"They Are There with Us": Theorizing Racial Status and Intergroup Relations[1]

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Working from a case study of Latinx immigrant settlement in a Black-White community in North Carolina, this article draws on social psychology, racial formation theory, and intersectional theory to produce the theory of racial status. This integrative theory better accounts for how race relations are formed and transformed, particularly among non-Whites. Racial status theory proposes that groups are most likely to get along when they believe their racial status is shared. In conceptualizing race as a status rather than a category, the author theorizes shared racial status as the product of three mechanisms: contact, discrimination, and external threat. These three mechanisms determine whether or not the boundaries of racial status shift and, when they do, in what direction. Moreover, in retheorizing intergroup relations dynamics through racial status, the author posits that collective racial status building is the process by which linked fate occurs on the one hand and assimilation on the other, suggesting new frameworks not only for understanding intergroup relations, but also for revealing dynamics of integration among immigrant newcomers and racial politics.

INTRODUCTION

The early social psychology literature of the 1950s and 1960s examined the social construction of race and race relations with the goal of understanding

[1] Special thanks are given to Hana Brown, Jessica Collett, Amy Langenkamp, Erin McDonnell, Elizabeth McClintock, Cassi Pittman-Claytor, Christi Smith, and Sandra Smith for their helpful comments on previous versions of this article and their feedback in the development of this project. Any errors are the sole responsibility of the author. Preparation of this article was supported in part by a grant from the National Science Foundation and support from a University of California Center for New Racial Studies Research

 https://doi.org/10.1086/721467

the dynamics of group formation and fostering positive intergroup relations (Sherif and Sherif 1953; Allport [1954] 1979; Sherif et al. [1961] 1988; Tajfel and Turner 1979; Tajfel 1982). This literature yielded a range of important insights, including a framework that examined group making as a process, theorized race as a social construction and a status, and considered a range of outcomes, including neutral, positive, and conflictual intergroup relations.

More recently, however, the study of intergroup relations has moved away from these broad insights, focusing narrowly on conflict between racialized groups (Olzak 1992; Quillian 1996; Gay 2006; McClain, Carter, Sota, Lyle, et al. 2006; Morris and Gimpel 2007; Marrow 2011; Hutchings and Wong 2014). This tendency manifests in the theories that have come to dominate the existing literature—competition, threat, conflict, and contact (Messick and Mackie 1989; McClain et al. 2006; Morris and Gimpel 2007; Hutchings and Wong 2014; Kun and Pulido 2014). Contemporary social scientific theories of intergroup dynamics are now part of a vast body of literature that has produced important meso theories central to our understanding of a wide array of phenomena, including immigrant assimilation, voting patterns, benefits distribution, stratification, urban conflict, and discriminatory behaviors (Bentacur and Gills 2000; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000).

Despite its wide application, however, the contemporary scholarship on intergroup relations is inconsistent and contradictory in its explanation for what causes conflict and cooperation (Sigelman and Welch 1993; Quillian 1996; Sigelman et al. 1996; Oliver and Wong 2003; Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004; Tropp and Pettigrew 2005; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006), in large part because contemporary intergroup relations research abandons those early insights (Fine 2004). As a result, contemporary scholarship does not provide a generalizable explanation of intergroup dynamics. Moreover, it is particularly weak in its ability to explain relations between non-Whites (Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004; Chamberlain 2011; Telles, Sawyer, and Rivera-Salgado 2011) and cannot explain instances of positive intergroup relations (Brown and Boswell 1995; González-Sobrino 2016).

This article traces these shortcomings to two flawed theoretical assumptions in the contemporary literature. First, the contemporary intergroup relations scholarship takes "groupness" for granted by treating the boundaries between groups and racial positioning as fixed (Blalock 1967; Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004; Fernandez and Neiman 2010). This shortcoming is especially evident in the vast body of literature that measures threat quantitatively (Sigelman and Welch 1993; Quillian 1996). Indeed, a significant subset of this literature relies on the mere presence of different racial groups in relative

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proximity, as determined by census categories, to measure intergroup threat (Oliver and Mendelberg 2000; Oliver and Wong 2003).

Second, the intergroup relations literature treats race as epiphenomenal to class (Barth 1969; Bonacich 1972; Olzak and Nagel 1986; Olzak 1992). Owing to this framing, intergroup relations theorists assume that conflictual race relations are an outcome of class conflict and arise out of labor market competition, unequal power dynamics, or zero-sum analyses of available economic, social, and political resources (Blumer 1958; Olzak and Nagel 1986; Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Kaufmann 2003*b*; Gay 2006; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Morris and Gimpel 2007). Moreover, because intergroup relations scholars frequently treat non-Whites as occupying a lower economic status position relative to Whites, intergroup relations theories predict and explain dynamics between non-Whites and Whites, and non-Whites and other non-Whites, as overwhelmingly conflictual (Bergeson and Herman 1998; Kim 2000; McClain et al. 2006).

These flawed assumptions are a significant departure from the early social psychology literature, which neither took groupness for granted nor theorized race as class. Rather it offered a framework that emphasized race as a construction and as a status. However, that literature also misses key processes because it relied exclusively on experimental methods. That is, despite the numerous insights yielded in hypothesis-testing research, they missed insights that emerge only when real-life dynamics are analyzed.

This article addresses these tensions in the contemporary intergroup relations literature by offering a new theory of racial status to understand and predict the quality of intergroup relations. Racial status theory posits that whether intergroup relations are positive, negative, or neutral depends on whether the two groups in question develop a shared racial status. Shared racial status is a sense of parallel position in the U.S. racial hierarchy. The recognition or assertion of a shared position, in turn, produces a sense of shared values, norms, and meanings alongside a sense of linked fate. Racial status theory takes race seriously, not as a group identity or static category, but a social position that, in turn, shapes group meanings, interactions, and boundaries. It also treats race and class as analytically distinct, while simultaneously accounting for the ways the interaction of race and class can produce distinct social relations.

In foregrounding racial status, I recover important insights from the early social psychological literature on race and identify alternative accounts of intergroup relations. I also resolve these problems by turning to the race literature and pursuing paths proposed but never analyzed by Sherif et al. (1953), who critiqued fellow social scientists who treated race as unchanging and fixed. Indeed, in the decades since, race theorists and boundary formation scholars have established that (1) race itself is processual in nature, changing over time and across contexts, and (2) race is not epiphenomenal

to class (Omi and Winant 1994; Bashi and McDaniel 1997; Bonilla-Silva 1997; Glenn 1999; Brubaker 2004; Bonilla-Silva and Baiocchi 2008). Yet few of these insights have been applied to contemporary intergroup relations research, producing a corpus of theory that yields only a partial account of intergroup dynamics, particularly among non-Whites. Finally, by moving beyond experimental research and applying these racial status frameworks to an ethnographic case study, I can reveal key real-world processes that shape intergroup dynamics on the ground.

In theorizing race as a status, I draw from the early social psychology literature to argue that shared racial status is a product of three processes: contact, discrimination, and external threat.[2] Collectively, these three processes function dialectically to alter group boundaries. That is, shared racial status produces a sense of shared values, norms, and meanings alongside a sense of linked fate. In turn, intergroup relations improve because group members reconceive group boundaries, resulting in the creating of a new shared umbrella group. Once this identity shift has occurred, the new group, in this case, minorities or non-Whites, can orient around shared goals, reinforcing their sense of themselves as a collective.

To develop this framework, I use a counterintuitive case of solidarity between Blacks and Latinxs to theorize the production of shared racial status; in this case, as non-Whites. I employ inductive grounded theory techniques (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Corbin and Strauss 1990) to explain how positive relations, including a growing sense of linked fate and solidarity, emerged between Blacks and Latinxs in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, *and* to account for the rare, yet observable moments in which conflictual relations did, in fact, materialize. In this article, I focus on the conditions under which positive intergroup relations emerge to highlight the framework's capacity to address a scholarly blind spot, providing new tools for a unified theory of intergroup relations.

Early Social Psychology Literature: Group Making and Racial Status

From the time of Reconstruction and through the expanding influx of European immigrants at the turn of the 20th century, sociology has long been concerned with intergroup conflict (Thomas 1904; Reinsch 1905; Stone 1908; Park 1950). Until the mid-20th century, social scientists overwhelmingly believed that conflict was the natural result of biological differences between

[2] Drawing from the race literature, I specify the importance of race as a process and a status category, treating race as a distinct set of social meanings, identities, and statuses that operate according to their own social logic (Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1991; Feagin 1991; Dawson 1994; Omi and Winant 1994; Bonilla-Silva 1999; Kim 2000; Collins and Bilge 2016).

racial groups (Du Bois [1898] 1978; Bonilla-Silva 1997; Winant 2007). In the 1950s and '60s, however, Sherif and collaborators initiated a ground-breaking series of experiments intended to examine how groups form, how conflict emerges, and how to ameliorate that conflict (Sherif and Sherif 1953; Sherif et al. 1988). This work was largely in the service of theorizing race relations and rejecting what they called the "race doctrine," or a persisting bias toward biological or essentialized explanations of racial difference and race relations.

Sherif and Sherif (1953, pp. 85–86) also highlight the importance of racial status in shaping race relations, even as many of their colleagues insisted on a race doctrine perspective, arguing that accepting social hierarchies imposed by the majority group not only has consequences for minority groups in terms of life chances, but also contributes to the maintenance of said hierarchies. Building on these points, Tajfel and Turner (1979) also offer additional insight into the importance of racial status. They conceptualize a group as "a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership of it. . . . Social groups, understood in this sense, provide their members with an identification of themselves in social terms. These identifications are to a very large extent relational and comparative: they define the individual as similar to or different from, as 'better' or 'worse' than members of other groups" (Tajfel and Turner 1979, p. 40).

I contend that these arguments about status and groupness hold today and underscore the importance of thinking carefully about race in our assessment of group behavior. Unfortunately, the conceptual insights of Sherif and colleagues and Tajfel and Turner on race and racial status are not integrated into the vast body of literature on intergroup relations that dominates scholarship today. Instead, since the 1970s, scholars have zeroed in on their findings regarding intergroup conflict with little attention to the group formation process or to the role of status.

The Conflict Model

In the 1960s, as social scientists came to understand the socially constructed nature of race, explanations for persisting racial conflict shifted away from primordial understandings of difference to economic explanations. Despite Sherif et al.'s (1988) broad contributions to our thinking about race, group formation, and intergroup relations, we rarely read and cite the broad insights from their *Robbers Cave Experiment* and related early studies (Fine 2004). Instead, what has emerged instead is a relatively narrow body of research that is best understood as the conflict model of intergroup relations.

In moving away from biological understandings of race conflict, theorists overcorrected and drew narrowly from early social psychological insights on intergroup conflict to explain race relations as largely competitive and a function of limited resources under capitalism, which in turn engendered intergroup animosity.

This shift was most notable with Barth (1969), who asserts that boundaries form through competition and heighten through conflict. For Barth, ethnic solidarity intensifies, and interethnic competition and conflict arise when ethnic groups live in close proximity or are in similar positions relative to the labor market (Barth 1969; González-Sobrino 2016). Similarly, Bonacich (1972) and other materialist theorists attribute ethnic conflict, competition, antagonism, and violence to group labor market position.

Building on these economic models of intergroup relations, materialists of the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s continued to conceptualize race primarily as a function of economic competition (Olzak and Nagel 1986; Olzak 1992), while broadening their analysis to account for other kinds of competition and conflict, such as social movements, political rivalries, and the rise of the political right (Bergeson and Herman 1998; McVeigh 1999; Van Dyke and Soule 2002; Cunningham and Phillips 2007; McVeigh and Sobolewski 2007).

These studies illuminate the importance of economic stratification and resource constraints in shaping social relations. However, by reducing race to class, they do not consider how race may work to shape social relations in independent or intersectional ways. Shared across these theories is the assumption that conflictual intergroup relations are the normative *outcome* of economic relations within a capitalist system; a perspective that continues to dominate the intergroup relations literature (Giles and Evans 1985; Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Taylor 1998; Gay 2006; McClain et al. 2006; McClain, Lyle, Sota, Carter, et al. 2007; Marrow 2008; Welch and Payne 2010).

