

Term Paper
Identity Formation across Cultural Frontiers
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Angelina is a 74 year old Puerto Rican Woman is married to Enrique 73 year old man living in Brooklyn New York. They have two kids, Jessica and Roberto, Angelina was a caretaker while Enrique was a construction worker. However this wasn't their lifestyle before they lived in New York. Both lived in San Juan Puerto Rico raising their own kids in this small town running their own family owned business with farm animals, skinning meat products to sell, sewing pieces of cloth together to create intricate clothing pieces and even make food; to them it seemed perfect, a normal lifestyle for them having both sides of the family there always to help and visit but they wanted more for their kids when they started growing up, so they packed their stuff and moved out of Puerto Rico and into New York around their 30s. In this paper I will address on how or what were the ways Enrique and Angelina managed to adapt to its culture in New York and be successful at it.

Angelina's Developmental

Angelina was born Caguas Puerto Rico, considered one of the most poorest parts of Puerto Rico, highest rates of poverty and hunger within the community. Angelina is one out of seven siblings in her family. One thing that Angelina's family were most known for was care-taking and making intricate clothing pieces. Their family built a business from Caguas and went to the city to sell the clothes to make profit to maintain their livings; of course Angelina still attending school and still doing the family's clothing business she soon started to take her sellings to the school to sell some clothes to also get some profit off of there too. And for years and years since Angelina was a kid till her mid 20s the business kept going. After Angelina graduated high school she needed to get a job other than the family owned business; so she took up this job offer of being a care-taker for the elderly to have some money of her own to make her own life, her own future while attending college. Soon in her mid 20s she met Enrique and a couple of years later had gotten married and started making a family of their own; decided after a few years later to move to NY to better their children's lives in the future. Throughout this development of Angelina's life *Erikson* would say that Angelina showed signs of *Purpose* in *Erikson's stage of Developments*, under the category of *Play Age*. *Erikson* states that in this stage of life "We are capable of learning, creating and accomplishing numerous new skills and knowledge, thus developing a sense of industry." So when Angelina was younger; the skills that her mother and the rest of the family she kept made her accomplish numerous skill and took her so far in the future even when she moved to New York. Another sign that Angelina showed was *Middle Adulthood* from *Erikson's* perspective "Work is most crucial. *Erikson* observed that middle-age is when we tend to be occupied with creative and meaningful work surrounding our family. Also, middle adulthood is when we can expect to "be in charge," the role we've long envied." This demonstrates back to Angelina's lifestyle because when she was going through her *Middle Adulthood* phase in life, Angelina took into consideration of her own children's life and took the initiative to start the moving process

Disruptions

Angelina and Enrique always thought of staying in Puerto Rico because they lived their “American Dream” achieving their business with Enrique alongside her, she didn't want to move elsewhere. However, upon having kids, she had to slow down with the family business to attend her kids. She had to take into consideration what to do for her kids Jessica and Roberto, assimilate to a whole different place and try to restart what they had or stay and be raised in Puerto Rico? She realized that moving to New York and finding work just to give her whole family a better life is what was gonna be successful. Here, the realization of her own life disruption was demonstrating Social Selection, she felt like moving for her kids to a whole different place was going to fulfill success. And so they moved in a street called Bushwick a one bedroom apartment for all four of them. At first they didn't have much furniture, two air mattresses for them two and the other for their kids; only temporary. Enrique started looking for well-paying jobs that he can maintain. He found this company store that had a sign “HELP WANTED” for a construction company, he started making conversation in Spanish amongst the other workers, asking what they do, how can he apply and what can he sign to become a part of this company; Enrique started realizing that most of the employees had similar minority backgrounds, and different Spanish cultures. The Boss joined in to converse with Enrique and other workers and when it was time for the employees to work, the boss offered him a job from what Enrique knew about construction. When Enrique got offered the job from the Boss himself, I didn't help but remember what Guarnaccia (1997) stated “*the Characteristics of migrants—their economic resources, social skills, knowledge of the receiving culture, social supports, etc.—are key factors in determining the stressfulness of migration*” (p. 72). Enrique started working in this construction job and money started rolling out for him and his family, they soon got rid of the air mattresses and started buying furniture to actually make it their home due to the skills that inhabited into Enrique when he was younger.

Decisions

Now Angelina and Enrique moving from Puerto Rico to New York they had to incorporate some sort of separation; to reiterate Angelina had a clothing business back in her home town alongside Enrique's meat selling business. Now this was quite difficult for the both of them because one they were always working together; they were business partners but here in New York you wasn't able to. So they parted job lives and even then they had difficulties doing their own passion, their own dream due to the language barrier in certain parts of New York, so they couldn't flourish so they both tried to avoid that language difficulty. According to J.W. Berry (2001), “*In contrast when migrants place a value on holding on to their original culture and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with others, then the separation alternative is defined*” (p. 619). However, even then it was still happening so they had to let go of their passions and find new jobs other than what they originally started with. Angelina went back to taking care of the elderly in Uptown Manhattan while Enrique

