BOSTON COLLEGE

School of Social Work

"NO TIENE LA COMUNIDAD QUE YO AMO": A COMMUNITY-ENGAGED
STUDY ON THE 'MORE-THAN-MATERIAL' IMPACT OF GENTRIFICATION ON
LONG-TIME RESIDENTS OF EAST BOSTON

A dissertation

by

JOSH LOWN

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for a degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

JUNE 2023

"NO TIENE LA COMUNIDAD QUE YO AMO": A COMMUNITY-ENGAGED STUDY ON THE 'MORE-THAN-MATERIAL' IMPACT OF GENTRIFICATION ON LONG-TIME RESIDENTS OF EAST BOSTON

A dissertation

by

JOSH LOWN

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Samantha Teixeira

Abstract

Residents and activists in neighborhoods undergoing gentrification have been raising alarm bells about its impact for decades. The promises that state and private funders and developers make about the benefits of neighborhood redevelopment are often overemphasized and/or unmet according to many in the communities who have experienced this change. The literature on the effects of capital reinvestment and urban renewal programs has shown mixed results, suggesting that poverty and crime rates tend to decrease as higher-income and educated residents move into these neighborhoods. However, evidence suggests that this may be the result of displacement of original residents and an influx of middle- and higher-income residents.

Much of the existing research into the effects of gentrification follows from a political economy perspective, which often leaves out the personal and communal effect on residents' psychological well-being. Though some recent work incorporates resident perspectives of the gentrification process, the field of social work has only recently begun engaging in understanding the impacts of gentrification This dissertation aims to address this key gap in the literature by exploring gentrification and associated neighborhood processes in partnership with residents from a Boston community undergoing gentrification.

This dissertation is a predominantly qualitative study with an embedded quantitative analysis using ethnographic methods to understand how residents of the East Boston neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts perceive their neighborhood. Specifically, the dissertation explored 1) the perception of individual and individual impacts of gentrification-related impact amongst long-time residents, 2) how residents make meaning of social control in the neighborhood as it relates to gentrification, and 3) the neighborhood-level spatial indicators of gentrification that contextualized residents' perceptions. This overarching approach relied on community-level input and participation through four methods: 1) an ethnography, 2) walking interviews, 3) photovoice, and 4) geospatial analysis of gentrification-related indicators using administrative data in order to use a rich array of data to better understand how community members communicate their experiences in their neighborhood as it gentrifies.

DEDICATION

To all those who continuously find joy in defiance of everything.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are not enough words in the English language to articulate the immense amount of gratitude I hold in my heart to all of those who have been with me throughout this journey. I can only hope that in my actions, over time, each of you will begin to understand how much you all mean to me. Though insufficient, for the time being I can only offer up some clumsy words of acknowledgement and gratitude in the hopes that it will convey all the love I have contained within these weary bones.

I must first acknowledge all of my friends and comrades at Mutual Aid East Boston, without whom this dissertation would not have been possible. Thank you all for your trust, for your support, for your guidance, and for your continued kindness. Your dedication to the community is beyond inspiring, and I'm honored to be alongside you in these fights. To all of the residents of East Boston that I had the pleasure of getting to know throughout this project, thank you for trusting me to represent your voice – it is a great honor, and I hope you all feel respectfully represented within these pages. And finally, to the neighborhood of East Boston as a character in and of itself: You've been the home my family and I needed. May you continue to be the home others need and deserve.

A deep and heartfelt thank you to my incredible committee members for challenging me, pushing me, and trusting me. Dr. Fusaro, you've been a part of my academic journey early on. Thank you for showing me how to be an effective and considerate professor, for listening to and humoring my half-baked ideas, and for being a steady voice of confidence in my work. Dr. Thurber, it has been an incredible honor to

work with you on this project. It was your paper that inspired me to take up the call that became this dissertation, and your dedication to challenging structures and lifting the voices of historically marginalized communities is boundlessly inspiring. Dr. Motley, thank you for trusting me, for all of your kindness, and for challenging me to trust myself in my writing. And, of course, to Dr. Teixeira: A simple thank you is not enough. I am forever grateful to you for challenging me to ask tougher questions, for supporting me through all of the rip currents of let-downs and insecurities, and for always trusting me to do the work I wanted to do. I couldn't have asked for a better mentor. Thank you.

There are so many other faculty in my orbit who, in various ways, supported me and propped me up throughout the program, and I am forever thankful for your kindness. There is also a special place in my heart to all of the academics whose work is a continuous inspiration, and especially to those I met at conferences only to find out you are all just as dorky as I am. Thank you to all of the students I've had the pleasure of teaching and who were forced to hear me pontificate on ideas that would be further fleshed out in this dissertation. To my homie. And of course to the friends and collaborators in my cohort and to those in the years below me: Megan, Ty, Leila, Beth (and Mason and Charlie), Barbara, Charles, Doyin, Gabby. You're all an inspiration.

To all of the artists who have inspired me in various ways and who's art got me through the moments that felt far too overwhelming to make it out of. I am deeply appreciative of all the other weirdos who shared space with me in sweaty venues, holding on to my shoulders and neck as we screamed lyrics as if our lives depended on it. And to

all of the pits that bruised my body and allowed the outlet for my anxious and overwhelmed brain that I desperately needed.

Chris, Nick, Ben, Brian, Matt, and Kayvon, thank you for the hiking trips, the dumb bits, and the countless little moments that remind me what friendship is. Joe, thank you for always being an unwavering support in my life and for being my North Star of what masculinity, vulnerability, and absolute care look like. And Beck, for the constant love and for being the rock that Joe needs. Cassidy – I know I pay you, but your insight and support these past few years have helped guide me out of the dark places that are always lying in wait. My parents, who have always been some of my biggest cheerleaders and for being the support systems I needed. Jonathan, Anna, Jordan, Michael, and all the family members that checked in on me and my family these past four years. To Michigan, my home. To Boston, my home. To the forest and the mountains where I am allowed to breath and that fill me with a fathomless wonder. This is all because of you.

And, of course, to the bottomless pit of love that I am blessed to live with every day of my life: Arlo and Whitney. Arlo, one day you might read this. And when you do, I hope you can forgive me for not always being who you needed me to be throughout these past two years. You fill me with an overwhelming love that I didn't know was possible, and a determination to fight and create a world that is worthy of you. And to Whitney, who has been by my side throughout the grief, delirium, mania, joy. You've helped keep the pieces in place. I love you beyond the ability to express it. I am glad you are here with me. Here, at the end of all things…

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter I. Introduction

Who the fuck are you?

It's a hot summer day in June, and I have just finished driving eight hours from Virginia back to East Boston to get to an event that started at noon. After parking at home, checking in on my pets, and taking off from my bike, I make it with plenty of time to spare. Despite spending some of most formative years as an organizer in Lansing, Michigan, I tend to forget that community events rarely start on time - a fact often blamed on a certain anarchistic carelessness of youthful organizers, rather than the more honest excuse: community organizers are often stretched thin and overcommitted, not because they are careless, but because they are deeply caring.

Who the fuck are you?

I stare outside my window.

There are strangers in my backyard.

These remarks were made by a resident as part of a poem she wrote about her experiences growing up East Boston and her interactions with the new residents moving in. She is in her 20's, Hispanic[1], and is not addressing any particular person – her poem is voiced to us, but these statements are directed at the many faceless new residents. The

---

[1] I will be using the term *Hispanic* as an identifier, instead of *Latinx* or *Latino/a*, as it was the most preferred term by participants in describing themselves. Decisions about the use of language, including use of the term Hispanic, is discussed in greater detail at the end of this chapter starting on p. 28.

event itself is the first in what was promised to be many popular education events surrounding gentrification in East Boston. It was organized predominantly by Mutual Aid East Boston, an organization that, much like many mutual aid organizations at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, spawned out of necessity and urgency to provide a baseline level of care and resources for the predominantly working-class neighborhood. As the pandemic-situated social restrictions began to shift, so did the overall goal of Mutual Aid East Boston. They found that, while the need for direct material support to the community was still very much necessary, so too was the need to build community.

"We realized we couldn't do this all on our own. If we truly believed in building community power, we needed to commit to it. We're still figuring it out." I'm told this by Lance, one of the lead organizers from Mutual Aid East Boston. Lance is everywhere all the time. He's energetic, always smiling, and seems to know everyone. He came to East Boston around three years ago after making connections with the community through organizing work he did with Cosecha, a national group focused on organizing around Central and South American immigrants and laborers in the United States. Despite being a White person born and raised in the Northeast, L is fluent in Spanish. His ability to present in both of these communities, the White community and the Hispanic community, grants him access many other organizers don't have. Although, in all appearance, Lance is most comfortable when he's within the Hispanic community.

¿Que eres tú? ¿Como te llamas?

Oh, you don't speak Spanish?

Who the fuck are you?

Talking to mi mama?

Hablando en inglés de terminos técnicos

Ma'am, our deed says this property is on our land

¿Que putas es un deed?

Ana Maria, Jose Carlos, all stare back

Un abutter meeting? Civic Association?

Development going up while Ana Maria, Jose Carlos clock into work

Trabajando diez horas

Cada día pensando que su casa ya no está cuando llegen

Lily's voice begins to break as she approaches the middle section of her poem. These moments of vulnerability draw silence from the actively engaged crowd, broken only momentarily by the words "we love you" coming from a disembodied voice. This event was not my first housing justice event in East Boston, but it was my first to attend while in my official capacity as an ethnographic researcher, an insider/outsider status that I would find difficult to navigate both on this day and every day thereafter.

My partner and I moved to East Boston in August 2021. Earlier that summer, we were near downtown enjoying a picnic in the Public Gardens, and we made the decision that we wanted to move from our home in New Hampshire. This decision was based on a few different factors, most importantly: 1) I knew the direction my research was heading was going to involve the city of Boston and I wanted to be closer to 'the action', as it were, and 2) we wanted our then one year old child to be a part of more diverse community than he had been exposed to while we lived in New Hampshire.

Unbeknownst to us, we were part of a growing trend of people 'rediscovering' East Boston and moving in: White, mid-20's to mid-30's, largely single with a smattering of young families. I say unbeknownst to us, but this is only partially true. We of course knew the stories of what was happening throughout the city of Boston: skyrocketing rent, new development, evictions. These are all phenomena that my research trajectory had been beginning to coalesce around. We had heard vaguely that East Boston was in the middle of a process of growth, although it was not in our consciousness as one of the neighborhoods most commonly associated with Boston's gentrification like South Boston and the Seaport.

We ultimately ended up in East Boston for the same reason many of the newcomers over the past 5 or so years have moved in: the rent was cheaper than most neighborhoods in such close proximity to downtown – one subway stop away if you're close to the water, four if you're further into the neighborhood. It was on our first visit to East Boston to tour apartments that we were truly able to grasp the scope of gentrification in East Boston. It was impossible to ignore the most obvious signifiers: the waterfront development and the constant construction. We loved the neighborhood, but we could feel there was a process of change we were walking into.