Yet despite its persistence in the literature on intergroup relations, the subordination of race to class has faced significant challenge among theorists of race, whose insights are often absent from the sociology of intergroup relations (Omi and Winant 1994; Bashi and McDaniel 1997; Haney López 1997; Glenn 2015; Winant 2000). Indeed, race theorists charge that class-based approaches are inadequate in accounting for the dynamic and contested nature of race (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Lewis 2004).

Racial formation theorists and boundary theorists in particular stress that class-based approaches to race tend to essentialize racial differences (Bashi and McDaniel 1997; Brubaker 2009), assuming static social meanings and hierarchies. In the contemporary era, variation within racial groups, expanding ties and shifting meanings across racial groups, and the decoupling of ethnoracial interests from class interests are increasingly evident (Lee and Bean 2007; Winant 2000; Brown and Jones 2015). Race is not a proxy for economic status as it neither neatly maps onto it (Dawson 1994; Pattillo-McCoy

1999; Lacy 2007; Landry and Marsh 2011) nor necessarily results from it (Lewis 2004; Mora 2014). As Bonilla-Silva and Baiocchi (2008, p. 148) note, the problem with framing race as class is not that "race is more important than class" but that "specifying what are the independent and combined effects of these two forms of social stratification on social actors" is necessary.

In addition, much of the intergroup relations research *presumes* conflictual relations between Whites and non-Whites and empirically locates non-Whites at the low end of the economic structure.[3] As a result, few studies of intergroup relations empirically investigate cases of relations between middle-class or affluent minorities, where presumably, labor market competition would not apply (Neckerman, Carter and Lee 1999; Landry and Marsh 2011).[4] Moreover, even in intensive qualitative studies of interminority relations motivated by increases in intergroup contact (Cravey 1997; Smith and Furuseth 2008; Winders 2008; Marrow 2011; Ribas 2015; Stuesse 2016), few scholars attempt to differentiate between working-class, middle-class, and affluent African-Americans' perceptions of Latinx immigrant newcomers (but see McDermott 2011).[5] Accordingly, studies that rely on this empirical essentialism also tend to present conflictual intergroup relations as a function of economic competition (see also Waters, Kasinitz, and Asad 2014).

In sum, not only are class-based theories theoretically flawed in reducing race to class, but these theoretical flaws produce bad empirics as scholars select on the dependent variable of conflictual relations (Lee 2002; Telles et al. 2011), and therefore, cannot explain instances of positive or neutral relations when they occur.

Although inadequately theorized, a small body of research empirically shows that other outcomes are possible, including neutral relations, characterized by a general lack of awareness, concern, or interest in the out-group (Hero and Preuhs 2013) and positive relations, characterized by closeness (Lee 2002; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). Scholars have found that labor unions with interracially inclusive strategies, for example, such as institutionalizing their rhetoric about racial inclusivity, are much more likely to cultivate worker

[3] By economic structure, I mean not only non-Whites' position in the labor market but also their access to wealth, resources, and education.

[4] To date, e.g., no studies have examined intergroup relations between affluent African-Americans and Latinxs.

[5] "Middle class" is a notoriously difficult concept to define, and there is relatively little agreement across the social sciences on its definition. While scholars measure middle-class status using indicators of some combination of income, wealth, educational attainment, occupational status, and life style, determining the boundaries of middle-class status is murkier. In this article, I follow Karen Lacy, who argues not only for within-group variation in understanding middle classness but also highlights wage earners of $50,000–$100,000, as well as those who have some wealth, relatively high educational attainment (a bachelor's degree or higher), professional occupations, or what she calls "a middle-class social identity" as indicators of middle-class status (Lacy 2007).

solidarity and build successful labor movements, especially under conditions of limited resources (Boswell et al. 2006). Likewise, perceptions of ethnoracial competition may not arise organically through fixed racial dynamics but through state and organizational efforts to sow discontent and segment labor markets and workplaces (López-Sanders 2012; Ribas 2015). These findings indicate that race can work in a myriad of ways to shape intergroup relations, not only as a proxy for byproduct of economic competition.

Theorizing Racial Status

Operationalizing Racial Status

Race is essential in shaping intergroup relationships: "Race is a sociocultural hierarchy and categories are social spaces or positions, that are carved out of that racial hierarchy" (Bashi 1998, p. 966). However, the operationalization of race in the intergroup relations literature essentializes race to internally homogenous fixed categories rather than collectives reacting to ascriptive processes and engaged in an ongoing struggle of boundary construction and meaning making (Barth 1969; Brubaker 2004; Brown and Jones 2015).[6] This article develops a racial status theory model that resolves this gap by examining how race is operationalized, building on insights from the race literature and reconstructing how positive intergroup relations can emerge. In so doing, I integrate insights from the early social psychology literature, the race literature, and the intersectionality literature to produce an integrative theory of intergroup relations that better accounts for how race relations are formed and transformed, particularly among non-Whites.

Group Making and Racial Status

The early social psychology literature offers us insights into the importance of racial status when thinking about how groups, and by extension, group relations, change. In Sherif and Sherif's (1953) discussion of what they call the social distance scale, they indicate that one way to think about group boundary shift is that the *social distance between groups collapses*. As a result, two heretofore distinct groups (with different interests, norms, and limited contact) no longer view themselves as wholly distinct (1953, p. 194). In other words, when groups integrate, it is essentially a reconfiguration of the hierarchy. Groups, due in part to increased contact, no longer see a status differential between them. In this way, understanding group boundaries is dependent on understanding racial status.

[6] Such assumptions are part of what Bonilla-Silva and Zuberi (2008) call "white logic," in that the methodological approach used by many intergroup relations scholars relies on racial common sense rather than a deep engagement with how race works.

In *An Integrative Theory of Group Conflict*, Tajfel and Turner (1979) argue that intergroup behavior is associated with an individual belief system, which they characterize as oriented either toward a "social mobility" model (i.e., the belief that society is flexible and mobility is possible through talent, hard work, or luck) or a "social change" model (i.e., individuals believe that the structure of relations between social groups is highly stratified, making it difficult for individuals to shift location) (p. 35). Those who believe in a social change model are not only likely to be members of a stigmatized group, but in relevant intergroup situations, are also more likely to act not as individuals, but as members of their group (p. 35). Those who believe in social mobility but are stigmatized, by contrast, are more likely to leave the group (i.e., assimilate) in an attempt to shed their marginalized status on an individual level.

Thus, in a stratified society, it matters the extent to which individuals see themselves as part of the *dominant group* or the *subordinate group*. Moreover, this recognition of subordinate status in relation to a dominant group is a group-making process. As Sherif and Sherif (1953) suggest, shifts in group boundaries are tied to perceptions of shared status. The concept of racial status, then, aligns closely with a social change model of boundary formation, in which dominant groups are juxtaposed against subordinate groups. While these distinctions apply to racial groups and categories individually, they also indicate broader alignments within the ethnoracial hierarchy, in which color lines signify the distinction between dominant and subordinate. Racial status then, which is not necessarily one's specific racial group or category but where one falls in the hierarchy, hinges on these two mechanisms—a bifurcated status model of the dominant and subordinate, and the process by which perceived changes in this order lead to changes in group boundaries.

Racial Formation Theory and Racial Status

Racial status theory is also grounded in the work of racial formation theorists who treat race as a "sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (Omi and Winant 1994, p. 55) and emphasize race as an organizing principle of social life that is constructed and reconstructed relationally (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Bashi 1998). Race theorists aim to treat race as a status category as well as a group and an identity. They also note that race making is continuous and that one's position in the hierarchy can shift over time.

Racial status and ethnoracial identity formation are related but distinct processes.[7] While racial status—that is, one's position within U.S. racial

[7] According to Bonilla-Silva and Zuberi (2008, p. 7), "Racial identity is about shared social status, not shared individual characteristics. Race is not about an individual's skin

hierarchy—may shift, affecting groups and relations between them, ethnoracial identity—that is, individual ideas about ethnoracial meaning and belonging—may not change. For example, Bonilla-Silva's (2004) triracial framework that reconfigures the racial hierarchy into Blacks, Whites, and honorary Whites does not allow for shifting group ethnoracial identities—the categories of White, Asian, Latinx, Native American, and Black remain the same. What shifts is one's position in the racial hierarchy as collective White, honorary White, and collective non-Black. Similarly, Dowling's (2014) analysis of Mexican American ethnoracial identity in Texas demonstrates that some Mexican Americans perceive themselves to be of White racial status, while simultaneously maintaining a Mexican American identity. Dowling's work suggests that, while related, racial status and ethnoracial identity are not identical concepts.[8] In this sense, racial status is an umbrella framework that configures, divides, and aligns individual ethnoracial groups, categories, and identities. As Bashi-Treitler notes, "Racialization is a positioning process, but this positioning takes place within a racial hierarchy" (Bashi 1998, p. 960).

The importance of racial status and its distinction from and relationship to identity formation are evident throughout the race literature. For example, panethnicity scholars show that racial status as a result of racialization and discrimination from the state and community can produce a sense of solidarity and shared interests among heretofore disparate groups in a way that economic status rarely does (Lopez and Espiritu 1990; Nagel 1995). Studies of such panethnic formation and coalition building among Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and Cubans reveal how disparate groups not only consolidated in response to colonialism and discrimination (Mora 2014; Lopez and Espiritu 1990) but also engaged in cross-solidarity movements, such as Puerto Rican activists' efforts to participate in Chicago immigrant rights demonstrations to shore up a politicized *Latinidad* (Rodríguez-Muñiz 2010). In this way, shared racial status helped to produce a sense of shared ethnoracial identity, but shared status and identity cultivation were not the same process.[9]

Likewise, the boundary formation and panethnicity literatures show how the existence or production of racial and ethnic categories does not necessarily produce feelings of affinity, belonging, salience, shared meanings, or

color. Race is about an individual's relationship to other people within the society. While racial identification maybe internalized and appear to be the result of self-designation, it is, in fact, a result of the merging of self-imposed choice within an externally imposed context."

[8] It is worth noting that others have argued that Latinxs have never achieved White racial status, even locally, and that such framing is limited to ideology, not substantive social experience (see Gómez 2018; Bashi-Treitler 2013).

[9] As Bashi-Treitler argues, "To be clear, 'pan-ethnic' labels like Asian-American and Hispanic are racialized labels (Bashi 1998, p. 962).

interests in the Latinx, Asian American, or multiracial cases (Espiritu 1992; Bashi 1998; Jones 2011; Mora 2014; Brown and Jones 2015). Feelings of mutuality can wax and wane over time, suggesting that ethnoracial identity formation and racial status formation processes may function independently, in tandem, or dialectically (Hirschfield 1996; Brubaker 2009; Brown and Jones 2015).

Changes in racial status can also be achieved through assimilation, in which previously discrete groups are absorbed, over time, into the White mainstream. Historically, this process transformed the position of Irish, Hungarian, Jewish, and Italian immigrants in the United States, which eventually shifted away from discrete national origin groups who were ambiguously defined racially, to a consolidated racial status category (Jacobson 1999; Roediger 1999; Bashi-Treitler 2013). Similarly, debates persist about the assimilative prospects of Asians and Latinxs, particularly upwardly mobile and elite Korean, Japanese, Chinese, and Cuban Americans (often designated as honorary Whites) who may maintain their ethnoracial identities and categories and nevertheless may be absorbed into the dominant status group (Bonilla-Silva 2004; Lee and Bean 2007; Jiménez and Horowitz 2013; Alba 2016). Particularly for Latinxs, scholars suggest that racial status is more of a process than a fixed position (Jiménez 2008; Mora and Rodríguez-Muñiz 2017).[10]

Importantly, this is because racial groups form relationally, often in response to external treatment (Bashi 1998), as populations that construct and reconstruct allies and adversaries while building group consciousness. Racial meaning and the content of such relations arise dynamically. It is through this process, I argue, that racial status shapes (and is shaped by) intergroup relations. That is, ascription and identity formation proceed relationally and dialectically (Brown and Jones 2015), and local context provides the raw materials through which such relations are built. In treating racial status as malleable and shifting as well as distinct from ethnoracial identity (Bashi 1998; Bashi-Treitler 2013), we more appropriately understand how race functions in intersectional and transformative ways (Brubaker 2004; Su 2010). In accounting for racial status, I argue, we can productively move away from an intergroup relations framework in which race is primarily understood as fixed and examined through the lens of class.

