Article

"Mexicans Built This Neighborhood!" Gentrification, Organizations, and the Role of Place-Based Identity in Latinx Chicago

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Abstract: This exploratory study draws on qualitative interviews to investigate respondents' perspectives about gentrification in their Chicago neighborhood. Prior research has demonstrated that place-based networks are crucial for the well-being of low-income and immigrant urban residents. A parallel though a previously disparate thread of research discusses the negative impacts of gentrification on long-term residents. I find that residents underscore concerns about their neighborhood's decreasing affordability, as well as the impending loss of their neighborhood's local Latinx immigrant identity, as central issues for their community. For residents, "place", vis-á-vis the neighborhood identity, was central to their own construction of ethnic identity. Concurrently, I find that community organizers viewed place-based changes associated with gentrification as nonstrategic for their organization, whose operations have evolved "beyond the neighborhood", and endeavor to meet the needs of low-income ethnic Latinx populations across the metropolitan region. I conclude that scholars of both ethnic identity and those studying urban inequalities may benefit from taking a place-centered approach in addressing the gentrification, community organizing, and residential displacement occurring within Latinx communities.

1. Introduction

The deleterious effects of gentrification on long-term community residents have been a topic of significant attention in research. One of the main problems that scholars identify with gentrification is the consequential displacement of residents. Generally describing the movement of members of the middle-class to central city neighborhoods, gentrification is a term originally coined by Ruth Glass (1964) to refer to neighborhood transformations taking place in London. Since then, the term commonly has been used to refer broadly to the shifting characteristics, demographics, and identity of neighborhoods (Brown-Saracino 2010).

The experiences of long-term residents in gentrifying communities are important to understand because, as a number of scholars have demonstrated, low-income people, and most often people of color, are disproportionately impacted by the negative aftereffects of development efforts (Lees 2012, 2016; Betancur 2011), and this has been extensively documented in the case of Chicago (Acosta-Córdova 2017; Hwang and Sampson 2014; Anderson and Sternberg 2013; Wilson and Sternberg 2012; Mumm 2008; Betancur 2002, 2005, 2011; Boyd 2007; Patillo 2007; Hyra 2008; Pérez 2004; Lin 2002; Ramos-Zayas 2001). Importantly, predominantly Black and Latinx[1] neighborhoods near the Central Business District have been identified as among the most at risk of experiencing re-development and gentrification (Timberlake and Johns-Wolfe 2017).

At the same time, various groups mobilize in efforts to bring about development with more equitable outcomes and to minimize displacement (Morisson and Bevilacqua 2019; Dyson and Varady 2018; Martin 2007). In a parallel strand, some research on community-based organizations has examined how these organizations can work to miti-

gate the adverse effects of structural inequalities as they impact individuals and families in impoverished circumstances (Vargas 2016; Marwell 2004, 2007).

The purpose of this study is to explore resident and community organizer perspectives of community change in the context of neighborhood gentrification. While previous studies have demonstrated that there are significant obstacles toward mobilization while addressing structural inequalities in urban environments (Melendez and Servon 2007; Arches 1999), missing are studies that examine the attitudes about and perspectives on gentrification from multiple vantage points simultaneously, including from those of local organizations. Some research has examined how residents may express a range of responses to gentrification efforts, often conveying an ambivalence about perceived negative and positive impacts associated with gentrification (Freeman 2006). However, previous literature tells us little about the relationship between community organizations' and residents' views about gentrification. It is useful to know their views because having multiple viewpoints can tell us much about the effectiveness of community-based organization services as they relate to the concerns of local residents. Within a context of persisting social inequality as well as ongoing gentrification, then, the guiding research questions for this study include: what issues do long-term residents perceive as important in the neighborhood? Additionally, how do community-based organization representatives view their role in the lives of neighborhood residents?

Based on original data from 25 in-depth qualitative interviews, this study examines responses toward gentrification from current and former residents and community-based organization (CBO) representatives in a historically Latinx immigrant neighborhood that presently is undergoing gentrification. I query respondents' opinions and experiences about their Chicago neighborhood as they remark on the needs and changes they observe. The exploratory research design of this study uncovers the disconnected relationship between organizations' and residents' priorities in urban environments as they each and together work to navigate stark socioeconomic inequalities.

To anticipate my findings, interviews with current and former residents in a predominantly Mexican and Mexican-American neighborhood revealed two principal themes: emphasizing affordability as a central issue for living in the neighborhood, as well as a concern over the loss of their neighborhood place-based identity that results from gentrification. Conversely, CBO representatives in this study distinguished gentrification as a dynamic affecting only Eastlake, and one that is not aligned with their evolving goals. Their focus and strategies are more in line with "thinking beyond the neighborhood", as they referred to it. Consistent with previous literature, organizational leaders emphasize the practical needs of constituents as the primary goal of their organizational service provisions. For the CBOs in this study, the practical needs of constituents were addressed by programs that included English as a Second Language (ESL), Alternative General Equivalency Diploma (GED) courses, and citizenship and immigration services. Nevertheless, because organizations conceptualize their constituents expansively, as the "broader Latino community", the neighborhood changes and concerns of the local residents are viewed as less strategically utile both for the organization as well as for the needs of Latinxs who continue to face deeply embedded structural inequalities.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Centrality of Place

