

Educational Excellence and the Economics of Immigration: Undocumented Latin American
Youth and the Neoliberal Knowledge Economy

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TS History

June 5, 2018

With the introduction of a neoliberal political structure in the early 1990s, educational outcomes for immigrant youth in the United States underwent drastic changes in a phenomenon identified as the immigrant paradox. As it currently stands, the immigrant paradox is defined as the social experience in which immigrant youth from Asia and Africa outperform their American-born peers in measures of academic success when socioeconomic status is controlled.¹ Perhaps the most significant aspect of this phenomenon is that immigrant educational advantage has not been observed in the educational outcomes of Latin American youth. Such patterns have been a source of inquiry within the fields of education, immigration and nationality studies, and American studies as a whole. While efforts to explain the immigrant paradox have been largely successful, if incomplete, the question of why the identified educational disadvantage remains an unaddressed issue has not been academically explained.

The service provided by the Youth Tutoring Program, or YTP, is significantly affected by the effects of the immigrant paradox. Located in the High Point neighborhood of West Seattle, the Youth Tutoring Program works primarily with immigrant youth from the High Point low and mixed income housing community to improve math skills, develop literacy, and set goals around academic success. Their mission statement is to “tutor, guide, and inspire youth living in low-income and public housing to achieve academic success.” Immediately apparent after working within YTP’s tutoring center is that the overwhelming majority of YTP’s students are immigrants of East African descent. Indeed, according to YTP’s official fact form, 79% percent of students benefitting from YTP’s services are Somali, Eritrean, or Ethiopian.² Compared to less than 5% of YTP students that identify as Latino/Hispanic, this number is grossly

¹ Crosnoe, Robert, and Ruth N. López Turley. “K–12 Educational Outcomes of Immigrant Youth.” *The Future of Children* 21.1 (2011): 129–152. Print.

² “Youth Tutoring Program (YTP).” Catholic Community Services and Catholic Housing Services of Western Washington, 2018. <http://ccsww.org/get-help/child-youth-family-services/youth-tutoring-program/>, Accessed Apr. 1, 2018.

disproportionate, especially considering the evidence provided by the immigrant paradox suggesting that Latinx immigrant youth face significant educational disadvantages.

In academic inquiries into the effects of the U.S school system on education for immigrant youth, the informal consensus has been to view the impacts of race and culture and the impacts of economic motivation and federal policy as mutually exclusive in the way that they influence educational outcomes. Even studies that acknowledge the relevance of documentation status and immigration on adolescent education and development choose to explain the barriers faced by immigrant youth as based in racial biases and stereotypes without explaining the political means through which racism is being actively mobilized. Especially in the case of Latinx youth, research into the impacts of cultural beliefs on the ways that Latin American families relate to higher education frame their findings as cultural, rather than socio-political, phenomena. Cultural factors, including apparently culturally specific family values and norms, are treated in these papers as independent and unrelated to issues of policy and national conflict.

In examining the educational disparities between Latinx immigrant youth and both their American citizen and immigrant peers of other national origins, this paper attempts to explain and identify the conditions under which the exclusionary aspect of the immigrant paradox is perpetuated through a lens that puts racial factors into conversation with economic-political factors. The central question guiding this inquiry is as follows: Given the trends suggested by the immigrant paradox, why are educational support services like the Youth Tutoring Program not supporting Latin American immigrant youth educationally? More specifically, how does the Youth Tutoring Program engage with the racial and political ideology surrounding immigration, education, and national economic standards in a way that perpetuates the exclusion of Latin American immigrants from public benefit programs and support services?

Ultimately, this paper argues that Latin American immigrant youth are not receiving educational support from programs like the Youth Tutoring Program because of institutional restrictions to eligibility for public housing against undocumented immigrants that are ultimately enforced by the neoliberal ideal of a knowledge economy in which educational institutions serve to advance American dominance in the global economic framework. This ideal of a knowledge economy excludes undocumented immigrants, particularly those from Latin America, on the grounds of maintaining an economically self-sufficient American community in which educational and housing services are provided only to those who are presumed to have the potential to later significantly contribute to the American economy. Behind the economic-political justifications for this process of exclusion are racially exclusive definitions of community that play into frameworks of American exceptionalism and ideological constructions of exclusive national and local communities.