The Intersection of Race and Class

Rooted in critical race theory and Black feminism, intersectionality provides a useful framework for understanding race and class as dynamic identities, statuses, and processes, and yet, is largely omitted from the scholarship on

[10] Bashi-Treitler (2013) in particular documents the shifting position of Mexicans within the racial hierarchy and their efforts, historically, to secure a better position, first as White, and later as Brown.

intergroup relations. In her landmark essays coining intersectionality, Crenshaw (1989, 1991) highlighted the limitations of existing social movements, advocacy work, scholarship, and the law, all of which tended to situate sex and race discrimination as separate entities, represented categorically by White women and Black men (Crenshaw 1989, 1991; Collins 1990; Carbado et al. 2013; Collins and Bilge 2016). Crenshaw's critique was by no means new (Hull, Bell-Scott, and Smith 1982), but it underscored that individuals occupy multiple statuses and that those statuses may function differently when they intersect (Carbado et al. 2013).

Such insights highlight the flaws embedded in the conflict model, which, as noted above, overwhelmingly treats race as epiphenomenal to class. Conversely, rather than conflate categories and processes, intersectionality productively engages the matrix of social relations produced through race and class (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008, p. 336). In their call to practice intersectionality in studying inequality, Choo and Ferree (2010, p. 1) note that doing so "highlights power as relational, seeing the interactions among variables as multiplying oppressions at various points of intersection, and drawing attention to unmarked groups" (and requires scholars to see everything as interactive and contextually contingent, not the result of a specific mode of stratification that is universal across time, space, and population. Following this logic, race and class should not be examined as a single concept, nor should one serve as a proxy for the other. Instead, as social scientists, we must be attentive to how race and class operate intersectionally.

Indeed, scholars have shown that that economic interests or socioeconomic status can modify racial perceptions, shaping the extent to which in-group members perceive a sense of linked fate or used shared identity labels (Espiritu 2005; Junn 2007). It follows that the reverse may also be true: perceptions of racial solidarity can extend to socioeconomic solidarity. Such findings also suggest that the characteristics shaping intergroup relations are dynamic and mutable rather than fixed (Foner 2001; Foerster 2004; Jones-Correa et al. 2015). And yet, despite growing attention to the intersectionality literature (Crenshaw 1991; Hutchinson 2000), when it comes to intergroup relations, race and class are rarely theorized and analyzed as dynamic and interactive.

Drawing from these insights, racial status theory explains how race, as relationally constructed and experienced, shapes how groups perceive and interact with one another. Where shared socioeconomic status can promote conflict or competition, shared racial status can foster unity. Whether or not groups share these statuses and how they interact plays an important role in producing intergroup relations, determining whether they are collaborative, conflictual, or neutral. In accounting for this variation, racial status theory offers an expanded analytic capacity beyond our current theoretical tools, allowing us to account not only for collaborative relations but also for neutral and conflictual relations.

Explaining Intergroup Relations: Experimental Insights and Blind Spots

In the *Robbers Cave Experiment*,[11] Sherif et al. (1988) make three core arguments. First, they make the case that small groups form most effectively when they have a set of shared goals (see also Fine 1979) and that groups form to build shard norms, hierarchies, values, and meanings. This process of group formation is consistent with the panethnicity literature as well (Lopez and Espiritu 1990) and suggests a framework for boundary formation.

Second, they argue that intergroup animosity can be fostered through competition. This competition (generally induced in a zero-sum context), in turn, has an impact on intragroup relations, producing negative attitudes, stereotypes, and hostility (often expressed most strongly by the lowest ranking members of the group) toward the out-group that can continue beyond the context of competition itself. This finding, as I noted above, is well established in the contemporary social science literature.[12]

In their third argument, however, Sherif et al. (1988) argue that animosity can be tempered and "friction reduced" by introducing a superordinate goal. Their theory is that if cooperation is necessary, groups will come together and build positive relations. Although this technique works and certainly explains certain kinds of outcomes, such as cooperation in social movements, their argument cannot explain how positive intergroup relations are forged in everyday life. In daily life, superordinate goals are more frequently an outcome of positive relations, rather than a mechanism. Thus, while this sequence of events is logical for understanding small group dynamics, it cannot fully account for how positive intergroup relations are formed on a broader scale.

Interestingly, however, Sherif et al. (1988) offer a number of alternative hypotheses for improving relations that they ultimately cast aside, but that I find to be useful here. One of the alternatives they offer is the construction of a shared enemy, which Sherif et al. (1988) mention as likely effective in forging solidarity but decide against testing. They also reject the possibility of disintegrating the groups, which they argue could also potentially be effective (p. 151). Finally, they consider the possibility that contact can improve relations, which despite playing an essential role in group formation and intergroup relation processes, Sherif et al. (1988) reject as largely inadequate in reducing intergroup tensions. In rejecting all of these hypotheses, they insist that superordinate goals must be introduced (p. 160). In the course of everyday life, however, developing superordinate goals may not be possible. Rather, I argue

[11] This is also the case in other earlier collaborative works that serve as the groundwork for the experiment, notably *Groups in Harmony and Tension* (Sherif and Sherif 1953).

[12] Though it is important to note that Tajfel and Turner argue that competition is not a necessary condition for conflict and that mere categorization can result in intergroup hostility (1979).

that their alternative hypotheses, when combined, are better able to explaining positive intergroup relations.

In daily life, cooperation is the outcome, not the causal mechanism. Instead, I argue what needs to occur to facilitate positive relations is a reorganization of groups. That is, how groups are arranged in a status hierarchy, members' perceptions of in-group versus out-group behaviors and beliefs, and members' understanding of the social consequences of such configurations, shift. Shared racial status, then, produces a sense of shared values, norms, and meanings, alongside a sense of linked fate. This umbrella status does not replace respective racial groups or categories — in this case, Blacks and Latinxs. Instead, what I find is that intergroup relations improve because members rethink the status boundaries of the group, becoming collective minorities or non-Whites, rather than holding separate statuses as Black or Latinx. Once this boundary shift has occurred, the group can orient around shared goals, with members reinforcing their sense of themselves as minorities, or subordinates relative to the dominant group.

Under these circumstances, two groups are collapsed into one group, in which non-Whites versus Whites become the operational intergroup dynamic, rather than a tripartite organization of Whites, Blacks, and Latinx. In effect, the racial status theory presents a broader mechanism that explains the reverse of a well-established process in the literature — assimilation. Assimilation allows individuals in groups to develop a shared racial status over time, not necessarily to eliminate their existing national origin or ethnicity, for example, but merging into another group with shared interests and values. In this sense, I argue that accounting for racial status is necessary to make sense of the processes at work in Winston-Salem and the types of intergroup relations that emerge. In what follows, I detail the components and scope conditions for my racial status theory.

The Racial Status Theory Model

In racial status theory, I build on previous accounts of intergroup relations that argue that perceptions of intergroup competition can forge hostility between groups. Thus, in racial status theory low resource competition is a necessary but not sufficient condition under which positive intergroup relations may occur. Low resource competition is best facilitated through unequal economic status, but that is not the only way that low resource competition emerges.[13]

[13] Though groups may share a status of low income or a precarious labor market position, this does not necessarily indicate that members will perceive each other as competitors. Rather, groups may (in part facilitated by shared racial status) look to structural conditions or the lack of unions in a given workplace as the cause of their social position. Under these circumstances, groups may collaborate, organizing for better wages or unionization, e.g., or to provide collective resources such as shared emergency funds, or

While the contemporary literature has overwhelmingly assumed that perceptions of intergroup competition, especially among non-Whites, are normative (Blumer 1958; Olzak and Nagel 1986; Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Gay 2006; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Morris and Gimpel 2007; Marrow 2011), there is insufficient empirical data to support the idea that non-Whites uniformly occupy a low economic position and therefore would perceive other groups as economic competitors. Indeed, in the case of African-Americans and Latinxs, we may look to the high density of Latinx newcomers to the suburbs, as well as numerous middle-class Black minority neighborhoods throughout cities like Los Angeles, Atlanta, Houston, Chicago, and New York as exceptions to this "rule" (Pattillo-McCoy 1999; Lacy 2007; Neckerman et al. 1999; Pittman-Claytor 2020). When perceptions of competition are present, groups are unlikely to perceive each other as members of the same group. When they are absent, however, the forging of shared racial status is possible.

According to racial status theory, racial groups' perceptions of their racial status are a function of three social processes that must all be present for shared racial status to emerge. First, sustained positive contact bolsters shared bonds and ameliorates tension. Second, experiences of discrimination facilitate a perception of shared status. Third, the development of a perceived "collective external threat" against which to organize and frame grievances facilitates feelings of shared status, solidarity, and linked fate. Interactions between racial groups and collective interpretations of those interactions are essential in establishing perceptions of shared racial status as minorities.

When racial status is not shared, racial groups distance themselves from one another. But, in line with Blumer's theory of racial prejudice (1958), regardless of whether they share histories, cultures, and/or phenotypes, each group can come to see the other group as sharing a similar status position within the racial hierarchy (Jones 2012). If groups determine that their position is shared, that shared position and the meaning of that racial status are amplified and refashioned as a set of tools and practices through which they construct intergroup relations. Below I draw from the literature to enumerate how each mechanism — contact, discrimination, and an external threat — functions intersectionally in status reconstruction work, leading groups to think of themselves as similarly situated racially and how this promotes collaborative intergroup relations.

Contact

Contact is an important initial condition for the formation of shared racial status. As noted by the social psychologist Gordon Allport (1954), sustained intergroup contact can ameliorate racial threat and engender civility (Gaertner

labor exchanges, rather than engage in conflict (Boswell et al. 2006; Bacon 2008; Greenhouse 2008).

et al. 1994; Sigelman et al. 1996; Oliver and Wong 2003). Equal status can foster collaborative relations through positive encounters between groups with similar tastes, values, and behaviors, creating a perception of collectivity (Allport 1979; Sigelman and Welch 1993).[14] Racial status theory draws from contact theory, holding that when two groups occupy different socioeconomic positions (limiting resource conflict), consistent cross-group exposure can facilitate sociability and a sense of a common in-group. Under these conditions, shared interests may become apparent, shifting cognitive frames so that members previously seen as belonging to out-groups are rendered insiders.

Discrimination and Exclusion

Racial status theory also posits that shared experiences of racial alienation drive shared racial status. In this way, it matters how groups understand themselves as or in relation to the dominant group and a broader racial field. In the case of shared racial status, a sense of shared racial alienation and exclusion is essential to forming cross-group racial solidarity (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Kaufmann 2003*b*; Foerster 2004). Discrimination has long been understood to be a key catalyst for group cohesion, regardless of class status (Welch and Combs 1985 Feagin 1991; Espiritu 1992; Cose 1993), in shoring-up pre-existing boundaries, establishing new ones, or reconfiguring and expanding prevailing ones. Because the U.S. system imposes an ethnoracial identity according to its racial hierarchy, new arrivals learn and respond to this positioning (Bashi and McDaniel 1997, p. 676).

Sherif et al. also highlight the importance of discrimination in shaping group boundaries, noting that "children are increasingly able to invest the developing self with group memberships. . . . Children who group up as members of a discriminated-against minority may acquire clear-cut identification with their group even earlier than children of the majority group," suggesting that discrimination plays a role in shaping strong identity as minorities — a key mechanism in shaping racial status (1953, p. 99).