One morning during a weekly meeting with my advisor, Dr. Samantha Teixeira, we were discussing what I wanted to study for my dissertation. It was in the very early stages of development, and I had a vague idea percolating that I wanted the study to center around gentrification in Boston. My partner and I had just secured an apartment in East Boston and were making arrangements to pack up our things and move into the

neighborhood. As the meeting was coming to a close, Dr. Teixeira asked me in her way of suggesting an idea without explicitly saying so: *What about East Boston*?

Lily takes a moment to catch herself before continuing.

Rent going up

Stress on shoulders rising

Pain under feet pulsing

¿Quién eres tú?

¿Dónde están Carlos, Ana Maria?

Ahh, es que vivo en Revere, but yo soy de East Boston

Ahh, es que vivo en Fall River, but yo soy de East Boston

Ahh, es que vivo en Ohio, but yo soy de East Boston

The crowd, both who was attending the event and who was on the outside merely walking by, reflected the ethnic and class antagonisms of the current moment: White passers-by on the outside who made up the newcomer contingent, largely ignoring what was happening while they walked alongside the park on their way to the only grocery store in the neighborhood and back towards the waterfront, presumably to their apartment in one of the many new luxury apartment buildings.

No es vecino se mudan, Maggie, Bob, Karen, Phil

Strangers in my backyard.

I hated you for years.

I would see you walking around

With your Sperry's, and your lattes.

Shucking your oysters.

I hated you

Just like they wanted me to.

Throughout my time in East Boston within my capacity as researcher, I came to know many of the people involved in the event intimately, and the stories being shared, intimately. The become participants, colleagues, support systems, gatekeepers, neighbors, member checkers, friends. They became the displaced and the left-behind. They are the names, faces, and stories that I do my due diligence to capture and present in this study and in its presentation.

The goal of this dissertation was to understand how long-time residents of East Boston experienced gentrification. More specifically, I aimed to understand how residents experienced gentrification individually and communally, how informal and formal social control are manifested within the context of gentrification, and what are the spatial contexts that these interactions take place in. I also wanted to understand how gentrification was spatially represented through administrative data, and how this spatial representation interacted with the stories and experiences of residents and participants. Throughout the iterative process of methods and analysis, key themes related to how residents make meaning in the contested spaces of gentrification, how loss is experienced, and how residents have worked towards defending the community against displacement began to emerge. This study also aimed to advance the underrepresented theoretical frameworks of hauntology and postcolonialsm into the realm of gentrification-related scholarship.

1.1 Scope of the Problem

The process of reinvestment into urban areas previously neglected by economic development has been well-documented over the last few decades (Bulger et al., 2023; Goetz, 2008; Sutton, 2020; von Hoffman, 2008**)**. The environmental, spatial, and social transformation of the city by these forces is broadly referred to as gentrification (Davidson and Lees, 2005). State and private proponents of urban renewal and reinvestment programs, such as Opportunity Zones and the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, state that such investment will lead neighborhood residents to see the benefit of greater security, increased housing values, and cleaner living environments (Avila & Rose, 2009; Carmon, 1999; HUD, 2015; von Hoffman, 2008). Communities living through these forces of reinvestment, often predominantly comprised of people of color and other marginalized communities, however, have been raising alarm bells regarding how their lived realities contradict the messaging and promises of gentrification (Thurber et al., 2019).

While popular theoretical positions used to explore the impacts of gentrification on communities, such as political economy, often emphasize the economic stressors and the need for affordable housing, this singular focus may ignore the psychological impact on neighborhood residents (Thurber et al., 2019). In conceptualizing the definition of gentrification, Davidson and Lees (2005) argue that previous understandings of gentrification do not make room for a modern, post-recession urban landscape. These

definitions largely followed Glass' (1964) definition that distinguished between rehabilitated housing and new-builds/redevelopment (Davidson and Lees, 2005). By creating this distinction, however, the definition doesn't account for the displacement that is often a result of new-builds and redevelopment. Therefore, in this study I follow the definition of gentrification presented by Davidson and Lees (2005), consistent of 4 parts: 1) capital reinvestment, 2) increase in high-income demographics, 3) landscape change, and 4) indirect and direct displacement of low-income groups. In order to expand this definition to include the 'more than material', I will also engage with the literature that explores the relationships between gentrification, well-being, and neighborhood social dynamics.

Fullilove (2004) describes the psychological trauma of being displaced as a result of changing urban landscapes as "root shock", a medical term she likens to the traumatic loss of one's emotional and physical environment through forced displacement. Root shock impacts both the individual and the communal in a feedback loop, as the change in the physical and demographic landscape impacts the individual's relationship to the community, which in turn impacts the community further, and so on (Fullilove, 2001; 2004). Communities where residents have experienced root shock through, for example, large scale building demolition, experience a loss of collective capacity to solve problems which can become crippling (Fullilove, 2004). Similarly, Pain (2019) describes the near-constant experience of loss due to the process of gentrification as "chronic urban trauma". This process may mimic a complex trauma response in community members, a response defined by more pervasive exposure to distressing and traumatic events (Courtois, 2008;

Herman, 1992; Pain, 2019). These two theoretical concepts provide a framework that allows researchers to consider the psychological impact of urban renewal, particularly within marginalized communities.

Forces of gentrification can also account for social impacts at the neighborhood-level broadly. Recent research has begun to show the tendency towards an increase in the presence of police in areas currently being developed. Beck (2020) finds that increases in higher-income residents are associated with more calls to police to respond to non-emergency issues such as noise complaints, loitering, and parking violations. The increase in police presence in neighborhoods undergoing gentrification tends to diminish the community's own ability to exert informal social control and may create an unsafe environment for marginalized community residents, such as those who are homeless who may be exposed to more police harassment (Dozier, 2019; Kochel and Gau, 2021; Lyons et al., 2017). As a community gentrifies, collective efficacy (community members' capacity to solve collective issues), may not be longer sufficient to mediate violent crime (Kozey, 2020). In fact, Kozey (2020) found that gentrification may increase instances of tension and altercations between long-time residents and new residents, as anger of an inability to use public space may spill over into disruptive protests and property crime.

The city of Boston, Massachusetts is the third most gentrified city in the United States as marked by new development, increasing rent, and resident displacement (Marques, 2020; Miller, 2019; Pan, 2020; Tiernan, 2020). According to a recent report, Boston neighborhoods with the highest rates of gentrification were overwhelmingly Hispanic and Black and saw the highest rates of non-White displacement (BPDA, 2021;

Pan, 2020). This has led activist organizations concerned with displacement and neighborhood safety, such as City Life/Vida Urbana and the Greater Boston Tenants Union, to call on the city to do more to protect historically marginalized residents in these communities. Recent pushes from activist organizations and community groups have resulted in the passing of rent stabilization efforts that aim to keep historically marginalized and working-class families in their homes (City of Boston, 2022; Platoff and Stout, 2023).

While there is increased attention to gentrification in the academic literature, Thurber and colleagues (2019) note the lack of social work perspective in the research surrounding gentrification. This provides an important opportunity for social work research to contribute unique perspectives, such as a trauma-informed approach to gentrification research, to better understand how residents make meaning of changing urban landscapes.

1.2 Overview of the Study

Rooted in an interpretivist epistemology, I used a mixed methods approach to this dissertation that was predominantly qualitative with an embedded quantitative component to understand long-time residents' relationship to gentrification in East Boston. I rooted the methods and analyses in a community based participatory research (CBPR) design, wherein the participants and members of the community played a key role in the meaning-making process of this study. I also aimed to spatially contextualize the

experiences and relationships in order to triangulate the shared stories and administrative data into a rich description of the individual and communal impacts of gentrification. In order to achieve this, I combined ethnographic field work, photovoice, and walking interviews alongside a geospatial analysis of data from the US Census and parcel-level data on Boston properties using GIS. Three related aims and five research questions guided my research:

Aim 1: Explore long-time residents' perceptions of the individual and collective impacts of gentrification-related cues, such as demographic and environmental change.

    RQ1: How do longtime residents perceive individual impacts of gentrification-related cues?

    RQ2: How do long-time residents perceive collective impacts of gentrification-related cues?

Aim 2: Explore how residents make meaning of processes of social control as they relate to gentrification.

    RQ3: How do long-time residents perceive changes in mechanisms of informal social control in their neighborhood?

    RQ4: How do long-time residents perceive changes in mechanisms of formal social control in their neighborhood?

Aim 3: Understand the neighborhood-level contextual factors that frame residents' perceptions of gentrification.

RQ5: What is the spatial distribution of gentrification-related indicators[2]?

The dissertation is organized into six parts: a literature review, an overview of the theoretical foundations, a methods section, the findings, a discussion section, and a conclusion. The second chapter is the literature review. Here, I situate gentrification into the broader historical framework of urban blight and urban renewal. I present the ways in which discourses surrounding urban renewal have typically situated themselves within a broader class-based and race-based fear of working-class and immigrant populations existing in the urban landscape. I also discuss how gentrification manifests in the present and its more-than-material impacts. In the third chapter, I discuss the theoretical frameworks guiding the research: social disorganization, postcolonialism, and hauntology, and discuss how each of these theoretical frameworks can add to gentrification scholarship. The methods are outlined in Chapter 4. I discuss my ethnographic process and my definition of the field I am conducting my research within. I also discuss the methodological and analytic process of the walking interviews, photovoice, and the geospatial analysis, alongside my approach to triangulating the findings across each of these methods.

---

[2] Gentrification-related indicators are defined here reflect the Davidson and Lees (2005) definition: Changes in demographics (ex. race, ethnicity, education level, median home income), and changes in the physical environment (new developments and rehabilitated houses). This will be defined more explicitly in the methods starting on p. 90.

I present the results in Chapter Five. I begin by giving a detailed description of each of the sub neighborhoods of East Boston, discovered through my ethnographic field work and discussions with key informants and other neighborhood residents. I then detail each of the themes and related sub-themes that emerged through the analysis. I first describe the way residents make meaning of the contested spaces of gentrification, including the way language is used as a way of claiming a 'right to the neighborhood.' I then describe how residents experience loss in various ways through the processes of gentrification, along with the ways in which physical structures and markers of absence represent 'hauntings' that linger in the neighborhood as it gentrifies. Finally, I discuss the ways residents describe their own individual and communal defense of the neighborhood and how informal and formal social control operate within these spaces.

In chapter six, I present a discussion of the findings situated within the broader context of gentrification research and theory and describe how my research builds upon and advances social work and cognate discipline's research. I also discuss the implications of the findings on social policy and social work practice, as well as the limitations of my research and the future research directions driven by my research, the limitations, and the theoretical foundations. Finally, chapter seven concludes with a reflection on the stories my research captured and those still missing, and an invitation for social workers and social policy scholars to come and see the impacts of uneven social policy by engaging within their own communities.

