIlwaine, 2011). However, despite growing numbers the community remained largely off the radar of local councils and borough
representatives. As Hill (2016) notes, the Latin American community in London is “one of its fastest-growing yet least noticed and appreciated migrant communities”.

After the global economic crisis in 2008, many onward migrants (i.e., those who initially migrated from Latin America to another European country) began to arrive in the U.K. to seek employment opportunities. In their survey of the Latin American population in the U.K., McIlwaine et al. (2011) found that more than one third of Latin Americans living and working in London had already migrated to another country and by the time they migrated to the E.U. they had already lived in another E.U. country, namely Spain, Portugal, and Italy (38%, 14%, and 6% respectively). Many onward migrants left Southern Europe in order to migrate to the U.K. because of its more favorable economic conditions despite many of these migrants facing language barriers, precarious labor conditions, and higher costs of living in London (McIwaine 2011; McIlwaine, 2012; Mas Giralt, 2017). Additionally, McIlwaine and Datta (2014) note that in addition to linguistic and economic barriers, since 2008 migrant workers began experiencing increased exploitation although many Latin Americans were able to gain legal status via E.U. citizenship. Legal status was possible because their initial migration to E.U. member countries grants them the ability to enter the U.K. and work legally because of free movement within the E.U. (McIlwaine, 2012).

Given the social, cultural and economic changes that increased migration can have on a region and country, it is important to understand the demographics of those who constitute the Latin American migrant community in the U.K. In an effort to do so, Geographer Cathy McIlwaine, along with other researchers conducted two separate studies of the Latin American population in London, which were published in 2011 and
2016 respectively. These reports provide the first robust statistical analyses of the Latin American community in the U.K. in terms of size, dispersal, profile, and patterns of migration. Key findings about the profile of Latin Americans living in London are significant particularly for how it has transformed the priorities and participants of migrant activism in recent years. Two-thirds of Latin Americans in London are under the age of forty and 90% are of working age (between the ages of 18-59). Two-thirds arrived in London after 2000 and around half have either a U.K. or E.U. passport. Latin Americans living in England and Wales are more deprived than average with poorer outcomes along the dimensions of health, education, housing stability, and income. Despite half of the population being college educated in their home countries, almost half work in low paid domestic, service, caring, and processing jobs in the U.K. (McIlwaine 2011; McIlwaine, 2016).

While these reports provide very important statistical analyses and qualitative profiles of Latin American migrants’ experiences, the researchers acknowledge the limitations of relying on census data, as more vulnerable Latin Americans with irregular immigration status are unlikely to have participated in government census and can be more hesitant to engage with researchers on migration. Research shows that within the last three decades the Latin American population has grown substantially through several waves of migration and concentrated pockets of the population constitute a well established as well as growing diaspora in London and other parts of the U.K. While research on Latin American populations in the U.K. is very limited, scholars have explored the importance of particular cultural activities, such as salsa music and dancing, in creating a sense of place and belonging for Latin American migrants living in London.
while other scholars have examined the making of Latin American publics (Roman-Velazquez, 1999; Cock, 2009). Research has also explored the impact of transnational migration on subjective experiences of familyhood for Latin Americans living in the U.K. and the enactments of diversity by children in their efforts to gain acceptance in schools (Mas Giralt & Bailey, 2010; Mas Giralt, 2011). This research adds to the small but growing body of work that considers how individuals and groups negotiate identity within particular contexts and focuses on the ways that organized identity movements navigate shifting policies, laws, and social and cultural discourses around their rights, recognition, and belonging. The organizations that are the subjects of this study have been working on these issues, in most cases, for decades. In the following section, I describe these organizations, when and why they were founded, how they have transformed in recent years and how, from the perspective of individuals directly involved, they see themselves moving forward.

**Latin American Organizations in the U.K.**

London, and the U.K. more broadly, are home to a vibrant network of migrant organizations that provide a range of services to members and clients. Most of these organizations focus on providing social services, such as advice on legal and labor issues and language and job training. Surveys of migrant organizations in the 1980s and early 1990s estimated that 70% of migrant organizations in Britain offered advice on social services (Cock, 2009). More recent studies have found that the dominant activities of migrant organizations are related to accessing social welfare, securing legal advice, especially related to immigration, and labor training and access to the labor market.
(Griffiths et al, 2005 in Cock, 2009; LaCroix, 2012). However, at least since 2011, a broader endeavor has emerged in which more public and strategic forms of activism around social issues impacting the Latin American community has been enabled by coalitions between organizations that have resulted in a more cohesive agenda on certain issues. This has occurred at the same time that many migrant/immigrant organizations, including Latin American organizations in London, are increasingly professionalized. Professionalization includes more strategic and effective use of technology, expanded network building, creative fundraising, increased campaign visibility, and a push towards policy consulting and policy writing. In recent years, many organizations have shifted from being run mostly by volunteer labor to being staffed by a mix of paid professional workers and volunteers. For Latin American organizations in the U.K., for example, the impact of new leadership - mostly by younger (under 45), highly educated, professional women – has not only injected organizations with renewed energy to support communities with valuable services in innovative ways, but also added perspectives from critical theory and feminism to activism efforts that perhaps were not as clearly articulated or embodied in the past. In my interviews with these more professionally oriented activists, it was common for participants to discuss the importance for movements to overcome advanced capitalism, hypermasculinity, hegemonic ideology, white supremacy, colonialism, and neoliberalism. Several participants explained in great detail the importance of grassroots organizations to understand these systems in order to subvert them, to work strategically in order to leverage power within them, and to rely on multiple forms of protest in order to build coalitions with other stakeholders. The leaders of the organizations are especially suited for this work given their educational
background and abilities to cross multiple social contexts in their efforts to support their organizations. This shift has created an environment where some organizations are much more effective in seeking funding, more efficient in carrying out their work, and much better at expanding networks and building coalitions with other groups. One participant described the shift in leadership across many organizations as a “changing of the guard” (Interview A, 2018). Several participants referred to CLAUK’s recognition efforts as a turning point for collaboration between organizations, which had previously collaborated but not always strategically. This section will describe five Latin American London-based organizations that have aimed to create more holistic approaches to activism and community support. I begin with the umbrella organization Coalition of Latin Americans in the U.K., which serves as a consortium for many Latin American organizations and has played an important role in gaining funding, promoting issues and goals, and making significant strides in the London metropolitan area.

**Coalition of Latin Americans in the U.K. (CLAUK)**

Based in London, the Coalition of Latin Americans in the U.K. (CLAUK) is an umbrella organization whose aim is, “Voicing the collective interests of the Latin American community in the U.K.” Following the publication of *No Longer Invisible*, the first major statistical study of the Latin American population in the U.K. (McIlwaine et al.), the Latin American Women’s Rights Service (LAWRS) invited representatives from other Latin American organizations to collaborate and pursue the recommendations presented in the report. In July 2011, this newly formed group met for the first time and set objectives and priorities to carry out work as a coalition using CLAUK as an umbrella

---

1 Coalition of Latin Americans in the United Kingdom, http://www.clauk.org.uk/
organization. CLAUK includes fourteen distinct member organizations that provide a range of services and focus on different areas of activism. All of the organizations included this project are CLAUK member organizations. CLAUK has received financial support from the Trust for London, an independent charitable foundation that provides funding to voluntary and charity groups. The organization has also received some support from the local Southwark council but according to one participant I spoke to with firsthand knowledge, CLAUK has struggled to retain funding since its formation in 2011 and gaining official census recognition for Latin Americans in the U.K. in 2012. The recognition campaign involved members organizing multiple events in London boroughs, meeting with councilors and leading delegations to council meetings. These efforts led directly to official recognition in four London boroughs with significant Latin American populations, including, Southwark, Lambeth, Islington, and Hackney. Such recognition includes the ethnic category ‘Latin American’ on local census and community participation forms. This means that community members can identify as Latin American when filling out community census forms, participation forms at council meetings on policy or planning, or forms at doctor’s offices and hospitals. Recognition in this form means that councilors and local institutions can account for the number of Latin Americans living in the area, using health services, attending meetings, and voting on issues. In addition to the recognition campaign, CLAUK has several goals in representing and unifying Latin American organizations in the U.K.

According to CLAUK’s 2014 brief titled, “Latin American Manifesto,” their mission is to provide local councils across the U.K. with information about the Latin American community, its growing numbers, the high skilled nature of migrants from
Latin America arriving in the U.K., often via Spain, Portugal, and Italy, and the challenges often faced by many migrants including poverty, exclusion, and exploitation. The brief describes how many Latin Americans migrated from Southern Europe to the U.K. fleeing economic crises in those other E.U. countries and hoped to secure employment opportunities in a more economically stable E.U. member state. Throughout its work, CLAUK points to the problem of non-regulatory oversight of certain sectors, including domestic work and catering services, which a majority of Latin Americans find work in and are thus the most vulnerable to employment abuses (McIlwaine et al., 2011).

According to their website,

- To work together to pursue the implementation of the recommendations contained in No Longer Invisible
- To raise awareness and understanding of the issues facing the Latin American community in the U.K.
- To network, share information and resources and ensure coordinated approaches towards appropriately responding to the needs of the Latin American community in the U.K.
- To jointly identify pressing and emerging needs of the Latin American community in the U.K. and develop strategies to ensure these needs are addressed
- To advocate, campaign and lobby policy and decision makers and service providers to ensure appropriate responses to the issues facing Latin Americans in the U.K.
- To act as a resource, source of information and mechanism for mutual support between organisations from the Latin American community in the U.K.

On their website’s main page CLAUK lists three priorities: gaining recognition of Latin Americans as an ethnic minority in London and the U.K., improving access to health services for Latin Americans living in the U.K., and campaigning to improve labor regulations and secure labor rights for Latin American workers. To date, CLAUK has been successful in its first priority, gaining recognition for Latin Americans with the

---

campaign to have a Latin American category added to official forms in four London boroughs providing visibility to a growing population.

According to a Trustee of one of the organizations I interviewed, CLAUK’s recognition campaigns were extremely effective in bringing leaders and members of different organizations together because their purpose and goal was clear and the benefits of recognition applied across organizations. By developing a strategy of what recognition could help achieve for all of the organizations involved, participation and collaboration between organizations increased and ultimately led to gaining ethnic minority status on official documents. The same participant further noted, “gaining recognition in this way was very important, it was a central aim of CLAUK and since it was achieved in London, CLAUK’s active role has declined significantly in recent years” (Interview A, 2018). Leaders who were central to CLAUK’s mission and goals have also shifted their focus to other Latin American organizations, achieving great success in garnering funding and starting new campaigns. Lucila Granada who was a central figure in the formation and management of CLAUK also directs the Latin American Women’s Rights Service (LAWRS), which according to the same Trustee is the most well funded of all of the Latin American organizations in the U.K. In the following sections I describe the work of individual organizations.