When groups perceive a shared minority status that is distinct from Whites, they perceive other minority groups positively (Jones-Correa and Hernandez 2007; Kaufmann 2003*b*). As a group, minorities can experience race as a roadblock and come to identify with a common minority experience (Bonilla-Silva and Embrick 2006; Lee and Bean 2007; Thorton et al. 2012). Once shared racial status is established, therefore, it can lead to linked fate (Dawson 1994). Indeed, much of the literature on linked fate and political mobilization

[14] While contact is a necessary condition, contemporary changes in social relations, particularly digital technologies, may make contact possible beyond traditional conceptions of physical proximity.

suggests within-group identity and solidarity are forged *from* marginalization (Dawson 1994; Okamoto and Ebert 2010; Rodríguez- Muñiz 2010; Sanchez and Masuoka 2010; Jones-Correa, Wallace, and Zepeda-Millian 2015; Jones 2019).

Perceptions of discrimination can also instigate a sense of shared status with the dominant group, in which distancing from minorities, particularly Blacks, is a practice for achieving aspirational or proximate Whiteness. Theories of Eastern and Southern European immigrant assimilation in the 1920s and 1930s (Jacobson 1999; Morrison 1993; Roediger 1999) and more recent Latinx assimilation (Bashi-Treitler 2013; Alba 2016) suggest that such approaches to asserting and consolidating racial status are widespread.

Common External Threat

Contact and a perception of discrimination are necessary but not sufficient for building shared racial status. A third condition—an identifiable external threat—is necessary. The group formation literature (Coser 1956; Brown 1993; Jones 2011) demonstrates how identifying a "responsible party" to mobilize against is a highly effective foundation for intergroup collaboration and panethnic mobilization (Espiritu 1992; Okamoto and Ebert 2010). For minority groups, marginalization is not experienced as a broadly applied condition or the result of a few bad apples' behaviors; instead, it is experienced as a consistent set of beliefs and practices imposed by a particular group. Importantly, Coser's classic works underscore how the relational aspects of group formation require a form of opposition or antagonism to create internal meaning and forge new relationships and cohesion (Simmel [1908] 1955; Brubaker 2009; Coser 1956). Shared racial status is forged, therefore, when two distinct groups experience positive contact with each other, identify shared discrimination, and point to a shared external threat. In this way, while an individual's "group" may not change over time (a person may not become more or less Latinx, e.g.), their status can—and that meaning making is essential to our understanding of intergroup dynamics. In the absence of these conditions, shared racial status may not emerge. Our sense of our own racial status and which other groups share a similar position in the racial hierarchy are important determinants of the quality of intergroup social relations.

Racial status, then, is not necessarily about belonging to a particular ethnoracial group, but the belief that one is located in a shared racial position (Bashi 1998). Scholars have engaged in significant debate about the contemporary racial hierarchy (Bonilla-Silva 2004; Lee and Bean 2007; Marrow 2011). In constructing racial status theory, however, I see racial status as tending to fall into one of two camps: dominant majority or subordinate

minority. To determine one's racial position, shared histories, national origins, or economic statuses give way to a set of sustained experiences of racialized contact, marginalization, and threat. This status, which may be more or less flexible for a given individual or collective, plays a constitutive and dynamic role in constructing intergroup relations.

In what follows, I use these insights to expand our knowledge by way of an ethnographic case study. Through an analysis of real-world dynamics, I engage in inductive theory building around the case of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where race and class intersect to create the conditions for collaborative relations, including social intimacy, solidarity, and linked fate between Blacks and Latinxs. In general, I find that under conditions of unequal economic status, equal racial status facilitates collaborative relations. However, in theorizing exceptions to the rule (Becker 2008), I demonstrate how conflictual relations can emerge when racial statuses are distinct. Specifically, in the case of Latinxs in Winston-Salem, I show that when racial status is not shared, Latinxs distance themselves from Blacks and other minority groups, aspiring instead to assimilate into the White mainstream.

To be clear, I am not making the case here that Blacks and Latinxs see themselves as part of the same ethnoracial group and therefore share a group identity. Instead, I argue that strikingly similar mechanisms underlie a group's ability to identify structurally similar experiences as non-Whites, creating bridges that lead the groups to increasingly positive and amicable and frequent interactions, and in turn, initiate a new bounded status group of non-Whites. Finally, while I draw primarily on Black/Latinx relations to develop racial status theory, I show how this theory can account for all forms of intergroup relations, not just those between Blacks and Latinxs.

DATA AND METHODS

The state of North Carolina is a preeminent site of contemporary migration. From 1990 to 2000, its immigrant population increased fourfold. The Mexican population grew from both direct migration and internal migration from states such as Arizona and California. As a result, North Carolina is one of the largest growing Latinx migration receivers in the South with long-standing and deeply entrenched negative Black-White race relations. The state is not only an ideal place to understand demographic change but also to theorize the role of racial status in shaping on-the-ground race relations. At the time of my study, North Carolina had one of the fastest growing Latinx populations, including in Forsyth County, where Winston-Salem (or "Winston," per local parlance) is located.

Winston-Salem is somewhat unusual, yet it shares key characteristics with other Southern cities. First, immigrants are arriving rapidly in significant numbers. Second, Winston has a high density of middle-class Blacks,

with approximately 38% of Black households above the metro area median (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Third, its Black population is quite large, at 30%–40% of the population. Winston's municipal leaders have pursued a diverse labor market, creating significant employment opportunities across skill levels and reducing the intensity of potential economic competition.

Ethnography

The findings in this study are primarily based on 12 months of community-level ethnographic fieldwork in Winston from 2008 to 2009,[15] during which I examined Latinx newcomer incorporation at the community level, considering both the experiences of newcomers and the everyday attitudes and practices of native-born residents. As I identified key mechanisms that might shape intergroup relations, I built theory inductively.

As entry points to the community, I chose three church sites with significant Latinx populations and outreach programs. Both Latinxs and Blacks are highly religious,[16] and churches provide a number of services with little risk to immigrants. Moreover, as in other Southern municipalities, Winston's churches are among the few organizations with political leverage; they serve as an important context for observing civic life.

Because churches can vary widely, I studied three churches with extensive programming for immigrants but with different theological orientations and geographical locations in Winston-Salem. The first was a Catholic church, which had separate Spanish masses and a chapel to serve its Mexican immigrant population as well as a school. The second was an independent Christian church that housed several service programs, run almost exclusively by Whites. The third was a Methodist church with a racially diverse congregation and volunteer community engaged in numerous outreach programs.

I spent two to four hours a day, three to five days a week, across these three locations. My time was divided between observing (attending church services and church-sponsored meetings or community events) and volunteering. After establishing relationships, I accompanied outreach staff on visits to parishioners and to meetings, and I joined the board of a Latinx church group organizing to form a nonprofit to meet the needs of local Latinxs. I also served as a regular participant in an interfaith community organization of over 25 member congregations, in which the Catholic and Methodist churches participated.

[15] I am not Latina, but thanks to my appearance and facility with Spanish I was frequently mistaken by Latinx respondents as such. African-American respondents consistently recognized me as Black, while White respondents perceived me as racially inscrutable.

[16] Eighty-four percent of Latinx immigrants are Catholic, Protestant, or other Christian, compared to 85% of Blacks. Blacks are the most likely to report a formal religious affiliation in the United States, followed by Latinxs (Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life 2007).

To include community members not involved in religious communities, I made regular observations in other sites, including the Winston-Salem human relations department, the local library, a community college, some ESL courses and afterschool programs, the YMCA, conferences, town halls, and local events and festivals, and in public spaces such as retail outlets and parks. I also visited the campuses and attended meetings at three of the universities in town. By developing contacts and recruiting in these locations, I triangulated information gathered in my primary sites, observing a variety of community-, organizational-, and individual-level interactions, both within and between racial groups, and integrated these observations into my primary site analysis.

Interviews

In addition to ethnographic fieldwork, I draw on data gathered from 86 formal and informal interviews with Mexican newcomers and Black, White, and Latinx community members (table 1).

Of these 86 interviews, 40 were with foreign-born respondents, 37 were formal ethnographic interviews with Mexican immigrants, and 3 were with non-Mexican immigrants of Latin American origin. Twenty-nine of the foreign-born in my sample were unauthorized. I conducted the remaining 46 formal and ethnographic interviews with Black, White, and Latinx native-born community members to capture community perceptions and interactions between Blacks and Latinxs. I gained access to my interview respondents using ethnographic contacts, contacts I established before entering the site, flyers, and snowball sampling techniques. Approximately one-half of the interview respondents belonged to one of the three churches that formed my primary sites.

All respondents were asked to report their education and occupation. The majority of foreign-born Mexican respondents in my study reported having little formal education beyond high school. This concentration of foreign-born respondents at the lower end of the class and education structure, as well as a high number of residents without documentation, is consistent with the class structure and citizenship status of Mexican immigrants in the area, as well as their sending communities.[17] The Blacks and Whites I interviewed were heavily middle class and upper class, as was the general population. I oversampled community leaders because of their important roles in shaping attitudes in the community; as noted by Blumer (1958), while everyday experiences are important to understanding and producing a sense of group position, public discourse plays a key role in shaping intergroup perspectives. Interviews and ethnographic data were examined in tandem. Interview data allowed me to collect community members' stated views and opinions, while

[17] Approximately 42% of Latinxs in North Carolina lacked legal status in this period (Gill 2010).

TABLE 1
Interview Respondent Characteristics

Respondent Characteristics	Foreign-born % (*n*)	Native-born % (*n*)
Total sample	100 (40)	100 (46)
Age (in years):		
under 18	. . .	2 (1)
18–30	40 (16)	26 (12)
31–50	50 (20)	22 (10)
51+	10 (4)	50 (23)
Gender:		
Male	40 (16)	41 (19)
Female	60 (24)	59 (27)
Race:		
White	2 (1)	54 (25)
Black	. . .	26 (12)
Latinx	98 (39)	17 (8)
Other race	. . .	2 (1)
Highest education level:		
Did not complete high school	30 (12)	2 (1)
Completed high school	23 (9)	. . .
Some college	15 (6)	2 (1)
Completed college	33 (13)	96 (44)
Employment sector:*		
Government	10 (4)	17 (8)
Nonprofit	8 (3)	50 (23)
Professional	8 (3)	20 (9)
Construction	15 (6)	
Self-employed/small business owner	. . .	7 (3)
Service	25 (10)	. . .
Manufacturing	13 (5)	. . .
Unemployed	15 (6)	. . .
Work in home/retired	5 (2)	2 (1)
In school	3 (1)	4 (2)
Country of origin:		
Mexico	93 (37)	. . .
Other Latin America	5 (2)	. . .
Other	3 (1)	. . .
Documentation status:		
Citizen/legal status	28 (11)	NA
Undocumented	73 (29)	NA

* Government = city council, social services, and schools. Nonprofit = churches, service agencies, and advocacy groups.

ethnographic data allowed me to see how they acted upon these attitudes. By examining these data as complementary, I was also able to examine whether respondents' views of intergroup relations changed across time and context.

Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, or both. Formal interviews lasted between 45 minutes and three hours and were conducted with an extensive interview schedule, including questions about perceptions of the

respondent's own identity, relationships with other groups, the community climate, views on immigration, feelings of belonging, labor market experiences, and differences within and among groups.[18] Ethnographic interviews had no formal interview schedule. Question responses were tabulated and reviewed for emergent themes. Finally, these two data sources were supplemented with analysis of city- and county-level census data, employment data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010*a*, 2010*b*), and inductive analysis of 20 years of newspaper articles on Latinxs and immigration in the Winston-Salem press from 1989 to 2009.

RACE VERSUS CLASS

Relying on existing theoretical frames, I entered the Winston-Salem community anticipating intergroup conflict. However, I quickly found that existing theories did little to account for the positive dynamics I found there. First, counter to the prevailing narrative that minorities occupy a shared status as the bottom of the labor market and therefore engage in persistent intergroup conflict, these conditions did not apply to the Winston-Salem context. The key features of the Winston-Salem receiving context were a stable middle-class Black community, high levels of residential racial segregation between Whites and Blacks, and low levels of labor market and resource competition. By and large, native-born community members had higher socioeconomic status than Latinx newcomers. This disparity not only made plain the distinction between race and class in this community but also facilitated the cultivation of shared racial status rather than negative intergroup relations, partially because Blacks' and Latinxs' shared institutions and neighborhoods provided ample opportunities for positive contact.