1.3 Significance to Social Work

Empirical research into the impacts of gentrification largely focuses on the material changes to neighborhoods, including demographic changes and property values. While important, this research misses the perspectives of residents in gentrifying neighborhoods. This dissertation addresses a gap in our understanding of the individual and collective perceptions of gentrification through a mixed-methods design that explores how residents engage and make meaning of their neighborhood as it changes. This dissertation is significant to the field of social work because social workers are taught to understand the individual, familial, community, and system-level factors that may affect an individual's well-being. In order to be better service providers, social workers should understand how changing social environments and feelings of belonging in a neighborhood can impact a person's well-being. This could bring about new interventions social workers can use aimed at providing individual and neighborhood-level solutions to individual and family treatment.

From a theoretical standpoint, this dissertation engages with two theoretical frameworks not often used in gentrification research or social work research more broadly: postcolonialism and hauntology. Postcolonialism is largely focused on areas of the world commonly referred to as the Global South – that is to say countries and regions who faced the brutality of European and American colonialism like Africa, Palestine, and India. Activist groups fighting gentrification have been aligning their discourse around gentrification as an act of 'modern colonialism' in urban environments in both its form

and function (Sunjata, 2021). In bringing gentrification in conversation with colonialism, they are connecting the way capital and the state are entering into historically underfunded areas to replace an 'Othered' group (ex. immigrant and working-class) with an in-group, (ex. White and upper-class). The new in-group then receives the financial and political empowerment through their new status as residents (Sunjata, 2021). By turning the lens of colonialism inwards, we can better understand the ways in which capital and the state, through the process of gentrification, create empowered in-groups and displaced 'Othered' groups.

I am also introducing the philosophical theory of hauntology into this study. Hauntology refers to the understanding that our current engagement with the world around us is governed by 'lost futures' – futures that once felt attainable and optimistic but no longer appear to exist – which 'haunt' us in different forms (Fisher, 2014). In neighborhoods undergoing the process of gentrification, this could mean developing an understanding of the ways the physical structures, rehabbed houses, and remnants of evicted families change long-time residents' relationship to their own past and future in the neighborhood. By grappling with the impacts of gentrification through a hauntological lens, we can reevaluate our understanding of how residents engage with place, temporality, and feelings of belonging in the neighborhood.

Focusing on the perspectives of long-time residents is an important foundation for developing interventions aimed at improving well-being. Gentrification is most often framed from a political economy lens that understands its impacts on the changes in rental and property prices, businesses, and demographics (Thurber et al., 2019). Though

important, this lens largely neglects the impacts these processes have on the individual and collective well-being of a neighborhood and its residents, from the perspective of the residents themselves. By bringing more resident perspectives into the gentrification discourse, more avenues for developing social and housing policy recommendations may emerge. This inclusion may prove to be an act of empowerment for those residents who are particularly at-risk for being displaced.

The NASW Code of Ethics urges social workers to "pursue *social change*, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people" as well as to "promote clients' socially responsible *self-determination*" (NASW, n.d.). Thus, social workers are primed to attend to the social consequences of gentrification and to lead research that brings the voices of the communities being most affected, psychologically and economically, by the forces of gentrification and the processes of displacement. This demands that we shift traditional models of research that are conducted *on* historically oppressed communities which only reinforce oppressive hierarchical structures, to models of research that are conducted *in collaboration with* historically oppressed communities which intentionally deconstruct oppressive hierarchical structures. The values of CBPR reinforce this. CBPR has been shown to be rigorous while maintaining a focus on uplifting and centering the voices and perspectives of the historically oppressed communities most at-risk of bearing the brunt of oppressive social policy (Frisby et al., 2005; Seshia, 2018). The rigor of CBPR is in its democratization of knowledge production, which strengthens research science, produces findings and applications that are more broadly relevant, and increases the reach of the

results (Balazs and Morello-Frosch, 2013). Furthermore, this dissertation follows the rich tradition of neighborhood-based research in social work, and by continuing in this tradition, may help to better understand the relationships between the spatial and demographic distribution of changing urban landscapes and their relationship to individual and community well-being.

1.4 The Use of Language

Language, both in its use and function, is an important attribute for communities and individuals to reenforce and express their own cultural identity. While I acknowledge that there is no perfect way to engage with the various ways language is employed, I have been careful to employ inclusive language that was both descriptive of and respectful to the different groups that occupy East Boston. As such, I use this section to describe the various decisions I made surrounding the use of language.

Throughout this paper, I will use the term 'Hispanic' to describe the population of East Boston residents who either directly immigrated from, or whose family immigrated from, Central and South American countries, as well as Puerto Rico. This decision was not taken lightly. Academic institutions and activist organizations tend to use the gender-neutral term 'Latinx' instead of the more gendered terms 'Latino' or 'Latina.' (Yarin, 2022). This, however, was not used by the majority of residents who comprise my sample from Central and South America, nor was it preferred. In my observations, activist organizations in East Boston told me that they were often met with anger and

resistance from the community when they used the 'x' in place of 'o/a' in Spanish terms as an attempt at gender-neutrality. The community conveyed to them that they felt this was disrespectful to their language and culture. Members of the Hispanic community that I engaged with over the course of this dissertation described themselves in various ways: Hispanic, Latin, and Latino/Latin were the most common when not using their country of origin as a signifier. As such, I have chosen to use the term 'Hispanic' for this community due to it being the most commonly endorsed by residents that I talked with in East Boston.

Throughout this dissertation, I describe three different groups within the neighborhood: the old-timers, the Hispanic community, and the newcomers. Each of these terms were chosen and cemented through conversations I had with various members of the community throughout this study. Although they are discussed more thoroughly throughout the findings, I am included a brief description of each group below:

Table 1: Descriptions of demographic categories

The Old-Timers	Neighborhood residents who have family lineages tracing back to family members who moved to the neighborhood from Italy. Whereas many in the Italian-American community moved out of the neighborhood when the Hispanic community began immigrating into the neighborhood, the old-timers represent the cohort of families who remained. Members of this group are White and largely homeowners, though this does not mean they are wealthy homeowners as many still present and identify as working-class.
The Hispanic Community:	Making up the largest share of the current population, members of the Hispanic community began immigrating to the neighborhood in the 1980's and 1990's. Members of this community represent both recent immigrants and their children who were born in East Boston. Families in this community largely come from El Salvador, while a smaller portion come from Venezuela, Columbia, Chile, and Puerto Rico. Members of this community primarily speak Spanish, while a small portion are fluent in both English and Spanish.
The Newcomers	This population make-up the group colloquially termed

'the gentrifiers': most moved in within the past five years and have been moving into the luxury apartments and renovated housing throughout the neighborhood. Although this group is generally defined by their short residency in the neighborhood, they are also largely White, middle-20's to late 30's in age, and largely single.

This is not an exhaustive list, and does not capture the complexity and variation of the different representative racial and ethnic groups in the neighborhood. As an example, there is a large percentage of residents from North Africa and South Asia who have been a part of the neighborhood for decades. Their stories are no less important than those mentioned in the groups above. However, due to my own ability to be granted access to particular groups, I focused my field of study on the relationship between the three groups mentioned above.

Chapter II. Literature Review

Historical descriptions of urban renewal are themselves intimately tied to histories and descriptions of working-class communities throughout time. Scholarly accounts of the oppressive living conditions of the working-class in urban environments and their relationship to systemic pressures can date back to the 19th Century: from Engels holding a microscope to the conditions of working-class families in Manchester in the 1840's, Riis' photojournalism capturing the living conditions in the New York City slums in the 1880's, and DuBois' rich ethnography of the Black community in Philadelphia in the 1890's. The term gentrification was first coined by Ruth Glass in her study of working-class displacement in London in the 1960's. It was meant to describe the process in which the English "gentry" class was moving into the urban centers and remaking the cities in their image (Subramaniam, 2020). Although the process of gentrification is not specific to the United States or England, the focus of this literature review will be in the ways this process manifests in the United States in various ways throughout history. Below I will engage thoroughly with the extant literature that frames this study, considering the historical contexts of urban renewal, the current state of gentrification, the 'more than material' (i.e., the social, political, and cultural impacts) of gentrification and a description of East Boston.

2.1 The History of Urban Renewal: Definitions and unfulfilled promises

Understanding the causes and consequences of gentrification cannot be done without a thorough understanding of the racial politics of disinvestment in major cities prior to recent reinvestment (Boston, 2020). Urban scholars have outlined how the mechanisms of state[3] policies towards urban centers have been enacted in a way that isolates low-income and racial/ethnic minorities into particular areas of the city (Boston, 2020; Carmon, 1999; Slater, 2011; von Hoffman, 2008). Policies such as red lining and urban renewal have created urban conditions where majority White and wealthy residents were separated from working-class and racial/ethnic minority residents, either intentionally or unintentionally (Boston, 2020; Carmon, 1999; Slater, 2011; von Hoffman, 2008). New federal, state, and local housing policies (i.e. HOPE VI and Choice Neighborhoods), however, have been aimed at directing public and private investment into previously disinvested neighborhoods in order to promote economic development into the area thus reversing prior racial/ethnic and class discrimination (HUD, 2015; Rothstein, 2020; Zielenbach et al., 2010). In order to contextualize the current scope of gentrification and its relation to the maintenance of social and racial hierarchies, it is first important to situate gentrification within the history of the problematizing of urban renewal and the public policy response, which I will begin doing below.

---

[3] I will be differentiating between the state as it is broadly conceptualized (i.e. the governing structures of society) and the State as in the State of Massachusetts.

2.1.1 Urban "Blight"

In the early part of the 20th century, wealthy property owners and politicians were paying increased attention to the slowing population growth and demographic changes in major US cities (von Hoffman, 2008). In particular, business leaders, politicians, and real-estate investors were voicing concern that an increase in industrial workplaces and the lower-class families and immigrants that often accompanied were causing more affluent residents to leave the city (von Hoffman, 2008). That, coupled with the increase in cheap and dilapidated housing that housed these new industrial workers and their families, led to a lowering of property values (Avila & Rose, 2009; von Hoffman, 2008).

Led by a coalition of social workers, Progressive politicians, intellectuals, urban professionals, and business and property owners, the ideals of urban reform coalesced around the project of slum clearance in early 1920's New York (Zipp, 2012). This approach to what was seen as the problem of industrialization of urban environments was not without its detractors, however (Zipp, 2012). Leftist urbanists and those swayed by socialist urban planning were immediately opposed to the clearing of dilapidated housing, believing it would be more equitable to build on the outskirts of already-existing cities where the urban and the rural environments could exist in an idealized state of harmony (Zipp, 2012). "Housers", as they called themselves, were generally skeptical of any intervention that was supported by property-owning and capitalist classes, and feared that

paying landlords to remove dilapidated housing would result in more privately-funded housing projects instead of publicly-funded government housing (Zipp, 2012).