The role of ethnic neighborhoods as a place-based social support system has, for a long time, been an important component of immigrant community life. Ethnic enclaves conceived of as concentrated and spatially identifiable communities have been studied for some time (Portes and Manning 2018; Portes and Rumbaut 1990; Portes and Jensen 1987). As Logan et al. (2002) found in their demographic analysis of ethnic immigrant groups in the New York and Los Angeles metropolitan areas, immigrant communities serve multiple purposes and provide a necessary function for new arrivals. This is particularly evident for people whose customs and languages set them apart from the majority population,

such as with Latinx immigrants (Logan et al. 2002). Ethnic neighborhoods serve to meet the needs of the new population, including "affordable housing, family ties, a familiar culture, and help in finding work" (Logan et al. 2002, p. 299). That is, for new Americans, these neighborhoods are essential in their search for quality of life in the city. This phenomenon is accentuated for low-income communities, as researchers have pointed out that neighborhoods, especially for low-income populations, serve as networks of mutual aid for community members (Kohn 2013).

The importance of 'place' in urban environments cannot be overstated, especially in the "city of neighborhoods", as Chicago has often been called (Taylor 2002). In fact, as Betancur (2011) found in his study, based on 10 years of qualitative interview and observational data, Latinx neighborhoods in Chicago provided significant place-based supports in that they relied on "social fabrics" that were created based on neighborhood localization. In general, social fabrics were created in shared environments and included the development of relationships based on shared values and shared place-based identity (Betancur 2011, p. 386). Latinx neighborhoods, because of their largely working-class status, might rely more heavily on "elaborate place-based economies of exchange and reciprocity that help them to satisfy needs and wants outside the market along with place-based networks [and] institutions [. . .] that often make up for limited exchange values and power" (Betancur 2011, p. 386).

Ethnic neighborhoods are not only central to how immigrants organize their social and economic lives, but they also represent spaces where, in creating opportunities for survival, immigrants also physically and symbolically modify the built environment to create a sense of community. As Krase and Hum (2007) find in their comparative analysis of immigrant communities in New York City and Rome, "the ability to define neighborhood spaces and boundaries is critical in community building" (p. 99). Thus, the role of territorial neighborhoods in immigrants' sense of community and identity under the conditions of gentrification is a clear avenue of inquiry. Considering the insights the cited authors provide, my analysis here explores the perceptions around gentrification within a neighborhood, including their community organizations and residents.

2.2. Gentrification and Displacement

Researchers have identified the detrimental effects of gentrification on long-term and, specifically, on low-income residents[2] (Born et al. 2021; Gainza 2017; Lees 2008, 2016; Twigge-Moleccey 2014; Kohn 2013; Betancur 2011; Glynn 2008; Martin 2007). Perhaps redounding the pernicious nature of gentrification processes, scholars have observed that low-income residents, most usually renters, are the most vulnerable to displacement and have the least to gain from the rising property value in areas undergoing gentrification (Gainza 2017; Langegger 2016; Shaw and Hagemans 2015; Goetz 2011; Moore 2009; Lees 2008; Boyd 2007; Newman and Wyly 2006; Davidson and Lees 2005; Wyly and Hammel 2004; Atkinson 2000, 2002). As Kohn (2013) concluded, "residential displacement is the most serious harm since it distributes the cost of neighborhood transition to people who are not responsible for the change" (p. 308).

In addition to residential displacement, researchers have also recognized how gentrification could result in a sense of *symbolic* erasure from the local historical memory of a place. In a study of Latino neighborhoods in California that underwent gentrification in the 1990s–2000s, Mirabal (2009) writes that, unlike the curated landmarks remembering important moments and historical contributions of previous generations of residents, "there is no place for remembering the recently displaced and excluded", namely, Latinx immigrant residents (p. 30). Mirabal's work notwithstanding, the examination of Latinxs' experiences with displacement remains a generally understudied area of research.

One such major study on a Latinx neighborhood examined the experiences of Puerto Ricans and Mexicans in East Harlem, New York. In their analysis, Dávila (2004) found that Latino culture was operationalized in ways that both facilitated and contested development efforts. Importantly, neighborhood residents of Mexican origin, likely due to their

undocumented status, were especially at-risk of residential displacement as gentrification made the neighborhood increasingly unaffordable. Focusing on the social displacement among diverse Latinxs groups in Chicago, Betancur (2011) observed that gentrification had negative impacts on former residents because it resulted in a loss of valuable social networks and relationships. Vulnerable populations, including low-income long-term residents, lost many of the resources that were anchored in localized neighborhood-based networks when they were forced to relocate. This inhibited the social stability of displaced residents and subsequently limited their prospects for an improved quality of life.

A number of studies have examined the experiences of Puerto Ricans in Chicago related to the gentrification of the northwest side of the city (Cruz and Kears 2019; Garcia and Rúa 2018; Pérez 2004; Alicea 2001; Ramos-Zayas 2001). Reflecting on the experiences of displaced Puerto Rican families whose neighborhood roots dated back to the 1960s, Alicea (2001) found that they were exposed to continuous acts of subtle and overt discrimination from the new, middle-class White families. Carefully documenting the economic and emotional consequences of gentrification, the author depicted how the long history of Puerto Rican immigration into the area had been erased by ongoing changes to the physical and cultural landscape, all marked with economic and racial overtones (Alicea 2001). Most recently, Garcia and Rúa (2018) found that Puerto Rican older residents, while able to prevent becoming priced-out—as often happens with low-income renters of urban areas that become gentrified—were unable to find a sense of belonging in their neighborhood given all of the new residents and businesses.

