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Between nations and the world: negotiating legal and social citizenship in the migration process: the case of Colombian and Puerto Rican computer engineers in the American Northeast

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Between Nations and the World: Negotiating Legal and Social Citizenship in the Migration Process

The Case of Colombian and Puerto Rican Computer Engineers in the American Northeast

By:

Lina Rincón

A Dissertation
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation research examines the negotiations Latino professional migrants engage in to navigate the interplay between the provisions of legal and social citizenship through the migration process. In this work, legal citizenship refers to the rights given to individuals that result from their formal membership to a nation. Social citizenship refers to the real ability individuals have to enjoy those rights and experience full social inclusion in a political community.

Based on 62 in-depth interviews with Colombian and Puerto Rican computer engineers that came to the United States during the “dot com” boom (1996 – 2004), I discuss the opportunities and constraints these migrants encountered and reveal the strategies and negotiations they used to ensure a successful and meaningful path to social inclusion and citizenship. I examine the role their class socialization and engineering training have in informing their migration process, as well as in negotiating the social and professional constraints presented by legal and ethno-racial marginalization in their settlement process in the United States. I illustrate how these migrants used their class and professional background to deflect their marginality and to conceive narratives that explained divergent conceptualizations of citizenship and belonging. These conceptualizations ranged from emergent American patriotism, to split cultural and political loyalties, as well as notions of global citizenship that would exist uprooted from the legislative and social structures of nations.
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## Introduction

### The Meanings of Citizenship: Federico, Elsa and Fidel

- **Federico** moved to the United States from Colombia fifteen years ago to work as a temporary contractor for a mainframe computing company. Today, he is the Vice-president for Sales at a software production company. Although a naturalized American citizen, Federico is adamant about his lack of interest in participating in the political life of Colombia or the United States.

As Federico implied in our conversation, this lack of interest stemmed from a combination of disenchanting experiences in his home country and in the United States. The anxiety he experienced fleeing from the political violence in Colombia in the 1990s, and the long-lasting personal and professional implications of switching his permanent legal status to a permanent one in the US are among these experiences.

Despite the challenges he has faced over the years, he feels his migration experience reaffirmed the ideal he had when he graduated from engineering school in Bogotá. Federico used his professional migration to become a *global citizen*: an individual open to foreign cultures, interested in furthering the progress of engineering in the world, and someone for whom nations and their institutions are obsolete.

- **Elsa** moved to Framingham, MA to work for a defense and military technologies company that recruited her in the annual job fair in Universidad de Puerto Rico in Mayaguez. Elsa remembers feeling comfortable with the idea of migrating to the United States since she believed there were no opportunities to be the engineer she wanted to be on the island.

During her arrival and settlement experience in the United States, she found that her origin, her accent and the fact that she is a woman became handicaps for her to become a successful engineer. She wishes she could just return to the island, but she acknowledges that that is not an economically or professionally viable option. Considering her thoughts and feelings on her migration experience, Elsa revealed that although not a politically tangible thing she is a *Puerto Rican citizen*. She feels this way because the island is the place where she belongs. For Elsa, being an American citizen is just an accident.

- **Fidel** started a full time position at a mainframe computing company in Fishkill, NY after he graduated from engineering school at Universidad de Puerto Rico. Fidel completed two internships in that same company in the last two years of his undergraduate program. Federico’s goal when he began engineering school was to find a job where he could develop his passion for technology.

He also wanted to live close to his sister who had moved to the US after she graduated. Although at times he feels disconnected from American society, today Fidel is proud to say that he lives and breathes being an *American citizen*. His pride, as he describes it, emerged from a growing appreciation for the principles of liberty, freedom and hard work that serve as the ideological foundation of the American nation.
The stories of Federico, Elsa and Fidel are examples of the relative social and economic success some professional migrants achieve in the United States. But, what processes and experiences prompted these professional migrants to conceptualize their notions of citizenship, nationhood and belonging in such different ways? What does this mean for how we understand the pathways migrants choose in order to integrate and incorporate into American society? How do these processes and experiences differ for migrants of different national, social and occupational backgrounds? This work aims to answer some of these questions by looking closely at the factors that enable and/or constrain the migration and incorporation opportunities of professional migrants in the United States.

In this work, I examine how professional migrants experience and negotiate the interplay between legal citizenship and social citizenship through their migration and settlement process. Legal citizenship relates to social, political and legal rights individuals are entitled to for having a legally recognized status in a particular nation. The real ability individuals have to enjoy those rights and experience full social inclusion relates to social citizenship. In this work, I view citizenship as a category of meaning migrants create as a response of their interpretation of legal discourses and practices of social inclusion or exclusion that are enacted within nation-states (Turner 1997; Bloemraad et. al 2008).

By exploring the experiences of Puerto Rican and Colombian highly skilled migrants working in the field of engineering, I explore how the interplay between legal and social citizenship manifests in three interconnected moments of the migration process. Through in-depth interviews I examine: a. the role of national histories, economic, social and educational contexts in motivating the migration of these professionals and shaping notions of citizenship; b. the opportunities and challenges these migrants encounter at their arrival and settlement process
in the United States; and c. how the social, racial and legal constraints these migrants encounter lead to new ways of thinking and conceptualizing notions of nationhood, citizenship and belonging they devised to make sense of their place and identity in the United States.

- **Why Citizenship?**

In the past twenty years, literature on the intersection between immigration and citizenship has shown that immigrants have found new ways to maintain and create meaningful relationships and to participate in the deliberation and solution of global issues. These new ways of conceiving citizenship expand beyond the boundaries of nations and sometimes occur apart from the institutions of the nation-state and may be in response to the limitations legal frameworks and social practices of exclusion and marginalization migrants encounter in receiving countries. For instance, the limitations of having temporary immigrant legal status strain migrants’ personal and professional lives and also restrict their access to social and opportunity rights such as health care and loans (Menjivar 2006; Chavez 2007). Moreover, socially constructed discourses and practices determine social categories of inclusion and exclusion that are based on race, class and gender (Smith 1999; Volpp 2001; Glenn 2004; Kivisto and Faist 2007).

Instead of assimilating or segregating themselves from the mainstream culture of the receiving country, migrants today make use of technology and send money to participate in decision making processes in their home countries and they vote in elections in the sending and receiving country (Levitt and Schiller 2004). Although these ways of maintaining ties between sending and receiving countries is not new, migrants use new technologies to devise ways of creating meaningful social, cultural and political connections that transcend the boundaries of the nation-state. For example, migrants today have found strategies to gain support from the global
civil society to pressure national governments to provide access to basic social and economic rights by relying on frameworks of human rights (Soysal 1994; 1997; Del Castillo 2002).

Additionally, migrants today may choose to participate in and belong to spheres that exist beyond the nation-state and endorse an issue-based citizenship, rather than a nation-based citizenship. Deliberating about the future of science and technology in global platforms such as the internet, the existence of cross border entrepreneurialism, claiming that no government is needed to protect you, are examples of these new ways of thinking about citizenship (Leach and Scoones 2003; Ong 2006; Root 2007; Nawyn 2012).

Can these transformations explain the ways in which Elsa made sense of their notions of nationhood, citizenship and belonging? Is the idea of global citizenship that Federico emphasizes in his account a real possibility among how migrants conceptualize their belonging? Is Fidel a case of immigrant assimilation? What motivates migrants to choose these pathways? The close examination of the migration and incorporation experiences and pathways and how they are enabled or constrained by legal and social citizenship I conduct in this work answers these questions.

- Why Study Notions of Citizenship among Professional Migrants?

In the current economic times, academics and policy makers agree that highly skilled migration is desired and needed, especially in the areas of science, technology and mathematics (Saxenian 2002; Zients 2014). However, debates about immigration and social integration policy heavily focus on the economic and social implications of undocumented immigration as a social problem. Rarely do they focus on the legal and social challenges highly skilled migrants face. What mechanisms are in place to attract highly skilled migrants to the United States? What motivates these migrants to contribute to the economic and political progress of this country?
What are the legal and social challenges these migrants face? By examining the interplay between experiences of legal and social citizenship among professional migrants, I provide a deeper understanding of the experiences of highly skilled migrants useful for these important policy questions.

In order to examine the interplay between legal and social citizenship among professional migrants, I examine the migration process of computer engineers that migrated to the United States during the “dot com” bubble in the United States (1996 – 2004). This is a key moment to study the migration of professionals because it was a period of economic prosperity in the information technologies and telecommunications fields and one of high demand for specialized computer and software programmers (Alarcón 2001).

During this period, the American government increased the work visa quota available for foreign-born professionals. Since its inception in 1990, the work visa program has had a 65,000 person annual cap of H-1B visas, except between 1998 and 2004 when an increased cap was allowed to cover the demands of the ‘dot com’ boom (Kerr and Lincoln 2010). This period also coincides with the enforcement of affirmative action policies in different industries orchestrated by the federal government’s anti-discrimination laws. These policies encouraged employers to actively recruit minorities in managerial and professional positions (Kelly and Dobin 1998).

In this dissertation, I compare the migration and settlement experiences of 62 Colombian and Puerto Rican computer engineers that migrated to the northeastern region of the United States during the “dot com” bubble. Colombian and Puerto Rican computer engineers are groups of migrants with diverging citizenship statuses and with similar pre-migration and migrant incorporation experiences. Their different citizenship statuses allowed me to study the importance of legal citizenship in enabling the social inclusion and successful incorporation of
professional migrants in the United States. The similarity of their engineering education and transnational connections allowed me to understand the networks that help these professional land jobs in the US and how these jobs shape their incorporation experiences. Additionally, factors such as economic instability and violence not only serve as additional motivations to migrate, but also as motives to maintain a contentious and disenchanted relationship with their home countries.

Although the social dynamics of local contexts and gender disparities in the engineering profession are important aspects to consider when exploring the migration and settlement experiences of these professional migrants, these are topics that are not thoroughly discussed in this dissertation. I will explore the effect of these topics in future publications.

- **Different Legal and Social Citizenship Experiences**

Because of the colonial relationship Puerto Rico and the United States have sustained, Puerto Ricans are considered legal American citizens. This allows Puerto Ricans to easily travel back and forward from the island to the mainland and work legally in the US. Colombians, on the other hand, require the sponsorship of an employer to get a visa to be able to work in the US.

Given the high demand for highly skilled migrants and legislative measures the American government took to ensure the legal and social workplace inclusion of professionals during this period, one would assume that the difference in legal status would not matter in the experiences of social inclusion and integration of Puerto Rican and Colombian engineers to American society. However, evidence from numerous studies reveal that the incorporation experience of Colombian and Puerto Rican migrants in the United States tend to face constraints associated with racial discrimination and legal marginalization (Aranda and Rebollo-Gil 2004; Chellaraj et al 2006; Roth 2010).
As Federico’s story reveals, because of their temporary legal status Colombian migrants tend to delay their personal and professional goals because of their temporary legal status. Colombian professionals face long waiting periods to be granted legal permanent residence. These waiting periods impact their social mobility, as well as their personal and financial decision-making processes regarding family and professional development. As Elsa’s story shows, Puerto Ricans are likely to be stereotyped based on their phenotype and their colonial history with the United States (Whalen et. al 2005; Aranda 2007). In fact, in the United States, of all Latino groups, island Puerto Ricans have the highest poverty rate and tend to fare worse than mainland Puerto Ricans and other Latino groups (Brown and Patten 2013; Cohn et al. 2014). These historical patterns likely hinder full access to economic and social opportunities for these migrants.

- **Similar Pre-migration Contexts, Educational Backgrounds and Transnational Connections.**

Unstable political and economic environments have led both Colombians and Puerto Ricans to migrate to the United States. These migrants typically have had a historically contentious relationship with their home territories and their governing structures. The economic and political security situation of the educated middle classes in Colombia has been impacted by extortions and kidnappings perpetrated by illegal armed forces such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. In the absence of government control, the armed conflict resulted in a massive exodus of the middle and upper middle classes to the United States and Spain (Murcia and Parrado 1999; Cardenas and Mejia 2008). In the Puerto Rican case, the colonial relationship that the island has sustained with the United States causes an array of political sentiment among island natives and migrants in the United States. Some Puerto Ricans support the independence
of the island and others support the recognition of Puerto Rico as an official and autonomous state (Grosfroguel 2003; Whalen 2005). These relationships might trigger a reflexive and critical view of nation-state institutions.

In regards to professionals, data from preliminary research and this study revealed that Colombian and Puerto Rican computer engineers were embedded in professional and recruitment networks sustained between their engineering schools and the American information technologies industry since the 1980s. These transnational relationships not only allowed them to migrate to the United States, but also transformed engineering curricula in Colombian and Puerto Rican universities to help engineering students meet international standards. In addition, the immersion these professional migrants had in the development of engineering as a global discipline based in transnational collaboration might lead engineers like Federico to conceptualize meanings of nationhood, citizenship and belonging in ways in which the institutions and discourses of nations become secondary.

**

I divided this work in two sections. In the first section, I set up the theoretical and methodological foundations of this study. In chapter two of this section, I examine the legal and social dimensions of citizenship in liberal democracies and their implications for migrants and minorities in the United States. I also discuss how globalization and transnational migration have transformed traditional notions of citizenship. In chapter three, I present my analytical scope to studying the changing meanings of citizenship through the migration process. In the second part of this chapter, I describe my research design. I provide details about the case comparison, discuss my research instruments, sampling strategy and the interview design. I end this section
with an elaboration of my analysis strategy and a reflection of the strengths and weaknesses of my research design.

In the second section, I present the empirical findings and discuss the implications of these findings. In chapter four, I contrast the contexts of economic and political insecurity of the 1990s in Colombia and Puerto Rico with the configuration of transnational recruitment mechanisms that facilitated the migration process of the interviewees. While challenging economic environments, dangerous security situations and a high demand for engineering professionals abroad motivated these engineers to migrate, I demonstrate that the cosmopolitan socialization these engineers received from their families and university professors created inclinations to leave their countries and explore the world.

In chapter five, I explore the contradictions these migrants face at their arrival in the United States. I discuss the resources and opportunities these engineers enjoyed upon their arrival in their workplaces. I contrast these privileges with the increasing episodes of ethno-racial stereotyping and accent marginalization they encountered and discuss the ways in which these engineers used their cosmopolitan socialization to comply and/or to resist the imposition of a “neutral” workplace.

I expand this discussion in chapter six, by revealing how racial and legal marginalization in the daily lives of Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers delayed and constrained their access to full social inclusion and to substantive citizenship. I demonstrate how the length and complications of switching from a temporary to a permanent legal status created a ripple effect in the lives of Colombian engineers that affected their professional and personal lives. I also discuss the prevalent effects of ethno-racial marginalization in the lives of both Colombian and Puerto
Rican engineers. I examine the criminalization of these engineers based on the conflation of their origins and ethnic background and their alleged undocumented status.

In chapter seven, I unveil three overlapping citizenship narratives Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers construed that result from their reflections on their migration and settlement experiences. These narratives combined notions of patriotism, nationhood, citizenship rights, emotional and cultural belonging and identity. These notions are central in revealing how these engineers defined themselves in relationship with the social structures and opportunities that are available in the United States, their home countries and in the world. The narratives emphasized the reasoning behind becoming American, stressed the negotiations between emotional and cultural attachments with instrumental interests, and modeled a post-national outlook on citizenship where the progress of scientific and technological enterprises was central.

In chapter eight, I discuss the central role of cosmopolitanism as a discursive instrument that provides professional migrants with material and symbolic tools to negotiate the interplay between legal and social citizenship in the migration process. In light of this discussion, I examine the theoretical, empirical and policy implications of this research around issues of immigration, citizenship and immigration legislation.
PART I: FRAMING THE STUDY
II. IMMIGRATION AND THE LANGUAGE OF CITIZENSHIP

The stories I presented in the introduction revealed divergent ways in which professional migrants like Federico, Elsa and Fidel conceived notions of nationhood, citizenship and belonging. As their stories reveal, diverse and contradictory experiences of professional success, legal and racial marginalization, cultural and nostalgic attachments to their home countries, and other experiences of social exclusion informed these notions.

Their stories illustrate why citizenship is a category of meaning. How migrants understand the interplay between the legal frameworks that constitute formal citizenship and the social provisions that allow individuals to become substantive citizens turn citizenship into a category of meaning. For example, having an American passport might ensure access to social and political rights, but social practices such as legal or racial marginalization might have prevented these migrants from experiencing full social inclusion.

As I alluded to in the previous chapter, despite the connections and human capital international migrants may have, the stipulations connected to temporary legal statuses and practices of social exclusion that include racial discrimination and criminalization have the potential of limiting the access migrants have to social, economic, cultural and opportunity rights in the United States (Glenn 2000; Menjivar and Abrego 2012). In spite of these constraints, contemporary migrants find ways to compensate for the restrictions their legal and social statuses bring to their lives. They expand their attachments and investments to their homelands or rely on globally available platforms such as the internet, to advocate for the deliberation of issues related to the progress of science, the centrality of market operations, human rights and other global discourse coalitions (Basch 1993; Glenn 2000; Soysal 1994; Root 2007).
In light of these transformations, and as a way to model citizenship as a category of meaning, I discuss how contemporary migration changes traditional conceptions of citizenship and expands them beyond the institutional and cultural provisions of the nation-state in this chapter. First, I discuss basic principles that define traditional conceptions of citizenship and the expansion of these principles based upon issues of exclusion and social inequality. Second, I reveal two different ways in which international migrants have transformed and expanded notions of citizenship in the context of globalization: transnational and post-national citizenship.

**Legal Citizenship and Social Citizenship in Nation-States**

Experiences of marginalization were central in the stories of Colombian and Puerto Rican computer engineers. These experiences played a major role in how, over the years, these migrants conceived their notions of citizenship and belonging. For example, Federico experienced delayed professional and socioeconomic mobility because of the lengthy and complicated process of switching from a temporary to a permanent legal status. Although a legal American citizen, Elsa experienced marginalization because of her racial, gender and origin characteristics.

These experiences illustrate the tight link between legal definitions of citizenship and the limitations these definitions have to ensure substantive social citizenship. What is the difference between legal and social citizenship? How do they interact and contradict?

**Legal Citizenship**

The legal dimension of citizenship derives from the contract citizens have with a national government whereby each has rights and obligations. That is, those considered legal citizens pay taxes in exchange for benefits and protection. From a legal perspective, governments establish institutional structures such as the jury system and the welfare state to administer the distribution
of economic and social resources for citizens (Kivisto and Faist 2007; Turner 1997).

In its basic form, citizenship is a legal construct that grants individuals access to legal, political, participation, and social rights. The law creates legal rights. These rights are conducive to other rights such as personal security, access to justice and its process, freedom of expression and choice, among others. In countries like the United States or Australia, the general requirements for granting national membership and citizenship rights are based upon place of birth, parental origins or naturalization. Naturalization can be granted when a migrant has legally lived in the receiving country for a period of time, and can demonstrate knowledge of the political history and language of that country (Castles and Miller 2003).

Political rights relate to the participation of citizens in the political process. This includes the right to vote. Social rights guarantee the social status and economic subsistence of citizens. Public assistance, education and opportunity rights are examples of these. Participation rights ensure the involvement of citizens in civil society and private arenas such as the market, the labor market and public organizations (Marshall 1950; Janoski and Gran 2002; Smith 2002; Brenan and Tomasi 2012).

In light of these definitions, Puerto Ricans like Elsa should be granted full access to citizenship rights given that they are legally considered an American citizen. However, as Elsa’s story illustrates, Puerto Ricans arrive to the US with a stigma of inferiority attributed to the dependent relationship the island has had with the US. This stigma also stems from the assumption that Puerto Ricans are uneducated and only interested in taking advantage of the welfare benefits the American government offers to citizens, as the literature on the experience of Puerto Ricans in the US suggests.
In his seminal work, Marshall (1950) argues that citizenship is an institution whose goal is to ensure full equality to all members of a political community. At the same time, he contends that more than ensuring the social welfare of citizens, the rights granted by citizenship give individuals the power to engage individually in the economic struggle to provide for themselves. This assertion assumes equal access to education and to opportunities that would help citizens conquer such struggles.

While Marshall provides a basis from which to understand citizenship, contemporary scholars in the social sciences criticize his assertions for being too focused on the legal basis of citizenship as an automatic assurance of rights for all citizens. These scholars contend that his theory of citizenship falls short when it comes to addressing the social inclusion and cultural needs of women, racial and ethnic minorities and immigrants (Glenn 2000; Turner 1993, 1997; Bloemraad et.al. 2008). Marshall assumes citizenship to be a stable institution that eschews the management of cultural, linguistic, gender, and racial and religious difference (Turner 1997).

**Social Citizenship: Rights, Membership and Belonging**

Drawing from Marshall’s criticism, Glenn (2011; 2-3) argues that the rights granted by legal citizenship can be necessary, but not sufficient. She indicates that social practices that deny the standing of social groups, such as racial, gender and other types of discrimination, becomes a constraint for the enjoyment of full social inclusion and substantive citizenship. Given this distinction, Glenn (2000) suggests that instead of it being a concept that derives from the basis of individual rights, citizenship is a social process that defines membership, rights and social inclusion.

Emerging frameworks to study citizenship propose a more interconnected understanding between the legal provisions of nation-state based citizenship and the extent of social, economic,
cultural and participation rights individuals and groups can have. A number of scholars suggest that citizenship should be studied as an entity composed of four main dimensions that feed, reinforce and sometimes undermine each another: membership as associated to legal status, rights, participation, and a sense of belonging (Smith 2002; Bosniak 2006; Bloemraad et.al 2008).

Because of the historically exclusionary nature of legal citizenship, the study of citizenship, scholars argue, should examine the extent to which everyone within the polity has access to substantive rights, rather than just formal rights and while transforming the political structures and regimes of citizenship to achieve them (Kivisto and Faist 2007; Bloemraad et.al. 2008). In this sense, it is the legal status combined with the nature of rights individuals have based upon their social status and cultural identities that allow for an expanded modern examination of the meanings of citizenship.

- **Second-Class Citizenship: Constrained Rights and Social Inclusion**

Given the distinction between legal and social citizenship, scholars suggest that citizenship is a system of classification that differentiates full citizens from second-class. Second-class are native born and/or naturalized citizens whose access to civic, political and social rights is constrained because of their social or racial characteristics (Turner 1997; Glenn 2000, 2004; Kivisto and Faist 2007). For instance, even though Federico, Elsa and Fidel migrated to the United States legally, their social and visa status placed them in second-class category in that system of classification.

The characteristics of racial exclusion in the United States have molded the possibilities of full citizenship for African Americans and “other” racialized individuals such as Native Americans and immigrants. Historical events and government policies, such as slavery, as well
as labor and residential segregation have made the distinction between the “ideal American citizen” and “other” citizens more salient and more detrimental for the inclusion of second-class citizens in the polity up until today (Volpp 2001; Glenn 2004).

Akin the political, geographical and symbolic marginalization African Americans, immigrants and other non-white groups face similar obstacles for accessing full citizenship and its privileges. The social and political marginalization of Latinos and Asians in the US are examples of their second-class citizenship status. Despite the fact that legally speaking, they are American citizens, Puerto Ricans arrive to the mainland with a stigma of inferiority, they are perceived as coming from pathologized families, as a tax burden for the US and as a socialist threat. This perception stems from the colonial relationship whereby Puerto Ricans were seen as dependent, poor and backwards. This fed the imagination of Americans about who “they are” for over a century (Acosta-Belen and Santiago 2006; Thomas 2010).

The racial violence Latinos and Asians face with actions such as racial profiling and anti-immigrant laws is another example of their marginalization. As Sánchez (2007) and other authors have shown, since after the 1992 riots in Los Angeles a number of states have launched propositions and laws that prevent these groups from accessing social services, health care and schools and have proposed to ban the teaching of bilingual education in schools (Roth 2010; Jaworsky 2011).

Regarding the distinction between full citizens and second-class citizens, Volpp (2001) points out that ideas of whiteness and assimilation associated with full “All American” citizenship, have contributed to the steady establishment of a racial hierarchy where citizens that do not comply with those ideas receive second class treatment, even though they are allowed to vote and politically participate. She indicates: “The historical contradictions at the core of
America’s liberalism continue to be replicated in the present day. Liberal notions of citizenship suppress particular and local differences, separating one’s abstract will from the specifics of social conditions, such as the racialized body (Pg. 61).

In the case of migrants in the United States, the mainstream framework that dictates social inclusion and citizenship expectations is that of assimilation - a repository of liberal regimes of citizenship. Under this framework, immigrants are expected to go through a gradual process of cultural assimilation, called “Americanization” that turns their primary identities and cultures into secondary and irrelevant features. While some scholars have criticized this view for its focus on White middle class mainstream integration (Hirschman et. al. 1999), others continue arguing that the dominant empirical pattern of immigrants’ integration is assimilation (Alba & Nee 2003).

The assimilation framework does not capture the lived realities and multiple belongings of immigrants. Scholars show that when immigrants arrive to the United States they arrive to constrained social contexts of reception where their classification in the racial stratification system affects their chances of upward mobility and successful integration to American life. Immigrant groups might exhibit different incorporation trajectories depending on their racial and economic positions revealing patterns of segmented assimilation. This could mean that some groups fully assimilate into the white middle class or that they would selectively integrate by keeping their ties to their culture (Waters 2001; Portes and Rumbaudt 2001; Waters and Jimenez 2005; Bloemraad et.al. 2008).

An emerging body of work examining the marginal status of immigrants in the United States contends that immigrants with uncertain legal status are also denied upward economic mobility as well as limited access to social, political and economic rights. Uncertain legal status
also separates families and constrains life planning for immigrants. (Stasiulis & Bakan 2005; Menjivar 2006; Chavez 2007; Dreby 2010)

In her study about the experience of undocumented migrants from Guatemala and El Salvador that are in between documented and undocumented status, Menjivar (2006) finds that such legal uncertainty shapes how and with whom migrants relate, the nature of their family networks and kinship, the extent to which these migrants can fully participate in local politics, their full access to the job market and housing opportunities.

Similarly, Saxenian (2002) and Chakravartty (2006) reveal similar uncertain statuses among highly skilled professionals whose visa status is temporary or in transition towards permanent residency or full naturalization. Because of their temporary worker status, these migrants either face obstacles to move forward with their professional and personal lives. Menjivar and Abrego (2012) contend that the constraints the law creates in the lives of migrants are illustration of structural and legal violence: daily acts of cruelty that force migrants to adapt their lives to the provisions of the legal system.

- The Management of Social Inclusion

In addition to legal frameworks and social practices that determine regimes of social inclusion and exclusion, migrant integration and diversity management programs are social policies that determine the opportunity structure and terms of inclusion migrants have access to. For instance, the existence of migrant integration programs in Canada has a positive effect on the naturalization rates of immigrants when compared to the United States. Canadian integration programs depart from the idea that migrant settlement is a public concern that government has a responsibility for. As such, these programs not only promote citizenship and integration, but also
solidify community programs that help migrants navigate their settlement process (Bloemraad 2006).

Different scholars contend that contrasting social discourses of assimilation and multiculturalism inform the existence of migrant integration programs and available opportunity structures that facilitate the incorporation of migrants. In first world countries like the United States or Canada, these discourses determine beliefs and mechanisms of social inclusion and exclusion. While the United States has policies that aim to address the management of diversity and proclaim themselves as multicultural societies, the polarization of American society on issues of migrant integration has not resulted in public initiatives that support settlement process of migrants.

Unlike Australia or Canada, the United States does not have official multicultural policies. However, it can be argued that gradually the country has developed a multicultural sensibility. Affirmative action and the push for bilingual education in some US states are examples of this multicultural sensibility. Affirmative action assists minority individuals to obtain university admission, employment slots, and business ownership opportunities through a variety of administrative devices. Likewise, the Bilingual Education Act was conceived to assist migrants to transition to English language proficiency (Kivisto and Faist 2007; 38).

These legislative initiatives vary by geographic and political context. For instance, these legislative initiatives would clash with those taking place in conservative states whose rhetoric aligns with the ideals of assimilation. Political arrangements that support the management of diversity come under attack, as minority beneficiaries are often accused of taking advantage of the system of social support offered by the government (Smith 2002; Roche 2002). Initiatives that propose to verify the legal status of individuals who appear suspicious of illegality or of
those who attempt to get services from the government such as public education or health care (e.g. Proposition 187, Arizona’s Senate bill 1070), as well as legislation that enforces English as the official language (e.g. “Official English Movement) are examples of these local state initiatives (Citrin et al. 1990; Martin 1995; Nier et al. 2012).

- Individual and Collective Efforts to Rebuild Social Citizenship

In the United States, the fight for substantive social rights has advanced tremendously due to the protest and action of members of the civil sphere when compared with other liberal democracies. These protests pressured governments to establish programs and policies in support of poverty relief and unemployment insurance that attempted to enable equal access to social rights (Kymlicka 1996). Despite such efforts, these political arrangements come under attack, as minority beneficiaries are often accused of taking advantage of the system of social support offered by the government (Smith 2002; Roche 2002; Kivisto & Faist 2007).

Contemporary governmental arrangements such as the privatization of state agencies, the deregulation of markets and cuts in public expenditures change the nature of these programs, as the funding of these provisions for citizens is not a priority (Roche 2002). This problem became more salient in the United States and in Latin America during the 1980s, as these democracies had to or chose to adapt to the emergence of neoliberal economic regimes. These regimes focused on economic growth affecting the content and extent of social rights as well as educational and work policies (So 1990; Mitchell 2003; Abowitz and Harnish 2006).

Because of the contentious politics and social practices of social inclusion, citizen groups with specific cultural and issue-based interests advocate for their cultural rights to contest and transform the “citizen-self” of traditional liberal democracies. This citizen aims to push local and national governments to acknowledge and address their grievances. Other individuals grow
disenchanted with what local and national governments offer to them and become motivated by individual self-governance and self-interest. This transformation is centered in a new politics of collective identities that challenge the expectation that citizens would feel identified with the national community and be inclined to engage with fellow citizens motivated by their desire to nurture the community’s social cohesion and solidarity (Greve 1998).

In this sense nationality, national community, and citizenship cannot be equated when it comes to how individuals define their sense of belonging. While nationality is generally associated with citizenship, such association assumes that the motives and goals of citizens within a nation can all be contained under the same umbrella. As traditional citizenship is criticized for its centrality on individual rights, citizenry’s learned capacity to self-government and with the emergence of multiple voices in the construction of the nation, belonging and cultural rights have become more about the various forms of political and emotional attachments citizens within a nation may have (Kivisto & Faist 2007).

The notion of “belonging” to a community or a place provides the basis for how individuals diagnose the extent to which their rights and membership within a nation-state are satisfactory. Hence, a dimension shaped by the understandings individuals have of their place in a community of meaning, whether national, ethnic, sexual or focused on a particular social problem (Sommers 2008; Schiller et. al. 2011).

In this sense, as Turner (2007) suggests, citizenship is a social process whereby individuals distinguish between their definition of membership to a political community (extent), an allocation of specific rights (content) and their understanding of how their identities would be performed (depth). The way in which Federico, Elsa and Fidel conceptualized their meanings of citizenship illustrates such process. Hence, a comprehensive approach to studying citizenship
examines obstacles that prevent individuals from fully accessing social, economic, political and cultural rights, as well as their strategies to negotiate these obstacles.

*Migration and Globalization: Changing the Meanings of Citizenship*

In light of the obstacles Federico and Elsa encountered to enjoy substantive social citizenship and inclusion, they drew distance from their relationship with nations and their institutions. Instead, they focused on emphasizing aspects of their emotional and professional lives to define the type of citizens they are. Unlike Fidel, who voiced his American citizenship pride, Federico and Elsa created alternative ways of conceptualizing their citizenship and modeled ways of exercising rights, participation and belonging in spheres that transcend the traditional legal and social structures of nation-states. What are the real possibilities of exercising citizenship in political spheres that are not within the confines of the nation? Are these citizenship conceptualizations solely based on notions of nationhood, identity and belonging? Are these conceptualizations new?

Scholarly discussions on legal status, rights, participation and cultural belonging take a different spin in the context of international migration and globalization. The social and economic pressures of migration and globalization have the potential of transforming the nation-state – citizenship nexus. The emergence of transnational flows of communication, people, ideas, capital and the appearance of supranational entities in the global scene help mobilize changes in the traditional ways in which individuals interpret citizenship.

Although international migrants have sustained strong ties with their home countries for over a century, new institutional arrangements and forms of identity have emerged as a result of the technological, economic and political changes brought by the growing interconnectedness of globalization since the 1980s (Glenn 2000; Kaldor 2008; Appadurai 2010). Notions of
transnational, global and post-national citizenship are among these new forms of citizenship and identity.

In this section, I present the transformations transnational and denationalized citizenship pose to traditional conceptions of citizenship. I argue that the social changes brought by globalization have triggered international migrants’ imagination as to how to ensure their rights in ways that override the nation-state.

*The Pressures of Economic Globalization and the Emergence of the Reflexive Citizen*

The 1980s and 1990s faced important changes in the governmental and economic structures of nation-states in both developed and developing countries. In the midst of these changes, the nation-state based goals to provide equal access to social and economic rights to their citizenry became even more damaged than they already were. In the United States, these changes along with a neo-conservative government meant a great reduction of state expenditures, especially those related to welfare and social services for the poor (Glenn 2000). In developing countries, supranational organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund forced governments to appropriate similar policies as a way to accommodate the necessary changes for national economies to be competitive in the global market: a doctrine called “structural adjustment” (So 1990; Glenn 2000; Sassen 2002).

While these institutional changes widened the wealth gap in the United States and in other countries, the expansion of neoliberal economic regimes and the opening to the global economy appeared beneficial for the development and commodification of an array of products, technologies, a more rapid circulation of knowledge, and for the consolidation of international division of labor.

Hence, while globalization brings both social inequalities at the national levels and
advancement in the circulation of technologies and knowledge, the global marketplace is, at the same time, the site of multiple inequalities and economic oppression. Phenomena such as human trafficking, undocumented migration, worker exploitation in sweatshops, outsourcing and the exploitation of local labor and resources by multinational corporations are examples of these global inequalities.

Some scholars suggest that the articulation of globalization and national economies leads to the withdrawal from key programs and legislation supporting the rights and entitlements of citizens for some states. While these changes allow for a quicker interconnectedness of the world, they also transform national projects and national citizenship into a process of partial denationalizing. There are two key characteristics of “denationalization”: the involvement of supranational organizations in decisions pertaining domestic economic performance and the “parcelization of authority” whereby citizenry claims take place more on the basis of issues such global financial regulation, human rights, global climate change and others, than on the basis of national territories (Sassen 2002; Kaldor 2008; Sommers 2008).

The parcelization of authority creates the conditions for the development of a strengthened global civil society with multiple actors, groups and communities motivated by social identities and issue-based politics and increasingly detached from nation-based loyalties and regimes. The diverse identities, oppositional politics, the deterritorialized global cultures and the transnational communities that constitute the European Union is one of the examples that would closely illustrate the parcelization of authority as a project of global governance, beyond the nation-state (Sassen 2002).

While phenomena like the parcelization of authority is significant in explaining the strengthening of the global civil society, the nation-state remains a fundamental institution with
the power to decide who belongs and who is entitled to civil, political, social and economic rights. Notwithstanding, the benefits and constraints of globalization challenge the monopoly of the nation-state by featuring a more reflexive citizenry inclined to solidarize with an array of social causes at a global level (Giddens 2000; Kivisto & Faist 2007).

It is in the context of the interconnectedness of globalization that Federico, the global citizen I mentioned in the introduction, was able to conceive a notion of citizenship in which nations and associated provisions can be dismissed and one centered in the global furthering of science and technology. The way in which Federico narrates his notion of citizenship illustrates the emergence of a “more reflexive” citizenry within the changing conditions brought by globalization. This reflexivity illustrates what Beck (2002) suggests occurs as derivative of the crisis of modernity: an increasing disenchantment civil actors have with nation-states and the extent to which they offer the rights and protections citizens need and aim for.

The crisis of modernity leads to a process of reflexive modernization whereby individuals gain agency to overthrow the traditional institutions and mandates of the nation-state with new emerging technological, economic, political and cultural processes and tools (Beck et. al. 2003) towards new forms of transnational and global civil engagement. Examples of such processes vary within a wide spectrum: from new individual and collective forms of engaging with multiple nations at the same time, or engaging with the global market and expert knowledge, to the embracement of universal human rights frameworks promoted by international non-governmental organizations and the United Nations (Glenn 2000; Sassen 2002).

**Transnational Citizenship**

Proponents of transnationalism argue that contemporary migrants participate in political, economic and social activities in their home countries and their receiving countries...
simultaneously. Such “simultaneous embeddedness” creates social fields that transcend the boundaries of the nation-state (Levitt and Schiller 2004; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). The establishment of transnational “social fields” becomes a strategy for migrants to either compensate or overcome some of the citizenship constraints they face in the receiving countries they arrive to.

Although this “simultaneous embeddedness” is not a new phenomenon, changes in the political structures of sending countries and advances in technology allow for the crystallization of new transnational behaviors. Transnationalism becomes an alternative for migrants to gain access to more adaptable and/or meaningful citizenship, legal statuses, rights, participation and forms of belonging. For example, from a legal status perspective, transnational migrants may choose to become dual or multiple citizens. This is a strategy that migrants can use to maximize economic, political and social benefits, though is not available to everyone (Glenn 2000; Sassen 2002; Bloemraad 2006).

Dual citizenship allows migrants to easily engage in political and social activities in their home and receiving countries. According to studies about patterns of transnational involvement among migrants, dual citizenship might increase voting behavior in both sending and receiving countries (Escobar 2004). In some cases, naturalization and the acquisition of dual citizenship lead to deeper engagements in the politics and activities of migrants’ sending countries through the emergence of transnational migrant organizations, as well as a more vested investments in local receiving country’s politics (Jones-Correa 2001).

Notwithstanding, these patterns vary by nationality, class and religious affiliation (Bloemraad 2004; Brettell 2006; Portes et.al 2008). In fact, as Ong (2006) points out the political and mobility benefits of dual citizenship are not accessible for everyone. Levels of
accessibility to the advantages of dual citizenship vary depending on the class standing of migrants. For example, Asian migrant entrepreneurs’ dual citizenship helps them maximize economic opportunities in sending countries, while ensuring political security and a western education for their children. On the flip side, Filipinos that migrate as domestic workers do not have the resources to engage in such transnational behaviors. Glenn (2000) argues that these differences show the significance of legal status vs. social status whereby citizenship is constructed to mirror ethnocultural, class and racial hierarchies.

In their study about the emergence of transnational political institutions, Levitt and de la Dehesa (2003) reveal that sending nation-states are well aware of the uncertainties and protections their migrant citizens need when settling temporarily or permanently in a different country. They show that the governments of some migrant sending nations reconfigure conventional understandings the polity to be able to support and protect their migrant citizens changing the meaning of national sovereignty, membership and citizenship. Among the efforts migrant sending nation-states make to protect their citizens are the provision of dual citizenship, voting rights, embassy and consulate services abroad.

With or without naturalization or multiple citizenships, transnational citizenship illustrates an array of behaviors and practices through which social, economic, political and cultural rights and attachments become more meaningful for migrants, than those offered in the receiving country. An example of this is the relatively increased remittance flows that associate with changing hometown local economies. More than the economic contributions of remittances to sending countries, the crystallization of a transnational field is expressed in how, for instance, the social and political status of migrants improves in sending countries via their marginal occupational status in the receiving country (Vertovec 2004).
In their studies about the transnational life of Dominicans and Mexicans Levitt (2001) and Smith (2006), show how the contributions of transnational migrants to their sending countries changes patterns of participation in cultural, religious and political life through social remittances. Second generation migrants participate in Mexican beauty pageants and festivals and Dominicans conduct religious ceremonies over the Internet or by sending VCR videos back and forth from sending to receiving countries and viceversa.