This gulf in idealized solutions to urban squalor soon narrowed, however, with both groups embracing the government intervention into housing through New Deal-era housing policies such as the 1937 Wagner Housing Act (Carmon, 1999; Zipp, 2012). This support came in large part over the 1937 Housing Act proposing slum clearance that made way for public housing that embraced the aesthetic ideals of the modernist view of housing (Carmon, 1999; Zipp, 2012). As the New Deal-era housing reform was implemented with the backing of two previously ideologically opposed groups, the era of slum clearance came to a close and gave way to an era defined by an idealized urban renewal (Carmon, 1999; Von Hoffman, 2008; Zipp, 2012).

2.1.2 Urban Renewal's Unfulfilled Promises

It is important to reiterate that urban renewal began first with the bulldozing of blighted properties and communities (Carmon, 1999; Von Hoffman, 2008; Zipp, 2012). It was federal policy to create urban spaces that made 'better use' of the land; that is to say the goal was to create an urban environment that was more suitable for commerce (Carmon, 1999; Von Hoffman, 2008; Zipp, 2012). The racial and class dimensions of this should not be understated; in order to make urban spaces more hospitable to commerce, the working-poor who occupied these areas needed to be driven out so that middle-class

families and businesses could be moved in (Carmon, 1999; Zipp, 2012). The policies of removal and renewal thus go hand-in-hand, with each supporting the other.

Although the 1937 Housing Act made slum clearance a federal policy, it wasn't until 1954 that the phrase 'urban renewal' was widely used (Avila and Rose, 2009). The 1954 Housing Act expanded the scope of government intervention into urban renewal to include nonresidential locations to include business districts (Avila and Rose, 2009). This process paved the way for an urban renewal that became more focused on the promotion of economic benefits to renewing urban spaces rather housing families (Avila and Rose, 2009; Slater, 2011). Authority over government-funded urban renewal projects began to shift away from the federal government and towards more localized control, albeit in the hands of local politicians such as mayors (Avila and Rose, 2009). During this time, however, the promise of urban renewal remained unfulfilled, at least in the way it was initially promoted; while successful in promoting the demolition of urban dwellings, few of these projects resulted in new housing projects, many of which took decades to complete, and many families were displaced while few families were rehoused (Avila and Rose, 2009; Carmon, 1999). Meanwhile, large-scale developers leveraged large sums of federal money to instead focus on economic growth over housing, continuing to replace housing units with high-rises apartments and office buildings. (Avila and Rose, 2009; Carmon, 1999).

The 1960's began to shift the public conversation around urban and rural poverty, thanks in large part to Michael Harrington's (1962) book *The Other America* (Carmon, 1999). During this time, the American social milieu began a 'rediscovery of poverty' in

the rural and urban environments (Carmon, 1999; Harrington, 1962). This zeitgeist shift brought with it a greater public acceptance around government spending on social welfare and poverty alleviation (Carmon, 1999). During this time the Department of Housing and Urban Development was created which funneled billions of dollars into targeted urban areas aimed at creating social programs meant to alleviate poverty (Carmon, 1999). Despite public support and large sums of government money being spent, these programs were largely considered a failure, with a large gulf existing between the success and the promises of these programs (Carmon, 1999; Von Hoffman, 2008).

Throughout the intervening years, the types of urban renewal approaches that had hitherto been attempted (i.e., federally funded and directed) began to be replaced with an approach that sought to explicitly promote economic development (Avila and Rose, 2009; Carmon, 1999). This was also happening within the racial and class contexts of 'White flight', where droves of middle- and upper-classed White residents left urban areas to live in the burgeoning suburban landscape surrounding the cities in the 1960's and 1970's (Avila and Rose, 2009; Carmon, 1999). The economic gap left by the departure of White families from cities and neighborhoods meant little political will remained to commit large sums of federal money into urban renewal, as the very families the programs meant to promote into the cities (White, upper- and middle-class) had all but left (Avila and Rose, 2009; Carmon, 1999; Slater, 2011; Von Hoffman, 2008). In the wake of this, urban environments and public housing began to deteriorate, only furthering

the racial and class-based narratives of cities as hotbeds of crime and decay (Avila and

Rose, 2009; Carmon, 1999; Slater, 2011; Von Hoffman, 2008).

2.2 The current landscape of gentrification

The coalition that formed in the 1930's between social reformers, politicians, and

the urban capitalist classes has continued into the current era of housing and urban

reform. In the early 1990's, the continuing discourse surrounding decaying urban

landscapes and social disorganization led to a reengagement of federal policies towards

urban environments that relied on the types of public-private partnerships promoted by

early urban reformers (Avila & Rose, 2009; von Hoffman, 2008). Although capital

reinvestment into urban environments has taken many forms, the federal Housing

Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE) VI program is one of the most notable

examples of this urban renewal policy shift. The overarching goal of the program was to

replace and repair distressed public and HUD-funded housing through targeted funding

and over time became a tool for promoting neighborhood development more broadly

(Zielenbach et al., 2010). Starting in 1992 and formally ending in 2010, HOPE VI

invested approximately $6.5 billion into the nation's most economically distressed

neighborhoods (Zielenbach et al., 2010).

Similar in aim to HOPE VI, Choice Neighborhoods came into existence as HOPE

VI ended and as part of the White House Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative (HUD,

2015). Between 2010 and 2015, Choice Neighborhoods distributed $371 million into

neighborhoods with distressed public or HUD-assisted housing (HUD, 2015). In that same period of time, the program reports to have leveraged more than $2.6 billion in private funding into these same neighborhoods (HUD, 2015). These amounts do not, however, account for private money that has been promoting development in neighborhoods that haven't received government grants. What's more, between 1993 and 2003, more than 49,000 residents were displaced from their homes permanently as a result of HOPE VI funding and redevelopment, with more than half of those displaced ending up in a different public housing development (GAO, 2003).

Research on the effect of this federal funding has shown mixed results. Some of the more limited and descriptive research appears to point to rent and property increases in some of the neighborhoods that received large influxes of both public and private funds, though much of this research was limited in scope (GAO, 2003; Zielenbach et al., 2010; Zielenbach and Voith, 2010). More rigorous research by Tach and Emory (2017) found that poverty rates declined and economic diversity increased in areas that saw government intervention into neighborhoods with public housing. This may also be the product of displacement rather than lifting families out of poverty – low-income units were often demolished and replaced with mixed-income and market rate units for this very purpose. Authors critical of HOPE VI funding have made connections from its demolition practices to the practice of slum clearance and urban renewal in the early 20th century (Keating, 2000).

Much of the current research has methodological limitations that inhibit assessing whether there is a causal relationship between the federal funding of HOPE VI and

Choice Neighborhoods and gentrification (Coley et al., 2022; Tach and Emory, 2017). Recent research that has addressed these limitations suggests that HOPE VI may have hastened these already-occurring neighborhood changes in rental prices (Teixiera et al., 2023). These findings suggest that, while there were broad changes to the urban environment occurring all over the United States, federal funding appears to be a catalyst for the hastening of those changes overall (Teixeira et al., 2023). The long-term consequences of this funding and its spillover effects on surrounding neighborhoods appears to show a waning in effect over time, although continued research would need to be done to more thoroughly suggest this (Teixeira et al., 2023). More importantly, while these funding mechanisms may send shockwaves throughout a neighborhood that lead to increased rent, this does not account for neighborhoods and cities where HOPE VI funding did not occur, that have also seen rent increases.

The growing research into gentrification has noted the complex nature of quantifying gentrification with census data and spatial analysis (Easton et al., 2020). Whether it is the result of federal funding mechanisms or not, the past 30 years has seen rental prices increasing by at least 12%, outpacing income growth for most Americans (HUD, n.d., Mazzara, 2019). Furthermore, between 2000 and 2013, more than 135,000 individuals had been displaced from their homes, with Black individuals accounting for more than 110,000 (Richardson et al., 2014). The growing gentrification-related research has often shown the racial stratification in residential mobility and experiences of gentrification (Rucks-Ahidiana, 2022; Hwang and Din, 2020). There is also research that shows mixed results for transit-oriented development, or the strategy of building housing

near public transit infrastructure, being a potential driver of gentrification (Padeiro et al., 2019). As this area of research continues to grow the extent to which gentrification's multiple drivers and impacts should continue to be assessed.

2.3 Gentrification and social control

Key to understanding the changing social dynamics within a neighborhood is the concept of social control, or the ways that neighborhood residents enforce the safety and norms of the neighborhood. The concept of social control is an important mechanism that is frequently used to understand and explain neighborhood responses to social problems such as disorder and crime (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003). For Sampson (1997) and later Sampson and Raudenbush (2004), social control would play a major role in the development of their theory of collective efficacy, which posited that informal social control (e.g., residents' willingness to intervene if children were damaging public property) and social cohesion (e.g., residents' perception that people in the neighborhood get along with each other) are two key predictors of neighborhood health and functioning.

As a community gentrifies, however, the model of collective efficacy appears no longer sufficient to mediate violent crime (Kozey, 2020). Forces of gentrification also tend to increase the presence of police in areas currently being developed (Beck, 2020). In New York City, Beck (2020) found that there was an increase in the number of calls to the police associated with an increase in higher-income residents moving into the neighborhood. Policing is responsive to changes in the real-estate market, with increased

attempts to "clean up" areas where redevelopment is occurring, a process Beck (2020) refers to as "development-directed policing" (p. 247). The increase in police presence in neighborhoods undergoing gentrification may diminish the community's own ability to be vigilant and creates an unsafe environment for marginalized community members (Dozier, 2019; Kochel and Gau, 2021; Lyons et al., 2017). What's more, researchers in New York and Chicago have demonstrated how the negative perceptions of change in the neighborhood may lead longtime residents to direct their anger about redevelopment towards the new residents in the form of violent altercations (Beck, 2020; Kozey, 2020). These altercations may lead to further interactions with the police, potentially escalating the tensions further. While there does appear to be some support for the idea that processes of gentrification has a negative effect on neighborhood collective efficacy, this is still a very new line of research and much more is needed to confirm whether or not this is the case (Beck, 2020; Kochel and Gau, 2021; Kozey, 2020).

2.4 Gentrification and well-being

The theory of political economy is a common theoretical framework used to understand the impacts of gentrification, which emphasizes how the economic stressors experienced by residents during gentrification are themselves the inevitable result of capitalism (Lees et al., 2013). As a result, this lens often frames a possible solution to these economic stressors as a need for more access to affordable housing (Thurber et al., 2019). This singular focus, however, often ignores the lived experiences of community

members witnessing and undergoing the processes of gentrification and subsequent displacement (Thurber et al., 2019). These "more than material" effects, however, are nonetheless important in gathering a more thorough understanding of the effects of gentrification and its potential solutions (Thurber et al., 2019). Given social work's disciplinary mandates to address structural vulnerabilities, reframing the discussion surrounding gentrification in this way is of particular interest to our field.