Yet, despite the mounting evidence documenting the negative impacts of gentrification and associated costs to long-term residents, little research has explored the wide range of perspectives that distinct Latinx groups hold about gentrification. Fewer have explicitly examined the perspectives of Latinx community members in a historically and predominantly Mexican-American neighborhood. This limitation in prior research suggests that further investigation is needed to describe how Mexican-American residents interpret and understand the neighborhood-wide shifts associated with gentrification in Chicago[3].

2.3. Community-Based Organizations and Latinx Neighborhoods

A review of the literature on CBOs in Latinx communities reveals that much of the existing scholarship has focused on the role that organizations serve in promoting improvements in health-oriented practices and policy interventions (Cartujano-Barrera et al. 2021; Rusch et al. 2015; Langellier et al. 2014; López-Cevallos et al. 2013; Twombly et al. 2012; O'Niell et al. 2008; Singer et al. 1990). In another thread of work, researchers have examined the interconnected nature of elite Latinx leaders in Latino advocacy organizations that focus on issues such as academic scholarships and various professional mentorship opportunities where Latinxs are underrepresented (Perez and Murray 2016). Similarly, other works have explored the rise of Latinxs in philanthropic efforts often in the form of privately funded organizations that support Latinx-focused education and entrepreneurial initiatives (Agius Vallejo 2012, 2013). This newer line of research has focused primarily on national policy- and advocacy-oriented nonprofits, suggesting that exploring the perspectives and orientations of direct-service community-based Latinx CBOs is an important next step in scholarship.

Underscoring why analysts should look at local organizations, Marwell (2004, 2007) found that CBOs served as gatekeepers for resources between multiple fields, including the city-wide private and public sectors and local neighborhood residents—most often the urban poor and socially segregated residents of cities. These resources included government agencies located in neighborhoods, as well as other institutions such as hospitals, schools, and universities, that are often located within or very near a local service area, usually the neighborhood. In many ways, the operations of CBOs can influence the wellbeing of a neighborhood. For example, in his work on violence in Chicago, Vargas (2016) found that organizations served as necessary intermediaries between community members, local gangs, politicians, and police in the South Lawndale community of Chicago. Indeed, research that has broadly examined the role of community organizations in developing

affordable housing in a wide range of neighborhoods has confirmed the importance of organizations for improving the conditions of marginalized communities. Another study based on survey data revealed that affordable housing development initiatives were most effective when combined with local grassroots organizing efforts led by CBOs (Melendez and Servon 2007). Together, this line of research emphasizes the continued importance of community-based organizations within predominantly Latinx neighborhoods.

Significantly, limited research has examined how local organizations in predominantly Latinx neighborhoods in Chicago perceive and approach the effects of gentrification. In some cases, community-based efforts have led to organizing around the challenges associated with gentrification for long-term residents. For instance, in their qualitative examination of community responses to gentrification in Humboldt Park, Chicago, Flores-Gonzales (2001) documented the efforts of local organizers to demarcate the historically Puerto Rican neighborhood with symbols that represented physical and geographic anchor points in the form of neighborhood gateways in the form of large metal Puerto Rican flags overarching the neighborhood's main throughway. Another analysis of the same neighborhood observed that these symbols were meant to serve as a symbolic place-marker for the Puerto Rican community of Chicago and to create a sense of cultural belonging in direct contestation to the aggressive gentrification and displacement the community experienced (Garcia 2018). While Flores-Gonzales' and Garcia's examples may highlight many parallels with other Latinx neighborhoods in Chicago, the emphasis on Puerto Rican cultural identity is distinct from the approach taken by organizations in Eastlake, a primarily Mexican-American neighborhood, as demonstrated below. The present study complements prior work by exploring the responses to gentrification in a neighborhood where Mexican-Americans comprise a large share of the Latinx residents.

3. The Research Site

Chicago is comprised of 77 community areas, 21 of which have large concentrations of Latinxs. Eight of these community areas have a Latinx population of greater than 50 percent, many of which face significant challenges (Acosta-Córdova 2017). Compared to black and White Chicagoans, Latinxs have lower levels of educational attainment. As of 2016, 15.7 percent of Latinxs age 25 and over had a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 21.3 percent of black and 62.7 percent of White Chicagoans (Acosta-Córdova 2017). Compared to the total population of Chicago, where 22 percent of households have incomes that place them below the poverty line, 24 percent of Latinx households live below the poverty line. Additionally, Latinxs tend to be concentrated in low-paying manufacturing and service industries. Furthering inequitable conditions for Chicago Latinxs, wealth-building activities have been further set back by lower rates of homeownership and higher rates of home foreclosures when compared to other Chicagoans (Acosta-Córdova 2017). This is likely reflected in the fact that Latinx household incomes were also found to be $33,120 less than White household incomes in the city (Acosta-Córdova 2017).