In order to support this argument, this paper will be structured through a series of sections. The first section will establish the assumptions made in this paper surrounding the immigrant paradox as well as show that assumptions about Latin American cultural values and individual reactions to immigration and documentation policy are not sufficient to answer the question “why are educational support services like YTP not catering to the needs of Latin American immigrant youth?” Instead, this section argues that the issues identified through the immigrant paradox must be analyzed through the lens of systemic, institutional restrictions. The second section will further substantiate this claim by establishing the theoretical framework through which the issue of immigrant education will be addressed. Section two argues that the examination of political and economic changes made to immigration policy will allow light to be shed upon the racial and economic community dynamics within smaller national communities

like that in which YTP is located. The third section provides the proximate explanation for the central question of this inquiry, arguing that Latinx immigrants are being excluded from the services of YTP because of broader restrictions prohibiting undocumented immigrants from entering the housing low and mixed income housing community that YTP serves. Section four builds upon the proximate explanation by arguing that the restrictions against housing and education services are rooted in constructions of the American national community that are racially, politically, and economically justified through national, neoliberal, ideological, frameworks that encompass that of the knowledge economy and the self-sufficient immigrant.

Academic attempts to identify causality behind the immigrant paradox primarily focus on the effects of bilingualism and comparative socioeconomic status on youths' educational outcomes. Research directed toward explaining the role of Latinx students in the immigrant paradox has been significantly more limited in its scope. The few academic works that attempt to answer the question, "Why are Latin American immigrant youth not receiving educational support?" either do not directly address the question, or do so in ways that are methodologically or disciplinarily inappropriate. Two such texts are Viana Turcios-Cotto's "Racial/Ethnic Differences in the Educational Expectations of Adolescents: Does Pursuing Higher Education Mean Something Different to Latino Students Compared to White and Black Students?" and Carola Suárez-Orozco's "Growing Up in the Shadows: The Developmental Implications of Unauthorized Status." Both texts focus on the various ways in which cultural attitudes and social stigma affect students of different races, ethnicities, and national origins in an educational and developmental context. While both studies offer significant insights into the contexts and environments in which Latinx immigrant youth are not being served by social services like the Youth Tutoring Program, neither sufficiently addresses the structural barriers that allow for

social stigma and cultural attitudes in the first place. Assumptions about Latin American cultural values and individual reactions to immigration and documentation policy are not sufficient to answer the question “Why are educational support services like YTP not catering to the needs of Latinx immigrant youth?” Instead, the issues identified through the immigrant paradox must be analyzed through the lens of systemic, institutional restrictions and barriers to public benefit and social service programs.

As has been previously established, the immigrant paradox is found to be strongly correlated to an immigrant family’s socioeconomic status. Thus, the fact that Latinx immigrants are, in general, more socioeconomically disadvantaged than immigrants of any other nationality of origin provides an explanation for why the immigrant paradox is not observed for Latinx youth. It is important to note that this general trend in the socioeconomic status of Latinx individuals is by no means all-encompassing or universal for the demographic category as a whole. Youth from wealthy Latin American families remain unaffected by the immigrant paradox, as they exhibit educational advantage when compared to other students from the same upper-class family income bracket. In light of the findings of the immigrant paradox, statistics on the racial and ethnic make-up and average income of the High Point neighborhood, in which the Youth Tutoring Program is located, and the nearby neighborhood of White Center (in which the majority of residents identify as Latin American) call the service methodologies of YTP into question. As of 2015, 33.2% of the residents of High Point identify as either “Black” or of African descent. In contrast, only 3.4% identified as Hispanic/Latino.³ In White Center, on the other hand, Hispanic/Latino individuals make up 22% of the population, whereas only 14%

³ “Race and Ethnicity in High Point, Seattle, Washington (Neighborhood),” Statistical Atlas, 2015. <https://statisticalatlas.com/neighborhood/Washington/Seattle/High-Point/Race-and-Ethnicity>, Accessed Apr. 1, 2018.

identified as black.⁴ Perhaps most significantly, the average family income for High Point is significantly higher than that of White Center. This information, coupled with that of the immigrant paradox begs the question, “Why is the Youth Tutoring Program not serving Latin American individuals and primarily Latin American neighborhoods if evidence suggesting the significance of their economic and educational need has become clearly available?” This paper is not meant to discount the importance of YTP’s assistance toward African youth, as conditions including socioeconomic disadvantages, language barriers, racism (both social and structural) reduce the possibility of their academic success. Rather, this question is meant to ask why the Youth Tutoring Program is allowing for the exclusion of a group of people that are also facing educational barriers.