The exploration of the "more than material" is fairly new and thus limited in gentrification research, despite prior ethnographic work by Gans (1962) and Sennet and Cobb (1972), among others. Research that has begun to explore this aspect has found quite consistently that there is, in fact, a psychological impact to experiencing gentrification and development-directed displacement (Fullilove, 2004; Koelsch et al., 2017; Pain, 2019; Thurber et al., 2019). Residents who have experienced the often slow change of their environment and the displacement of friends and family from their neighborhoods often describe a seemingly contradictory duality: belonging and alienation (Koelsch et al., 2017). Belonging seems to happen in two movements: a remembrance of what it was like to feel as though you belong in your environment, and the subsequent feeling of loss of that belonging that is currently felt (Koelsch et al., 2017).

The forced changes in one's environment, which contribute to a sense of alienation and loss, have been shown to result in symptoms similar to diagnosable trauma (Fullilove, 2004; Pain, 2019). Fullilove's (2004) diagnostic conceptualization "root shock" describes this very concept as it relates to individuals who have been displaced from their neighborhoods due to the forces of gentrification. "Root shock" and what is

referred to as "chronic urban trauma" are a direct result of what Pain calls the 'slow violence' of a city as it experiences gentrification (Fullilove, 2004; Pain, 2019; Till, 2012). For these researchers, trauma extends beyond a singular moment and instead reoccurs over and over again, often rooted in a particular place (Pain, 2019; Till, 2012). This expansion of the concept of trauma to research on gentrification is a unique opportunity for social work research, allowing the field to "broaden the study of gentrification beyond locating its structural causes to understanding possibilities for — and lending our hands to — local resistance" (Thurber et al., 2019).

2.5 The history of urban renewal and gentrification in Boston

The history of urban renewal in Boston is one that is complicated and often contradictory, promising racial integration and blight removal with the support of the community slowly waning over time (Hock, 2012). One of the first studies of the effect of urban renewal on residents' social ties and self-perception was Herbert J. Gans's (1962) ethnography *The Urban Villagers*. Gans (1962) studied second generation Italian-Americans in Boston's West End before and during the neighborhood's razing to make way for redevelopment (Banton, 1963). Gans (1962) notes that the decision on behalf of the City of Boston to deem this community in need of demolition and renewal was made without the considerations of the rich social ties already in existence, and that this decision could be said to have more to do with a desire to disperse a neighborhood based on their ethnic and class identities (Banton, 1963). Though written in the early 1960's,

the effect of this project of urban renewal as noted by Gans (1962) was one that has been replicated in numerous subsequent studies: the disruption of deep social ties by the displacement of over 3,000 families as a result of the urban renewal project (Renewing Inequality, n.d.). Other early studies of urban renewal and social class in Boston found that psychological well-being is directly related to the social and how we perceive ourselves within our environment (Ramsden and Smith, 2018; Sennett and Cobb, 1972).

Recent research into the effects of urban renewal projects in Boston have found generally mixed outcomes compared to the promises of increased safety and economic advancement espoused by the different projects that have occurred throughout the city (Graves, 2011; Marques, 2020; Miller, 2019; Pan, 2020; Tiernan, 2020). As noted in the previous section, urban renewal policies promise to decrease social disorder and poverty by incentivizing higher income individuals and families to move into the area. These mechanisms in Boston have followed national trends, resulting in higher rent and property costs and causing Boston to become the third most intensely gentrified city in the United States (Marques, 2020; Miller, 2019; Pan, 2020; Tiernan, 2020). Neighborhoods with the greatest gentrification between 2000 and 2020 were overwhelmingly Black and Hispanic (BPDA, 2021; Pan, 2020). These same neighborhoods also saw the greatest displacement of historically oppressed populations (BPDA, 2021; Pan, 2020) For example, the non-Hispanic White population saw the slowest growth between 2010 and 2020 at 3.8%, but that growth was almost entirely focused in the city center while large decreases in the non-Hispanic White population were seen in outer ring Boston neighborhoods (e.g., Hyde Park, West Roxbury, Allston,

and Brighton) (BPDA, 2021). Conversely, the non-Hispanic Black population fell by

6.4% over the same 10-year period in nearly the same neighborhoods where the White

population grew the most (excluding Downtown and North End) (BPDA, 2021).

Higher-income individuals and families who move into these neighborhoods

following urban renewal projects do not always integrate into the established social

structures, which may leave current residents to feel as though they no longer belong in

their community (Graves, 2011; Miller, 2019). Class dynamics in mixed-income

developments tend to promote the increases in control mechanisms, such as the police

and security systems, to the benefit of the new, upper-class residents (Beck, 2020;

Graves, 2011). In East Boston, wealthier residents who moved into new mixed-income

housing largely focused their attention towards neighborhood improvement measures that

promoted safety and security (i.e. more police presence and security cameras) instead of

other neighborhood improvement measures (Graves, 2011). These complicated realities

are often glossed over by those that promote these new neighborhoods, using a veneer of

"carefully managed cultural pluralism" that favors an imagined socio-cultural diversity

against the reality of displacement (Mandl, 2015, para. 9).

What more recent studies of the phenomenon of gentrification often miss,

however, are precisely what Gans (1962) explored through his early ethnography; that is,

in primarily focusing on the economic and housing effects of gentrification we miss what

Thurber (2019) and colleagues deem the "more than material", the intersection of sense

of self, socio-ethnic identities, and their attachment to place. A more thorough

understanding to these effects is needed to better understand the extent gentrification

impacts the "more than material" realities of residents. For the reasons mentioned above, Boston is an ideal setting to conduct research that aims at better understanding these realities. In particular, this dissertation will focus on the Boston neighborhood of East Boston, which has seen a large growth in gentrification-related indicators over the years. I will now set up the local context of this dissertation by describing the geographic, social, and demographic context of East Boston.

2.6 The Study Site: East Boston

Geographically, East Boston is bordered on the North by the city of Revere, MA, and by Boston Harbor in every other direction. East Boston is made up of three primary sub-neighborhoods, each with their own history and character: Eagle Hill, Orient Heights, and Jeffries Point. Figure 1 shows the neighborhood of East Boston in the relation to the City of Boston, and Figure 2 below shows the boundaries of East Boston and the sub neighborhoods encompassed within it. In the Findings, I will go engage in a deeper description of each sub neighborhood.

Figure 1: East Boston in the context of the City of Boston
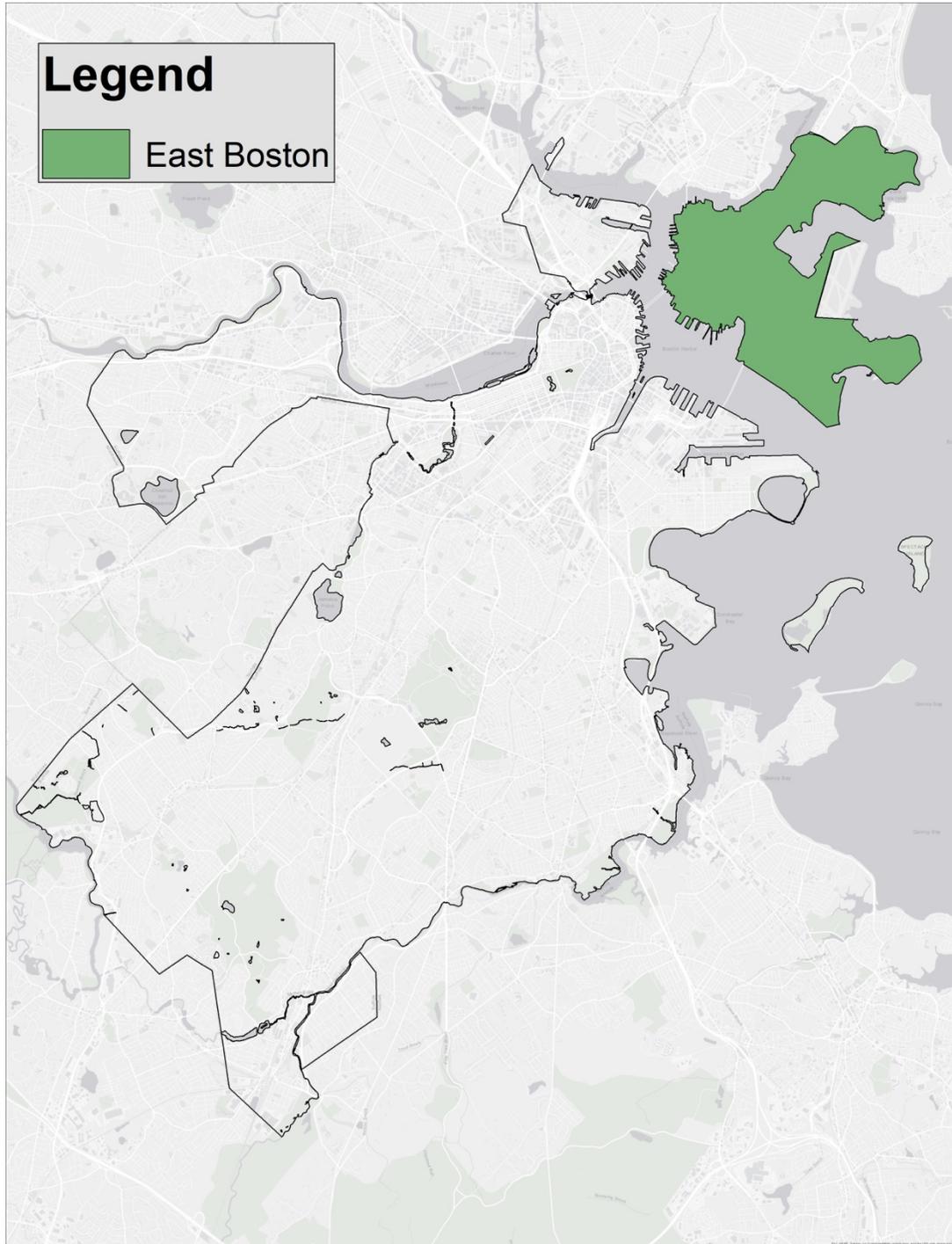
Figure 2: Neighborhood and sub-neighborhood boundaries in East Boston
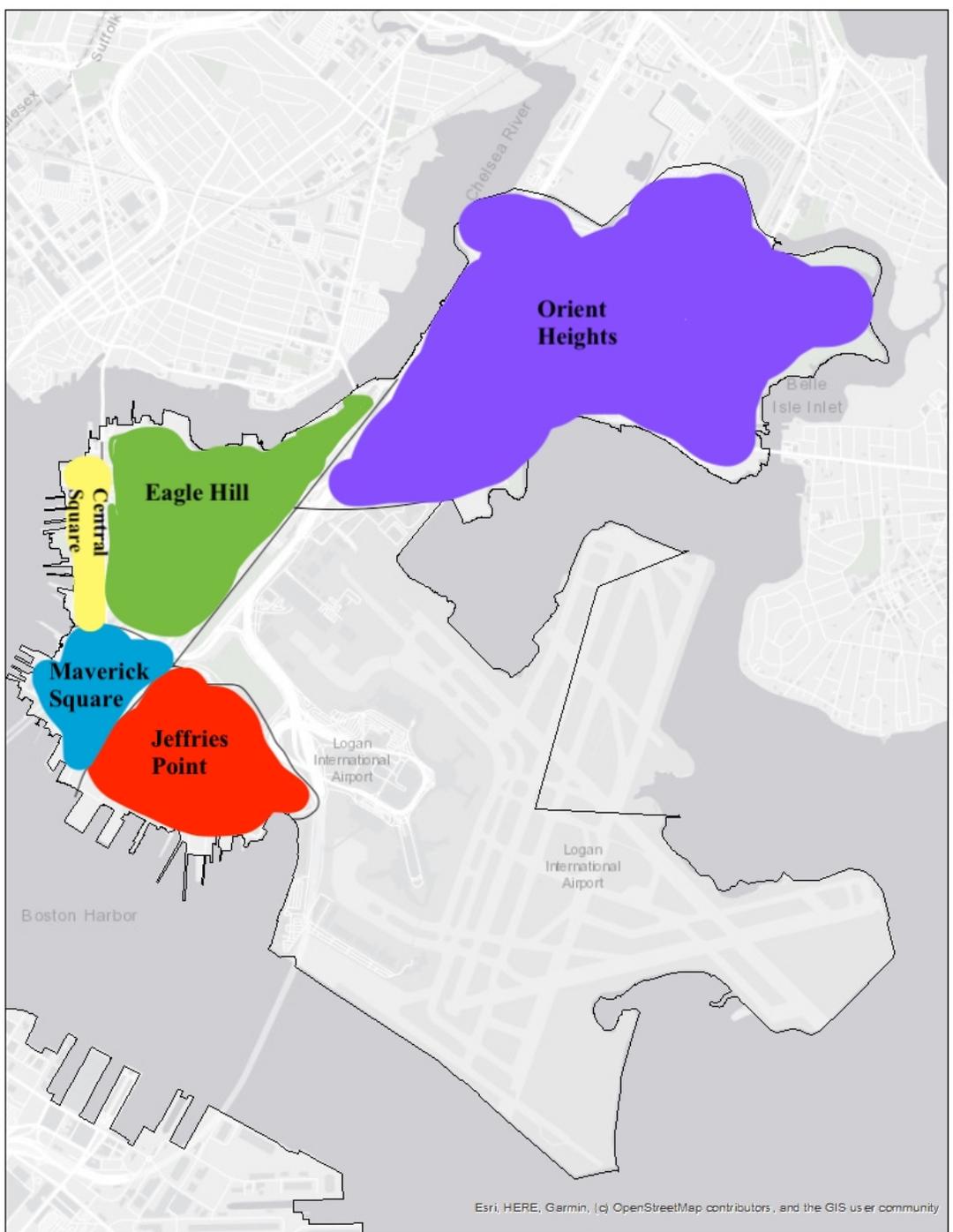
Historically, the neighborhood was predominantly Italian-American (Mahato, 2018). As immigrants from Central and South America began to move into the neighborhood, the White, ethnically-Italian residents began to move out of the neighborhood, either towards the outskirts of Orient Heights or into the cities of Winthrop and Revere (Mahato, 2018). Currently, the neighborhood is more than 50% Hispanic, and around 36% non-Hispanic White (BPDA, 2021). The White population in East Boston has grown around 5% over the past 20 years, greater than any other racial and ethnic group in the neighborhood (BPDA, 2021). Much of that growth is occurring in the Jeffries Point neighborhood, which is the site of much recent residential development (Miller, 2019; Tiernan, 2020).