Eastlake[4] is a predominantly Latinx and immigrant neighborhood in Chicago. Throughout the better part of a century, the neighborhood has been home to the city's immigrant and working-class Latinx population of the city. Like other neighborhoods throughout Chicago, Eastlake has served as a major port of entry for Mexican immigrants (Arredondo 2008; Paral et al. 2004; Casuso and Camacho 1995). Though it presently remains majority Latinx, this population has substantially decreased in the last 20 years, giving way to a growing middle-class White population. Consistent with processes associated with gentrification, it has also seen a sharp increase in property values, owner-occupancy rates, and average rental costs, especially in the census tracts closest to the Central Business District (U.S. Census 2000). As Table 1 illustrates, between 2000 and 2019, the population of the neighborhood decreased by about 9000 from about 44,000 to 33,000, pointing to a decreased overcrowding of the housing market. During the same period, the percentage of non-Hispanic Whites in the area increased from approximately 8 percent to nearly 20 percent. Conversely, the percent of Latinxs residing in the area dropped significantly from

about 89% down to 70%. Similarly, the portion of foreign-born population decreased starkly from 49 to 31 percent. These characteristics, combined with commentary from respondents, indicate that Eastlake is experiencing gentrification.

Table 1. Key Neighborhood Characteristics, 2000–2019.

	2000	2006–2010	2015–2019
	Percent	Percent	Percent
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	88.9	82.2	70.3
Non-Hispanic White	8.1	13.4	20.9
Other racial and ethnic groups	3	4.5	8.8
Foreign-born	49.1	45.8	31.7
Total population	44,000	39,000	33,000

Source: 2000 Census; 2006–2010 and 2015–2019 American Community Survey five-year estimates.

4. Data and Methods

Data for this study are based on semistructured in-person interviews with twelve residents and thirteen CBO representatives. On average, interviews ranged from 70–90 min in length and took place in the CBO office or, in the case of residents, in their homes. Residents were selected using a convenience sampling method (Creswell 2009) seeking CBO representatives and residents who worked and/or lived in Eastlake. Given the exploratory study design about respondents' perspectives and concerns surrounding gentrification, the sampling approach also followed a "theoretical sampling strategy" (Bowen 2008). Within this strategy, a researcher seeks to achieve "sampling adequacy" based on the appropriateness of participants who have a knowledge of the research topic (Bowen 2008). Within the case of Eastlake, the theoretically relevant sample included long-term residents and community organization representatives that worked in the neighborhood. A theoretical sampling strategy is contrasted with strategies for which representativeness or generalizability, and therefore sample size, are critical; this would be incompatible with an exploratory research design and was not the goal of this study.

Respondents were recruited by contacting three CBOs located in the Eastlake neighborhood via the email addresses listed on their websites. The first two organizations that responded became the two cases selected for the study. These two organizations have been given the pseudonyms "Esperanza House" and "Proyecto Eastlake". After initial interviews with representatives, I attended CBO events and programs that residents were likely to attend and asked for volunteers. These volunteers constituted the final pool of resident respondents.

CBO representatives included one executive director, program directors, and coordinators that managed a variety of projects and organizational initiatives. Similarly, in order to assess potentially distinct viewpoints, I interviewed both current and former residents. Five out of twelve resident respondents who were interviewed had recently moved out of Eastlake within the last year. All respondents identified as Latinx and several of the residents were recent immigrants from Latin America (having immigrated within the last 10–20 years). Respondents' ages ranged from 25–65, and thirteen of the respondents were women. All resident respondents had participated in programs offered through one of the CBOs such as English as a Second Language (ESL) or Alternative General Equivalency Diploma (GED) courses. Residents had lived in the neighborhood for a median of 15 years or since having moved to the U.S.

Interview question topics included the residents' ongoing concerns about their neighborhood, whether they had observed any changes in their neighborhood, and what their perceptions were about such changes. I also asked respondents about their views regarding local community organizations and the services they offered. Questions for community organization representatives included topics such as whether they had recognized any changes in the neighborhood and what their perceptions were about such changes. I asked organization representatives questions about the local issues they saw as most pressing

and whether they had observed any recent changes within their organization. I also asked about their view of their organization's goals and initiatives and their importance. Finally, I asked about what they believed their constituents' needs were and how their organization addressed those needs. Initially, I expected that community organization representatives' and residents' perspectives regarding neighborhood concerns to be the same, if not at least aligned. Eight out of twenty-one interviews were conducted in Spanish, and the remaining interviews were conducted in English. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Once transcribed, interviews conducted in Spanish were translated into English.

Following a thematic analysis approach (Boyatzis 1998), I began coding procedures by identifying broad patterns in the experiences and responses of the two groups (residents and representatives together), then by isolating themes that emerged consistently within each of the interview groups separately. As with inductive analysis, I developed themes from "the bottom up" (Creswell 2009, p. 174) and then worked iteratively back and forth between the database and emergent themes to develop focused codes. These codes were checked and refined for reliability using a second coder (Bowen 2008; Boyatzis 1998; Creswell 2009). For both residents and CBO representatives, I focused primarily on the explanatory themes that most accurately and insightfully described the shared "participants' meanings" surrounding neighborhood dynamics, changes, and respondent experiences with the neighborhood (Creswell 2009, p. 175). The findings that are reported as a result of these procedures then, reflect what Lofland et al. (2006) describe as "theoretical candor" in that they are the result of an inductive analysis that best represented the data as well as the "particularity" of the respondents and sites herein studied (Creswell 2009).