The first of two major academic works that attempt to address this question is “Racial/Ethnic Differences in the Educational Expectations of Adolescents: Does Pursuing Higher Education Mean Something Different to Latino Students Compared to White and Black Students?” by Viana Turcios-Cotto. This article about the differences in the educational expectations of students of different racial and ethnic identities focusses upon the ways in which Latino, Black, and White ninth-grade students responded to the question “How do you picture your life in five years?” According to the research of Turcios-Cotto and her colleagues, Latinx students consistently set family and social goals more often than they set academic goals. Turcios-Cotto argues that Latinx cultural values associated with the importance of family closeness, loyalty, and support, may contribute to the social and familial responses of Latinx

⁴ “Race and Ethnicity in White Center, Washington (Unincorporated Place),” Statistical Atlas, 2015. <https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Washington/White-Center/Race-and-Ethnicity>, Accessed Apr. 1, 2018.

students.⁵ While Turcios-Cotto's research is relevant to inquiries looking at the intersection of developmental psychology and race, it is not helpful to answering questions about the Youth Tutoring Program. In particular, assumptions about the cultural values and attitudes of an entire ethnic community cannot be based upon the personal experiences of a limited number of individuals. Moreover, conclusions cannot be made about the roles of a particular group if that group is being observed on account of their absence, as is the case in this inquiry.

The second text proposes, rather than acts upon, a different, more productive lens through which to view the immigrant paradox and YTP. "Growing Up in the Shadows: The Developmental Implications of Unauthorized Status" by Carola Suárez-Orozco introduces the role of documentation status into the conversation on the immigrant paradox. "Growing Up in the Shadows" looks at the effects of undocumented or "illegal" status on the developmental outcomes on Latino youth, looking closely at how being seen as "illegal" may play an inhibitory role in educational progress. According to Suárez-Orozco, the fear of discovery and retribution from authority figures also prevents many undocumented Latinx youth from reaching out to social services.⁶ Suárez-Orozco's article opens up the conversation on documentation very effectively, contrasting the experiences of citizens to those with valid immigration status to those that are living in the U.S without valid documentation. Suárez-Orozco and Turcios-Cotto's arguments both contain assumptions that are not substantiated with empirical evidence. There have been multiple studies that have debunked the myth that Latino and Hispanic individuals do

⁵ Turcios-Cotto VY, Milan S. "Racial/Ethnic Differences in the Educational Expectations of Adolescents: Does Pursuing Higher Education Mean Something Different to Latino Students Compared to White and Black Students?" *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. 2013;42 (9):1399-1412. doi:10.1007/s10964-012-9845-9.

⁶ Suárez-Orozco, Carola., Hirokazu Yoshikawa, Robert Teranishi, and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco (2011) "Growing Up in the Shadows: The Developmental Implications of Unauthorized Status". *Harvard Educational Review*: September 2011, Vol. 81, No. 3, pp. 438-473.

not seek higher educational opportunities or financial or academic assistance.⁷ The most useful aspect of Suárez-Orozco's argument is the opportunity to build off of her claims and ask, "Why is this apparent aversion to social support even a possibility? How do the structural aspects of the U.S immigration and documentation system influence the ways in which Latinx immigrants interact with school environments?" Part of the reason that the body of literature concerning a lack of educational support for Latinx youth is so limited is that, previously, interventions into the conversation required cultural assumptions to be made in a way that cannot be effectively substantiated with evidence. Avoiding proximate explanations such as cultural, contextual, and environmental factors can help facilitate the transition to arguments that sufficiently address the lack of educational support systems for Latin American youth. Because of the influence of socioeconomic status on the educational success of immigrant youth, the racial divisions of support, and the introduction of the relevance of immigration, the logical framework through which to view this issue is the intersection of racial assumptions, economic standards, and immigration policy. It is through this lens that Latinx exclusion from educational success can be seen as a social, economic, and political production.

In asking the question, "Why are Latinx immigrants not receiving educational support from programs like YTP?" the relevance of institutional barriers prohibiting access to low and mixed income communities like High Point becomes particularly relevant. Working in partnership with the Seattle Housing Authority, YTP serves only the communities that fall under the jurisdiction of the SHA. Under federal law, undocumented immigrant families are not eligible for housing in low and mixed income communities like High Point. Because Latinx immigrants are significantly more likely than immigrants of any other nationality to be

⁷ Laden, Berta Vigil. "Hispanic-Serving Institutions: Myths and Realities." *Peabody Journal of Education* 76, no. 1 (2001): 73-92. <http://www.jstor.org.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/stable/1493006>

undocumented, this results in their exclusion from the High Point community and YTP. This is by no means true for all Latinx immigrants and should be treated as a general trend, rather than a universal. The closeness, both physically and socially, of the Youth Tutoring Program to other facets of the High Point community goes to illustrate that in addition to being excluded from the housing program itself, undocumented Latin American immigrants are also excluded from participating in YTP because of the way in which the program has specified its services to the housing community in which it is located.

