

*Unidad en Comunidad:*

The role of Community-Based Organizations in dealing with Gentrification in Chicago's Pilsen and Logan Square neighborhoods.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Public Policy at the University of Chicago.

Preceptor: Natalja Czarnecki

Paper presented to: Chad Broughton

Gabino Sanchez Jr.

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*Thank you to all those who helped me make this project possible, the residents of gentrifying neighborhoods fighting for their homes, and the Chicago neighborhoods that raised me.*

## *Abstract*

With the growing “beautification” and development of Chicago neighborhoods, many communities in the north and west sides have begun to lose their people and identity. This analysis aims to understand how Chicago’s community-based organizations, CBOs, within Logan Square and Pilsen have attempted to combat the effects of gentrification on their neighborhoods. This topic is important to consider in order to understand how different organizations have approached the issues of displacement and identity-loss and what efforts they have made in order to mitigate, combat, or reverse them. By utilizing a mixed-methods approach, I find that the role of a CBO is to provide residents with goods and services they cannot get otherwise, keeping residents informed on the on-goings of their neighborhoods, and creating a space where residents can not only express their opinions on those changes but also learn how to best navigate around them. Thus, it is recommended that local governments work closer with CBOs in order to support their work and to gain a deeper understanding of the concerns of the residents.

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*Introduction*

If you were to spend an afternoon in Pilsen, your eyes would be drawn to the colorful murals on every street depicting historical Latino figures. You would hear the bells of the *paleteros* selling popsicles to children and the *chisme* being shared by the storefronts. Spanish is the language of the community, English is only used when needed. You would catch the sweet smell of freshly-made *aguas frescas* accompanied with tacos. You would almost taste the pan dulce being made at the local *panaderia*. Walking through the neighborhood is being immersed in Latin American culture, *Mexicanidad* to be exact. Or at least it used to be.

Over recent decades, the term gentrification has been used to describe the drastic economic and structural change to a neighborhood. Another popular term that is sometimes used interchangeably with gentrification is redevelopment, which can be defined as “changes to a community done to conform to the middle-class and middle-class customs.” Gentrification has advanced to change many different neighborhoods in the city of Chicago, IL. Neighborhoods that have been affected by gentrification include –but are in no way limited to– Lincoln Park, Buck Town, Wicker Park, West Town, and Albany Park (Betancur, 2005). These neighborhoods, and many more, have been dramatically transformed in the way they look like and in what and who they are composed of. This includes the types of retail options that are in the neighborhood such as bars, coffee shops, grocery stores, dining places, etc. On the other hand, this also includes a rise in the prices for services and goods that one can get in the

community. Over recent years, gentrification has affected the neighborhoods of Logan Square and Pilsen in drastically different ways – gentrification has affected each neighborhood so differently that the dissimilarities are so apparent that one can walk through each neighborhood and visibly see how they have reacted to gentrification. Although the neighborhoods have been experiencing gentrification semi-simultaneously, the tolls their communities have taken are not matched. This study will focus on these differences and specifically, how the community-based organizations within each community have played a role in combatting gentrification and alleviating its effects.

Within Logan Square and Pilsen lie community-based organizations and social service organizations, such as Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA), We Are Logan Square, also known as Somos Logan Square, The Resurrection Project, Pilsen Alliance, etc. All of these organizations aim to serve and protect the health of the community and those who reside inside it. For the most part, the organizations are not supportive of in-movers attempting to take property from others in their communities for self-gain. Firstly, they fear that redevelopment and gentrification would take away opportunities and resources available to the community members. They fear that with the higher income of new residents and businesses of higher-ends which cause the prices of property, food, rent, and other resources to rise, they will drive out all that already exists in their communities (Wilson & Grammenos, 2005). What is already standing would not be able to compete with the new, “fancier” establishments and would also not be able to afford to maintain their positions with increased rent. This includes the spaces the businesses are in as well as the houses and apartments the business owners reside in.

Another threat that gentrification poses on communities is taking away its identity. Logan Square and Pilsen are predominantly Mexican and Mexican-American communities and have long been proud to be so. Pop-up bars, coffee shops, art studios, and galleries tend to differ in the types of businesses offered in the communities. There have been many cases where these new shops take the place of locally-owned businesses that have stood in the community for years and have made a reputation for themselves. *Eloteros*, *paleteros*, and *tamaleros*, (vendors who sell prepared corn, popsicles, and tamales on the streets) all begin to disappear as businesses like Starbucks, Dunkin' Donuts, and other trendy coffee shops begin to move into their neighborhood. The street vendors, who typically sell in their own communities, lose their businesses to upscale developers and in-movers willing to pay higher prices for their current locations. Given that these posts play an important role in creating the identity of the community and its members, their absences signify a change of direction for the neighborhood, something that some its residents may not be ready for or want. Therefore, gentrification poses a threat to the identity of the communities in which it occurs.

The stark differences in ideas and sympathies towards gentrification within neighborhoods have caused there to be conflicts between those that wish to move into neighborhoods and redevelop them, the community-based organizations, and residents of the community. In the eyes of the developers, their work is beautifying the neighborhood: making it safer, cleaner, and an overall happier place (Wilson, Wouters, & Grammenos, 2004). Developers wish to revamp previously thriving neighborhoods in order to get them back to their previously lifeful states. Another common sentiment among in-movers is saving neighborhoods from being 'ghetto', 'crime-ridden', and 'dirty', and 'poor' and turn them into

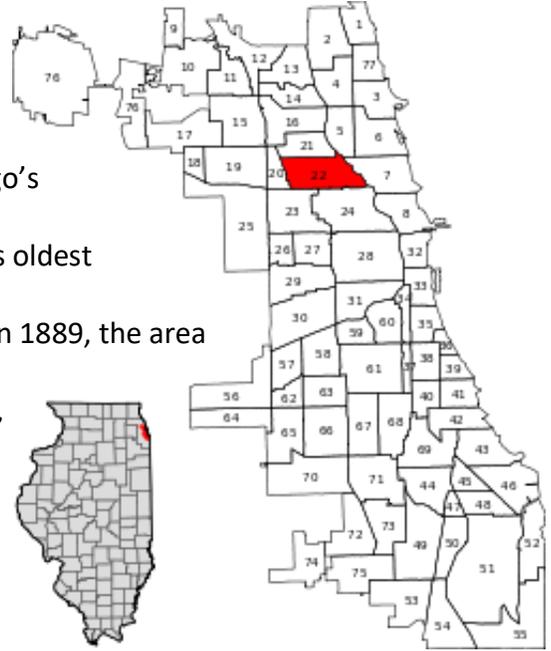
rich, gang-free, clean, and booming communities (Wilson, Wouters, & Grammenos, 2004). This idea of turning 'old' neighborhoods to 'new' communities is a driving force that pushes developers to look at Chicago neighborhoods with an aim of changing them, as well the motive for monetary gain.