Transnational social fields also allow for changing gender roles and responsibilities. A number of scholars argue that, generally speaking, the transnational experience tends to put women in a position where they are more committed to participate in the receiving country as they have more opportunities to engage in different activities, other than the traditional ones they used to engage in the sending country. Furthermore, men tend to attach more to public life in the sending country as their transnational experience gives them more public and political status (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Salcedo 2005; Smith 2006; Dreby 2007).

While transnational social fields open up new ways of participating in social life and belonging to a meaningful space that transcend the nation-state, engagement in these fields bring emotional dislocations as the structural conditions of the receiving country and the difficulty of managing family ties in closer proximity take a toll on migrants. Some migrants might be able to feel politically and economically included in both the sending and receiving societies, it is the citizenship dimension of belonging whose stretching by transnational social fields becomes challenging: transnational citizenship cannot overcome the barriers of racism, the separation from family and not being able to be present in the home country in an ongoing basis (Aranda 2007). These feelings of disconnection, of course, vary by national origins, class and gender
backgrounds. The strong sense of belonging Elsa expressed when defining her citizenship as Puerto Rican illustrates transnational engagements triggered by those emotional dislocations.

More than an alternative to achieve full citizenship status, transnational social fields are spaces of possibility and connection for migrants. For instance, economic and political participation are successfully achieved through remittances and multiple citizenships. However, transnational social fields cannot effectively fulfill the dimensions of citizenship -legal status, social rights, and belonging. At the same time, access to civil and social rights are still exclusively granted by the nation-state. In this sense, transnational citizenship seems promising as it opens up new sociability possibilities, but does not provide an alternative to the nation-state when it comes to legal provisions. Other forms of denationalized citizenship might be a promising step in that direction.

*Post-National and Global Citizenship*

Post-national and global citizenship challenge the nation-state and the cultural structures it sets up in the provision of rights, obligations, participation and belonging. Post-national citizenship is an alternative legal framework that pressures the nation-state to provide equal access to labor and opportunity rights for migrants, as contributors of their national community. Global citizenship is an alternative to the national belonging discourse advocated by nation-states as a fundamental part of citizenship. These forms of citizenship highlight the relevance of alternative frameworks to understand community and belonging.

For example, post-national citizens use the framework of universal human rights and personhood and the support of the global civil sphere to achieve rights and entitlements that they would otherwise be denied in the context of the nation-state (Soysal 1994; Ramirez et.al. 1997; Bhabha 1999). In a slightly different way, global citizens deconstruct the importance of the
nation-state in providing meaningful structures of participation and belonging. They rely on global discourses that are not contained in the legal provisions of nation-state based citizenship, but that more accurately represent individual and collective global interests. Global environmental struggles, scientific knowledge, the free software movement or active engagements in the global market are examples of global citizenship (Falk 1993; Boli and Thomas 1999; Giddens 2000; Sassen 2002; Smith 2002; Ong 2006).

Post-national citizenship is a model whereby individuals demand the provision of rights and participation in public spheres based upon a framework of human rights, equality, emancipation and individual rights, regardless of their historical or cultural ties to a national community (Soysal 1994, 2001). The use of this framework is possible thanks to the emergence of global political communities that pressure the legal structures of the nation-state to extend membership and social rights to immigrants living within their communities (Bhabha 1999). Post-national citizens organize around claims supporting particularistic identities and interests that they connect with transnational discourses and agendas of human rights (Sassen 2002).

While regular citizens can arguably use these forms of citizenship, post-national citizenship is an alternative framework international migrants use to battle the social structural constraints associated with uncertain legal statuses, racism and discrimination. For example, by using a human rights and personhood framework migrant workers in Europe gained better access to social and political rights: they achieved improved living conditions and the right to appeal deportation, in the case of undocumented migrants. Moreover, migrants use ethnic, religious and non-ethnic subcultures (i.e. youth, gay/lesbian and deaf cultures) to make their claims and ensure their rights (Soysal 1994; Ramirez et.al. 1997).
Soysal (2001) contends that more than a legal institution, post-national citizenship signifies practices whereby individuals and groups partake in multiple public spheres that are defined beyond “belonging to a nation-state”: their engagement in these public spheres allow for new mobilization based on the politics of identity or particular social issues on a global scale. Post-national citizenship is different from national and transnational citizenship as it decouples rights from identities: “individuals attain rights and protection, and this membership, within states that are not ‘their own’” (pg. 334).

As the argument of some of the contemporary scholarship on citizenship and transnational migration is that the nation-state structures granting citizenship are eroding, post-national citizenship shows potential to understand the power global transnational discourses have to transform the constraining structures of national citizenship. However, this paradigm has been criticized for not having enough empirical support to be able to describe the objective conditions of its appearance and to understand the nature of local migrant struggles (i.e. racism, legality issues) and its association with the discourses of international actors or supranational institutions (Bloemraad et. al. 2008).

Global citizenship delineates a more idealistic way of framing post-national citizenship. This view is, as Falk (1993) puts it, a process where “it is possible to make the impossible happen”: the emergence of global reformers that perceive a more efficient and improved way of organizing political life in the planet in lieu of the accessible transnational logics of globalization propagated through NGOs. The emergence of a global sense of solidarity and alternative notions of community membership provided by the internet, an interconnected world, international non-governmental organizations, highly specialized discourses, environmental struggles, particularized political projects and cosmopolitan identities are examples of global citizenship.
(Boli and Thomas 1999; Giddens 2000; Sassen 2002; Smith 2002; Ong 2006). The way in which Felipe conceptualized his citizenship as one that furthers issues that affect the world, such as technology, is an example of global citizenship.

Some of the emerging global citizenship notions are based on the idea that individuals’ participation in the global market and the global creation of knowledge is now more accessible and much less mediated by nation-states. The market – as an unbounded actor- is one of many alternative frameworks emerging as a possibility: privileged citizens around the world reject state intervention in their lives and often rely on market mechanisms that provide the rewards, incentives and motivations that they choose (Ong 2006; Root 2007).

A globalized economy and the opening of borders for international trade allow for the market to be the new repository for citizenship action. Market citizenship is then, the achievement of rights through economic rather than political means, namely for “those who can pay the price” (Dudley 2009; Nawyn 2010). As Somers (2008) argue, this transition turns citizenship into a matter of contracts as opposed to rights, which in turn contribute to the persistence of the polarization of rights and social inequalities. For example, scientific citizenship sustains that science is a global discourse that influences both local and global decisions. The scientific citizen is reflexive enough to respond to global and transnational innovations and threats such as the development of free software or global warming. Along these lines, scientific citizenship advocates for the idea that knowledge rights should be included within the fundamental rights of citizens in the world (Elam and Bertilsson 2002; Leach and Scoones 2003).

Another exemplary of global citizenship is the appearance of cosmopolitan identities or modes of sociability. The global cosmopolitan opposes the idea of social citizenship as an
institution based on the exclusion of others and supports universalistic forms of identity displays by cool loyalties and thin patterns of solidarity regarding particular nation-state based forms of ethnic identity (Turner 2000). Instead they accentuate gender, professional and lifestyle identities that they claim to be associated with globalized discourses (Turritin et al. 2002; Gruner-Domic 2011).

Critics of global citizenship argue that loyalties and political participation beyond the nation-state tend to be based on thin attachments with weak legal frameworks. Others argue that global citizenship is a project for the world’s denationalized global elite whose claims aim to make the planet sustainable for middle-class styles, a project for people who have lost their cultural specificity (Falk 1993).

One could argue that these forms of belonging are novel, but in terms of legal and political rights do not necessarily overthrow the structures and mechanisms of inclusion of the nation-state such as legal citizenship, the right to vote and work and the provision of welfare protection. I contend that transformations in our understanding of the meanings and uses of global citizenship among migrants are yet to be seen not only in the terms of migrants’ sense of belonging, but also in terms of the salient role the global market plays in the lives of migrants whose decisions are less and less tied to the bounded narratives of the nation-state.

Examples of these types of transformations and how the market might orchestrate them are few at this moment. The transnational entrepreneurial ventures Chinese information technologies professionals undertook in the late 1990s to create yahoo.com (Saxenian 2002), as well as professional migrants extending their student visas to work for technology companies under the table, broadly illustrate strategies of dealing with nation-state based structural constraints, while shifting their forms of belonging towards something else. These changes might
illustrate what Ong (2006; 500) conceptualizes as the mutations of citizenship in the contemporary global space of assemblages where “the (re) combinations of globalizing forces and situated elements produce distinctive environments in which citizens, foreigners, and asylum-seekers make political claims through pre-existing political membership as well as on the grounds of universalizing criteria”.

It is hard to tell whether the notion of the global citizen and global governance will have endurance. However, what these changes show is that thanks to the globalization juncture the meanings of citizenship as political self-governance and as centered in the nation-state has heavily been criticized and citizens have tried to transform them into something new (Smith 2002).

The stories of professional migrants like Federico, provide some empirical support for post-national and global citizenship frameworks. In the chapters that follow, I show that challenges in the interplay between legal and social citizenship lead to transformed notions of belonging among professional migrants. The experiences Colombian and Puerto Rican professional migrants had leads them to become reflexive citizens that take issue with some of the provisions of the nation-state and sometimes endorse transnational and global forms of citizenship.
III. HOW TO EXAMINE THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN LEGAL AND SOCIAL CITIZENSHIP IN THE MIGRATION PROCESS?

The motivations Puerto Rican and Colombian engineers had to conceive their meanings of nationhood, citizenship and belonging in divergent ways not only stems from the opportunities and challenges they encountered at their arrival and settlement in the United States, but also the experiences and circumstances of their departure from their home countries. As my opening vignette shows, Federico alluded to traumatic experiences he had living in a politically violent country before his departure and drew from his professional training to emphasize his identification and political investment in the global engineering community. On the flip side, Elsa stressed her belonging to Puerto Rico despite the difficult economic environment that made her leave the island and the social marginalization she faced in the United States.

The ways in which migrants conceive meanings of citizenship and belonging are not divorced from the economic, social and political environments of their sending or receiving contexts. In light of this, I examine the role pre-migration experiences and motivations, and migration experiences and settlement decisions play in shaping how migrants make sense of their loyalties, attachments and citizenship meanings in this dissertation.

In this chapter, I present my rationale to study the interplay between legal and social citizenship through the migration process. First, I discuss the scope of my analysis and reveal how it contributes to the literature on immigration and citizenship. Second, I explain the research methodology in light of the cases I chose to compare. I also discuss the strengths and weakness of the chosen research methods.

In order to trace how meanings of nationhood, citizenship and belonging evolve and transform, I examine the relationships between three different moments of the experience of international migrants. These three moments unveil the expectations and struggles faced by migrants in their process of migration and settlement processes. In this analytical approach I explore: a. the historic relationship that migrants have with their homeland and the extent to which this relationship informed their decision to migrate; b. the challenges migrants face in the receiving country, as well as the resources migrants use to sort them out; and c. the strategies migrants use to countervail challenges and consider their choices when making sense of their meanings of citizenship and belonging in light of their migration experience (See figure 1).

FIGURE 1. Citizenship Meaning Transformation in the Process of Migration
**Pre-migration Citizenship Assessment**

In this dissertation, I consider two related pre-migration factors: how and to what extent social institutions such as the school, the family or the media promote or endorse particular forms of citizenship and belonging through socialization messages and how migration motivations and push factors are tied to assessments of threatened or uncertain citizenship in the sending context.

I focus on the ways in which Colombian and Puerto Rican software engineers embedded themselves in national and global structures of privilege. I investigate: 1) how they acquired knowledge about national and/or global citizenship; 2) their engineering training; 3) their recruitment by international information technologies companies and; 4) their political and social assessment of their citizenship rights and obligations in their sending territories. In this area I probed what these engineers learned about their obligations, rights, options, and opportunities as citizens.

In order to understand what citizenship means and how its meanings are transformed during the process of migration, it is necessary to explore where the construction of meaning begins. Institutions that associate with the goals of the nation-state such as universities, the family or the media can further ideas about citizenship (Wood and King 2001; Mitchell 2003). In the case of professional migration, I examine the role the university and the role specific professions have in encouraging graduates to contribute to the nation and/or the global market. This assessment also allowed me to explore the role other socialization agents play in offering resources, such as information or social networks that facilitated the migration of these professionals. In other types of migration, it would be fundamental to reveal the mechanisms that
inform or encourage international migration and how they stand up in relationship with the homogenizing goals of the nation-state.

Examining economic, political and social factors that enable or constrain the opportunities individuals have to achieve social inclusion in their home countries allowed me to explore the push and pull factors that motivated their migration. Parallel to the messages about citizenship families and universities disseminate, potential migrants examine the possibilities of their inclusion in nationally based projects and determine whether their access to rights, participation, membership and their sense of belonging coincide with their expectations.

Depending on their social backgrounds and influences, some migrants might exhibit reflexive ways to engage with their decision to migrate, while others might endure an abrupt decision-making process if unstable political communities trigger migration due to economic uncertainty, political unrest or lack of social mobility, as classic theories of international migration suggest (Sassen 1998; Massey et al. 1993; Bean and Stevens 2003). Considering the role of national histories, class socialization and the previous exposure potential migrants had to the receiving country provides an alternative to understanding the way in which migrants make sense of structural forces that push or pull them into international migration.

- **Assessment of Citizenship in the Integration and Settlement Process**

In the second moment of the migration process, I explore the challenges and opportunities migrants encounter over their integration and settlement processes. As discussed in the previous chapter, the literature points at legal, social and institutional barriers that prompt feelings of insecurity, uncertainty and/or confusion among migrants. These insecurities may hinder the ability migrants have to participate in political institutions or to negotiate work conditions. In that sense, this area explores migrants’ sources of *contingency* and *uncertainty* in
the integration and settlement process and sheds light on institutional, community or social capital resources that might help migrants navigate these challenges (Hagan 1998; Portes 2000; Bagchi 2001).

I focus on the ways in which Colombian and Puerto Rican software engineers understand their immigration and settlement experience. I investigate: 1) programs, organizations or policies that promote or prevent the social inclusion of these migrants in their arrival communities; 2) the roots of social exclusion these migrants might face; 3) the strategies migrants use to negotiate such social exclusion, if applicable. In this area I probed what these engineers learned about their obligations, rights, options, and opportunities as citizens in the receiving context.

Mapping challenges and opportunities allows me to understand how migrants diagnose their civic, political and cultural inclusion in the receiving country in light of their legal and social standing. Additionally, identifying challenges may also lead to understanding some of the strategies migrants devise to countervail the challenges that cannot be negotiated with the support of institution or the community.

- Strategies to Countervail Threatened Citizenship:

Migrants may devise cultural strategies to overcome the institutional, legal and social barriers they encounter over their integration and settlement processes. In this dissertation, I explore the different realms in which migrants make use of these cultural strategies: a. migrants’ interpretations of integration discourses and policies; b. racial, class, gender and other types of symbolic boundaries; and c. revaluation of the attachments to sending and receiving national political communities.

Informed by their backgrounds and worldviews migrants translate and interpret the
available social inclusion and integration narratives in different ways. In light of their experiences and backgrounds, migrants may endorse or reject assimilationist or multicultural discourses that align with the receiving country’s national discourses of social inclusion.

Migrants may also use their previous experiences, class or educational backgrounds to draw symbolic boundaries to attempt to enforce alternative systems of classification that counter or contradict the existing ones. Unlike social boundaries, symbolic boundaries exist at the intersubjective level as they portray the ways in which “groups compete in the production, diffusion and institutionalization of alternative systems and principles of classification. They are an essential medium through which people acquire status and monopolize resources (Lamont and Molnar 2002; 168).”

For instance, certain groups of migrants may perceive that the receiving society is racist hence assuming that their possibilities of upward mobility are restricted, while other groups of migrants concoct alternative approaches to negotiating that barrier. An example of the latter negotiation is Waters’ study about second-generation West Indian migrants that enact their class values as a strategy to avoid being racialized as African American (2001).

The revaluation of the attachments and loyalties migrants have to their home and receiving countries is an important element of the type of citizen that they become during their integration and settlement. The literature illustrates the emergence of new forms of citizenship among migrant populations (e.g. transnational, postnational, etc), but a lot of these studies do not delve into how migrants’ national attachments transform as a result of the migration process and how these transformations inform emerging forms of citizenship.

In order to examine the strength of the ties migrants have with their home country during the migration process, I assess the extent to which they perceive a need to exercise their
citizenship rights or if they choose to participate in the public sphere of either home or receiving countries. Migrants’ willingness to engage shows the strength of their commitment and sense of belonging to their home countries.

**Outcome: Citizenship Transformed**

By exploring migrants’ lived experiences along these three aspects of the migration process, we can better understand the patterns and possible mechanisms that produce new forms and meanings of citizenship among international migrants. Key to this analytical model is to explore how migrants assess meanings of citizenship in different moments of the migration process and investigate the mechanisms that aid them in making sense of these meanings. Barriers that are unresolved are negotiated through cultural strategies that can either be symbolic or material.

For example, one of the ways these negotiations are expressed is through migrants’ inclination to engage in transnational or post-national citizenship attachments. For instance, the combination of disenchanted, weak or contradictory relationships with nation-states and their institutions led more Colombian engineers to identify with ideas related to global citizenship, than to nation-based citizenship. Disengagement from nation-based forms of citizenship was less likely when migrants had a close relationship with the institutions that promote the goals of the national project, as was the case of Fidel in chapter one. In the case of professional migration, the exposure to global market and scientific structures was responsible for distorting the goals of nation-based projects of citizenship, as is the case of Federico.

**II. Comparing Puerto Rican and Colombian Computer Engineers**

Colombian and Puerto Rican computer engineers that migrated to the United States during the ‘dot com’ bubble (1996 – 2004) have a combination of experiences that may generate
reflexive outlooks about the role nation-state institutions and provisions have in their lives. Because both groups are recruited as desirable migrants, we might expect that their incorporation experience to be fairly straightforward.

However, differences in the citizenship status and incorporation experiences of Colombian and Puerto Ricans allowed me to examine the relative importance of legal citizenship in ensuring full access to social citizenship in the migration process. The similarity in their pre-migration migration contexts allowed me to assess the role national histories, engineering education, work and personal transnational connections and their class socialization played in shaping the strategies migrants use to negotiate challenges, as well as in informing notions of nationhood, citizenship and belonging during the settlement process.

- **Similarities**

  a. **Contexts of insecurity and political instability.**

    The migration motivations of Colombians and Puerto Ricans have roots in the historical relationships that they have with their nation-states and their governmental structures. In the Colombian case, in the 1990s the economic and political security situation of the middle educated classes was impacted by extortions and kidnappings perpetrated by illegal armed forces such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. The armed conflict resulted in a massive exodus of the middle and upper middle classes to the United States and Spain because the government was not able to control the situation (Parrado and Murcia 1999; Cardenas and Mejia 2008). In the Puerto Rican case, the island’s status as an “American associated state” triggers an array of political sentiment among Puerto Ricans and Puerto Rican migrants. Some Puerto Ricans support the independence of the island, others support the recognition of the island as an
official US state, and others support the status quo (Grosfoguel 2003; Whalen 2005)

b. Transnational recruitment mechanisms and educational exchanges.

Both countries\(^1\) underwent processes that nurtured the establishment of transnational recruitment networks that informed and enabled the migration of engineers during the ‘dot com’, an economic boom fueled by the incorporation of advanced telecommunication and information technologies in the operations of financial and commercial businesses that began in the mid 1990s and ended in the early 2000s (Schiller 1990).

In the Puerto Rican case, the goal of curricula standardization and the presence of American pharmaceutical and high tech companies on the island since the late 1970s supported the consolidations of these recruitment networks. The presence of these companies was made possible by a legislative act called Section 936. This law was created by the American government and exempted American and transnational corporations from federal taxes when settled on the island. These companies had a strong influence on engineering curricula and engineering research because they provide funding for labs and research tools. U.S. companies frame curricula to serve the needs of the industry in the United States (Grosfoguel 2003; Whalen 2005).

American engineering standards influenced Colombian engineering programs since their inception (Valderrama et. al. 2009). Colombian engineering programs also became active participants of the internationalization of engineering initiatives in the 1990s. This initiative promoted training focused on the needs of the global information technology (IT) industry and an English learning requirement in the curriculum (Cheng and Yang 1998; Bidanda et.al. 2006).

\(^1\) Although Puerto Rico is an associated free state of the US and not a country, I am treating it as an independent nation as their culture and institutional systems differ from those of the US (Duany 2007; Aranda 2008).
Direct recruitment from transnational financial and technology companies and professional network referrals were responsible for the migration of Colombian engineers during the ‘dot com’.

These transnational networks also created global communities of knowledge whose ongoing dialogue transcends the scope of the nation-state’s regulations. These networks cultivate a continuous flow of highly trained engineers that are hired by technology companies in the areas of software development, minicomputers and military technology in the United States (Herbig and Golden 1993; Kenney and Von Burg 1999; Saxenian 2002).

The migration of engineers supported by these networks began in the 1980s but migration intensified in the late 1990s launched by the “dot com” boom. This economic boom was fueled by the incorporation of advanced telecommunication and information technologies in the operations of financial and commercial businesses (Schiller 1990). Because the global market of information technologies influences engineering education in these territories, the participation of engineering graduates in these communities of knowledge and industrial production may lead them to believe that they are privileged individuals with unlimited and unrestrained opportunities for social mobility.

- **Differences: Migration Trajectories and Citizenship**

  - **PUERTO RICANS**

Puerto Rican migrants have encountered unique opportunities and challenges in the United States. The traces of their colonial experience are central to their process of incorporation and the meanings they give to their citizenship. The colonial experience benefits Puerto Ricans in the United States in formal aspects of their incorporation to the country: Puerto Ricans are
considered legal citizens which allows them to freely travel back and forward from the island to
the mainland freely and work legally in the US.

The colonial relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico has a major effect on
the immigration and citizenship histories of Puerto Ricans in the US. Since 1952, Puerto Rico
has been a US Free Associated State – not a nation-state - which means that the island has a local
government with a good deal of autonomy, but just like in any US state, decisions related to
defense, the monetary system, or external trade are made by the United States congress. This
relative control has been part of the island’s history in the past two centuries: Puerto Rico was a
Spanish colony until 1898, when it became an American territory following the Spanish
American war (Cervantes-Rodríguez et al. 2008).

With the United States military and political presence on the island, two interrelated
process began to take place in the first half of the XX century: first, Puerto Rico became the
American experiment on ideal economic development in the 1940s; second, under the economic
development rubric and the recognition of Puerto Ricans as US citizens, labor migration to the
United States became a rule. The role of the United States on the island was that of savior of “a
people without government, whose poverty problem is cultural and whose major issue is
overpopulation” (Briggs 2002; Whalen 2005).

In the 1940s, the United States used Puerto Rico as a space to expand the industrialization
project of the mainland and as an international example of economic development. Indeed,
Puerto Rico was the headquarters of the “Point Four Program”, the training ground for technical
development for third world elites. The industrialization project in Puerto Rico had several stages
throughout the XX century, all of them resulting in a massive exodus of the lower strata of the
island population. The first known operation triggering this exodus was “Operation Bootstrap”, a
program intended to act as incentive to foreign enterprises and investment in Puerto Rico: this program instigated massive foreign capital investment – the model of industrialization by invitation (Grosfoguel 2003; Whalen 2005; Cervantes-Rodríguez et al. 2008).

“Operation Bootstrap” did not only contribute to the migration of low-skilled migrants from the island due to the creation of supervised government contracts in the mainland, but also because the standard of living on the island increased leaving the poor with no option but to flee (Aranda 2007). The creation of government contracts for Puerto Ricans in the mainland was one of many US strategies to control the perceived problem of the island’s overpopulation: a problem that was also tackled by massive sterilization campaigns on the island (Briggs 2002).

These control strategies aligned with the economic, military and symbolic interests of the US on the island. First, between 1898 and 1973, the island was the epicenter of US sugar corporations and labor-intensive industries. Second, the island became a launching point for US invasions and military operations in the Caribbean region. Finally, Puerto Rico was the first showcased experiment of capital import-export oriented industrialization (Grosfoguel 2003; 45 - 46).

In the early 1970s, the number of return migrants to the island increased despite the high rates of unemployment on the island. In the mid-1970s rates of unemployment partially decreased due to the introduction of the 936 act in 1976. This act exempted mainland and transnational corporations from federal taxes when expanded on the island. The presence of high tech, electronics and pharmaceutical companies on the island not only represented a change on the available jobs, but just like the presence of the American culture through the XX century, the presence of high tech companies put a toll on the higher education structure of public and private
universities on the island, as more emphasis and funding was given to research in the sciences and engineering areas. (Grosfoguel 2003; Whalen 2005).

In the 1980s and 1990s, migration from the island to the mainland increased once again establishing patterns of circular migration. Scholars of the Puerto Rican diaspora argue that this pattern is related to economic recession and economic restructuring in the United States. In the mid-1980s high tech and pharmaceutical companies on the island closed as the 936 law provisions came to an end as a result of the Caribbean Basin Initiative that nurtured other free trade zones in peripheral areas making other countries like Puerto Rico (Whalen 2005; Aranda 2008).

Puerto Rican migration to the United States since the 1990s remained steady not only due to continuous demand of work force, but more importantly so because of the network connections Puerto Rican families have with other Puerto Ricans in the mainland. These existent networks play an important role in the contemporary circular migration pattern observed today (Duany 2002; 2007). The areas where Puerto Rican migrants have settled in the United States and have served as nodes of social networks pulling other migrants to come are mainly New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, Newark, NJ and Springfield, MA among others (Whalen 2005; Borges-Mendez 2011).

While some scholars argue that the Puerto Rican diaspora should be studied as an internal migration phenomenon, other scholars sustain that because of Puerto Rico’s colonial history their immigration experience should be examined as a transnational migration phenomenon (Duany 2007; Aranda 2008). The way in which Puerto Ricans experience their American citizenship is contentious because their cultural backgrounds are different from those of American people. Puerto Ricans use their diasporic citizenship as a form of political leverage between island and
mainland politics. This citizenship is the place where different groups of Puerto Ricans formulate and reformulate their national, cultural and ethnic heritage on the island and in the mainland.

In addition, the traces of colonial life have given Puerto Rican migrants a stigma when they arrive to the mainland. Puerto Rican migrants are often stigmatized as coming from pathologized families, as a tax burden for the US, and as a socialist threat. This stigmatization is a result of the images and stereotypes created about Puerto Rico as a colony of the United States. This stigma of inferiority places them in a second-class citizenship status from the outset (Briggs 2002; Whalen 2005; Acosta-Belen and Santiago 2006; Aranda 2007; Thomas 2010).

The paradox of this stigma is that Puerto Ricans on the island have been exposed, educated and socialized into English language, consumerism, suburban housing, among others. “Puerto Ricans have been assimilated to the cultural practices of consumerism and the lifestyle of American middle classes. The mass construction of suburban housing, the exaggerated proliferation of cars, together with the spread of malls all over the island, all assimilated millions of Puerto Ricans to the American way of life, where social needs are commodified and where culture and entertainment are synonymous with shopping in malls and going on vacation to Disneyland” (Grosfoguel 2003; 63).

Some of the most recent literature examining the impact of skin color on the experience of Puerto Ricans in the United States reveal that citizenship and belonging is mediated by their assumed subordinate position as second-class citizens based on what being Puerto Rican means historically on one hand, plus the added weight of ethno-racism. Ethno-racism is identified as societal constraint and response where migrants’ accents, colonial history and phenotype worsens the acceptance migrants may have in institutional environments (Aranda and Rebollo-Gil 2004; Roth 2010).
The migration of Colombians to the United States is more recent than that of Puerto Ricans. Colombian migration to the United States was relatively small between the 1950s and the 1970s. Most of these migrants were mostly from the Colombian upper and middle classes, entrepreneurs, professionals and white looking for job opportunities or to migrate “out of whim”. After the decade of the 1970s, the migration of Colombians to the United States, Spain and Venezuela increased as a result of the formation of peasant guerrillas fighting against the policies of the Colombian government (González 2000).

This period of civil conflict and violence was replaced by the emergence of the drug cartels and the expansion of narcotraffic activities throughout the country in the 1980s. The generalized environment of insecurity and uncertainty felt by Colombian citizens was hindered by the debt crisis of the 1980s that deteriorated local economic conditions and shrunk opportunities (Guarnizo and Díaz 1999). The debt, as well as the income and resource inequalities in Latin American countries was a result of the process of structural adjustment encouraged by multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Organization.

The doctrine of structural adjustment prompted developing countries to borrow money from international banks and multilateral organizations towards industrialization. The combination of economic restructuring processes and the drug trafficking did not only make the conditions of the country difficult for the massive inequalities and unemployment, but also due to the kidnappings, extortions and terrorism brought about by different illegal armed groups such as the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) (Cárdenas and Mejía 2008).
Before the 1980s, middle class individuals and professionals composed Colombian emigration to the United States. Despite of their background and education, some of these migrants struggled to find jobs and to stay in the country, as their legal status was their main barrier to achieve their goal of upward mobility resulting in a class downgrading process. As a way to counterbalance the obstacle this legal status posed it was a common practice for Colombians to marry Americans as a means to naturalize (González 2000).

In regards to the educated and highly skilled, Murcia and Parrado sustain that professional migration skyrocketed in the 1990s because of the perception of uncertainty regarding job placement and future economic mobility opportunities, as well as the poorly developed research and development structure in the country. “The situation that pushes skilled people to leave the country is also based on the poor relative development that science and technology, for its weak capacity to disseminate and contrast the outcome of academic activities between specialists in each disciplinary or academic field, for the weakness of cultural guidelines that do not coincide with the values that are supposed to be appropriate for the development of science” (my translation) (1998; 110).

Unlike Puerto Ricans, Colombians are less likely to face experiences of racial marginalization, but they are likely to experience marginalization associated with their temporary, or in some cases, undocumented status. For instance, while the Colombian engineers that migrated to the United States might have benefited from the increased number of available H1B visas pushed by the information technologies companies in the late 1990s (Chellaraj et al 2006), their temporary visa status might have hindered their possibilities of social mobility, as well as their personal, financial and professional goals.
In addition, the international reputation of drug cartels and the history of civil unrest in Colombia may prompt stereotyping by employers and co-workers. This stereotyping might lead Colombians to face the social constraints of ethno-racism: a response to accents, colonial history and phenotype that worsens the acceptance they receive in institutional environments (Aranda and Rebollo-Gil 2004; Roth 2010).

In sum, the migration and citizenship experience of Puerto Ricans might lead to a beneficial migration and incorporation experience. Their American citizenship allows them to work and travel freely between the mainland and the island. The previous migration experience of their families and friends might help recent Puerto Rican migrants navigate their incorporation to the United States as well. However, because of their colonial past and stereotypical position in the United States, Puerto Ricans are likely to face barriers to their social inclusion and social citizenship.

Although the migration of Colombians to the United States is relatively recent, the high levels of education of most of these migrants would likely help them navigate their incorporation in the country. Despite this advantage, Colombian migrants are likely to face socioeconomic barriers related to their temporary legal status. To a lesser extent, stereotyping related to drug trafficking and violence occurring in Colombia might negatively affect the experience of social inclusion and social citizenship Colombians may have in the United States.

In light of these similarities and differences, it can be argued that Colombian and Puerto Rican software engineers that migrated to the United States during the “dot com” boom experience a set of conditions that lead them to become reflexive about the interplay between legal and social citizenship in their home countries and in the United States. Their conflicted relationship with their national governments and their constrained social mobility experience in
the United States might lead them to become disenchanted or suspicious of what the institutional structures of the nation-state can offer. Furthermore, because of their tight association with science and global scientific discourses these migrants may be likely to endorse issue-based forms of citizenship (e.g. participate in deliberations and actions that further the progress of science and technology in the world), as opposed to nation-based forms of citizenship.

III. Research Methods

This project relied on field research to examine how and in to what degree the experiences professional migrants had in their migration process informed their conceptualizations of nationhood, citizenship and belonging. Because this research dealt with the examination of meanings, the most fruitful way to gain access to these meanings was through qualitative interviews. I interviewed individuals whose migration was motivated by direct recruitment by an information technology company in the United States, as well as those whose migration was motivated by the prospect of joining the IT market by coming to the United States for graduate school.

I supplemented my interviews with few field observations in social gatherings like birthdays and holiday celebrations attended by these engineers. In these field observations, I examined the interactions that they had amongst themselves, with their families and with their living space. I examined how these interactions elicited reflections about the opportunities and challenges these migrants encountered in their settlement process. These observations also captured conversations about how the migration experience shaped the loyalties and attachments of these engineers and how they aligned with different citizenship frameworks and discourses.

- **Sampling**

This study relied on a snowball sampling method. This type of sampling allowed me to
gather data from groups of professionals with specific work and migration experiences that were connected through professional networks. I began by interviewing individuals that met the recruitment criteria I described above and that I knew. Some of these engineers were acquaintances I met when I lived in Boston. These interviewees connected me to other engineers with similar experiences. Additionally, I used the social networking site LinkedIn and the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers to gain access to engineers that were outside of the Boston network I was familiar with.

I interviewed 62 Colombian and Puerto Rican software engineers that migrated to the United States between 1996 and 2004. This time period covers the emergence of the ‘dot com bubble’ in the late 1990s and the years that crystallized the demand for software engineers and information technologies experts in the United States. I interviewed a total of 31 Colombian engineers and 31 Puerto Rican engineers. Fifty of all of these engineers were men and 12 were women. In order to supplement data gathered in these interviews, I also conducted 20 interviews with university professors in engineering schools in Colombia and Puerto Rico. All interviews were conducted in Spanish.

I conducted interviews in the Northeast region of the United States. Most interviewees migrated and settled in urban and suburban locations in Massachusetts, Upstate and downstate New York, as well as Philadelphia and around Washington D. C. I chose the American Northeast region as it houses one of the three main information technology hubs brought software engineers to the United States: Silicon Valley in California, the research triangle in North Carolina and Route 128 in Massachusetts (Alarcón 2001). Additionally, the literature on the Hispanic settlement in the United States shows that highly skilled Puerto Ricans were actively recruited by technology companies such as Kodak and IBM to work in Western New York in
Rochester and Buffalo (De Young 1978).

The Northeast region has historically been a technology, research and development hub with companies such as Raytheon Systems, EMC, IBM, the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Geological Survey, MITRE, Lucent, Xerox, NSA and Naval Undersea Laboratories in the Massachusetts area, Toshiba, Intel, Samsung in the Hudson Valley, NY area (Von Zedwitz and Gassmann 2002). Also, the latest US Department of Commerce report on the foreign born with engineering degrees in the United States, indicates that about 33.6 percent of this population are from Latin America and the Caribbean. These percentages are mostly located in the areas of Baltimore, MD, Boston, MA, Philadelphia, PA and the Washington DC area (Freeman 2011).

- **Research Process**

   In the initial recruitment process, I contacted the engineers that I already knew in the Northeast region and asked them to participate in my study. I sent emails to these engineers explaining the nature of the study and what the study entailed. After the first round of interviews, I requested interviewees to suggest other potential participants for the study. I also advertised the study through the list server of the Hispanic Professional Engineers Association and the professional website “LinkedIn”. Participants mainly contacted me by email if they were interested in participating.

   Two thirds of the interviews were conducted in person and one third via Skype or Google hangouts. Interviews lasted between 60 and 150 minutes. I met interviewees at their homes and at public places such as coffee shops or restaurants in the city where they lived. Before conducting the interview, I explained the study, the benefits and risks of participating in it and briefly elaborated on the types of questions that I would asking. Before proceeding, I asked participants if they have any questions or concerns about the study.
For the ethnographic observations, I asked for consent from the people that were present at the meetings, prior to the observation. Based on the gatekeepers' criteria, I would contact meeting attendees ahead of time to inform them of my intentions of conducting observations, or informed everyone when I arrive at the meetings. I provided everyone at the meeting with a consent form that informed them of the purposes of the study and what it entailed.

**Interview Design**

I conducted semi-structured, qualitative interviews. The goal of these interviews was to understand the experiences the interviewees have had throughout the process of migration and incorporation. The questionnaire was designed to prompt responses that relate with the meanings of citizenship and the nation-state before, during and after the process of migration. My interview guide aimed to elicit participants reflections on their migration and adaptation process in the following areas: a. the influence of engineering training and IT recruitment have in their experience as migrants in the United States; b. their legality process (for Colombians) and their racialization processes (for both groups); c. what the legality and racialization processes mean for their experience of inclusion into a political community and; d. the innovative ways these migrants find to give new meanings to their place in new imagined communities (e.g. universal, global, market, cosmopolitan, etc).

The questionnaire was designed to elicit answers that pertain to the three topical areas laid out in the conceptual framework. It explored the origins of the interviewees’ inclination to become engineers and how their engineering training gave them a particular view on their role as nation-state or global agents. The questions aimed to elicit responses regarding the subjects’ current attachments to their home countries and the United States. Additionally, the questionnaire includes two sets of questions devoted to exploring issues of marginality regarding
legal constraints, ethno-racism and/or discrimination and how these are negotiated (See Appendix 1).

For the purposes of getting detailed information about these topical areas, the questionnaire is divided in six different sections. The first section in the questionnaire aimed to elicit general answers about the current professional and personal situation of the interviewee. These questions intended to get answers about the feelings the interviewees’ had about their profession and the extant racial/ethnic classifications in the United States. This subset aimed at exploring the tension between becoming a national citizen that is expected to support the nation vis-à-vis becoming a boundless global citizen whose circulation around the world would be plausible.

Section two includes questions about the interviewees’ worldview before leaving their home country. These questions assessed feelings and thoughts about their expectations and goals as engineers living in their home countries. This set of questions aimed to explore the extant interactions between the expectations of the professional field and those of the nation, according to the interviewees. Additionally, this section allowed me to understand the involvement the interviewee had with transnational engineering networks.

Section three aimed at getting details about the conditions of recruitment and the hiring processes in the United States. The purpose of these questions was to understand how recruitment was linked to transnational professional networks, as well as to elicit responses on the first impressions migrants had of the context of reception.

Section four diagnoses the experience of migrants in the context of reception. The first part asked general questions about migrants’ adjustment to the city and community where they arrived. These questions aimed to understand the amount of support these migrants had from
family and members from their ethnic or professional group. The second part compared their workplace experiences in the first years with those during the years these migrants have lived in the United States. The following part in this section examined issues of ethno-racism and gender discrimination in the workplace. This section also includes questions regarding work incorporation and visa restrictions for Colombian migrants.

Section five invites interviewees to diagnose their situation in the years they have lived in the United States. These questions aimed to discuss the negotiations of difficulties in which these migrants might have engaged. Additionally, these questions elicited reactions about how these migrants might drew distinctions from other Colombian and Puerto Rican migrants that are not engineers. This set of questions also assessed the way in which these migrants balanced professional vs. ethnic/national labels and identities. Finally, these questions explored the strength of the relationship migrants had with their home countries in the present time: there are a number of questions regarding transnational behaviors that helped me assess the extent to which these behaviors supported nation-state goals or other goals regarding the profession or participation in the global market.