5. Findings

Four central themes emerged from my analysis of community organization and resident views of the gentrification of their neighborhood. First, I found that a majority of residents' concerns were centered closely around the lack of quality, affordable housing in addition to the ongoing adverse impacts that are associated with neighborhood gentrification. This is significant because, as I demonstrate below, respondents' discussions of neighborhood challenges were tacit, understanding gentrification more through the lens of neighborhood change and the challenges they encountered in their lives. In other words, gentrification set the conditions of the community under which perceptions took form. Second, respondents lamented the loss of the neighborhood given the cultural and ethnic pride represented in their neighborhood's historical identity. The symbolic and physical displacement that long-term residents experienced then was meaningful because of the vital role that the physical place served in their personal social identities. At the same time, I found that community-based organization representatives and leaders referred to the needs of the Latinx population as guiding their program goals and initiatives. Finally, organizational representatives viewed the needs of their constituents broadly, insofar as socioeconomic barriers disparately impact Latinxs, as opposed to being guided by the needs of the residents located in the geographical neighborhood in which they were based. I present each theme below, beginning with responses from current and former long-term residents, followed by responses from community organization representatives, and then a discussion of the implications associated with these findings.

5.1. Resident Concerns about Gentrification: Affordability and Displacement

When I asked residents about what changes they observe taking place in the neighborhood, they were quick to describe the changes surrounding the gentrification of the Eastlake neighborhood. Residents generally recognized that affordability factors into their decision-making process when it comes to their residential choices. Alejandra, who lived in Eastlake for 10 years before moving, recognized that there were significant changes going on in the neighborhood, especially in terms of affordability to live in the area and quality of available housing:

> There are a lot of people leaving that area; it's changing. They were remodeling all the areas near (an intersection located in Eastlake). There were a lot of White people moving in . . . and new condominiums going up. So, the reason that we left that place is because they wanted to increase the rent. They were increasing our rent and the apartment remained the same. *How could we pay more and more and the apartment remain the same?*

In her view, many residents probably left Eastlake because of a ripple effect associated with new development. Landlords raised Alejandra's rent but not the *quality* of their rental unit, causing her to look elsewhere for more affordable housing. For Alejandra, the push factor in her moving away was simple. The ongoing changes in the neighborhood effectively made the neighborhood unaffordable. Some residents were aware that changes were occurring in the neighborhood and had mixed feelings about it. For example, Maribel made her concerns about the neighborhood clear, also tying them back to her previous comments about neighborhood safety:

> I think it's fine that they fix up homes. If someone is going to get charged a rent, the houses should be well-maintained; that the heat works, the windows are good, etc. And aside from that, it should be an area that's safe. The houses could be great and beautiful from the inside but if the neighborhood is dangerous, then it's not a good area to live in.

Affordability was important for Maribel, but, in her judgment, if the cost of living rises in the area, then so too should the expectation of safety as well as the quality of the housing unit. Residents were also highly aware of the implications of rising rental prices. When probed about the changes that are taking place in the neighborhood, Domingo responded with a number of concerns that were closely linked to issues surrounding the decreasing affordability of the neighborhood, including a loss of neighborhood identity and social support. He said:

> There are communities who come to the U.S., like for example, in Chinatown. There, they put up their signs and protect and maintain their community more than we do—they are more united than we are. They help each other. Here, when the houses became valuable, many people began to sell their homes because they really couldn't afford it anymore. They sell to buy somewhere else. And so, (White) Americans would buy them and make condominiums. I'm not in agreement with that. *Because this is an area where immigrants have lived and that's how we should have kept it. That's what made this area known.*

Domingo's observations point to the destabilizing of dynamics within the neighborhood that could lead to a lack of mutual support among neighborhood residents as a consequence of an increasingly unaffordable housing market. Gentrification has also caused changes in the symbols that are represented throughout the neighborhood. Whereas many signs are posted by businesses in English and Mandarin in Chinatown, respondents thought Spanish was used less frequently in Eastlake. As a result, Domingo believes the neighborhood has lost its identity as a Latinx immigrant neighborhood largely due to gentrification.

Along the same lines, Josue, who has participated in various programs at Esperanza House for the last 14 years, explained that his concern stems from what appears to him to be an injustice to the long-term Mexican-American residents of the area while the neighborhood is undergoing gentrification. For Josue, a loss of neighborhood identity and physical displacement are the result of inadequate community leadership. He explained:

> Now Eastlake is being invaded, and people are being removed, and there was no help from anyone to protect us from that. *It could be said that here was the heart of Mexicans.* And then, I think that we needed more support from those that represent us, and protection from things that will cause more harm than good. When those people get here, they are going to raise taxes and remove *all* of us.

When I got to this area, it was worthless. And the people here worked to make it something. It was *of* our people. I think it's very sad. We are being moved out by a system that we don't understand. And they move us out whenever. Our representatives should have protected us better. They should have warned us. They should have helped us.