Differences in the amount of community involvement between the social organizations in Logan Square and in Pilsen also differ by community. There is a clear difference in how many and how much the community members are involved in the organizations and in how influential they are in their respective neighborhoods. Pilsen manages to get more community involvement through its vast array of organizations that they can get involved with. Its organizations appeal to everyone in the community, causing organizations and members to work with each other more in their communal struggles, creating a more unified community than Logan Square. This is not to say, however, that community-based organizations in Logan Square do not create unity within their communities, rather than it does so at a lesser extent than those in Pilsen. It is anticipated, then, that Pilsen is able to resist gentrification longer and more effectively than Logan Square. How organizations do this specifically and how resident reactions differ from those in Logan Square will be further examined in this study. Using a comparative analysis of the two Chicago communities, I will examine how community-based organizations work to channel, reshape, and contest the forces of development and gentrification that primarily affect their vulnerable residents.

## Historical Background

### Logan Square

Community Area 22, the community area that is known as Logan Square, is one of the City of Chicago's 77 city-designed community areas and has been part of Chicago's history for quite some time now, becoming one of the city's oldest neighborhoods ("Logan Square, Chicago", 2019). Founded in 1889, the area was named after John Alexander Logan, a Civil War general, politician, and founder of the nationally-celebrated Memorial Day ("Logan Square Preservation", 2018). The area is located on the northwest side of Chicago and only 5 miles northwest of the downtown Loop. Generally speaking, Logan Square is defined by Diversey Avenue on the north, the Chicago River to the east, the south-most point being Bloomingdale Avenue, and the Metra/Milwaukee District North Line railroad as its west-most area ("Logan Square", 2005). Within the neighborhood is the Logan Square train station of the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) Blue Line train. According to 2015 data, Logan Square is home to approximately 73, 742 residents. The majority of Logan Square's residents identify themselves as Hispanic (46.94%), the second racial majority is White (43.61%). Other racial identities of the neighborhood include Black (4.66%), Asian (2.72%), and those classified under Other (2.06%) ("Community Data Snapshot: Logan Square", 2016).

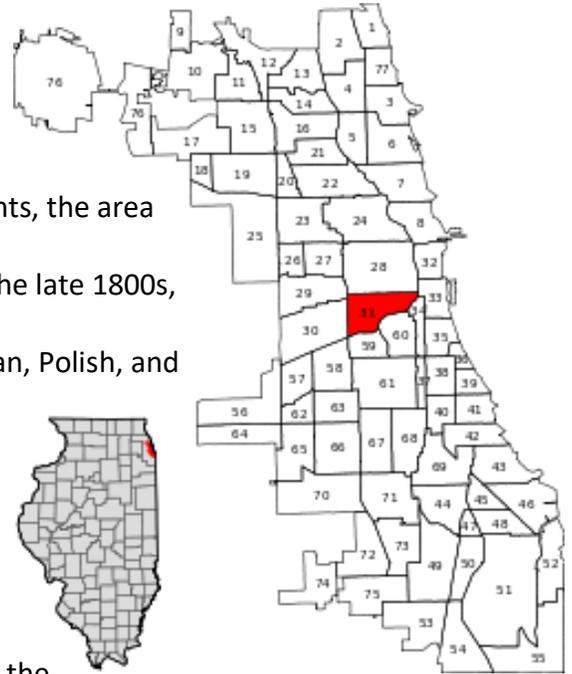


As time passes, new residents enter the neighborhood for many different reasons. One of the main reasons for the influx of new residents is due to the increasing housing costs of

Wicker Park, a nearby neighborhood to the southeast of Logan Square. Logan Square's proximity to the Wicker Park neighborhood and Chicago's downtown and its easily accessible location is also attractive to in-movers. Another aspect of Logan Square that influences their view of the community is its park-like boulevards. The best example of this is at the center of the community: The Illinois Centennial Monument. Constructed in 1915, the monument was designed by Henry Bacon, who is also famous for the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. ("Logan Square Preservation", 2018; "Logan Square, Chicago: About the Neighborhood", 2017). Other neighborhood attractions include the Logan Theater, which was also established in 1915 and continues to deliver a unique and memorable experience to movie-goers ("Logan Square, Chicago: About the Neighborhood", 2017). Logan Square is also home to a strip of famous Christian and Catholic churches along Logan Avenue. Besides what is already in the neighborhood, new establishments include gourmet coffee shops, bookstores, and artisanal cocktail lounges and bars for the modern consumer ("Logan Square, Chicago: About the Neighborhood", 2017). Establishments have started to use ingredients grown by locally-run farmers markets to source their restaurants. In the same vein, local artists' work is showcased in galleries, concerts, and street festivals to promote the newer community identity. All of these amenities combine to create a local-friendly community within Logan Square that is convenient for its current residents and attractive to others outside it.

## Pilsen

Chicago's Pilsen is the largest neighborhood of the Lower West Side, which is the 31<sup>st</sup> of the 77 community areas. Historically a neighborhood of working-class residents, the area became a gateway for people immigrating to Chicago. In the late 1800s, the community area was inhabited by many German, Italian, Polish, and Czech immigrants and their families (Pupovak, 2018). Eventually, Czech immigrants would become the most prominent group in the area and named the district after Plzeň (City of Pilsen), the fourth largest city in what is now the Czech Republic and known for its Pilsner beer (Pupovak, 2018; Gellman, 2005). This, however, did not last long. Due to the labor shortages during and following the first World War, many Mexicans started to settle into Pilsen. This, combined with Chicago's White Flight and the forced migration of Mexicans to Pilsen from the Near West Side to make way for the expansion of the University of Illinois at Chicago campus, Mexican immigrants and their descendants became Pilsen's majority in the 1970s ("Lower West Side, Chicago", 2018). The change of Pilsen's ethnic composition also came with a change of cultural identity as Mexican artists decorated the neighborhood with artwork depicting Mexican art. Currently, it is estimated that the number of residents living in Pilsen is 34,410. Using the Census data of 2010, the racial composition of Pilsen is 13.4% White, 3.2% African American, 1.7% Asian, 1.1% from other



racas (“Lower West Side, Chicago”, 2018). Hispanic or Latino of any race were 80.5% of the population.

For many, the location of Pilsen is a strong asset to the community. It lies three miles southwest of the Chicago Loop, making the downtown area nearby as well as very accessible. For those who drive, the Stevenson Expressway has two exits in Pilsen: one at Damen Avenue and another on Ashland Avenue on the Lower West Side (Pupovak, 2018). The CTA Pink Line conveniently has a stop right in the heart of Pilsen (the 18<sup>th</sup> Street stop), making it easy to get to for commuters. Besides its geolocation and its accessibility, there are many aspects of Pilsen that make it attractive to its current residents and for in-movers. For many years, Pilsen has prided itself for being one of Chicago’s largest Mexican neighborhoods. Due to this, the neighborhood is alive with Mexican culture and food. Within the neighborhood, one can find authentic Mexican food traditional to its roots, *bodegas* that sell Mexican grocery items, *panaderias* selling traditional Mexican pastries, and much more. The neighborhood also serves as a hub for street artists and muralists who use their art to convey Aztec and Mayan traditions (Gellman, 2005). With the migrations of the White middle-class into the neighborhood, Pilsen has experienced the addition of quirky bars and coffee shops to its area. Its areas have also become subject to developers who wish to capitalize on the popularity of the neighborhood and the cheap land it offers. Similar to the experiences had Logan Square, what has always been normal to the current residents of Pilsen is what is attracting in-movers and paradoxically, what is driving the changes in community makeup and identity.