The Youth Tutoring Program functions as a central element of the High Point neighborhood, taking place in the Neighborhood House community center, located in the middle of the neighborhood, and surrounded by houses and apartment complexes. The students that participate in YTP are almost exclusively African individuals from within the High Point neighborhood and public housing community. Furthermore, given YTP's location inside a community center created specifically for individuals in the neighborhood housing program, it is clear that YTP means to provide service only to the students in this community. Indeed, it is written in their Tutor Training Manual that "The Youth Tutoring Program is an evening educational enrichment program for students living in Seattle's low and mixed income public housing communities."⁸ Because of the closeness of the program to the community it serves, those that live outside the community and are denied access to low or mixed income housing programs will not be served by YTP.

The absence of Latinx immigrant families from the High Point neighborhood can be explained by the restrictions imposed by the Seattle Housing Authority limiting access to their services for undocumented immigrants. According to SHA's eligibility protocol, "at the time of

⁸ "Tutor Training Manual—Youth Tutoring Program," *Youth Tutoring Program and Catholic Community Services*, 2016. ccsww.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/ytp-manual-10-2016.pdf, Accessed Apr. 1, 2018.

move-in at least one household member must either be a U.S. citizen or have eligible immigration status” in order to be given access to housing and community services.⁹ Thus, families that do not have valid or current visas are denied access to the Seattle Housing Authorities services. Information from the Pew Research center indicates that Latinx immigrants are more likely than any other immigrant national group in America to be undocumented. In particular, Mexican immigrants alone account for 52% of undocumented immigrants in the United States.¹⁰ The exclusion of undocumented Latinx immigrant families from SHA programs on the basis of the lack of documentation can explain a large part of the absence of Latinx students from YTP. However, the reasons for YTP’s connection with the Seattle Housing Authority in the first place as well as the systemic explanation behind the disproportionate number of undocumented Latinx immigrants have yet to be explained through SHA eligibility policies.

The fact that YTP almost exclusively serves African youth is intrinsically connected to the effects of the Diversity Visa Program, first established as part of the Immigration Act of 1990. This program was designed to facilitate immigration from “underrepresented regions” of the world while limiting immigration from regions that are already heavily represented in the U.S population.¹¹ While the act was originally created to facilitate the immigration of Eastern Europeans to the United States, the law allows for African immigration to the United States beginning in 1990. Because Latin America was deemed to be a “high admission region,” the number of visas offered to Latino individuals was significantly lower than those extended to

⁹ “Eligibility—SHA Housing” Seattle Housing Authority, 2018. <https://www.seattlehousing.org/housing/sha-housing/eligibility>, Accessed Apr. 24, 2018.

¹⁰ Passel, Jeffrey S. and D’Vera Cohn. “Overall Number of U.S. Unauthorized Immigrants Holds Steady Since 2009,” Pew Research Center, Sept. 20, 2016. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2016/09/20/overall-number-of-u-s-unauthorized-immigrants-holds-steady-since-2009/>. Accessed Apr. 23, 2018.

¹¹ “Diversity Visa Program,” *U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs*, 2018. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/diversity-visa-program-entry.html>, Accessed May 5, 2018.

African and European immigrants. Throughout its years facilitating immigration to the United States, the Diversity Visa Program has been criticized for engaging in racist practices that prioritize European immigration over immigration from any other region of the world. In her article, “I’m a White Immigrant and I Benefited from a Racist Visa Lottery,” Francesca Gaiba suggests that the only reason these racially biased practices are no longer relevant is because America has no longer become an economically attractive destination for European immigrants: “improving European economies meant a decreased interest in emigration towards the U.S.”¹² Because of relatively high poverty rates in many parts of Latin America, the United States remains a place of economic opportunity. However, these same policies allow for the legal immigration of African individuals at much higher rates than Latinx individuals, who are often forced to enter the country without valid documentation.

The dynamics enforced by the Diversity Visa Program are clearly illustrated by the demographics and community relationships of the Youth Tutoring Program. Because of restrictions to documentation status for Latinx immigrants, those individuals are actively excluded from YTP’s services. Beyond the systemic, political, factors contributing to 1990s immigration legislation, a discriminatory racial logic is clearly at play in a way that deeply effects the ideological and practical constructions of local American communities such as High Point. Observing the racial/demographical effects of federal immigration policy on neighborhoods like High Point, it can be seen that policy relevant on a global and national scale also has profound effects on the dynamics and construction of local communities.