Section six expands on issues of legality and meanings of community and citizenship. This set of questions aimed at understanding participants’ reformulations of the meanings of citizenship in lieu of their migration and adaptation processes. These questions examined migrants’ perspectives of their interests and needs in relationship with the opportunities and challenges offered to them in the United States with a focus on plausible actions they took to ensure those interests and needs. In this section I requested interviewees to think about American institutions and how they compared them with other nation-state based and/or global institutions. Finally, I asked interviewees to express what citizenship and community meant to them.
Analysis

I used the method of comparative analysis and the discovery of theory to analyze the data from the interviews. I discovered categories, its properties and the relationship between the groups of categories. This process, as Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest, starts from the early stages of data collection and continue throughout the process of collection and final analysis. They suggest that close examination and reflection of recently collected data leads to the development of “lower level categories” that prompt initial analysis of the data. Later in the process of coding and analysis, “higher level categories” will emerge that help organize the relationships between concepts and the meanings of those concepts towards an emerging theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; 22-43)

Following this method, I transcribed all interviews, interview notes and field notes into word documents. Field notes emerged from my ethnographic observations; interview notes were memos regarding my impressions about the interview and future areas of analysis that emerged from each interview. The interview transcripts were verbatim from the recorded interviews. I coded and analyzed all these documents using the Qualitative Analysis Software (QAS) “Hyperresearch.” I complemented the analysis with the data from a post interview sheet I filled out after each interview. This sheet included demographic data such as gender, profession, degree granting university, year of migration, name and nature of companies where interviewee worked, citizenship status, among others.

As suggested by Lofland and Lofland (1984) I filed and coded these files periodically. This helped me engage with the data from an early stage and allowed me to discover plausible categories of analysis and existent relationships between these categories. The use of the QAS
not only helped to organize and categorize the data, but also allowed me to run frequencies and cross-tabulations to understand the association between data categories and their properties.

- **Strengths and Weaknesses of Chosen Methods**

  One of the key strengths of this research and its methods is that through qualitative interviews, I was able to gather first hand data that are meaningful to research participants embedded in particular migration systems and specific local contexts. By comparing these two cases, I present analytically equivalent phenomena that ensure similarity, but also variation. This approach ensures conceptual validity. This methodology also allowed me to determine the relative importance of legal citizenship and social citizenship in shaping particular transformations in the concept of citizenship.

  In addition, the fact that I am a Spanish speaking Colombian immigrant who grew up in a middle class family was instrumental in establishing rapport with my research participants. I was able to share common experiences and meanings in the interviews. I was also able to relate with the opportunities and challenges of their migration experience. My understanding of Latin American and Caribbean culture and traditions and my familiarity with the universities and educational environments in which my research participants were trained was also key to establishing that rapport with interviewees. This familiarity was also instrumental in order to contextualize the stories they told about their experiences in my analysis.

  At the same time, these personal characteristics and my familiarity with some of the research participants might have biased my interpretation of the data. My middle class background might have biased my interpretations of the central role class socialization has in devising strategies to countervail obstacles and deflect marginality. Experiences of ethno-racial marginalization might have biased my interpretations about the centrality of this form of
marginalization in the migration and settlement story of interviewees. It is also possible that my role as a female researcher conducting social science research might have had an effect on the responses of my participants. I, however, tried to remain conscious and aware of not influencing the interviews and data analyses with my class, gender, age or academic biases.

Although more convenient for some of the participants, conducting some of the interviews via video chat might have limit my ability to observe and document specific practices and meanings that take place within specific symbolic spatial contexts such as cities, workplaces or homes. In these cases, I added informal questions about the way in which those contexts could have possibly been meaningful to the migration and settlement experience of interviewees.

The major strength of the sampling strategy is that it allowed me to have direct access to a particular subgroup of the population of Colombian and Puerto Rican migrants in the United States. Because data regarding these particular subgroups is restricted in publicly available sources, snowball sampling was the most fruitful sampling and recruitment strategy.

A limitation of the sampling strategy is some unavoidable biases in the sampling method. For instance, about two thirds of Puerto Rican interviewees began working or had work experiences with the same military technologies and defense company. This experience might have affected their experience in the United States and their outlook on citizenship. Similarly, most Colombian engineers in the sample graduated from two of the most prestigious private universities in Colombia. This experience gave them privileged access to transnational networks and opportunities that engineers in public universities would not have easy access to. I strived to diversify the sample as much as I could by using LinkedIn and professional engineering organizations helped in achieving that goal.
Finally, because this is a qualitative study with a non-probabilistic sampling technique, my results might not be generalizable to the entire population of professional migrants in the United States. However, my findings inform academic and policy discussions. For instance, this work reveals the implications of transnational recruitment mechanisms in bringing skilled talent in engineering to the United States. My findings also reveal the ways in which legal and ethno-racial marginalization delay the socioeconomic incorporation and affect the personal lives of professional migrants. Additionally, the analytical scope and research design of this project proved fruitful to study the centrality of meanings to understand social processes and transformations throughout the process of migration.
Classic migration theories maintain that motivations such as the maximization of income or the supply and demand mechanisms of the global market can explain why individuals migrate internationally. These theories sustain that migration is a strategy individuals use to balance the demands of economic and labor markets; to adverse economic circumstances in the sending country; or to match their skills with those of global labor markets (Massey et al 1993, 1999; Bean and Stevens 2003).

Examining the economic and political environments of sending countries along with the socialization experiences of individuals provides a better understanding of the migration motivations of individuals. Considering this approach, I examine the impact neoliberal policies, economic crises and unreliable governmental policies have in creating contexts of insecurity that made Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers view international migration as a solution to stabilize what they perceived as life threatening situations. In addition, I analyze the influence of families and schools had in shaping the cosmopolitan inclinations and transnational opportunities that shaped the migration motivations of these engineers and explain how they made their migration process unique.

Different socialization contexts and influences played a part in shaping the departure narratives of Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers. Most engineers in this study grew up learning to embrace a cosmopolitan worldview instilled by their families and schools, regardless of country of origin. This view encouraged the appreciation of foreign cultures through international travel, fostered the acquisition of international language proficiency, and overall, promoted an awareness of the global nature of the world. The messages engineering faculty disseminated about the role these engineers had when graduating contributed to that
cosmopolitan worldview. The prevalence of ties between multinational technology companies and engineering schools in these countries also helped connect Colombian and Puerto Rican computer engineers with professional development opportunities in the United States. In addition, the contexts of insecurity and uncertainty faced by these countries during the 1990s played an important part in pushing these engineers to leave. Environments of generalized political violence and raised criminality escalated in both countries as a result of civil unrest. Political violence and criminality, interacted with the prevalence of constrained labor markets, limited job opportunities and limited resources as migration push factors.

In this chapter, I explain the contexts of insecurity and uncertainty that these engineers witnessed in their countries and illustrate how they interpreted these contexts as spaces of exclusion where their political enfranchisement was constrained. I document the configuration of formal and informal recruitment mechanisms between American information technologies companies and engineering schools in Colombia and Puerto Rico. I discuss how these mechanisms stemmed from a combination of governmental and educational policies that emerged and operated in the context of economic development and neoliberal doctrines. Lastly, I discuss the central role families, higher education institutions and media representations had in cultivating cosmopolitan ideals and creating tangible opportunities for Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers to engage in international migration. I demonstrate how the cultivation of these ideals and opportunities shapes these engineers’ narratives about who they are, where they belong and what type of citizens they are.

**Contexts of Uncertainty: Economic Crises, Political Violence and Criminality**

The Colombian and Puerto Rican computer engineers that migrated to the United States during the ‘dot com’ boom that I interviewed graduated from college between 1993 and 2000.
The decade of the 1990s was a period of abrupt changes in the economies and political systems of Colombia and Puerto Rico. Colombia’s economy suffered as a result of the government’s appropriation of free market and international competition policies that aimed to propel economic development. The adoption of these policies increased economic inequalities in Colombian society in the hands of right wing political parties. Governmental efforts to cope with the changes dictated by a new constitution that demanded the extension of social rights to previously marginalized indigenous and afro descendent groups led to an increase in internal spending. This increased spending worsened economic matters. International policies that promoted economic competition in Colombia triggered changes in the focus of national educational policies. Educational policies switched the focus of higher education from local to international priorities. In addition to this change, the escalation of political violence caused by the drug trade and the warfare between the national army and illegal armed groups from the right and the left made social conditions more unstable and uncertain (Echavarria 2001; Franco 2003; Aviles 2006).

During this same period, Puerto Rico’s economy decayed because of the end of the 936 federal tax act. The 936 act was introduced in 1976 and allowed transnational companies to expand on the island tax-free. The end of this act in 1993 constrained the job market in the areas of technology and manufacturing, and dramatically increased economic inequalities among most islanders (Cepal 2004; Bram et al 2008). In this context of persistent economic inequalities, the island faced a growth in criminal activity: drug trafficking, carjacking and homicides became more prevalent than in previous decades (Rivera Batiz and Santiago 1996; Villa 2006).
A Future in the Global IT Market

These circumstances generated uncertainty about the future Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers had laid out for themselves when they decided to pursue a career in science and technology in the early 1990s. The imminent appearance of globalization in these countries made middle class families and individuals believe that a career in a technology related field implied an economically viable alternative to the traditionally profitable careers of medicine and law. These beliefs spread as a result of emergent governmental policies and educational programs whose focus was to invest in the growth and improvement of science and technology training as a potential engine of economic development and change.

In Colombia, investment in science and technology educational policies became a central goal in policies that resulted from the opening of the national economy to the world: “in 1989 –1990, the academic community in Colombia undertook an extensive and far reaching examination of the country's scientific directions. With the so called "Mission of Science and Technology" all the public research programmes came under review and their orientations toward the rest of society were reconsidered” (Meyer et al. 1997; 6). Because of its links with the United States, the transnational operations of technology companies in Puerto Rico during the 936 act and the influence of American engineering standards throughout the last half of the twentieth century, beliefs about the potential profitability of a career in engineering were common among prospective university students, as I discuss later in this chapter.

When explaining their rationale to pursue a career in science and technology, Juan, a systems engineering graduate from Colombia, and Luis, a physics graduate from Puerto Rico revealed the contrast between their initial motivations and the downward mobility they faced when entering the job market in their countries upon graduation:
I always saw Systems Engineering as the career of the future: it felt like there was a prospect for development in that area in Colombia. The markets opened up, informatics burst in every level, and it seemed like switching my major would lead to more practical options. Systems engineering is very applicable: I could even see a future in the financial world [with a career in engineering]. When I graduated I realized how difficult things were: I was not paid enough, it didn’t seem like there was a prospect of improvement in the economy…I was still living with my mom and I could barely make ends meet. I ran out of money every month and even if I had spent my money in an organized manner it wouldn’t have been enough to afford a car or an apartment. I got tired of that. I figured I needed to find a job that paid better. I looked for other jobs in Colombia, but it was too difficult to find what I wanted in my field (Juan, Systems Engineer, Burlington, MA).

I remember everyone telling me that I should study engineering because of the job prospects. I was actually more inclined to study something in pure sciences (physics) because I wanted to show everybody that I wanted to do something that would fulfill me and I also wanted to be different. I wanted to do something that was different from law or medicine and something with more job prospects. When I graduated I was interested in learning about the connections between physics and the technology industry so I was aware that I wasn’t going to be able to do anything like that on the island. When I graduated, some companies in Puerto Rico interviewed me and salaries were about 60 to 70% less than what I was offered when I moved to Rhode Island. It is really sad, but everything is extremely expensive in Puerto Rico (Luis, Principal Systems Engineer, Providence, RI).
The contradictory experiences of downward mobility that engineers like Juan and Luis encountered when they entered the job market in their countries mirrored the situation of other professionals that attempted to navigate the economic crises Colombia and Puerto Rico underwent throughout the 1990s. In the last half of the decade, Colombia exhibited the highest level of economic inequality in Latin America after Brazil (Franco 2009) and an unemployment rate of about 20% (Ahumada and Andrews 1998). Similarly, Puerto Rico’s economy remained unstable after the numerous economic policy changes that took effect during the 1950s and 1960s when the United States used the island to showcase a model of import-export oriented industrialization (Grosfoguel 2003). In fact, in the 1990s Puerto Rico had a much lower per capita income than Mississippi, the poorest US state in 1997. In addition, unemployment rates rose to over 20% among men between 20 and 29 and 62% for women (Rivera Batiz and Santiago 1996).

While these economic crises explain the realities of downward mobility engineers like Juan and Luis endured upon their college graduation, policies that focused on promoting investment and improvement in science and technology in these countries could have been responsible as well. Higher education institutions invested resources to propel their science and technology curricula at a faster pace than the actual generation of local job market opportunities in those fields (Murcia and Parrado 2013; Birson 2014). To illustrate this point, it is interesting to observe that between 1997 and 2001 four of the top Puerto Rican engineering schools were among those graduating the majority of Hispanics in science and technology fields in the United States. A majority of these students moved to the mainland upon graduation (Chapa and De La Rosa 2006).
In the midst of the contradictions of downward mobility these engineers experienced, they described how the social environments and institutions of their countries gradually transformed between the time they started college and their graduation. Although already part of the institutional cultures of these countries, corruption in government and institutions and prices going through the roof were among the problems that intensified during this period. Some of the interviewees that joined the job market as contractors for the local government upon graduation observed and endured unethical and sometimes illegal behaviors sponsored by their managers and clients. For example, Sebastián, a Colombian computer engineer who worked in a small contracting firm before migrating to the United States, illustrated these transformations by revealing that the company he used to work for, had to rely on a middleman and pay him “under the table” to be able to maintain their contracts with the government. Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers alike reported these experiences when dealing with government institutions and with clients.

*Structural Factors: Violence and Criminality*

The 1990s in Colombia and Puerto Rico also marked a period of growing violence and criminality. The prevalence of violence and criminality in Colombia has deep and complex roots. Colombia has endured ongoing civil unrest for almost a century. In spite of these roots, the violence and criminality of the 1990s in Colombia was distinctively characterized by confrontations between illegal armed groups and civil society, illegal drug trafficking and the growth of civil distrust for the local government’s policies and actions. Puerto Rico witnessed similar social problems throughout this decade: paradoxically, the creation of state policies fighting crime and drugs triggered an unprecedented increase in criminal behavior and homicidal activities on the island during this decade.
Puerto Ricans: Between the Island and the Mainland

Puerto Rican scholars that studied the growth of criminal activity and the staggering rise of homicide rates in the 1990s contend that the introduction of state policies prohibiting the traffic and circulation of illegal drugs had a ripple effect that made other types of criminal activity spike. Drug trafficking in Puerto Rico was sustained by the configuration of illegal underground markets in which law enforcement officers and criminals participated equally. These policies, scholars argue, also contributed to the criminalization of youth in poor areas, which led to an augmentation of homicide rates on the island (Morán 2006; Villa 2006).

Andrés, a Puerto Rican computer engineer who moved to Massachusetts to work with a defense company upon his graduation from Universidad de Mayagüez, alluded to the societal changes he witnessed upon graduation and how they served as a motivation to leave the island:

I was not liking the environment either…especially me being young…there was crime everywhere and people’s attitudes were changing. There are still a lot of good people in Puerto Rico, but there are a lot of bad people that associate with criminal activities. Everything that was going on at the time was a real shame and to be honest it was one more thing that pushed me to come here.

Andrés’ narrative represents the concerns about the security situation of the island. Nearly half of the sample of Puerto Rican engineers expressed this concern when justifying their decision not to remain on the island. It is important to highlight that about 40% of this subgroup talked about these concerns in the context of being vocal about their belief in the island’s prospects of improvement. This narrative was connected with the ideal of returning to the island in the future when things improved.
Juliana, a computer engineer that migrated to upstate New York to work with a digital technologies company and who recently moved to Florida to be closer to the island, spoke about her attachment to the island in the context of the growth of criminal activities: “At that time I wanted to ignore everything that had to do with the security situation, with the economic situation, with how dysfunctional politics were… I wanted to believe in the potential of the island. That was a desire that dissolved upon graduation when I learned more about all the money the state government wasted and how dangerous things were at the time.”

Although Puerto Rican’s views and concerns about the rise of violence and criminality before their migration seemed mild and not explicitly pointed at drug trafficking or homicidal activities as the causes of their concerns, the literature confirms this trend. Between 1990 and 2000 there were a total of 8594 registered homicides on the island: half of these homicides were directly linked with activities derived from illegal drug trafficking (Villa 2006; 163). The average murder rate in Puerto Rico during the first half of the 1990s was about 17 per 100,000 persons (Rivera Batíz and Santiago 1996). Arguably, other forms of daily violence, such as the increase of carjacking can be attributed to the dual pressures of the economic crisis and the war on drugs.

Puerto Rican engineers used the crisis of the economy, the constriction of the highly skilled job market and the rise of criminality when reflecting on the deterioration of civic, political and government institutions on the island. Although some of their testimonies displayed optimism about the prospects of the island, all of them felt that the reach of their social rights and freedoms was going to be limited had they stayed. Julia, an electrical engineer that moved to Boston to work with a telecommunications company and who dreams about the day she will
return to the island, synthesizes how the cost of living and the security situation on the island led to a situation in which the basic social rights she expected to have access to were limited:

In Puerto Rico it doesn’t matter where you live…you can get mugged, almost everywhere. You can lose your job all of a sudden; it doesn’t matter if you worked at the same place for months or years. There are like twenty thousand people competing for the same job. Education is awful: finding a good school for your children is not possible. If you get sick, please excuse me… but you are screwed: if you go to the hospital you don’t know if anybody is going to take care of you. Life is clearly easier and more reliable in Massachusetts. From a practical standpoint it makes sense to be here, but I really wish I could just move back. I have always wanted to return and that will never change.

Julia’s account exposes the ambiguity some Puerto Rican engineers felt when referring to the available options and their cultural and affective attachments to the island. This ambiguity illustrates how citizenship today, and especially for individuals for which migration is a choice, is a multidimensional concept. Puerto Rican engineers who experienced this ambiguity fought to reconcile the extent, content and depth of citizenship (Isin and Turner 2007). In their narratives, these engineers implied an ideal way of belonging and participating in Puerto Rican society, but they struggled to negotiate that ideal with what is being offered to them by the political, economic and social systems of the island.

❖ Disenchanted Colombians

Despite the fact that both Colombian and Puerto engineers pointed to the growth of violence and criminality as the reasons that motivated them to leave their countries, accounts about fear of death, general insecurity and increased distrust in government institutions were much more salient among Colombians. The implications that violence and criminality had on the
lives of Colombian engineers were much more explicit than those of Puerto Ricans. While some Puerto Rican engineers wanted to portray the island in a positive light, Colombians showed no intention of doing so. Their narratives exhibited an urgent desire to flee based upon the limited opportunities that were available, as well as their distrust in government institutions and in Colombian citizens.

Current literature about the Colombian conflict points to a complex combination of factors that made the 1990s one of the worst decades of political violence in the nation’s history. The production and international circulation of illegal drugs by drug cartels, the military and political conflict between guerrillas and the national army, the privatization of justice in the hands of paramilitary groups are among those factors (Richani 1997; Franco 2009). In his analysis of the violence of the 1990s, Bergquist et al. (2003) synthesizes the interplay of different political actors and how they contribute to a society living in fear: “There has been strengthening of the many armed actors, whose actions intertwine, confront one another, feed on each other, an even sometimes complement one another. The result is a sensation of total chaos. But this sensation hides the frightful reality that the war has generated its own mechanisms of “order”. These particularly interest the actors in the conflict, but they have a high cost both for the state, whose legitimacy progressively erodes, and for the civil population, which directly supports the weight of the conflict” (Pg. 186).

In this context of civil unrest, Colombians began to feel they were living in a “risk society” whose future was determined by surviving an unpredictable day-to-day life. Simple acts like stepping out of their houses or “being in the wrong place at the wrong time” were perceived as risky as random bombings or kidnapping acts could occur at any time. This theme was common in the narratives that these engineers associated with their diagnosis of rights, security
and future as Colombian citizens. Santiago, an electrical engineer who had worked for a Colombian company that developed microwave technologies prior to migration, explains how this context of insecurity and political violence became the ultimate reason for him to flee:

In regards to that period of time, the political situation of the country…there was a lot of violence. It was the time when Pablo Escobar was all people talked about, it was the years when there were bombings everywhere. As a matter of fact, the main reason I left Colombia and I came to the United States was because of the job my dad had and the top position he had. They threatened him with kidnapping me, so all of a sudden I had to flee, in a period of a week. My decision was to move to a place where I already knew someone, so I moved to Boston where my aunt lived. That’s what made me leave the country… I left and was going to wait and see if things would calm down, but they never did.

These types of narratives were salient among all of the Colombian engineers interviewed in this study. Some engineers emphasized the anxiety of living in contexts of uncertainty and instability propelled by illegitimate forms of social, economic and political order. These narratives also alluded to the disenchantment of living in a chaotic society, as Bergquist’s excerpt above indicates. This sensation of chaos was worsened by the government’s clumsy and inefficient response to managing the changes brought by the new constitution, the economy and the disintegration of the social order in the hands of illegal armed groups and drug cartels.

Felipe, a computer engineer that attended Universidad Javeriana in Cali, referred to his attempts at improving a life of uncertainty and injustice by moving to the capital city and then to the United States. He explains:
I got to the point where I reflected: I have a career, I am intellectually capable, I work for a good company, but I still have to deal with this back and forth with these people (unidentified illegal armed group). I believe they just stereotyped me because I had a good car, and they never thought I was a recent systems engineer graduate working with a multinational company; what they immediately assume is that I was a lavaperro. So that model where the influence of narco-traffic supports the economy becomes incredibly maluco (uncomfortable). That’s why I moved to Bogotá, where it ended up being basically the same. It was a really weird mix….a mix of instability, insecurity. For example, you would go out on a bike ride and you never knew when a truck would pull out and steal your bike and the bikes of another twenty people at the same time. It would of course be at gun point…so it wasn’t very inviting to stay in the country.

Felipe and his family, like about 16% (5) of Colombians in this study, endured extortion, kidnapping and imposed taxation by both right and left wing illegal armed groups. These tactics were common among guerrilla groups as a way to intimidate landowners who had accumulated wealth by appropriating land illegally or through undetermined legal channels. Guerrilla extortions were a response to their frustration with the government’s delay to institute agrarian land reform. Although right wing groups did not necessarily engage in extortions or kidnappings, they were responsible for a large part of human rights violations in Colombia during this period. The actions undertaken by left and right wing groups in the 1990s are all associated and linked to drug cartels and drug trade (Bibes 2001).

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2 Lavaperros are members of the Colombian mafia who take care of daily criminal activities with lower importance. Lavaperros are in the bottom of the hierarchy and have limited upward opportunities within the criminal organization.
The production and circulation of illegal drugs created “alternative” illegitimate economies and political spaces the Colombian government was not able to control. Drug cartels and illegal armed groups that were their supporters committed indiscriminate acts of terrorism. These acts consisted of random bombings in public places and kidnappings whose victims was the general civilian population. Given the government’s inability to prevent these acts of terrorism paramilitary groups emerged to make justice with their own hands, slaughtering anybody who had any tie (even if remote) to the guerrillas or the drug cartels. (Echavarria 2001; Aviles 2006; Cárdenas and Mejía 2008). These concurrent events shattered trust in government institutions and made intolerance grow as part of this context of uncertainty and insecurity (Franco 2009).

Given the contexts of uncertainty and insecurity Colombian engineers endured before they migrated to the United States, none of them spoke optimistically or nostalgically about their ties to their country, like Puerto Ricans did. High levels of disenchantment and fear characterized the accounts of departure of all the Colombian engineers that participated in this study. This disenchantment played an important role in Colombian’s diagnosis of their citizenship rights, participation, membership and belonging to their country.

Jaime, an electronics engineer who used to teach at an engineering school in Bogotá, illustrates how the political and economic situation produced high levels of anxiety in his daily life and led him to believe that his days were numbered in the country:

I was worried about my security, I was fed up of living in fear. That daily practice of trying to have eyes in the back of your head to see if anyone is following you made me really tired. What made me more tired was thinking that if I were to get a good job I was never going to be at peace. I knew that if I did well and found a really good job I was
going to make good money, but also a big headache. The headache of thinking that people wanted to take it away from me…so there was no future [in Colombia].

Jaime’s narrative encapsulates the urgency most Colombian engineers spoke about when alluding to their prospects of living in their country. Similar to the accounts of Puerto Ricans these narratives of urgency represent Colombians’ perception about the limited rights and opportunities they would have if they stayed in their country. I argue that these accounts of uncertainty and disenchantment play an important role in Colombians’ interpretations of their citizenship and belonging after they migrate to the United States.

Despite their historical and political differences, the incidence of the transnational war against drugs and the adoption of free market and international competition policies in Colombia and Puerto Rico had devastating consequences for the legitimacy of government institutions and the maintenance of tolerant societies. Although these factors and consequences had different effects on how Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers reflected about their citizenship and belonging to their countries, they played a pivotal role in their decision to migrate to the United States.

In spite of the accounts of downward mobility, constrained job markets and political violence discussed in this section, one could argue that other Colombians and Puerto Ricans endured similar circumstances in the 1990s. The influence of universities, families, and media representations made these engineers a distinctive group of individuals for whom international migration was a choice, rather than a last resort. I argue that such distinctiveness has to do with the knowledge about the global market and the transnational connections they acquired in engineering school, as well as the cosmopolitan inclinations these engineers learned to embrace.
from socialization agents such as their schools, their families and the media. I discuss those transnational connections and socialization experiences next.

*Engineering Education: Curricular Standardization, Mentoring and Transnational Connections*

Educational opportunities help families further and expand the transmission of cultural capital and class dispositions onto their children. Schools support the formation and inculcation of scholastically recognized knowledge. Schools are also repositories of resources and relationships that cultivate the transmission of cosmopolitan values and transnational connections. The majority of Colombians and Puerto Ricans in this study attended engineering schools equipped with internationally accredited curricula, faculty trained in the United States and France, internship and study abroad programs, as well as moderate research development resources. Inadvertently, these programs and resources helped bridge Colombian and Puerto Rican engineering students with educational opportunities and transnational connections that facilitated their migration to the United States.

In Puerto Rico, the influence that technology and pharmaceutical companies that settled on the island due to the 936 section led to an overproduction of engineering graduates, which led to an imbalance between labor supply and demand (Birson 2014). This imbalance encouraged the migration of Puerto Rican engineers already fostered by transnational recruitment networks American industries created with engineering schools such Universidad de Puerto Rico, Mayagüez. In Colombia, the push to structure engineering programs that imitated those of the

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3 Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Mayaguez is one of the top engineering schools in the United States and was the top producer of engineering graduates between 1997 and 2001 (Chapa and De La Rosa 2006).
United States and Europe led to incongruity between the messages that college students received in relation to the available opportunities in the national job market (Murcia and Parrado 2013).

❖ The Prospect of Working in “Advanced Contexts”

Engineers in this study revealed that experiencing “more advanced” contexts was among their motivations to migrate. In the view of interviewees, the academic and financial resources that American technology research and development facilities and universities had constituted such “advanced” contexts. From their perspective, these contexts would allow these engineers to learn and/or improve their English skills, interact with people from different countries and experience the transnational operations of corporate environments. From their perspective, these skills and strengths were fundamental to complete their training as competitive professionals after graduating from engineering school.

Daniel, a systems engineer who moved to Colombia’s capital city from his native Cali⁴ to pursue his degree at a private engineering school, felt the need to leave the country to experience new things and improve his English skills. His motivations stemmed from his reflection about the types of teaching materials his professors utilized to teach about the latest trends in engineering. Daniel says:

I knew that [learning] English was going to be a great platform to succeed because all of my undergraduate books were in English. All of my programming books came from abroad…some came from Spain, but to be honest with you, programming books in Spanish are scarce…everything was in English. So I thought about it and realized that all advances in my career are written in English, it is really people from other countries that publish them, and it is really other people that lead technological innovation. If I want to

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⁴ The third largest city of Colombia.
be able to communicate with them, if I want to send them emails, I have to improve my English, which was my motivation [to leave].

Daniel’s narrative lists basic skills and competencies other engineers alluded to when explaining their reasons to choose the United States, rather than any other destinations. These skills and competencies align with what is conceived as cosmopolitan inclinations and a distinctive awareness of the global nature of engineering as a community of knowledge. Daniel’s account also provides us a hint of the emphasis of his education on transcultural communication and the consolidation of engineering as a transnational community of knowledge. This emphasis becomes clearer in the accounts of other engineers whose departure was tied to weighing the available opportunities of academic and/or professional paths in engineering in their home countries against paths in the United States. Academic paths in Colombia and Puerto Rico seemed impossible to pursue and professional paths were perceived as “dead ends” because of the constrained situation of the local labor market.

Mariana - a Colombian systems engineer and mathematician that came to the United States to work in a financial software company - and Manuel – a Puerto Rican electrical engineering recruited by an American defense technologies company -, expressed those contradictions to justify why leaving was the best choice.

I didn’t see a clear professional path in Colombia. I wanted to be a researcher, I wanted to work with the latest and most advanced cutting edge technology and that was not available in Colombia. I wanted to be surrounded by people that were doing the latest in technology. I know it sounds pedantic, but Colombia seemed small in relationship with my aspirations, so I really didn’t want to stay (Mariana).
There were no jobs in Puerto Rico for engineers that were doing what I wanted to do…and that’s mainly because they closed the [military] bases on the island. If I wanted to work and truly apply what I studied, I had to leave. If I stayed in Puerto Rico I would have ended up working at a factory, just like my parents did. They always told me they didn’t want that for me and that the only way was for me to leave Puerto Rico to work on what I studied (Manuel).

The accounts Mariana, Daniel and Manuel offered to explain their migration motivations result from the interaction between the internationalization of engineering education and the opening of national economies to compete in the global market throughout the 1990s that I alluded to earlier. Throughout this decade, Latin American governments and higher education institutions enrolled in initiatives to internationalize the curricula of undergraduate and graduate programs in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math. The purpose of internationalization was to train professionals that were capable of competing in the global market.

- **The Internationalization of Engineering**

  The internationalization of engineering gradually changed curricula in universities and switched the focus of professor-student mentoring relationships from a focus on training students to contribute to the development of their local labor market economy to preparing them to compete in international and transnational contexts. This process helped form an international division of labor and foster a continuous supply of highly skilled workers to core economies (Cheng and Yang 1998; Iredale 2001). The values, skills and practices that the internationalization of engineering promotes, concretize sets of dispositions of membership in the transnational field of technology knowledge and production. As Igarashi and Saito (2014;
227) point out, the focus of educational systems in the neoliberal era shifts from the national to the global economy. This creates new imperatives of flexibility and adaptability to changing conditions and to coexisting with others in diverse public spaces.

The Accrediting College Programs in Applied Science, Computing, Engineering, and Technology Education (ABET) in the United States led most efforts towards the internationalization of engineering in the world. In an effort to comply with ABET’s mandates Spanish-speaking engineering organizations and schools formed the Iberoamerican Society of Engineering Education (ASIBEI) to prepare engineering students to compete in the global market and to protect them from the “aggressiveness” of this market. ASIBEI laid out a list of competencies engineers needed in order to compete in the global market, as well as to balance their efforts between the needs of local and international contexts. In light of these initiatives, engineering programs started promoting the following competencies: a) profound knowledge of the needs of the hemisphere and ability to take advantage of the rich aspect represented in cultural diversity; b) the habit of generating local solutions to international problems including participating, outsourcing to the local small business and engineering consultant firms; c) knowledge of English and at least one foreign hemisphere language; d) engineers should learn to become project managers and system integrators (Lucena et. al 2008; 441).

The internationalization of engineering engendered a “culture lag” in Colombian universities as its principles countered the already institutionalized goals of engineering. These goals aimed to train engineers to be able to contribute to the development of their nations. Engineering professors in private and public universities pointed out that the guidance they provided to students regarding their employment and professional development options upon
graduation were often contradictory. Demetrio, an engineering professor at Colombia’s National University remembers his experience teaching and mentoring students in the early 1990s:

  Our country was very parochial. Today we are much more open to the world thanks to the influence of information technologies. This is a country that has not had any migrations, we are not as multicultural as the United States: that made our perspective very naïve and narrow back in the 1990s. We believed that the necessary conditions to create advanced science and technology were almost impossible to achieve in our country. It is true. At the time we didn’t have the capacity, even if we had the resources. I think that was the typical mentality of a developing country.

  Demetrio’s experience of balancing the pressures of the global market in information technologies exemplifies Beck’s arguments about the pressures of globalization on institutions and individuals. He contends that the merger of education and knowledge in societies in times of globalization, forces institutions and individuals to cope with the multiple dimensions and traps of local and global lifestyles (2000; 138). These pressures simulate those of Puerto Rican engineering professors in this period. As a matter of fact, the act of balancing local and global living is an exercise Puerto Ricans and their institutions have engaged in for almost a century given the colonial relationship the United States has sustained with the island.

  Due to this relationship, an “international” style of education has been a standard practice in Puerto Rico (Colegio de Ingenieros y Agrimesores de Puerto Rico 2014). In that sense, the internationalization of engineering did not induce major changes on the focus of training except for a change in the way in which curricular materials were written for dissemination purposes. Despite the long transnational history of engineering in Puerto Rico, professors struggled to negotiate the pressures of the standardization of engineering, the influence of American high tech
companies on the changing curriculum and making Puerto Rican engineers a distinctive group of proud nationals.

Like other engineering faculty at the Universidad de Puerto Rico (UPR) in Mayagüez, Leopoldo – an associate professor of electrical engineering - felt conflicted about teaching certain subjects in English and about propagating teaching materials in English. He believes that UPR should teach and promote the Spanish language not only because it gives engineering students a competitive edge, but also because they should remain loyal to Puerto Rico’s cultural heritage. Leopoldo pointed out:

The available syllabi on our website are in English because we want to make sure our students are competitive in the United States: we want to make sure that our engineering program is accredited by ABET. Because ABET is an American institution and has a lot of say in how decisions are made in the engineering world, we want to comply so we make sure we get funding for education and research.

Internationalization has aided engineering programs to standardize the skills that their graduates needed to compete in the global information technology market. It also helped strengthen the ties between American technology companies and engineering schools. These ties materialized in formal and informal connections nurtured by study abroad and internship programs, through ties that faculty had with engineering schools in the United States and Europe, as well as the configuration of formal transnational recruitment mechanisms set up by technology companies.

- Bridging the Gap: Internships and Transnational Network Connections

References by professors in class and conversations about the teaching and research resources available in universities abroad and the explosion of the technology market in
developed countries were among the subtle ways in which these connections materialized. Engineers benefitted most by the concrete ties that engineering schools and engineering faculty had with technology industries and universities abroad. Colombian engineers referred to casual conversations they had with their professors about the pros and cons of leaving the country as initial triggers to crafting a plan to leave. They also talked about the knowledge and experience they acquired in study abroad and internship programs that they participated in as motivators. Puerto Rican engineers also alluded to their experiences in study abroad and internship programs coordinated by their universities, but most of all to the loud and clear presence of transnational technology companies in their education and recruitment.

Guillermo, a computer engineer that started working for a transnational software technology company in Bogotá after graduation and who was later transferred to Boston, spoke about the long-term effect that these connections had. He specifically referred to the internship he completed as a result of his professor’s ties with a university in France:

I went to France thanks to Romelio (professor). I went to learn about research in Nantes. There were four people from my school, each of us from a different engineering field. We spent three months doing research… but more than the research it’s the opportunity and the connections you make, and simply being able to see how education works in these countries, the system and the technology and the processes… everything was so enriching. So what our university did about forcing our professors to get their doctorates is quite smart, from my point of view, because they killed two birds with one stone.

- **Nature of Colombian and Puerto Rican Transnational Connections**

About half of Colombians in the sample found jobs in the United States as a result of their professors’ recommendations or connections with American recruiting companies in...
Colombia. While most Colombian engineers turned their professor’s connections abroad to their advantage, about 25% (7) migrated to the United States without a clear plan. This subgroup migrated to the United States to pursue graduate school or to study English. The ones that pursued graduate school used it to learn how to better navigate the American job market and to make new connections that eventually led them to land jobs in the technology market.

It is important to point out that although this subgroup was trained under the premise of internationalization, most of them attended engineering schools whose concrete connections with technology centers and universities abroad were still in the making. The evidence from this study reveals that public engineering schools in Colombia fit this description. As a matter of fact, witnessing their colleagues being hired abroad served as an additional trigger to venture into leaving. Duván, an electronics engineer who came to the United States to join a transnational startup company, suggested that while leaving the country to join a small company that was just starting seemed like a risk, it felt like a good opportunity given the advantageous economic moment of the global Internet and telecommunications markets. Duván explains:

There was also a very big influence…when I graduated it was exactly the time of the boom of telecommunications: the ‘dot com’, I am not sure if you’ve heard of it. All of my peers started traveling everywhere and connecting with the most important companies such as Sysco, Bay Network and Nortech. It was hard to tell who was doing better economically speaking in terms of their position in their companies, or whether they were transferred… I mean, once they were transferred to Miami, they would start traveling everywhere…everybody would brag about being here and everywhere. So I felt like I also wanted to have the ambition of conquering the world by working hard, right?
The late 1990s coincides with the peak of the “dot com” boom: a period of unprecedented growth in Internet and telecommunication industries in industrialized countries (Schiller 2000). During this period the demand for software programmers and developers skyrocketed in the US in key information technology hubs in Silicon Valley, the Research Triangle in North Carolina and Route 128 in Massachusetts (Alarcón 2000). Because of the dot com’s economic promise, the American government increased the work visa quota available for foreign-born professionals. Since its inception in 1990, the work visa program has had a 65,000 person annual cap of H-1B visas, except between 1998 and 2004 when an increased cap was allowed to cover the demands of the ‘dot com’ boom (Kerr and Lincoln 2010).

The increased investment in Internet and telecommunications research and development in the United States explains the perception Duván had about the demand for jobs in the United States. In the period studied, 84% (26) of Colombians were initially hired as software developers or information technologies technicians. Other Colombians performed jobs in the telecommunications, education and logistics fields. It is important to underscore that while the connections engineering professors had facilitated access to job opportunities in the United States, some of those who venture to migrate without a concrete job opportunity spent years in unstable work conditions as temporary workers.

The extant connections between American technology companies and Puerto Rican universities were much stronger than those in the Colombian case. The internationalization of engineering initiative helped strengthen the ties between American technology companies and engineering schools that emerged in the context of the 936 federal act that exempted transnational corporations from federal taxes. The presence of these companies on the island resulted in curricular changes, funding for laboratories and the establishment of biannual job fair
events that focused on the recruitment of engineering graduates to work in the United States (UPRM 2015).

Lisandro, a graduate of UPR’s master’s program in mechanical engineer, articulated how engineering training in his university became a boot camp to prepare Puerto Ricans to leave the island upon graduation. This type of training, as Lisandro points out, left little room for Puerto Rican engineers to believe that there was a professional future for them on the island. Lisandro indicated:

They [UPR] did not have to make too many adjustments to our education because it had always been based on the big companies. They trained you with the assumption that you were going to work in a large company, something like a Fortune 100. Had it been Hewlett Packard, Intel…I mean, a lot of my friends work in Intel, in Motorola…so, because a lot of those companies were settled in Puerto Rico there was a huge interaction between companies and the school. The companies would say ‘this is what I want in an engineer’ and that’s exactly what the university would give them. That was an advantage for us because we understood the needs of these companies first hand: sometimes it was the companies teaching us in the classroom.

Internship, co-op and scholarship programs funded by companies such as IBM, Kodak, Xerox and Lucent Technologies facilitated the strengthening of transnational recruitment mechanisms between American high tech companies and Puerto Rico’s engineering schools. About 35% (11) of Puerto Rican engineers in the sample participated in internship programs in these companies that lasted between six weeks to two months over one or two summers before their college graduation. Most engineers that had this experience were hired upon graduation or were awarded scholarships that allowed them to complete a part-time master’s degree while
working with one of these companies. The remaining 65% (20) of Puerto Rican engineers found jobs by participating in job fairs organized by their universities. These engineers reported receiving between three to ten job offers from research and development companies that specialized in software development, data storage, manufacturing and military technologies.