**Latin American Women’s Rights Service (LAWRS)**

The Latin American Women’s Rights Service (LAWRS) is a registered charity located in Islington, central London that views itself as a human rights, feminist organisation run for Latin American women, and 100% run by Latin American women.”
It was founded in 1983 when members of the community noticed that women needed specific services that were not being adequately addressed. LAWRS is a feminist organization that incorporates an understanding of the intersectional dimensions of discrimination in its advocacy and activism work, similar to LAWA, another Latin American women’s organization that I will discuss in this chapter. According to a video posted to their website that celebrated the 30th anniversary of LAWRS in 2013, the organization’s leaders have four main goals: 1) combating poverty by providing advice, advocacy and casework support; 2) preventing violence and abuse of women and girls by providing counseling and support; 3) providing opportunities for women to empower themselves through workshops and training; and 4) campaigning for recognition and rights for ethnic minority women and migrant women more broadly. LAWRS provides a range of free services to over 5,000 Latin American women every year in Spanish and Portuguese in a women-only environment. LAWRS is a well-funded organization with local, national, and E.U.-level funding from both independent nonprofit charitable trusts to government organizations, including the E.U. Commission. One well-connected informant with intimate knowledge of multiple Latin American migrant organizations in the U.K. notes that “LAWRS, in particular, is well-funded and well-led in terms of consistent, strategic fundraising… I think they stand out in that way” (Interview A, 2018). Its strategies for securing consistent funding for initiatives have included securing public and private funds by leveraging its strong network to effectively lobby. In addition LAWRS has a history of writing successful grants to receive private donor funding. As a result, LAWRS is able to offer community members advice on housing, benefits, and

---

finances, counseling and psychotherapy, workshops of relational violence, child and family legal aid and English language classes.

LAWRS is also actively engaged in a number of campaigns that align with their goals. In a video they produced titled *Invisible Women* and posted to the Advocacy page of their website, it discusses the challenges of intersecting dimensions regarding identity of gender, ethnicity/race, poverty, nationality and language by portraying in a narrative the voices of Latin American women navigating life in the U.K. The film depicts two stories of women who have used LAWRS services and begins with a highly educated Latin American woman working in a professional job in Colombia who immigrants to London and works as a custodian at night in empty London office buildings. She discusses her story and after describing moving to the U.K. to seek better opportunities for her kids, she says, “I’ve been in London for 19 years [yet] how strange that no one seems to know me.” The Latin American woman portrayed is the victim of domestic violence. Her partner intimidates her and she fears notifying authorities or seeking medical care because of her irregular status. At the end of the vignette, text flashes on the screen, “Latin American women are hit harder by migration – unequal gender roles can lead to increased risk of domestic violence.” There are several informational films posted on the website, and this one is brief example of the types of films that LAWRS has commissioned, posted, and shared. LAWRS was one of the funders of two major reports conducted by Geographers at Queen Mary University of London, the only reliable statistical study of the Latin American community, which were published in 2011 and 2016 respectively. The leaders of LAWRS were fundamental in forming CLAUK, the coalition of Latin American migrant organizations and bringing together other solidarity

---

groups to advocate for recognition on the government census in several London boroughs with a significant Latin American population.

One of LAWRS major campaigns is Step Up Migrant Women U.K., which was launched by the group in November 2017 in collaboration with 26 migrant rights organizations in the U.K., including LAWA, Latin Elephant, and IRMO. LAWRS serves as steering group organization for the campaign. The goals for the campaign\textsuperscript{5} are the following:

1. Secure safe reporting mechanisms and work towards the establishment of a firewall at the levels of policy and practice to separate reporting of crime and access to support services from immigration control.
2. Bring together diverse voices from BME women and migrant organisations: to challenge the barriers faced by migrant women with insecure status as victims/survivors of violence or exploitation.
3. Increase participation and empowerment of migrant women through involvement in research, consultation and advocacy and campaign activities. We highlight and recognise the intersectional experiences of migrant women and the specific barriers we face, which are often marked by discrimination linked to race, language, immigration status, income, sexuality, disability, and others.

The collaborative campaign included a video and open statement that calls for a separation between immigration controls and human rights. This would mean that when a woman reports a crime to police, for example a domestic violence incident, she would not be asked about her legal status, be forced to provide documents to provide a legal status, or be punished if her status was irregular. Additionally, the campaign combines traditional forms of protest with digital activism and uses the hashtags #StepUpMigrantWomen and #MigrantWomenUK. One participant involved in the campaign and launch shared that the goal was to “address the U.K. government’s hostile environment towards migrants with a strategic campaign that both brings awareness and builds coalitions while engaging policy makers in affecting change” (Interview F, 2018).

Thus far, the campaign has successfully raised awareness and helped to strengthen

\textsuperscript{5} Step Up Migrant Women U.K., https://stepupmigrantwomen.org/about-sumw/
coalitions, which is evident by increased media coverage, and government officials’
willingness to engage with representatives and discuss the potential for policy change.

One way to track the success of the campaign is by analyzing its impact online. A search
on Keyhole.co of the hashtag #StepUpMigrantWomen identifies 219 separate posts by
152 distinct users using the hashtag since the campaign launched in November 2017.

Engagement data, tracking the shares, likes, and comments on posts related to the hashtag
#StepUpMigrantWomen show over 100,000 distinct impressions (the number of times a
post with the hashtag was delivered to someone’s feed) with 20+ shares across various
posts. Individuals used the hashtag in concert with a printable campaign sign that could
be customized by each person with their own experience and demonstration of support.

Figure 4.1 shows a few of these images, which were also shared on the campaigns’
website. The images and posts include the experiences of victims of rape, sex trafficking,
and survivors of domestic violence and call for safe reporting measures to protect migrant
women who are victims of crime but fear destitution and/or deportation.

Figure 4.1 Participants in the #StepUpMigrantWomen campaign
Members of the #StepUpMigrantWomen campaign have successfully organized round table and forum events with Ministers of Parliament and London central government officials such as London Victims’ Commissioner Claire Waxman and continue to promote the campaign in an effort to impact and connect between reporting mechanisms and immigration controls. The group has secured national media coverage for the campaign with its Director, Lucila Granada appearing on a BBC news program presented by Victoria Derbyshire to discuss the campaign in May 2018. In this interview, discussing the situation many of the women who use LAWRS services find themselves in, Ms. Granada said, “What we see is many women who come to us facing threats of deportation by their perpetrators.” She continued, “Insecure immigration status is used to abuse and control.” With its robust funding efforts, popular programming and services, energetic and focused leadership, and strategic goals and agenda, LAWRS continues to be an important resource and advocate for Latin Americans living in the U.K. More than 4,000 women utilize LAWRS’ services every year and they were voted Air Europe/LUKAS Human Rights Organisation of the Year in 2014. I will now discuss another Latin American organization whose work supports Latin American women, Latin American Women’s Aid.

**Latin American Women’s Aid (LAWA)**

Latin American Women’s Aid (LAWA) is a registered charity founded in 1987 whose office is located in Dalston in the London borough of Hackney. LAWA provides a wide range of services to Latin American women in London including drop-in legal aid,

---

6 BBC Victoria Derbyshire, https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/b05qqk5c
career advice, therapeutic support, and childcare services. They describe their mission as follows: “Latin American and other Spanish /Portuguese speaking Black and minority ethnic women and their children working together to end violence and achieve self-determination.”*8 LAWA has received funding from multiple public and private sources, including the City of London, National Lottery, and other private nonprofit and corporate sponsors.9 LAWA collaborates with a range of registered charities, state welfare organizations, and corporate partners such as women’s and minority ethnic migrant solidarity groups, law firms, and welfare service organizations. Until recently, LAWA also received funding from Islington Council, but having been decommissioned, they have effectively utilized crowd funding strategies for specific fundraising efforts. One such campaign, “Vital domestic violence service under threat” (globalgiving.org Project #27526) has raised $14,090 as of April 2018 to support a LAWA-operated safe house for women and their children who are victims of domestic and sexual violence. According to their website10 as well as participants involved with the organization, LAWA is “the only refuge provider in the U.K. and Europe for Latin American, Black and minority ethnic women and children experiencing, or recovering from, domestic violence”11. While crowdsourcing has been a valuable supplement, it has not been adequate to keep services running indefinitely. LAWA and its representatives are very clear that the goal of the organization is to be open and accommodating to an invisible but highly vulnerable segment of the Latin American community. This includes women who are victims of violence who are simultaneously facing the hardships of low wage

---

*8 Latin American Women’s Aid, http://lawadv.org.uk/about1/
*9 Latin American Women’s Aid, http://lawadv.org.uk/
*10 Latin American Women’s Aid, http://lawadv.org.uk/
*11 Latin American Women’s Aid, http://lawadv.org.uk/get-support/project-hunger/
work, labor exploitation, high cost of living, lack of access to health and welfare services, and potential language barriers. In addition, many women who utilize LAWA’s services are dependent on their partners for income, housing, and immigration status. In the case of non-U.K./non-E.U. citizen Latin American women who are living with or married to U.K./E.U. citizen partners, the fear of deportation often keeps women from leaving abusing partners and reporting violence to authorities, which is very similar to Latin American immigrants in the U.S.

According to their website\textsuperscript{12}, LAWA’s goals are as follows:

1. Actively advocate for gender equality and promote women’s rights
2. Help women to recognise when they are affected by domestic violence and identify the dynamics of abuse
3. Empower women to become independent and take control of their own lives
4. Support children in overcoming the trauma of the abuse they witnessed/experienced and prevent long term mental health damage
5. Provide practical and emotional support that women and children from ethnic minority backgrounds require to exit a violent home, helping them overcome their additional barriers to safety such as language, insufficient knowledge of U.K. systems and fear of the U.K. authorities
6. Be a gateway towards integration by encouraging women to become active members of the community
7. Increase awareness in the wider community of issues faced by women and children from ethnic minority communities
8. Involve service users in the continuous development of our services

To achieve the aforementioned goals LAWA incorporates what it calls a person-centered and holistic approach to supporting women in need. This means services are open to all women from the Latin American community, including black and minority ethnic and transwomen, and according to one participant the safe house can accommodate anywhere from 8-12 women and their children at a given time. Time and again, participants connected to LAWA reiterated their message of inclusivity and especially of intersectionality, which is also evident by the fact services are provided in

\textsuperscript{12} Latin American Women’s Aid, http://lawadv.org.uk/about1/
Spanish, Portuguese, and English thus acknowledging language barriers. When I asked one participant to describe to me what intersectionality means to her she told me, “It means that we understand that migrant women face multiple forms of discrimination that are related not just to their race or ethnicity, but also to their gender identity, immigration status, and socioeconomic status” (Interview E, 2018). As another participant connected to LAW A told me, “many women face the problem of being tied to their partners because of their insecure status, but it is not just immigration, it is their income, it is their children, they face many issues” (Interview F, 2018). Consequently, intersectional feminism provides a framework that allows leaders and service providers at LAW A to adopt a holistic approach to help their clients. LAW A’s website  provides the following definition of intersectionality, along with the graphic in Figure 4.2:

BME women are simultaneously embedded in other experiences of oppression apart from gender violence, linked to their ethnic background, class, nationality/migration status, disabilities etc. Their experience of gender violence is hence shaped by what Black feminist theory refers to as “intersectionality”. BME specialist organisations led by and for BME women, like LAW A, have a unique understanding and knowledge of addressing the multiple intersecting needs of the women they support. We are therefore catalysts of positive change and advocates of justice in the communities we work in.