This interplay between the racial and social dynamics of local communities and the national political agenda perpetuating those dynamics is investigated in Kevin R. Johnson’s 1995

¹² Gaiba, Francesca. “I’m a White Immigrant and I Benefited from a Racist Visa Lottery,” *Time*, Dec. 8, 2016. <http://time.com/4593985/immigration-visa-lotter-racism/>, Accessed May 3, 2018.

“Public Benefits and Immigration: The Intersection of Immigration Status, Ethnicity, Gender, and Class,” a law review for the UCLA Immigration and Nationality legal journal. Responding to the political debate of the 1990s around the U.S government’s response to the rapid influx of undocumented immigrants, Johnson attempts to quash the “lazy immigrant on welfare” stereotype by pointing out the many ways and reasons through which undocumented immigrants are the victims of policies that limit the range and degree of benefits to which non-citizens are allowed access. In framing his critique through the lens of federal constructions of an exclusive national community, Johnson focuses on the U.S government’s shift toward an increasingly neoliberal political structure. Johnson connects this political shift to changes not only in the United States as a national community, but also communities at the state and even local level, analyzing the effects of California’s “Save Our State” Proposition 187, among other state-based legal measures. Looking at sources of ultimate causation for YTP’s insufficient service methodologies requires analysis through the framework proposed by Johnson. Examining political and economic changes to the entire nation will allow light to be shed upon racial and economic community dynamics within smaller national communities. Johnson’s text will be used in this analysis primarily as a means to connect federal actions and ideology to the experiences of smaller communities like High Point. This connection, economically motivated restrictions from the national community, is relevant not only to the policy explicitly mentioned by Johnson, but also to that which is currently affecting housing opportunities in Seattle.

While Johnson acknowledges the influence of social and psychological disincentives associated with public benefit programs for undocumented immigrants such as the threat of deportation, his focus is largely on the political and economic factors that allow for the prevalence of such attitudes toward social services. The aspect of Johnson’s argument most

essential to this paper's framework is the fact that economic motivations alone do not sufficiently explain the modern political structure restricting access to resources for undocumented immigrants. Johnson writes that "something other than dollars-and-cents considerations might be fueling the backlash against immigrants."¹³ Johnson's identification of the motivations behind federally imposed policies against undocumented immigrants is split into three sections—symbolism, community boundaries, and state-federal tensions—each of which is relevant to a different aspect of immigration policy.

Of Johnson's three theories, "community boundaries" is most applicable to the situation in which the Youth Tutoring Program and the High Point housing program are participating. According to Johnson, "The idea that undocumented persons are not part of the community carries great weight in the political process. If undocumented persons are excluded from the definition of the community, it is far easier to intellectually justify barring their access to the minimal safety-net for which community members are eligible."¹⁴ The exclusion of undocumented immigrants from SHA housing in High Point originates with the idea that non-citizens of the United States are not part of the national community despite living, working and paying taxes in the United States. Moreover, Johnson writes, "Some would argue that... it is entirely permissible, indeed advisable, to condition entry on the potential immigrants' economic self-sufficiency and limit their access to public benefits once they immigrate."¹⁵ This system, according to Johnson, guarantees that all individuals entering the United States are able to contribute to the American economy in a way that makes up for all the resources that were allegedly sacrificed in allowing the immigrants to enter the country in the first place.

¹³ Johnson, Kevin R. "Public Benefits and Immigration: The Intersection of Immigration Status, Ethnicity, Gender, and Class." *Immigration & Nationality L. Rev.* 17 (1995): 457.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 486.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Johnson's framework allows for an initial understanding of the role of the community boundaries theory in in the Youth Tutoring Program itself, not just the High Point housing neighborhood. In Robert Crosnoe and Ruth López Turley's study entitled "K–12 Educational Outcomes of Immigrant Youth," the causes of the immigrant paradox are discussed in relation to socioeconomic factors. Crosnoe and Turley write that for those from Asia and Africa "it is at least partially explained by the tendency for more socioeconomically advantaged residents of those regions to leave their home country for the United States."¹⁶ Seen through Johnson's framework, the racial-economic logic behind the exclusion of Latinx immigrants from SHA housing becomes clear. It is the perceived inability of Latinx immigrants to eventually give back to the American economy that is meant to justify their exclusion from public benefit housing programs. While Johnson's framework sufficiently provides an explanation for why undocumented immigrants are excluded from the Seattle Housing Authorities benefit programs, it does not fully explain the motivation behind the Youth Tutoring Program's partnership with the SHA. That being said, the relevance of neoliberal economic systems to immigration policy and constructions of national community will remain relevant to a discussion of the role of education and race within these political systems.