Middle-Class Blacks and Working-Class Latinxs: Distinct Socioeconomic Status

Winston developed as a tobacco and clothing manufacturing center in the 19th and 20th centuries, attracting both Blacks and poor Whites looking for work. These companies wielded near-exclusive economic and political power until the 1980s, paying high wages to avoid unionization while simultaneously maintaining segregated institutions (Harry 2012; Jones 2019). Because the White political elite established parallel institutions for Blacks, including hospitals and schools, local Blacks had uncontested opportunities to receive advanced education and develop independent businesses.[19] This segregation meant relatively little competition for resources between Blacks

[18] All respondent names are pseudonyms.

[19] To be clear, I do not argue here that these institutions were equal in terms of resources and quality (though they were of relatively higher quality than similar institutions in other

and Whites, including for housing and employment, but also little contact (Oppermann 1994; Korstad 2003).

Winston diversified in the 1980s and 1990s when it became a major hub for the financial, airline, and manufacturing industries, as well as a center for medical research (Tursi 1994). As white-collar jobs dramatically increased, many Blacks, particularly those educated at the local historically Black university, moved into managerial and professional occupations, representing approximately 18.51% of Black workers in North Carolina in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau 2010; see fig. 1).

In the 1990s, Latinxs, as well as Whites and Blacks, arrived in substantial numbers. Unlike African-Americans who sought out professional and skilled positions, Mexican immigrant arrivals were largely undocumented and had lower levels of education and English ability. In 2000, 20.2% of all Latinxs over the age of 25 in Forsyth County had completed at least some college, compared to 46.4% of Blacks. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Blacks were well represented in middle-class labor markets; approximately 45% of the Black population was employed in middle-class wage-earning occupations (16.63% as professionals and managers and 28.4% in technical, sales, and administrative positions). Winston-Salem, like the rest of North Carolina, was also experiencing a building boom, and another 23.72% of African-Americans were employed in construction and fabrication. While we might typically imagine that this is low-wage work, many Blacks in this field served in lucrative skilled jobs and supervisory capacities. In 2005, the mean North Carolina construction management wage was $69,140, and for laborers $22,850 (BLS 2005). In 2010, those wages were, on average, $91,990 and $25,340, respectively (BLS 2010*b*). Though 43.91% of Latinx workers were concentrated in construction, they were less likely to hold skilled and supervisory positions. Whites, too, were represented across labor sectors, but most heavily concentrated in professional, technical, and managerial sectors fields at 38.65% (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).[20] In general, even when they were concentrated in the same industry, Blacks and Latinxs were more likely to be in distinct occupational positions, and widespread overemployment meant that job competition was relatively low.

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segregated spaces in the South; (see Oppermann 1994). Rather, the existence of schools, hospitals, libraries and other Black institutions created opportunities to develop a professional class of Black doctors, professors, teachers, nurses, and librarians who were well educated and relatively well-off compared to their Black counterparts. Indeed, recent research has highlighted the loss of these institutions and occupational opportunities as an outcome of formal integration in the 1960s and '70s (Brown 2016).

[20] It is important to note that African-Americans were not as affluent as Whites, nor did they experience parallel accumulation of wealth (they emphatically did not). Rather I argue that, due to their robust access to more prestigious and higher-paying jobs, Black people were largely middle class and, therefore, less likely to perceive Latinx immigrants as competitors for resources and labor market opportunities.

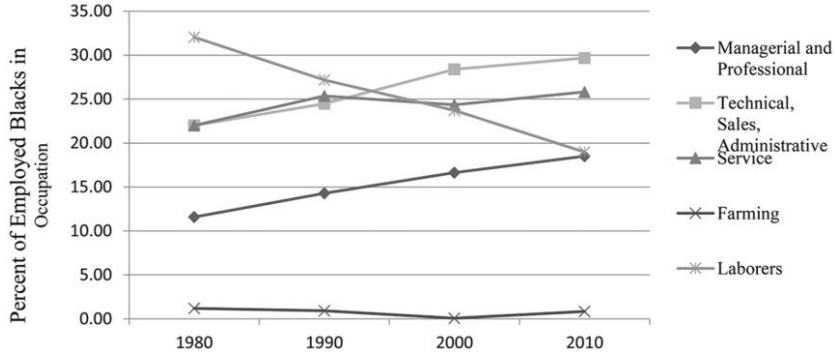

FIG. 1.—Percentage of employed Blacks by occupation sector in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, 1980–2010. Author's calculation, with data from U.S. Census 5% and 1% samples 1980, Census 5% 1990, Census 5% 2000, ACS 5%, metro level, weighted at person level. See Ruggles et al. (2010).

This labor market distribution reflected Blacks' steady movement into higher prestige occupations. Even in cases where Blacks and Latinxs were working at the same level, in the same industry, they did not frequently perceive widespread labor market competition. Respondents reported that Blacks and Latinxs worked together in teams requiring significant cooperation rather than competition and creating opportunities for positive contact and social ties. Amid massive economic development and expansion, there was substantial opportunity in construction for both groups across the state and the region (Kochhar, Suro, and Tafoya 2005). In fact, there were no signs of Black labor market displacement in Southern counties that experienced new Latinx settlement, suggesting that by and large throughout this period in the Southeast, there was little reason for my respondents to sense widespread interminority labor market competition (Kochhar et al. 2005). Its lack diminished zero-sum attitudes between Blacks and Latinxs, who came to relate to one another largely through their perception of shared racial status. Absent those conditions, no conflict was catalyzed. Still, an absence of conflict is not necessarily collaborative relations. Groups may instead perceive each other neutrally. Collaborative relations, however, are rarely cultivated economically. It is in the fostering of collaborative relations where shared racial status plays a pivotal role in the production of intergroup relations.

SHARED RACIAL STATUS

Positive Black-Latinx Contact

In Winston, a sense of shared racial status as minorities produced collaborative relations between Blacks and Latinxs. As the city's economy expanded

to include more white-collar positions available to Blacks, Blacks moved out of the rental and lower-quality housing units near the downtown area and into owner-occupied homes on the outer edges of the city center, as well across the north and west quadrants of the city.[21] Choropleth maps of Black populations show growth and spread over time, though many census districts remained predominately White. Moreover, Blacks' upward mobility created a pocket of available housing stock for new Latinxs within or near stable, middle-class Black communities (see figs. 2–4).

Such close proximity provided important opportunities for Black-Latinx contact, a key component to building equal racial status. Many respondents referred to this neighborhood transition as "revitalizing" because properties that had been empty now housed Latinx families. Human relations officers and local media accounts confirmed little housing competition between Blacks and Latinxs in the 1990s and early 2000s.[22] As Latinxs' settlement in Black neighborhoods meant more contact with Blacks, it also meant few interpersonal relationships with Whites, who were so often segregated from both groups.[23] It was not uncommon for the Mexican immigrants in my study to not know any Whites at all. Such an absence of contact makes it difficult to actively promote good relations and, as Pettigrew (1998) suggests, may encourage intergroup prejudice. And with few exceptions, even when Latinxs had no negative interpersonal experiences with Whites, the absence of high-quality contact with Whites precluded Latinxs from reporting a strong perception of collaborative relations between the two groups.

Mexican respondents widely reported that their sustained, positive contact with Blacks contributed to a sense of a shared racial status, here understood as a shared minority status in relation to Whites. Juan, a Mexican migrant who had been living and working in Winston for over 10 years, told me: "I have heard this—that there is a lot of tension—but that's not been my experience. I live in a Black neighborhood, and I've never had any problems with my neighbors. People are very nice, and we get along well. . . . I haven't had any problems. My children attend a mostly Black school, and they don't have any problems."

Juan rejected the "conventional wisdom" that Blacks and Latinxs do not get along, as did many other respondents. Instead, he asserts that people are

[21] Forty percent of Blacks in Winston lived in owner-occupied dwellings as of 2000, vs. 76% of Whites and 15% of Latinxs (U.S. Census Bureau 2000).

[22] Mary Giunca, "Stymied: Dashed Plan No Victory in Southside," *Winston-Salem Journal*, January 30, 2003.

[23] It is also the case that there were few long-term Latinx residents in the Winston community at the time, and therefore relative isolation from both groups by settling in majority Latinx communities with their own social networks and resources, was not an option. The presence of such communities would likely have altered the level of contact between groups as well as the level of resources within the Latinx community available to newcomers.

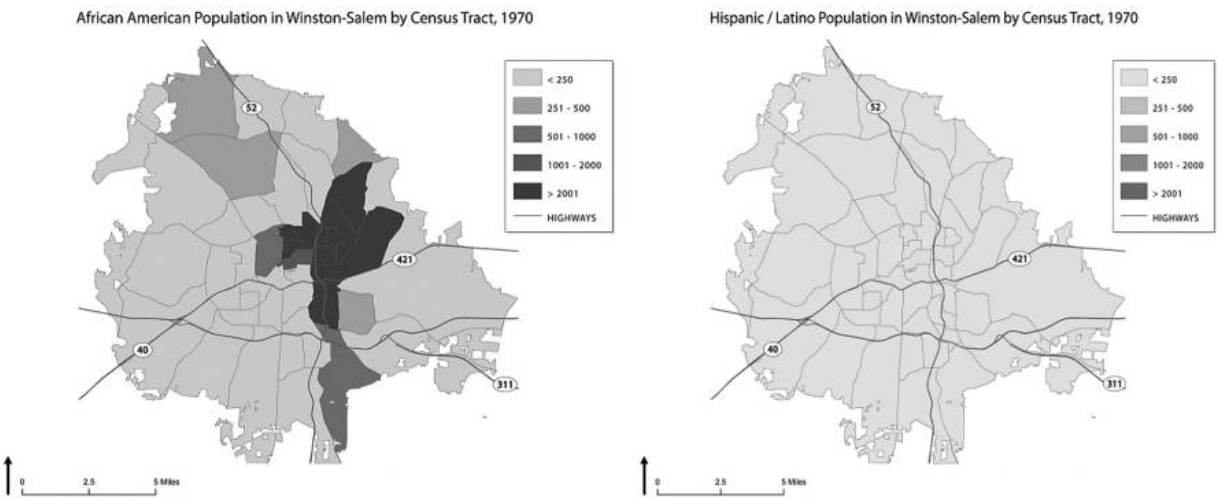

FIG. 2.—Demographic change in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Black and Latinx populations, 1970–2010. DIS from the Minnesota Population Center, National Historical Geographic System, prerelease ver. 0.1, University of Minnesota, 2004. Data from 1970 Census of Housing and Population, file CNT4P, table NT 105.

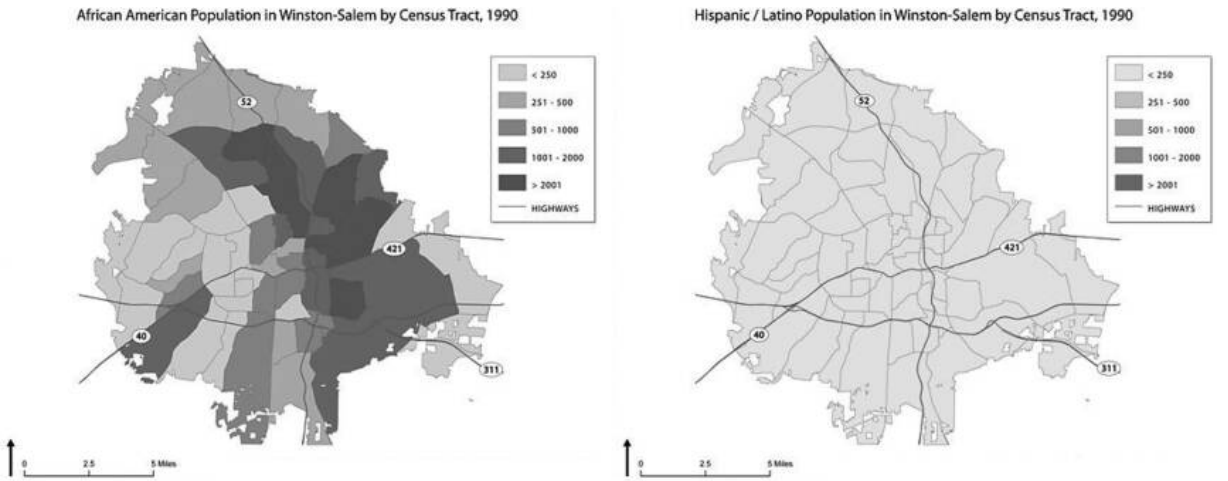

FIG. 3.—Demographic change in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Black and Latinx populations, 1970–2010. GIS from the Minnesota Population Center, National Historical Geographic System, prerelease ver. 0.1, University of Minnesota, 2004. Data from 1990 Census of Housing and Population, file SF1, table NP6.