Figure 4.2 LAW A intersectionality graphic

13 Latin American Women’s Aid,  http://lawadv.org.uk/what-we-do/
Such intentional intersectional feminism demonstrates that the current wave of Latin American activism in the U.K. acknowledges that identity is multilayered and that minority women are subject to discrimination along multiple dimensions. In addition, it allows LAWA to support black and minority ethnic women from Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries with the services required to support them fully. For example, one participant told me that in the refuge they not only provide for basic needs like shelter and food but also provide emotional counseling, domestic violence recovery workshops, and job training. The women who run and operate LAWA are committed to providing a safe space and use intersectional feminism as a framework to design programming, support services, and spaces in order to address the complex and unique situation Latin American migrant women face as victims of violence. LAWA offers free use of their space for events, meetings, classes and uses it space to provide emotional counseling and daycare services in addition to English language classes and legal and career advice. One of the overarching goals of LAWA is to provide services that help women achieve what they call “self-determination.” The theme of self-empowerment and self-determination is reiterated in several of the organization’s goals, which emphasize not only helping support women but also empowering them with knowledge and tools to get involved in their communities, improve their career prospects, and to help improve the services that LAWA provides. Over the past thirty years, LAWA has provided important services to Latin American women in the U.K. and its success is evident. According to a video about the organization posted on their website14, 83% of service users do not return to the abusive relationship that brought them to LAWA in the first place. One testimonial

---

14 Latin American Women’s Aid Video, http://lawadv.org.uk/
included in the video comes from a young woman that has utilized the refuge who says, “Through LAWA I understood what it meant a healthy and an unhealthy relationship,” she continues, “I learned not to tolerate abuse towards me and my family.” LAWA provides a vital service to women and their children in imminent danger of continued violence. By employing intersectional feminism staff at LAWA can address the dynamic situation that Latin American migrant/immigrant women face in the U.K. I will now discuss the history and services provided by the Indoamerican Refugee Migrant Organization (IRMO).

**Indoamerican Refugee Migrant Organization (IRMO)**

The Indoamerican Refugee Migrant Organization (IRMO) is a registered charity located in the Brixton district in the South London borough of Lambeth. IRMO was formed in 1974 by community members as the Chile Democrático GB to respond to the needs of 3,000+ refugees who arrived to the U.K. after Chile’s 1973 coup d’etat as well as people who fled Argentina and Uruguay between 1976 and 1983. Activism in the early years of its formation focused on political exile and the politics in Chile. A 1985 bulletin (see Figure 4.3) promoting the first national congress of the group includes the headline “Queremos Otro Chile” (We Want Another Chile).

![Figure 4.3 1985 information bulletin by IRMO, then Chile Democrático GB](image)
Multiple participants that I interviewed – many with a long view of the history and evolution of Latin American community organizations in the U.K. – told me about the shift in focus from politics in Latin America to the material and cultural politics in the U.K. for Latin Americans. One participant noted that the shift had to do with changes in migration flows, from refugees escaping persecution and going into exile in the U.K. in the 1970s and 1980s to the increased economic migration in the 1990s until present day:

I think this has to do with the way that people imagined they would someday return to Latin America and they saw the U.K. as a place that they could enact a form of politics that would change things and improve things back home. Increasingly though, it became clear that the issues and struggles of migrants would need to be addressed not in Latin America, but here in London because there was no going back. (Interview B, 2018)

In the early 2000’s, Chile Democrático GB changed its name to Indoamerican Refugee Migrant Organization (IRMO) because the organization needed to reflect and recognize how diverse the Latin American community in London had become and “recognize the importance of indigenous peoples and cultures to the story of Latin America.” IRMO has three main pillars that constitute its mission: 1) education, training and employment; 2) advice and case-work; and 3) wellbeing. It also has one “cross cutting pillar” that centers the rights of all migrant communities. In an effort to fully embody its pillars, IRMO offers a range of classes, workshops, and activities including twice weekly drop-in hours for immigration social welfare, tax, and housing advice. IRMO also offers support to Spanish and Portuguese speaking migrant families who need assistance navigating daily life in the U.K., including their “Welcome Guide for Families” which provides information about education, housing policies, labor laws,
accessing health services, transport, voting and public services such as libraries, public restrooms and free English language courses.

To address the specific needs of migrant women, IRMO launched a program called El Costurero (The Sewing Box) in 2011, which hosts a meeting of women once a month to discuss issues and participate in workshops related to gender violence, inequality, and community engagement. In terms of collaborative campaigns, IRMO participates in Step Up, which along with the independent charity funding organizations Trust for London and the Walcot Foundation, provide advice, training, and work placement for low-wage migrant workers stuck in cycles of in-work poverty. IRMO also participates in the #migrantscontribute campaign which is run by Migrants Contribute, a consortium of migrant organizations in the U.K. that campaigns for awareness of economic, cultural, and civic contributions of migrant communities in the U.K. Lastly, serving the youth in the community is also critical to IRMO’s mission. Its youth programs provide opportunities for migrant children to engage in a range of educational workshops, art classes and cultural activities. These include English for English language learners, diversity and inclusion workshops, and poetry, music and dance showcases. In 2016 and 2017 IRMO’s Education and Learning Centre in Brixton provided 1,440 hours of English classes and 150 hours of conversation practice to 452 students.16 The following organization, Latin American House, has also made strides in its advocacy and support of Latin Americans in London.

---

Latin American House

Founded in 1983, Latin American House (previously known as Casa Latinoamericana) is a registered charity located in Kilburn, Northwest London that offers free services and support for Latin Americans and Spanish and Portuguese speakers in London and surrounding areas. The organization was formed initially as a collective of multiple organizations including Casa de Cultura Latinoamericana, the Advisory Committee, the Cooperative Project of Commercial and Legal Advice for Entrepreneurs, Chile Democrático, The Association of Bolivian Residents in England, The Latin America Film Makers Association, LAWRS, the Association of Latin American Workers, and the Colombian Committee of Human Rights. The organization’s initial goal was to create a space where Latin American heritage and culture could be celebrated and each individual member organization could offer services under the same name in the same place, essentially pooling resources. A building was purchased in 1986 and the initial range of services offered to the local Latin American community were diverse. However, according to the history of Latin American House provided on their website as part of the 30th anniversary of the Latin American House in 2013\(^{17}\) soon after the purchase of the building the group faced some internal issues that would eventually see a separation. Some member organizations simply outgrew the space and needed to expand on their own, others disagreements about the broader goals and vision, along with personality conflicts and funding issues served as the catalyst for several member organizations to leave. In the years that followed, nonprofit organizations at large,

\(^{17}\) Latin American House, http://www.ventanalatina.co.uk/2013/10/30-anos-casa-latinoamericana/
including Latin American House, struggled as they faced budget cuts under Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government.

By 2002, leaders at Latin American House decided to focus on providing services based on growing community needs and opened the Menchú Children's Center, a nursery school that had previously been run as a daycare. Menchú enrolls children from ages 2 to 5 years Monday through Friday so parents can work while their children received a bilingual partial immersion Spanish-English education. In addition, Spanish language Saturday School is offered for children ages 4 to 11. In 2016, forty-one children were enrolled in the nursery school. In addition to children’s education, Latin American House offers free beginners’ English classes which are held six times a week for adults. In 2016, seventy-two adult students enrolled in English language courses and the largest percentage of enrolled students were originally from Brazil (26%). As the Brazilian population continues to grow at a faster rate when compared to other Latin Americans in the U.K., more services and programming are being offered in Portuguese along with Spanish. Other services offered range from advice on legal and social matters, to workshops on handling finances, immigration and employment law, English language classes and training in computers and technology. Community members who have used Latin American House services report high satisfaction with the range of services, level of professionalism, quality of care, commitment of volunteers, and the welcoming space. One participant who worked at multiple organizations informed me that Latin American House really stands out in terms of the environment and level of service

---

provided to community members: “Latin American House is incredible. I have worked
with other community organizations and they are at the top for me” (Interview K, 2018).

According to their 2016 Annual Report, Latin American House legal advisors
counseled 752 community members on issues related to immigration, welfare,
employment and family law (2016, p. 5). The organization was able to provide an in-
house immigration lawyer all year due to grant funds provided by Lloyds Bank
Foundation and Trust for London. Legal services were provided to community members
from seventeen different Latin American countries, as well as several E.U. and non-E.U.
countries. It is important to note that Brazilians and Colombians made up the largest
group of advisees, and the growth of these populations is the result of continued political
and economic instability in both countries. Latin American House views immigration
support as a key advocacy issue because so many Latin Americans living in the U.K. are
either on work visas, or are onward migrants from other E.U. countries whose post-Brexit
status has been thrown into uncertainty. Consequently, it provides free legal advice in
Spanish and Portuguese during weekly drop-in sessions. According to Latin American
House’s 2016 Annual Report, advice on what to do to secure their future in the U.K.
following the referendum vote is the most common type of advice sought at the drop-in
sessions. Seeking such advice is different from previous legal questions that were asked
by Latin American migrants. One legal theme that arose consistently was insecurity
around immigration status following a marital breakdown, especially between E.U.
nationals and their non-E.U. Latin American partners. Latin American House included an
educational comic about the impact of Brexit and anxiety surrounding it on their website
(see Fig). The comic utilizes the ‘BREAKING POINT’ image famously used in the UKIP
promotional poster and explains that, while the referendum was successful, many people in the U.K. are actually against Brexit, and that the implications for E.U. nationals and others residing in the U.K. are unknown. It provides the narrative of a family of mice that face the uncertainty of Brexit after the referendum and they discuss how they now need to apply for a permanent residence permit while they wait to see what will occur after Britain exits the E.U. These education pieces coincide with increased support around securing immigration status.

![Brexit comic strip](image)

**Figure 4.4 A Brexit comic strip by Latin American House**

In addition to providing social services and resources, Latin American House began a series of events starting in 2016 called Salón Cultural, a forum that was “inspired by the original idea of the Salon as a special space that began in the 17th and 18th Century France and spread to Latin America where it became central to the development of ideas
of democracy and freedom.” The forums host conversations on a series of topics intended to provoke critical dialogue regarding issues of Latin American culture and its relationship with Europe. Recent forums have included topics such as exploring the philosophy of Karl Marx in relation to Latin America, a critical feminist performance piece examining motherhood, a panel discussion on Latin American identity and the implications of being a Latin American in the creative sector in the U.K. Forums are diverse in the range of topics they cover and are held in Spanish, Portuguese, and/or English. Other cultural events include highlighting Latin American artists, poets, writers, singers, and dancers.