According to the Youth Tutoring Program's online fact page, the tutoring service partners with "families facing the challenges of financial need, racism, and limited English proficiency to help students overcome educational opportunity gaps."¹⁷ Given the mission statement of the Youth Tutoring Program, one can see the contradiction inherent between YTP's public image and the ways in which service is actually performed. In Seattle, Latinx youth face all three of the

¹⁶ Crosnoe, Robert, and Ruth N. López Turley. "K–12 Educational Outcomes of Immigrant Youth." *The Future of Children* 21.1 (2011): 129–152. Print.

¹⁷ "Youth Tutoring Program (YTP)." Catholic Community Services and Catholic Housing Services of Western Washington, 2018. <http://ccsww.org/get-help/child-youth-family-services/youth-tutoring-program/>, Accessed Apr. 1, 2018.

barriers listed by the program and yet are not receiving support on the basis of their overall statistically lower socioeconomic status. This exclusion is based upon YTP's association with the Seattle Housing Authority, which under federal law excludes undocumented immigrants from its housing program. Under the policies enforced by the Diversity Visa Program, it is much more likely for Latinx immigrants to be undocumented than immigrants of any other national origin. That being said, two questions emerge in light of the previous conclusions surrounding YTP and its relationship to federal policy. First, "Why is YTP working in partnership with the Seattle Housing Authority?" and second, "How, or in what ways, is this being played out in the facilitation of the program?" These questions can be answered by pairing direct observations about the tutoring program with academic analysis on the relationship between Johnson's identified neoliberal ideal of the economically self-sufficient immigrant, race and immigration, and education under the current political system.

The beginnings of an explanation come from analyzing the processes through which YTP is funded, as economic support unites the issues of federal policy and neoliberal economic ideals. Approximately half (more than 42%) of the funding YTP receives comes from the federal government. Recognizing the power of the federal government's delegation of funds to non-profit organizations requires one to examine its effects on the White House Initiative for Educational Excellence for Hispanics. Originally established in 1990 by George H. W. Bush, this initiative was meant to support the educational success of Hispanic individuals. As written on the official website, the initiative is allegedly "restoring the country to its role as a global leader in education, strengthening the Nation by expanding educational opportunities and improving educational outcomes for Hispanics of all ages, and helping ensure that all Hispanics receive an education that properly prepares them for college, productive careers, and satisfying lives. The

future of our nation is inextricably linked to the future of the Hispanic community.”¹⁸ This loaded statement perfectly exemplifies the neoliberal relationship to immigrant education in the United States. In a later section, this point will be returned to, but in this section attention will be placed on the funding of this program.

Though it has been recognized by all presidents following Bush, the Hispanic Educational Excellence Initiative has not made a significant impact on immigrant education because it has not been prioritized for funding by the federal government. Reading the comments of Alejandra Ceja, executive director of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, it is particularly notable that the initiative’s only successes have involved recognition of the problem and commitments toward future practices rather than actual changes in educational outcomes.¹⁹ Given the recent reduction in funding and prioritization given to the Department of Education by the current head of the executive branch, the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics is not receiving funding. This is due to the fact that such educational support programs do not conform to neoliberal constructions of Latinx immigrants as “illegal aliens” that have no place in the national community. These attitudes can be seen in the funding scheme of YTP. YTP, unlike the Hispanic education initiative, is receiving funding because of the work it does to exclude undocumented immigrants. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that YTP exists because of its association with the Seattle Housing Authority that is ultimately supported by neoliberal attitudes around immigrant education and economic standards.

¹⁸ “White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics,” *US Department of Education*, 2018. <https://sites.ed.gov/hispanic-initiative/>, Accessed Apr. 15, 2018.

¹⁹ Gross, Natalie. “What’s Next for the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics?” *Education Writers Association*, Jan. 3, 2017. <https://www.ewa.org/blog-latino-ed-beat/whats-next-white-house-initiative-educational-excellence-hispanics>, Accessed May 20, 2018.

The position of the federal government in relationship to Johnson's self-sufficient immigrant ideal is exemplified by Christina Gerken's "Immigrant Anxieties: 1990s Immigration Reform and the Neoliberal Consensus." A main facet of Gerken's argument is that "government debates, media discourse, and public perception were part of a larger regime of knowledge/power that continually produced and reinforced the neoliberal ideal of a responsible, self-sufficient subject."²⁰ Connecting her argument to that made by Johnson, Gerken points out the ways in which the state constructs immigrants of lower socioeconomic status as the source of lowered educational standards in the U.S. She writes that "the news media made it clear that it was not immigrant students per se who had caused the current education crisis, but lower-class newcomers from Latin America and the Caribbean."²¹ The intersection of race, citizenship, and class is, in this case, what allows for the generalization about immigrant educational inferiority. Because of the lack of citizenship for many Latin American individuals, that both creates and is ideologically justified by lower-socioeconomic status, assumptions are made about Latin American individuals in a general sense. This assumption then feeds policy that is currently working toward making that generalization a reality by making legal immigration more and more difficult for Latin American families and individuals.