For Josue, there are long-term consequences to the gentrification of Eastlake. For him, the changes the neighborhood is experiencing also meant that his community was subject to displacement by higher-income White "invaders". He concluded there is little political and community leadership that effectively addressed the concerns of residents. For him, the neighborhood belonged to the people who lead its initial development and improvement. In this case, he believed that to be the Latinx population of the neighborhood. The immigrant history and cultural identity that the community has maintained over the years, should be preserved and protected by those representing and leading the neighborhood. Interrogating who really has a "right to the neighborhood", Francisco argued that the control over redevelopment was being unfairly controlled by outside stakeholders rather than the long-term residents of Eastlake. Clearly, the loss of neighborhood identity in addition to the looming physical and symbolic displacement of long-term ethnic residents were central concerns for residents.

Altogether, these data suggested that gentrification is interlinked with other resident concerns, such as the availability of affordable housing and the expectation of having the opportunity to live in a safe neighborhood. Based on their experiences, residents felt that the rising cost of living in Eastlake sometimes outweighed the benefits, given the low quality of housing and persisting crime and violence, in tandem with the rising costs of living in the area. Ultimately, long-term residents also emphasized feelings of anger and resentment over the loss of their neighborhood identity that would result from the widespread displacement of long-term Latinx immigrant residents. It is important to note that residents' narratives about the neighborhood were accompanied by elevated emotionality during interviews, suggesting that these issues were the most personally relevant to respondents.

5.2. CBOs in the Context of Expanding Structural Inequity in Chicago

I asked organization representatives questions about the local issues they viewed as most pressing, any changes they have observed within their organization, and their understanding of the needs of their constituents. One predominant theme that emerged was that CBO representatives believed that they were addressing the shared structural disadvantages experienced by the population they serve. CBO representatives expressed that their organizational initiatives are in direct relation to the persisting economic challenges encountered by a growing number of working-class and Latinx Chicagoans. Thus, while local long-term Eastlake residents viewed crime, safety, affordability, and gentrification as the primary concerns, CBO representatives understood their role as addressing the broad-scale and expanded racial and economic inequities faced by Latinxs across the region.

One economic barrier that Latinx Chicagoans encountered was directly related to the foreclosure crisis that affected many Americans beginning in 2008 and that had long-lasting repercussions. For example, Cruz, a Proyecto Eastlake employee, coordinated a number of housing-related initiatives meant to assist constituents who may be close to losing their home. Cruz had worked in Eastlake for the last eight years. He remarked that one of the programs that has noted rapid growth over time:

We opened services over in (a suburb of Chicago). That's new. We were seeing this wave of foreclosures. People coming in for help to save their homes. And it's not just a metropolitan problem. The suburbs were hit very hard. And we were realizing that a lot of people were traveling to get our services and that we needed to increase our capacity. We found a good partner organization (in a suburb). They were able to let us have some space in their building; we were able to open there and to help the people in that area.

In Cruz's viewpoint, as organizations have grown, so has their ability to serve more people who need their services. At base, the organization sought to address the growing need for foreclosure assistance among Latinxs across the region. Widespread economic disadvantages that were exacerbated beginning in the foreclosure crisis disproportionately affected a number of working-class communities of color, including Latinx Chicagoans (Martinez 2009). This likely compelled the organization to address these expanding inequalities through their service provisions by expanding their service area to include suburbs.

In general, respondents discussed their CBO's mission-orientation as attempting to address many of the challenges that are associated with poverty. For example, in an interview with Paola who has worked at Esperanza House for over 10 years and lives nearby, she highlighted the challenges shared by many immigrants who are low-income. She described the constituents her organization served through the English language and literacy programs she managed:

> There are entire families that are illiterate. We have people come from all these places in the far suburbs with their kids, after a long day of work. At times, they cannot make it all the way to Chicago due to economic and time constraints on them. Many of them are not able to make it consistently to classes in Eastlake; they seek us out to find out if there is anything closer to them in their towns or suburbs.

As she described, the resources Esperanza House offered were important enough that people from outside the neighborhood traveled to Eastlake to participate in them. Even still, she acknowledged, since many people who were illiterate were also likely to have limited economic opportunities, they were unable to travel to Eastlake. As a result, it is likely that organizations sought ways to expand their services outside of the neighborhood in order to address these growing inequities as experienced by Latinxs.

The unprecedented needs of the region's Latinx residents also led to increased expansion in the organization through an addition to their services and programs that did not previously exist. Serena, who joined the Proyecto Eastlake organization two years ago, noted:

> I've seen an enormous growth with our organization. We have multiple offices with new services. We have a site downtown and several here in the neighborhood. We also have new programs—daycare, women's association, youth programs—and none of this was here before. Now they are.

Proyecto Eastlake began providing services all across the city, in part by opening a centrally located satellite office in downtown Chicago. By adding more services to their portfolio, the organization is able to support the growing Latinx population of Chicago. Similarly, Lucio noted that he expects Esperanza House to open offices outside of the neighborhood, in fact, outside of Chicago, in surrounding suburbs. Their strategy, he explained, is to maintain their current set of services but to expand their service area. He said,

> What we can do is set up franchises in other communities with new partners. With what we've already done, we can go provide those services elsewhere; there's tremendous potential to do more there.

As Esperanza House continues to open more offices to expand its reach, the number of people it is able to serve will also grow. Both organizations sought to expand their organizational reach; Proyecto Eastlake by increasing the number and types of services they provide, and Esperanza House by expanding the number of offices they manage in order to reach more potential constituents.