## *Literature Review*

A majority of the existing scholarly literature on gentrification focuses on its effects in different neighborhoods, including both its positive and negative effects. As this paper attempts to cover the role that community-based organizations (CBOs) have in dealing with those effects –particularly the negative effects such as rent increases, forced displacement, higher-end food markets– it is also important to understand how other key players have behaved prior to and in response to pro- and anti-gentrification movements.

### **Gentrification: Tell-Tell Signs**

When research is done on gentrification, it tends to focus on the changes specific to a neighborhood’s residential and business composure as well as its identity. One of the early “tell-tell” signs of a neighborhood undergoing gentrification can be the additions of a coffee shop or a trendy restaurant to the area (Gerdeman, 2018; Fraser, 2013). For example, *Forbes* magazine found that an opening of a Starbucks –or any coffee shop for that matter– is associated with a 0.5% increase in local housing prices (Gerdeman, 2018). Other data have shown that chain stores, bars, and the overall number of new businesses are indicative of a changing neighborhood. Interestingly, the frequency of *Yelp* reviews, an online platform that allows its users to provide customer reviews for businesses and services, is also associated with a gentrifying neighborhood: housing prices increase by 1.4% for every business review in that neighborhood (Gerdeman, 2018). This phenomenon can be explained by the population that uses *Yelp*: those who not only have access to the internet, are capable of using it, but also are reliant on a service like it. Thus, it is important to consider the role that local establishments

have in changing the economic composition of a community as well as the people who reside in those communities.

### **Contesting Ideals**

Other existing scholarly literature focuses on how community members have responded to the effects of gentrification in their neighborhoods. Many of the studies conducted by researchers in geography, environmental studies, geographic information science suggest that most residents in gentrifying neighborhoods are not supportive of the change (Betancur, 2009; Betancur, 2005; Wilson & Grammenos, 2005; Wilson, Wouters, & Grammenos, 2004). However, the researchers do also recognize that some of the residents are supportive of redevelopment as they believe it would bring more businesses and foot traffic to the community, and effectively increasing the dollar circulation within the neighborhood (Betancur, 2005; Wilson & Grammenos, 2005). Property and business owners are put in a situation where they are forced to raise the prices of their services and goods due to two reasons: their property taxes also increase and, business owners specifically, cannot afford to compete with new, flashier businesses so they resort to raising their own prices to keep up with opposing businesses (Garcia, 2016; Betancur, 2005). Many business owners who depend on the increase of wealth in the neighborhood are then caught off-guard when their own business fails and they have to move out of the area (Hyra, 2008). Raising the prices of the goods or services that were offered already can be a risky move as the establishment can lose its current customers who cannot afford the new prices and the goods and services can be too expensive for new customers, therefore losing their clientele altogether. The conflicting viewpoints and actions of the

property owners cause there to be tensions between them and the residents, which in turn makes it difficult to have a united community.

Although there are economic and business opportunities for developers and business owners to 'beautify' a neighborhood, it comes at a cost of changing the identity and the composition of the residents. To some, their local organizations are the only source for them to understand how to navigate around the changes that occur in their neighborhood. Specific to Logan Square and Pilsen, CBOs provide a way for residents to understand the changes by getting through language barriers, by becoming financially competent and able to make decisions that best suit their interests and positions, and CBOs can serve as advisors when making those decisions (Fraser, 2013). Without these, residents are left without any assistance in making decisions that will affect them greatly.

### **Community Involvement**

Professor of Urban Planning and Policy at the University of Illinois at Chicago, John Betancur's 2005 study, *Gentrification before Gentrification? The Plight of Pilsen in Chicago*, examines community trends of communities said to be experiencing gentrification. The goal of the paper is to determine if certain Chicago communities, that were considered to be gentrified, were actually gentrified or not. The paper gives a deep understanding of why Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood was able to become an area of interest, then, how it became a target of redevelopment. Betancur (2005) also highlights where signs of gentrification began in Pilsen, where gentrification was hindered, and how community members have responded to these changes. The paper concludes with the notion that increasing housing prices, and its

effect of forcing residents out of their homes, causes the negative effects of gentrification (price increases, displacement) to occur before the positive effects (influx of money, booming businesses) (Betancur, 2005). This paper is helpful in understanding the role of CBOs in their communities as it speaks to how gentrification affects communities and in some cases, in what order. CBOs can play a major role in their gentrifying neighborhoods if they choose to work towards informing the residents on what is happening to their community. By keeping the inhabitants of the neighborhoods up to date on what is occurring in their neighborhoods, the CBOs are essentially creating informed residents who are aware of any changes, are familiar with moving around those changes to protect themselves and their family, and can become actively involved if need be.

### **Dependencies on Community-based Organizations**

Another topic that is covered widely by existing literature is the importance of community-based organizations and community fabrics in communities that are experiencing gentrification. It has been observed that community-based organizations play many roles in their respective communities, primarily focusing on providing those who are disadvantaged with needs they may have and creating a sense of unity in their neighborhoods (Betancur, 2009). However, although all community members can benefit from community organizations, those who benefit the most from them are residents of lower socioeconomic status (SES) (Hyra, 2008; Betancur, 2005; Wilson & Grammenos, 2005). Residents of lower SES tend to look to these organizations for the services that they offer for opportunities and for satisfaction (Betancur, 2009; Theodore & Martin, 2007). This causes the lower SES residents to become

semi-dependent on CBOs for services, opportunities, and goods and other services that they cannot afford financially, while more affluent residents are not dependent on the organizations because they can afford to receive services elsewhere (Hyra, 2008; Betancur, 2009). This goes to show that residents of lower SES prioritize and value CBOs higher than those of higher socioeconomic status, which also means that CBOs play a vital role for those who live under the threat of displacement since they will be affected the hardest by rent or mortgage increases (Betancur, 2005; Wilson & Grammenos, 2005; Wilson, Wouters, & Grammenos, 2004).

### **CBO-created Spaces**

In order to combat gentrification and its negative effects, community-based organizations have created mental spaces with formed philosophies. CBOs have created spaces where two clear ideas were formed and enforced. The ideas they helped create are of a gentrifying force targeting lower-income residents and a united community standing against gentrification (Wilson, Wouters, & Grammenos, 2004). CBOs create these spaces in order to unify the community members and to put them all against in-movers. The goal of the CBOs is to mobilize the residents to fight the developers and to 'sway merchants to resist ethnic upscaling' (Wilson, Wouters, & Grammenos, 2004, pg. 1186). Another goal that CBOs have is to make residents aware of their oppression and to try to fight their oppressors politically by 'voting unresponsive representatives out of office' (Betancur, 2005, pg. 9) as well as local alderman and other elected representatives (Betancur, 2005). This shows that there are many ways in which CBOs attempt to mobilize the residents in the neighborhoods they are in. Although it may not be the ultimate goal of the organizations, CBOs can create spaces that are 'echo chambers' of

their own beliefs. In doing so, they are creating community members that hold the same political stances as the organizations do. This adds value to this study as it highlights the extent to which CBOs are involved in dealing with the prevention and the effects of gentrification and redevelopment.