This ideology is very apparent in the statement made about the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics above. In saying that "the future of our nation is inextricably linked to the future of the Hispanic community," the initiative is constructing Hispanic individuals as the source of lowered educational standards nationwide. The connection between the ideology of the new left and the Youth Tutoring Program can be seen in Gerken's

²⁰ Gerken, Christina. "Immigrant Anxieties: 1990S Immigration Reform and the Neoliberal Consensus," Graduate College of Bowling Green State University, Aug. 2007. <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/rwsetd/document/get/bgsu180034821/inline>, Accessed Apr. 30, 2018.

²¹ Ibid.

comments on the federal funding of education. According to Gerken, “The dominant neoliberal framework required that funds be made available to those people who had the most potential to develop into self-sufficient neoliberal subjects. In other words, the state should invest in those people who would eventually return the investment with a considerable interest.”²² Looking at the issue of YTP’s funding through Johnson’s framework and Gerken’s analysis, one finds that YTP’s association with the Seattle Housing Authority is intrinsically one of funding. Because of the ways in which the federal government constructs Latinx immigrants as unworthy of educational support on account of their perceived inability to “give back to the nation” economically, funding will not be provided to YTP unless the program perpetuates the exclusion of undocumented immigrants from its services. In making this conclusion, the case of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics is pertinent not only because it provides an example of the ways in which the federal government constructs Hispanic/Latinx immigrants as the cause of U.S educational inferiority, but also in the ways that it connects that apparent inferiority to questions of globalism and the international authority of the “Nation”. Ideas of American exceptionalism are bound up in immigration, education, and economic neoliberal policies. Investigation into this sub-topic allows for the second question of this section to be answered through the more precise question of “Where/how can we see YTP’s participation in the ideals of economic self-sufficiency in the organization’s service methodologies?”

Once again, the evidence found through observations of YTP’s service practices connects to the statement made through the White House initiative. In the Youth Tutoring Program, academic support is heavily geared toward college readiness and career success. Posters on the walls of the tutoring center list hundreds of different jobs necessary to do things like build a

²² Ibid.

house or create a video game. Starting in sixth grade, each student gets a binder with college preparation packets and worksheets. This emphasis on college and career development is not new or unique to the Youth Tutoring Program. According to standard educational practices, the purpose of education is to facilitate the transition from dependent youth to self-sufficient contributors to the nation's economy. Education in the United States is therefore considered necessary as a means of achieving the end of economic superiority, rather than an end in and of itself. This trend can be seen in the White House initiative's published statement. The goal is to provide "an education that properly prepares [Hispanic youth] for college, productive careers, and satisfying lives." The implications of this approach to education are partially explained by Thomas Hairston in his analysis of President Barack Obama's speeches about education policy through the lens of economics. According to Hairston, the speeches construct education through a neoliberal frame in which schools are seen as "economic tools." Furthermore, Hairston claims that Obama's speeches ultimately equate "educational inferiority with economic inferiority such that any attempts to improve educational standards must simultaneously improve economic standards."²³ This framework is clearly at play in the Youth Tutoring Program, not only with the push for college and career readiness, but also with the ways that undocumented Latinx immigrant youth are being excluded from educational support systems on the basis of their lack of economic self-sufficiency.

As alluded to in the White House statement and Hairston's speech analysis, globalism and American exceptionalism are at play in this dynamic, both in educational/economic and racial terms. Mark Olssen and Michael Peters label the neoliberal ideology around each of these factors as the development of a "knowledge economy" in which stress is played on standardized

²³ Hairston, Thomas W. "Continuing Inequity through Neoliberalism: The Conveyance of White Dominance in the Educational Policy Speeches of President Barack Obama." *Interchange*. 43, no. 3 (2013): 229-44.

measures of educational success as a way to gain national power—power that is made available by the new associations of higher education institutions with industrial and corporate enterprises.²⁴ While not explicitly linked to either higher education or corporate agendas, YTP falls into the ideological emphasis on standardized testing, framing success around meeting numerical scores on reading and math tests. In emphasizing standardized testing, YTP is allowing for racial exclusions to be perpetuated. Testing in the United States is dramatically biased against ELL students, leading those learning English as a second language to be dramatically behind their peers and eventually less likely to do well on college entrance exams. By framing their service around college and career opportunities while excluding undocumented Latin American immigrants on the basis of economic dependency and English literacy, the Youth Tutoring Program is engaging in practices that, while intended to facilitate support, ultimately engage in the same processes of institutionalized exclusion.