The engineers that found employment through job fairs in the late 1990s indicated that the demand for computer engineers in the United States was massive. Hiring companies would pay for airfares and buses to be able to transport groups of Puerto Rican engineers to different cities in the American northeast. Interviewing sessions would take place in hotels and conference centers and a great majority of candidates would receive offers from several employers.

While the ‘dot com’ boom explains the exploding demand for engineers in the context of the job fairs, most Puerto Ricans referred to affirmative action policies as fundamental forces pushing recruitment on the island. Puerto Rican engineers were ideal candidates for technology companies aiming to hire trained engineers without visa restrictions while meeting their diversity requirement. While affirmative action or equal opportunity employment policies were enforced since the mid-1960s by the American government, the 1990s coincides with a period in which larger corporations were actively pressured to recruit minorities in managerial and professional positions (Kelly and Dobin 1998).

Andrés, a computer engineer who received job offers from five American technology companies in different regions in the United States recalls printing a pile of resumes, distributing them among different technology companies that attended the job fair and often getting interviews on the spot. Andrés compared the salaries proposed by different companies and decided to join a defense company. This company did not offer him the best salary, but it was
located near the Boston area, where most of his Puerto Rican classmates had gone over the years. Andrés pointed out:

What I remember, around 97 or 98, the boom was ridiculous. We are talking about more than thirty people that moved every year. The place where it all happened was the job fair. Many international companies attend and it is quite competitive. It really does give a lot of options to the students that attend and that is mainly because this fair is the niche to hire Hispanic engineers. There are many reasons why it is the niche: we are American citizens, so it’s easy for foreign companies, I mean…American companies, to establish their diversity quota. At the same time, it helps us, because it makes us more competitive and they can find the talent they are looking for.

Andres’ account sheds light on the advantages and paradoxical aspects of the role and position Puerto Rican engineers had in the American IT market. While the training and education they received in engineering school in the island equipped them to get a job in the IT sector in the United States, Puerto Rican engineers were aware that their entrance to the mainland job market would include managing the newly acquired classification of an ethnic minority. Their professional competency and this ethnic classification become contentious and contradictory aspects of Puerto Ricans’ labor market incorporation, as I develop in the following chapter.

As the quote suggests, equal opportunity employment policies promoted the configuration of ethnic niches in the Upstate New York and Boston regions. Ethnic niches became a source of social capital that allowed Puerto Ricans to gain access to key information and opportunities in the settlement process, as Alarcón (2001) suggests. The evidence from this study reveals that ethnic niches not only created favorable conditions for engineers that migrated
to these regions, but also served as an important guiding resource for them, as I elaborate in chapter V.

Creating and Recreating Cosmopolitanism: The Influence of Family and Media Representations

The exposure Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers had to cosmopolitan values and connections made them a distinctive group with access to exclusive social and cultural capital that allowed them to view international migration, for the most part, as a profitable, achievable and potentially safe alternative. These values and connections allowed these engineers to easily use their knowledge and background as a bridge to academic and professional opportunities in the United States. These engineers acquired relevant knowledge and skills to be able to compete in the global high tech job market from their exposure to engineering curricula and the international focus of their professors. They benefitted from personal and professional connections their families and engineering professors had abroad in universities, high tech companies and research centers. They also learned to appreciate practices such as traveling and getting advanced training abroad from their families, their professors and from transnational media representations that imparted ideas about specific career and occupational interests that were not available in Colombia or Puerto Rico.

The exposure these engineers had to this knowledge and connections is part of the social conditioning that shapes their class habitus: a set of specific appreciations, behaviors and actions that allow actors to navigate cultural understandings and fight for particular positions in different social fields. This knowledge and these connections condition these engineers into a homogenous group of individuals capable of generating similar practices and meanings (Bourdieu 1984). As I discuss in chapter V, these cosmopolitan and global inclinations are
meaningful repositories of cultural capital that helped these migrants leverage resources to countervail some of the challenges presented by the migration process.

Broadly defined, cosmopolitan inclinations are forms of social and cultural capital that prepare individuals to engage in transnational activities and to interact with foreign cultures (Hannerz 2000; Beck and Cronin 2006; Weenink 2008). Cosmopolitan inclinations are taught and reproduced by families with high socioeconomic status (Igarashi and Saito 2014), as well as higher education institutions that subscribe to the promotion of global communities of knowledge and the internationalization of education (Adler and Haas 1992; Beck 2000; Mitchell 2003).

The configuration of cultural structures that promote cosmopolitan orientations becomes widespread because of the transnational circulation of knowledge and goods propelled by processes of globalization. Having access to these orientations becomes an important tool to fight for dominant positions in privileged transnational fields in an increasingly stratified global society. Cosmopolitan orientations are attractive and useful attributes that selected schools and privileged families reproduce upon individuals, thus recreating new conditions for the social exclusion of those who have no access to learning them (Calhoun 2003; Lizardo 2005; Igarashi and Saito 2014).

The messages and knowledge that engineers received from their families, engineering school and media representations also fostered identification with cosmopolitan or global ideals that aimed to prepare them to navigate culturally diverse environments and to manage the transnational experiences they would face as international migrants. This type of conditioning shaped the way in which Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers conceived the type of professional world they expected to thrive in after graduation. The origination of formal and
informal transnational recruitment mechanisms between American high tech industries and engineering schools in Puerto Rico and Colombia allowed this socialization and training to crystallize into concrete professional and academic opportunities in the United States.

In his analysis of the reproduction of class values, Bourdieu (1984) argues that parents play a pivotal role in imparting specific class dispositions, practices and preferences onto their children. Daily interactions, conversations and family plans serve as “imperceptible” lessons that shape the preferences, cultural legitimacy and future access children in bourgeois families have to privileged social spaces (fields). Parents are able to inculcate cosmopolitan class dispositions if they previously had those experiences imparted by their families, as well as by schools and universities whose goal was to disseminate ideas and practices of openness towards foreign and transnational cultures (Igarashi and Saito 2014).

Before migrating to the United States, 20% (13) of engineers in this study had traveled to the United States and Europe and about 80% (50) had an intermediate level of English. Some of the engineers that had been abroad had traveled with their parents when they were young children. Other engineers participated in internships in research laboratories in the United States and France. Most engineers who had not traveled abroad before migrating to the United States, reported having a close family member who attended graduate school abroad or had traveled widely.

Family members transmitted knowledge about the logics of the emerging field of information technologies in developed countries and shared information about plausible future opportunities in this field with computer engineers such as Esteban and Epifanio. Esteban and Epifanio attended private engineering schools in Colombia and migrated to the United States to pursue a graduate degree that would serve as a springboard to a career in technology. They
revealed that the goal of pursuing a career in technology and the ideal of living abroad had its roots on the influence that their parents and uncles had on them when they were growing up. Esteban and Epifanio explained:

My uncles studied in the United States. They had scholarships. They had all the influence of the United States, so when they returned to Colombia they wanted to spread ideas about computer technologies and all of that...I was not sure what a computer did back then, but they used them (computers) to do fancy things...My uncle ended up becoming one of the pioneers of computer technologies in Colombia: he and my uncle knew programming languages and they taught me. I told one of my uncles that I wanted to learn and he kept saying...yeah, that’s good, you better learn mijito (my son), learn as much as you can (Esteban).

I wanted to come to this country and get my master’s degree and then my doctorate and eventually, maybe [stay]... I was ahead of the game because I came with a “tape recording” embedded in my brain that I had to come here. My parents are pro-gringos and since I was in high school they told me that I had to get more schooling beyond a bachelor’s degree and that I had to do it in the United States. So I kind of knew that that was my destiny. It all made sense, especially because I already had a sister living here, so having that connection really helped (Epifanio).

The impressions Epifanio and Esteban had about the influence their families had in shaping their goals and inclinations about their future careers and destinations matched those of most Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers in the sample. In the Colombian case, engineers that benefitted from the experiences of their families abroad attended private engineering school (94% or 29). When these engineers migrated to the United States they had been admitted to
graduate school, had already received a job offer with a high tech company, or had professional connections that would help them navigate the American job market. The remaining 6% attended public engineering schools and were first generation college students. The experiences of this subgroup differed slightly in that they did not have direct access to transnational connections or information about emerging global professional fields from their families or professors, but received training in standard international skills (i.e. English language training), that would allow them to navigate the logics of transnational job markets, as I explain later.

About half of Puerto Rican engineers reported having siblings and other family members who had established connections with the American workplace through internships or brief transnational business practices. At least a quarter of Puerto Ricans reported traveling repeatedly to the United States with their families when they were children. They described the practice of traveling to the US as an important step to feel comfortable and familiar with the mainland. Merizalde, a computer engineer whose first time in the United States was when he visited a potential employer in Massachusetts before graduating from engineering school, expresses how the cosmopolitan expectations he learned about growing up would materialize by leaving the island. He says:

It always felt like a mental barrier: the ones that are there (mainland) look at those outside. They know how it’s different and worth it. I always saw the United States as a destination abroad and Puerto Rico as a small cell. It was a great accomplishment for me to be able to cross that mental barrier. I never really felt this way, but now that I am here I dare to move anywhere in the world. When I was there, it didn’t feel like there was anything special about the little island.
Although Merizalde’s account does not make the influence of family members apparent, it recreates a sort of colonized and exclusive vision of the geopolitical place where he would be able to exercise his cosmopolitan leanings (see emphasis). Merizalde’s narrative about the place the island occupies has to do with Puerto Rico’s colonial history and their proximity with the United States. Many of the narratives of Puerto Ricans in this study elaborate on their exposure to American culture, English language education and identification with the mainland as a more “advanced, civilized and cosmopolitan” space. These narratives were embedded in reference to media representations like movies, science magazines and theme parks some Puerto Ricans visited or wanted to visit when they were young. These representations coincide with Grosfoguel’s analysis of the cultural practices of Puerto Ricans on the island. Grosfoguel sustains that Puerto Ricans on the island have been bombarded with messages about consumerism and the lifestyle of the American middle classes. He points out that the island has become a place “where social needs are commodified and where culture and entertainment are synonymous with shopping in malls and going on vacation to Disneyland” (2003; Pg. 63).

The outpouring of these messages might explain why the influence of media representations as a means to imagine a future in technology in the United States was much more salient among Puerto Rican than Colombian engineers. About 20% (11) of Puerto Rican engineers and a small portion of Colombian engineers made concrete reference to movies, magazines and video games as influencers in their interest to join technology related research centers or to advance their knowledge in programming languages. It is possible that these references were less salient among Colombians as their exposure to these consumer media representations was not as common when these engineers were growing up. It was in the early 1990s when Colombia opened its economy to the commercialization of massive consumption
products such as video games and specialty magazines in English. Before that, access to such products was relatively limited to the general public. Colombians would have access to this merchandise if it were specially delivered by family members or friends that had traveled abroad or through contraband.

When asked about their motivations to study engineering and leaving the island, Puerto Rican and Colombian engineers alluded to precise references from science events and magazines that informed them about the existence of science producing communities in different places in the United States. They also referred to their access to electronic video games such as “Atari” as triggers of their interest in developing similar technologies as professionals. Martin, a Puerto Rican electrical engineer who wanted to pursue a career in aeronautics before enrolling in engineering school, reminisced about how a combination of movies and how science related events had an impact on the type of person he wanted to become:

I remember how famous the movie ‘Space Camp’ was back in ‘86 or ‘87. I knew that NASA had this program called ‘Space Camp’ and I had heard that there were some kids in my high school who had attended that program. I mean, I remember how impressed I was by that movie, and also the Challenger incident…I don’t know if that really made me feel inclined to become an aerospace engineer one day and that time it all seemed possible. It was the idea of being part of an organization with a lot of fame and glamour. It was my dream to be able to work there one day, except for the fact that I couldn’t really pursue that field on the island.

Martin’s account underscores the prestige of joining renowned organizations and communities of knowledge that exist and flourish outside of the island. The conscious choice of highlighting the fame and glamour of these science based organizations in his narrative shows
how the influence of media representations is filtered by the aesthetic class values he appreciates, which might be a result of the class socialization he received from his family.

While the extent of the influence of the family and media representations varied across groups of Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers, all of their accounts exhibited exposure to cosmopolitan values and inclinations. Family members with transnational connections and information about emerging transnational markets or the consumption of foreign cultural products cultivated these leanings.

The appreciation for these cosmopolitan inclinations materialized in the hands of engineering education and its development throughout the 1990s: what engineers narrated as their dreams of joining a world class science community, crystallized by a professional training that praised international exposure, as well as the job opportunities they had access to through extant transnational recruitment mechanisms between American high tech companies and universities in Colombia and Puerto Rico.

Professional networks and recruitment mechanisms bridged Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers with tangible work and study opportunities in the United States in a moment of shifting economic circumstances in the local, transnational and global levels. The juxtaposition of economic changes and crises powered by the adoption of neoliberal policies and the favorable moment the information and telecommunications market experienced in the mid 1990s created the conditions that strengthened the materialization of these networks and recruitment mechanisms.

The dissemination of cultural structures that promoted cosmopolitan values and inclinations guided these engineers’ desire and ambition to migrate to the United States. These cosmopolitan values did not only align with their process of learning to navigate transnational
spaces in which foreign cultures inhabit, but also with specific career choices and specific geopolitical locations in which these career choices could have been enacted (Igarashi and Saito 2014). The evidence from these engineers’ narratives points to their families, their professors, engineering curriculum and media representations as socialization agents that helped anchor these cosmopolitan values and inclinations.

Because of some of the privileged conditions that preceded the migration of these engineers to the United States, one could argue that theirs is a case of lifestyle migration where their decision to migrate is based on a belief that there is a more fulfilling way of life available to them elsewhere (Benson and O’Reilly 2009). The juxtaposition of contexts of uncertainty and insecurity in Puerto Rico and Colombia with the dissemination of narratives and opportunities in cosmopolitan transnational fields (i.e. Internet and telecommunications transnational markets) triggered these engineers reflexivity about the social spheres in which they could freely participate in a productive and profitable manner, which displays international migration as a choice.

The local and transnational economic, social and political conditions with which these engineers are presented, generate “ongoing processes of scrutiny, assessment and evaluation” in which expert systems of knowledge take a central role in providing individuals with alternatives to the fulfillment of their needs and offer opportunity rights nation-states fail to offer (i.e. security, protection, advancement opportunities, etc.) (Beck 2000). Their membership in a transnational social space that gives them privileged access to information and social networks prompt them to imagine transnational social fields in which their living conditions could be optimal. Rather than a coping act, their balancing between local and global social spaces lays out
a map of participation, membership and belonging possibilities in spheres that transcend their nations (e.g. science based communities).

The prospect of partaking in the knowledge, research and development of information technologies made these engineers hopeful about the international or transnational lives they had heard about as undergraduate students. Although the conditions of their departure are conflicting but promising, engineers in this study viewed their migration as a positive step, often ignoring the racial, legal and social constraints that they would encounter once they settled in their jobs in different northeastern regions of the United States. I discuss these constraints in the next chapter.
“We face unique challenges because we are learning…English is not our first language, but we have to be really good because we are in an environment where we have to know well and understand well, and we have the challenges of work and family, they are the only things…they are unique challenges among professionals. So, when one combines those challenges with the benefits of being Latino, there are many things in common. That’s what makes us all equal among all, and makes us different from other professionals” (Andrés, Puerto Rican Computer Engineer, Leominster, MA).

Andrés’ account illustrates the privileged and marginal incorporation experiences of computer engineers in the American northeast. Their cosmopolitan upbringing and the connections they acquired with the global Internet and telecommunications communities at their hometown universities allowed these engineers to experience a welcoming and comfortable arrival at their workplaces. At the same time, the social dynamics of racialization and the limitations of immigration legislation in the United States made their arrival experience contradictory and constrained.

In this chapter, I examine the workplace incorporation experiences of Colombian and Puerto Rican computer engineers. I compare and contrast the opportunities and challenges these engineers experienced at their arrival at their workplaces in the northeastern region of the United States. First, I discuss how the professional development and mentoring opportunities these workplace environments offered assisted engineers in navigating their incorporation to the American workplace. These opportunities gave Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers the impression that these workplaces offered a link to the “advanced, civilized and cosmopolitan” contexts they hoped to experience through their migration. Second, I examine how shifts in the economic and social environment of the early 2000s in the United States highlighted the vulnerability of these engineers. I demonstrate how the racial dynamics of their workplace
marginalized them while constraining their professional advancement. I reveal the contrasting ways in which Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers used their cosmopolitan worldview to support or counter the racial logics of their workplaces.

**Privileged Incorporation: ‘Dot Com’ Localities as Facilitators of Migrant Incorporation**

The majority of Colombian and Puerto Rican computer engineers in this study arrived to work and study at small and medium sized companies and at universities located in three distinctive “knowledge economy” clusters: the Hudson River computer chip and mainframe computers hub led by IBM technologies; the upstate New York optics technologies cluster controlled by research and development partnerships between the Rochester Institute of Technology, Eastman Kodak, Xerox, Corning and Bausch and Lomb; and Route 128 - one of the top research and development hubs in the areas of telecommunications, biotechnology, defense and healthcare technology in the 1990s led by partnerships between the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, private investors, government investment and small and medium start-up companies (Kenney and Von Burgh 1999; Christopherson and Clark 2007; Martin de Castro et al. 2008; Feldman and Lendel 2010).

Prior to the 1990s, these regions underwent investment processes that led them to become economic clusters through regional, transnational and global partnerships. The concurrent operations of local financial institutions, universities, small businesses and governmental funding helped these economic clusters flourish as powerful engines of integrated transactions and economic interests in the global knowledge economy (Saxenian 2002; Womglipiyarat 2006; Christopherson and Clark 2007).

- *Working in “Advanced Contexts”*
These economic clusters offered training, mentoring and social networking opportunities similar to those provided in the engineering schools that Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers attended in their home countries. Similar to migrant integration programs, these opportunities exposed professional migrants to valuable knowledge that informed some of their incorporation and settlement process strategies.

These contexts of reception met the expectations that these engineers had about joining advanced contexts where they could learn and/or improve their English skills, interact with people from different countries, and experience the transnational operations of industries that furthered the research and development of new technologies. In addition, the guidance and instruction that these engineers received by professional organizations, supervisors, managers and fellow international migrants was a steady source of information and resources that helped them understand how to navigate their workplaces and get familiar with some of the social and cultural dynamics of American society.

As reported by study participants, their arrival to these localities was a promising step to advance their professional careers and to enter an environment where they would expand their cosmopolitan worldviews. Javier, a Puerto Rican computer engineer that moved to Rochester, NY to start a job as a software manager and to begin an apprenticeship in optics technologies at Eastman Kodak revealed how his arrival felt like a seamless continuation of his training as an engineer and scientist. He explained:

Well, I remember I used to think that I was going to work for Google because I wanted to do something different. I like the concept they have there where everything is engineer-focused. A lot of companies see engineers as machines that count bits, but Google was more focused on the advancement of the engineer. I ended up working for Kodak and it
felt like the realization of what I had imagined, in a way. I met a lot of people and I was always like….wow, they know so much! I was always behind them asking questions, I wanted to learn more, I was hungry to learn from them. I really loved that. I loved being surrounded by lots of intelligent people from whom I could learn. There were lots and lots of them at Kodak.

Javier’s narrative captures the outlook that engineers in this study had at their arrival. Because joining the knowledge economy had been part of their prospects as engineering students, they viewed their initial work experiences as the practical realization of their goal of working in advanced contexts where they could expand their training and cosmopolitan view of the world.

Arrival localities appeared as stages where the cosmopolitan dispositions with which these engineers were socialized could be enacted. Puerto Rican and Colombian engineers alike referred to the multicultural and global dynamics of their workplaces as spaces that allowed the exploration and expansion of their desire to see the world and understand it. Some of these engineers reported that meeting like-minded professionals from different countries in the world brought life to the descriptions that their family members and university professors shared with them in their home countries about professional life in the United States. Other engineers underscored the global nature of their job as represented by the travel opportunities and the transnational pace of their workplaces.

Duván, a Colombian electronics engineer that migrated to the United States as a transfer worker in a transnational startup company, reminisced about his arrival at his company’s headquarters in New Jersey. Although he had been working for the same software development
company in Colombia for two years, his arrival at this locality made him realize the extent to which his cosmopolitan inclinations and dreams had brought him. He pointed out:

So when I moved to New Jersey I started working with more clients from Europe. I was assigned to travel to Portugal, and Spain and Switzerland. I went to France. I went to St. Petersburg. No! You name it! Because the main headquarters were in China, I had to go to China on a regular basis. There I met our Japan and Taiwan clients. I was also providing support for Russia…I mean, that was really when my whole outlook expanded in an infinite way. That was a dream I had all of my life.

The accounts offered by engineers like Javier and Duván represent a fulfillment of the cross-cultural immersion individuals with cosmopolitan dispositions aim to experience through travel and by displaying openness to contrasting cultural experiences. This cross-cultural consumption approach to cosmopolitanism features a “quest for cultural competence” that helps individuals become proficient with particular systems of meaning by listening, looking intuiting and reflecting (Hannerz 1990; Calcutt et al. 2009).

While these accounts demonstrate an aesthetic fulfillment of their cosmopolitan curiosity, other engineers interpreted their arrival at these localities as a step forward in their economic mobility. Although the notion of expanding their training in advanced contexts resonated with many of these engineers, they also construed their arrival at these localities as a sign of upward mobility. Their accounts alluded to their professional advancement in relationship to what they could have accomplished in their home countries, had they stayed.

Felipe, a systems engineer who came to the United States with a transfer visa granted by the software and hardware company he was part of in Colombia, reflected on how networking
opportunities and access to information about diverse career options gradually unlatched when he began working in the Boston office. Felipe said:

So it was quite a dream to be working right there at that time. It really felt like I was working for a multinational company with very good salary options. As soon as my support skills evolved a little bit, I was able to manage a group and I suddenly had the opportunity to work in sales. I was able to witness how successful people really are and see how working in sales was going to really help me get ahead economically. It was when I came here that I was able to perform my support and sales skills and show what I was made of.

Felipe’s account illustrates the focus most engineers in this study had on their economic and professional advancement as concomitant factors, and how the localities where they landed offered promise for the achievement of these goals. His account makes sense when interpreted in regards to the constrained job opportunities that these engineers encountered in their home countries and that motivated them to migrate. At the same time, his interpretation encapsulates some of the pragmatic goals of cosmopolitan socialization such as geographic and occupational mobility. The accomplishment of these goals underscores the utilization of the cultural and educational capital that these migrants had available to them before migrating and that, as discussed in the previous chapter, allowed them to compete for dominant positions in a stratified global society (Calhoun 2003; Igarashi and Saito 2014).

The ease and comfort with which engineers such as Felipe, Duván and Javier navigated the multicultural, global and professional dynamics of their workplaces was made possible by their cosmopolitan socialization, the training that they received in their home countries, and the internships that they participated in before their migration. The reinforcement they received from
their companies and supervisors through training and mentoring programs, as well as the support offered by fellow international migrants played an important part in providing information about their context of reception.

The evidence from this study indicates that Puerto Rican engineers benefitted from training and mentoring opportunities more extensively than Colombian engineers. About 58% (18) of Puerto Rican engineers indicated that they received direct support from their supervisors and managers, that they participated in professional development training programs that expanded their technical skills and that allowed them to strengthen their professional networks. In contrast, 32% (10) of Colombian engineers reported receiving support from their supervisors, managers or immigrant co-workers, but not specifically from professional development trainings at their workplaces.

This difference in resources probably has to do with the fact that Puerto Rican engineers worked in larger companies that had more established organizational initiatives and funding to foster professional development among their employees. As I discuss later, Puerto Rican engineers were also more likely to have easier access to support and to receive information about these opportunities from other Puerto Rican professionals in these companies. In contrast, Colombian engineers tended to work in smaller companies with fewer resources and have limited access to the information and support ethnic networks would be able and willing to provide.

*Professional Development Trainings for Puerto Ricans*

As reflected in previous accounts in this chapter, Puerto Rican engineers emphasized the value of expanding and improving skills that would help them succeed in the high tech world, in addition to the economic value their jobs in the United States offered. Reinforcing that emphasis,
Fernando, a Puerto Rican computer engineer that migrated to Rochester, NY, elaborated on his rationale to join an organization that supported his professional advancement from the outset.

I interviewed with eight different companies. I had follow-up interviews with four companies. Now that I think back I was glad Kodak was the company that attracted me the most at the time. They had a really good program for new hires. It was a rotational program where, for two years, I was exposed to different areas in the company and you don’t necessarily have the pressure of finding a steady position in the company. It was a division that holds new employees and they are available for any group in the company that wants them. That is how you get exposed to the areas of Research and Development, Manufacturing, Governance, etc. I really liked that. I kind of wanted to go to Boston because I have a sister there and because I had an offer from Raytheon, but I liked what Kodak had to offer much more.

Rotational programs like the one Fernando describes, is one of many different tools large firms have to improve their economic performance. Rotational programs are designed to acquaint employees with different aspects of a business and to assess their skills, as well as their likes and dislikes before a definitive job placement. Rotations are also important to help new employees immerse in the culture and organizational dynamics of a firm (Maxwell 2008). About 19% (6) of Puerto Rican engineers in the study reported participating in these types of programs in companies such as Kodak and IBM.

Other Puerto Rican engineers benefitted from their participation in leadership trainings and professional ethnic organizations extant within their own companies. Similar to rotational programs, leadership organizations and the trainings they offered allowed these engineers to
understand the management logics of their organizations, as well as to recognize skills and strategies to move ahead professionally.

National professional ethnic organizations such as the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) and company-based organizations such as the Hispanic Organization for Leadership and Advancement (HOLA) at Raytheon, arranged professional training and coaching opportunities for engineers in this study. Elsa, a computer engineer recruited by Raytheon at the job fair at Universidad de Mayaguez before she graduated, revealed that her participation in leadership organizations was an empowering experience that taught her how to better communicate with her supervisors and co-workers. Elsa explained:

I did [benefit] from the [leadership] program. It lasted a year and it was very good. It helped me understand the way management people think. It really did help me a lot personally to protect myself…to know better…because sometimes I don’t have a filter and when I don’t like something I get angry. I learned to say things to you in a nicer way and that benefited me hugely. This was for minorities: basically Hispanics and African Americans. They had…I believe it included Asians, although Asians don’t count as minorities.

Elsa’s narrative spells out the focus and effect of some of the professional development training programs Puerto Rican engineers participated in. As is explicit in Elsa’s quote, her participation in leadership trainings helped create awareness about how to navigate the workplace and how to cultivate behaviors that would help her get ahead. As revealed in the accounts of other Puerto Rican engineers, Elsa’s allusion to her minority status suggests that professional organizations and trainings serve a socialization function that not only teach these engineers about the culture and dynamics of their workplaces, but also present and frame
information about the dynamics of American society and culture in a particular way. In this case, Elsa’s account reveals how her participation in the leadership training increased her sensitivity about marginalization issues associated with her minority status.

Inadvertently, the information and guidance about the social and cultural dynamics of the American workplace and American society provided in these trainings and organizations fulfills some of the functions settlement and incorporation government programs aim to achieve in different migrant receiving countries. Settlement and incorporation government policies and programs offer language training, employment counseling, social assistance and education about integration and inclusion policies (i.e. multiculturalism) that are available in different contexts of reception in countries such as Canada and Australia (Freeman 2004; Bloemraad 2006).

The unintended incorporation guidance that these trainings and organizations provided to these engineers upon their arrival might be founded on the transitional period affirmative action policies faced in the 1990s. In their study about how affirmative action policies shifted to diversity management programs in corporate environments in the United States, Kelly and Dobbin (1998) found that between 1988 and 1996 the federal government ordered the elimination of quotas, as a response to pressures exercised by the Supreme Court and the lukewarm support President Clinton offered to these policies. In lieu of the change in affirmative action policies, executives and human resources management staff in different agencies began to frame diversity as a synonym of competitiveness. Thus, agencies began to support diversity as a means to increase productivity and advance cultural expertise by “helping members of diverse groups perform to their potential” (Kelly and Dobbin 1998; 973).
Mentoring Relationships for Colombians

Just as professional organizations and trainings provided valuable information and guidance that helped these engineers navigate their incorporation to the American workplace, managers and supervisors played a similar role in advocating for the progress and success of these engineers. Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers alike reported that their supervisors and managers invested time and effort in encouraging their work and nurturing their potential. Santiago, a Colombian electrical engineer that started working for a software development company after migrating to Boston, spoke about the support and guidance his supervisors offered throughout his tenure in the first company for which he worked:

My managers have been a person (sic) that works alongside with me. It is not a person that just expects me to report my work to them, it’s a person that guides me and helps me do my work better. My experience in Colombia in the jobs that I had, my manager was the person that would not let me leave work on time, the person that would ask me to work late, and the person that would give me trouble if I wanted to do a better job. In this case the manager is the person that guides me and a person I can look for when I need help.

Santiago’s account illustrates the view that most engineers in this study had about the mentoring role that their managers and supervisors had regarding their professional advancement: being able to share ideas in a safe and non-judgmental environment, receiving career advice, and being assigned work tasks that would allow these engineers to stand out (i.e. special research projects or public presentations).

Besides focusing on their professional advancement in the workplace, some engineers in this study revealed that their supervisors and managers focused on expanding their multicultural
outlook. Supervisors and managers with this focus considered that exposing these engineers to other cultures complemented the knowledge of corporate culture and the engineering profession they were already advancing through mentoring and trainings. Mariana, a Colombian systems engineer and mathematician who was recruited by a small financial software company, evoked her experiences learning about the diversity of American culture thanks to the outings that her boss organized for the groups of international newcomers in his company:

When we arrived Dan made an effort to make us feel welcomed. When we arrived, he was very special with us and only with us, so you could say that the preferential treatment was for us. He used to talk to us about the culture, giving us clues about how to integrate, how to do things right. It seemed like he wanted to be close to us, he seemed to admire us as a group. He contracted people that he believed were going to succeed...he would take us...this is a good example...he took us to a Japanese restaurant that he liked...you know, those with the short tables on the floor...he taught us how to eat with chopsticks...he taught us in a very intimate and comfortable way. He said: ‘I am going to invite you all and then we all learn’. He wanted to be a mentor to us and there were other situations like that. That was a really positive thing, although I used to feel bad, because I felt like other people in my office were going to get offended because we were getting preferential treatment.

The emphasis that supervisors like Mariana’s placed in showing different facets of American culture to their workers reinforces the high regard of cosmopolitan dispositions as tools that assisted these engineers push their professional careers forward. Similar to the role of trainings and professional organizations, the encouragement and support of supervisors and
managers eased the process of incorporation and settlement of these professional migrants.

In contrast with the experience of Puerto Rican engineers, close mentoring relationships with managers and supervisors were the most prominent sources of support, guidance and information among Colombian engineers. Because Puerto Rican engineers joined larger companies whose hiring processes were facilitated by the historically established formal transnational recruitment mechanisms I mentioned in chapter IV, they had access to a wider array of social network resources than Colombians.

- *Puerto Rican Niches*

One of these key social network resources was the configuration of ethnic niches at most of the companies in which Puerto Rican worked over time. Because these companies started hiring Puerto Ricans in the mid 1990s, most Puerto Rican interviewees revealed that these previous generations served as valuable sources of support and information. Ethnic niches are concentrations of workers from a particular immigrant group that provide work environments in which potentially stigmatized groups, such as migrant minorities, might be treated more favorably, while constituting important sources of social capital that help circulate information that prepares migrants for the settlement process (Waldinger 1996). As Alarcon (2001; 237) points out, labor market ethnic niches not only increase immigrants’ ability to access employment, but also help employers reduce costs and risks associated with hiring and training.

Similar to the focus that professional trainings and organizations had on the workplace integration of recently arrived migrants, the proliferation of Puerto Rican niches in the localities I studied, became an organic phenomenon in the context of diversity hiring and diversity management in larger size high tech companies in the 1990s. Resembling the accounts of 70%
(22) of Puerto Rican engineers in the sample, Lisandro - a mechanical engineer who has worked at a weapons design and manufacturing company since he first migrated to Massachusetts - stressed the fundamental advantage of joining a company that has visible groups of co-ethnics. Lisandro explained:

Other companies offered to pay me the same, but what made Raytheon different was that it had a distinctive social network that was in charge, literally. There was someone who was assigned to you and that person had to make sure that you had everything you needed, that you knew what to do when you arrived, etc. I remember this girl that used to be my classmate in college, she studied with me and we graduated together…she used to tell me: ‘what did we do wrong here [at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayaguez]? Why didn’t you stay here with us?’ I don’t think they did anything wrong, it’s just that Raytheon has a large group of Puerto Ricans and they are taking care of all the people that comes here, so it makes it so much easier for us. They are helping us with the cultural change, this change…I mean…because you come here and there’s a shock, a big shock factor…everything is different…obviously Hispanic culture and American culture here are quite different.

In her study about the effect of ethnic niches in high tech industries on the earnings of migrants, Lee (2013) demonstrates that positive earning outcomes can be observed under certain contextual circumstances (pg. 777). The evidence from this study shows that Puerto Rican engineers benefitted from the extant ethnic niches in their workplaces in that they were sources of information and community support, but not necessarily a source of improved earnings in the long term.
Earnings data collected for most participants in this study reveal that despite the limitations faced because of their temporary legal status, Colombian engineers fared better than Puerto Rican engineers when comparing their current salaries with those at their arrival. Initial median annual earnings for both groups were slightly different: median annual earnings at their arrival were about $50,000 for Colombians and $45,500 for Puerto Ricans. Based on data reported by these engineers in 2013 about their current salaries, the initial salary parity these groups experienced at their arrival shifts to favor Colombians more than Puerto Ricans. Colombians experienced a 150% increase and Puerto Ricans viewed a 100% increase in their annual median income in 2013 when compared with their arrival salaries.

While the data from this study cannot explain whether the association of Puerto Ricans to ethnic niches caused their earnings disparity in the long term - as suggested by Catanzarite and Aguilera (2002) and Lee (2013) - I hypothesize that a combination of discrimination against Puerto Ricans (Waters and Eschbach 1995; Akresh 2006), as well as their low labor mobility might have something to do with such disparity. While most Puerto Rican engineers in this study worked in the same company where they were initially hired in 2013, Colombian engineers experienced higher labor mobility after obtaining their legal permanent residency status.

The unique characteristics of the localities where Puerto Rican and Colombian engineers arrived, served as sites that supplied them with social and cultural guidelines that informed their workplace incorporation. The availability of professional training programs, as well as informal and formal mentoring in these companies gave these engineers the impression that these sites were part of a sort of natural progression of their advancement as cosmopolitan professionals. Professional organizations and ethnic niches in the arrival localities disseminated information that framed the understanding that these engineers had about the American workplace and some
Marginal Incorporation: Ethno-Racial Marginalization or Ethno-Racial Privilege?

Despite the favorable conditions that welcomed these engineers to their workplaces, the difficult economic environment high tech industries faced after the terrorist events of 9/11 and the burst of the ‘dot com’ bubble between 2000 and 2001 made them vulnerable to overt and covert episodes of ethno-racial marginalization. These episodes delayed and constrained the goals of upward economic and professional mobility that these engineers had when they migrated to the United States.

Colombian and Puerto Rican computer engineers faced increasing symbolic and professional constraints associated with their racial and legal status in the post 9/11 era. Regardless of their legal citizenship status, both groups of professionals underwent racial marginalization related with their accents, colonial histories and overall ongoing racialization practices occurring in their work places. While all of the engineers in this study benefitted from the economic peak along with the cultural and technological changes introduced by the ‘dot com’ bubble, they also confronted the economic consequences of its demise between 2000 and 2001. Layoffs and hard competition in high tech workplaces were among these consequences.

The heavy investment of venture capitalists, banking institutions and governmental institutions propelled the unprecedented growth of the Internet, telecommunications, military and financial industries in the United States and Europe during the second half of the 1990s and early 2000s (Schiller 2000; Martin de Castro et al. 2008). The ‘dot com’ bubble introduced a massive change in the way businesses organized their data and production. This bubble also turned customers and industries towards online consumption.
The profitability and popularity of the ‘dot com’ phenomenon led to the creation of a multitude of startup companies that generated management and administration solutions for an array of different businesses: from financial software to online distribution companies (e.g. ebay, petco, Ebay, Yahoo, etc). These companies profited from heavy investment and revenue (Hirakubo and Friedman 2002). Large investments in the promise of “online” solutions not only resulted in competition and innovation, but in the gradual demise of the ‘dot com’ between 2000 and 2001. Overinvestment, oversaturation of firms serving similar purposes, and poor business models left numerous ‘dot com’ companies running out of money causing the economic bubble to burst. Layoffs, added delivery fees, and higher profit margins for merchandise occurred as a consequence of the ‘dot com’ downfall (Hirakubo and Friedman 2002; Ortiz 2002).

The tense economic environment that technology companies experienced during the downfall of the ‘dot com’ disrupted the sense of relative continuity that Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers encountered upon their arrival. When referring to this period, narratives highlighting ideal characteristics of their professional migration transformed into accounts about personal and professional uncertainty and instability.

Because the ‘dot com’ introduced important cultural changes to the way the operations of financial, telecommunications and commercial industries functioned, the demand for high tech workers did not cease despite its economic downturn. Some engineers that arrived immediately after the burst of the ‘dot com’ bubble (2001 – 2004) found work as temporary workers (19% or 12), but the benefits they enjoyed at their arrival were modest in comparison with the ones engineers that arrived prior to the crisis (81% or 50) had experienced. Contracting work became a widespread practice among high tech companies as a means to maintain operations that still generated revenue in the midst of the crisis. This type of temporary employment was detrimental
for all engineers in this study mainly because, as Lowell and Taylor (2000) suggest, it did not guarantee opportunities for promotion, permanent settlement and better salaries.

The burst of the ‘dot com bubble’ coincides with a period of economic belt-tightening that preceded the terrorist events of September 11, 2001 and an economic recession in the United States. These events contributed to high unemployment rates and mass lay-offs in several industries between 2001 and 2002 (Makinen 2011). In addition, racialization practices that led to racial profiling and marginalization intensified as a result of the environment of economic and social crisis in the early 2000s as well. As different scholars have identified, the intensification of racial exclusion in the post 9/11 era manifested in overt and covert day-to-day racially charged interactions between natives and “others”, as in the case of Arabs and Muslims (Naber 2006), in skyrocketing deportation acts, as in the case of Mexicans and Central Americans (Golash-Boza and Hondagneu- Sotelo 2013) and overall demeaning stereotypes and discrimination, as in the case of Latino professionals (Chávez 2011).

- The Downward Mobility and Racialization Experiences of Colombians

Reflexivity about ethno-racial and legal marginalization surfaced in narratives about the rising competitiveness of IT and telecommunications workplaces in the midst of the economic and social crises of the early 2000s. The stark reality of contradictory class mobility that these engineers experienced disrupted the privileged experience that welcomed them at their arrival. Danilo, a Colombian computer engineer that migrated to the Philadelphia area to work as a software developer for General Electric, spoke about how the class privileges he took for granted when he was in his home country gradually faded during this period of crisis. Danilo elaborated:

There’s a lot of competition here. I mean, I feel like a big difference here that I’ve found is that back in Colombia when you come from well reputed universities like Los Andes,
La Javeriana or El Rosario, you have a great advantage in relationship with other professionals from other universities. Here, you find great professionals who were art majors or engineering majors and they are really good at something that they didn’t specialize in in college. There’s a whole lot more competition here. I am not sure what it is, but when people here decide to do something they do it well. They dedicate themselves entirely to that.