In addition to forums, panels, and cultural events, Latin American House publishes Ventana Latina, a mostly Spanish quarterly online cultural magazine. The most recent issue was a special edition on the life and work of Violeta Parra, the Chilean composer, songwriter, visual artist, and activist best known for the movement song Nueva Canción which combined Chilean folk traditions with a social justice message. Ultimately, Latin American House uses its space to bring together a range of speakers, panels, forums, exhibitions, performances that allow community members to engage with a broad spectrum of art, politics, education, socializing, and culture from all over the Portuguese and Spanish speaking world. Latin American House also allows community members and organizations to rent their space at affordable prices for gatherings such as yoga and Brazilian dance classes, which are held regularly.

In 2016, Latin American House created a three-year business plan with the help of a volunteer team of consultants from global consulting firm Accenture. With the consulting firm’s advice they created a list of key strategic objectives:

---

1. To further the skills, knowledge, experience and career paths for members of the Latin American community.
2. To be a source of information, establish health dialogues and participation.
3. To support and promote Latin American arts and culture, Spanish and Portuguese and other languages.
4. To offer legal advice and other social welfare services to improve wellbeing.
5. To work towards positioning the Latin American community into the ever-growing multicultural British society.  

Earlier, in 2013, Latin American House released a video to celebrate its 30th anniversary and to highlight its goals, which have been related to the political situation in Latin America and to ongoing issues impacting Latin Americans living in the U.K. Like many of the other migrant organizations that formed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the initial focus of Latin American House was to advocate for those struggling back home in Latin America and affect change from the U.K. In recent years, the focus has shifted toward providing local services to many migrants and immigrants, including the recent influx of onward migrants who face many difficulties in adjusting to life in the U.K. A strong network of volunteers are creating a welcoming and positive environment for community members who use the service, which is evident in the way that volunteers engage in a range of advocacy and activism. Many participants interviewed praised Latin American House for providing a wonderful space, engaged and committed volunteer staff, focused leadership and continued advocacy efforts that has transformed the organization into an excellent resource for the local community. As one participant described, “Latin American House is amazing.” “It is a space where culture is celebrated and they still provide so many services.” “It is a very important organization for our community” (Interview C, 2016). The next organization that I will discuss, Latin

https://www.casalatina.org.uk/administrator/components/com_annual_reports/downloads/2276f9b32111a9f79e43f3ec20c1aa8d-AnnualReport16-17-LAH--1-.pdf
Elephant, is one that was formed relatively recently but has had a major impact on shaping Latin American activist discourses in the U.K.

**Latin Elephant**

Latin Elephant is a registered charity located in Elephant and Castle, a district of the South London borough of Southwark. Elephant and Castle, sometimes referred to as “The Latin Quarter,” is home to the largest concentration of Latin Americans in London and to a shopping center that is well known to many Latin Americans living across London. The shopping center includes popular retail stalls, salons, cafes and restaurants, including the Colombian restaurant La Bodeguita (see Figure 4.5), and serves as a space for meeting, purchasing goods, eating, and socializing across a pan-Latin American community. On any given day, the sounds of varying Spanish and Portuguese dialects can be heard throughout the market.

![Figure 4.5 La Bodeguita restaurant in Elephant and Castle](image)
In addition to the shopping center, over 150 migrant-owned businesses are located in Elephant and Castle. The organization, Latin Elephant, was founded in 2010 by Patria Roman-Velazquez, a Colombian academic and activist who had previously conducted research on the Latin American community in London, which in 1999 was published in the book *The Making of Latin London*. Patria was motivated to start the organization based on the historical precedent of how regeneration in other parts of London often displaced migrants and minority ethnic business owners and residents; and did not take into account the necessity for people to have cultural spaces such as the Elephant and Castle shopping center. Roman-Velazquez lived in the area and decided she had the skills to raise funds, come up with an organizing strategy, and propose plans to the local council to stop the demolishment and redevelopment of a site by the company Delancey that would affect the best interests of local business owners and residents, including many Latin Americans. The campaign launched in 2012 and used the hashtag #LatinElephant to promote its proposal online. Online links on their website also included a complete plan for the Latin Quarter that showed the promise of controlled rent for retailers and residents, green spaces for the local community, and the inclusion of local residents in regeneration plans. Figure 4.6 shows one part of an artistic rendition of the proposed Latin Quarter, commissioned and shared by Latin Elephant on their website and social media platforms.
For over five years, Latin Elephant has been fighting against redevelopment plans by both engaging the public and building coalitions with ally migrant and anti-redevelopment organizations. It has also engaged local politicians and other stakeholders in official meetings and roundtables where Delancey’s plans have been presented to the council, discussed and debated.

Latin Elephant has consistently objected to the plans offered by Delancey on the grounds that they are not in the best interest of local business owners and residents; and has filed objections that have been presented to the council. In January 2018, the council rejected Delancey’s proposal and consequently an amended proposal was submitted in March 2018 for debate, which Latin Elephant rejected\(^\text{21}\) on the grounds that black and minority ethnic populations in Elephant and Castle would be disproportionately affected by the redevelopment. In addition to their efforts to reject Delancey’s plans, Latin Elephant continues to offer educational workshops on a range of topics including

entrepreneurship, labor and trade policies. The debate continues between Delancey and members of the community, especially members of Latin Elephant who are fighting to have more input in any plans to redevelop the area. Latin Elephant has been successful in gaining support of ally organizations, including student groups from London College of Communication (LCC) who have been troubled by Brexit and its related anti-immigrant rhetoric and economic effects such as rising rents across London. While Latin Elephant focuses on issues of urban planning, community rights, and access to space, it also supports other Latin American organizations by lending strategic assistance in areas of research and policy writing, and by supporting campaigns such as #StepUpMigrantWomen U.K. As evident from above, Latin Elephant continues to serve an important role in advocating on behalf of the Latin American community in London. I will now discuss Latin American Disabled People’s Project, an organization that works specifically with Latin Americans navigating life in London with intellectual, physical, emotional challenges.

**Latin American Disabled People’s Project (LADDP)**

The Latin American Disabled People’s Project (LADDP) is a registered charity also located in the Elephant and Castle district of South London’s borough of Southwark. LADDP was formed in London in 1989 by a group of disabled individuals, caretakers of disabled individuals, and community members who recognized the need for specific resources for disabled people from Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries now living in London. In addition to facing language barriers, individuals with special physical, intellectual and emotional needs are more subject to abuse in work, school, and other
community contexts. LADDP formed its constitution in 1992 and became a registered charity in 1993 and has since then provided a range of services to individuals with physical, intellectual and emotional disabilities. Additionally, LADDP provides support to community members who are often more vulnerable to exploitation because of physical, intellectual and/or emotional challenges they face, such as refugees and migrants in precarious work situations, individuals with irregular immigration status, and those that may be exploited due to limited English language skills. LADDP provides one-on-one support to individuals who need assistance in applying for welfare benefits, regularizing their immigration status, filing work claims, and securing housing and work. Translation services, English language classes and workshops on taxes, benefits, labor laws and employee rights provide community members with opportunities to empower themselves. Most services are conducted in Spanish, and Portuguese translators assist individuals from Portuguese speaking countries. A major resource in the organizations is the availability of interpreters to assist community members with medical appointments and work contracts.

According to LADDP,\textsuperscript{22} their Community Integration Advice and Representation Project, 1,566 community members have been assisted over the past year and 400 people attended twenty workshops held at the center. Because migrant communities are disproportionately excluded from accessing health services, LADPP provides free consultations from a National Health Service nurse who can help with securing doctor’s appointments and any necessary diagnostics testing. The National Health Service in the U.K. provides public health services such as regular and emergency healthcare, but

\textsuperscript{22} Latin American Disabled People’s Project, http://www.ladpp.org.uk/community-integration-advice-and-representation-project.html
migrant communities often have difficulty accessing healthcare service due to language barriers, lack of knowledge around where to acquire appropriate services, issues with immigration status, and associated costs (non-U.K. residents pay significant fees to use the National Health Services). In addition, LADPP provides alternative health therapies, such as reflexology and massage are offered to community members at the center two days a month (see Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7 LADPP promoting reflexology services to community members

LADPP continues to provide important services to a specific segment of the Latin American population in London and designs its programming based on evolving needs. One participant working for LADPP shared, “There are a lot of people who need help with language and translating documents from work…You hear a lot of really sad stories from people that come in about what they have been through and at least in some small way we are helping” (Interview K, 2018). One campaign that is unique to LADPP is the Befriending Initiative. This initiative connects Spanish and/or Portuguese speaking volunteers willing to spend a couple hours a week with an individual who is feeling lonely, isolated, or in need of companionship. The emphasis on mental health as well as
physical wellbeing is apparent in the programs and projects LADPP promotes. Their services help individuals facing multiple forms of discrimination and whose physical, intellectual and emotional circumstances often exacerbate barriers that they face as migrants in the U.K. In the section that follows, I will discuss specific campaigns that demonstrate how organizations collaborate to achieve particular goals.

**Collaborative Campaigns**

Over the last thirty years, the Latin American community in London has built a strong support network of advocacy organizations, commercial areas, and community and cultural spaces. In recent years those areas and spaces are under threat by political and economic forces that hope to develop areas where Latin Americans have built a community and where many live and earn a living. Like the development threat facing of Elephant and Castle, Latin Village, located in North London, also faces demolition by developers eager to take control of valuable real estate occupied by Latin American business owners and frequented by many members of the local community. The community has responded with a campaign set up by local advocates and supported by Latin American advocacy organizations and activists. I describe the campaign in the following section.

The Save Latin Village campaign was started by a small group of shop owners in the Latin American market known as Latin Village/El Pueblito Paisa (also known as Ward’s Corner) located in the Seven Sisters district of the North London borough of Haringey (see Figure 4.8).
In 2008, Grainger PLC submitted a plan, that was accepted by the Haringey local government, to redevelop the market that would likely displace 60 retail business, most all of which are owned by minority ethnic business owners. In addition to the market redevelopment, the plan did not include provision for affordable housing, which would disproportionately affect minority ethnic business owners and residents. Merchants who organized The Save Latin Village campaign, led by Colombian business owner Victoria Alvarez, effectively used crowd funding to raise over £20,000 ($26,600 USD as of May 2018) to mount a legal fight against Grainger. Back in June 2010, a High Court judge rejected Grainger’s plans on appeal, citing that the council had not considered the impact redevelopment would have on the area’s culture and heritage. Two years later in May 2012, the Haringey council once again granted Grainger permission to redevelop the market, although no affordable housing or rent control provisions were included in the amendment proposal. In September 2016, Compulsory Purchase Orders were issued that gave the council permission to evict local shop owners and residents. However, campaigners decided to mount a fight on the basis of human rights, sending a small delegation to the United Nations Human Rights Council to discuss the issue. The group
argued that migrant and immigrant communities were disproportionately impacted by developers plans which did not take into account rent control or affordable housing to a standard acceptable relative to the local community’s wages. This resulted in official support and publicity from the UN Human Rights Council to maintain the area from the intergovernmental body (see Figure 4.9).