I selected East Boston as the focus of this dissertation because it is the site of substantial recent capital reinvestment and has been a focus of gentrification-related activism and policy attention (Miller, 2019; Tiernan, 2020). As a resident of East Boston, I was in an ideal position to embed myself using an ethnographic approach. Local activists have been vocal about concerns related to gentrification in East Boston. Over the past 10 years, the neighborhood has seen increases in rent, changes in demographics, and a slow displacement of current residents (Marques, 2020; Miller, 2019; Tiernan, 2020). Rent in East Boston has more than tripled since 2000, rising from $875/month for a one-bedroom apartment to around $2,600/month (Tiernan, 2020). New developments are also changing the physical character of the neighborhood. The majority of developments are for studio and one-bedroom apartments while the average family size in East Boston is between 2 and 3 people (2.66) (Miller, 2019). Between 2019 and 2021 research found

that the Zoning Board Administration (ZBA), the bureaucratic office tasked with enforcing zoning ordinances in Boston, approved around 90% of the zoning variances requested by developers (Infraca and Farris, 2023). These variances are often being approved with little discussion on the merits of the variances from the ZBA, who generally accepts that 'loss of revenue' falls into the domain of 'significant hardship' required by the zoning laws (Infraca and Farris, 2023). The process for approving zoning variances for new construction includes a community process wherein developers and their lawyers are required to have the construction voted on for approval by neighbors through the relevant neighborhood association. Researchers found that in nearly all cases where the requested variances were met with opposition or "no support" from neighbors, variances were still approved (Infraca and Farris, 2023). Of the approved variances, East Boston received more than any other neighborhood in the city (Infraca and Farris, 2023).

Given the active role residents have taken in expressing their needs as a community, along with the available data on building developments in the neighborhood and that it is situated within one of the most rapidly gentrifying cities in the United States, East Boston is an ideal neighborhood in which to address my research questions.

Chapter III: Theoretical Frameworks

This dissertation draws on three overlapping theoretical and conceptual frameworks that aim to explain the interaction between community members, political actors, development companies, and the overall perception of neighborhood change in East Boston. In this discussion, I draw on social disorganization theory and two theoretical frameworks underutilized in social work research: postcolonial theory and hauntology. First, I will discuss how social disorganization theory, along with the concepts of social capital and collective efficacy, describe neighborhood social relationships and how they are affected by the changes in social environments that gentrification often brings. Next, I will explore how postcolonial theory, though primarily used in international research, can help to frame how marginalized communities in the US have been made to feel "othered" by the state power and capitalism that drive gentrification. Here, I will bring in the conceptual frameworks of root shock and chronic urban trauma as a way to make clear the impacts of these processes. Finally, the theoretical framework of hauntology will be explored as a way of understanding how memories of how a community once existed compared to its current reality may *haunt* the community, bringing with it a sense of loss and alienation.

3.1 Social Disorganization Theory

First advanced by Shaw and McKay (1969), social disorganization theory posits that the places that people inhabit are more important in understanding how crime functions than the kinds of people that inhabit those spaces (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003). Shaw and McKay (1969) attempted to understand the spatial distribution of criminal behavior by drawing a relationship between neighborhood characteristics and crime rates in Chicago neighborhoods (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003). They found that racial and ethnic changes in the make-up of the neighborhood did not change the crime rate across Chicago neighborhoods (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003). Poverty, residential mobility, racial and ethnic heterogeneity, and weak social networks were found to be the drivers of neighborhood crime, leading to decreased opportunities for community members to collectively control neighborhood behavior (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003).

The theory fell out of academic favor in subsequent years, only to regain traction in the late 1980s and 1990s with the explosion in interest in neighborhood effects research (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003). During that time, prominent sociological research pushed the theory to include a deeper understanding of the interaction between intra-neighborhood relationships, structural conditions, and neighborhood violence and crime (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003). Two of these prominent efforts sought to test the assumptions of social disorganization theory: Sampson and Groves (1989) emphasized the importance of friendship networks and teenage supervision, while Bursik and Grasmick (1993) found a need to better understand the economic and political systems

that contextualize the neighborhoods. Out of this, two new factors were considered to expand social disorganization theory: informal social control and social cohesion. These two factors would go on to inform the collective efficacy model put forth by Sampson (1997) and later Sampson, Morenoff, and Earls (1999).

3.1.1 Collective Efficacy

Prior to the concept of collective efficacy, it was thought that social ties between neighbors, and the social capital they build, was the primary factor driving healthy communities (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003). Social capital, or the intangible resources produced in relations between people acting in mutual benefit, contends that social relations often have the capacity to create a shared trust and obligation towards one another (Coleman, 1988). According to the social capital framework, resources, such as obligations and trust, are more important to the facilitation of social control than the ties themselves (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003). As an example, a long-time resident of a neighborhood may share what they feel are the norms and obligations of the neighborhood to a new neighbor with the expectations that they will act in accordance with these norms and obligations.

While social networks and ties seem to have a relationship to social control, they do not appear to be solely sufficient in developing a sense of community action (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003). What appeared to be missing was the collective willingness to take action on behalf of a neighborhood that is fostered by social ties (Kubrin and Weitzer,

2003). While social capital may have this capacity, it is by definition a byproduct of other social activities and thus rarely recognized and employed as a means of social control (Coleman, 1988; Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003). Sampson and colleagues' (1997) concept of collective efficacy, or the way community members work collectively to solve problems, relies on purposive communal action. This construct of collective efficacy, linking communal trust and collective intervention for the common good, would be found to be a strong moderator for reducing violent crime in neighborhoods (Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson et al., 1997; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999).