## *Methods*

Gentrification, and all of the changes that it brings, has had long-lasting effects in many Chicago neighborhoods. This was the case in West Town, a community in the north-west side of the Loop, prior to 2002. The case of West Town had been a long struggle for people on both sides: those that wanted to see change in the neighborhood and those resisting change. The neighborhood was bitterly split between those who wanted to 'develop and beautify' the community and those who opposed the changes (Betancur, 2002). This issue, however, is not specific to West Town itself as it is seen in other Chicago neighborhoods such as Logan Square and Pilsen.

In order to best investigate the impact of community-based organizations in dealing with gentrifications and its effects, I took a mixed-methods approach with an emphasis on qualitative research methods. The methods that this investigation includes are a historical analysis of each neighborhood, observational data of the communities, and interviews with key stakeholders of the neighborhoods. In the following sections, I will provide justification for each of the methods while also acknowledging their limitations.

### **Historical Analysis**

As this research aims to focus on the role that community-based organizations have on preventing and mitigating the effects of gentrification in their communities, quantitative data will be used in order to understand the historical background needed to understand the topic fully. Specifically, I looked at the differences in neighborhood composition of the two communities in 2000 and the most recent data of 2010. This section included statistics on the

Latino and Hispanic populations in each area, amenities that can be found within each neighborhood, and aspects of the communities that may be attractive to outsiders. This historical background is important in understanding the changes that have occurred most recently in the communities due to redevelopment and to draw a reasonable comparison of the two. The historical analysis data was collected from Census data and similar databases made available to the public. Limitations of conducting a historical analysis are the data not fully representing the population due to sampling error as well as the possibility that they did not represent the population accurately due to dishonest responses.

### **Observational data**

For each neighborhood, it is important to understand what makes up the identity and culture they have. In order to understand this, I sought out to understand the cultures of each neighborhood by directly observing it. The data that I kept an eye for were objects, amenities, and characteristics of Logan Square and Pilsen that make up its identity. Given that both communities have predominantly Mexican identities, coming from a Mexican background made it easy for me to identify the spaces of the community that were inspired by Mexican culture. This also made it easier for me to verify the information I received from data from the literature review as well as information told to me by interviewees. Another strength to using this method is that it allowed me to see what amenities and aspects of the community were popular to its residents and visitors. This data allowed me to determine what are some of the priorities of the neighborhoods and was especially useful in understanding the dynamics of those who live in the areas of interest. By the end of the data collection process, I had made 8

observational trips to Logan Square and 9 to Pilsen, accumulating 10 pages of field notes per neighborhood and 50 pictures of the neighborhood, some of which can be found throughout this paper.

A limitation of using observational data is that information collected through observations may not be representative of the community as a whole. Similarly, the people whom I observed may not characterize the entire neighborhood, rather only those who happened to be out the same day I was and at the times I collected data. It is difficult to determine a community's culture in a few days. Most cultures are dynamic and have many aspects that make them what they are. Many communities can be identified with their nightlife, their music-related events such as shows and concerts, commercial areas, etc., all of which are seen throughout a larger time-span, not captured in a couple of visits. Therefore, it is impossible to determine the identity of a community in a few trips to the location. Limitations to using this for data collection is that it can be misleading, which can create wrong impressions of the community culture is. Being misled could cause me to have a wrong understanding of the neighborhoods and sway my data analysis.

### **Interviews with key stakeholders**

In order to understand the role that community-based organizations play in their neighborhoods, I sought to speak with leaders and members of social organizations that have expressed support or opposition towards gentrification or redevelopment in their neighborhoods. Organizations that I reached out to include Logan Square Neighborhood Alliance, We Are Logan Square/Somos Logan Square, Pilsen Alliance, The Resurrection Project,

and The National Museum of Mexican Art to name a few. By the end of the data collection process, I had spoken to a representative of all organizations mentioned except for We Are Logan Square/Somos Logan Square, totaling 5 interviews with former- and current CBO staff. Community leaders were able to provide this project with the general views of the organization that they work with, and the community and its members, something that other players lack/fail to focus on. As they are the main focus of this investigation, members of the CBOs were also able to provide information that cannot be obtained elsewhere.

I also planned to speak with Daniel S. Solis and Carlos Ramirez-Rosa, aldermen of the 25<sup>th</sup> Ward (that includes a majority of Pilsen) and the 35<sup>th</sup> Ward (including Logan Square), respectively. Interviews with the aldermen would have highlighted their insights in working with residential and commercial developers, and those different reactions to it. Aldermen, given that they play an important role in decided what changes are allowed to happen in their community and which are not, would have knowledge and viewpoints different from the other key players. Limitations of working with Aldermen is that, as their job is political, their responses to questions about the on-goings of their communities can be driven by other forces that are not community-oriented. In other words, the decisions they make and their justifications for them could be driven by ideologies that do not align with the community's and therefore, would not be mentioned during an interview. Due to the Chicago Alderman political race occurring parallel to this project, I was not able to speak with an alderman for reasons not disclosed to me.

For this project, I also spoke to scholarly experts on the topics who are neither involved with the CBOs nor living within the community. This will provide me with an outsider's look at

the situation at hand and hopefully, a viewpoint that is different and less biased than those of the other stakeholders. An expert's point of view will also be beneficial as they have studied the topic and, through many years of research and analysis, have gained knowledge not easily acquired. Thus, I spoke with 3 academics who have studied the same or similar neighborhoods as well as investigated the role CBOs take in their neighborhoods. The biggest limitation to this source is that they may not have close ties to the community and therefore, can fail to realize the personal significance of the situations of the residents.

Lastly, the input of the community's residents is extremely valuable for this investigation as they are the ones experiencing the different changes directly and participating in –or choosing not to participate in– the opposition or support of the changes. Therefore, Logan Square and Pilsen residents will be contacted to get an in-depth understanding of the perceived involvement of CBOs and neighborhood redevelopment. Participants unknown to the researchers will be recruited directly by the researcher by contacting them through electronic mail and using snowball sampling to recruit additional interviewees. A limitation of this method is that residents are not always fully aware of the on-goings in their neighborhoods and will tend to only remember or notice events that impact them directly. This can cause bias in responses given during an interview. A total of 6 interviews were conducted with residents of Logan Square or Pilsen.

All of the interviews were between the interviewee and me to keep the conversations one-on-one, private, and to keep distractions to a minimum. Interviews happened in quiet rooms with the door and windows shut to keep out any interruptions and loud noises. If they were had over the phone, interviewees were asked to find a quiet room where they will not be

interrupted and I did the same for the same reasons as above. Guided questions (found in the *Appendix*) were used to lead conversations but interviews in no way were limited to these questions nor were all questions covered in every interview. On average, the duration of the interviews was between 30 and 60 minutes at the times that worked best between the interviewee and me. If the interviewee felt comfortable, the conversation was recorded using a Voice Memos app on an iPhone 6S Plus. I also asked interviewees if they felt comfortable if I used their name in the paper and respected their whatever their decision was. Interviewees were also free to choose not to be recorded, for me to keep their name confidential, and to end the conversation at any point without consequences.