As of early 2018, the fight is ongoing. One activist close to the campaign, and with intimate knowledge of the market and its history noted in the interview that the current property manager has punished shop owners who have been a part of the campaign as a way to pressure other shop owners from joining the #SaveLatinVillage efforts and stop Grainger and the council from moving forward. One participant with close knowledge of the situation told me that shop owners were denied certain repairs from property managers and that it was made known that their objection to the
development plans was the reason that they were not receiving assistance from property management. The same informant also explained the importance of digital protest for this specific campaign, which they believed, would otherwise have failed in its early stages. “By promoting the campaign on social media, we were able to secure the funds to fight on legal grounds, to retain solicitors with experience in these issues and to bring this to higher courts because it is a human rights issue” (Interview D, 2018). Publicity following the successful crowd funding drive helped elevate the issue to an even higher awareness, with shop owners appearing on national media. The campaign produced a set of videos\(^{23}\) that they shared on social media that included personalized narratives of shop owners, residents and community members who live, work and even grew up around Latin Village and spent time in the market since the early 1990s.

One participant in the #SaveLatinVillage told me about how important the market has been for many Latin American women, some whom are single mothers and cannot always afford childcare while going to work. “It is a place where people take care of one another and each other’s children…If you run a stall or worked in one and can’t afford private childcare, you could go to work with your mother and be with other kids whose mother’s worked there too – and it was always fun” (Interview D, 2018). Due to the increased publicity, the campaign has garnered support from ally organizations, including the local Ward’s Corner Coalition, whose members also reject any plans to redevelop the area without provisions for current shop owners and residents. Other Latin America organizations have also supported the campaign online, with the hashtag #SaveLatinVillage being shared by many. Young activists have been particularly engaged both in traditional protest events such as rallies and online activism, creating,

\(^{23}\) Save Latin Village, latincorner.org.uk
sharing, liking, and commenting on campaign content. For instance, three Latin American U.K. youth organizations, The London Latinxs, London Mexico Solidarity, and Movimiento Jaguar Despierto have supported the campaign and been very vocal online, at rallies, and political and cultural events. See Figure 4.10 for an image posted to Twitter by members of Movimiento Jaguar Despierto. The caption on the photo says, “We’re with our sisters at Pueblito Paisa, demanding that Latin Village be saved from capitalist gentrification – join us! #SaveLatinVillage.” Youth activists have been extremely important in local movements and organizing around Latin American migrant issues in the U.K. in recent years. Their participation, which demonstrates a different period of Latin American activism in the U.K., is key to the present moment, and thus I discuss their impact in more detail in the following chapter.

![Image of youth activists]

**Figure 4.10** Movimiento Jaguar Despierto supporting #SaveLatinVillage at a protest
Conclusion

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, Latin American advocacy organizations provide important services and resources to community members and organizations and report that these services are being utilized more than ever in the last several years. The increase in the intensity of anti-migrant sentiment in the U.K., a central narrative of the Leave campaign in the Brexit debate, and their success in the Yes vote to leave the E.U., has made both non-E.U. citizen migrants and E.U. citizen onward migrants very anxious and worried about their future in a country they currently call home. As demonstrated by feminist organizations such as LAWA and LAWRS, building broad coalitions is key for garnering support from policy makers and engaging and energizing people online and on the ground around specific campaigns. The internet provides an important way for those hoping to get involved to find organizations, through their websites, social media pages, and various digital campaigns that are widely shared. Two Latin American participants who grew up in London but did not have knowledge of Latin American community organizations prior to finding them online, one via Google search and the other via Twitter were able to connect with organizations and get involved. In addition to being a place people can find information related to their cultural identity, digital spaces provide a key site to enact and negotiate collective identity and gain support from other Latin Americans and other allies for campaigns. In the next chapter I will discuss how these coalitions have been formed, how activists see themselves working together strategically, how agendas are created and how Brexit, in particular, has had an impact on activism over the last two years.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the conclusions of my dissertation based on my research observing and engaging with movements online, speaking with activists about their work, and following developments on Latin American activism in the U.K. The conclusions are organized thematically, and each theme includes supporting examples and considers how formations of collective identity and collective action help explain what I have observed. The chapter concludes by demonstrating the important implications of my study and potential pathways for future research on this topic. Through the process of analyzing the data, reviewing analytic memos and revisiting interview recordings and transcripts, three important themes emerged: challenges, collaborations, and leadership.

First, there are multiple challenges all of these organizations face while conducting their work. While their histories intertwine and loose connections bind them, each organization has its own agenda and serves a particular geographical area and segment of the Latin American population. However, they share common challenges of conducting community work in the face of increased anti migrant hostility combined with the pressures of austerity measures that disproportionately impact minority communities. Every participant I spoke with articulated challenges presented by state policies, the increasing difficulties with securing funding, the importance of gaining recognition, and the anxiety around the uncertainty of Brexit. A second theme that emerged was the difficulty of collaborating across organizations for various reasons. Participants describe how operating with different resources, staffing, funding mechanisms and agendas across
organizations often make it difficult to collaborate. In fact, collaboration in recent years has been made more grueling because of the particular context in the U.K. Finally, the important role of young people in accepting leadership roles within organizations, starting their own campaigns, expanding networks, and facing shared challenges in different ways was reiterated unanimously. These themes relate directly to the questions I set out to address while conducting my research, which I will restate below:

1. How have Latin American advocacy organizations operating in the United Kingdom been founded, funded, and structured?

2. In what ways do these activists make sense of their agendas, collaborate, strategize, and evaluate the outcomes of their work?

3. How has Brexit and related rhetoric, discourses, and policies around immigration and migration impacted Latin American activism in the U.K.?

In what follows, I address each research question and describe related themes that emerged through my research project.

**Founding, Funding, and Structures**

When I began my research, I approached all of the organizations with the same criteria. I wanted to understand their histories, find out about their resources and services they provide, learn about the communities that they serve, and hear perspectives of activists and advocates. I wanted to understand how communities under imminent threat from the state were responding to those threats, and how activists were strategizing to face new challenges in the face of major policy changes. I discovered that while all five organizations are very different, they share a few things in common. All but two of the
Latin American advocacy organizations in the U.K. that I explored were founded between 1983 and 1989. Latin American Disabled People’s Project was founded in 1989, Latin American House in 1983, Latin American Women’s Aid in 1987, and Latin American Women’s Rights Service in 1983. The umbrella organization, The Coalition of Latin Americans in the U.K., was founded in 2011 and Latin Elephant was founded in 2011. Migration flows from Latin America to the U.K. in the 1980s were the result of refugees fleeing oppressive political regimes and migrants leaving countries that were in economic ruin. It is important to situate these migration flows in historical context, and to recognize how the legacy of European colonialism and subsequent decolonization factors into contemporary transnational migration.

Decolonization in Latin America began in the early 19th century with Chile gaining independence from Spain in 1818 after years of sustained conflict and other Latin American countries gaining independence in the years that followed. However, two centuries later the echoes of genocide, slavery, oppression, and unrest continue to persist. In most parts of Latin America, enduring political and economic instability is a result of the destruction or weakening of institutions of civic bureaucracy, conflict over borders and resources, the continued oppression of native peoples, power struggles between conflicting governing ideologies and the regimes associated with them, and the collapse of trade agreements and industry (Quijano, 2000; Domingues, 2009). This is important context because for most organizations, their founding were based on a need to connect with other Latin Americans in the U.K., rally for change, and ideally return when things improved. Despite attempts to change politics in Latin America from afar, most of the migrants that arrived in the 1970s and 1980s remained in the U.K. because of continued
instability and over time many settled into life in the U.K. working, raising families, getting involved in the community, owning businesses, and creating spaces that allowed them to remain connected to Latin American culture (Roman-Velazquez, 1999; Cock, 2009).

The desire to connect with other Latin Americans was one factor that motivated the founding of organizations that serve the community. As one participant who has conducted extensive research with the Latin American community in London described:

For some reason, people felt interpolated into engaging in a kind of reproducing of Latinness in London. There is a lot to say about these spaces without reifying them into ‘this is Latin Americanness’ these spaces are important for people at certain times, for their survival, but they may be temporal, they may die. I prefer a more liberal understanding of people creating spaces as they need them, operating within structures as they can, and creating these sorts of messy mixed discourses of identity and belonging (Interview H, 2018).

This perspective is one that takes into account the specific social, political, and economic factors that influence migration flows, and collective identity and action. As I described in chapter 2, neither identification nor deprivation on their own are enough to motivate collective identity or collective action. In fact, in different contexts, groups that share similar origins, cultures, languages, and/or economic situations may not form social bonds. It is only under certain circumstances that collective identity is established and collective action is achieved. For some Latin Americans in London, community spaces like markets, cafes, and restaurants provide a place to connect with a sense of home and belonging. Participants described how this drive is closely associated with feeling like an outsider in British society. The first significant wave of migration from Latin America to the U.K. followed the Immigration Act of 1971 which made it easier for Latin Americans to obtain work visas and migrate to the U.K. Several subsequent flows followed, with
many choosing to migrate to the U.K. because they could secure legal status through another European nation state. Thirty years after the first major migration, multiculturalism as a political program in Britain is under attack. Over the last 15 years in particular, policies and provisions afforded to minority communities have been subject to sustained criticism and austerity measures and debates around integration and community cohesion continue (Mason, 2017). As one participant with close knowledge of acquiring grant funds for a Latin American women’s organization described:

After the coalition government took power and more austerity measures were put into place it seemed we were scrambling for grant money. Now you have to come up with a cookie cutter project to appeal to funders when you really just need money to fund core staff. We know that we cannot rely on the government for funding anymore. It was easy for them to stop funding migrant women’s charities because these were not seen as essential services. It was an easy argument for councils to make when deciding on their budgets (Interview E, 2018).

Losing government funding, at both local and national levels has been a common experience across the organizations I examined for this study. Defunding of community organizations was framed as nonessential, with government officials arguing that services supporting migrants, who may not have regular status, was nonessential and inconsistent with the goals of integration, community cohesion, and active citizenship.