Akin to the narratives of other Colombian engineers, Danilo’s comparison between his past and present class status and mobility were followed by accounts about ethnic stereotyping and discrimination. Stereotyping related with the assumed low class and low educational standing of Latinos in the United States, and marginalization associated with their “faulty” accents were among the experiences that had an impact on their self-esteem and professional advancement.

Interviewees emphasized the importance of distinguishing themselves from other Latinos, as they actively worked towards highlighting their self-worth to their co-workers. They feared being classified under the stereotypical view of Latinos as low-skilled uneducated workers. Gabriel, a Colombian software engineer that moved to Rochester, NY to join the efforts of a digital technologies startup company, discovered how being racialized as Latino had counterproductive effects for his professional image. Gabriel explained:

You have to consider the issue of the paradigm you are up against, the one you are swimming against…the Latino stereotype… all the terms that are used to define them: lazy, aggressive, sassy…and I feel this when I am in work meetings. I remember there was this person I met at one of these meetings and I told him that I graduated from college and he said: Congratulations! You must be the only one in your family that
managed to graduate, that is just wonderful! I’ve noticed there is this type of mentality here and a couple of times I’ve heard unintended comments from people…they say, I am so sorry, I shouldn’t have said that or assumed that if you are Latino you are lazy.

Gabriel’s realizations about the symbolic effects of racialization in his workplace did not only couple with the stereotypical images of Latinos, but also with those of his country of origin. Similar to other Colombian engineers, Gabriel received remarks about his alleged connections with drug cartels and the drug trade.

- Ethno-Racial Stereotyping among Puerto Ricans

While the drug trafficking activities and political violence that took place in Colombia during the 1990s influenced the circulation of stereotypes about Colombian engineers in the American workplace, the historical images of Puerto Rican migrants in the United States had the same effect on the stereotypical observations Puerto Rican engineers received from their co-workers. Lisandro, a multidisciplinary engineer hired to work for a defense company, expressed his concern about the view that some of his co-workers had about Puerto Rican migrants like him. Lisandro said:

Early twentieth century Puerto Rican migrants were *jíbaros*\(^5\), people without education. Professionals, are exactly the opposite, we graduated from the university. A lot of people have this vision of Puerto Ricans as people that live in the housing projects and that like to live out of welfare benefits. My boss even told me: ‘you are so different than I had imagined’. She told me straight up that she thought that we all lived in the projects and that we were poor and what have you.

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\(^5\) Mountain dwelling peasants.
The type of stereotyping engineers like Lisandro were subject to is a representation of ethno-racism: remarks and actions that provide an indication of where individuals and groups stand in the racial hierarchy that not only account for skin color, but that also expand on colonial histories, accents and culture, as qualifiers. As Aranda and Rebollo Gil (2004) indicate in their study about the racial positioning of Puerto Ricans in the United States, the use of these additional qualifiers reveals the interlocking effects of ethno-racial, cultural, historical and geopolitical factors on the social construction of race in the United States, as well as the placement of Latinos at the bottom of the racial hierarchy.

- **Countervailing Stigma: The Principle of Equivalence in Engineering**

Experiences of ethno-racial stereotyping did not only emerge in informal conversations about the origins and social positioning that these engineers had, from the perspective of their co-workers, but also in deliberations about how economic and professional recognition should be determined in the workplace. Interviewees declared incidences in which their co-workers blatantly asked them about their qualifications or implied that the recognition they received was due to their minority status and not their professional accomplishments. As suggested by scholars studying the experience of Latinos in the American workplace, these types of remarks became reminders that the opportunities and choices that these migrants had were based upon a structural context informed by negative connotations (García Bedolla 2004): a context in which they would have to work much harder (Chávez 2011) and one in which they would have to find strategies to countervail stigma.

Luis, a Principal Systems Engineer that moved from Puerto Rico to Rhode Island to work with a military weapon design and manufacturing company, tried to come to terms with the weight of ethnic stereotyping in his workplace when he was nominated to receive an award that
recognized his contributions to different projects in the first five years he had been in that company. Luis explained:

There was this time when my colleagues thought that the only reason why I was being recognized was because I was a Hispanic minority. I was once nominated for an award and even though I believed I had done something special, I decided not to accept it because my colleagues thought that I was getting preferential treatment, that I was receiving a different treatment because I am Hispanic. Over the years I have come to realize that what it really all comes down to is your personal performance, it’s your reputation: what you do for the company, if they give you two projects or one, you may perceive that some people move up quickly, but there’s a moment when you can get stuck and you are not being productive and that happens regardless of whether you are a woman, if you are white, black or Hispanic: they are not going to give you special treatment.

As Luis makes explicit in his account the assumptions and stigma that equated with his ethnic background triggered his reflexivity about how to best negotiate a respectable position in his company where his worth would become really visible. Comparable with the strategies that other Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers devised, Luis decided to focus on establishing a reputation as a subject matter expert by working on special projects and furthering his education. In light of his narrative about the questioning of his professional worth, Luis clarified:

Around that time, what really helped me was to establish a reputation in my company. I became the ‘PhD type’ and that meant that when they had more complex tasks than usual they would say ‘I know a guy who knows how to do that’. [They would say]: this guy is
doing his doctorate; he must know how to do that. They gave me interesting tasks and
that way I was able to balance things out a bit.

Luis’ clarification encapsulated one of the strategies Colombian and Puerto Rican
engineers in this study chose to counter the racial remarks and overt accusations they received.
Luis resorted to his understanding of the logics of the engineering workplace to stress his self-
worth by pointing at the specific contributions he makes to the company, in light of his
professional training and expertise.

In their work about the modes of justification used by individuals to promote their worth,
Boltanski and Thevenot (1999) sustain that in the midst of a dispute or disagreement occurring in
industrial settings actors make use of a principle of equivalence towards the reparation of an
injustice. The principle of equivalence highlights actors’ productivity, efficiency, professional
competency and expertise (pg. 362 – 363). In his account, Luis utilizes his professional training
and expertise as attributes of a principle of equivalence, a principle that levels the playing field
and helps him deflect his marginality. Luis emphasizes how these “attributes” were earned and
how they propel the efficiency and productivity any other successful engineer in his industry
would have. In a way, Luis’ strategy is to play down the weight of racial stereotypes to justify
the principles of productivity and meritocracy under which he believes his professional world
operates.

- Accent Marginalization among Colombians and Puerto Ricans

Engineers in this study hashed over their strategies to defend their professional worth
when confronted with remarks that questioned their productivity and found that the
marginalization they experienced in regards to their accents was a more challenging obstacle to
offset. Compared with the principle of equivalence used by interviewees to highlight their self-
worth, their accents became markers of incompatibility with their surroundings: more often than not, the co-workers of these engineers equated their accents with an inability to navigate specific projects, with a lack of understanding of technical language or with plain stupidity.

Wilmer and Miranda - computer engineers that were hired to perform programming tasks at small software development companies in New York City and in Rochester, NY respectively - explained that because of their accents they were singled out and treated as less capable of contributing to assigned group projects. Wilmer and Miranda revealed:

I felt that I was treated differently because of my English, in different ways. There were a lot of people that I found that assumed I was stupid because they couldn’t understand my accent, literally. So you are constantly proving yourself. That part was very obvious. For example, it was difficult to ask questions in new areas and receive misleading answers in return. It seems as if people wanted to keep work knowledge secret, because they are afraid of sharing it. That was extremely difficult (Wilmer, Colombia).

I was assigned a new boss and when I talked to her she said that she didn’t know anybody from Puerto Rico. She said that she was from the central states of the US. She began talking to me like if I didn’t know what I was doing. That’s when I had to tell her respectfully: ‘Just so you know, I do have a degree in engineering’. After that she gradually changed her attitude. I mean, the fact that you come from a place where English is not the official language doesn’t mean that engineering doesn’t exist there. So then they tell you…you mean engineering at the university level, right? Not at the high school level. So you have to teach them that it is possible to come from a university where you were well trained and prepared (Miranda, Puerto Rico).
It can be argued that the accent marginalization that engineers like Wilmer and Miranda experienced is not exclusive to Puerto Rican and Colombian engineers in the United States. As scholars that study linguistic marginalization point out, regardless of their occupational status, migrants’ accents have always been markers of their foreignness. Accents tend to be equated with migrants’ alleged inadequacy to navigate workplace logics established by those in dominant positions (Hill 1998; Lippi-Green 2011).

In her studies about the use of language and accents in the interactions of migrants with their co-workers in American workplaces, anthropologist Jane Hill (1995, 2009) argues that linguistic marginalization is a practice that delineates “White public space”: a performative social stage where boundaries about domination and power are established. In these social spaces, linguistic marginalization helps institute “standard” English as an attribute of Whiteness and establishes it as an invisible and unproblematic normality (Hill 1995; Barrett 2006). Similarly, accents and language in this study became markers of the intersectional effects of geopolitical factors on the social construction of race, as well as the prevalence of White ideology in the workplaces I studied.

Congruous with the goals professional training and mentoring opportunities offered to interviewees in this study, companies suggested that foreign-born engineers enroll in accent reduction courses as a means to improve their performance and visibility in their professions. The evidence from this study indicates that companies where Puerto Rican engineers worked were more likely to offer accent reduction courses to their foreign born employees. This could be a virtue of the types of diversity management programs these companies maintained, or an illustration of how the accent marginalization experience of Puerto Ricans was different from that of Colombians. In contrast with the parallel reactions that Puerto Rican and Colombian
engineers had to ethnic stereotyping, responses to accent marginalization varied: some engineers 
complied with accent reduction recommendations and considered them part of their professional 
development. Others believed that the imposition of a neutral accent violated the multicultural 
nature of the global workplace.

The analysis of the interviews reveals that Colombian engineers tended to be more 
proactive about “neutralizing” their accents, as well as about hiding their origins in order to be 
seen as worthy engineers. For instance, Felipe – a Colombian computer engineer that spent his 
first five years in the US as a contractor and who now occupies an executive position in a 
transnational software development company – equated neutralization of his foreign 
characteristics, including his accent, with steady professional success. Felipe contended:

I always make sure I don’t project being a foreigner when I attend work meetings: I make 
sure they can’t tell I am Colombian, I make sure I am not folkloric or ethnic in any 
way…I dress better than Americans. If they are going to notice me its not because of my 
accent or because I am Colombian, but because I was the most prepared and the most 
professional.

Similar to Felipe’s narrative, some interviewees sought to neutralize their accents as a 
means to divert their marginality. They interpreted accent reduction courses as opportunities of 
professional growth granted by their companies. Gerardo - a Puerto Rican mechanical engineer 
recruited by a defense company in Massachusetts - interpreted the diversity of accents in his 
workplace as an illustration of the global/multicultural space he was part of. He also believed 
that accent reduction courses were a good strategy to maintain efficient communication in the 
workplace. Gerardo pointed out:
I had the opportunity of taking classes to reduce my accent so I can communicate better. This is something that I take seriously, because I want to make sure that I am giving messages adequately, it is something I don’t take lightly, I mean… I am not going to say I take it with enthusiasm, but it is something I am very careful about. Because when you are in a position, regardless of what it is, you have to make sure that you communicate efficiently, and that is something that I always ensure.

As Gerardo’s account reveals, some engineers viewed their access to accent reduction courses as tools that would help them achieve the principle of equivalence discussed above. Hence, despite the reactions that they had against remarks associated with their origins, racial/ethnic affiliation and linguistic ability, some interviewees viewed accent reduction courses as opportunities to move ahead.

In order to avoid masking their accents or their origins, other interviewees called attention to their professional skills and their understanding of specific projects to highlight their self-worth. Some of them defied the requirement of completing accent reduction courses, as they seemed discordant with the global operations of the engineering profession and its multicultural nature. Francisco – a computer engineer who transitioned from a software development position to a sales position within a software development company in Massachusetts – discussed why he objected to his manager’s recommendation to take English and accent reduction courses and how such recommendation motivated him to promote and enforce the skills a professional in the engineering workplace should strive to have. Francisco explained:

In many occasions they offered to pay for English courses. They also gave me a CD so I could learn English and pronounce it better. I think that is a little extreme. I think it’s a matter of people adjusting to accents, I mean, that’s part of the modern world. We are all
used to speaking with thick accents, with Indians, for instance, I mean…there are a lot of Chinese, there are many areas in India that have different accents, the same applies to China. I often talk with people from different countries and yes, it takes me like half an hour to adjust to the new accent… once I adjust, everything flows naturally. It seems to me that people like me are used to dealing with people from other countries, but a “native manager” not so much…maybe they have not seen people from other countries, maybe that was not as common when I came here. My counterargument to complete accent reduction courses was that if they were offering to pay for my professional development, I had a choice. I chose to start my master’s degree instead.

By choosing how his professional development funds would be allotted, Francisco substantiated his conviction of what the interactions between individuals of different origins should be like in globally oriented work environments. Francisco’s decisions about his training and his views about the need to adjust to multicultural dynamics also served to reject the imposition of a “White public space” in his workplace.

This defiance also gives us insights on the contentious discursive struggles that take place in American workplaces that are racially and ethnically diverse, like those where these engineers worked. While demographic diversity is encouraged and sought after, the content and practices of diversity clashed with the discursive imperatives of those in dominant social and managerial positions.

Francisco’s position is representative of the antithetical ways in which engineers in this study used ethnic and foreign characteristics as frames of reference about their professional identities. As a means to make a case about their professional competence, interviewees disapproved of assumptions made about their ethnic affiliation and their origins. This
disapproval led them to devise strategies to emphasize their self-worth. At the same time, engineers utilized their notion of foreignness as a way to establish the attributes that shape what constitutes the *principle of equivalence* in their profession. Their insights on the ideal logics and skills an engineer in a global workplace should have impelled them to accentuate their foreignness as a desirable attribute. This illustrates the extant tension between racial practices and cosmopolitan discourses.

- **Negotiating Local Stereotypes and Global Demands**

The antithetical relationship that Puerto Rican and Colombian engineers had with their “diversity” and their foreignness not only illustrates their desire to be recognized as worthy engineers and professionals, but also demonstrates their firm belief in affecting change, as citizens of the engineering world. However, this desire might be in vain, as the racial structures of American society that crystallized in the hands of stakeholders that have decision making power mute these engineers’ desire to change the operating structures of their workplaces. Nonetheless, negotiating local with global expectations and discourses was part of the exercise of affecting change and changing the extant cultural structure of their work environments. Sara - a Puerto Rican systems engineer that migrated to the Hudson Valley in NY after completing two internships with IBM – explains these expectations:

> I think it’s harder for foreigners like me, but because there are so many in IBM and now we are so global, it’s sort of a benefit because you know more about other cultures and you know other languages and that helps you do your job. If we speak locally, it’s a bit harder because sometimes you don’t know how to communicate with others, but if you speak globally it’s definitely an advantage to know other languages, other cultures, etc.
In her account, Sara conveys how the transnational pace of her workplace clashed with the local social dynamics of diversity. Like most engineers in the study, she recognizes the advantage that her language skills, her cultural competency and awareness and her global and cosmopolitan inclinations have in a larger transnational/global context.

Interviewees also drew from the difficult experiences of their upbringing and their migration to pinpoint the attributes and skills that proved their suitability in the engineering work environment: they argued that the creativity, curiosity and cleverness they cultivated through negotiating difficulties in their home countries and navigating cultural differences in their incorporation to American society gave them a competitive edge that eventually served them to move ahead in their careers. Duván, a Colombian electronics engineer who transitioned to his company’s pre-sales team from a software development position, attributed his slow but steady career advancement to specific experiences and skills that Americans do not have. Duván explained:

I think we are really well educated and we also have a good reputation as professionals. I think most people appreciate the work that we do, we are very responsible and dedicated people. We are very inquisitive, we are bold, we have common sense, we are clever...these are characteristics that most Americans don’t have. I mean…it’s like this idea that we believe things can get done differently. I believe these differences lay on the very circumstances in which we grew up: we had to take care of ourselves, be resourceful. The social differences between Colombian culture and American culture make us be a little more creative, allow us to defend ourselves from adversity. I mean, when things are not so easy and so safe, you are obliged to be more creative and resourceful.
Sara’s and Duvan’s narratives epitomize the nuanced ways in which Puerto Rican and Colombian engineers interpreted the competing discourses and social practices of racialization and whiteness in their work environments. Always aiming to reach and establish the attributes that comprised the principle of equivalence in the engineering profession, engineers in this study placed their professional identities at the forefront. In order to lay the foundation of their professional identities in their work places, they dichotomized the meanings of “difference” and foreignness. At times, difference was evil because it associated with stereotypes about Latinos being poor or ignorant. However, difference was good because it honored the multicultural realities of the global marketplace.

Studies about the experiences of professional migrants in the information technologies, nursing and law fields confirm that symbolic and institutional racism are integral parts of their workplace experience. Similar to the attitudes Puerto Rican and Colombian engineers exhibited, other migrants in different professions used their knowledge of institutional mechanisms, deny the existence of a racial structure, and emphasize discourses about meritocracy and professional self-worth to combat racism (Turritin et al 2002; Chakravartty 2005; Chávez 2011).

Despite this resemblance, the accounts of Puerto Rican and Colombian engineers in these transnational locations illustrate something new and contradictory about how professional migrants negotiate ethno-racial marginalization in their work environments. First, they endorsed ideas of leadership, intelligence, competence and power as acceptable and desirable attributes of what made them the same, or better, than their professional counterparts and other Latinos. This endorsement demonstrates acceptance of ideas that align with a White racial frame: “an overarching white worldview that encompasses a broad and persisting set of racial stereotypes,
prejudices, ideologies, images, interpretations and narratives, emotions, and reactions to
language accents, as well as racialized inclinations to discriminate” (Feagin 2013; 3).

Second, engineers in this study utilized aspects of their cultural background and
immigrant experience to push the limits of institutional logics that imposed a white racial frame.
They challenged diversity management policies in the workplace based upon multicultural and
cosmopolitan frames. These frames aim to nurture individuals that are capable of working and
coexisting with diverse groups of people and that are “not motivated by notions of national unity,
but by understandings of global competitiveness and the necessity to strategically adapt to
rapidly shifting personal and national contexts” (Mitchell 2003).

Analogous with multicultural regimes of citizenship in Western democracies, engineers
in this study attempted to expand established ideas of social inclusion by making diversity and
cultural plurality a priority (Bosniak 2006). I contend that their defiance was an attempt to
readjust the established cultural structures that allowed them to have a meaningful experience of
membership, participation and belonging in the microcosm of the engineering workplace.

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The workplace incorporation experience of Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers is a
testament of their privileged marginality. Their privileged background and socialization, as well
as the training and social networks that they acquired in their hometown universities allowed
them to experience seemingly easy workplace incorporation. Racialization processes turned this
initial privileged experience into one of increasing uncertainty and marginality.

I demonstrate that the transnational localities offered them access to the advanced
contexts they expected to encounter by joining the global Internet and telecommunications labor
market. These localities were described as global and multicultural sites associated with upward
mobility and professional development. Diversity management and professional development programs, as well as informal mentoring played an important supporting role at fostering a welcoming workplace environment that guided these engineers navigate their incorporation to American society.

The social and economic implications of the terrorist events of 9/11 and the downfall of the “dot com” boom in the early 2000s accentuated the vulnerabilities of Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers in their workplaces. Processes of racialization led to episodes of ethno-racial stereotyping and accent marginalization that affected the professional standing of these engineers. Regardless of their citizenship status, Puerto Ricans felt marginalized and stereotyped because of their origins, culture and accents. Colombians also felt teased and singled out because of their co-workers perceptions of their accents and the reputation of their country. In order to counter the effect stereotypical remarks and marginalization had on their professional standing, these engineers drew from their academic and cultural background to highlight their self-worth and to resist the notion of a homogeneous and “neutral” (White) workplace. This resistance is an illustration of one of the active ways in which Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers use cosmopolitanism narrate and construct places of social inclusion. Interestingly, the ways in which Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers used cosmopolitanism revealed a contradiction: while cosmopolitanism advocates for an openness to foreign cultures, it also imposes a sort of class or professional neutrality that clashes with the former.

The contradictory experiences Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers experienced in their workplace triggered formulations about the prospects of long-term social inclusion these engineers. The experiences of marginalization these engineers encountered in their day-to-day lives in American society added concern and reflection to those formulations.
VI. BARRIERS TO SOCIAL CITIZENSHIP: LEGAL UNCERTAINTY AND RACIAL MARGINALIZATION

Edgardo: “Jaime how is the new house? Or should I say, the mansion? Because, I mean you guys really went overboard with that house…but, well you deserve it. You work hard. So…have you found anything exotic or exciting in Sudbury?"

Jaime: “Sudbury? It’s great. The only exotic thing in Sudbury is really us. We are probably the only minorities there with the exception of the Black family that is probably related to Shaquille O’Neil!”.

Edgardo and Jaime met again after six years of having updates about each other only through their Facebook interactions. They met at the reunion party Edgardo organized in his newly renovated house. Edgardo organized the party to be able to catch up with his old engineer friends that had migrated to Boston in the late 1990s. Many of the exchanges that I observed between the engineers in this party, resembled the one between Edgardo and Jaime. They talked about how their lives had changed from the time they migrated and reflected on the opportunities and challenges they faced as they built their lives with their families in the United States.

The reflections and narratives of most Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers presented about their integration and settlement processes in the American northeast emphasized the central role of racial classification and racialization in their integration experiences. Colombian engineers also spoke about the personal implications of carrying their temporary legal status and how these affected their understandings of integration into American society.

Just like Jaime, Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers achieved their “American Dream.” They came to the United States recruited by information technology (IT) companies in the late 1990s, they worked as low-paid computer programmers in their first years in the country,
and lived in apartments shared with their co-workers. Today, most of them own houses and make at least two times the salary they made when they first came to the country.

In the years they spent in the United States, these engineers learned that this “American Dream” came with contradictory experiences and negotiations. Episodes of ethno-racial stereotyping and marginalization reminded these engineers that their integration experience was contingent upon practices of inclusion and/or exclusion carried out by members of American society, as well as by the limitations imposed by the stipulations of immigration legislation.

These reiterative experiences limited the social citizenship of these engineers. That is, their right to enjoy economic security, to be active and accepted members of society under the standards prevailing in society (Marshall 1964). These experiences also affected the notions of membership, participation and belonging to the American nation and to the local communities where they resided in their settlement years.

In this chapter, I explore the limiting effects of racial and legal marginalization in the access Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers had to full social citizenship and social inclusion. First, I discuss the economic, professional and personal implications temporary legal statuses had on the lives of Colombian engineers. I examine how the length and complications of switching from a temporary to a permanent legal status led these engineers to witness stagnant salaries, downward occupational mobility and dependence from their employers. I argue that the economic and professional constraints created by their legalization processes created a ripple effect that affected their personal lives. I also discuss the modifications Colombian engineers made in their life course and family decisions to adapt to the stipulations of the legal system. I argue that, just like the experiences of racial marginalization they faced, the constraints of their
legal experience took a toll on the vision these engineers had about the prospects of their social citizenship and social inclusion in the United States.

Second, I examine the pervasive effects of racialization in the daily experiences of both Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers. I discuss how these engineers were criminalized based on the assumption that their origins and ethnic background equated with an undocumented legal status. I also reveal how perceptions members of their communities had about their foreignness made these engineers feel excluded and marginalized.

**Legal Uncertainty among Colombian Engineers**

So you get anxious, you feel that your life is on standby. It’s difficult to plan anything. It’s difficult to say: let’s buy this house, let’s move here because you don’t want to move out. You don’t want your papers to get lost in the mail. When we moved, we officially switched our paperwork to a new assigned immigration office and it was traumatic, they couldn’t find our paperwork after a while. This affects your well-being, because you fear that you will have to start all over again. You want to make sure that everything is safe and correct, because you are afraid things are going to get lost. Your life is on standby because of this. Your personal life has to wait because of this paperwork craziness (Felipe).

Felipe’s account encapsulates the impact visa adjustment processes had on the lives of Colombian engineers and their families. The anxiety and constraint Felipe describes illustrates the limitations and strain the transition from a temporary legal status to a permanent legal status brought to the professional and personal experience of Colombian engineers. The process of switching from a temporary to a permanent legal status delayed the professional and economic advancement of these engineers, created instability in their romantic relationships, separated their families and deprived them from traveling outside of the country. Similar to experiences of racial marginalization, these experiences marginalized Colombian engineers and constituted barriers to their social citizenship.
Colombian engineers in this study revealed that legal uncertainty and legal marginality had a significant effect on their professional advancement. The majority of Colombian engineers in this study held a temporary legal status for the first six to ten years of their arrival to the United States. In this study temporary legal statuses refer to work (H1B), company transfer visas (L1, L4) and training visas (L3). These visas are awarded to individuals in special occupations or to intra-company transferees with specialized knowledge for periods between one to six years (USCIS 2014).

All engineers came to the United States with temporary legal visas and were able to subsequently obtain a permanent resident visa (green card), except for one interviewee. While this is a positive finding, these engineers reported that the length and complications of the green card application process restricted their occupational and economic mobility. As made explicit by Colombian engineers, their delayed occupational and economic mobility generated workplace dynamics that marginalized them.

The favorable economic conditions of the ‘dot com’ boom allowed IT and telecommunication companies to rely on a large cap of work visas opened by the American government. Since its inception in 1990, the work visa program has had a 65,000 person annual cap on H-1B visas, except between 1998 and 2004 when an increased cap was allowed to cover the demands of the ‘dot com’ boom (Kerr and Lincoln 2010). Despite this increased cap, competition for available H1B visas rose as ‘dot com’ companies grew. Additionally, stagnant economic and legal resources during the burst of the ‘dot com’ bubble limited the capacity that companies had to sponsor permanent resident visa applications and offer foreign workers optimal work and salary conditions.

- Professional and Economic Implications
Some of the engineers that were promised green card sponsorship by their employers were not enrolled in the application process until their work visa was about to expire. Sponsorship processes were contingent upon the connections that employers could have with the immigration office, but more significantly the availability of legal and economic resources employers had to retain their foreign born professionals in the middle of the “dot com” downturn.

For instance, Boris - a mathematician who was hired by a telecommunications company after finishing his master’s degree at an American university – justified the uncertainty that the lengthy green card application process generated in his life reflecting on his awareness about the scarcity of resources that his company confronted during the ‘dot com’ economic crisis. Boris explained:

Having the work visa tied me to [company] and I had not realized that. I mean, the green card process started two years after I began working for them. There was a lot of economic imbalance in the company anyway. [Company] started to lay people off, so the green card process was affected by it. If the way they are justifying the green card application is that they need more skilled workers and in reality they are getting rid of them, it was a process that was hard to justify. So my green card process was really long and painful. In most cases it takes two years to get the green card, in my case it took seven years.

Boris spent years fearing the possibility of having to return to Colombia. While it was not Boris’ case, some engineers stayed in low-level positions within their companies for years as a way to keep their work visa or obtain permanent residency status. The process of getting a green card for these engineers lasted as long as eight years. The length, confusion and complications
associated with the process of obtaining legal permanent residency generated dependent relationships between employees and employers. This dependency had long-term effects on their economic and professional advancement. It delayed goals of economic progress and held up promotion opportunities for these engineers and led to exploitative experiences, stagnant salaries and marginalization at the workplace.

Juan, a computer engineer who came to work for a startup company that was absorbed by IBM, alluded to the implications of the dependent work relationship he endured as a result of the lengthy green card sponsorship process. Juan indicated:

"Having a green card is a relief because you are not tied to your job. Now I feel like I can change jobs and shape my professional career as I had planned. It was a burden. I took the technical support job because it was my chance to stay, but I never thought of it as my definite job. It was a hindrance. I lived like that for two years. Now I am free!"

The accounts Boris and Juan offered exemplify the types of decisions Colombian engineers made in order to secure their temporary visa and their job. These accounts also expand our understanding of the diverse ways in which temporary legal statuses affect and marginalize professional migrants and how they restrict their access to economic and social opportunities. These experiences and decisions demonstrate that professional migrants faced burdens associated with legal uncertainty and legal marginality, such as restricted access to economic and social rights, as well as economic abuse, similar to migrants with different educational and occupational backgrounds (Menjivar 2006; Menjivar and Abrego 2012).

While Colombian engineers held legal statuses that allowed them to work in the United States, the transition between temporary to permanent legal statuses affected their professional and personal decisions. Interviewees identified experiences of downward occupational mobility,
as well as delayed personal decisions associated with the time they had to wait for their green cards to get approved.

Emphasizing the dependent relationship Colombian engineers maintained with their employers, Guillermo - a computer engineer hired by a small financial company in Massachusetts - disclosed how his legal status kept him from making important life decisions. Guillermo explained:

I don’t think having a temporary visa makes a difference in terms of what you have to do at work, but I do believe it makes a difference in terms of making drastic decisions in your life. If I were an American citizen, I wouldn’t have put up working for the same company for six years. I might have quit after one or two years and if I couldn’t find a job I could have gotten unemployment aid from the government while I found a new job. But losing my job meant losing my residency in this country, so I felt committed to working with them.

After conducting some research, Guillermo left the small company that initially hired him and found a job with a bigger company that offered to sponsor his green card. The process never took place. Because he did not want to end his relationship with his recently naturalized girlfriend, they decided to get married. Just like Guillermo, about 30% (10) of Colombian engineers that endured lengthy permanent residency processes devised different strategies to speed up the process. Hiring an immigration lawyer or marrying an American citizen were among these strategies.

Despite the regulations that protect skilled workers with an H1-B visa (Gerdeman 2014), Colombian engineers found that because of their temporary status they were paid less than their counterparts or that their salaries remained stagnant over the years they held a temporary legal
status. According to the accounts of Colombian engineers, salary disparities were a remnant of the dependence they had with their employers through the green card sponsorship process.

Mario, a software developer recruited in Colombia by a small financial company based in Boston in the late 1990s, exposed the long-term frustrations and financial burdens created by the process of switching his temporary work visa to a permanent resident visa. Mario declared:

Over time, I noticed that we were paid less than what they should or what natives at the same level were paid. At first that was really hard because we were doing the same job and doing the same things and they were paying us less anyway. I mean, I understood in a way...because the company was taking on additional costs for us (foreign workers) regarding visas and what have you, getting green cards and whatever. After a while I felt like it should not have been that way though.

Mario’s dismay with the economic consequences of his dependent relationship with his employer led him to take action. Like other migrant professionals in his situation, Mario conducted research that would help him make a case to request better salary conditions to his employer. Mario presented his employers with information about the median salary a professional in his position earned and requested them to consider giving him a raise. Mario’s employers rejected his request arguing that a raise was not really in their hands. They suggested that he would find a job elsewhere, if he was not happy with what they offered him.

Mario’s episode with his employers illustrates that of at least a third of Colombian engineers endured work visa extensions or permanent residency processes through their employers. Their accounts noted stagnant salaries and perceived exploitation coupled with experiences of downward occupational mobility. Colombian engineers exposed their awareness
about the initial economic and professional risks of taking a job in the American market. As time went by, their dissatisfaction with their professional and occupational progress grew.

Walter, a computer engineer that migrated to the United States as a transfer employee with a multinational financial institution, provided details about how his upward occupational trajectory faced an unexpected halt because of the constraints imposed by the stipulations of immigration legislation. Walter explained:

It did affect me professionally. When I was in Colombia I was a telecommunications officer, I was in charge of the systems department. When I accepted to come here, I took a position that was a little below the one I had. After all these years, I feel like these processes truncated my professional career because I couldn’t switch companies, and I couldn’t change jobs because of immigration restrictions. They brought me here for a specific job and I couldn’t grow, they couldn’t increase my salary. Coming here really slowed me down. I couldn’t get ahead; I couldn’t look for a different future. I couldn’t even look for a better job within the company, because of the immigration limitations.

Walter’s narrative depicts the experience of Colombian engineers that migrated to the US with a transfer visa (16%). As Walter describes, the stipulations of transfer visa limited the occupational mobility of foreign workers, even more than for those who began their work tenure with a work visa. Although work visa holders depended on their employer to remain in the United States or to sponsor their permanent resident visas, they had relative freedom to search for a different employer willing to sponsor them. Only few interviewees pursued this option though.

Evidence from recent studies on the occupational mobility of U.S. legal immigrants, suggest that stagnant economic and occupational experiences are expected and common among
educated migrants. In her analysis of the New Immigrant Survey, Akresh (2008) finds that the majority of legal immigrants in the U.S. face downward occupational mobility in their first job, but that this trend changes in subsequent jobs. Akresh contends that this trend lessens as migrants improve their English ability and when they acquire a U.S. education, especially for migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean (2006).

The evidence from this study reveals that the stipulations of temporary work legal statuses might explain this occupational mobility trend. Moreover, the long-term occupational experiences of Colombian engineers support Akresh’s claim about the positive effect of language ability and a U.S. education. About 81% of Colombian engineers received graduate degrees from American universities before or during their work tenure in their first job in the U.S.

When comparing their occupational mobility experience in their first jobs with those they held when they were interviewed, Colombians perceived that their upward occupational status and superior salaries were signs of improvement. These improvements might be a ramification of their U.S. credentials. The resolution of their temporary legal status process or the additional cultural and technical skills they were able to exploit to promote themselves in the American labor market might explain Akresh’s occupational mobility trend as well.

Nonetheless, the economic and professional impacts that resulted from the lengthy and cumbersome processes of maintaining their temporary legal status or obtaining a permanent resident status also resulted in workplace marginalization. Unlike the experience these engineers had with ethno-racial marginalization, the isolation that legal uncertainty produced was not easily countervailed by emphasizing professional worth or by endorsing a multicultural workplace. Colombian engineers enduring legal status changes reported feeling excluded as a
result of their stagnant professional standing, and the economic implications of their legalization processes on their companies.

For instance, Daniel – a systems engineer that was hired by a Boston-based mainframe company after he completed his doctoral work in Chicago – recounted the emotional burdens of his legal uncertainty. He evoked experiences of marginalization and stress in his workplace. Daniel explained:

After four years I didn’t have my residency yet. My last two years in that company were torturous, they were very difficult. I felt discriminated against…it was interesting, I was the only engineer with a PhD. They had master’s degrees, but I have two master’s degrees and a doctoral degree. My immediate boss had a bachelor’s and I was ten years older than him. In the years that I was in that company, I was never promoted. I remember overhearing people saying: ‘when is this guy going to leave?’ My boss had told me that I had to leave the company eventually. Every time he passed by my office it was hell: I always felt like he was about to kick me out. I spent two years like this. Daniel’s narrative captures the interlocking effects legal uncertainty had on the professional standing and the occupational mobility of Colombian engineers. Their dependence from their employers put them in a vulnerable economic and professional position at his workplace. This vulnerability invalidated the pertinence of their credentials and professional experience. Such invalidation illustrates the power that the stipulations of the immigration legal system have to constrain and delay the workplace incorporation of foreign-born professionals in the United States.

- **Interference in Life Course Decisions**
Temporary legal statuses also interfered with life course expectations such as getting married, settling down or having children. Federico, a computer engineer that migrated to Massachusetts to begin graduate school after leaving a senior programmer position in Colombia, reflected on the contradictions of holding a temporary legal status, in light of his qualifications and credentials. He revealed that because of his temporary legal status he slowed down some of his personal goals. That made him feel unaccomplished when he compared himself with his friends back in his home country. Federico declared:

It’s hard…the worst part for me was to feel like I should have been in a different moment in my life, you know what I mean? I mean, we had everything in Colombia and we came here and we kind of had to start from scratch. Witnessing how you start growing is great, but witnessing how you are not is not ok. For example, if I compare myself with my college classmates in Colombia and observe all the things that they have been able to do and what I have done, I still feel like we are a bit behind. We delayed having children because we were just not ready to support them economically and that’s something that I always have on my mind.

Interference with life course expectations such settling down and having children illustrate the ripple effect of delayed economic and professional advancement. These delays also reveal the way in which the legal status of migrants is part of a stratification system that, as Menjivar (2006) has stated, “shapes life chances and future prospects”. Such stratification system manifests in the economic and professional stagnation these engineers witnessed, as well as in the adjustments they felt impelled to make in order to stay in the country legally.

Epifanio, an Advisory Software Engineer that migrated to Connecticut with his wife in 2001, elaborated how the legal stratification system determined their family planning decisions
in the long term. He illustrated how their approach to having children had to adapt to the difficulties derived from his legal status adjustment process. He offered:

At some point we realized that it was going to be better not to have biological children. We decided we wanted to adopt. If we do adopt, we want to make sure it’s a Colombian child. In order to adopt internationally in this country, you have to be a citizen. You can’t adopt if you are a resident. We have felt very limited. When we had the H1B visa we could not travel easily. Now that we have the green card traveling is not easy and I don’t even know how much we’ll have to wait to become citizens. This whole process takes a really long time. The good news is that we finally got the interview to naturalize. We are almost at the end of the tunnel. It has been an eleven yearlong tunnel though.

The narratives of Federico and Epifanio illustrate the different ways in which professional migrants accommodate their personal lives to be able to prolong their legal status. The impositions the immigration legal system placed in the lives of professional migrants like Federico and Epifanio can be seen through the lens of legal violence: “the suffering that results from and is made possible through the implementation of the body of laws that delimit and shape individuals’ lives on a routine basis” (Menjivar and Abrejo 2012; 1387). The stagnation they observed in their professional and personal lives are forms of structural violence that deprived them from basic rights. This forms of violence are akin the ones faced by migrants with different legal statuses (e.g. temporary, undocumented) (Kanstroom 2007).

In his narrative, Epifanio also alludes to the travel restrictions that are part of the stipulations of temporary legal statuses, as well as of permanent resident visa holders (LPRs). Despite the difference between the stipulations of temporary vs. permanent visas, travel
restrictions apply to both. These restrictions made Colombians miss family events and prevented them from providing emotional support to family members in need back in their home country.

Interestingly, the great majority of interviewees reported that their inability to travel conflicted with their goal of exploring the world. Allusions to this goal reinforced the desire these professionals had to put forward some of the features of their cosmopolitan socialization I discussed in chapter IV. Before confronting travel restrictions these professionals believed that adjusting their visa status would be enough to overcome them. This belief ended up adding to the list of reasons they had to accommodate their lives to the stipulations of the legal system.

Emilio, an industrial engineer whose visa adjustment process lasted three years, provided his rationale about the impact visa restrictions had on his life. Emilio switched jobs with companies that offered to sponsor his green card, but did not receive it until a Boston university hired him as a Research Associate. Although, his work as a researcher involved investigating technology and logistics trends in Latin America, the travel restrictions of his newly acquired legal permanent residency prevented him from fully immersing in his job tasks in the first years in this position. Emilio explained:

[My visa] impeded me from pursuing my work and my real passion. I could not really travel freely. My Colombian passport is quite a bad tool to travel. I was able to travel within the United States, but I could not travel to other places. I was not able to see and study other parts of the world. That was problematic for me.

The travel restrictions Colombian professionals confronted result from the contradictory recommendations they received from lawyers and immigration advisors. As Morawetz (2007) indicates these restrictions derive from differing interpretations of the statutory and regulatory stipulations tied to legal permanent residency visas. While LPRs can request “advance parole” to
be able to travel outside of the United States, it officially represents a legal change from a permanent to a temporary status. This change may lead permanent migrants to be denied entry because their immigration “intent” does not match that of those seeking to become legal permanent residents (213 - 214).