After the data has been gathered, an analysis was run on the responses from each of the community areas. Looking at the data and being able to compare and contrast responses from different stakeholders helped me to draw conclusions on what roles CBOs play in dealing with gentrification and its many effects, positive and negative. It is for this reason that open-ended interviews are preferred to surveys. Open-ended interviews allowed the interviewees to speak broadly and with more freedom than surveys do. They also gave more room for the interviewees to express their true opinions and general thoughts as they were not attempting to answer an explicit question but a topic, and thus, provided this investigation with unprovoked responses. Additional questions were added to tailor to the expertise of the interviewee at my discretion.

### **Gentrification as Waves**

While discussing gentrification with David Wilson, professor of Geography & Geographic Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, he brought up the notion that what Logan Square and Pilsen are currently going through is known as *third wave gentrification*. When asked to elaborate, Wilson said that the first wave of gentrification occurred as an isolated phenomenon in U.S. urban areas during the mid- to late-1970s. The second wave of gentrification was built on the first wave and occurred approximately in the 1980s and '90s. The major distinctions between the two “waves” is that the second wave grasped on the locations of the first, which made gentrification spread and grow substantially in geographic size. Given that both Logan Square and Pilsen are experiencing gentrification in its third wave, the magnitude of the size of already-gentrified land and communities can be explained through this. The amount of change, especially in neighborhoods such as Logan Square, can be explained by this fact and one can understand the magnitude of what the residents face by considering how much change the neighborhood has already been through and how much will continue to do so.

### **How Neighborhoods are “Chosen”**

Gentrification is not new. For many years, developers have attempted to ‘revitalize’ communities by increasing the cash flow that circulates within that neighborhood (Wilson & Grammenos, 2005). It is not just any neighborhood that in-movers are interested in. In fact, neighborhoods that are attractive to outsiders and get gentrified tend to have the following key

elements: low land values that translate to low property taxes, proximity to the downtown area, firm housing stocks, and areas where the local government has little influence (Wilson & Grammenos, 2005, pg. 295). These factors are attractive to builders and developers, as they allow them to build their expansions with greater ease. Specific to the Pilsen area, developers have been interested in the community since 1985 due to its having the characteristics detailed above (Wilson, Wouters, & Grammenos, 2004, 1177). Logan Square has similar characteristics, making both neighborhoods ideal in the eyes of the developers. It is unlikely for developers to attempt to move into a neighborhood that does not share these characteristics as they make it difficult for them to get a return on their investments – individuals would not be interested in moving into a neighborhood that is not cheap, close to downtown, or that is lacking in other amenities, and that does not have new or refurbished buildings.

The influx of new businesses and new customers is the ultimate goal of developers as it means a return on their investments through renting and buying of their property. However, those same businesses and costumers are the driving force behind the involuntary displacement of current residents. After gentrification has begun in a neighborhood, after wealthier people have begun to shop, spend, and live in the neighborhood, do property owners increase the prices that others are expected to pay and business owners increase their prices. For example, property owners who increase the prices they charge for rent begin to do so because of property tax increases and general supply-and-demand practices. After the rents have been increased, they become affordable for only in-movers of the community not for families who have lived in the community long before gentrification had begun (Betancur, 2005). This is one of the major dilemmas community members have to face when under the

pressure of gentrification. Put simply, “On the one hand, homeowners and local business owners may encourage the gentrification process to maximize returns on property investments. On the other hand, long-time residents run the risk of being priced out. Renters are particularly vulnerable to displacement as a result of gentrification. As property values increase, rent follows, forcing out lower-income residents and replacing them with higher paying customers” (Betancur, 2005, pg. 12). Whether or not property owners support the redevelopment of their neighborhood, it may not matter when they have to find a way to keep up with property tax increases on their own properties. This creates tension between landlords and tenants, who are both directly affected by increased housing prices. If the concerns of the landlords and tenants are not properly understood by both sides, this tension can begin to produce disunity within the community.

### **Strategies used by Gentrifiers**

Apart from moving into neighborhoods that have low property values, proximity to downtown, low governmental influence, those who wish to move into a neighborhood take extra measures to ensure their integration into the community. In order to make a neighborhood easier to gentrify, developers take specific methods to ensure that their goals become reality. In an interview with Wilson, it was brought up that one method developers take to ease their way into a neighborhood is by making residents appear to be ‘less than quality’ citizens. Specifically, developers target the youth of the community and label them as ‘gang-bangers,’ thugs, and low-lives that do not contribute to the well-being of their community. Doing so allows for a ‘justified’ reason for their interest and intervention in the community. This also causes in-movers to gain a sense of nobility because they believe that

they are ‘saving’ the community. Those who move into the community gain a sense of self-importance believing that they are doing a good deed. This idea also helps to commodify the ethnic culture in lower-income communities, or as Wilson puts it, ‘sickly *culturalize* the neighborhood.’ Turning the community’s identity into a commodity, into items makes it easier to sell and thus, makes it more attractive to white, middle-class outsiders. Developers do this by “implanting, [in neighborhoods’] symbols of ethnic richness, ethnic strength, and ethnic robustness,” all of which create means for those not affiliated with the community to feel as if they were doing a public good by moving into the community while also giving them a culture they find exotic and attractive. Below are examples of artwork that is for sale in Logan Square. The work depicts song titles of African-American musicians represented in fonts and colors typically used for Latin produce<sup>1</sup>.



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<sup>1</sup> Artwork by PAIDMSD

## Commodification of Community Identity

Another major topic in the discussion of the gentrification in Logan Square and in Pilsen is the commodification of their identity. As covered in previous sections, the commodification of neighborhood identity is the process in which the ethnic or national identity of the residents that make up a neighborhood gets 'itemized' in order to sell to others outside of that community. In both neighborhoods, this is the Mexican identity. Although both neighborhoods are predominantly Mexican/Mexican-American, the Mexican identity and culture are made to sell more in Pilsen than in Logan Square. In other words, it is commodified more in Pilsen than it is in Logan Square. This may be due to many reasons: it is easier to commodify the *Mexican-ness* in Pilsen than in Logan Square because it has a larger Latino population, the Mexican identity is stronger in Pilsen than in Logan Square, there is a greater push-back from community organizers and members in Pilsen and thus, developers have to take careful steps to avoid making drastic changes to the neighborhood. An example where developers were not careful and received backlash was in June 2017, when the new owners of the well-known *Casa Aztlan* building, a former community center, painted over its famous mural depicting heroes of the *Chicanismo* movement with gray paint. This act resulted in residents becoming infuriated and a protest was held soon after by the grassroots organization Pilsen Alliance. The building remained gray until October 2017, when the new owners offered to paint a new mural depicting local heroes. This example shows two important things: that the Mexican identity of Pilsen residents is very important for them and they wish to keep it that way, and it shows that community organizers can successfully mobilize residents to fight for what they want and be successful at it.