In recent years, however, the function of social control, as it is often understood and used in neighborhood research, has come into question as authors have attempted to disentangle social control used informally within a neighborhood from formal social control mechanisms like policing (Gearhardt, 2019). Recent research that has incorporated measures of collective efficacy in research on community policing does not appear to support the claim that police in a neighborhood improve the collective efficacy of that neighborhood (Beck, 2020; Kochel and Gau, 2021; Wells et al., 2006; Xu et al., 2005). Kochel and Gau (2021) as well as Wells and colleagues (2006) have taken collective efficacy's mixed ability to predict crime and social disorganization in a neighborhood to claim that police are more necessary than believed and that community engagement is therefore unnecessary. It may also be true that these findings provide evidence that police-presence itself does not actively deter crime or predict greater informal social control, and that neighborhood factors need to be further explored. What seems to be clear from most research, however, is that social cohesion might be the

greater predictor of these outcomes, adding evidence for the argument that collective efficacy should instead be measured as two distinct concepts, informal social control and social cohesion, rather than a single concept (Gearhart, 2019; Kochel and Gau, 2021)

3.2 Postcolonial Theory

Whereas social disorganization theory and collective efficacy offer up insight into the behaviors of residents within a neighborhood, postcolonial theory offers a critical engagement with the context that these neighborhoods exist within. Postcolonial theory is the generalized theory used to understand the impact of colonialism on the economic, political, aesthetic, and social relationships in formerly colonized regions (Garrett, 2020). The theory is often said to have three founding thinkers: Said, Bhabha, and Spivak (Ali, 2007). Postcolonial theory has served as a useful theory for understanding how oppressed communities perceive themselves and their relationship to systems of control such as the state[4] and the police along with wealthy and extractive industries (Ali, 2007; Rukundwa and van Arde, 2007; Stam and Shohat, 2012). Prior to those often identified as the founding thinkers, Franz Fanon set forth the groundwork for what would inspire later inspire the theoretical underpinnings of postcolonial theory in his assessment of the Algerian people under French colonial rule (Ali, 2007; Garrett, 2020). Fanon's approach

---

[4] Throughout, I use the term "the state" as a stand-in for all the functions of the government, including policing, legislative actions, and legal actions.

to understanding the impact of the violence of colonial rule was to do so in his role as a

psychiatrist, presenting case studies of four individuals who suffer from some form of

traumatic stress (Fanon, 1961). For Fanon, the greatest impact of colonialism was in how

it stripped indigenous identity from its subjects, which resulted in individuals either

adopting the identity of the colonial oppressor or adopting the tactic of the colonial

oppressor (i.e. retrofitting an identity as a nation-state) (Fanon, 1961).

A common conceptualization in postcolonial studies is that of "the Other", or "the

Self waiting to be assimilated" (Khair, 2009, p. 4). That is, the Other is the inverse of

what is considered the dominant identity, national, racial, and otherwise (Khair, 2009).

Though the concept of the Other is not necessarily racialized or nationalized, in Western

literature, culture, and politics, the Other is often identified as the colonized African

and/or Arabian, and currently as the immigrant/refugee from Africa and the Middle East

(Khair, 2009). National identity is thus only significant and meaningful in contrast to the

Others (Triandafyllidou, 1998). For Fanon (1961), this forced Othering of individuals

within their own communities and cultures was a traumatic event that left them feeling as

though they lacked a cohesive self- and communal identity (Ali, 2007; Fanon, 1961;

Garrett, 2020). The traumatic impact of colonial violence, both object and subjective,

brought a human dimension to the discussion surrounding colonial rule; we were now

able to understand that there was more than simply an economic impact to colonialism

and violence, but also a psychic impact (Fanon, 1961).

Postcolonial concepts like the Other and the Fanonian theorization of colonial

trauma are useful in understanding how urban communities that had been effectively

neglected by the state and capital[5] were at once meant to feel Othered in their own country, then again in their own community as higher-income people moved in and the racial identity of the communities began to change (Roy, 2015; Triandafyllidou, 1998). Postcolonialism also challenges current theories of urban studies that maintain a universal understanding of the city (Roy, 2015). In developing a universal definition of the urban, we are flattening the particular identities and social relations that exist in the urban in service of applying a particular (primarily Eurocentric) concept of the urban (Roy, 2015). Here I will take this application of postcolonial theory to understand the way gentrification may displace current residents in favor of new residents who are wealthier, and often White. Postcolonial theory can also be used to understand the traumatic impacts of displacement on residents. Below, I will discuss how Till's (2012) idea of 'wounded cities' and Pain's (2019) chronic urban trauma will be further used in this understanding through a postcolonial lens.

3.2.1 Wounded cities and chronic urban trauma

Thurber and colleagues (2019) have described a lack of attention in social work research related to the effects of gentrification. According to the authors, the lack of a

---

[5] Here, I am using *capital* in the Marxist sense of the word: that is it is the accumulation of wealth used to garner greater purchasing power (and therefore more wealth accumulation) as well as the social relation this type of wealth accumulation creates.

social work perspective has implications for the broader study of gentrification. For example, research on gentrification has largely focused on its effect on the affordable housing market while often ignoring what they call 'more than material': the psychological and traumatic effects. Drawing on the postcolonial framing of trauma and its understanding of the urban environment, chronic urban trauma describes the effects of neoliberal forces that ultimately drive gentrification (Nixon, 2011; Pain, 2019). These forces that have driven the processes of gentrification have created what Till (2012) calls 'wounded cities', urban places that have been (re)structured through their histories of disinvestment and displacement. This entire process is what Pain (2019) describes as the 'slow violence' of the city resulting in a chronic urban trauma. The 'slow violence' at the heart of gentrification is reoccurring, happening at once through the slow processes of state and private disinvestment of the neighborhood, then again through the processes of reinvestment that often result in the displacement of current residents (Fullilove; 2004; Pain, 2019).

Chronic urban trauma is both individual and social, with the experience of gentrification affecting the communal relations that have built up over time (Till, 2012). The environmental and demographic changes that occur as a result of gentrification create a duality in long-time residents: remembrance and longing for past belonging, and current feelings of alienation from friends and family (Koelsch et al., 2017). The conceptualization of chronic urban trauma pulls from Fullilove's (2004) concept of 'root shock', the traumatic stress brought on by long term disruption and displacement in one's own environment. The idea is that community members, displaced from their homes due

to the economic effects of the forces of gentrification (such as increased rent and the subsequent loss of memories and belonging) present symptoms not dissimilar to post-traumatic stress disorder (Fullilove, 2004).

There is a connection to be made here between chronic urban trauma's postcolonial conception of the traumatic reaction to the neoliberal urban environment, and Sampson and colleagues' (1997) theory of collective efficacy. The economic and social outcomes of gentrification often result in a lowering, or complete loss of, a neighborhood's belief in their ability to communally solve problems for the betterment of the neighborhood (Kozey, 2020). This loss affects how long-time residents of the community see their place in the neighborhood, creating the alienation associated with the trauma of 'root shock' (Fullilove, 2004; Pain, 2019; Till, 2012). What I see as missing in this relationship is a conceptualization of how residents perceive the structural and environmental change in their neighborhoods beyond a diagnostic understanding of psychological well-being and instead how their perception of change effects their understanding of their place in the future of the city. My final theoretical framework, hauntology, attempts to address this gap.

3.3 Hauntology

Rooted firmly in phenomenology, hauntology was first expressed in full by French philosopher Jacques Derrida in his book *Specters of Marx* (1993)*.* Derrida's portmanteau of 'haunt' and 'ontology' is used to explain how the social and cultural

elements of our past persistently return to the present (Derrida, 1993; Fisher, 2012). Whereas ontology is the study of understanding being and existence, hauntology is a way of understanding the present as an intrusion of the past that gestures towards a potential future (Derrida, 1993; Davis, 2005). To that end, hauntology sees the present as unstable on its own. As Fisher (2014) describes:

> "Let's put it this way: it's easy to say, "Oh, things were great in the 70s, let's go back to the 70s," but I think the real issue is "What kind of future did we expect from the 70s?" I mean, there was a trajectory, and this trajectory was interrupted. And now we find ourselves haunted by this future that we vaguely expected at the time, and that was terminated somewhere…" (para. 8)

Derrida's (1993) exploration of this idea came directly from his attempt at understanding the meaning of Marxism after the collapse of the Soviet Union. His goal in the text was to counter Fukayama's notion of 'the end of history'[6] and to instead invoke the seeming death of communism as the rebirth of Marxist analysis of current and future

---

[6] Francis Fukuyama refers to the 'end of history' as beginning at the fall of the Soviet Union: "What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." (Fukuyama, 1989, p. 4).

crises (Derrida, 1993). Marx, in this sense, is a ghost[7] that haunts our present political and economic relationships and gestures towards an uncertain, possibly unimaginable, future.

Mark Fisher (2009, 2014) significantly expanded Derrida's formulation of Hauntology in his works *Capitalist Realism* and *Ghosts of My Life*. Fisher (2012) was particularly interested in the bidirectional temporality of Derrida's concept: it represents both that which is no longer present, and that which has not yet happened but is already affecting the present. For Fisher (2009), this understanding led to his belief in the 'slow cancelation of the future'. For Fisher, the capitalist mode of production had created an image of the future that was quickly becoming nonexistent; our cultural forces were no longer forward-thinking, instead gripped by the nostalgia of an idealized past. This looking backwards meant that the haunting was no longer purely from the past, but from a 'lost future' that a more hopeful past pointed towards (Fisher, 2012). For both Derrida and Fisher, the seeming abandonment of Marxism by the Soviet Union and the rise of neoliberalism in global economics meant that a once-promised future by the Left[8] appeared no longer to be a given. And it was in this realization that we are haunted by these 'lost futures.'

---

[7] It is important here to not understand the terms "ghost", "specter", and "haunt" as literal, an assertion of the legitimacy of the paranormal, but instead as metaphorical in that these processes act in the way ghosts and specters are believed to act.

[8] I am using the term "the Left" as a signifier for all political ideologies to the political left of American Liberalism, i.e. communism, democratic socialism, anarchism, and so on.

Fisher's (2012) application of hauntology was primarily aimed at pop culture (e.g., music, television, movies). Not only was this a departure from Derrida's (1993) purely political exploration of the concept, but this also expanded the relevant application of hauntology to domains outside of political philosophy. It is here that I see the value in hauntology's theoretical underpinnings on my understanding of the 'more than material' effects of gentrification.

Sociologist Avery Gordon (2008) describes social hauntings as "how that which appears to be not there is often a seething presence" (p. 8). Hauntings are the absence of a community through the presence of the things that caused that absence: brand new luxury apartment buildings, rehabilitated housing structures, trendy new cafes and restaurants, new park systems and bike paths. Hauntings are also present in the signifiers of a community's absence: changes in demographics, increased police presence, lower neighborhood involvement in the day-to-day tasks of maintaining neighborhood cleanliness and order. Hauntings are present in both the structures themselves, and the absence of former centers of community. This present absence brought on through gentrification is the representation of a 'lost future' through the visuals of what is left behind and no longer. That is, social hauntings in a changing neighborhood can be witnessed in empty storefronts, rehabbed multifamily housing units, or the personal belongings left behind on the sidewalk after a no-fault eviction. Each of these signifiers represent a lost future - the remnants of what is left behind are a symbol of a community's absence and the lost hope of a future in the neighborhood that they were included in.

Capturing the hauntological in urban environments is an area that research has not fully engaged with, however some recent research has begun to explore how this could be done. For example, Best and Ramirez (2021) approach the racial hauntings of urban displacement through interrelated performance art pieces and art installations in two US cities. Using hauntology and Gordon's (2008) conceptualization of urban hauntings as a framework, they draw on how these art installations showcased the absence of Black bodies and Black history (Best and Ramirez, 2021). In drawing these observations, they were able to connect these representations of absence to the displacement of Black communities inherent to gentrification (Best and Ramirez, 2021). Similarly, Kindynis (2019) uses graffiti as their focus of inquiry when engaging with the urban hauntological. For Kindynis, graffiti is a representation of how hauntings signify places that are "stained by time" (Fisher, 2012, p. 19). Kindynis views layers of graffiti as the spectral presence of the urban environment representing a counter-history to "conventional sites of historical and cultural importance" (Kindynis, 2019, p. 37). It is our job, as they see it, to excavate these specters by retracing and reengaging with these spaces and those that once inhabited them (Kindynis, 2019).