Undoubtedly, the services that the organizations provided were vital to the quality of life of many Latinxs across Chicago. Focusing on community organizing, workforce development in the form of trade training programs, ESL and GED courses, as well as citizenship and immigration services, community organizations bore a heavy burden. As

a result, attempting to meet the needs of their constituents at both Esperanza House and Proyecto Eastlake was guided by the many structural inequities faced by Latinxs. In the context of ongoing concerns around gentrification, Latinx disadvantages within the neighborhood manifested via localized housing and crime-related issues. As I illustrate below, a corollary finding was that community-based organization representatives described their target constituency in terms of a city-wide or regional Latino panethnicity, rather than by the neighborhood in which they are based.

5.3. Beyond Neighborhoods: CBOs' Ethnic Concepts of Community

Organization representatives conceptualized the boundaries of where their target constituents began and ended differently than perhaps Eastlake residents believed. I found that CBOs did not define their constituency in neighborhood terms. This is contrary to what previous scholarship has suggested (Marwell 2004, 2007) in that their services were targeted across the city. In other words, CBO leaders viewed their constituency as *panethnically based*, rather than in terms of the local neighborhood residents. For example, associating the large size of Proyecto Eastlake with their intended constituency, Guillermo clarified that the organization does not seek to address any single neighborhood:

> Although we work with certain segments of the population, we're a larger organization. When we talk about having or starting a program, we're talking about a program that may be open to this side of Chicago. It's not, you know, just working with Eastlake. I think we're kind of past that. *We're thinking beyond the neighborhood, and we're thinking city-wide—the Latinos of Chicago is who we're serving.* (Italics added)

In this way, the goal of Proyecto Eastlake was as much about addressing the needs that Latinxs have in relation to their structural social positioning (i.e., poverty, literacy, English language fluency, etc.) and much less about the local issues facing the neighborhood (i.e., safety, affordability, displacement, etc.), though we may note that the two are structurally linked. While several CBO representatives acknowledged that the local neighborhood is not considered their target constituency, the executive director of Esperanza House took this idea a step further and suggested that the organization believed that Latinx coethnics were their primary constituency. Tomás framed his perspective in this way:

> It depends on how you define the "local community". Everybody defines it a little differently. If you define the local community as Eastlake, then, no. The people that come in to use our programs are from *the Latino community*. So, we end up largely serving Eastlake and the people around the greater area. And the reason that our service area is wider is because *Latinos are our community*, right? So, we don't like community in that kind of sense, we look at community as one that we are *creating among Latinos.* (Italics added)

According to Tomás, the organization created its community, suggesting that its constituency was formed by those that participate in the organization's programs. From his position, defining community in broader terms encompasses not only Latinxs from Eastlake but also those from outside of the city. Similarly, still another Proyecto Eastlake leader, Carmen, summarized her organization's mission statement in this way: "We do what is possible to get organizations from the area and from outside of the neighborhood to help our people, *nuestra gente Latina* (our Latinx community)". For Carmen, then, the community that the organization seeks to serve is *the Latinx community* of Chicago. Importantly, she also pointed to the fact that due to the depth of inequality that Latinxs confront in Chicago, Proyecto Eastlake sought to coordinate between organizations and re-direct resources to the needy members of the Latinx community. Taken together, the data presented in this section depicted how organization representatives described their organization and their constituencies as city- and regionally situated and as panethnically based.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

Interviews with residents suggested that the relationship between CBOs located in the neighborhood and their inhabitants is not a place-centered relationship. CBO representatives underscored the value of their programs when they highlighted how they have constituents participate in the services from outside of the city and distant suburbs. This indicated an incongruent relationship between the goals of CBOs and the concerns of their local neighborhood residents. Exacerbating inequalities faced by Latinxs in the Chicago area were met with a broadened conceptualization of the constituencies the organizations attempted to serve. By approaching "community" to mean the Latinx population in the metropolitan region, the organizations were able to address many of the needs of the growing Latinx population of Chicago. At the same time, as demonstrated earlier, residents emphasized concerns that were place-centered and closely related to the dynamics of the quality of life within their neighborhood and under the conditions of gentrification.

It is critical to understand how residents experience the social inequalities associated with poverty while simultaneously witnessing the uneven development of urban residential areas. The purpose of this study was to explore resident and community organization perspectives of their community amid ongoing gentrification. Guiding questions sought to better understand how long-term residents perceive the present needs of the neighborhood, as well as how community-based organization representatives viewed their role in the lives of neighborhood residents. As residents observed, Eastlake underwent several physical and economic developments in their neighborhood that are associated with gentrification. Tensions around the quality of life that are generated by exposure to unaffordability are surfaced when discussing gentrification among residents; "*How could we pay more and more and the apartment remain the same?*" as one resident emphasized. Previous research that centers the views of long-term residents on gentrification has done little to examine their adverse experiences that result from poverty—the inability to afford quality housing as it is tied to their construction of place.