Other ways we see the commodification of the Mexican identity of Pilsen is by looking at what new shops open in the neighborhood. In an interview with Chicago-native Osvaldo Galvez, he mentioned that he believes the artwork and other forms of expressing the Mexican identity of the residents can be twofold: it can be used to depict the residents' culture and it can be used to sell to outsiders. Murals from local artists that can be found throughout each of the neighborhoods are meant to showcase the history and backgrounds of the people who live there. However, this is not how everyone perceives them. Galvez said, "I do not believe that they only represent the identity of the Mexican residents in either neighborhood – I believe that those who visit see them as something foreign, something that is unfamiliar yet eye-catching." Similar sentiments were revealed in conversations with other residents from each neighborhood. It is important, then, to consider what implications are had when showing off the culture of the residents of these neighborhoods. The main question to be asked is: who are depictions of community identity serving the most? Are they serving the current residents by representing a stance they are taking or are they seen as attractions to outsiders who want to move into the neighborhood? These are important questions to think over when considering the role that a community's identity has in its gentrification.

### **Changes in neighborhood and community responses**

There are many changes that come with gentrifying a neighborhood. When asked what changes they have witnessed, residents of Logan Square never knew how to respond. Malcolm Washington, a full-time college student who is also involved in community organizing, stated that what he saw the most was the forced displacement that his friends and family were

experiencing. He even mentioned that most, if not all, of the close friends he had growing up have since moved to the south and west sides of Chicago in order to find cheaper places to live. Seeing people around him being kicked out of the places they called home made him worry about when he and his family would be forced to leave the neighborhood. Washington stated that the worry of being displaced was such a big one that, “[he] noticed the displacement before noticed the change of infrastructure.” In conversations with Pilsen residents, similar sentiments were expressed with regards to displacement shadowing other changes in their neighborhoods.

Others noticed the change of infrastructure and in businesses first. All Logan Square residents interviewed for this research mentioned the replacement of the Megamall building with what will become a commercial strip with coffee shops, a Target, and condos. For context, the Megamall was a discount mall and outlet where many families could go to find clothing, food, jewelry at cheap prices. However, the mall was constantly fighting to keep its doors open. It was not until a 2007 fire that marked the beginning of the end for the Megamall. After its



closing, plans began to convert the building into what is being called Logan’s Crossing (shown to the left<sup>2</sup>), a commercial area (Holliday, 2014). For Logan Square residents, the Megamall was a place where they and their neighbors would

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<sup>2</sup> Photograph of the construction site of Logan’s Crossing taken By Gabino Sanchez Jr. on Apr. 15, 2019

spend their weekends. It was vibrant, crowded, and became a vital part of their community experience (Holliday, 2014). Other establishments that were brought up were the condominium complexes that have been and are being built in the area. The MICA towers located on Milwaukee and California, have caused great concern to local residents who are worried that their small apartments, which will start at \$2,000 – 3,000 would cause nearby residents to lose their homes due to rent and property tax increases. The MICA towers are not the only new complexes in the area causing concern. The new retail developments are so different and new to some residents that they do not feel like they grew up in the area. Washington states that he “does not associate Logan Square with those developments; they are more of an extension of the already gentrified Wicker Park further south.” The new developments are not just increasing rent, displacement rates, and identity change, they are also making current residents uncomfortable in their homes.

Something that was not brought up by many was the changes in local school composition and resources that are available to their students. Juliet de Jesus Alejandre of the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) mentions that due to the displacement of low-income families by higher-income families in Logan Square, local schools are also losing students at a fast rate. Because the families that are moving into the neighborhood are not enrolling their children in the local schools, the number of students they have is decreasing, with one school having lost one-third of its population in one year. Due to the nature of the funding algorithm of Chicago Public Schools, which distributes its money to schools depending on the total number of students enrolled, local schools do not have the means to offer their students the resources they need, such as gym and art classes which are now being taken as

online classes. These effects are not talked about as much as they are not as visible as the other changes. However, they have a major impact on those who live in the neighborhood and students who are enrolled in the local schools and will have to travel farther to receive the proper education and resources they need for a quality education they deserve.

Treatment of the youth is also being changed due to the new wave of residents. de Jesus Alejandre mentions that youth are targeted and forced to leave areas that are open to the public. She mentions that “[at the Illinois Centennial Monument] teens that would have rap battles would get kicked out but White folks who are drinking wine would be allowed to stay” (the Illinois



Centennial Monument shown to the right)<sup>3</sup>. The change in demographics has even caused other Latino residents to feel uncomfortable. “I feel weird walking around on a Sunday morning – it is the epitome of what young, White professionals want. Many times I am the only brown person I see,” says Erendira Reñon, a current Logan Square resident. Reñon remembers a time where almost all the faces one saw were Latino and more specifically, of Mexican descent. That has since changed. Another resident states that “Logan Square was a Hispanic, vibrant community and the development of these new establishments are catering to White people and people of

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<sup>3</sup> Photo taken by Gabino Sanchez Jr. on Apr.15, 2019

middle-class” causing the neighborhood to lose its culture, which has had a strong impact on its identity. As the area becomes increasingly White and less Latino, the cultural identity will leave with its Mexican residents.

Juan Arrieta, a resident of Logan Square and community leader, responded that the biggest change he has witnessed was the change of neighbors. White, middle-class residents replaced lower-class Latino families on his block. He and his family are not upset at this change however, as it meant getting rid of the gang members who would congregate on their corner. He mentioned that he was surprised to see people jogging at 3 am where drug hustlers used to stand. Arrieta joked that “you know your neighborhood is being gentrified if you see people play ultimate frisbee in the evenings in the park. You never saw that. You would see the outline of where someone got shot. It is truly a 360.” But he also says that there is a price to looking nice, but he is unsure whether ‘looking nice’ is meant for the current residents or for others outside of the community.

The case of Pilsen is very similar to that of Logan Square, yet it is different in many ways. With the changes of businesses, from traditionally Mexican to Mexican-appealing, the identity of the neighborhood still remains. Bars that have begun to pop up tend to include a Mexican element, appealing to those who appreciate or are drawn to the Mexican identity of the neighborhood. However, not all new establishments are like this. For Sarita Garcia, an artist at the National Museum of Mexican Art (NMMA) located in Pilsen, the changes reminded her of her hometown of San Antonio, Texas, which is also experiencing rapid change. She first noticed the changes when “DIY art galleries were excavated and replaced with fancy boutiques and coffee shops.” She also noticed small but clear differences in the type of businesses that were

being built. For example, new businesses that using glass as their walls and ceilings caught her attention as it did not fit with the rest of the community's infrastructure. Subtle differences like these do not go unnoticed by Pilsen's community members.

Because the identity of the neighborhood has hardly been changed, what has been noticed the most is the change in property value as well as changes in rent prices. Displacement has also been noticed and experienced by many residents. With the demographic changes that the neighborhood is experiencing, people have started to wonder who new establishments are being built for. Garcia states, "there are signs that new renovations are made to cater to a specific person of a certain income. I also see that a lot in nearby neighborhoods like the UIC area, University Village." Thus, even though there is little identity change in Pilsen, changes in infrastructure appearances have been noticed.