With its culturally diverse population, London is often pointed to by critics of the perceived failure of multiculturalism, with numerous studies devoted to the concept of “parallel societies”, or diasporic communities creating ethnic public spaces, like Pueblito Paisa or Elephant and Castle inside of the U.K. For critics, community groups and public spaces that attract individuals based on a specific aspect of one’s identity, especially race, ethnicity, nationality, or religion, prevent individuals from integrating successfully into British culture. Across the U.K., and indeed across the European Union, the language of
multiculturalism has been replaced with talk of civic participation, active citizenship, and integration. In Germany the term parallelegesellschaften was coined by German social scientist Wilhelm Heimeyer (1996) to describe these so-called parallel societies, mainly those of Islamic and Turkish backgrounds. He writes, “There is that danger that religious-political groups could form ‘parallel societies’ on the edges of the majority society.” (Heimeyer in Hiscott, 2005). Heimeyer went on to characterize immigrant communities as a “growing danger” who were “disintegrating society”. In doing so, he provided a terse soundbite for politicians from center, right, and far right parties to target minority communities and claim their ways of life were incompatible with the ideals of western liberal democracy.

The targeting of particular minority communities was not isolated to Germany. In 2011, both France and Belgium banned Islamic women from wearing full face veils in public (Weaver, 2018). In January 2016, Denmark passed a “jewelry bill,” which allows authorities to seize cash and other valuables from asylum seekers in order to contribute to the state costs associated with their lodging, food, and medical care (Bilefsky, 2016). In one U.K. town, asylum seekers were forced to wear red wristbands at all times in order to receive food rations (Taylor, 2016). The retreat from multiculturalism and return to nationalism and integration policies is not subtle in the distinctions they make about the requirements of belonging. These policies call on individuals to cast aside their home country and blend into the cultural landscape and to conform to the integration conditions as set forth by both national and European governments. Integration conditions are a part of both E.U. Family Reunification and Long Term Residence Directives (Mullally, 2013). This creates an environment where cultural practices, modes of religious worship,
and everyday life of migrants are closely scrutinized and subject to continued discrimination.

In fact, Brexit does not represent a sudden change in how minorities, and migrants in particular, are seen in British society. Brexit is a confirmation of longstanding institutional racism that has been legitimized by a large enough segment of the population to create a significant policy change. I heard from a young Latin American woman in her early 20s who has a graduate degree from a top British university and who serves as a volunteer at two Latin American organizations about the forms of discrimination she has experienced while living in the U.K.:

There is something I think different now, it’s the old lady on the train that gives me a dirty look if I start speaking Spanish on the phone to my mother or the things you see on social media about ‘go back to your country’ and it is not everybody, but those little things do happen more now (Interview K, 2018).

I heard from several participants about how in recent years people feel emboldened to publicly share their feelings about migration and about how very often all migrants, are subject to subtle and aggressive forms of discrimination. As Rosa and Bonilla (2017) write, Brexit, like the election of Donald Trump in the United States, is not an exceptional moment of crisis. Rather, both the election of Trump and retreat to nationalism in Europe reflect the reverberations of the deep rooted and intertwined histories of colonialism and exploitation that have enabled sustained institutional racism and embolden both tacit and overt forms of discrimination.

Latin American community organizations are grappling with Brexit and the ensuing high levels of anxiety as best they can. More than one participant told me about changes to programming and resources that support community members who need
immigration advice and counseling. One participant who develops programing for a Latin American organization told me, “there is more and more need for legal advice because of the anxiety of Brexit…We have had to secure more resources to address those needs”. (Interview I, 2018). When asked about the way that organizations are responding to community needs related to the increased anxiety around Brexit, another participant responded: “So many Latin Americans have E.U. passports so it [Brexit] has created a collective sense of anxiety.” Furthermore, “When we run a workshop on passport issues and Brexit, we are completely inundated because people are anxious” (Interview A, 2018).

To respond to anxiety and uncertainty around Brexit, organizations provide information regarding what the referendum means, how it relates to particular ideological positions, and what community members can do to get involved. For example, in a series of posts on CLAUK’s Facebook page in May of 2017, ahead of the June 2017 general election, they share information about voting in light of Brexit (see Figure 5.1). The images include the slogan “Tu Voto Cuenta” (“Your Vote Counts”). The first post is an image with the heading “¿Por qué es importante votar?” (“Why is it important to vote?”). It goes on to describe in Spanish that 1) voting is a right, 2) candidates and policies are chosen, 3) each vote supports an idea and sends a message, and 4) by voting you decide (my emphasis). A subsequent post included the heading “¿Y el Brexit?” (“And Brexit?”) and provides a brief overview of the positions each major political party has taken on Brexit along with photos of candidates from each party.
In addition to posting in order to share important information about the referendum and what it means for community members, organizations hold workshops and participate in panels with other migrant organizations regarding Brexit and its potential impact. While organizations are attempting to address community needs, there is a great deal of uncertainty regarding Brexit and the policies that will be implemented over the next several years. For some participants, this creates an increased need to collaborate between organizations to address this uncertainty most effectively.

In sum, Latin American organizations were founded in response to community needs, initially needs related to what was happening in Latin America, where the impacts of decolonization produced continuous destabilization in many Latin American countries. Early advocacy by Latin American groups based in the U.K., which were founded by those who had migrated as asylum seekers, refugees, or economic migrants, focused on developing political situations in Latin America, namely Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, and Uruguay. In the late 1970s and early 1980s organizations were largely informal in nature, with members holding meetings to discuss issues and events to gather and socialize. Once participation increased and groups grew in size, along with the Latin American
population in areas of London, groups sought formal recognition and became registered charities. As the Latin American population continued to increase with the integration of the U.K. into the European Union in 1973 organizations grew and offered more services. When many onward Latin American migrants arrived to the U.K. from Spain following the economic crisis in 2008, organizations tried to provide more services to community members who faced increased unexpected challenges. Many of those who migrated from Latin America to Spain sought work opportunities and were able to successfully navigate Spanish language and culture with much more ease than life in the U.K. for various reasons including the nature of job stability in the U.K. Onward migrants who initially moved from Latin America to Spain but ended up in the U.K. following the economic crisis now face language barriers and a higher cost of living. Because of this many were forced into precarious work and some allowed their legal status to lapse. These conditions place specific pressures on onward migrants as they consider the implications of Brexit and what it means for those who either hold E.U. citizenship or obtained a visa from another E.U. member state before migrating to the U.K. Organizations have responded to these needs in both their support services and activism. While some are more politically active and others focus energy more on providing community resources, all are continuously recalibrating their strategies based on what is happening on the ground. As one participant told me, “It is absolutely a chess match to figure out what move we make next with this government and this situation” (Interview D, 2018).

By the 2000s Latin American organizations had already shifted efforts towards engaging in more advocacy in the U.K. with some taking up local causes such as protesting neighborhood development projects, advocating for migrant rights,
campaigning for recognition in their local councils, and continuing community advocacy work focused on issues such as domestic and sexual violence and immigration rights. Most organizations also incorporated the celebration of Latin American culture and history into their agendas and continued to organize cultural events. By 2011, against the backdrop of increasing hostility towards migrants and increased austerity measures impacting the nonprofit sector, organizations who had been working in collaboration with limited capacity decided to form the coalition known as the Coalition of Latin Americans in the U.K. (CLAUK) in order to campaign for inclusion as an ethnic minority on the official census in five London boroughs with significant Latin American populations. By 2015, communities and spaces occupied by them were under threat. Latin Elephant was formed to fight the redevelopment of the largest concentration of Latin American owned business in the U.K. in Elephant and Castle and the Save Latin Village campaign launched in 2016 to fight the redevelopment of Pueblito Paisa, also known as Latin Village, the second largest concentration of Latin American business in the U.K. As discussed in chapter 2, identification and shared deprivation alone are inadequate for sustained collective action. In the case of Latin American organizations in the U.K., a series of major events have impacted the ways that organizations have formed, been structured, and have carried out advocacy and activism. In the next section, I discuss how organizations have collaborated historically and describe how agendas and strategies have been developed.

**Collaboration and Strategy**

The Coalition of Latin Americans in the U.K. (CLAUK) was founded in 2012 to address the collective needs of the Latin American community in the U.K. Considering
its primary purpose, CLAUK achieved what it set out to do. As one participant with knowledge of multiple organizations’ collective efforts noted, “Gaining recognition was the main goal of CLAUK, and it was a very important achievement, but since that was achieved there has been much less collaboration on issues” (Interview A, 2018). However, while CLAUK’s collaborative efforts achieved official ethnic minority status for Latin Americans on the census in five London boroughs and enabled organizations to lobby for more funding from government sources, government funding has become increasingly harder to secure for most organizations. In fact, in recent years, many have shifted to relying on alternative funding from crowdsource campaigns and private donations. Several participants lamented the lack of collaboration on issues in recent years, as many hoped the formation of CLAUK would lead to more sustained coordination on important issues impacting the community as a whole. As one participant told me:

We have tried to outreach to do more of that but they [another Latin American organization that works on similar issues] are not so keen. There was some bad blood between the organizations at some point. We have reached out to do joint funding, but they have not been so keen. It’s an awful shame but there is a younger generation of women now who really don’t remember that and really don't care, I think the old bad blood will die out eventually (Interview E, 2018).

The theme of contention between organizations came up in my interviews with several participants who described how the competitive pressures of securing funding, personal conflict between some leadership, and differing agendas and strategies impacted the level of collaboration between organizations. As another participant who has served in a leadership role at one organization and is very familiar with the history of relations between some of the others told me, “these organizations are subject to their long
histories and often without knowing it, some groups had fallen out with each other and the lack of cooperation just continued” (Interview H, 2018).

However, it seems that a few recent shifts are creating the potential for increased collaboration around important issues that impact many members of the community that these organizations serve. These include the role of new leaders, the professionalization of several organizations, and the role of direct action groups in energizing members of organizations and encouraging collaboration on issues. Several participants spoke positively of the potential impact of new leadership at multiple organizations along with a shift toward more professionalized modes of management and administration. According to several participants, this professionalization helps some organization secure more funding than others, better expand and leverage their networks, and more effectively utilize technology to campaign, crowdsource donations, and promote activities and events. As one participant who tracked movements for several years from 2005 described:

There is much more professionalization then there was years ago, remember some of the organizations were run on very little, out of garages, or industrial spaces, nothing sophisticated, and now some work like proper NGOs because they have learned how to in order to survive (Interview H, 2018).

Professionalization has impacted how well organizations can fundraise, promote themselves, expand their networks and has, on the one hand allowed for increased collaboration in the creation of CLAUK and its successful census recognition campaign. However, when considered within the context of increased austerity, professionalization has increased competition for funding between organizations with some succeeding more than others when they adopt the strategies of successful professional nonprofit charities. Additionally, all of this has occurred within the context of a backlash against
multiculturalism in Britain, a retreat to nationalism, and an increasing anti-migrant sentiment. While census recognition was a major accomplishment, government officials have been quick to point out that organizations who serve a particular national, racial, religious, or ethnic group, such as Latin Americans, run counter to the ideal goal of community cohesion and integration. This has also increased pressure on organizations to move away from collective identity as a means to promote themselves or their services, fundraise, and campaign. Instead, organizations are increasingly expanding their networks based on the specific causes they work on, for example, women’s issues or neighborhood and housing disputes. This is strategic in the current environment, as it allows organizations to expand their networks and seek more diverse funding mechanisms. In one conversation, a participant describe the importance of expanding networks outside of Latin American organizations in order to succeed:

We have had to look to other similar organizations supporting the issues we care about when it comes to domestic violence and reporting because those groups have really protected us and taught us a great deal about fundraising and campaigning. The intersectional part of what we do opens doors for collaborating really creatively with other women’s’ rights organizations who have done this work for a long time (Interview F, 2018).