Travel restrictions also had important implications in the families of Colombian engineers. These professionals endured separation from their families as a result of the lengthy and confusing process of their legalization. Tiberio, an industrial engineer that was hired by a telecommunications company after he completed his master’s degree at an American university, reflected on the strategies he had to use to surpass the burdens of family separation as a result of travel restrictions and misinformation about their legalization processes. Tiberio revealed:

I got my green card in September, got engaged in October and got married in April. Before that, Paula used to be back and forth between Colombia and the US with a tourist visa to be with me. We started investigating to figure out what we needed to do to start her process. That’s when we found out that according with immigration law it is perfectly normal for the family to wait between three to five years in their home country while the process gets approved. I actually have been told something different by the lawyer I had at the time. This was followed by two years of stress, suffering and worrying because Paula didn’t have her situation sorted out. Fortunately, the relationship was not affected because we had to be separated. The first year of marriage, it was easy for me to travel to Colombia. When our son was born, Paula had already been accepted to a graduate program at the University of Bridgeport. It was a twelve-month program. As soon as she started the program, we sent the applications to change her status from a student visa to a green card, and she was denied. That was based on her immigration intent. We received
the news on the day of our son’s baptism and Paula had to leave in six days. They left for Colombia for three months. I picked them up and we went to Paris where I had a work project. After that, they stayed with Paula’s friend in Scotland for a while. It was almost two years after we got married that Paula was able to return to the US after she received a job offer from Columbia University.

This account demonstrates one of the most prominent ways in which families with different visa provisions navigated their separation. Most Colombians whose partners migrated after them indicated that the process of unifying their legal status led to their separation for periods of months and in some cases, for years. All Colombians that underwent visa status adjustments manifested similar episodes of family separation: they were physically separated from immediate members of the family such as partners or children or were unable to visit parents or family members that needed support back in Colombia. These findings also resemble those of studies that examine the experience of immigrant families with mixed legal statuses in the United States and Canada (Dreby 2012; Goldring and Landolt 2013).

The stress and uncertainty couples and families with different legal statuses (e.g. work visa or green card vs. spousal visa) endured exemplify other ways in which temporary legal statuses created a ripple effect that slowed or delayed the life course expectations of Colombian engineers. At least 32% of Colombian interviewees reported negotiating difficult situations with their partners and families because of the differing stipulations of their legal statuses. Most of these interviewees migrated with partners or wives whose visa allowed them to stay legally in the United States, but did not allow them to work. Partners were usually professional women who had attended engineering school, had completed a bachelor’s degree or had begun a professional career in Colombia prior to their migration.
Esteban, a Boston based electronics engineer who started working for a software development company after completing his master’s degree, explained how getting married to his college girlfriend seemed like the right thing to do when he got the job. Over time the contradictory provisions of their visas put a strain on their relationship. He stated that his then wife clashed with the legal provisions imposed by her spousal visa. Esteban declared:

My ex-wife had a spousal visa and she was not able to do anything. She couldn’t work, she couldn’t do anything. That obviously affected her because she couldn’t develop as a professional. When she got her residency through me, she was already raising children and that’s even more complicated…the implication that that had was that we had to get a divorce and I had to pay…and now I have to pay her…it’s like a sort of subsidy that I have to pay, so she can start…so she can recover and get experience and then be able to support herself…so that’s what affected her, that she was not able to work.

Esteban’s account illuminates how the legal system accentuates gender disparities that already exist in the engineering profession. It also emphasizes the cumulative effects immigration legislation has on families with mixed legal statuses, and on women that depend on their husbands to maintain a legal status.

More often than not, these engineers observed aspects of their personal lives become stagnant or in crisis because of their temporary legal status. The restrained access these engineers had to economic and opportunity rights such as loans or scholarships are examples of such stagnation. Ramiro, a computer engineer who lived with his wife and three children in Wellesley, MA, revealed how his temporary legal status kept him from moving forward with his goal of buying a house and getting more schooling. In his narrative, Ramiro believed that getting more schooling would improve his chances of getting a different job. He also sustained that buying a
house was a wiser financial decision than paying rent. In light of this rational, he felt like his contributions to the country did not pair well with the access he had to the economic and opportunity rights the “American Dream” promotes. Ramiro conveyed:

It was horrible. Thinking about buying a house was quite difficult, because I didn’t have the permanent resident visa yet. I, however, think that buying a house is really important. But this legal limbo really affects you. You can’t apply for long-term loans, plus it’s absolutely outrageous to be paying taxes with the same economic weight as a resident! The other thing is, if you need to apply to programs that would help you pay for your schooling, you really have no options. That was my case and that of Lorena’s, my wife. It was even worst for her because she couldn’t even work.

The accounts Esteban and Ramiro offered accentuate the ripple effect legal adjustment processes have on the economic advancement of their families. These accounts also reinforce the numerous ways in which the immigration legal system reproduces inequalities in the way that characterizes established stratification systems. Akin studies about the experience of professional women with spousal visas, this type of account reveals how women’s migrant status delays their careers and affects their families (Purkayastha 2005; Balgamwalla 2014), forces them into unpaid carework (Kim 2006) and takes a toll on romantic relationships.

❖ Long-Lasting Impacts of Legal Uncertainty

The strains created by the stipulations of their visa adjustment processes made Colombian engineers feel disenchanted and disoriented. Despite the fact that Colombian interviewees expressed their desire to naturalize (48%) or had naturalized\(^6\) (45%) by the time I interviewed

\(^6\) Except for one returnee and one who was not interested in naturalizing.
them, the personal burdens and complications derived from holding temporary statuses clouded their optimism about their prospects of full integration and citizenship.

Daniel, a systems engineer whose permanent resident visa process lasted about six years, conveyed how the personal and professional burdens he endured while undergoing his legalization process affected how he feels about his integration to American society. Daniel revealed:

Maybe [I don’t feel integrated] because I am not a citizen yet, because regardless, you enter the country and show your green card and they ask you: ‘what are you doing here?’ Even if they have all your history in their files (immigration files), right? They asked you a thousand questions and they take your fingerprints and they take pictures…I am not politically active because it concerns me, it worries me that there are going to be implications or retaliations, because I am not from here. You know what I mean?

Daniel’s remarks epitomize the deep impact the ramifications of legal provisions have on the ways in which Colombians conceptualized their integration process in American society. The feeling Daniel expressed about navigating the legal stratification system brings to light the subtle ways in which legal violence manifests in the lives of professional migrants who are documented. Daniel, just like other Colombians, saw the strain his legal adjustment process created in his life as an injustice. These injustices stem from the social perception that the intended and unintended actions of the legal system are legitimated and “normal”, because it’s the law, as Menjivar and Abrego (2012; 1387) put it.

While Colombians appeared constrained when confronted with the limitations of their legal status, some of them overcame them by relying on the advice of other migrants that had gone through the green card process. Some of the engineers that worked in large multinational
companies counted on the support of legal departments with appropriate information and connections that expedited their application process. Despite these advantages, the process seemed inconsistent and unclear to the interviewees. For example, some lawyers recommended that applicants stay with the same employer for at least two years after receiving the green card to make sure they could keep it. Others implied that once the process ended, applicants were free to change jobs. Clear expectations and guidelines about obtaining the permanent residence for foreign-born workers and their families would aid them navigate the process.

Colombian engineers expressed their disappointment with the imbalance between the professional contributions they made to their workplace and their constrained access to economic and social opportunities. Their experiences with the legal immigration system gave them little wiggle room to negotiate their social inclusion in their workplaces. Over time, the abstruseness of the immigration legalization process took a toll on romantic relationships, temporarily separated families and slowed life course decisions such as having children. These professional and personal pressures had important ramifications in the interpretations Colombian engineers in this study gave to the meanings of membership, participation and belonging to the United States on the verge of their process of becoming Americans, as I elaborate in chapter VII.

*Experiences that Scar You: Racialization in Public Spaces*

Although Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers believed that their economic and social contributions to American society should grant them a respectable social status, many of them felt that the stereotypical remarks they continued to be subject of challenged that assumption. Danilo and Gladys explained how their racialization experience made them feel undeserving of their place in American society and made them feel excluded. Danilo, a Colombian computer engineer that bought a house in a suburban area between Philadelphia, PA and Danbury, CT
where his wife worked, depicted his experience in the suburban community where he lived.

Danilo offered:

I feel like they box me in the ‘Latino’ category and assume that I eat spicy food and that I should know how to dance and shake my body. In that sense, I feel there is no inclusion, it’s just because everyone around me has such a limited vision. If they didn’t think that way it would be much easier, there would be much more acceptance. For example, in my daily life, I’d go to a supermarket and people hear me speak Spanish and I’ve heard people saying things like: ‘Why don’t they go back to their country?’ The thing is though, they don’t know why I am here in the United States, they don’t know what my story is, and they don’t know what has happened. The other thing that I found interesting is the racism that exists from Black people towards the rest of the community in this region…in the eastern region. They are a bit more relaxed in the west, but here people have this attitude, I don’t know…they look at you funny…I mean, I am Latino and you can tell from my face, I have black hair and my skin color is…well, darker…and I wouldn’t expect that, let’s say, a minority would treat me like that. It’s strange.

Gladys, a Puerto Rican computer engineer working for a small software corporation in Rochester, NY, used an example of an interaction she had in a supermarket to illustrate experiences of racialization and marginalization. Gladys explained:

So we went to Walmart to get the canned food we needed for the event. We were in a group of like five people; we were standing in one of the isles, speaking Spanish and this guy passed by. It was an older white man. He made a comment, he mumbled: ‘Oh man! We are in America’. I was not sure if he meant it for us, so I said: ‘What did you say?’ He responded saying: ‘We are in America, speak English!’ and we were like…wow! You
gotta be kidding me, really…It was very shocking. The very fact of hearing someone saying it in your face…he didn’t give us a break to reply to that. It was a really big shock.

The accounts Danilo and Gladys provided capture some of the most salient experiences Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers had when they explained how they navigated the social landscape of their neighborhoods and communities. Akin to episodes they encountered in their workplaces, these engineers discovered the implications of racial classification and racialization extended to public spaces such as supermarkets, schools, restaurants and bars.

Many of the interactions these engineers sustained in public places showed them that the strategies they used to countervail racial marginalization in their workplaces could not be effectively utilized. They discovered that their professional worth and cosmopolitan background had little or no value to help them play down stereotypical remarks. Incidents some Puerto Rican and Colombian engineers had with local authorities illustrate the irrelevance this background had in public spaces.

A quarter of the engineers in this study, reported incidents where local police stopped, detained or penalized them for no apparent reason, other than the color of their skin or their accent. About half of these interviewees lived in or near Rochester, NY and historically working class cities near Boston (i.e. Worcester, Maynard and Melrose). Miranda and Gabriel-engineers that lived in Rochester, NY-, revealed details about times when they felt law enforcement pushed them to the limit and reduced them to be “racialized victims”. Both recounted incidences where they were stopped by police officers for no clear reason, other than their foreign characteristics. They offered:

I was stopped by a police officer who said I was going 75 miles an hour and I wasn’t! He first asked me for my license and registration and asked me if the car was stolen. I was
thinking: It is likely that my salary is much larger than his salary, I felt so angry! Then I thought: he is a policeman. If I start arguing he will detain me and take me. He gave me the ticket and suggested that I pled guilty and paid for the ticket. I said: ‘I am not going to plead guilty, because I was not speeding’. A week after that I remember there was a report on the news about a group of policemen that were stopping Hispanics only and when we went to court we couldn’t even say anything. They said: ‘if you were not speeding, why would you have a ticket?’ I tried to defend myself, but it was useless (Miranda, Puerto Rico).

When I was in Rochester, a policeman stopped me and I believe I was going like 20 miles an hour. He stopped me because I was speeding. Because I didn’t have my passport, he forced me out of the car and he called the immigration police. I had to wait and then they took me to Buffalo. They interrogated me and treated me poorly. I had to stay one night at the station in Buffalo until they completed the investigation. They asked why I was in the country and I explained. They finally let me go, but I was in the middle of nowhere with no car. I asked them what I could do to return to Rochester. They said: ‘you are on your own. You lied to us’. Fortunately, a policeman in the station intervened and said that he would bring me back to Rochester (Gabriel, Colombia).

One could argue that the choices Miranda and Gabriel made to navigate their interactions with local authorities were bold. Miranda - like many other Puerto Ricans - insisted on using her Puerto Rican identification card to make a point about her right to citizenship in her interaction with the police officer. Gabriel ventured the streets without any identification with the thought of having a quick beer and going back to his apartment located a couple of blocks from the bar where he was detained.
Miranda and Gabriel failed to provide valid documentation to the local authorities and that probably made both of the situations escalate. However, just like Miranda and Gabriel, interviewees that were involved in similar episodes found that the reactions of local authorities and of some members of their communities were unsettling. These reactions revealed that their membership to the American polity was contingent upon an established racial and legal hierarchy. The experiences these interviewees had, bring to light to processes of racial removal that come attached to the social construction of legality in the United States. Similar to the detention and deportation experiences of Latino migrants in the country, engineers like Miranda and Gabriel felt they were subject to criminalization as a result of the assumptions made on their origins and ethnic background, as well as on their legal status (Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013).

These experiences made Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers feel marginalized. Despite their legal right to live respectably in the United States, some of their social rights were carried off. Sara, a Puerto Rican systems engineer who lives in Poughkeepsie, NY with her Indian husband, illustrated the frustration of feeling like a second-class citizen. She discussed why being an American citizen and Puerto Rican made her feel like a non-citizen or a part-citizen. She conveyed:

We are American citizens, but it’s complicated. For instance when I used my Puerto Rican ID or when I used my Puerto Rican license, some people don’t want to accept it. I find that ridiculous! How come you are not going to accept it? We are American citizens, so what’s the big deal? I’d always end up showing my passport. It’s hard to figure out what my citizenship is because I am Puerto Rican. When you live in Puerto Rico you are an American citizen, but you can’t vote in the presidential elections. At the same time,
being Puerto Rican and being a citizen has been beneficial, when I moved here (sic), I mean I appreciate being a citizen. But when you live on the island you feel like you are prevented from some of your rights that Americans living in the US enjoy. *That scars you.*

Sara’s considerations about her rights as an American citizen illustrate the overall perception Puerto Rican interviewees had about their citizenship. Despite their decision to settle in the United States, their right to full inclusion as an American citizen felt incomplete and partial. Puerto Ricans felt compelled to justify their role and place as American citizens in daily interactions: they made known that being perceived as foreign and navigating cultural differences made them feel inadequate to be considered - as Glenn (2011) puts it - substantive citizens recognized by all members of society.

Comparable with the experiences of other racialized ethnic minorities in the United States, daily interactions reminded these engineers about the effect of their foreignness on their emotional well-being and their integration processes. Similar to Asians, Asian Americans and other Latinos in the United States, episodes of everyday racism triggered by their foreignness would never allow these migrants to qualify as authentic Americans (Tuan 1998; Rocco and Gallagher 2004), hence denying the promise of social citizenship (Kim 2007).

For instance, Juliana, a Puerto Rican computer engineer that lived in New England for six years and who recently moved to Florida, illustrates how perceptions people have about her foreignness have taken a toll on how she feels about who she is in American society. Juliana offered:

> When I treat with other people, I forget. I treat people and I am not wearing my hat, I am not thinking: I am the ‘other’. You know, that *otherness*, you are not aware sometimes.
But I know that when other people interact with me, the fact that I have my accent and my name is Latin is at the forefront of their minds. Although my community is diverse, there are people in it that see me as ‘the other’, like a person that is not fully from here although I was born an American citizen and I will always be. For them I will always be a foreigner, I will always be Hispanic. The notion that Hispanics are from different nations doesn’t matter to them. I am not exactly like them. I’ve been living in New England for six years, but I still feel like a visitor. I wish I didn’t.

Feeling like outsiders, Juliana and her husband decided to move to Florida. Juliana clarified that they wanted to live in a place where they felt more accepted and one that was closer to the island. She explained that living in Miami made a difference mostly when Latinos surrounded her. She continued to feel that she had to explain herself and justify why she lived in the United States.

As Aranda (2007; 116) points out in her study about the migration and incorporation experiences of middle class Puerto Ricans in the United States, racism and American nativism prevented these migrants from feeling integrated. Engineers in this study, achieved some of the material aspects of the “American Dream”: they had a respectable professional job that they fought to maintain, they had a good salary and most of them were home owners.

However, episodes of stereotyping and marginalization associated with their accents, their colonial past and their origins had a profound effect on how they understood their identities and roles in American society. These experiences informed Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers about the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion that exist in American society. They made them realize that despite their contributions to American society, they did not seem to deserve a right to substantive citizenship. This realization was even more severe for Colombian
engineers whose experiences of inclusion were tainted by the economic and personal burdens derived from their visa adjustment processes.

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Experiences of racial and legal marginalization in the daily lives of Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers limited their social citizenship and social inclusion in the United States. The reiterative effect of racialization in public places categorized these engineers as criminals and as eternal foreigners. The way in which they were categorized made them feel like they had to justify why they lived in the country. Witnessing criminalization and social exclusion made these engineers feel like outsiders and second-class citizens whose right to full social citizenship was denied.

I demonstrated how legalization processes are part of a large system of classification that separated Colombian engineers from other citizens. The length and ambiguity of the stipulations of temporary visa programs generated a ripple effect in the lives of Colombian engineers. Economic and professional stagnation led to delayed or failed life course decisions. For instance, employee – employer dependence led to stagnant salaries and downward occupational mobility, which in turn affected decisions such as getting married or having children. The abstruseness of the immigration legalization process also took a toll on romantic relationships and temporarily separated families. These findings suggest that Colombian engineers had to adjust their lives to the stipulations and constraints of the immigration system.

These contradictory experiences triggered formulations about the prospects of long-term social inclusion these engineers would have in American society as a whole. Because some of these engineers were able to resolve or come into terms with some their experiences of social and
legal marginalization, their diagnoses of their opportunities of inclusion and participation in American society were optimistic. In light of these experiences of marginalization, other engineers grew skeptical about such opportunities. I discuss these deliberations in the next chapter.
VII. BETWEEN NATIONS AND THE WORLD: THE OVERLAPPING MEANINGS OF NATIONHOOD, CITIZENSHIP AND BELONGING

Today citizenship is no longer a mere legal category that entitles individuals to social, economic and political rights within a political community. How individuals conceptualize their citizenship derives from experiences of social inclusion or exclusion that they come up against in their society. For instance, if the policies and practices of a receiving country promote the inclusion of migrants, these migrants would be more likely to exhibit participatory behaviors, such as naturalization or voting in that political community (Bloemraad 2006). Hence, citizenship is a multidimensional concept. Conceptions of citizenship develop from individuals’ definitions of membership to a political community; from their reflection about the challenges and opportunities attached to specific legal, social and opportunity rights; and from the centrality of their social identities in those conceptualizations (Bloemraad et al 2008; Turner 2011).

This framework proves fruitful to examine the meanings Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers attributed to their citizenship. The opportunities and constraints these engineers encountered throughout their migration and settlement process, as well as the unique historical experiences they had with the United States informed their decisions about the material and instrumental aspects of their citizenship. Their continued attachments to their families and culture in their home countries defined the transnational nature of their citizenship loyalties. Their experiences as engineers that negotiate local and global dynamics motivated them to imagine new ways to model and exercise their citizenship.

In this chapter, I examine three different, yet overlapping, narratives that Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers crafted to illustrate the meanings they attributed to the concept of citizenship. First, I discuss the ideological and pragmatic motivations these engineers used to
narrate their rationale on American citizenship and the adoption of an “Americanized identity”. I reveal the role of values and practices associated with the American dream and American patriotism in the construction of this narrative. I unveil the central role naturalization processes have in motivating Colombian engineers to embrace their American citizenship. I also discuss the central role tragic violent events and military operations have in activating feelings of American patriotism among Puerto Rican engineers.

Second, I consider the central role of emotions, cultural nostalgia and transnational attachments in these engineers’ construction of nationhood. I discuss the role emotions, culture and pragmatic interests had in crafting the distinction between notions of political and cultural nationhood among these engineers. Lastly, I unveil a new model of citizenship Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers devised in light of their experience as global professionals. This model transcended the boundaries and legal provisions of the nation-state. I consider how the configuration of global communities, in the view of these engineers, includes ample access to open borders and opportunity rights all around the world. I also discuss the issue-based focus of this model whereby platforms such as the Internet help foster global deliberation about the future of science and technology in the world.

**Becoming American: Pragmatism and Ideology**

Long-established theoretical and ideological frameworks about migrant integration processes maintain that, over time and across generations, migrants socially, culturally and economically assimilate into mainstream culture (Alba and Nee 1997). The assumptions of these frameworks depart from the notion that migrants learn to adapt to the tensions provoked by race relations (Park 1930) and that their cultural and ethnic characteristics blur or disappear over time (Lieberson 1973).
About 39% (12) of Puerto Rican engineers and 26% of Colombian engineers in the study accepted this framework, but also drew from other related narratives and from their reflections on their experiences of racial and legal marginalization to explain their endorsement of their American citizenship and their “Americanized” identities. The material and instrumental aspects of the notion of American citizenship were central for some: the expansion of economic, social, political and other rights based this view of American citizenship. Ideological aspects of the notion of American citizenship were fundamental for others: the admiration of American foundational narratives posed in the U.S. constitution and a deeper understanding of the American political project in the world motivated some engineers to embrace their American citizenship.

For Colombians, feeling American and embracing an American identity emerged from their naturalization processes and from a gradually heightened admiration of the American political project. In their view, naturalization processes brought light to the relevance of the American dream, the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights as foundational narratives that empower citizens to have equal access to economic, social and opportunity rights. For Puerto Ricans, feeling American surfaced from unexpected experiences of social inclusion they had in the midst of violent and terrorist events occurring in their immediate communities. In addition, work experiences that furthered the expansion of democratic goals by the American government in foreign countries allowed Puerto Ricans to gain a deeper understanding of the American project, thus raising their feelings of American patriotism.

- Blending In

Apart from adopting their American passports as forms of identification, Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers that claimed allegiance to the American project contended that “blending
in” and embracing American traditional values would grant them ample access to economic, opportunity and travel rights. These engineers emphasized the importance of appearing and acting “neutral” in public spaces and actively denying the existence of any form of social exclusion (e.g. racial, gender, legal). This neutral stance featured self-reliance, independence, responsibility and merit as fundamental values that led to success and full inclusion into American society. Proponents of this framework believed that striving to align with this approach would lead them and their families into a path of full inclusion in the American policy.

Gregorio, a Colombian Software Architect who claimed to experience few barriers to his economic and professional success in the United States, illustrates the connections between meritocracy, America’s racial ideology, and the American dream. Gregorio explained:

So I feel very, very, very proud of being “Gringo” because I believe I am an example of what it means to be “Gringo.” It’s a really good illustration. I came here and I started from scratch…hahaha…no, no, really…I came here from Colombia but had no connections, nothing…no family here. Nothing. Nobody had to “hacer palanca” for me. My success is fully based on merit. I am sure that I am where I am because of my merit. That’s what I love about being here: it is a culture that values merit. I value that a lot, and I feel very proud.

Although Gregorio’s account dismisses the fact that it was his connections that allowed him to land a position as a software programmer in Maryland, his account clearly illustrates his alignment with the ideology that American society offers equal opportunities to everybody. In this case, Gregorio’s narrative helps us grasp the early roots of the American dream. The

7 American
8 To have a crony; to have connections or insiders that ease opportunities or hand them over to you.
foundation of the American dream is closely tied with the widespread notion that opportunity is available for those who work hard and have enough individual merit to succeed (Hochschild 1995; Merenstein 2008). This cultural repertoire originates from the values of “work ethic” that define American individualism promoted by the first white Anglo-Saxon Protestant colonists in America (McNamee 2009).

Most engineers who embraced an American identity claimed that their success was a result of their belief in hard work and merit, as fundamental principles of the American dream. Interviewees also revealed their awareness about aspects of their cultural identities that had to be muted or hidden. In their view, the fruits of their muteness would result a sense of partial social inclusion in the long term.

Fredy and Tiberio concurred with the importance of blending into American culture to develop acceptance from Americans. Fredy, a Puerto Rican computer engineer who has worked for a data storage company in Massachusetts, indicated:

When I came here I initially had some conflicts with the culture. It is interesting, you know? People always tell you: when you go to Rome, do as Romans do. That is the key to really be successful wherever you are. The biggest mistake many people that came with me here made is that they couldn’t let go of doing things the Puerto Rican way. They came here under similar conditions and they couldn’t keep up with that.

Fredy’s account stresses the importance of disaggregating from the comfort and familiarity of his co-ethnics, as a strategy to obtain the visibility he would otherwise not obtain. His narrative makes explicit that the “Puerto Rican” way goes counter to “the other way” that actually leads to success. In this case that “other way” is the American way.
Tiberio, a Colombian engineer who owns an innovation and technology company in New Jersey, concurs with Fredy’s observations by stressing the importance of being neutral and ignoring the cultural differences between him and Americans. Tiberio expressed: “It’s difficult to feel like you are part of the American community if you are not American. The number (sic) of things that are in common are minimal, but you have to camouflage yourself and through that camouflage you can eventually feel part of the community.”

These remarks encapsulate how some interviewees negotiated their origins and “past identities” with the renewed type of citizen they chose to be: an American citizen. Remarkably, these accounts resemble widespread repertoires about immigrant assimilation. These repertoires emphasize the notion that immigrants gradually integrate to the modes of living and acting of White middle class mainstream society (Hirshman et al. 1999). These accounts also assume that structural assimilation and full social inclusion follow ideological assimilation: that is, “blending in” or camouflaging would lead to the gradual elimination of racial and legal barriers to a socio-economic upward trajectory. Interestingly, engineers that supported this view perceived that moving away blending or camouflaging their primary cultural identities would allow them and their families a path towards social inclusion rights in the long term.

For instance, Sebastián, a computer engineer that migrated as a transfer worker with a multinational technology company, offered his rationale about the idea of “Americanizing.” He viewed the adjustments he made in his daily life as an investment in the future of his children. Sebastián explained:

Out best friends are not Latinos. They are Americans. The sports we follow are not with Latinos. They are with Americans. Our doctors are not Latinos: they are American. But I do believe the vehicle to be like this is my family. I imagined it would be very different
for someone who comes here alone. If you don’t have children, there’s no reason to do this. I believe that having a family makes you change as an immigrant. My family has been fundamental for me to integrate to American society.

When the reason to Americanize was connected to their families, interviewees perceived that immersing themselves in American middle class values would help their children avoid the impediments that they had to overcome when they arrived to the United States. They concluded that their foreignness and lack of understanding of how things work in American institutions explained the barriers they had to overcome.

In our conversations, interviewees often seemed doubtful about the real prospects of their full inclusion. They considered that their children will be able to enjoy full inclusion as they would not have any accent, racial or legal markers that would make them look different from other Americans. Despite the occasional resistance from their children interviewees strongly believed that separating themselves and their families from their “foreign” attributes would allow for gradual assimilation and integration.

- The Inevitability of Becoming American after Naturalization

For Colombians, adopting American values and embracing an American identity often derived from their naturalization experience. Rather than praising the civic and political values promoted by the naturalization exam study guide, the open access they had to education, economic and travel rights constituted enough reason to praise their newly acquired American identity. Ramiro, a computer engineer who bumped up against numerous family and professional complications that resulted from his visa adjustment process, expressed relief when he described how naturalization allowed him to navigate a world of equal opportunity for him and his family. Ramiro expressed:
Why become a citizen? It opens up possibilities. First, it makes no sense to continue with your permanent resident visa because you only get partial rights. Second, having your citizenship makes your life easier if you are going to live here. Being a citizen is much better than being a permanent resident for any kind of activity. Being an American citizen opens up the doors of the world to you, you don’t have to get a visa for so many countries. If you make your life here, it really makes sense to be an American citizen and have citizenship. I even feel like if I had to choose, I’d choose my American citizenship.

Some interviewees expressed that embracing an American citizenship was not a simple process. Because Colombians have the choice of becoming dual citizens, voicing their American loyalties was a reflective process in which they weighed in the limitations and opportunities they had in their home country with those offered in the United States. While embracing American loyalties took a bit of soul searching for some, the expansion of rights that allowed them to apply for home loans and educational scholarships for them and for their children favored a stronger sense of belonging to the United States.

Ramiro’s allusion to his access to travel rights as an additional benefit derived from his American passport was a recurring narrative among Colombians. In addition to the instrumental reasons that accompanied their endorsement of American citizenship in regards to the expansion of economic and political rights, travel rights were an added perquisite. Travel rights did not only align with his instrumental interests, but also with a particular social status. A blue passport awarded Colombians a beneficial and superior international status that allowed them to further realize their cosmopolitan goals of traveling and to hold an international status. This is an advantage their old red passport, for which they were stopped and questioned at airports everywhere, did not offer.
Esteban, an application developer who spoke widely about how he climbed the occupational ladder after his naturalization, found that the benefits of his American citizenship went beyond a list of obvious rights. For him, being an American citizen did not only allow him inclusion in the United States, but in the entire world. Esteban offered:

The United States has more resources if there are any problems abroad. They really watch over their citizens. I’ve never had that experience, but you hear that if there’s an American citizen in trouble in a corner in China, they help him out. That gives me a sense of certainty, of security, and a sense of pride. I am American and my country protects me. That would not hold true with Colombia, I don’t think. So there’s a theme of... a global presence, an economic capacity, a development... of a developed country against a country (Colombia) that has improved, but still has a lot to do.

The comparison Esteban makes between the capacities the American and Colombian governments have to protect their citizens abroad reinforces the arguments engineers in this study put forward when revealing their reasons for leaving their home countries. Their cosmopolitan socialization emphasized the superior qualities and opportunities tied to specific geopolitical locations whose economies were “more advanced” and whose polities promoted democratic participation and protection for all their citizens.

While pragmatism made naturalization attractive for Colombians, the ideological principles that define the American nation also motivated them to embrace their American citizenship. Indeed, some of the narratives of Colombian engineers unveiled a real investment in understanding American culture. Their commitment to penetrate American culture seemed larger than their desire to connect with culture and political institutions in their home countries.
For example, Mariana, a systems engineer whose goal when she left Colombia was to work as a researcher, explained how her decision to naturalize expanded beyond the instrumental interests migrants tend to appreciate when they get their American passport. Mariana offered:

I always wanted to naturalize for different reasons. One reason is that it is convenient to have American citizenship. But at the same time, I really identify with the country, I have always liked the history of the United States, I like the principles under which the nation was founded, I feel much more identified with that than with Colombia. I mean, I always wanted, let’s say, from the bottom of my heart, to be an American citizen. Apart from all of the benefits that it brings, I feel I identify with the history and the principles.

Mariana had visited the United States repeatedly since she was a girl and always had it in her mind that she would come to study and work with computers at an Ivy League university. She viewed her migration as the realization of her dream, but also as a saving grace. Her migration experience reinforced her American loyalties. Mariana compared the principles by which Colombia and the United States were founded. She viewed Colombia as a chaotic place where everyone walks over everybody, a place with low self-esteem and lack of national identity. In her mind, the opposite held true for the United States. The United States was a safe haven that granted her and her family personal security, professional advancement and an identity she could embrace that was consistent with the values she appreciated. Mariana asserted these feelings and clarified:

If there was a war between Colombia and the United States and I had to choose one of the two sides or something like that, because it was obligatory…I mean, ideally I wouldn’t do it, but if they obliged me because someone is going to kill me, I’d choose the United
States. I’d try to take my family from there somehow but…my loyalty is with the United States.

Mariana’s identification with the principles and history that laid the foundation of the United States brings to light modern conceptualizations of citizenship as strictly situated in the confines of a nation-state. In these conceptualizations the nation is an imagined community that feeds itself from collective memory and renewed forms of social solidarity (Isin and Turner 2007). In her view, her identification as an American citizen reassured her right to participate in a political project that advanced well-respected values and forms of social solidarity.

Concurrently, other Colombian engineers alluded to repertories, such as the American dream and the principles of the constitution, to emphasize their sense of admiration and determination to be part of the American project. Colombians that defended this line of reasoning invoked discourses and values that construct the collective memory of Americans as their own. This invocation allowed Colombians to feel part of the American community and work towards the continuation of celebrated American values that constitute the basis of group solidarity (Calhoun 2007).

Emilio, a Colombian industrial engineer whose career success skyrocketed after being hired as a Research Associate at an Ivy League university in the Boston area, expressed his admiration for the democratic principles of the United States as a well-rounded illustration of the American project of which he wanted to be part. He explained:

[Being an American citizen] is the best! I am very pleased for many reasons. I have great admiration for the cultural coexistence [of this country] despite the differences. I believe that something that people don’t notice when they are outside of the United States is how different people are here, how different they think. In another part [of the world]
everyone would have killed each other. The remarkable thing here is that everyone feels part of something bigger, a bigger dream... I think that’s really impressive. My loyalties go to the United States without a doubt. When I examine the Declaration of Independence it is such a visionary document. I mean, I totally identify with these kinds of values; I thoroughly identify with the American values of work, liberty, freedom of speech and not having a government that is going to oppress me, or at least a government that I think is not going to oppress me.

All through our conversation, Emilio emphasized his appreciation for the opportunities he had in the years that he lived in the United States. His narrative also stressed that his success was a combination of his hard work and the way the laws and the government are organized in the United States. This emphasis features Emilio’s alignment with values and practices associated with the promises of the American dream. Because he believed that his hard work and his adoption of American values had paid off, he expressed that the best way of showing his gratitude for the secure and free life he had was to participate of the rights and obligations typical of an American citizen: Emilio wished to be called on jury duty and vote in local and national elections as a means to contribute and shape the fate of the place where he lived. Through this commitment, Emilio brings light to the interplay between rights and obligations conceived in traditional conceptualizations of citizenship where there’s an alleged equilibrium between what national governments give to their citizens and what citizens should contribute to their polity, in return (Turner 2007).

- **Cultural Trauma and Terrorism: The Emergent Patriotism of Puerto Ricans**

  While Colombian engineers were more prone to justify the emergence of their American pride in light of practices of merit and self-reliance or the foundational values that build
America, Puerto Ricans pointed at violent and terrorist events that occurred in their communities as life changing occurrences that allowed them to feel like they were part of the American community. These events awoke feelings of American patriotism and emerging commitments to defend the mission of values of the United States. Their participation in work projects that furthered the military goals of the United States abroad also served as catalysts of this emerging American patriotism.

Lisandro, a Puerto Rican Multidisciplinary Engineer at a weapons design and manufacturing company, spoke about the terrorist acts of September 11, 2011. He conveyed that experiencing this event along with his co-workers was a turning point in his sense of belonging to the United States. The experience of devastation and trauma that Lisandro and his co-workers shared, made him feel like he was now part of the American community. Because of the experiences of marginalization he had previously came up against, this feeling of inclusion was new to him. Lisandro emphasized that 9/11 changed it all for him:

I have always said that before 9/11, I was quite the Puerto Rican. I mean I was first Puerto Rican and second an American. But September 11 strongly changed how I feel about everything. Thank you, 9/11! It was the first time that I really truly felt like I lived here, like this is my home now. I am an American: this is my new home, this is my new nation. It was a very clear change in me, because before I had those roots and I didn’t want to let go. I think that’s probably because people in Puerto Rico brainwash you and you start believing that if you like American things, you are no longer a Puerto Rican.

In our conversation, Lisandro explained that the business trip he had planned for that day was eventually cancelled. When he appeared in his company’s headquarters, his co-workers approached him and some of them hugged him and exclaimed: “you are alive!” Lisandro was
surprised and touched by the reaction of his co-workers. He viewed this reaction as a gesture of acceptance, but also as a critical moment that made everyone in the country come together.

The impact the aftermath of the 9/11 bombings had on Lisandro’s identity illustrates the effect of cultural trauma. Through cultural traumas, like the 9/11 terrorist events, social groups “cognitively identify the existence and source of human suffering and ‘take on board’ some significant responsibility for it” (Alexander et al. 2004; I). The process by which Lisandro felt like an American, not only emerged from his acknowledgement of a national tragedy, but also as a result of his co-workers reaction when they realized he was alive. This event helped Lisandro feel part of the collective mourning and devastation, thus making him feel socially included. Hence, the experience Lisandro had with this particular event served to renew the sense of social cohesion and pride him and his co-workers had “in the American way of life, its values, its culture and its democracy (Smelser 2004; 270).

While Lisandro was the only interviewee that focused attention on the 9/11 bombings, other Puerto Ricans brought up more recent tragedies that had a similar effect on their emerging pride and sense of belonging to the American nation. Shooting events in local schools and the Boston Marathon bombings in 2013 were among them. Miranda’s experience illustrates the effect of these violent events in her sense of belonging and social inclusion to the American community. Miranda described how the shooting of two firemen by a mentally unstable gunman near Rochester, NY changed her view on how her neighbors perceived her and transformed their relationship to one of closeness and collaboration. Miranda offered:

This man started shooting, that was here in Webster and the sense of community that we have felt since that day has been incredible. I mean, my eyes get teary and everything, because is not a community like, say, New York City or Rochester. No. Everywhere I go
I’d see someone I know, and well, inside that community you can find my Puerto Rican and Hispanic friends too. But this was different. This happened a week before the Connecticut shootings happened, I was very affected, everyone was. I remember going to the supermarket and there was a terrible silence, but also a sense of solidarity. Some people there gathered to share how crushed they were. I told them: I can’t believe that something like this happened here, that someone shot innocent people. They opened a Facebook page and people started making comments and they raised money for the families of the firemen. It was not the same as watching the news. It was like recognizing the members of the community; it was like everyone came closer together. It was like…that sense of community, we were all united, and we were all donating things, donating money…. I really felt that, and now people see me and I see them and we greet each other it’s like now I really feel that, now I really feel like I am part of the community.

Miranda’s account is another illustration of the theory of cultural trauma. Her account clearly delineates how solidarity was socially constructed gradually after the shootings occurred. Similar to the transformative effect 9/11 had on Lisandro, Miranda felt integrated in the community as a result of the emotional connection she established with others in light of the tragedy she narrated. Similar to Lisandro’s experience, Miranda’s new sense of belonging to the American community was a renovating and positive experience that ran counter experiences of exclusion she had faced before.

The experience of these tragic events Lisandro and Miranda had created awareness of their role as Americans, rather than as immigrants, Puerto Ricans, or “others.” I argue that the effect these events had on Puerto Ricans’ sense of belonging to the United States, reveals the
potential traumatic events have to reset and diffuse racial tensions or conflicts and allow marginalized groups to temporarily or permanently feel a sense of full social inclusion. These findings are especially compelling given that, historically, Puerto Ricans have defined their loyalties and identities in ambiguous and contrarian ways in order to fight against the “coloniality of power” of American elites both on the island and in the mainland (Grosfoguel 2003).

- Feelings of Patriotism Triggered by Workplace Contexts

Feelings of patriotism also emerged in the context of work assignments related to government projects that demanded Puerto Rican engineers to interact with military personnel and strategists. This contact was unique to Puerto Ricans given their citizenship status. Defense and military based organizations such as the Naval Undersea Warfare Center and Raytheon hired about half of the Puerto Ricans in this study sample. The circumstances of their employment gave Puerto Ricans a different perspective on the expansion of the American project in foreign countries. Their exposure to the design and implementation of military operations shaped their process of switching and reinforcing their American loyalties.