### **Role of Community-based Organizations**

There are many roles that community-based organizations can take in the neighborhoods they operate in and in the surrounding areas. CBOs that take actions to deal with the effects gentrification has on their neighborhoods have similar roles in Logan Square and in Pilsen but they also have some differences. CBOs in both communities aim to serve their residents by providing them with services to satisfy their needs. John Betancur, a professor of Urban Planning and Policy at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), states that there are two types of community organizations: one that aims to provide resident with services that they will not typically have or struggle to obtain and one that takes political stances and demand from governments and private institutions better conditions. Presently, organizations in Logan Square like the Logan Square Neighborhood Association participate in both activities. They

provide adult education centers, urban centers that reduce poverty by distributing services and goods, information that they can use to make informed decisions on their mortgages, legal advice, and more. Another large part of their work is focusing on political advocacy such as door-knocking to get people to vote on policies and government representation, host marches when denied conversations with the alderman, and taking political stances short of supporting any one candidate. Thus, most of their work focuses on providing residents with information and resources that will benefit them when making decisions related to their homes and changes to in their neighborhoods and encouraging them to understand and participate in the politics behind those changes. In Pilsen, this is slightly different. Organizations like The Resurrection Project, also known as TRP, aim to support those who live in the area. However, their approach is different due to them having more funds, which makes them able to provide Pilsen residents with more resources. These resources include affordable housing through TRP, something impactful that organizations in Logan Square have not been able to provide. Reñon, who serves as the Vice President of Immigration Strategy and Advocacy at TRP, says that the organization aims to serve those who have been directly affected by displacement by providing them with affordable housing rather than trying to create political reform.

Although different organizations have similar goals with the work that they do, their means of implementing their goals differ greatly. Organizations in Logan Square focus a lot of their efforts in creating political change in the neighborhood by encouraging the community members to get involved politically. On the other hand, Pilsen chooses to focus on those who are in danger of or have already been displaced and those who cannot afford to live elsewhere.

TRP does this by housing families in affordable living spaces that will remain affordable for those who live there. The differences in actions may cause residents of each neighborhood to perceive them and their efforts differently.

### **Efforts to combat gentrification**

From the experience and knowledge that Wilson has gathered throughout the years, he believes that there is still hope to combat gentrification and its negative effects on urban communities. Wilson mentioned that in 2004, Pilsen was able to successfully slow down gentrification in its community because of the community-based organizations were able to create spaces in which the neighborhood's residents could convene to discuss the changes in their communities and decide if and how they should respond to those changes. The reason why these spaces work, Wilson says, is because the CBOs gave a positive sense of cultural identity to the residents and because they "identified 'clear enemies' to the neighborhood. The developers and the in-movers are labeled as community-enemies due to [their] kicking out residents due to wealth and kicking out community-owned business and increasing rent." CBOs have had the ability to create a sense of unity in the neighborhoods in which they do their work and leverage the unity to inform and mobilize residents in response to community changes. They are capable of creating these spaces by spreading the word out using many forms of media such as pamphlets, word of mouth, social media, and primarily door-knocking techniques. Typically, a lot of the networking happens between friends and relatives, neighbors, and institutions that take actions in response to gentrification. Residents are attracted to these spaces as they provide them with a sense of inclusivity and accord.

Another way that residents of Pilsen mobilized to fight against gentrification was through the use of art. As mentioned in previous sections, Logan Square and Pilsen serve as hubs for artists as they are places full of museums, galleries, exhibits, and a plentitude of local artists showcasing their work. The neighborhoods also promote the work of local artists portraying their cultural identities and styles on public spaces such as on the sides of the Chicago Elevated train tracks and on nearing buildings. Some of the artwork done by local artists is meant as a way to represent a resistance of structural change in their communities.



For example, some of the art created by these artists portrays the strong Mexican identity of Logan Square and Pilsen in order to take a stand against in-movers. The murals are meant to tell the history of the Mexican people in Mexico and settling in the United States. An example of art created for this reason is shown to the left – the artwork itself is installed in a conference room in The Resurrection Project, a community-based organization located in Pilsen<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Artwork by Oscar Romero (1998)

## **Resident Reactions to CBO Efforts**

As stated previously, there are mixed resident responses to the efforts of CBOs to try to mitigate the negative effects of gentrification. Residents of both Logan Square and Pilsen have expressed both positive and negative viewpoints on what the community organizations have done and have chosen to focus on pertaining to displacement. Their opinions are also tied to how connected and engaged they are with the organizations, meaning that those who interact with their local CBOs the most have stronger opinions about them.

Those who take advantage of CBO efforts to keep people in their homes by providing them with information they need to make informed decisions about their mortgages find their work to be helpful. That is, for those who actively engage with the organizations to learn about what their options are moving forward with buying or selling a home tend to have better experiences with the CBO and in the communities. For organizations such as LSNA, a significant portion of the cases they get result in a content client. In Pilsen, and specifically for those who work with TRP, those that are placed in affordable homes and those that use the information they are given to make the choice that is right for them also result in positive views of the organization and their work. Thus, those who actively try to engage with and take advantage of what the community-based organizations have to offer them view CBOs in positive lights and believe their efforts are worthwhile. They also perceive the organizations to be creating a significant impact in their community and in the lives of the community members, with some being heard saying, 'Oh, there are people who are looking out for us, that's cool!'

Families who do not actively engage with community organizations in their neighborhoods do not experience the same amount of luck. Arrieta of LSNA has commented

that when door-knocking to inform residents of the changes they will experience and how to best deal with them, some families do not seem to care. He states that some may be too busy to seek the information they need, others not caring enough to ask for it, and the real possibility that some families are too prideful to ask for help. In order to help residents get over this barrier, Arrieta and his team work to make residents comfortable and aware that they are not the only household experiencing distress related to their homes. de Jesus Alejandro, also from LSNA, mentions that after families realize that they are not alone in their struggles, they begin to take action. They become more involved in the on-goings of their neighborhoods and also begin to seek information and support they need. Those who choose not to open the door to community-based organizations or choose to ignore their offers tend to get confused when making decisions on their homes and sell for less, buy for more, or are forced to move out of the neighborhood at a faster rate for not being able to keep up with the rent increases. Thus, those who have not been taking advantage of what the organizations in their communities have to offer have been suffering more than those that do. Not only do those who engage with CBOs experience better outcomes for themselves and their family's well-being, but they are also more involved in their communities and aware of the different things that are occurring that can affect people like themselves. This is not seen as often with residents who are not involved with CBOs in their areas. With the support of CBOs, residents become better-informed and more productive community members.