From the above analysis of the Youth Tutoring Program in relationship to neoliberal education policies both questions beginning this section can be answered. First, it can be concluded that YTP is participating in this exclusionary system that at first seems antithetical to their goals as a tutoring service because of their need to conform to the standards of service delegation imposed by the neoliberal government in order to receive funding. At the foundation of this exclusion is the ideal of a self-sufficient immigrant population from which undocumented Latinx immigrants are perceived to be excluded. Second, YTP is implicitly participating in the neoliberal ideal of economic self-sufficiency that governs the neoliberal government through support of the “knowledge economy” that has arisen in response to poor education standards allegedly caused by undocumented immigrants.

²⁴ Olssen, Mark, and Michael A. Peters. "Neoliberalism, higher education and the knowledge economy: From the free market to knowledge capitalism." *Journal of education policy* 20, no. 3 (2005): 313-345.

Though it has not been discussed thoroughly in this paper up to this point, the process of the exclusion of Latinx individuals from YTP, the High Point neighborhood, and national communities in general is inherently an issue of racism based in American exceptionalism and the construction of national and community borders. In writing an article for *Opinion*, Tyler Simpson writes that Seattle, as a neoliberal city, “cannot be a sanctuary.”²⁵ Through the construction of Latin American individuals in the United States as “illegal” and “alien,” American communities have been constructed in ways that are racially exclusive and play into ideals of America as a society build upon normative whiteness. Mae Ngai highlights the importance of race to questions of deportation quite clearly: “We ought not to rush to the conclusion...that race no longer operates in either the practice or representation of deportation...That preoccupation has focused on the United States-Mexico border and therefore on illegal immigrants from Mexico and Central America, suggesting that race and illegal status remain closely related.”²⁶ The exclusion of Latinx immigrants from YTP’s services, which, political and economic in nature, is based upon racial assumptions concerning Latinx individuals’ inability to become economically self-sufficient. This has been perpetuated by the “lazy immigrant on welfare” trope that is rarely applied to immigrants of any other national origin. The Youth Tutoring Program itself, based purely on observation, does not engage in racist practices on its own terms. It is by being part of a neoliberal city, and, further, nation, that YTP’s service practices become economically exclusive and structurally racist.

While the connection between the operation of the Youth Tutoring Program as a community service organization and the immigrant paradox is quite intuitive, the lines that

²⁵ Simpson, Tyler. “The Neoliberal City Cannot Be a Sanctuary,” *That Opinion*. Feb. 24, 2017. <http://thatopinion.com/neoliberal-sanctuary/>, Accessed Apr. 29, 2018.

²⁶ Ngai, Mae M. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004.

connect YTP and neoliberal economic standards surrounding education and immigration policy are less immediately clear. What ultimately provides the connection between these two apparently disparate concepts are racial constructions of communities and the link between the national and the local. It has become clear that socioeconomic factors are intrinsically linked to educational outcomes. Within this framework, Latinx immigrants are suffering from educational disadvantages most profoundly because of socioeconomic barriers that are both produced and justified by immigration policy perpetuating undocumented immigration from Latin America. This immigration policy, facilitated by the federal government impacts who gets served by the Youth Tutoring Program through constructions of local community based inexorably upon economic standards. The imagination of the long-term economically dependent immigrant is another idea that produces that which it purports only to represent. In other words, the idea of the economically dependent immigrant is meant to reflect a reality of a lack of self-sufficiency, but actually produces that reality through policy meant to address it. While it is not sufficient to fall upon racial and cultural factors as the only explanations for educational disparity, approaching political and economic influences through the lens of racism provides a web of causal explanations that addresses more aspects of the issue than one lens acting on its own. That being said, it is important to note that this argument does not answer all aspects of the question posed by the immigrant paradox and YTP. For instance, it does not address the educational outcomes of Latin American students that are either U.S citizens or in the United States on valid visas. This opens up possible inquiries that may further address the role of racism directly within the Youth Tutoring Program itself. This argument, however, limited to an analysis of the exclusion of undocumented Latinx immigrants, can be explained by the dynamic intersection of neoliberal economic ideologies, immigration policy, and standards of educational excellence.

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