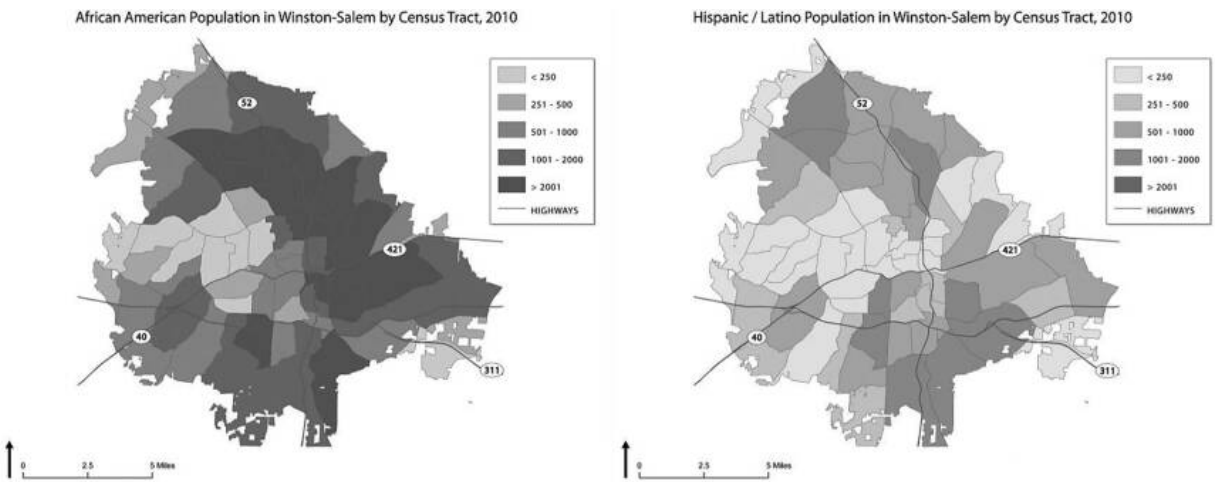

FIG. 4.—Demographic change in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Black and Latinx populations, 1970–2010. GIS from the Minnesota Population Center, National Historical Geographic System, prerelease ver. 0.1, University of Minnesota, 2004. Data from 2010 Census Redistricting Data SF, table P2.

friendly and they get along. Later in our conversation, Juan indicated that he knows his neighbors, the parents at his daughter's school, and has other opportunities for the kind of sustained, positive contact that produces shared racial status. Despite language barriers, my respondents told me, Blacks and Latinxs often greeted each other in Winston and made a point of connecting. Linda, a shy young Mexican woman, was unemployed and spoke no English; she told me during a home visit with a church outreach coordinator that she had a Black neighbor who stopped to check on her regularly, sometimes bringing a treat for her children. Stories like these illustrated the type of amicable, intimate, and regular forms of contact that alleviate prejudice and foster intergroup relations.

Other respondents reported more intimate ties. Brenda, an African-American woman who worked at a local church, recalled how proximity led to a friendship between Black and Latinx neighbors she knew:

> This child was the cause, because she was always asking, "What's cooking? What's the food?" You know? And she had [the child] taste it. So, she started to tell her mama what was being cooked, and Mrs. James said, "Well, you know, it smells mighty good across the street." So, they just . . . swapped recipes and, and then ultimately decided that everybody would eat supper together one day a week. A Mexican meal and a soul food meal. . . . People find ways to connect with each other when they have shared values.

Eliana, a 19-year-old Mexican woman who had come to Winston from Guerrero six years earlier, noted, "At my middle school, there were more African-American people and Hispanics. There were like almost no White people . . . and they all get along, so that wasn't a problem in there. High school, same thing. . . . And Hispanics and African-Americans, they get along very well." I inquired about the quality of the contact between these groups of students, and Eliana said, "Yeah, they're talking, like, they actually go out together, they like go to parties together or something like that, go to the movies." And when I asked her about similar relationships outside of school, she nodded, "In church, they work together. African-Americans help. . . . I know a lot of African-Americans who want the Latinxs who are here illegally to become legal, and they try to do something to help them." Here, Eliana points out not only that there is persistent, high-quality contact, but that such contact is also rooted in a sense of collaborative support. Eliana, Linda, and Juan described the range of contact between Blacks and Latinxs as largely warm and social, often contrasting it with Whites, who were perceived as less sociable. Even though English facilitated contact with both Blacks and Whites, English-speaking Latinx respondents consistently reported closer ties to Blacks. They thought Black people were friendlier.

Ramón relayed positive experiences with Blacks but did not feel those were replicated among Whites. Ramón was from Mexico City and undocumented.

He had arrived in the United States in 1996 and had a job in construction. He told me most of his coworkers were Black and "American" (White), [24] and he was friendly with all of them. But, he said, "Listen . . . with the Americans, I get along well, but by chance, I get along better with Blacks. . . . Well, I've never had any problem with anyone, not with Americans, not Blacks, but I have better relationships with Blacks."

When I pressed him, Ramón explained, "It's because . . . I worked in construction and in factories. . . . My friendships always have been with Blacks, and I began to rely more on them. . . . I have good relationships with them, curiously, yes." And when I asked what he meant by "curiously," he replied, "Because supposedly, supposedly they say that Blacks and Hispanics don't get along . . . but it's just much easier to call a Black person a friend than an American." Ramón even pointed to shared ethnoracial experiences, if not in those terms, as a point of bonding: "I get along with Blacks, yes, because they've gone through what we are going through. You know the problems that they've had for years, from slavery and all that. The Americans have treated the Blacks badly to this day. They have the same problem that we have: racism. And because of this, we get along better."

Though he and many African-Americans occupied the same labor market sector, construction, Ramón saw his Black coworkers as friends rather than competitors. Having Black coworkers did not automatically lead to resource competition. Indeed, even among respondents who occupied the same labor market status, my respondents rarely perceived a zero-sum racial competition for resources. Whether because of labor market expansion (real conditions) or through racial status modifications by which shared minority status mediated competition, non-Whites in Winston-Salem seemed to see solidarity between Black and Latinx residents (see Bacon 2008; López-Sanders 2012). Through this contact, Mexicans established real social ties, which in turn reproduced their perception that racial status was shared between African-Americans and Mexicans in Winston. Such practices suggest that race is a potential modifier of status and that perceptions rather than objective conditions of resource competition are what actually shape intergroup relations.

[24] Ramón's labeling of Whites as "Americans" was not uncommon in my study. This usage, as was explained to me by respondents, marked off Whites as true, unhyphenated Americans, whereas Blacks, Asians, and other groups were defined collectively as something else, despite equal claims to Americanness. This differentiation may suggest a linguistic coding of shared status in terms of the racial hierarchy. Indeed, respondents frequently explained that citizenship for non-Whites, though technically and legally accessible, was nevertheless socially contingent. This was often reflected in their understanding of intermarriage, in that marriage to White partners was understood as strategic, whereas marriage to African-Americans and other non-White partners was understood as for love.

Discrimination as Shared Experience

The literature on immigrant incorporation broadly suggests that even in cases where Blacks seek to build alliances with Latinxs, Latinxs attempt to distance themselves from Blacks and what they perceive as Blacks' lower racial status (Charles 2006). Racial status theory accounts for this practice by theorizing that distancing only happens absent the three factors that promote shared racial status. In this section, I show that Latinxs in Winston perceived increasing local-level immigration enforcement and Whites' increasingly negative dispositions toward them as systemic and racially motivated discrimination. The racializing experience of discrimination forged for Latinxs a sense of shared racial status with Blacks.

Although North Carolina policymakers and employers once believed rapid immigration was necessary for economic growth (Smith and Furuseth 2008), immigration enforcement and widespread attitudes of Latinx criminality and cultural difference increased as the state's Latinx population grew. By 2005, North Carolina communities were using 287(g) to enter into agreements with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to carry out immigration law enforcement.[25] The 2005 Real ID Act, a federal mandate that undocumented persons could not receive government-issued IDs, provided the legal theory by which local officials would turn over minor offenders, such as those driving without a license, to ICE.

Mexicans in North Carolina felt suddenly targeted as racialized minorities under these policy changes. Marco, a Latinx community organizer, described it as deliberate discrimination: "North Carolina is trying to put police at churches and other places to arrest innocent Latinos. . . . There are now two Minutemen [Project] groups in North Carolina and no evidence that things will improve." This growing sense of marginalization led local Mexicans to draw heavily on the experiences of Blacks in making sense of their own situation. Eliana explained: "I think Hispanics and Blacks are more close than other races because Blacks were slaves before, and then Latinxs, they are sometimes not treated right either, so they're kind of more close together because of that, more than anything else." This sense that Blacks' legal and social experiences were similar to the increasing criminalization of Latinx immigrants rang true to many of my respondents and was on display at a town hall meeting on the implementation of 287(g) in nearby Greensboro. A Latino in his mid-30s read a statement addressed to the

[25] "Clause 287(g)" refers to a clause in the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act that allowed for the performance of immigration enforcement functions by local and state law enforcement. In practice, this clause was not utilized until 2002. While use of the program was largely replaced by Secure Communities in 2015 (also subsequently discontinued), the program trained over 1500 officers for enforcement and identified over 370,000 potentially removable immigrants (Immigration and Customs Enforcement 2015: http://www.ice.gov/factsheets/287g).

county sheriff, who planned to join the program. "You say you have to enforce the law, but when I read history, in the 1960s and 1970s, and about Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement, he was talking about laws, but he stood up to those laws because those laws were wrong."

Thus, as Mexicans embraced the idea that Latinxs and Blacks shared a similar racial status vis-à-vis discrimination, their views were embraced and applauded by Black community leaders, who, in turn, worked to cultivate a similar sense of shared status within the Black community. Such efforts are strong indicators that community leaders played a crucial role in cultivating the perception of shared racial status among both Latinxs and African-Americans. Locally, public advocates such as Councilwoman Burke, a long-time African-American representative of the Northeast Ward, raised the issue of shared minority status. At more than one City Council meeting in 2008, Burke called for the equitable treatment of Latinxs and African-Americans in Winston-Salem, pointing out minorities' contributions to the community.[26] "A study done in 2006," she explained, "indicated that Hispanics contribute more than $9 billion to the state, African-Americans contribute more than $44.5 billion, and spending by Asians exceeded $156 million." City hall, she said, "belongs to taxpayers, and the way in which minorities consume, they should be treated equally and fairly, and City staff should do a better job in addressing unfair treatment of minorities by City government as well as in the community."[27] Interactions within local institutions and community leaders' efforts to capitalize on Black-Latinx connections and engage in advocacy work reinforced those connections. Such efforts had a clear impact on the perceptions of Latinx residents, who perceived African-American community leaders as allies. For example, when I asked Marco, an editor at a local Spanish-language newspaper, if he felt there was a different relationship between Latinxs and Whites and Latinxs and African-Americans in the community, he said, "Yes, absolutely. And that depends also on the area. I think that, for example, Black leaders are being really, really wonderful with the Hispanic community. They're always fighting for us. You see it in Congress, you see it in marches, you see it in manifestations, you see it in demonstrations. And I think this has been an interesting alliance between Black leaders and Hispanic leaders, in this state."

As early as 2004, Black community leaders and civil servants had made a concerted effort to link the Black and Latinx communities through their shared experiences and to create the perception among both communities

[26] Hispanic issues were infrequently raised in council meetings, and most references were by community members who raised issues regarding resource access and services for Latinxs. Between 2006 and 2010, 2008 had the highest proportion of discussions on Latinx issues, with 12.5% of the meetings including some discussion of Latinxs. Topics included a need for more city services and fair treatment in the city for all minorities.