## Artwork in Neighborhoods

Artwork also has an important role in the communities. The role that art has had in these neighborhoods has always been one that the residents can relate to. Osvaldo Galvez, a Logan Square resident and a frequent visitor of Pilsen,



says that one of his favorite pastimes growing up was visiting the art scenes of each neighborhood. Galvez would frequent the local-artist made murals on the sides of abandoned spaces and on popular buildings<sup>56</sup>. His favorite aspect of street art was that he “was able to connect with it on a personal level. Seeing art that depicts Aztec and Mayan history made by Mexican artists made it very special.” For him, the street art signifies the identity of the people who live in the neighborhood. Thus, taking the street art away from the neighborhoods would be the same as removing part of the identities of the neighborhoods. This was later confirmed when Galvez and residents from both communities mentioned the covering up of the murals of Casa Atzán in Pilsen. The well-known mural depicting Mexican historical figures and culture was painted over with gray paint when a developer bought the property to convert the former community organization into a condominium complex in 2016. The action of covering the

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<sup>5</sup> The photograph on this page was taken on the side of a bank in Logan Square. It depicts Latinos holding signs that read “¡Pa’lante! Siempre Pa’lante” which translates to “Forward! Always Forward”

<sup>6</sup> Mural by Sam Kirk and Sandra Antongiorgi (2017)

murals was not taken positively by the residents as it caused a demonstration of anger by locals. Therefore, tension gets created when developers decide to change something crucial to the community such as the artwork that has been a staple in the community for its residents. Removing and covering up what has, for many, represented the cultures and lives of the community's residents is seen as an act of aggression, a symbol of unwelcomed change, and a threat of displacement.

On the other hand, it has been observed that developers may use the already existing murals or any other cultural identifiers to draw in outsiders. Artwork, then, is a two-edged sword: it can serve as a message by current residents that signifies their fight to keep their neighborhood changes from driving them out, or it can be used by developers to capitalize on the communities' exotic culture. Whether it is used to express the cultural identity of a community's current residents or used to draw in a different group of residents, the artwork is creating different representations of the community: one that current residents want to keep and another that caters to the wants of future residents of that neighborhood. Thus, it is up to

the artists and the viewers to determine what the message of the artwork is supposed to be telling. The artwork to the left shows the awareness of Pilsen artists of the commodification of the Mexican identity; it takes the



phrase “Mi Casa Es Tu Casa,” which is not commonly-used among Spanish-speakers, and uses its popularity to create an anti-gentrification work that reads “Mi Casa No Es Tu Casa” (“My Home is Not Your Home”)<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> *Mi Casa No Es Su Casa (My Home is Not Your Home)*, Diana Solís

## *Policy Recommendations*

Given what has been learned from reviewing existing literature on gentrification and its effects on urban neighborhoods and through interviews with key stakeholders, it is clear that community-based organizations (CBOs) play an important role in dealing with the effects of gentrification and redevelopment in neighborhoods they focus their work on. Some of the duties that they take on are voicing their opinions on what structures get built in their zones, informing the public on how to best manage selling or buying a home, keeping the residents informed on the on-goings of their neighborhoods, and also in creating a voice for the residents among other things. Combined, these actions have created not only a way to slow down the changes of a neighborhood, but a way to slow down the rate at which residents have to sell their home and/or move out of their community. Of course, this effect is only observable within those who choose to accept the help and assistance that a CBO can provide them. In many instances, households that did not or could not receive assistance from a CBO ended up having to sell their home and leave the neighborhood.

One of the major issues that I found was that not all of the CBOs in the communities can afford to provide their residents with all of the resources listed above. This can be due to not having a voice to vote on the decisions made by the community alderman, not having the funding to support all of the residents' needs or to support a large amount of residents, not having the time or staff power to provide the neighborhood with what it needs, or a combination of any of these limitations. Community-based organizations primarily take on the role of creating a space where the community members of a minority status can become informed residents and can generate their own opinions and ideas on how to take on their

concerns. They allow residents to make decisions that best suit them and can benefit others in the community like them. Thus, in order to improve the function that CBOs have in their communities, they should be given a louder voice and a bigger presence in the communities that they serve.

In order to support community-based organizations increase their presence and the number of people they are able to serve, aldermen and local governments should work more closely with CBOs to provide them with the support they and their residents need. The support can come in the form of allocating funding to them, using their reach and influence to increase the awareness of the CBOs and what they have to offer, and by allowing CBOs to voice their opinions on decisions that will dramatically affect the community. The latter point can be achieved by strengthening the communication and relationship between aldermen and community-based organizations. An efficient partnership between aldermen and CBOs would be one where there is plenty of communication between the two, especially on what changes the neighborhood should expect and what the sentiments of the residents are pertaining to those changes. Instances where aldermen have worked with community organizations on large-scale decisions have been more successful than when decisions were not made with the input of CBOs because they lacked the voice of the people, a critical aspect that organizations have and aldermen do not. Voicing the opinions of the people would also benefit the aldermen as they would perform their duty to serve those people more proficiently. Establishing a relationship between aldermen and community-based organizations would cause both parties to understand the needs of the community and its residents at large.

## *Conclusion*

It is clear that there are different actions done by community-based organizations in their respective communities and these actions can lead to how they are perceived by the rest of the community. Through conversations with different community stakeholders, I find that the actions CBOs take depend on their perceptions of gentrification. Those that see gentrification as a stoppable force, one that can be slowed down or blocked by creating new policies and laws, tend to take actions regarding governmental change. On the other hand, those that see gentrification as an unstoppable force that can only be slowed down take action that they believe would take effect in the present. These actions have to do with providing immediate housing assistance for those who will have to move out of the neighborhood otherwise and other similar interventions. The actions CBOs take also determine how the organizations will be perceived by the community members in the neighborhood they are meant to serve. For example, if an organization chooses to ignore a topic that affects a large portion of the residents, many of those who are affected or know someone who was affected, will perceive the organization as one that does not actually care for the people they mean to serve as much as the organization wants to come off as caring. If residents can see that the organizations are actively trying to improve the conditions of the residents and that their efforts are not being wasted, they will perceive them with positive views as essential for the community and its integrity.

When looking at gentrifying neighborhoods, one thinks about what can be done for those who experience the negative effects of the change. For community-based organizations, which aim to serve the disadvantaged persons who reside in and near the community, this may

be difficult if they do not work with the local government. CBOs need to work closer with aldermen in order for both of them to best serve the community. Aldermen and CBOs have very similar goals, working together would only help them reach those goals of serving the people in their neighborhoods and to preserve the integrity of the community in the long run. Thus, local governments and community-based organizations need to work together to make the transition of a rapidly changing community smoother for its current and future occupants.

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## *Appendix*

### **Guiding Interview Questions:**

1. Why have you decided to enter into the work that you do?
2. Are you familiar with the terms 'gentrification' and 'redevelopment'?
  - a. Do you believe that these terms have different meanings?
3. Have there been any effects that gentrification has had on Pilsen/Logan Square?
  - a. What are they?
4. What is the current standing that the community-based organizations (CBOs) in Pilsen/Logan Square have on gentrification and redevelopment in the community?
5. To what extent have the CBOs been involved in dealing with the changes the community has faced due to gentrification?
6. What is the role that the CBOs have had in preventing/promoting gentrification in Pilsen/Logan Square?
  - a. How have community members responded to their actions/events?
7. What is the role that the CBOs have had in mitigating the effects of gentrification in Pilsen/Logan Square?
  - a. How responsive are community members to their actions/events?
8. What are the general sentiments community members have on gentrification and its effects?
9. What are the general sentiments community members have on the involvement of the CBOs with gentrification and its effects?