A theme that emerged in several conversations with younger female participants (four of whom described similar feelings and all either British born to Latin American parents, or who migrated to the U.K. as children and are now in their 20s) was their feeling of responsibility to use their own privilege to help members of the Latin American community. As one participant who migrated from Latin America to London as a child and now works in the legal sector and is heavily involved with the Save Latin Village campaign told me:
I always had the two cultures [Latin American and British] as very much a part of who I am and I thought that I was both and I could navigate both very well. I had an extended family in the market and people knew that I know certain things and they would ask me [for advice]. I really want to be able to stand up for other people and use my voice to help the people who need me (Interview D, 2018).

Recognizing the privilege that their access to resources such as healthcare and education, command of the English language, legal status along with their first hand experience witnessing the hardships of many communities members, often including their own parents or extended family motivates the need to engage in activism for several of my participants. This included those who grew up very privileged, and successfully navigated life as part of the British upper classes.

For example, one young female participant whose mother is Latin American and father is British explained to me that she really only knew of her difference once she attended an elite British university, historically dominated by Britain’s white upper classes. “We were having a conversation about where we came from and who we were and one white British male points to me and says “but you’re Brazilian” (Interview E, 2018). She described how this was the first time her whiteness had been called into question and it motivated her to become more connected to her Latin American heritage and learn more about the history of racism and postcolonialism, which she went on to study at university level along with critical feminist theory. She described how learning about particular theories, considering the history of colonialism and slavery in Latin America and realizing how the interaction with a classmate represented the ways that identity is used to exclude and disempower she began to consider engaging in Latin American activism after finding one organization online. She told me:
Before then, I honestly did not know much about the Latin American community in the U.K. I spent my life living a white British middle class life, but as I got older and started to explore certain theories, I became more and more interested and now I definitely feel like it is my responsibility to use that privilege to do what is right. (Interview E, 2018)

This participant, along with several others found a space to engage with her Latin American heritage online. She performed a Google search online and found several organizations that are the subjects of this study. For her, the organizations and campaigns that combined her ethnic identity with women’s issues resonated most and she was especially impressed with those that employed intersectional approaches to their activism. She, along with others that I spoke with described how finding an organization online was both a surprise and a turning point. “I finally found all these organizations and campaigns working on issues I really care about” (Interview E, 2018). While the Latin American community in the U.K., and specifically in London, has grown significantly over the last decade the community remains largely dispersed outside of a few concentrated areas like Elephant and Castle and Seven Sisters. For younger Latin Americans who feel inspired to get involved in activism but have not previously had contact with Latin American advocacy organizations, technology and specifically social media have allowed them to cultivate cultural connections and participate in important identity work by connecting with other Latin Americans. Younger (under 30) Latin Americans often become more interested in exploring their cultural heritage during their high school and college years. Several participants described how their university coursework inspired them to consider how to incorporate issues related to their cultural background with their interest in progressive political action. Many of these young people used technology to find the groups most visible online and got involved as
volunteers, campaign organizers, and leaders. Based on their own politics, interests, and motivations, some young activists wanted to engage in more radical forms of direct action. As one participant described:

[In London] there were a lot of NGOs doing really important work in London but they weren’t always dealing with all of the issues impacting Latin Americans, like the rising housing prices, the anti-migration policies of the Tory government, the rise of UKIP. Even though they [NGOs] were doing really great work a lot of that work was not dealing with the root causes. I was really interested in anti-capitalism and anti-colonialism and wanted to do something with those ideas. (Interview G, 2018)

The sentiment of this participant, that some established Latin American organizations were not addressing issues in ways that young activists hoped, was echoed by two other young activists I spoke to for this project. One participant, who spoke about the need for more emphasis on challenging Eurocentric versions of Latinidad and demanding decolonialization expressed frustration with the ways “mainstream” Latin American activism in the U.K. did not engage with a more radical politics. Several youth groups have formed over the last three years to address a more radical version of identity politics that confronts issues of migration, decolonialty, with a racially inclusive and genderqueer approach. One such group was formed in 2015, when a group of Latin American women met at an anti-gentrification protest in Brixton, South London called ‘Reclaim Brixton’. They decided to form a group called The London Latinxs that would focus on direct action against gentrification and deportation. Their Facebook page and Twitter feed is filled with colorful images of young people engaged in street protests, news stories of actions they have taken and been involved in, and posts bringing support and attention to a wide range of issues from domestic and sexual violence, to hate crimes, reproductive
freedom, labor rights, the struggles of native peoples, critiques of austerity measures, state violence, and highlighting the plight of refugees and migrants.

The London Latinxs are open and inclusive, operate without a traditional hierarchical structure, and take a collaborative approach to strategy and action. They do not seek traditional funding, do not operate as a registered charity, and have a core membership of about fifteen people. In addition to being involved in a wide range of actions related to gentrification and migrant rights, they support issues that impact black and minority ethnic communities, including the Latin American community. They have engaged in protests for both the Latin Elephant and Save Latin Village campaigns and have previously worked closely with IRMO on a youth education collaboration. Their more radical approach to activism has helped bring attention to issues impacting migrants in the U.K. and has helped mobilize and engage young people in significant ways. All of the participants that I spoke to were familiar with their group due to their high level of engagement online and on the ground. When asked about the role of The London Latinxs within the larger Latin American movement, one leader described it as follows:

This new generation of activists is very important to the work we do. They can do and say things that we cannot always do and say because of certain funding mechanisms. You need both organizations working directly on policy and those that use more radical methods to bring attention to the issues we all care about (Interview F, 2018).

The group’s ability to engage in more radical forms of protest was welcome by several of the organizational leaders I spoke with. As one participant with more than two decades of experience working with and on behalf of the community in different capacities told me when asked about the role of The London Latinxs and groups like them:

They take on any cause that they do onboard…getting other Latin American groups to come and join us. They get involved with big protests and amplify
discourses…anything that oppresses our communities, wherever there is a protest they will go and make sure there are representatives of the Latin American community that I think is very important. They have a role to fulfill in the voluntary sector, they can call a protest where I cannot, they can organize the community in ways I can’t. It’s good to have groups like that. They are that new generation of feminist activism (Interview B, 2018).

Although youth groups’ energy, enthusiasm, and ability to “amplify discourses” has been largely welcome by Latin American organizations, some have not been as receptive to the sometimes radical methods used by groups like The London Latinxs and have cut ties because of their involvement with certain controversial actions.

In October 2015, some members of the group participated, along with some 300 others, in an anti-border demonstration at London’s St Pancras Station, which is a hub for the Eurostar train to Paris and other European capitals. A small group glued themselves to ticket barriers and surrounded by fake blood chanted “Your Borders Kill!” (See Figure 5.2). The group was protesting the deaths of desperate migrants who died in France’s Calais Jungle or in the attempt to reach European borders. They hoped to bring attention to the issue by disrupting travel and delaying passengers. For The London Latinxs it represented a moment of solidarity with other black and minority ethnic groups and a chance to represent Latin American interests while supporting broader migrant rights. As Tatiana Garavito, a member of The London Latinxs wrote in a blog post after the protest:

We need a transformative migrant rights movement, politically and personally. This movement will connect the dots between different struggles: from climate change to housing, from fighting austerity as a whole to cuts specifically targeting women, BME [black and minority ethnic] and disabled people, from fighting the fascists to the movement to shut down detention centres.24

---

Figure 5.2 Members of The London Latinxs participate in Your Borders Kill protest (Credit: Demotix/Gordon Roland Peden)

Tatiana’s words reflect the desire of members of youth movements who want to engage in more radical action without the pressure of certain nonprofit structures and funding mechanisms. They believe they can lend their voice and energy in ways that bring attention to issues impacting the Latin American community and other black and minority ethnic communities in the U.K. and beyond. Their commitment has been largely embraced by other Latin American organizations and their ability to speak about issues that impact the community in ways that gain media attention and help shed light on broader structural issues such as white supremacy, capitalism, colonialism and gentrification are an important part of the broader message, particularly when communities of color are under sustained threat by political projects such as Brexit. In addition, these groups serve as important interlocutors for Latin American organizations to other groups and networks, allowing them to strengthen their networks. In supporting multiple campaigns, they also help encourage collaboration between Latin American organizations on specific issues. In fact, several members have worked as volunteers and/or members of staff for other Latin American organizations. In the next section, I
discuss the important role of allies outside of the Latin American community in furthering their agendas, participating in their actions, and gaining attention for specific campaigns.

The Role of Allies

Austerity measures present a particular set of challenges for community and activist groups. Often times, resources allocated to community groups are the first to be cut, impacting programming and vital services for community members. While this is true for many non-profit groups, within the context of Brexit, and the anti-immigrant sentiment that underpins the Leave movement’s ultimate success, providing services that benefit non-white, sometimes non-U.K. citizen members of the community has become a particular point of contention. Far Right groups, such as UKIP and Britain First, consistently circulate anti-immigrant content on social media pages that speak directly to this point. A cursory look at the comment sections on these posts reveal that these groups gain support from many Britons who believe migrants are the root cause of economic, social, and cultural problems in the U.K. While Brexit has emboldened many in sharing these views publicly, it has also helped energize a broad coalition of allies that are assisting organizations in doing their work. For example, part of the plan to develop Elephant and Castle would also redevelop London College of Communication (LCC) along with its student housing. The school’s administration supports the development project and serves as a development partner in Delancey’s plans, however, student groups at LCC, angry with the dismissal of traders’ concerns and anticipating an increase in local housing prices have joined efforts to protest Delancey’s plan. Just before the local council’s planning committee met to discuss the plans in January of 2018, students
launched a Stop the Elephant Campaign occupying LCC to protest the redevelopment of the area. They also organized public protests during major college events, such as the Capital City Exhibition in May of 2018. Figure 5.3 is an image taken during the Capital City protest.