[27] City Council Meeting Minutes, April 21, 2008.

of their shared status as minorities. As the hostile public rhetoric around immigration increased, so did Black leaders' sense that Latinxs were entering a realm of discrimination akin to their own Civil Rights battles, which instigated a collaborative antiracist response. In this way, appeals to unity iteratively used the uniting capabilities of shared racial status to shore up collaborative relations.

In 2005, the *Winston-Salem Chronicle*, the city's Black newspaper, ran a series of articles calling on African-Americans to dispel their stereotypes of Latinx immigrants and, instead, use their shared experiences to build solidarity. This work translated to community engagement as well. The first of Winston's "Soul and Salsa" series came in June 2005. These community forums, which bring together Black and Latinx community leaders, officials, and residents over shared issues, were initiated by the City of Winston-Salem Human Relations Commission (led by a Black woman). These neighborhood forums grew into one of the commission's most successful community-wide events. At a 2006 forum, a Latina woman addressed the police captain: "Hispanics are more and more receiving the kind of treatment that African-Americans are getting on the street from police, and I speak from personal experience, but it was frightening and I was terrified. What is frightening is that both communities are identifiable by color, most of the time, and that makes them targetable. And the difference between the two is that Hispanics are perceived to be from a different country." At that same forum, an older Black woman in the audience asked, "I am a community activist, and I want to know, can a license of my people [of color] be renewed?" When someone in the audience shouted that you used to be able to renew licenses, but now you can't, the woman returned to the police chief: "Will you allow renewal?"[28] He equivocated: "That's not decided by the policy, that was determined a few years ago to change the process, and that is determined by the DMV. You need to meet with them. I believe if you don't have the proper forms, you can't re-apply. You need to address the DMV on that matter." The woman persisted:

> That's my reason — all these systems, ICE, DMV, there are so many who are just as concerned as you are, and I've been hosting workshops on undoing racism. I mention this because it gives you a better perception of systems and how they put roadblocks in front of you. You need to understand that to organize against the 287(g)s that disrupt our lives — we have upcoming workshops, and if we keep learning, we keep doing this, keep educating yourself. It's not these people who make the laws, who say they are doing their jobs. We need to work together as a family and stick together as a family and learn about gatekeepers. And I thank you for allowing me this time.

[28] I presume she is referring broadly to the communities of color, particularly Latinxs, that she engages with in her organizing work.

At the eighth forum, in May 2009, the focus was on the pending 287(g) partnership between the county sheriff's office and ICE. The sheriff was invited to discuss his interest in the program and hear the concerns of the community. He defended 287(g) as targeting "*self-detected* individuals—they have committed a crime and are in jail," but Black and Latinx community members posed various objections in the Q&A. Speaking directly to the sheriff, they expressed disdain for police checkpoints in their shared neighborhoods, plans for the implementation of 287(g), and their mutual distrust of the sheriff's motivation.

These forums underlined for Latinxs that their lives were being shaped by discrimination in a manner that was similar to Blacks. By engaging in a discourse of shared legal and social marginalization, Blacks and Latinxs reinforced their shared racial status as minorities.

In the fall 2008, a two-day conference was held in neighboring Greensboro that included civil rights activists, church leaders, and union organizers from Greensboro, Winston-Salem, and other surrounding communities with the purpose of forging Black/Latinx relationships. Gathering in a local Baptist church and community center, various pastors and community representatives, African-American and Latinx, spoke to the similar structural conditions faced by Black and Latinx communities — problems with gangs, poor schools, employment, institutional discrimination, violence, and exploitation. A Latino participant noted:

> My wife lost her license and cannot get it renewed, and she can't leave to go anywhere. When the Black community in my church realized this, they went to the house and said that they didn't know that I was illegal. I live in an Afro-American community, and they got together 100 signatures asking the department of immigration not to deport me. They spoke with lawyers and the police chief not to work with ICE. Latinos can't do this, they can't ask for that, but Blacks can. The office of human relations includes a Black pastor who is open to seeing the experience of Hispanos. We have the potential and capacity to work together to create a difference in our communities. I'm happy with the support of the Black community, and the church is a good place for this, to understand the story of what's happened. . . . In the Afro community, leaders have emerged to talk and work with us. They don't speak Spanish, but they are there with us, working to bring our communities together.

This sense of empathy and public gestures of advocacy and support from African-American neighbors and fellow church members concretized Latinxs' sense of shared discrimination and positive intergroup perceptions. These events were also covered in the local Spanish-language press, reproducing these perceptions for a wider audience. Moreover, this perception was bolstered by the stratification of views on immigration enforcement by race. Both locally and nationally, key White leaders often represented an enforcement view, while Black leaders often advocated for immigrants, using their political power to leverage support.

The case of Winston-Salem makes clear that shared status is produced not only through shared objective conditions but also through an agentic process that shapes perceptions and worldviews. In Winston, political elites and community leaders played an essential role in this process, both locally and nationally (see Waters et al. 2014; Williams 2016). Traditional intergroup relations theory relies on conflict and domination to understand the formation of group boundaries but cannot account for how the ways shared structures of marginalization can blur boundaries among similarly positioned groups while brightening the boundaries between dominant and subordinate groups (Coser 1956).

External Threat

A third process is needed to tie groups into a minority collective: a common external threat. While discrimination can come piecemeal from individuals or structurally, the group formation literature theorizes it is the identification of a specific threat source that catalyzes group identity formation and mobilization (Espiritu 1992; Brown 1993; Jones 2011). Exclusionary practices and poor-quality contact with the White majority created a sense of fear and distrust among Winston's Latinxs that even progressive Whites, that significant portion of the White populace receptive to Latinxs and immigration, found difficult to overcome. The hostile actions of conservative leaders situated Whites as a collective threat to minority well-being. As a result, most of the Mexicans in my study consistently and overwhelmingly characterized Whites as people to be feared and mistrusted.

Latinxs' suspicions of White danger were confirmed at a variety of levels of social discourse and interaction. In the media and politics, for instance, White authorities categorized Latinxs as culturally inferior. As reported by the ACLU in a hearing on the efficacy of 287(g) programs before the U.S. House of Representatives, "Sheriff Steve Bizzell of Johnston County, NC, a 287(g) applicant, has publicly acknowledged 'his goal is to reduce if not eliminate the immigrant population of Johnston County.' He has described 'Mexicans' as 'trashy' people who 'breed like rabbits' and 'rape, rob, and murder American citizens'" (Lin, Ramirez, and Shuford 2009, pp. 6–7). U.S. Congresswoman Virginia Foxx of North Carolina's Fifth District hosted a special hearing in Winston-Salem entitled "Gangs, Fraud, and Sexual Predators: Struggling with the Consequences of Illegal Immigration" in 2006 (U.S. House of Representatives 2006). Alienating statements suffused election season, with campaign speeches and robocalls deriding the presence of Latinxs in the community. Those White liberals advocating for immigrants were frequently overshadowed by the political Right. It looked to Latinxs as though discriminatory practices were divided along racial lines.

Many Mexicans in my study also reported daily microaggressions from Whites; these cemented the perception that Whites but not Blacks discriminated against Latinxs. Diego, an undocumented immigrant from Guerrero, indicated systematic interpersonal hostility and discrimination: "If I ask [Whites] for something and, or I ask them something, they don't answer me. They look at me and turn around. Well, there are some White people who if I park my car next to them, they turn on the security alarm on in their car. They think I'm going to rob them." He chuckled. "This is what I've noticed many times, many, many times. . . . Or they clutch their bags," he continued. "It's the same thing you see with someone of color. They do the same thing." I clarified, "The Whites do it to people of color?"[29] "Yes, of course, of course. And with people of color . . . never have I seen someone close their bag or clutch their purse because they see me walking next to them."

Latinxs' interpretation of Whites as a threat was so pervasive that, even when Whites attempted to facilitate better contact, their intentions were deemed suspect. For example, at a meeting to inform immigrants of their rights in the event of a raid or traffic stop, a Latina woman told me that many Whites learned Spanish so that they could use it against Latinxs: "You have to be careful. They say they are friends, but they are really racist." Such high levels of distrust are indicative of the perception that Whites posed a threat to Latinx well-being.

Latinxs' perception of White threat was made starker by comparison with Blacks. As the level of public anti-immigrant rhetoric and enforcement increased, so did Black leaders' involvement in Latinx and immigration issues. The 2008 election cycle was particularly symbolic in that vitriolic discourse against Latinx immigrants deployed by White conservatives was juxtaposed against the hopeful rhetoric of a Black presidential candidate. From the national to the local level, Mexicans' perceptions that Black leaders would stand with undocumented migrants while Whites would actively discriminate against them seemed substantiated. For example, the National Black Police Association signed a letter to President Obama demanding an end to the 287(g) program in 2009. The Black police chiefs in Winston-Salem and neighboring Greensboro refused to endorse any local-federal enforcement partnerships,[30] and Black council members opposed enhanced policing that targeted Latinxs in their districts.

The actions of Whites, who often engaged in various anti-Latinx statements and actions, not only concretized Latinxs' sense of discrimination

[29] I have translated *gente de color* to *people of color*, but it often, though not always, refers to Black people.

[30] The Winston-Salem police chief from 2004 to 2008 was a Black woman, replaced in 2008 by a White man who pledged to maintain the policy of declining to participate in immigration enforcement.

as a shared experience with Blacks but also coalesced into a sense of that Whites were a threatening out-group. In other words, the shared external threat posed by Whites reinscribed feelings of shared racial status, broader minority identity, and linked fate (Giles and Evans 1985; Rothgerber 1997; Jones 2019).

In the case of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, extensive social contact, a sense of shared experiences of discrimination and exclusion, and a common external threat produced an overwhelming belief among most Latinxs and Blacks that they shared a common racial status. Through this lens, they saw each other as collaborators, intimate friends and partners, and political allies. Moreover, although economic competition between these groups was verifiably minimal, neither group was likely to interpret the relatively fewer resources available to minority residents compared to Whites as a zero-sum condition. Even so, subcases of conflict offer opportunities to observe and theorize intergroup relations under various conditions.

UNEQUAL RACIAL STATUS

Progressive Whites: The Racial Status Gap

According to the racial status theory, collaborative relations are unlikely to materialize absent perceptions of racial commonality. While this framing may seem specific to interminority relations, various studies have shown that Latinxs more often build close relations with and see themselves as holding a shared racial position with Whites rather than with Blacks (Alba 2016; Darity, Dietrich and Hamilton 2005; Golash-Boza and Darity 2008; Marrow 2011). Such views are theorized as a critical mechanism through which immigrants acculturate into American society (Lee and Bean 2007). In Winston, barriers to this sense of shared position prevented such outcomes from unfolding.

For example, significant numbers of progressive Whites attempted to reach out to Latinxs and to advocate for tolerance and immigrant rights, while others were engaged in direct service provision to the Latinx community. While these discourses and actions were undoubtedly supportive of immigrants, they failed to build connections on the basis of a shared racial status. Even in cases where Mexicans and Whites came into regular contact—two of the church sites' outreach programs, for instance, were primarily staffed by White volunteers—collaborative relations did not result, suggesting dissimilar socioeconomic status was not sufficient in producing connectedness. One White church volunteer confided that she had been working with the Latinx community outreach programs for 10 years, but only recently learned any of the Latinx participants' names. When I asked why, she shrugged, "I felt too uncomfortable to build a relationship." She didn't seem to think she had anything but shared church experiences in common and failed to reach out;

dissimilar racial status was reinforced rather than bridged. Elsewhere, in public forums, immigrants were framed as "the stranger" in a biblical orientation that was simultaneously sympathetic and distancing. In continuing to situate Latinx immigrants as the "other," apart from White congregants, Winston's White residents were similar to other Southern faith communities studied by Nagel and Erkhamp (2017): despite efforts to disrupt existing racial hierarchies, congregations' emphasis on tolerance and diversity nevertheless leaves racial divisions and inequalities intact.