For instance, Manuel, a computer engineer that has worked for the Naval Undersea Laboratories for over ten years, pondered on the influence his work projects had on changing his view of the American project. He explained:

Look… at first I was not so keen on embracing an American identity or supporting the American project. I originally didn’t want to. I am a pacifist here in the United States and in Puerto Rico, in any country. I wouldn’t have gone to war for this country, for example. But now, after my experience working for the companies I’ve worked for, I’ve been in a lot of defense contracts and I have been exposed to a lot of Air Force and Army soldiers
and I’ve seen a lot of missions in which they work. I’ve come to appreciate their importance and what they bring to the table to keep us safe. Now I have a different perception. It’s difficult…for me; it’s more the intelligence work they do. I associate this more with the Air Force. These kids go away and they don’t quite know about what they are going to do there or what awaits them there. They are just there and in most cases they are not there to kill anybody, but to help. I’ve seen situations in which they have saved lives: not just our people, but people from other countries. And they do it with pride and patriotism, which is really quite incredible.

Manuel’s patriotic inclinations emerged from his observation and participation of cultural practices that underscored commonly used discourses that strengthen mainstream social solidarity in America. Manuel’s invocation of the image of the heroic troops that save America from “others” that are its enemies, brings to light the use of symbolic icons that help reproduce discourses and cultivate cultural practices that configure the American nation as a political community. These discourses and cultural practices encourage members of the polity “to situate their own identities and self-understandings within [the boundaries] of a nation” (Calhoun 2007; 38).

❖ *Adopting American Values*

It is compelling to observe the diverging motivations Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers offered to uphold their inclinations to embrace “American” values and principles. The motivations Colombian engineers had to adopt American values and practices were both pragmatic and ideological. For some, taking an American identity derived from the expansion of social, economic and political rights attached to their naturalization. While others also appreciated the benefits included in their American citizenship, they conceived it as an
ideological construct that was worth investing in. Meritocratic values along with principles that are foundational to the construction of the American nation (e.g., the American dream, the U.S. Constitution) were features of such ideological construct. In their view, following and respecting these values and principles would grant them and their families the promise of socioeconomic success and full social inclusion.

In contrast, the motivations of Puerto Rican engineers to adopt an “American” identity developed from specific life-changing experiences in their workplaces and communities. While some Puerto Ricans established their appreciation for the meritocratic values that American society promotes, they also emphasized the impact of tragic terrorist events and their involvement in military operations as catalysts of their American pride and sense of belonging.

**Split Loyalties: Cultural Citizenship vs. Political Citizenship**

It is important to note that adopting patriotic values and embracing an American citizenship was not a straightforward process for some of the interviewees. Their loyalties overlapped their *present* lives in the United States and their *past* home country emotional and cultural attachments that they wanted to maintain. About 52% (16) of Puerto Rican engineers and 35% (11) of Colombian engineers declared that defining their place and identity in their settlement process was a delicate balancing act. Negotiating emotional demands from family and friends, managing their nostalgia about their cultural traditions and seizing opportunities that guaranteed their well-being in the United States were part of that balancing act. Defining what “home” meant and delineating their identity and/or social responsibility in their home countries and in the United States were part of that experience as well.

In all accounts, balancing emotional attachments, cultural memories and instrumental interests led these engineers to enact loyalties and commitments that took place in sending
countries and in the United States simultaneously. The underlying reasoning through which Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers maintained these simultaneous attachments and logics stemmed from their reflections about the extant cultural incompatibilities between the United States and their home countries. Most importantly, these simultaneous attachments emerged from the perception that the principles and practices associated with American citizenship did not fully match the views that these engineers had on what citizenship and belonging should mean.

- **The Distinction between Cultural and Political Citizenship among Puerto Ricans**

Julia, an electrical engineer who dreams about retiring in Puerto Rico, went into great lengths to illustrate why defining who she is and where she belongs is a matter of balancing split loyalties. She felt compelled to balance these loyalties because they support her emotional, as well as her financial well being. Julia expressed:

  For me, it’s a conflict because I can’t say that I have Puerto Rican citizenship because it doesn’t exist. If there was one and I could feel as such. I would feel proud and at the same time I would have rights to be a good citizen bound to a particular community. That’s what citizenship means to me, to belong to a place, do the best you can for that place, to belong to a community, to give your part, to work hard, to contribute, to pay your taxes... for me, because I can’t be a Puerto Rican citizen, I guess I am an American citizen. That means that I have a ticket to come here whenever I want and survive here.

Julia’s account brings light to one of the ways in which Puerto Rican engineers with split loyalties formulated their allegiances and meanings of citizenship. Puerto Ricans did not believe that they could embrace a nation-based citizenship because the concept of the Puerto Rican nation as a political community and as grantor of citizenship does not exist. As Julia implies,
split loyalties allowed Puerto Ricans to differentiate their cultural citizenship from the classic notion of citizenship where the nation-state is the definition of a political community.

Julia’s differentiation highlights the notion that citizenship can be “a cultural process of subjectification.” In this view, citizenship is a process that results from the interplay between “self-making” and “being-made” by power relations that produce consent through schemes of surveillance, control and administration (Ong et al. 1996; 737). In this case, Julia’s remark about the impossibility of being a Puerto Rican citizen brings light to her aspirations and her own definitions of enfranchisement (Rosaldo 1997), as a result of the political barriers the US-Puerto Rico colonial relationship creates.

As Acosta – Belen and Santiago (2006; 185) point out, policies imposed by the United States on the island made Puerto Ricans especially sensitive and defensive about cultural and language issues vis-à-vis US influence and domination. The imposition of English language as the official language of Puerto Rico, the undermining of Spanish and the disregard for local historical and cultural traditions are among those policies. Hence, by imagining the notion of “Puerto Rican” citizenship, Julia puts forward an ideal of citizenship whose definition is cultural, rather than political or civic.

Julia’s imagined notion of Puerto Rican citizenship accurately conveys the effect colonial rule had on the conception of citizenship as a multidimensional process. The differing experiences Puerto Ricans had on the island and in the mainland in regards to the exercise of their American citizenship led them to establish a system of classification that, as Turner (2007) suggests, distinguishes between a definition of membership to a political community (extent), an allocation of specific rights (content) and an understanding of how their identities would be performed (depth).
Patricia and Jaime differentiated aspects of their citizenship in regards to their conceptions of nation, rights and belonging. Patricia, a Puerto Rican computer engineer living in Framingham, MA, discriminated between the definition of country and nation in light of the nation-based rights associated with American citizenship. Patricia revealed:

A Puerto Rican citizenship makes no sense to me because having citizenship means being part of a country and have the liberties that that country gives you and the rights that country gives you. If we were Puerto Rican citizens instead of American citizens, we would not be able to enter the United States without a visa. I mean, there are also some countries that see North America like the best in the world. Having a Puerto Rican citizenship, which doesn’t really exist, that would really close more doors than would open them. You know what I mean? We consider ourselves more as a nation, that we are a country.

Jaime, a Puerto Rican computer engineer living in Washington DC, conceptualized the Puerto Rican community as a construct that transgresses traditional conceptualizations of American citizenship. Jaime explained:

I think what defines your citizenship is your education, the culture with which you identify with. I am an American because I live in this country and because culturally we are so different, I don’t say that I feel American because of the culture, but because of what citizenship would be, traditionally speaking. I feel membership to this country, I am glad it is a successful country, but to be honest I don’t get any goose bumps when I hear the national anthem. So for me, to be a citizen is to be a part of a community, but for us Puerto Ricans it is a bit different, because we don’t grow up feeling part of that
community, but we feel part of a family that’s in Puerto Rico. We know that we are part, but we are really not. It is all quite complicated, but it shouldn’t be that way, I think.

The approach Patricia and Jaime chose to conceptualize the relationship between the concepts of citizenship and nation unveils two interrelated phenomena among Puerto Rican migrants in the United States. First, their accounts display a compartmentalized notion of citizenship that does not necessarily complement one another. That is, rights do not inform political participation or a sense of belonging. Hence, Puerto Ricans with split loyalties seek to distinguish and separate the cultural and political aspects of citizenship and belonging. In this case, the separation between rights and cultural belonging that Julia, Patricia and Jaime brought forward might derive from the impositions of the US policies on the culture of the island (Acosta-Belen and Santiago 2006), as well as from a response to the racialization and marginalization processes Puerto Ricans in the United States endure (Sánchez 2007).

Second, their narratives highlight a semantic difference between “nation” and “country.” This distinction resembles Duany’s argument about the importance of examining Puerto Rican “citizenship” and “belonging” as a tension between political nationalism and cultural nationalism. Political nationalism stems from the doctrine that people should have their own sovereign state. Cultural nationalism emerges from the assertion of the moral and spiritual autonomy of people (Duany 2007). This separation allowed Puerto Ricans with split loyalties to conceive a community of belonging in a transnational space: a space where they assumed hybrid forms of national, ethnic – and other – identities simultaneously (Grosfoguel 2003).

- Balancing Emotional and Pragmatic Attachments

Comparable with Puerto Ricans, Colombians with split loyalties distanced themselves from embracing rigid nation-based citizenship meanings. They worked on compartmentalizing
their citizenship and belonging in emotional vis-à-vis instrumental ways. Their self-awareness about their past and their emotional attachments to family and friends comprised aspects that their American citizenship could not replace. Guillermo, a Colombian computer engineer that lived in Massachusetts since his arrival to the United States, decoupled his citizenship by juxtaposing a spiritual facet and an instrumental angle that allowed him access to concrete economic and social rights. Guillermo conveyed:

My spiritual part will always be in Colombia and it will never leave that place. Never. At the same time, I’ve learned a lot here and there’s a lot that the American government has facilitated for me. My loyalties are split between the two. Your roots are in the bottom of your heart, and maybe a future…in Colombia. Colombia occupies that part: my heart.

Like Guillermo, Colombian engineers with split loyalties underscored the cultural realm of their citizenship and belonging. Although the foundation of cultural citizenship for both Puerto Ricans and Colombians lies in cultural practices and habits that could not fully be enacted in their receiving country, their frame of reference varies. Even though both groups emphasized the separation between cultural attachments vis-à-vis instrumental interests, the narratives of Puerto Ricans encompassed the tension between the idea of the Puerto Rican (cultural) nation and the United States as a sovereign political community they did not fully feel part of. Colombians focused on their nostalgia about cultural traditions and the fabric of friendships and family they felt comfortable with when living in their home country, but did not stress the differences between cultural and political nationalism.

The narratives of Federico, a Colombian computer engineer who recently naturalized, and Elsa, a Puerto Rican computer engineer that migrated to Massachusetts against her desire to
stay on the island, developed this claim by illustrating the mismatch between the United States and Colombia. Federico and Elsa exposed:

It is really tough to be away from my family… and well, I really miss the culture…both, really. Being away from your family, friends, the music, the food…being able to meet up anytime! Here you have to plan everything ahead of time just to meet up with a friend. You have to call for an appointment three months ahead of time. If your friend can make it on a weekend, he can only meet up from 2 to 4. Everything here is really all different. In Colombia, you come by, ring the bell and that’s it. So really, the cultural part is just not present here (Federico, Colombia).

When we go to Puerto Rico, we stay in a secure urbanization that is closed from the outside. In Puerto Rico they kill two, three, four, five every day. In theory it would be nice to stay on the island. That was our dream; our plan was to return after seven years. It’s now double that time and Ernesto and I hurt, we are hurting every time we think about returning to the island. We look at each other and we say: what for? People don’t respect one another, they would not respect what we have, and the one that tries to live there is practically surviving. It’s not worth it, so in theory yes, it’s a great statement, but in practice is not really going to work out well… I often feel like that old saying is true: basically, the brains that leave and the hearts that stay. Puerto Rico’s expats that come to the United States, we have a better life, but maybe more to be able to use our studies, but our heart is always on the island (Elsa, Puerto Rico).

These narratives encapsulate the contrasting ways in which Colombian and Puerto Ricans conflated cultural and emotional aspects as features of a cultural citizenship that could not easily be enacted in the United States. I argue that the central role of emotional and cultural
dimensions in these narratives illuminates a relevant assessment of citizenship in the settlement process of migrants. I concurred with Aranda (2007; 217) that emotions, relationships of affect, and cultural habits play a decisive role in migrants’ diagnosis of the dislocating social forces that are part of their settlement experience. As she points out, emotions are expressions of cultural citizenship and acknowledging them allow migrants to contest the social forces that make their experience “dislocated.”

It is important to indicate that although the meanings Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers attributed to the cultural dimension of their citizenship had relatively similar emotional and nostalgic features, it was relatively easier for Puerto Ricans to find outlets to enact this dimension in their local communities in the United States than for Colombians. Because of their proximity to niches of professionals, Puerto Ricans relied on these communities to share and reminisce about the cultural and emotional dimensions of their citizenship. In contrast, the narratives of Colombian engineers underscored emotional and cultural nostalgia that was triggered by feelings of isolation and loneliness associated with their settlement process. These marked differences affected the ways in which each group enacted their transnational loyalties.

The following accounts illustrate these differences. Aurora and Juan elaborated on the contexts in which they share cultural practices and emotional nostalgia. Like other Puerto Rican engineers with split loyalties, Aurora - a Puerto Rican computer engineer that works for the U.S. Patents and Trademark in Washington D.C. – recognized that her proximity to Puerto Rican professionals in her community allowed her to commemorate Puerto Rican culture even if not on the island. Aurora offered:

Well, we are a ton of Boricuas, a ton of Puerto Ricans. This is now our family and it’s now huge, it’s grown over time. We’ve spent a lot of time together here. We all have
families now, we are married, and we have children. We get together almost every weekend. We laugh, we remember things about the island, we cook together, and the kids hang out together. So, the same group that I have here at work is the group I have outside of work.

In contrast, Juan – a Colombian a computer engineer who works for a mainframe company in Littleton, MA - underscored his inability to connect to a meaningful community because of the isolation he faced, akin the experience of Colombian interviewees. Juan explained:

Sometimes when things are difficult here, I wonder if I should return to Colombia. Things are getting difficult in this country too. But then I think about it. I’ve lived here for over 15 years; I am raising a family here. That would not make a lot of sense. It is hard to decide what would be best. My life is here, but the toughest part is…how lonely I feel here. There are things that I miss here, that I miss a lot: my closest friends, my social circles. This is a really lonely society, in many ways this society is about being alone. I mean, I have my wife and my children and work, but that’s really all I have here. I don’t have anything I can fully relate to, the way I used to with my social circles in Bogotá. I had ample social circles there. I still see my friends in Colombia and those ties I keep. But the toughest part is really that sense of loneliness.

These narratives exemplify the contrasting experiences Puerto Rican and Colombian engineers had with their local community. Although one can argue that these differing experiences might associate with the divergent cultural and ethnic community resources that might be available in the communities where migrants live (Zúñiga et al. 2005; Bloemraad 2006), the evidence from this study indicates that the proximity to communities of professional co-
nationals had more of an impact in the way interviewees conceived the enactment of the emotional and cultural dimensions of their citizenship and identity.

Rarely did Colombian or Puerto Rican engineers referred to specific ethnic resources or organizations in urban or suburban spaces that were used to reminisce, celebrate or disseminate their cultural heritage. I contend that interviewees did not make use of these resources because they were either not available or - as their narratives indicate - because they chose to disassociate from these resources and organizations as a means to differentiate themselves from non-professional Latinos. Thus, the configuration of niches of professionals allowed Puerto Ricans to enact their cultural citizenship in a transnational space that included their local US communities and the island. The isolation Colombian engineers confronted prompted them to situate the cultural aspects of their citizenship in their home country and the instrumental aspects of it in the United States.

Transnational Engagements

The cultivation of educational and mentoring programs in Colombia and Puerto Rico was also an important source of pride among some engineers with split loyalties. About third of them engaged in transnational philanthropic activities that aimed to contribute to the educational and entrepreneurial advancement of their home countries. Occasional donations to community organizations that protect children and low-income families in need, exchanges promoting science and technology education, as well as technology-related mentoring programs with business groups and entrepreneurs were among these activities. For some, donating money for these causes represented a contribution to the country that they felt they should have been more connected to over the years. For others, their transnational engagements allowed them to provide
high school students and young professionals in their home countries with science and technology related opportunities.

The projects Javier and Felipe describe below illustrate some of these transnational efforts. As they outlined the details of these projects, Javier and Felipe revealed that they emerged from their desire to strengthen ties with their home countries. Their motivation also stemmed from their aspiration to disseminate the knowledge and experience they acquired in their professional tenure abroad.

Javier, a VP at a Cloud and Server Engineering company from Puerto Rico, founded a scholarship program that fosters educational opportunities for high school students in his hometown. Javier explained:

We began with a team of four people that wanted to make a difference. It’s two PhDs [in the US] and two in Chibiriquí. We offer financial aid, which really comes directly from my pocket. I mean, I choose to use my money to help out those children, we offer this help to find them summer internships….they can be where I work, or through friends in the network. I think we want to make a big difference in promoting STEM [on the island]. We bring people and have them talk about what they do. Sometimes we do video-conferencing, if we can’t afford all to go to Chibiriquí.

Felipe, a VP at a software development company, modeled an informal mentoring program with technology-focused entrepreneurs in Colombia inspired by the work some of his colleagues were doing with contractors in developing countries. Felipe offered:

When I worked with technology incubators in Brazil, I realized they had this mentoring program. I asked what this was about. They explained that mentors helped companies in different countries to get their businesses running. I suddenly felt this connection with

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9 Town name was changed to protect the confidentiality of the interviewee.
Colombia where I felt I could really connect with all of these companies. Once I understood the methodology [of the mentoring program], I became a mentor in an incubator in Colombia. Now I am part of the companies that help propel technology in Colombia. If they need advice with their business or need help navigating the market or the characteristics of a particular product, we arrange sessions through Google hangouts or Skype. So now, I have another connection. I feel like this fulfills my need to stay connected; it kind of makes me think about the future and the things that I could possibly do in Colombia.

The types of projects on which Javier and Felipe embarked expand the discussion about the involvement of Puerto Rican and Colombian migrants in transnational activities. Because the analysis of transnational activities of Puerto Ricans in the United States has focused on issues of culture, identity politics and emotional dislocations (Duany 1996, 2011; Aranda 2007; Acosta–Belen & Santiago 2006), evidence of participation in civic, educational and social transnational organizations is often scarce.

Historically, participation of Puerto Rican migrants in organizations of this nature has taken place in Latino communities in the mainland more than on the island (Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society 2003). However, as DeSipio (2006) indicates, participation in home country elections and involvement in government offices on the island are among the transnational activities in which Puerto Rican migrants typically get involved. In contrast, initiatives like the one Javier describes illustrates philanthropic activities that middle class Puerto Rican migrants develop that promote transnational educational exchanges.

On the other hand, Colombian migrants in the United States are more prone to get involved in transnational philanthropic projects that advance political, educational and social
causes in their home country (Portes et al 2005; Aysa-Lastra 2007). Contributions and involvement in educational scholarship programs, disaster relief and assistance to the poor are among these projects. Felipe’s involvement adds to the repertoire of typical transnational activities of Colombian migrants. Instead of promoting political parties or donating to charity, the type of involvement Felipe describes nurtures transnational guidance and collaboration among professional communities.

Narratives about split loyalties stressed the distinction between the cultural, emotional and instrumental realms that configured notions of “home,” identity and social responsibility. The invocation of cultural values and traditions, as well as the emotional connections with family and friends left behind in their sending countries, triggered the separation between the cultural and instrumental realms of citizenship. The colonial and transnational experience of Puerto Ricans led to the contrasting conceptualization of nation as a cultural vis-à-vis political entity. In light of these differing conceptualizations, Puerto Ricans reminisced and celebrated their cultural citizenship simultaneously on the island and with Puerto Rican professionals in their local communities (the Puerto Rican nation). In contrast, Colombian engineers enacted their cultural and emotional loyalties with their immediate families in the United States or by maintaining remote contact with their loved ones in their home countries. Their narratives indicate that their experience was different due to feelings of isolation and loneliness they faced during their settlement process.

While all engineers with split loyalties expressed desire to contribute to communities in need in their home countries, only a portion of interviewees participated in civic, educational and charity organizations with their contributions. These contributions mirrored some of the transnational behaviors other Puerto Rican and Colombian migrants in the United States tend to
engage in. Transnational initiatives that disseminated science and technology educational and entrepreneurial opportunities interviewees ran stood out in this group.

The split loyalties delineated by Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers intersect with the large body of academic work that demonstrate that the incorporation of migrant groups occurs in social fields where the exchange of ideas, emotions, practices and resources transcends the boundaries of nation-states (Levitt and Schiller 2004). Their split loyalties also reveal that some of the emotional and cultural dimensions of citizenship are better suited to occur in transnational spaces, while dimensions related to social and legal rights are enacted in both national and transnational spaces (Soysal 2001).

**Modeling Global Citizenship: Open Borders and Science-Focused Communities**

While their split loyalties made Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers resemble other migrant counterparts, I argue that their conceptualizations of global citizenship made them a peculiar group of professional migrants. These engineers dared to imagine a functioning global boundary-free community. A community composed of multicultural groups with relative equal access to the creation and production of scientific and technological advancement for the world. This creative process led some of these engineers to renounce their ascription to national boundaries or specific ethnic identity labels.

About 16% (5) of Puerto Rican engineers and 39% (12) of Colombian engineers explicitly proposed to take the nation-state out of the citizenship equation. This group of engineers embraced a global orientation to conceptualize ideas of participation, community and citizenship. The configuration of open multicultural societies that would allow access to open travel and opportunity rights to all their members constituted one of the features of this type of citizenship. Notions of global citizenship derived from reflections about the restrictive and
eroding effects of nation-states on individual freedoms: legal and social structures that marginalize people and imposed racial classifications were among those restrictions. At the same time, their focus on science and technology as globally-based goods and needs modeled an issue-based notion of citizenship, rather than a nation-based ideological focus.

I assert that these imagined notions are a product of the middle class and professional backgrounds of these engineers. Their vision of an open world of opportunities assumes that everyone has equal access to the same social and cultural capital resources that appeared available to them. Concurrently, because of the way in which their professions shaped their interests and identities engineers in this study proposed the advancement of science and technology as a basis for the conceptualization of global citizenship (Elam and Bertilsson 2003).

\* The Nation-State Model is Obsolete

Engineers that endorsed ideals of global citizenship began by questioning the relevance of nation-states as repositories of political activity and social solidarity. This contemplation emerged from their disenchantment about the nature of political processes and the lack of equity and cohesion in their home countries. This pondering also derived from their dissatisfaction with American politics, as well as their own experiences of marginalization during their settlement process.

Boris and Martin conveyed this disappointment by disputing the purpose and legitimacy of nation-states as containers of political life. Boris, a Colombian mathematician and programmer, revealed that his skepticism emerged from his discontent with the decision-making processes of nation-state governments. He regarded these processes as counterproductive for the well-being of citizens. In light of this consideration, Boris viewed processes of membership and
belonging as a personal decision, rather than a communal issue people should have a say on.

Boris offered:

What matters to me is my family and my friends. I don’t believe in countries or none of that. For me it is the same to be Colombian or not. But I do have personal ties and friends I care about. I mean . . . although the girls are in school, I don’t know, I don’t really belong here or anywhere I don’t really favor nationalisms, so I don’t really understand I can’t conceive the idea that they go and invade another country and start wars and things like that. This is all more like from a personal level it’s not really the community’s business it’s more my personal business.

Throughout our conversation, Boris expressed his irritation about the polarization of American politics and the decisions the American government made about the use of drones in foreign countries. He forcefully asserted that the invasion of countries as a means to disseminate democratic principles was an arrogant and faulty act the American government advanced. Considering these assertions, Boris characterized the actions of the United States government as irresponsible and corrupt. He compared those actions with those of Colombia’s government and concluded that the form of government of nation-states brings more harm than good.

Martín, a Puerto Rican electrical engineer who traveled widely and lived abroad as a child, declared that his migration experience and his cosmopolitan upbringing led him to take a critical stance about the role of nations. He explained that living in the United States reminded him of the freedom he used to feel growing up in Spain: there, people were multicultural and had diverse goals and backgrounds. Martín also indicated that experiencing that kind of freedom made him reflect on the complications that the nation-state order brought to his natal Puerto Rico. Martín declared:
It’s very interesting because, for me, my opinion has always been, since I was like . . .
since I’ve had an opinion as an adult, I believe that the status of Puerto Rico today is
totally obsolete. It is obsolete because nowadays we don’t live in a world that should
have territories and things like that. Either you are a country or not, or you belong to one
or more countries . . . that’s my opinion.

Martín identified as a Latino professional. He believed that people like him should not be
denied the opportunity to work towards the advancement of the global industry he worked for.
He used the example of his professional colleagues to state that the profitability of markets
should guide the decisions of whether people could cross borders. He added:

I believe that something like a global citizenship or a global passport would give
opportunities to people like me, an opportunity to be able to work anywhere and feel like
you are . . . like there are not different criteria for job opportunities, for advancement
opportunities because you are a foreigner. I mean, that even applies to us, although we
are American citizens. But any other Hispanic that come to the United States, well [they
need] the green card first and then the work visas. That is really an obstacle that keeps
them from advancing and to be honest, it’s sort of inefficient when a person contributes
and has the opportunity to learn and to contribute to the industry and have them leave
because they don’t have the green card.

These narratives call attention to political and legislative actions that restrict the
opportunity rights of individuals. Engineers like Boris and Martin disagreed with these
restrictions as illustrations of legal frameworks nation-states create to limit their freedoms. For
instance, Boris’ discontent with “nationalisms” emerged from his varied experiences with the
political and decision-making processes of the governments of Colombia and the United States.
Similarly, Martin’s reflections stemmed from the contradictions of being an American citizen while living in Puerto Rico, as well as with the restrictions he observed his fellow professional co-workers trying to overcome in the United States.

Their disenchantment about the institutional and political structures of their receiving and sending nations exemplifies the crisis of modernity. One of the signs of this crisis is the growing skepticism of individuals about the ability nation-states have to meet their needs and support their claims. The provisions and protections of nation-states fall short as a consequence of economic and social pressures of globalization such as global economic competition, social inequalities, and wealth gaps, among others (Giddens 2000; Kivisto and Faist 2007). Instead of defending aspects of either nation, the sentiments these engineers expressed, conveyed ideals that challenged nationalism as a dominant principle that creates and maintains group boundaries (Beck 2000).

Their narratives also feature claims that epitomize the contradictory conceptualizations of modern cosmopolitanism. Unlike previous accounts in this chapter, supporters of global citizenship neglected to make sense of their world and their identity by location, ancestry or nationality (Turner 2000; Vertovec and Cohen 2002) and put forward a sort of social justice that focuses solely on the needs and rights of individuals as subjects of basic moral equality (Agartan 2014). In the former accounts, Boris exhibits “cool loyalties and thin patterns of solidarity” (Turner 2000) in regards to national or ethnic forms of classifications. Martin purports a world where opportunity rights can be accessible to everyone. One could also argue that these narratives also appear as myopic. They give prevalence to individuals who are trained and privileged. Whether deliberate or accidental, these narratives give prevalence to a global
citizenship that results as the reward for those with the tools to succeed in navigating today’s global economic activity (Robbins 1999; Igashiro and Saito 2014).

- **Open Borders and Free Circulation of Knowledge**

Considering their disengaged attitude regarding the prospects of nations, supporters of this view proposed an alternative form of citizenship that includes open borders and mechanisms that foster the free circulation of knowledge and communication around the world, like the Internet, and a community in which people with globally-accepted technical and language skills would help connect the local with the global. Francisco and Enrique conveyed their versions of this outlook in light of the tension between nation-state based concepts and new forms of social organization dictated by professional and economic opportunity.

Francisco, a Puerto Rican computer engineer who is known as the advocate of the idea of global citizenship among his friends and who likes to remind everyone that he is a “world citizen,” revealed his rationale about the antiquated constructs nation-states impose on people. Francisco explained:

I think we have advanced…the whole society has advanced to the point that, beyond the conceptual part, the artificial [concepts] that governments create about migration, citizenship, nationality and residency and all of those legal complications, I think that the world has advanced to the point that the concept of migration doesn’t exist. If you tell me that I found an appropriate job in Shanghai and you guarantee a certain degree of social security in Shanghai that no one is going to shoot me or anything like that, and if I find a good school for the kids, as long as the economic change is positive, I hop on a plane and I leave. I think that we are at that point. Why? Because everyone who’s a professional, if you can speak basic English, because no one complains about my accent anymore, maybe
because everyone got used to it, at least in this region and well everyone has an accent everywhere…who cares! We are really getting to that point where you can find all the same products and services anywhere in the world, for the same price. The only thing that varies is the artificial elements such as the customs declarations. I mean, basic prices are all the same, except for the taxes imposed by the government. All kinds of products are accessible all over the world, if you want to purchase them from the Internet. Because everyone is migrating everywhere, one can find people, without so much nostalgia: you can follow people from similar cultures everywhere in the world. I mean…if you think about it with Internet there’s no government, no one can govern anybody with the Internet! That’s a good thing. Once you cross borders, you are in a wild world and that’s what governments don’t recognize: that they already lost that battle.

Enrique, a Colombian computer engineer who landed the job of his dreams with a software and hardware development company and who sustains a long distance relationship with his wife and daughter living in Colombia, expressed his frustration about some of the legal restrictions that impacted his life and offered his take on the idea of global citizenship. Enrique maintained:

I see it a lot in terms of [how you use] the passport. Like you don’t have a frontier through which you can go places anywhere in the world with no limits. And it doesn’t matter where you are you can be the same person, and do the same, acquire the same, and support the same, without government restrictions, with no restrictions from the law, no restrictions at all. So as a global citizen, laws apply for the masses and there are no borders. So one would say, what is the benefit of being a global citizen? How do I become one? How does that help me? I can work in Russia and they would continue
paying me when I am there without needing a visa, simply because a company in Russia hired me and I can work there because I belong in a global universe. Or maybe I can vote in Iran, or in any other country. Because I have read about them and I think their politics are interesting. I can participate wherever, and I want to be a congressman in Israel. Maybe this is a stretch, but that’s the way I see it.

The model of global citizenship Francisco and Enrique propose illustrates a transformative conception of belonging and participation typical of cosmopolitanism (Delanty 2009). In this model, the legislative structures of nation-states appear limiting and obsolete, and new spheres of action are put on the forefront. Francisco emphasizes the capacity the Internet gives society to cross borders and to disregard the obstructions of national governments. Enrique dares to imagine a world in which he can easily cross borders and where he can pick and choose how to participate in the political processes of different nations.

The notions of citizenship engineers like Francisco and Enrique put forward simulate characteristics that illustrate the prospects of post-national citizenship. First, ideas of free movement and political participation beyond the confines of nation-states resemble the model of regional integration of the European Union. By allowing individuals to move and reside freely in participating nations, partaking in municipal elections and providing citizens with diplomatic and consular protection, this model represents an example of post-national citizenship. This citizenship model extends rights to non-citizen immigrants. This extension of rights shifts the focus of citizenship on the human rights of individuals rather than rights entitled to nationals vs. aliens (Bhabha 1999; Soysal 1997; 2001). Second, Francisco’s reference on the reach and power of the Internet aligns with the emergence of platforms that foster connections and establish identities on the basis of shared interests and shared issues such as global social movements,
environmental causes and political uprising, rather than by patriotism or nationalism (Strijbos 2002; Kiwan 2014).

The realization of global citizenship in the way Francisco and Enrique narrate it might be far-fetched considering the baggage of colonial, racial and social disparities that the United States, Puerto Rico and Colombia share. This type of narrative was salient among engineers who supported global citizenship as a plausible model though. Overall, their narratives revealed contradictions derived from the tension between the legal structures of nation-states vis-à-vis the ideals of global participation and belonging. For instance, most engineers that promoted global citizenship viewed their American passport as a springboard to open borders and as an aperture to a world of opportunities. In addition, promoters of this view emphasized the potential technology based discourses and actions had to forge an issue-based global citizenship, rather than a nation-state based citizenship.

Vancho and Marleny articulated these notions by juxtaposing the provisions of nation-states vis-à-vis a global citizenship. Vancho, a computer engineer whose loyalties to the United States and Puerto Rico overlapped with his support for the ideals of a global citizenship, crafted a plan through which the ideal of open borders and individual rights could be enacted in a post-national fashion. Vancho expressed:

The way I see it, when you are an American citizen, that helps you. With an American passport you can go anywhere you want in the world. There are very few countries for which you have to apply for a visa. I mean, I have gone to many different places in the world and I’ve never had a problem. So, I would see a global citizenship in something where the rest of the countries could have the same benefit: that someone from Brazil
could go to the US without having to wait in line and wait two months for approval…for me that’s really strange.

Echoing other engineers, Vancho reveals how the stature of the United States leads migrants to equate American citizenship – represented in a passport – with the ideal of global citizenship. Paradoxically, his narrative highlights the central role nation-states still have in the organization and administration of rights, underscoring the notion that the existence of post-national and/or global principles does not imply the dismantling of nation-states (Soysal 2001).

❖ Scientific Citizenship?

Marleny, a Puerto Rican who indicated that her most fundamental community ties were the local church and her job as a computer programmer, illustrated the overlapping and often contradictory ways in which nation-states and global discourses coexist. Marleny volunteers her own notion of community and citizenship by underscoring her affiliation to her profession. Marleny conveyed:

This is a definition of citizenship that is completely different from what most people use. This is not a citizenship that has to do with a country. For me it’s all about your own community. I am part of a global community, and that makes a lot of sense to me. I consider myself part of the global community of technology. I don’t expect anybody to give me a global passport, but with what I do, I am part of the global technical community of technology development. That is only possible from country to country though.

The meaning Marleny assigns to her community and citizenship underscores the aspiration that interviewees who supported the idea of global citizenship had about disaggregating themselves from national and ethnic classifications. Marleny’s emphasis on her
participation in the global technical community introduces the notion that shared social interests such as global environmental struggles, scientifically based decisions or issues of human rights, can be driving forces of a global citizenship (Boli and Thomas 1999; Leach and Scoones 2003; Sassen 2002; Smith 2002; Root 2007).

Colombian and Puerto Rican computer engineers modeled ideas of global citizenship in light of their allegiance to the engineering profession and their commitment to the advancement of science and technology. This type of commitment was apparent in the mission and purpose of the transnational activities these engineers maintained with student groups and entrepreneurs in their home countries, as examined earlier in this chapter. The formulation of their identities and the conceptualization of alternative political communities also delineated the way in which these engineers devised notions of global citizenship. Santiago and Luis corroborated these emerging notions through the accounts that follow.

Santiago, a Colombian technical leader at a global network telecommunications company located in New York City, revealed how the knowledge he acquired through his professional tenure in the United States bolstered his adherence to the principles of science and rationality as foundational of his identity. Santiago explained:

I am a person that...I am not sure how to say... I am person of science. I am a person that believes in facts, I am not sure how that fits in a stereotype, I don’t know. I think it is maybe because I study it, because my engineering background has instilled it in me, because this is what I believe in. Maybe this means that I fit with the stereotype of people that believe and invest in science. I believe in facts, in real things and I believe in sharing that, so more people can believe and invest in the same.
Santiago’s sentiment coincided with his experience in the different companies he worked for in the United States. He acknowledged that the global nature of the telecommunications industry made him aware of the potential of global citizenship. He revealed that the design and administration of telecommunications networks illustrate the potential of global operations where an array of different actors participates in decision-making processes. He admitted that the management of these global operations would still rely on nations as geographic points of reference though. He added:

I think we already have a global citizenship project going on. I think the issue is that we are not fully aware of how to exploit it or how to enjoy it. We are all members of the world and the fact that we can’t visit all of the places in the world, doesn’t mean that we can’t use the tools of technology to learn to know the world as it is. I think this is something we should all become aware of.

Engineers who believed in a technology-focused sense of global citizenship argued that the universality of science and technology gave credibility to its potential. Luis, a Puerto Rican Systems Engineer who felt conflicted about his understanding of citizenship as a national vis-à-vis global construct, defined the contours of a science based global citizenship as an alternative community of deliberation and action. Luis offered:

I relate more with that [idea of a global citizen]. Because I work in technology and I develop products, the ideas of race and nationality lose meaning. What really is meaningful is people speaking the same language, the same programming language, people speaking in mathematical terms that are universal and this type of culture could be a bridge to the global way of thinking. Although there are different opinions in regards to technologies, it would work anyways. I think that there are many more opinions in
political matters than in the technology field. In the technology field, physics would help you to make things happen, science allows you to do it. Rules are made by principles, by fundamental science laws. In the political system, laws are created, relationships are created and you can change them. In science, laws don’t change and you can’t ignore that. In that sense, in technology is more viable to have an open system, something that is more universal that could influence political decisions and could influence the idea of having a global citizenship. I see that as something distant, but maybe doable.

The centrality of science, technology and rationality in the narratives of Santiago and Luis epitomize the novel ways in which transnational actors embrace specific issues and interests to justify the exercise of global citizenship. The way in which they frame their loyalties exemplify global deliberations about the risks and opportunities that the practices of science and technology have on lives of individuals and societies (Beck 2002). As Leach and Scoones (2003; 14) discuss, deliberations about science today influence the framing of debates on the direction of scientific and technological research through the creation of epistemic communities, advocacy and discourse coalitions. These deliberations occur through email-based networks, professionally based workshops and international conventions.

The narratives that engineers like Santiago and Luis offered illustrate the ways in which their socialization as engineers, as well as their migration and settlement experiences transformed their conceptions on their citizenship and their participation in political communities. In this case, Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers began to endorse the idea that science and technology driven spaces can serve as platforms of public deliberation that are founded on “rational consensus, rather than mere agreement”, as the more traditional nation-state political community operates (Horst 2007).
While these accounts appear rhetorical rather than based on actual practices of deliberation or action, I contend that the science and technology focused transnational initiatives I discussed earlier in the second section of this chapter reveal a different picture. These initiatives expose how migration experiences and engineering discourses configure transnational/global social spaces that foster the consolidation of communities whose primary interest is the dissemination and decision-making about and around science and technology.

Overall, feelings of disenchantment with the governance structures of nation states and a general desire to disaggregate from local, ancestry or national identifications drove Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers to craft a model of post-national citizenship. A world of open borders for individuals equipped with multiple language skills and with an innate openness to foreign cultures constituted one of the key principles of this form of citizenship. The promotion of scientific and technological goals and its deliberation in transnational and globally-situated platforms (i.e. Internet forums, conferences, educational initiatives across countries, etc.) was also at the center of post-national citizenship.

Concurrently, the arguments and actions that sustained ideas of post-national citizenship in this work relied on dispositions and rights granted by nation-states. For instance, for many engineers having an American passport served as an enabler of post-national citizenship aspirations. This confirms that whether imagined or plausible post-national citizenship forms and orientations still coexist with the traditional structures of the nation-state (Soysal 2001; Sassen 2002).

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The meanings Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers attributed to their notions of nationhood and citizenship emerged from the juxtaposition of their migration process and their
settlement experiences. These meanings developed as reflections on the barriers and constraints they came across through their departure from their home countries to their arrival and settlement in the United States. They also emerged from the negotiations these migrants made of their instrumental interests, ideological inclinations, their emotions and cultural nostalgia, as well as their professional identities.

Three overlapping narratives unveiled the meanings of nationhood, citizenship and identity Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers construed. These narratives distinguished the motives interviewees had to embrace an American citizenship and identity, the difference between notions of cultural vs. political nationhood, and modeled a vision of global citizenship founded on their professional experiences and identities.

The expansion of social and opportunity rights for themselves and their families was a central motive to embrace their American citizenship for Colombian engineers. Feelings of inclusion triggered by the collective devastation and social solidarity created by terrorist and violent events such as 9/11 led Puerto Ricans to embrace their American patriotism and to feel part of the American community. The unique exposure Puerto Rican engineers had to military operations in their workplaces expanded their understanding of the American project abroad. This experience inspired Puerto Ricans to celebrate their newly born American patriotism as well. Both Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers sustained that their alignment with values of self-reliance and merit led them to realize the American dream, reinforcing their allegiance to the United States.