Enriques Developmental

Enrique was also born in Puerto Rico in one of the *Campos* that were poor as well. Enrique was a farmer and a builder, he always contributed his skills when it's needed and he always had gotten tips for the workload he did when living in Puerto Rico at the time. Not only he himself liked doing farming and building but his dad loved it too, except for his other siblings they were more into schooling and sports, but Enrique and his dad made it a career for themselves. Enrique did partake in school and its activities however he dropped out due to the high need to provide for his family and his desires to reach the desired future he wanted. After dropping out of Highschool Enrique's dad started teaching him on how to fix simple things around the house the sink, the metal roof tops they had above their heads, the barn where the animals stayed, skinning and cleaning the animals to be layered sold when him and his dad drove out to the city to sell at the market. Throughout this process of Enrique learning through his father; learning basic skills or learning what his father does on a daily basis demonstrate what Erickson was talking about; the *Basic strength of competence*. Due to him grasping the knowledge that he learned and using it for his benefits to support him and his family as well. He gained a job in the city that consisted of traveling to different cities handling meat and being able to sell; upon Enrique traveling to different cities to sell product he met Angelina and started building a relationship after that. Later in the relationship Enrique and Angelina did get married and started creating a family of their own. They had combined two of their own skills and created a family business that was meat handling and a sewing business. They had seen progress from where they started and what their position there in now; and they felt good about their set future as a family. However Angelina always thought about her kids and how she wanted the best for them, schooling, career, lifestyle. She felt like she wanted to give her two kids a better life than what she and Enrique had; she didn't want her kids to struggle in poverty like she did, so she felt the need to leave Puerto Rico and start heading to New York. However Enrique pictured him and his family staying here being raised in Puerto Rico because he had already accomplished his dreams; have a successful business and have his kids not to struggle like he did; however he went wherever his wife and kids went to New York.

Disruptions

Like was stated when living in Brooklyn Angelina stated “Aye mucho gentes en el este vecindario comparte la misma cultura española y también habla español, así que no fue tan difícil para vivir aquí” however she emphasized that “era difícil seguir en el negocio de la ropa en otras partes de la ciudad de Nueva York cuando la mayoría de las veces tus compañeros de trabajo o tus clientes no te entienden la mayor parte del tiempo.”; Enrique further said the exact same thing. So they *Isolated* themselves from the work environment that includes language barriers that made it harder for them two to separately succeed because they had no support; this made them develop *Social Stress*. Al-Issa (1997) said that the “one stressful aspect of migration is social isolation and the loss of social networks that provide both emotional and instrumental

support. Down the line after they separated from trying to achieve their passions that failed; Angelina went back on working with taking care of the elderly like she did when she was attending in college in PR; Enrique managed to score a construction job in Upper Manhattan alongside with a plethora of other hispanics. Wen H. Kuo and Yung-Mei Tsai (1986) stated that *“Immigrants in the former category are part of chain migration, a term denoting that some type of social network has already been established by members of the families these immigrants have come to join”* (p. 134). When talking about chain migration in this situation despite Enrique having a language barrier in New York City, he still managed to find a job that he already knew the skills and he has other co workers that have the same story as him, a man that wants to succeed for not only himself but for his family too. As well as Angelina, this caretaker job enables Angelina to help and speak in her own way; for instance Angelina addresses that when she used to work in the caretaking field back in the day there was some patients that spoke Spanish and did routines that Angelina was normal too and some of her co-workers as well spoke some Spanish whenever they've had conversations with Angelina

Decisions

Both Angelina and Enrique started to make more money in New York than in Puerto Rico; started putting their two kids in school and decided to stay for now in New York because they were stable. New York gave them a sense of a second home like Puerto Rico did, especially when they lived in Brooklyn; so much diversity and so much Spanish culture surrounding them; it felt so normal like nothing changed. Yes Angelina did separate from her clothing business and Enrique did as well with the meat seller business; however Angelina still pursued the job of caretaking the elderly due to a high demand and high pay. And Enrique with being a construction worker around uptown Manhattan and downtown Brooklyn, due to the skills that he learned from his father when he was younger. Both Enrique and Angelina decided to incorporate *Integration*. Now when writing about Enrique's and Angelina's story it reminded me of what Berry stated. According to Berry (2001), *“When there is interest in both maintaining one's original culture and engaging in daily interactions with other groups, integration is the option; here, some degree of cultural integrity is maintained, while at the same time immigrants seek, as a member of an ethnocultural group, to participate as an integral part of the larger society”* (p. 619) When looking back at Angelina's and Enrique's story they maintained their own culture, the Puerto Rican culture especially in New York; additionally when they separately work they are freely able to use their culture and their own skills to achieve on keeping their culture habits. Now when it comes to their kids Jessica and Roberto, Enrique and Angelina started acknowledging the blend of two different cultures between their children half spoken Spanish and half spoken English. Due to Enrique and Angelina making the choice on moving to NYC and putting their kids in school they are facing acculturation and enculturation especially in their phase of life due to what Erickson stated when he spoke about his theory/ideology of the 8 stages of development within everyone.

Conclusion: Now that we looked into the life of Angelina and Enrique, the main question would have to be how or what were the ways Enrique and Angelina managed to adapt to its culture in New York and be successful at it. And now that we looked in depth I think everything correlates with what happens and how it happens. From Erikson's ideology, on how there's always 8 stages of development of an individual to then what Berry talks about a immigrant or a migrants experiences and connection to another person that is considered a migrant or a immigrant. And finally what Guarnaccia talks about social skills and skills that are developed within an individual. Of course they had the option to Acculturate and fully be people that they weren't before and forget what how they started off, however they grasped the knowledge of a new area and still managed to keep their own culture, their own roots.

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