By failing to establish a sense of shared racial status with Latinxs, progressive White organizations did not signal themselves as reliable allies to the Latinx community, and the relative lack of individual-level contact between Whites and Latinxs made it easier for Latinxs to see White organizations and public officials as part of a single opposing category. For all their advocacy efforts, Whites did not undermine Latinxs' negative perceptions of White dedication to bright racial boundaries. Whites claimed to welcome "the stranger" in their midst, but did not include them as fellow community members. Blacks, on the other hand, explicitly called for African-Americans and Latinxs to see each other as part of the same racialized minority group in forums such as the Soul and Salsa series, community town halls, and conferences on Black-Brown relations.

Interminority Conflict: Shared Status and Economic Threat

To be clear, despite broad perceptions of collaborative relations among Blacks and Latinxs, these relationships were not universal at the individual level. As in all social relations, the aggregate positive interactions included a minority of negative counternarratives and countercurrents. These recollections were mostly peripheral in the broader Winston community, but racial status theory nonetheless accounts for circumstances under which such negative or neutral relations occur.

As noted, most White and African-American Winston residents were economically stable, even affluent, and there was little competition for jobs and housing. However, some of Winston's Black residents perceived Latinxs as a source of competition when population growth strained local school systems and other municipal services, and such perceptions, in turn, undermined perceptions of shared racial status. The manager of a small Black bookstore is typical of the infrequent complaints I heard in my ethnographic observations: "I am not happy at how Latinos are taking over. The test scores, for example, of Black children in the third grade at my school have remained flat, while Latino children are improving because they are getting more resources. . . . And you know the doctor's office nearby was closed, and a clinic for Latinos was opened in its place. I just don't think it's fair. I have nothing against Latinos personally, but it just isn't fair."

In this case, negative intergroup relations arose from a zero-sum perception of limited institutional resources. It was widely known that the public schools and healthcare facilities that served minority neighborhoods were of lower quality than those in predominantly White neighborhoods, and the respondent above has a valid point: such resources should be increased. But she attributed reductions in services to growth in the Latinx population relative to Blacks. As seen in theories of ethnic replacement in Los Angeles, where housing, school access, and political representation are occasional sites of interminority conflict, resource competition frames undermine feelings of cooperation and solidarity.

Working-class African-Americans also sometimes used a competition frame to understand the position of Latinxs, primarily shaped by their standing in the labor market. For example, an African-American clerk at a UPS store lamented that her son, who lacked a college education, was having trouble finding work and speculated that, with the influx of Latinx workers in the area, he would have to move to another county to find employment.

While these expressions of interminority resource competition were not the norm among either Blacks or Latinxs, they highlight that intergroup competition does exist. However, competition can also highlight racial status theory's broad explanatory power. In the intergroup relations literature, when perceptions of resource competition are present, whether in the labor market, political representation, housing, or institutional resources, collaborative relations are unlikely to emerge. However, this literature overlooks the potential mediating role of other status relationships and the importance of treating race and class distinctly and intersectionally, rather than race as epiphenomenal to class. Indeed, working-class Blacks in my study often explained resource competition using a collective external threat frame, identifying the racism of Whites as the culprit in the limited resources available to Winston's minorities. Per racial status theory, then, shared racial status may, in the long run, ease or neutralize competition so that outright conflict is unlikely to occur. Moreover, to the extent that competitive attitudes were expressed, Winston's Black leaders explicitly engaged in racial solidarity work, using their belief in a shared racial status to reject competition, undermine perceptions of conflict, and express support for minority solidarity.

CONCLUSION

Intergroup relations are shaped by racial status and, to a lesser extent, the intersection of groups' relative racial and socioeconomic statuses. Yet, because extant scholarship analytically conflates race and socioeconomic status (Olzak and Nagel 1986; Gay 2006: Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Morris and Gimpel 2007; Fernandez and Niemann 2010), it does not provide a coherent account of collaborative intergroup relations and overstates the prevalence of

conflictual intergroup relations. To resolve this problem, I have drawn from ethnographic data to develop racial status theory. By decoupling race and socioeconomic status and paying attention to a group's own understanding of its relative status in the racial hierarchy, racial status theory explains the conditions under which collaborative, neutral, and conflictual relations prevail. I theorize the production of shared racial status as a product of three mechanisms: contact, discrimination, and external threat, showing that positive relations are unlikely to materialize absent perceptions of racial commonality and, therefore, are an essential mechanism in shaping intergroup relations.

While my case study suggests that all three mechanisms produce positive intergroup relations, we need additional empirical work to determine whether all three are necessary and to what degree. Various studies indicate that relations between Blacks and Latinxs that vary from conflictual (Rich and Miranda 2005; McClain et al. 2007; Marrow 2011;) to neutral (Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2001; Winders 2008), to collaborative (McDermott 2011; Greenhouse 2008). Racial status theory may help to explain these varied results, giving us additional insight into how these mechanisms matter. As a secondary analysis of existing research demonstrates, seemingly haphazard outcomes across localities may, in fact, reveal patterns when examined using the racial status theory. For example, Marrow (2008, 2011) finds Black-Latinx conflict, which is explained as normative. However, when racial status theory is applied, it is clear that Latinxs' perceptions of similarities with Whites, positive contact with Whites, and a shared sense of hostility from and socioeconomic competition with Blacks, sparks not only a sense of shared dominant status with Whites but also collaborative relations. Zúñiga and Hernández-León's (2001) and Winders's (2008) work on Dalton, Georgia, and Nashville, Tennessee, respectively, has uncovered neutral relations. This is due in part to the distinct labor markets in which Latinx immigrants work in each city (carpet manufacturing and horse racing) and their segregation and isolation from both Blacks and Whites in both places. Racial status theory interprets neutrality in each case as conditioned by a lack of contact and general isolation from all out-groups. By contrast, Morin, Sanchez, and Barreto (2011) draw from the Latino National Survey (LNS) to find that Latinx friendships with Blacks significantly decrease perceptions of resource competition, as do high levels of African-American density, resulting in collaborative relations, suggesting that contact is an important mediating factor.

While existing research does not use a racial status lens to analyze findings, doing so retroactively highlights the scope of racial status theory. That is, while the early social psychological literature suggests that common goals may also forge positive relations, in daily life shared status must be present, as established through the three elements of positive contact, discrimination,

and a common enemy. As is consistent with the literature, this framework also shows that perceived economic competition must be absent or minimal for shared status to take place.[31]

In developing racial status theory, I bring the intergroup relations literature more in line with the broader insights of the early social psychology literature and contemporary race theory to produce a more robust tool for understanding how race shapes intergroup dynamics. In theorizing race as a status category, I provide a means for reconceptualizing *how* race works in the context of daily life. From a racial status perspective, race relations are dependent on where one falls, or is perceived to fall, in the social hierarchy and the process by which perceived changes in this order lead to shifts in group boundaries. Approaching race relations from this perspective not only challenges materialist assumptions about the nature of race, but also allows for a dynamic and nuanced approach to understanding how race works in relation to class. In other words, it moves us toward "specifying what are the independent and combined effects of these two forms of social stratification on social actors" (Bonilla-Silva and Baiocchi 2008, p. 148).

Moreover, racial status theory allows us to better account for how race relations are formed and transformed, including among non-Whites, as well as for how racial boundaries shift. As noted above, racial status theory posits that once a boundary shift has occurred, the group members can orient around shared goals, reinforcing their sense of themselves as minorities, or subordinates relative to the dominant group. In this sense, racial status theory takes us beyond the realm of intergroup relations, providing insight into how new racial groups form, as well as new tools for revisiting theories of immigration, such as classical assimilation theory. Through racial status theory, we can understand not only how access to resources shapes new social identities and life chances but also how individual and group perceptions of access and status lead toward minority group solidarity on the one hand and assimilation on the other.

Similarly, racial status theory helps us understand not only a politics of solidarity within racial categories, but the mechanisms by which solidarity occurs across them. In this sense, racial status theory offers us a processual model of how linked fate, as defined by Dawson (1994), emerges, not only among Blacks, but in producing non-White solidarity and political mobilization (Jones 2019). Similarly, it also may be useful explaining the recent rise of White nationalist politics in the mainstream, in which increased contact in virtual spaces combined with the perception that Whites are discriminated

[31] This framing is also dependent on the persistence of a U.S. racial hierarchy in which dominant and subordinate status remains an essential feature of race. It also is limited to group dynamics and does not account for individual-level social relations, in which more complex social interactions may be at play.

against and under threat, despite historical conditions that suggests the contrary, invigorates White solidarity.

Racial status theory also has important implications for our methodological approaches to understanding intergroup relations. Quantitative work that relies on demographic data alone to predict the quality of intergroup relations is insufficient, as race is not a static variable, but a process. To account for racial status, scholars must break away from relying on ascriptive categories and assuming group perceptions. Scholars must also take seriously the relational components of race and account for interaction within and between groups. Expanding our approach to race as a status that dynamically shapes relations alongside and intersectionally with class will allow for a better accounting of a fuller range of intergroup relations, including neutral and collaborative relations.

These findings also suggest that the study of intergroup relations should shift toward an emphasis on perceptions rather than objective differences. The case of Winston, in particular, highlights the role of elites and community leaders in shaping public perception and social attitudes. Similarly, studies of unionization efforts demonstrate how leadership reconfigured notions of shared economic precarity into a platform for solidarity (Boswell et al. 2006; Bacon 2008; Greenhouse 2008). Corollary efforts can be observed in efforts to divide, such as rhetorical strategies employed by the Trump administration to characterize Latinx immigrants and African-Americans as criminals, radicals, and threats to White Americans or to each other. In each of these cases, while objective economic, political, and social relations matter, perception and interpretation are the fundamental mechanisms through which intergroup attitudes are forged. Future research should continue to study the roles of leaders in shaping perceptions and examine other ways in which intergroup perceptions may be constructed.

This article also examines a case of positive intergroup relations in a single geographic location and a single historical moment. The dynamics at play in this case study that led to positive intergroup relations appear to be more likely to occur in the U.S. South than in other regions. For example, well-resourced Black communities may be easier to find in places like Atlanta, Georgia, or Prince Georges County, Maryland. It is also the case that long-standing patterns of immigration and segregation mattered in shaping how non-Whites perceived and accessed political power. However, these are empirical questions rather than theoretical ones that should be examined in future research rather than presumed. New work that reexamines locations like South Central Los Angeles, suggests that positive intergroup relations can emerge between Blacks and Latinxs as conditions change over time (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Pastor 2021). Similarly, while I do not argue that these processes lead to permanent shifts (racialization is an ongoing process), my study does suggest that such outcomes may be long-standing,

contrary to much of the work on interracial coalitions, for example, which argues that such collaborations are instrumental and temporary, if they happen at all (Kauffman 2003*a*; Vaca 2004). Nevertheless, longitudinal processes are an important area for future investigation.

Since my data collection, North Carolina has experienced slower but consistent growth in the immigrant population. As of 2015, approximately one in 12 residents were immigrants, and one in 15 had at least one immigrant parent (American Immigration Council 2017). Over 30% of North Carolina's foreign-born population came from Mexico, and nearly 43% of the immigrant population was undocumented (American Immigration Council 2017). Combined with a broad political rhetoric under the Trump administration that drew heavily from anti-immigrant Southern strategies in the early 2000s, little about the current conditions—including the continued use of 287(g) agreements, raids, and efforts to restrict immigrant access to state and federal resources—has changed except time. And, as my framework would predict, ties between Blacks and Latinxs throughout the state continue to develop and strengthen. For example, in 2018, a record number of eight African-American sheriffs were elected, including in the seven largest counties in the state (including majority-White counties), unseating incumbent White sheriffs in every case. This included the election of Bobby Kimbrough, who defeated a five-term White Republican in Forsyth County (Killian 2018; Inge 2018). What is notable about these victories is that Black candidates ran on racial inequities platforms, pledging to reduce racial profiling and, notably, to withdraw from the 287(g) program, well before the mainstreaming of calls for police reform in the wake of George Floyd's murder in 2020. While this is just one example, it suggests that not only has the Black community expanded its support for Latinx immigrants, but it has done so through the lens of shared racial status.

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