![Figure 5.3 LCC students protest plans to develop Elephant and Castle (Credit: southwarknotes.wordpress.com)](image)

Student groups have played a very important role in garnering attention for redevelopment plans and halting planning approvals in an effort to gain more concessions from Delancey. Organizers recognize that ultimately it is likely Delancey will receive planning permission and move forward with the development. In fact, traders have already received notice that they should vacate their market spaces by March 2019. However, the goal of organizers, including those involved in Latin Elephant is to gain as much as possible for local traders, residents, and students in the planning phases. While they have had some success, for example increasing the percentage of affordable housing that Delancey must include in their plans, they hope to put pressure on the local council, development partners, and developers as they continue to move forward. The role of local allies, including LCC student groups, neighborhood groups, and local legal organizations
have been essential for Latin American organizers opposing development projects in London. As one participant told me, “I have received incredible support from lawyers, neighborhood activists, architects, students…all have helped in creating our development plans, volunteering, and organizing protests” (Interview B, 2018). This level of support is confirmed when exploring groups and individuals support of anti-development initiatives online. Using keyhole.co to track hashtags related to anti development campaigns including #LatinElephant and #SaveLatinVillage I found that support comes from a broad range of allies in multiple forms. Some simply share, like, and comment on posts related to direct action, planning, and fundraising. Others describe active engagement, share information about protest locations, dates and times. Up the Elephant, a local group comprised of residents, traders, students, and other allies that opposes Delancey’s plans to develop Elephant and Castle often likes and retweets posts from Latin Elephant and has been involved in organizing protests against the plans. Figure 5.4 shows a screen capture from part of Up the Elephant’s Twitter page.

![Figure 5.4 Community group, Up the Elephant's Twitter homepage](image-url)
In July 2018 the council voted to allow Delancey’s plans to proceed to the next phase, against protests from community groups including Latin Elephant, Up the Elephant, and The London Latinxs. The groups continue to put pressure on the council and Delancey. The groups are collaborating to bring their objections to London’s central governing body the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan. Figure 5.5 shows a tweet from The London Latinxs supporting Latin Elephant’s post regarding the council’s decision in early July to allow Delancey to move forward with its plans. The tweets were shared by Up the Elephant.

Figure 5.5 Retweet of The London Latinxs post by Up the Elephant

Groups like Up the Elephant and the LCC student group Stop the Elephant Development utilize methods of protest that have been most effective in recent years and leverage the wide visibility made possible by social media tools and by using direct action methods, such as occupying spaces. Several participants spoke about how they were inspired or influenced by other movements in their own work and connected with and supported
other movements using technology. For example, one participant directly involved with a Latin American women’s organization told me:

#MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter have been hugely important for us. We have definitely looked to more successful movements for guidance on what is most effective. #BlackLivesMatter, for example, gave us ways to talk about the intersection between race and gender and what happens for example when a trans person of color is killed in ways we were not doing before (Interview E, 2018).

As some groups continue to professionalize, expand their networks, effectively use technology, and fundraise creatively they provide important platforms for the broader coalition of Latin American organizations in the U.K. However, organizations who do not engage in such activities face extinction. As several participants told me, Latin American organizations who have not effectively navigated changes, such as Carila, a once successful Latin American organization based in London whose mission was “to empower and enable Spanish and Portuguese speakers in London to thrive within British society” no longer operate. Groups with more finite agendas, as those fighting specific development projects will naturally have a shorter life span, however as competition continues to pressure groups with more long term agendas, such as women’s organizations, how they respond will be largely based on how events continue to develop in the U.K. In the next section I discuss important implications for Latin American organizations in the U.K. I will also address some of the limitations of this project and what issues researchers taking up this work should consider.

**Recognition and Integration**

In the current context, nonprofit organizations in the U.K. face increased uncertainty and anxiety about their future. Most recognize that their work is more
important than ever, especially with so many unanswered questions about what Brexit will mean for migrants, both from within the E.U. and elsewhere, once the United Kingdom eventually leaves the European Union. In recent years austerity measures have helped create increased competition between some groups for funding. At the same time, integration policies have impacted the ways groups position themselves and approach local governments and promote their own activities and initiatives. For example, a recent set of social media posts by several Latin American groups celebrating the six year anniversary of CLAUK’s successful campaign to gain ethnic minority status on the official census demonstrates this shift. Figure 5.6 shows a poster shared by CLAUK and other groups that promoted the sixth anniversary celebration. The poster includes the headline 6to Aniversario del Reconocimiento de la Comunidad Latinoamericana en Southwark! (Sixth Anniversary of the Recognition of the Latin American Community in Southwark!) along with three central images with accompanying text. The first image includes several staff members of organizations holding up the census forms with the text Integración (Integration). The second image is of traditional dancers with the text Equidad (Equity). The third image is a statue of an elephant from the Elephant and Castle area with the text Desarrollo (Development).
Organized by CLAUK with the support of the local Southwark council, IRMO, LAW, LAWRS, LADPP, and Latin Elephant and many others were involved in the celebration which included a range of Latin American foods, music, and dancing and remarks from London Deputy Mayor Mathew Ryder. The promotional framing of gaining recognition as achieving integration suggests that recognition, or being recognized as a distinct group, has assisted Latin Americans with integrating into British society. From the perspective that recognition allows for an official accounting of the size of the community based on how many complete the census it should help the community advocate for and receive resources and support. In fact, this was the main point of the recognition campaign according to participants I spoke with that had firsthand knowledge of CLAUK’s census recognition campaign. But according to participants, support from government sources has been decreasing in recent years. Perhaps what the campaign reflects is a deeper need to be recognized. Recognition, has both a normative and
psychological aspect. To be recognized legitimizes in some way, just as in the case of the census. It calls for an accounting of something material. This is indeed an important achievement for individuals who have felt marginalized. Recognition in this sense constitutes what Taylor describes as a “vital human need” (1992, 26). While we cannot underestimate the importance of recognition and in fact, the lack of recognition has been described as the most nefarious form of state violence (Fanon, 1952), recognition alone, especially within the context of Post-Brexit Britain has its limitations. But organizers understand these limitations, even if they are willing to engage in strategic framing. In fact, one participant who was involved with the campaign directly told me, “What is the point of recognition for recognition’s sake?” “There is no point.” (Interview B, 2018). This awareness, situated within the current context seems to provide some motivation among organizers to increase collaboration between groups. However, there is some contention about ways to accomplish collective goals particularly between established groups, whose identities are closely tied to their Hispanic heritage and whose agenda does not include critiques of colonialism or engagement with intersectional feminism and both feminist women’s groups and emergent youth groups. Certain established groups, such as IRMO and LADPP have attempted to distance themselves from more radical political agendas and have less interest than groups like LAWRS, LAWA, and Latin Elephant to engage with issues of decoloniality and racialization. While groups have different approaches for a myriad of reasons, including restrictions related to certain funding, different histories and leadership, and different goals, some of the differences relate to the role of networks and allies and how they engage with different groups and their agendas. For example, women’s groups like LAWRS and LAWA have received
support on organizing, campaigning, and lobbying for policy change from other
established women’s groups such as Imkaan, a U.K. based black feminist organization and
Sisters Uncut, a U.K. based intersectional feminist direct action collective. These
associations provide opportunities to expand organizations’ networks and increase
visibility for campaigns around issues like domestic violence, sex trafficking, and sexual
violence. The influence of these associations is apparent in intertextuality across
organizational texts, which demonstrate how organizations have adopted communication
repertoires around gender identity and feminism similar to other groups in their networks.
For example, in the last year LAWRS updated its website to include more language about
their intersectional feminist approach and how it influences the way they provide services
and participate in activism. And a participant with direct knowledge of the
#StepUpMigrantWomen campaign described how it has been important for LAWRS to
consider its own identity in relation to more radical feminist approaches to activism in
such contentious times when migrant women face increased subjugation.

For emergent groups such as The London Latinxs, Latinxs for Corbyn (the
leftwing Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn), and Movimiento Jaguar Despierto their
connections with other movements, such as the migrant’s rights, students’ movements
around austerity policies and their impacts on tuition, housing and wages, and
engagement with queer theory, womanism, decoloniality, and anti-capitalism heavily
inform their activism. A distinguishing factor of youth groups is their desire to confront
some of the tensions at the root of panethnicity, particularly the ways in which some
members of the Latin American can claim whiteness and/or European passports, while
others are racialized and discriminated against in overt ways. Established groups tend to
emphasize and celebrate Latinidad as a unifying factor, while youth groups both celebrate and are critical of it. For example, Movimiento Jaguar Despierto describes itself as:

An organisation that has managed to bring together various activists from the so-called Latin American community in a united front against the political, economic, and social injustices that we face on our homelands, and in exile here in the UK.\(^{25}\)

While ethnocultural identity is a unifying factor for activists in the group, it is also a main point of critique for the group whose main goals include supporting “all those expressions of resistance and autonomy that speak of many universes, not a singular universe, as purported by the European idea of progress and modernity. We are for decoloniality.”\(^ {26}\) This approach offers another perspective to the dynamic range of agendas, goals, and forms of action Latin American activists in the U.K. engage in and demonstrates the tensions that underlie the potential for increased collaboration between some established groups and emergent ones. It also demonstrates how different groups within the broader movement divide activist labor, with progressive groups taking up more provocative, critical and reactive positions, while some activist/advocacy groups balance activism and the desire to influence policy, and other groups simply focus on providing resources and services to community members. While participants lamented the level of collaboration between organizations in recent years, some were hopeful that the uncertainty of Brexit would encourage more coordination on events, protests, and joint funding ventures. “That is something I think we should definitely sit down together and talk about. What are we going to do now? How are we going to move forward with what is about to happen?” (Interview E, 2018). The recent celebration of the anniversary of recognition represents a step in the right direction. Complex times call for dynamic

\(^{26}\) Movimiento Jaguar Despierto manifesto, http://www.movjaguar.org/manifesto/
action. Latin American youth activist groups have been active in bringing vital attention and energy and young professionals are leveraging their knowledge of technology to produce effective campaigns, engage in creative funding, and build their networks. Some organizations will thrive and grow and others will not. Just as the markets in Elephant and Castle and Pueblito Paisa face being reshaped by the forces of neoliberalism, so too do organizations that work with communities that are subject to state violence. Through ally building, increased collaboration, continued engagement in dynamic forms of direct action, and continuing to utilize technology effectively the “new guard” of Latin American social activism in the U.K. has a bright future.

**Future Research**

I hope to continue work in this area and to track these movements over the next two years while Britain prepares to exit from the European Union with a deadline of March 2019 to complete separation. I believe it will be crucial to follow the network and coalition building that continues between and across Latin American organizations and their allies and to examine how organizations collaborate to face new challenges. Participants described the importance of allies, both individuals who help with volunteer consulting work and join protests and ally organizations with experience that have helped Latin American organizations secure funding, gain attention for their campaigns, and expand their reach and visibility. Researchers taking up this work should pay close attention to progressive youth movements and their efforts to merge ethnic identity recognition and rights with broader social justice actions and follow how integration narratives will continue to impact movement framing. Considering the developing context, it is important for researchers to explore how technology will continue to play a
role in collective identity framing, network and coalition building, and how professionalization will continue to transform social justice work.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


"Calais 'Jungle' cleared of migrants, French prefect says". BBC News. 26 October 2016.