It is important to highlight that a larger number of Puerto Rican engineers evoked feelings of patriotism and pride associated with the foundational principles of the American nation and the American dream than did Colombians. For Colombians, a minority among those
endorsing their American citizenship, naturalization was the central motivation to prefer this pathway.

Emotional and cultural attachments to their home countries still had an important place in the narratives of Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers. About half of Puerto Rican interviewees emphasized these attachments, while only a third of Colombian interviewees did. Because these attachments could not easily be enacted in the United States, interviewees bifurcated their notions of nationhood in cultural and political realms. The colonial experience and the cultural differences between the island and the United States prompted Puerto Rican engineers to view the United States as a political community that offered them opportunity rights, and Puerto Rico as a cultural community where their national identity and cultural traditions could be enacted. The contrast between their emotional and cultural attachments in their home country and the social and opportunity rights they had in the United States illustrated the separation between cultural and political nationhood for Colombians.

Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers also engaged in transnational activities in order to maintain their ties with their home countries. Monetary donations to charity and educational organizations and the coordination of educational and mentoring programs that focused on the dissemination and advancement of science and technology were among those transnational initiatives.

Inspired by their experience as engineers, Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers devised a model of global citizenship. This model conceptualized a form of citizenship that transcended the boundaries and legislative constraints posed by nation-states. In the view of these engineers, global citizens would be allowed to travel freely, to work and to live and participate of democratic processes anywhere in the world. From this perspective, global citizens would also
be concerned with deliberating about and contributing to the advancement of science and technology all over the world through globally available platforms such as the Internet. The deliberative focus of this type of global citizenship emphasized an issue-based, rather than a nation-based notion of citizenship.
VIII. CONCLUSION: FROM COSMOPOLITAN SOCIALIZATION TO COSMOPOLITAN CITIZENSHIPS.

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<th>The Meanings of Citizenship: Federico, Elsa and Fidel</th>
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<td>❖ Two years ago, Federico set up a mentoring program that aimed to prepare engineering students in developing countries to succeed in software production, dissemination and sales. Federico’s goal was to disseminate the knowledge he had acquired about how global technology markets work, about traveling and about overcoming obstacles in his migration experience. When I asked him about what he tells his mentees regarding obstacles, he said that he talks to them about some of the limitations he had to face when switching from a temporary to a permanent legal status as a migrant in the US. He reminds them that the constraints the law imposed in his life did not stop his business drive. He used his global connections, the Internet and his knowledge of different cultural markets to become the Global Sales Specialist he is. Federico stressed that this kind of mentality is what kept him afloat and what makes him feel like a global citizen.</td>
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<td>❖ Elsa and her husband had a daughter seven years ago. Elsa wishes her daughter had the same experiences she had growing up with her cousins by the beach. She really wishes her daughter spoke Spanish without the “funny” accent. When she expresses that she is a Puerto Rican citizen, she understands that her migration would always keep her apart from what is in her heart. Elsa alluded to the essay a Puerto Rican writer¹⁰ wrote to describe how it feels to be a Puerto Rican citizen in the diaspora. She said: “It is like the brains that leave and the heart that stays”.</td>
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<td>❖ When Fidel reflects on his work experience in the United States, he feels proud of what he has accomplished. He started working for a company that already wanted him, he moved up quickly in his career. Today, he owns a house and travels widely. Despite the initial discomfort of the cultural differences he confronted, he thinks he is an example of the opportunities migrants have in the United States if they work hard. That is what makes him a proud American citizen. Unlike some of his old classmates, he defies the idea that Puerto Ricans are discriminated against. For Fidel, it is all about paying attention, learning to play the game and ignoring negative ideas that might derail him from being successful.</td>
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These stories reveal some of the strategies Colombian and Puerto Rican computer engineers used to negotiate the challenges brought by the interplay between the legal and social

¹⁰ Magali García Ramis. “Los cerebros que se van y el corazón que se queda.”
dimensions of citizenship in their settlement years in the United States. These stories also display some of the material and emotional features these migrants chose to emphasize when speaking about their sense of belonging and identity. How these engineers negotiated the legal and social dimensions of their citizenship draws from experiences they had through their migration process.

Considering the ways in which Colombian and Puerto Rican computer engineers experienced structural, legal and social conditions in their pre-migration, arrival and settlement contexts, I argue that one of the key instruments that these migrants used to negotiate the interplay between legal and social citizenship was their cosmopolitan and professional socialization. Although the appreciation for foreign cultures and multiculturalism through international travel and fluency in international languages promoted by cosmopolitanism is a contradictory worldview only reserved for privileged educated migrants, it gave Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers leverage to countervail challenges faced in their migration process and allowed them to reason their chosen citizenship pathways.

In what specific ways does cosmopolitanism give professional migrants leverage to navigate the interplay between legal and citizenship in their migration process? How does cosmopolitanism impact the migration and incorporation process of professional migrants? What are the theoretical, empirical and policy implications of such impact? In light of the opportunities and limitations Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers encountered in negotiating the interplay between legal and social citizenship in their migration process, I explore the features and contradictions of cosmopolitanism in the context of immigration and citizenship in this concluding chapter. I begin by highlighting the contributions of the analytical approach I used in this work. I continue with a discussion of the empirical and policy implications of this research in issues of immigration and citizenship.
The Interplay between Legal and Social Citizenship in the Migration Process

This dissertation examined the contexts of opportunity and challenge professional migrants navigate and negotiate in their migration and settlement process. By focusing on the intersection between citizenship and migration, I analyzed how the legal and social provisions of citizenship in both sending and receiving countries interacted with the perspectives migrants had on nationhood, citizenship and belonging. With this analytical scope, I shed light on the fundamental role the subjective experiences of migrants play in shaping their strategies to navigate structural forces - such as those of economic and political instability - to negotiate racial and legal marginalization, and to reproduce or transform nation-based notions of citizenship.

This scope contributes to our understanding of the interaction between immigration and citizenship. Instead of assuming that migrants are passive recipients of structural forces, legal impositions, immigration policies or programs and social discourses and practices, this work reveals the active strategies migrants devise to either reproduce or transform them. The decision to migrate weighted in relationship with the option to stay in their home country, the use of their cosmopolitan and professional background to countervail marginalization in their workplaces and the diverging citizenship narratives they devised to make sense of their belonging and identity are examples of this active role Puerto Rican and Colombian professionals had to negotiate legal and social exclusion.

By exploring the linkages between different moments in the migration process, I illustrated the complex interplay between legal and social citizenship. I unveiled how professional migrants utilized their cosmopolitan inclinations and education to negotiate contradictory contexts of social inclusion prior to their migration; I discussed how professional migrants take advantage of transnational opportunities and perform their understandings of
cosmopolitanism to deplete moments of legal and social exclusion in their arrival to their workplaces and communities; I also revealed narratives professional migrants utilized to make sense of notions of membership, belonging and identity that in implicit and explicit ways brought about contradictory interpretations of cosmopolitanism.

This analytical scope helps expand the current repertoire of immigration and incorporation theories. By examining how professionals interpret and utilize national histories and socialization processes in the pre-migration context this analytical scope broadened our understanding of the symbolic resources potential migrants use to inform their decisions to migrate. This allowed us to look beyond classic migration theories such as those that contend that the maximization of income or the balance of economic and labor market demands explain migration behaviors.

By analyzing how migrants interpret and negotiate institutional and social opportunities and challenges, I reveal how migrants choose divergent incorporation paths and unveil the underlying cultural narratives that explain those choices. Hence, rather than just mapping different incorporation paths this framework brings to light how and why migrants choose such paths.

**Cosmopolitan Socialization and Transnational Migration Mechanisms**

Throughout the dissertation, I reveal that the early socialization experiences of Colombian and Puerto Rican computer engineers impacted the negotiations and decisions they made throughout their migration and settlement process. I demonstrate that the early socialization experiences acquired through their families, educators and the media played a distinctive role in cultivating cosmopolitan inclinations and ideals that informed the migration decisions of these engineers, shaped their interpretations of the constraining factors they
encountered in their home and receiving countries, and influenced the meanings of citizenship they construed.

I introduce these socialization experiences when I describe the pre-migration context that facilitated the migration of these engineers. I demonstrate that the cosmopolitan worldview these engineers acquired from their families, their university professors and the media informed their migration decisions and helped them bridge their engineering training with concrete job opportunities in the United States.

The heavy international focus of Colombian and Puerto Rican higher education policies in the 1990s, and especially of engineering education, helped concretize the cosmopolitan worldview interviewees learned to appreciate from their families and from the media into specific skills and network connections “global professionals” should have. A deep knowledge of the needs of the hemisphere, an ability to use cultural diversity to solve international problems and an advanced knowledge of English or more than a foreign language were among those skills. Transnational networking opportunities offered by engineering schools and professors allowed Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers to have concrete opportunities in the form of internships, international exchanges and job opportunities in the United States.

While a strained context of economic crisis and political violence in Colombia and Puerto Rico hindered the prospects of a safe and profitable future in their home countries, I contend that the cultural resources and social networks provided by the class positioning and socialization of these engineers allowed them to view international migration as a choice, rather than a necessity. Additionally, their interpretation of the narratives and opportunities available in the information technology and telecommunications market made these engineers hopeful about the existence of
global social spheres in which they could participate. At times, these engineers referred to these
global social spheres as alternatives to the regulations and stipulations of nation-states.

These findings reveal the importance of transnational exchanges and recruitment
mechanisms between universities and industry in order to maintain a reliable flow of skilled
talent to the United States. This is relevant for the strengthening of industries and governments
looking for specialists in science and technology, as is the case of the United States. This finding
is especially relevant regarding Puerto Rican engineers. Most Puerto Rican engineers attend
some of the top engineering schools in the island and in the United States. Ties between
industries and universities that date back to the 1970s have shaped the engineering curriculum to
serve the needs of American industries. Hence, the focus of attracting Puerto Rican skilled
migrants to join industries in the United States should be their highly specialized training and
their bilingualism, rather than just their minority status, as some interviewees indicated.

Cosmopolitan Socialization as a Tool to Navigate the American Workplace

The cosmopolitan socialization Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers received and the
“international” skills they learned in engineering school take central stage in their arrival
experience, in contradictory and paradoxical ways. At their arrival in the American northeast,
Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers put their cosmopolitan worldview and engineering skills
into action in what they described as their arrival to “advanced” workplaces. They also benefited
from an array of formal and informal training, mentoring and networking opportunities in these
workplaces. Despite these opportunities, the tense economic environment the information
technology and telecommunications market experienced in the early 2000s and the
intensification of racialization and racial profiling that resulted from terrorist events of 9/11
highlighted their vulnerability. Interviewees used their class and educational background and their cosmopolitan socialization to counteract that vulnerability.

❖ *Lessons from Arrival Opportunities in the IT Industry*

Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers cherished the experience of working in multicultural workplaces that, in their view, were mostly composed of multicultural professionals that developed and produced cutting edge technologies. The formal and informal training and mentoring programs these engineers joined complemented the welcoming reception they had in their workplaces at their arrival. These programs emphasized leadership, communication and diversity management skills with the goal of helping these engineers to get acquainted with the dynamics of their workplaces and propel them to succeed.

Besides guiding these engineers to navigate their workplaces, I argue that these training and mentoring programs also provided valuable information about the social and cultural dynamics of American society. For instance, some of these programs showed interviewees how to navigate their minority status, while others stressed the multicultural qualities of American society. In a way, these programs served a similar function to that of migrant integration programs whose goal is to offer migrants training, employment and education about pathways to social inclusion.

These programs could serve as models for academics and policy makers whose goal is to create migrant integration and labor market incorporation programs that match local and national labor market needs with the actual skills incoming migrants have. Modeling these programs considering the informal and formal strategies these companies use might help close the extant gap between the skills universities teach graduates and the actual needs of industry, as some recent policy discussions reveal.
Because the migration of Puerto Rican engineers to IT and military technology companies in the Northeast was more patterned than for Colombian engineers, Puerto Ricans enjoyed the support of their professional co-nationals. The proliferation of niches of Puerto Rican professionals in some of their workplaces provided information about work and community dynamics and opportunities. Although the literature on the economic incorporation of professional migrants suggests that the presence of ethnic niches in workplaces and communities correlates with positive earning outcomes for newly arrived professionals, the evidence in this study does not support that finding. Overtime, the earnings of Colombian engineers were higher than those of Puerto Ricans despite their restricted access to ethnic niches. It is possible that the low labor mobility of Puerto Ricans compared to that of Colombians after becoming permanent legal residents explains this difference.

Although major conclusions about the correlation between labor mobility and income cannot be drawn from the evidence in this study, these findings reveal further research opportunities. Would high labor mobility after obtaining a permanent legal status really account for better economic outcomes among professional migrants? What are the strategies professional migrants use to achieve high labor mobility in the American market? Besides potential racial discrimination, what made the experience of Puerto Rican engineers in the labor market different from that of Colombians?

- Playing the “Cosmopolitanism Card”

The simultaneous economic and social crises of the “dot com” downfall in the early 2000s and the terrorist events of 9/11 switched the welcoming reception these engineers had when they arrived at their workplaces. During this period, interviewees experienced episodes of ethno-racial stereotyping and marginalization. Negative remarks that questioned the true ability
these engineers had to perform their jobs and actions that responded to their skin color, colonial histories, accents, culture of these engineers characterized these episodes.

In order to highlight their self-worth, Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers emphasized their professional training and their cosmopolitan worldview to stress the characteristics and skills they had that differentiated them from the stereotypical view of Latinos as low-skilled uneducated workers. Interviewees also resorted to their understanding of the logics of engineering and science to align with a “principle of equivalence” in the engineering profession. This principle aimed to level the playing field in which their professional training and experience equaled or surpassed those of their co-workers. Could we argue that the way in which interviewees sought to comply with the “principle of equivalence” is a manifestation of how the “universality” of the engineering profession could help alleviate racist dynamics in workplaces?

Interviewees used similar strategies to deflect marginalization associated with their accents. For some of their co-workers, the accents of Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers were markers of their inability to communicate quickly or to contribute to projects with smart and professional ideas and solutions. These perceptions marginalized interviewees by preventing them from gaining access to crucial information to complete work assignments or by not being included in deliberations about workplace policies and projects.

Different from the strategies interviewees used to deflect the marginality associated with ethno-racial stereotyping, responses to accent marginalization were split. Some engineers complied with the recommendation of their supervisors to take part in accent reduction courses. These engineers believed that these courses were beneficial as an effort to neutralize their accents and as a vehicle to achieve the “principle of equivalence” they wanted to emphasize.
Other engineers disputed the imposition of accent neutrality by arguing that a diversity of accents and people should characterize the global engineering workplace.

The strategies Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers utilized to deflect the marginality caused by the perceptions their co-workers had about their origins, national histories, culture and accents revealed a contradictory tension between racial discourses and cosmopolitanism ideals. The emphasis the cosmopolitan socialization of these engineers placed in professional and international cultural competence as tools to succeed in the global market endorses ideas of merit and racial neutrality. Those ideas contradict the multicultural scope of the cosmopolitan worldview some interviewees strived to promote in their workplaces to counter the accent neutrality impositions.

The tension between racial and cosmopolitan discourses unveils the contradictions that characterize cosmopolitan narratives. The tension highlights, as Igarashi and Saito (2014) point out, why it is easier for educated individuals that grew up in families with high socioeconomic status like Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers to use, promote and enact a cosmopolitan outlook in their migration and settlement experiences. At the same time, the contradictory ways in which interviewees used their cosmopolitan outlook demonstrates their ability to reflect on the established cultural structures of social inclusion and membership in their workplaces and reproduce or transform them.

What do these insights reveal about the latent institutional logics of professional workplaces in the United States? How do globalized technology workplaces replicate dominant vs. dominated or colonizer vs. colonized dynamics? If transnational cosmopolitanism is another expression of multiculturalism and it is an alleged feature of globalized workplaces, how can workplaces truly use and learn from diversity to abolish the discursive imperatives of whiteness?
The Limits of Cosmopolitan Socialization

The narratives Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers offered about some of their experiences outside of their workplaces emphasized the pervasive effects of legal and ethno-racial marginalization in their lives. These experiences revealed the limits of their professional status and their cosmopolitan socialization as a means to deflect their marginality in public settings. Regardless of their citizenship status, both Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers endured marginalization experiences that derived from established racial and legal stratification systems that exist in American society.

Assumptions authorities and people in their communities made about their foreign characteristics raised concerns about the real prospects of their full social inclusion and substantive citizenship. Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers experienced episodes of overt racial discrimination where their foreignness – made evident by their skin color, accent or their choice to speak Spanish in public places – was conflated with the presumption of a criminal intention and an undocumented status. These misunderstandings and the cultural differences they tried to navigate made interviewees feel marginalized and inadequate to be considered full members of American society.

These experiences of marginalization and inadequacy had deeper implications for Colombian engineers whose temporary legal status generated higher levels of uncertainty. Similar to the uncertainty and marginalization undocumented migrants face in the United States, Colombian engineers endured lengthy and cumbersome legalization processes that had negative effects in their professional and personal lives. I demonstrate that the process of switching from a temporary to a permanent legal status led Colombian engineers to manage their lives with stagnant salaries, to face downward occupational mobility and to maintain dependent
relationships with their employers. These constraints directly affected the life course and family decisions of these engineers. Because Colombian engineers delayed life course decisions such as getting married or having children and endured family separation experiences, these interviewees had to adapt their lives to the stipulations of immigration legislation.

Although, these findings illustrated the experiences of professional migrants in the mid-2000s, they pointed at the specific issue of the green card process bottleneck, a serious systemic problem temporary migrants still face to date. For example, the Migration Policy Institute revealed that although the provisions of the Senate’s bipartisan Immigration Innovation Act of 2013 would ease the access to legal residency to immigrants with science and technology degrees and those of great talent, the proposed expansion of employer based visas will continue to create long delays for immigrants transitioning from temporary to permanent status. This bottleneck should be accounted for as it has important implications for migrants’ successful incorporation.

All in all, the way in which Colombians and Puerto Ricans experienced racial and legal marginalization in public spaces reminds us about the effects of the criminalization of Latinos in the United States. As Menjivar and Abrego (2012) suggest, this criminalization is yet another effect of the structural violence that derives from the conflation between immigration law, criminal law and racial profiling that not only affect undocumented migrants, but all Latinos regardless of their national, occupational or class background.

When examining the incentives and motivations Latino migrants have to become “new Americans” and contribute to American society either politically, economically or socially these implications have to be taken into consideration. As I allude in the dissertation, these experiences of marginalization left interviewees feeling doubtful about their prospects of full social inclusion.
and substantive citizenship. As revealed by the divergent citizenship and belonging pathways they narrated, these experiences go counter with the prospects of social inclusion and opportunity these migrants thought they would find in the United States.

**Cosmopolitan Citizienships**

Throughout the analysis and writing stages of the dissertation, I grappled with concretizing the meaning of cosmopolitanism as a unique characteristic that defined the migration of professionals like Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers. As I indicate at different points in this work, the aspirations of individuals who think and act cosmopolitan tend to clash throughout the migration process. For instance, the celebration of multicultural views conflict with ideals of global competitiveness that often impose cultural neutrality as a rule.

Concretizing the meanings of cosmopolitanism is a usual concern among social science scholars who choose to use the term to illustrate their theoretical and empirical discussions. For some scholars, the term alludes to a vision of global democracy and world citizenship, or to individual inclinations and dispositions that aim to engage with cultural multiplicity. For others, cosmopolitanism is a worldview that challenges notions of belonging, identity and citizenship (Hannerz 1990; Beck 2002; Vertovec and Cohen 2002; Igarashi and Saito 2014).

The narratives Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers devised to conceive notions of nationhood, citizenship and identity reassured me that cosmopolitanism was the central thread that connected their pre-migration, arrival and settlement experiences. Although the narratives of nationhood, citizenship and identity I discussed in chapter VII can be substantially different in their focus and intent, how they overlapped and appeared in the accounts of interviewees, sometimes in contradictory ways, assured me about giving cosmopolitanism that central role.
I argue that the narratives of Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers about their meanings of citizenship illustrate cosmopolitanism because they “simultaneously transcended the seemingly exhausted nation-state model; mediated actions and ideals oriented both to the universal and the particular, the global and the local; and represented variously complex repertoires of allegiance, identity and interest to be able to manage cultural and political multiplicities” (Vertovec and Cohen 2002; 4).

Notions of nationhood, emotional and cultural belonging, ideological and instrumental interests and negotiations between local and global demands characterized the three narratives Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers devised to give new meanings to their citizenship. The first narrative illustrates the ideological and pragmatic foundations interviewees used to justify their process of becoming American. The second narrative emphasizes emotional and cultural meanings in defining divided meanings of nationhood and attachment. The third narrative proposes a model of citizenship whose focus is the global advancement of science and technology and that counters the nation-state model.

❖ The Pragmatic Aspects of Becoming American

Emerging pride in American patriotism and a strong belief in the American dream characterized the desire Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers had to become American citizens and embrace an Americanized identity. The culmination of their naturalization processes gradually increased the admiration and endorsement of the American dream, the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights among Colombians. This risen admiration derived from the expansion of economic, social, political and travel rights their newly acquired American passports entitled them to have.
Achieving “neutrality” through camouflaging their cultural roots was also among the strategies Colombian engineers listed as a requisite to be recognized as Americans. Hard work and merit coupled with the notion of neutrality as a means to gain access to full social inclusion. Beyond expanding the repertoire of rights they could exercise, becoming American citizens equated with an upgraded international social status that allowed Colombians to travel, be respected abroad and be protected by the American government anywhere they went.

The strategy of camouflaging illustrates the need interviewees had to comply with a forced sense of a post-racial American society. Although interviewees framed this a strategy that ensured a meaningful sense of belonging and social inclusion, it really manifests some of the impossibilities of substantive citizenship in American society. Unless something dramatic or miraculous happened, interviewees implied constraint to fully feeling part of the American social fabric.

Dramatic terrorist events seem to help interviewees to experience the social inclusion they were hoping to experience. The trauma, devastation and subsequent collective healing generated by terrorist events such as 9/11 or the Boston marathon bombings triggered feelings of American pride and a sense of social inclusion among Puerto Rican engineers. These feelings gave Puerto Rican interviewees the impression that the marginalization they had faced would cease, as their co-workers and neighbors seemed more accepting of the role and place they had in their communities.

These findings suggest that cultural traumas characterized by dramatic social events that generate human suffering, can trigger social solidarity and lay the foundation for collective national identities based on notions of patriotism. The heightened sense of national pride and
social solidarity Puerto Ricans witness in lieu of these events highlights the potential cultural traumas have to diffuse racial tension and racial conflict temporarily or permanently.

The unique experience Puerto Ricans had working with defense and military technologies companies also shaped their risen admiration for the United States and its political project. Work assignments that directly dealt with military personnel or defense operations motivated this group of engineers to embrace their American pride and endorse the foreign operations of the country. Puerto Rican engineers sustained that this emergent sense of pride derived from a more informed and in-depth understanding of the American project.

Similar to training and mentoring programs in their workplaces, the familiarity Puerto Ricans gained in light of their work experiences reveals the high potential workplaces have to shape the motivations, desires and identities of migrants. This illustrates the potential workplaces have to help guide newly arrived migrants towards a successful socioeconomic and cultural integration in American society.

 Emotional and Cultural Projects vs. Political and Pragmatic Projects

Reconciling their past and their cultural and emotional attachments in their home country was a central concern in the narratives of Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers who felt that their loyalties were divided. Interviewees with divided loyalties struggled to reconcile their cultural and emotional nostalgia for their home countries with the wide array of political and opportunity rights they were able to have in the United States.

The political barriers and second class citizenship conditions created by the colonial history of the island with the United States led Puerto Ricans to establish the distinction between cultural nationalism and political nationalism Duany (2007) previously observed among Puerto Rican migrants. Cultural nationalism emerges from the moral and cultural autonomy of Puerto
Ricans, whereas political nationalism assumes people have membership and participation in a sovereign nation-state. The latter is not the case of Puerto Rico, hence the need some Puerto Rican engineers had to draw the distinction.

Although Colombian engineers also differentiated between the cultural and political realms of their split loyalties, the distinction was not as enthusiastically drawn as it was for Puerto Ricans. Colombians split loyalties consisted of balancing their emotional, cultural and spiritual attachments lived in their home country with their work and professional interests that inhabited in the United States. The evidence from the interviews reveals that the differentiation Colombians made between the cultural and political realms of their notions of nationhood and citizenship also lies on their feelings of isolation and lack of connection with their culture and their lack of close family-based relationships. Because more co-ethnic professionals have settled near the places where Puerto Rican interviewees lived, it was easier for them to enact their cultural loyalties and citizenship in the mainland and on the island too.

The way in which interviewees compartmentalized the cultural, political and more pragmatic aspects of their transnational loyalties provides empirical support for the notion that citizenship is a multidimensional concept that stems from the interplay between legal and social dimensions associated with experiences of social inclusion or exclusion. This compartmentalization also substantiates the claim that migrants rely on their transnational loyalties and engagements as a way to cope with or resolve experiences of social exclusion in the receiving country (Schiller et al. 2005; Schiller et al. 2011).

- Brain Circulation through Transnational Initiatives

Mirroring the findings of classic studies on transnational behaviors, Puerto Rican and Colombian engineers participated in transnational philanthropic activities that include donating
money to organizations that favored children in need and the promotion of science and technology educational exchanges. It is possible to argue that the transnational initiatives that aimed to advance science and technology education helped perpetuate network systems that supported the circulation and transfer of specialized knowledge. Over time, these projects might have helped prolong continued processes of high-skilled migration from these countries.

To an extent, these transnational initiatives also address the rising concern about migrant-sending countries losing skilled talent whose contributions are important to developing economies. The educational and entrepreneurial focus of these initiatives resonates with governmental policies and programs that foster “brain circulation” rather than “brain drain”. These programs “aim to use migrants as links between local and global science and technology networks or agents of knowledge and technology transfer” (Pellegrino 2001; 112).

Even though the “brain drain” concern is relatively recent in Puerto Rico (Birson 2014), this was a major focus of the Colombian government during the 1990s. Because of the rise of emigrants since the 1990s, the Colombian government created a program that aimed to cultivate links with skilled migrants abroad to promote brain circulation initiatives (Meyer et al. 1997). The initiative lost momentum in the mid-2000s\(^1\). Because of the continued incongruity between the messages that college students receive in relation to the available opportunities in the national job market the issue of brain drain has subsequently increased (Murcia and Parrado 2013).

Although individual and private, the transnational initiatives these engineers advanced may have helped cultivate the transfer of knowledge and the formation of networks that strengthen the proliferation of science and technology locally and globally. Accounts about science and technology-focused transnational projects had no explicit ties to government organizations or institutions in either sending or receiving countries.

\(^{11}\) Personal communication with one of the scholars that ran the program.
These initiatives emerged from the desire that these engineers had to benefit young people and professionals in their home country and their determination to extend the same opportunities they had without the interference of government programs or institutions. I contend that the non-governmental nature of these transnational initiatives and their focus on science and technology hinted at the aspirations some engineers had to partially or completely disaggregate from politically based projects whose goals were dictated by national governments, a central theme in the last narrative Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers offered.

- Global Futures?

The centrality of their cosmopolitan and professional identities led some interviewees to imagine a model of global citizenship that would allow individuals to have access to open borders and equal opportunity rights worldwide. Interviewees that pushed this vision forward expressed disenchantment with the legal and social institutions of the nation-state. They imagined the configuration of open multicultural societies under the assumption that they would serve as equal level playing fields for everyone with an education and with ambition.

The foundational principles of this form citizenship mirrored models of cosmopolitan citizenship, post-national and global citizenship dictated by a). the middle class and professional backgrounds and interests of their devisers and recipients (Calhoun 2002; Vertovec 2002; Turner 2011); and b. issues and/or interests that individuals and groups around the globe aim to campaign and strive for (Soysal 1997; Boli and Thomas 1999; Sassen 2002; Beck 2002).

The configuration of communities that deliberate the shape and future of science and technology in global platforms such as the Internet was central to the formulations of global citizenship Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers proposed. Considering the literature on global and post-national citizenship, the creation of these global communities has the potential of
materializing the idea that in today’s globalized world individuals choose to participate in communities of choice that push forward issues, rather than nations. This would, in theory, allow individuals to have greater freedom and agency to achieve social inclusion (Gelernter and Regev 2009; 64).

These initiatives and worldviews might foster the increasing need scientists and experts have of communicating the benefits and status of science to a wider public for their scrutiny and influence (Public Understanding of Science) (Horst 2007; Bickerstaff et al 2010). Thus, it would be plausible to argue that some the accounts and initiatives interviewees talked about in their narratives illustrate notions of scientific citizenship: a new social contract that brings together science and society that “defines and delimits itself by its capacity to produce and mobilize knowledge”. The goal of this contract is to engage publics in building political decision-making in issues of science and technology by taking on the knowledge, experience and capabilities of diverse actors (Elam and Bertilsson 2003; 234).

The model of global citizenship Colombian and Puerto Rican engineers proposed is a novel form of political identity that, some scholars would argue, is typical of the modern globalized world: a cosmopolitan citizenship whose focus is universal human rights and systems of social solidarity and identity that are based on inclusion, rather than the exclusion of others (Turner 2000). Models of global citizenship and notions of a globalized world do not override the central role nations and their bounded societies have in the provision of legal and social citizenship for migrants though.

It is compelling, however, to reflect on the real possibilities that universal discourses, such as science and technology, and globalized platforms such as the Internet provide for modeling global governance projects and for the consolidation of interest groups that strengthen
the global civil sphere. If a global civil sphere succeeds, what would a boundless global project look like? Would such project debilitate the legal regulations and social discourses that marginalize migrants? It remains to be seen.

- *Global Futures for Whom?*

It was compelling to observe that a greater majority of Colombian engineers indicated their alignment with ideals of global and transnational citizenship than with an American identity. Although not conclusive, the evidence from this research reveals that Colombians who directly experienced or witnessed political violence in their home country, who performed research and/or programming tasks in large technology companies in the United States, and who experienced long waiting periods to get their permanent visa (more than five years) were more likely to express their disenchantment with nations and, in some cases, propose extra-statal platforms to advance science and technology in the world. This pattern provides some support for Beck’s notion of the crisis of modernity. According to this notion, individuals grow disenchanted with the institutions and provisions of nation-states and are more inclined to participate in new forms of transnational and global civil engagement (2003).

On the flip side, Puerto Rican engineers tended to emphasize the transnational and/or American aspects of their identity more than the global ones. For half of the Puerto Rican sample the distinction between the cultural and political sense of nation was central to defining their citizenship. For more than a third of this sample, becoming American was an indication of the social inclusion they were denied even before their migration to the US. This finding reveals that the construction of citizenship as tied to particular nations is still central to the way in which these interviewees construct their identities as citizens and migrants. This also suggests that the
influence of the engineering profession was less salient in the construction of citizenship and
identity among Puerto Rican professionals, than among Colombians.

Is the Technology Industry a Game Changer?

The momentum the “dot com” boom generated in the technology industry worldwide not
only changed the ways in which institutions and societies depended on technology, but also had
an effect on the configuration of migration networks and trajectories for different social groups
worldwide. As I revealed in this dissertation, the emerging information and telecommunications
(IT) market of the 1990s created opportunities and crafted worldwide social narratives that
allowed and motivated Colombian and Puerto Rican computer engineers begin their migrant
journey. This also occurred parallel with the global initiative to standardize engineering practices
and skills.

In many different ways, these concurrent phenomena gave professional migrants tools
and ideas to navigate the social challenges and legal contradictions of arriving and living in the
United States. It is compelling to see that despite the racial/racist logics interviewees
experienced, the soft skills promoted by technology markets and engineering training such as,
the openness for foreign cultures or the need to speak different international languages, served
them in their attempt to establish socially fairer and equal practices and policies in their
workplaces. Likewise, how interviewees used their interest in the promotion of science and
technology endeavors to generate concrete transnational initiatives, as well as to model notions
of citizenship that focused on issues that a global civil society deliberate and advance is
captivating.

Although the strategies and narratives of nationhood, citizenship and identity
interviewees devised to negotiate their social inclusion illustrate features of their specialized
training and cosmopolitan socialization, the numerous constraints and barriers caused by ethno-racial stereotyping, accent marginalization, legal uncertainty and marginalization and criminalization call attention to the central role of nations in determining the regimes and narratives of social inclusion for professional migrants.

As I demonstrate in this work, migrants today can make use of cheaper travel, technology or cross-border enterprises to devise way to connect to their home countries or to totally reject the relevance of nations, their legislation and their provisions. Despite the opportunities and relative symbolic and material freedoms the technology market may offer in order to devise economic, political and cultural strategies to overthrow the limiting social, racial and legal provisions of the nation-state, national governments still have the final word in providing opportunity rights to migrants.

I believe technology will continue to be a game changer in how migrants build and conceive ways of conceptualizing transnational practices and post-national models of participating in a global civil sphere (issue-based). However, while issue-based citizenship might continue to be fruitful for groups with special interests (e.g. engineers, activists, etc) and will continue to illustrate new and innovative ways in which migrants conceptualize notions of citizenship, the national realm will continue to coexist with the transnational and the post-national.

Hence, as Soysal (2001; 340) points out, the national and transnational determinants of the experience of migrants are concurrent: they reinforce and reconfigure each other. Still, I would deem necessary to investigate the origin and connection between national and transnational determinants to truly understand how and why migrants conceptualize notions of nationhood, citizenship and belonging in divergent ways. I encourage scholars interested in
examining the concurrent narratives and practices of the national, the transnational and the post-national among international migrants to examine the interplay between legal and social citizenship between pre-migration and settlement process to be able to shed light on the plausible roots of such divergent pathways.
APPENDIX
Appendix 1

Interview Schedule

Section One: General Questions:

1. Tell me about yourself. What are you currently doing? Who do you live with?
2. Do you have any other family members living in the United States?
3. What would you consider to be your racial or ethnic group?
4. What did you study? Where?
5. Do you have any postgraduate training? What kind?
6. Why did you decide to study engineering?

Section Two: Pre-migration Motivations:

7. How would you describe the situation of Puerto Rico/Colombia before you left? (Prompt economic, social, political, economic and work related aspects)
8. What were you doing before you left Puerto Rico/Colombia?
9. What were your personal goals when you graduated college?
10. What were your professional goals when you graduated college?
11. Where did these goals come from? What inspire you to have them?
12. Please tell me about the process of migrating to the United States. How did it happen?
13. What was the most challenging part of leaving Puerto Rico/Colombia?
14. Besides working or studying abroad, were there other reasons that motivated you to leave Puerto Rico/Colombia?
15. In what way do you think your experience in engineering school motivated you to come to the United States? (Prompt: professional networks, messages received in the classroom, mentor-mentee relationships, etc)
16. What were your expectations when you came to the United States? What did you think it was going to be like?

Section Three: Migration Process:

17. Please tell me about your first job in the United States. How did you find it?
18. What did you like about that job?
19. What were some of the problems that you encountered with this job?
20. What types of benefits were offered to you?
21. What salary did they offer you?
22. Were you able to make negotiations regarding salary or the benefits package? Which ones?
23. What other job offers did you have lined up then?
24. What type of professional profile were they looking for at this job?

Section Four: Settlement Questions:

General Questions:

25. How long have you been in the United States?
26. What other jobs have you had?
27. What would you describe as the most interesting that first year?
28. What would you describe as the most challenging that first year?
29. Where did you live? In what neighborhood?
30. How would you describe your experience with your neighbors?
31. Describe your daily routine then. How did you find a place to live? Who did you spend your time with? Who were your friends?
32. Please describe your interactions with other Colombians/Puerto Ricans or Latinos.

Workplace Questions:

33. Please describe your experience at the workplace that first year
34. What would you describe as the most interesting in your job that first year?
35. What would you describe as the most challenging in your job that first year?
36. Please describe your experience at the workplace in the time that you have been in the United States
37. What would you describe as the most interesting in your job during the time that you have been in the United States?
38. What would you describe as the most challenging in your job during the time that you have been in the United States?

Discrimination and Racism Questions:

39. How would you describe your relationship with your bosses or managers?
40. How would you describe your relationship with your colleagues?
41. If you could describe the women/men ratio in the places that you have worked, what would it be?
42. Do you believe that the experiences of women differed from those of men in the places where you have worked? If yes, in what way?
43. If you could describe the foreign/native population ratio in the places that you have worked, what would it be?
44. Do you believe that the experiences of foreigners differed from those of natives in the places where you have worked? If yes, in what way?
45. If you could describe the ratio of minorities in the places that you have worked, what would it be?
46. Do you believe that the experiences of minorities differed from those of other workers in the places where you have worked? If yes, in what way?
47. Have you ever felt that your experiences at the workplace are different from those of other colleagues?
48. Have you been promoted over the years that you have been in the United States?
49. How much has you salary changed over time?
50. (For Colombians) How many different visas have you had? What was the visa application experience like?

Section Five: Context of Reception Diagnosis and Views on Citizenship

51. Have you ever experienced an unjust situation in the time that you have been in the United States? Could you describe it?
52. What has been the most rewarding aspect of living in the United States?
53. What has been the most challenging aspect of living in the United States?
54. How have you overcome these difficulties?
55. FOR PUERTO RICANS: Some people say that coming to the US for Puerto Ricans is like migrating internally. Puerto Rican migration to the US does not change the lives of people, because it is like migrating from North Carolina to New York. What do you think about this statement?
56. FOR COLOMBIANS: Some scholars say that Colombians in the United States become more Colombian than when they were living in their home country. What do you think about this statement?
57. When I spoke with professors at engineering programs in your home country, some of them said that for them the engineering profession was meant to support the economic development of the island/country. Does this mean anything to you? Why or why not?
58. How would you describe your contribution to the engineering field?
59. What regrets do you have? Why? (Prompt: leaving Puerto Rico/Colombia)
60. When you think about staying connected with Puerto Rico/Colombia, what comes to mind?
61. How would you describe your participation in political affairs (voting, participation in public spheres, holding political office)?
62. How often do you travel? Where do you go?
63. (If person travels to homeland often) How have things changed in Puerto Rico/Colombia?
64. Are you involved with any organization? (Prompt: National, ethnic, religious, and/or professional organization?)
65. What does this involvement entail?
66. What does the word “community” mean to you?
67. Which community are you loyal to? Which community do you think you belong to?
68. How do you participate in this community?
69. After the years that you have lived here, do you feel you belong to the American community? If yes, why? If no, why not?
70. Where else do you belong?
71. It is elections time. What is your political inclination? Why?

Section Six: Legality and Community

72. (If Puerto Rican, skip to question 80). What is your legal status at the moment?
73. Do you feel you are a (legal status)? What does make you feel?
74. Could you tell me about other visa categories you have held? What has been the process?
75. How have the visa processes affected your personal goals?
76. How have these processes affected your professional goals?
77. How have you dealt with these difficulties?
78. What do you think about becoming a permanent resident or an American citizen?
79. What are the disadvantages? What are the advantages?
80. How do you feel about being an American citizen?
81. What is your opinion of the American government?
82. What kinds of things can you achieve in the United States that you could not achieve in your home country?
83. How does the American government help you achieve these things?
84. How is the American government an obstacle to achieve the things that you want and need?
85. What does the word “citizenship” mean to you?
86. What does the word “citizen” mean to you?
87. What does the expression “global citizenship” mean to you?
88. Do you consider yourself to be a “global citizen”? Why? Why not?
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