Previous literature has also documented a range of negative outcomes of gentrification generally, namely the multiple forms of displacement of long-term residents (Gainza 2017; Twigge-Moleccey 2014; Kohn 2013; Betancur 2011; Glynn 2008; Martin 2007). Additionally, some have focused on the experiences of Latinx groups (Dávila 2004), mainly Puerto Ricans (Garcia 2018; Garcia and Rúa 2018; Pérez 2004; Alicea 2001; Flores-Gonzales 2001; Ramos-Zayas 2001). I found that Eastlake residents were chiefly worried about the decreasing affordability of their neighborhood but also the forthcoming loss of their neighborhood's Latinx identity. In this article, the physical place in the form of the neighborhood was shown to be central to residents' discussion of both ethnic identity and understanding of gentrification processes. Neighborhood residents expressed a profound sense of loss regarding their neighborhood's longstanding Latinx immigrant identity. Specifically, residents lamented that the historically Latinx immigrant population has not been able to maintain its ownership—vis-á-vis the neighborhood's identity—over the community area, largely due to gentrification pressures.

However, a centerpiece of this theme also demonstrated that residents' construction of their personal ethnic identity was directly tied to physical place—the identity of the neighborhood, proper. As some of them remarked, oftentimes emotionally, "*it was Mexicans who built this neighborhood up*". For residents, many of whom had lived in the neighborhood for years but were also new Americans, their personal ethnic identity was also attached to the community in which they had made their homes and set roots in the U.S.

This study also explored the standpoint of community organizations in this dynamic environment. The majority of prior research on Latinx-oriented organizations has focused more so on the policy and advocacy work they accomplish (Perez and Murray 2016; Agius Vallejo 2012, 2013; Marwell 2004, 2007) or on how they can support positive health policy interventions (Cartujano-Barrera et al. 2021; Rusch et al. 2015; Langellier et al. 2014; López-Cevallos et al. 2013; Twombly et al. 2012; O'Niell et al. 2008). While this was true

for the organizations included in this study, interview data surfaced another dimension of Latinx organizations: focusing on the role of geography in their mission orientation within the backdrop of gentrification, which often results in the physical displacement of long-term residents.

Organizations' construction of ethnic identity stood in contrast to community residents' understanding of the importance of the neighborhood. While residents discussed structural inequalities surrounding crime and housing concurrently with geo-territorial displacement and consequential loss of the neighborhood's symbolic identity, CBO representatives recognized their role as building community around a shared panethnicity, "*the Latinos of Chicago*", while also addressing the many social inequalities faced by this population. CBOs such as those included in this study are invaluable to low-income populations across the city. This is especially the case as gentrification continues to physically displace vulnerable residents who depend on place-based networks and organizations to provide support for their survival and well-being. As described above, CBOs' services are in such high demand that they are expanding provisions into new municipalities across the region. Working-class Latinxs across Chicago required supports and resources to achieve a higher quality of life, and this was evident in the increasing demand for services that Proyecto Eastlake and Esperanza House observed.

However, for organizations, Chicago was only the setting—an environment in which they continued to combat the profound inequalities that Latinxs encounter, well beyond the boundaries of neighborhoods. For residents, as they describe struggling to navigate life in Eastlake, the neighborhood itself was a dimension of social life in which they attempted to attain a quality of life. The neighborhood itself was at stake, and with it, a part of the cultural identity they had created. While previous research on immigrant neighborhoods emphasizes the social fabric and networks that provide support for residents' transition into a new country, interviews with residents demonstrated a salient relationship with the identity of the neighborhood. Residents' struggle for affordable housing—their actual neighborhood—is rooted in the identities they had forged around the place. Indeed, their struggle for quality of life is locally embedded.

Additional research on both Latinx organizations and urban residents in the context of gentrification is warranted by the findings reported in this article. Future studies may incorporate comprehensive surveying of Latinx-serving organizations across multiple cities to better understand patterns in how gentrification impacts community-based organizing practices. How do organizations manage localized and broad-scale inequalities in an era of accelerated urban development? Similarly, qualitative studies could investigate organizational practices with greater attention paid to the experiences of disadvantaged urban Latinx residents within which their neighborhoods may be becoming an increasingly salient element of their ethnic American identity.

Notes

[1] Throughout this article, I employ a combination of terms for the U.S.-based population group with an ancestral ties to Latin America. I use Latinx when I am referring to the population group in general, consistent with a gender-expansive articulation of the term. However, to remain true to respondents' perspectives, I use often use Latina or Latino if they or the organization they reference uses such terms.

[2] Historically, demographic transitions in neighborhoods have been studied as a matter of "invasion" and "succession", whereby one predominant immigrant group in a neighborhood, after assimilating into the mainstream, gives way to a newer immigrant group. This was an early perspective pioneered by the Chicago School of sociology in the 1920s (see Park et al. 1925). For a detailed discussion on the motivating factors behind contemporary gentrification, see Hyra (2008) comparative analysis of the political and economic contexts for urban renewal policies in Chicago and New York.

3   For a historical treatment of the impacts of gentrification and urban renewal processes on Chicago Latinxs, please see Fernandez (2012) analysis of Mexican and Puerto Rican neighborhoods from the 1950–1980s.

4   In this paper, I employed pseudonyms for respondents, organizations, and the neighborhood studied. Using any of the actual names, combined with the findings reported, would otherwise reveal the identity of any of the interviewees who were guaranteed best efforts of anonymity and confidentiality upon agreement of study participation.

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