These explorations of the hauntological within urban environments speak to its radical potential. The act of exploring these contested sites in urban landscapes brings us closer to understanding the 'lost future' signified by the absent presence of a community. It helps us pull at the threads of the material to reveal the more-than-material hidden in plain view. And while the above authors begin pulling at these threads, they do not capture the mundane everyday-ness of living in a gentrifying neighborhood.

The city itself is a place of constant change, particularly in those areas undergoing large capital reinvestment where the landscape and environment of the neighborhoods are undergoing rapid adjustment. Hauntology would tell us that embedded in these changing landscapes is the trauma of loss and alienation for those who have been living in the communities undergoing change. Its application asks us to view refurbished buildings with new tenants and the destruction of old buildings to make way for new construction as specters that haunt how long-time residents now see their neighborhood and their relation to its future. We can see in hauntology as well the connection between what Fisher calls 'the slow cancellation of the future' and what chronic urban trauma deems 'the slow violence' of the city. Each of these processes are gradual in their implementation and effect, yet also create a traumatic reaction to urban places that have been stained by time (Fisher, 2014; Kindynis, 2019; Pain, 2019).

What hauntology offers to gentrification studies that differs from chronic urban trauma and root shock, however, is in its explanation of how we understand loss at a communal and spatial level. Where root shock and chronic urban trauma help us to understand the impact of gentrification on individual psychological well-being, hauntology allows us to conceptualize a communal sense of loss of a future ideal. That is, hauntology itself is not radically different from postcolonial understandings of trauma and urban change, but instead provides an additional framework for understanding how changing urban spaces haunt individual understandings of their place in a city's future. From the standpoint of gentrification and urban studies, hauntology has much to add in

our understanding of how demolition and construction warp our sense of space and time and affect how residents begin to relate to a neighborhood's past and changing future.

In a way, a hauntological lens focused on the urban environment asks us to interrogate the question: How do we explain the present absence of a community? That is to say, how do we grapple with what is left behind - structurally, culturally, emotionally, spiritually - after a community is forced out? In the language of hauntology: what *ghosts* are lingering in these contested spaces?

3.4 Integration of Theories

I have briefly mentioned throughout the discussion surrounding each theoretical framework how they are in conversation with one another. Here I will be more explicit with how these theoretical foundations are not simply three isolated ways of viewing the phenomena of gentrification, but three interlocking and connected frameworks that work together to create a more wholistic view of gentrification.

The way I understand the relationship across all three frameworks is in the domains each of the occupy. That is: *social disorganization* occupies the domain of social interaction, *postcolonialism* occupies the domain of context, and *hauntology* occupies the domain of time. That is to say, postcolonialism lays the ground for understanding the context that social interactions described by social disorganization theory take place, while hauntology frames these interactions within how they are impacted by resident conceptualizations of their relationship between the future and the past. To use a visual

metaphor: in a residential building, social disorganization are the people inside the building and the conditions of the building itself, postcolonialism is the ground that the building sits on, and hauntology is the shadow cast by the building. The diagram below (Figure 3) provides an illustration of how these theories map on to one another.

Figure 3: Relationship between theoretical frameworks.

Postcolonial Theory

The critical political and social context of place.

How is identity understood?

Who is included in the definition of the "urban"? Who is "Othered"?

Chronic Urban Trauma and Root Shock

Hauntology

The temporal domain

The 'lost futures' of gentrification

'Social Hauntings': Closed storefronts, rehabilitated multifamily units, belongings left from eviction

Present absences of communities

The impacts of gentrification

The nature of the social interactions taking place within a neighborhood

Collective Efficacy

Development Directed Policing

Social Disorganization Theory

Chapter IV. Methods

There is a disparity in the way urban renewal was studied up until the 1970's, and how gentrification is largely studied to this day. Where studies of urban renewal in the past were done with an eye and ear towards rich, in-depth analysis and stories, more recent research aimed at understanding the impact of gentrification has focused on its material effects including things like increased rent, social and demographic changes, and aesthetic changes in the buildings. What has been missing in the discourse surrounding gentrification is the bridging of these two modes of storytelling - the rich, deep analysis alongside the contextual, material analysis (Thurber et al., 2021). In bridging these two methodological forms, new insights told through the lived experiences of residents of the neighborhood can be placed within a contextual, material analysis to provide an at once deeper and more broad understanding of the effects of gentrification. This dissertation aims to bridge these two approaches.

This chapter outlines the methods and analytic approaches used in this study. I used a mixed methods approach that was predominantly qualitative with an embedded, quantitative component. The data gathering for this dissertation was approved by the Boston College Institutional Review Board (protocol number 22.247.01). The qualitative portion of this study was comprised of three distinct but interrelated parts: an ethnography, walking interviews, and photovoice. I will begin with a description of the ethnographic methods that framed this study, including a description of the various sub-neighborhoods that make up East Boston. I then discuss the procedures and analytic

methods used in the walking interviews, followed by a description of the photovoice

project. Finally, I discuss the quantitative portion of this dissertation, a geospatial

analysis of the social and demographic changes occurring in East Boston.

4.1 Study Aims and Research Questions

As outlined above, three aims and five related research questions guide this study.

They are as follows:

Aim 1: Explore long-time residents' perceptions of the individual and collective impacts

of gentrification-related cues, such as demographic and environmental change.

> *RQ1*: How do long time residents perceive individual impacts of gentrification-
>
> related cues?
>
> *RQ2*: How do long-time residents perceive collective impacts of gentrification-
>
> related cues?

Aim 2: Explore how residents make meaning of processes of social control as they relate

to gentrification.

> *RQ3*: How do long-time residents perceive changes in mechanisms of informal
>
> social control in their neighborhood?
>
> *RQ4*: How do long-time residents perceive changes in mechanisms of formal
>
> social control in their neighborhood?

Aim 3: Understand the neighborhood-level contextual factors that frame residents'

perceptions of gentrification.

RQ5: What is the spatial distribution of gentrification related indicators?

4.2 Ethnography

In the 1920's, Professor Robert Park, one of the founding fathers of American social science, invited his students to cast aside the "accumulating mass of notes and liberal coating of grime" of traditional research and instead "get the seat of your pants dirty" in the *real* research of observation (Duneier et al., 2014, p.1). It is an invitation that is embedded with the acknowledgement that you cannot fully grasp the lived experiences of everyday people without "getting the seat of your pants dirty" through field work. Over the course of the past decade, urban researchers have been engaging in ethnographic field work, a domain largely held by anthropologists, as a way of producing a counternarrative to traditional research that brought the lived experiences of urban residents into the sociological field of study (Duneier et al., 2014; Tedlock, 2000). Engaging in this type of deep analysis allows for an engagement with the ambiguities, subtleties, and contradictions that are often too difficult to be explored through traditional methodological means (Sennett and Cobb, 1971).

Similarly, the research questions that I pose require a closeness to the subject that cannot be apprehended through survey data or an analysis of administrative data provided by government institutions. Even survey questions that trend towards nuanced understandings of the impact of gentrification may not fully grasp the true feelings and complexities of an individual respondent. Thus, ethnographic observation provides the narrative foundation for this dissertation, as it aims to provide thick description of

residents' perceptions of the process of gentrification and how it affects them individually and their neighborhood.

Ethnographic research is defined, in part, by the researcher being embedded into the environment they are attempting to understand. Importance in ethnographic research is placed on the lived experiences of the subjects, as well as the subjectivity of the researcher (Tedlock, 2000). While my ethnographic approach is geographically bounded in the neighborhood of East Boston, I did not follow the traditional ethnographic method of using geographic location(s) as the sole research object. I instead followed what Mathew Desmond (2014) called "relational ethnography." Unlike traditional ethnography, relational ethnography views the field in which people and organizations interact as the object of inquiry, rather than the location or group of individuals themselves (Desmond, 2014). Space is a relational process that "implies, contains and dissimulates social relationships – and this despite the fact that space is not a thing but rather a set of relations between things (objects and products)" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 82-83). As it relates to this dissertation, my objects of inquiry were the individuals and organizations that make up East Boston and their relationship to each other, the changing environment, the developers, the city government, the police, and the new inhabitants who have moved into the recently-built properties.

There are differing opinions in the literature on what kind of engagement and what timeframe truly constitute ethnographic research (Jeffrey and Troman, 2003; Pink and Morgan, 2013; Tedlock, 2000). In terms of engagement, one of the key components of laying the groundwork for ethnographic work is gaining entreé (Desmond, 2012; Pink

and Morgan, 2013; Tedlock, 2000). Gaining entreé is to obtain permission to access the ethnographic field and participants you hope to engage with as a researcher (Bailey, 2017). I had already lived in East Boston for 9 months when I began this study, which allowed me unique 'insider access' to my neighbors in East Boston and events occurring in the community. However, this alone was insufficient to gain entreé into the field and I relied from the beginning on gatekeepers in the form of trusted community organizations to help grant further access to the community (Bailey, 2017).

In terms of the timeframe for ethnographic research, Jeffery and Troman (2003) suggest that overall time should not be the only factor when considering whether some research is ethnographic. Some researchers have suggested 6 months of deep engagement as a minimum standard of time, however, most now agree that the main focus should be on *how* the researcher is engaging in the field rather than *how long* (Jeffrey and Troman, 2003). The type, intensity, and frequency of encounters and interactions is just as important as the amount of time spent in the field (Desmond, 2012; Jeffrey and Troman, 2003; Pink and Morgan, 2013; Tedlock, 2000).

While living in East Boston, I have been a full-time researcher. In all, I spent 1,435 hours over the course of a year exploring, capturing, and observing the neighborhood of East Boston. To achieve deeper detail and more intense encounters, I built strong relationships with community organizations in East Boston. Neighbors United for a Better East Boston and Mutual Aid East Boston, in particular, conveyed that they believed in the overall mission of the research and acted as gatekeepers to the

community, more specifically the Hispanic population of East Boston whom those organizations intentionally targeted (Pink and Morgan, 2013).

4.2.1 Field Notes Methods

One approach I used in my ethnographic methods was to attend neighborhood association meetings for each of the sub-neighborhoods in East Boston that organized them: Jeffries Point, Eagle Hill, Maverick Square, and Orient Heights. These meetings occurred monthly and were generally used to update neighbors on matters related to city processes and programs, police activity, and for neighbors to discuss and vote on the approval of new developments in the area. I attended as many of these meetings I could, having to miss those that occurred when I had other family obligations (a concern that was shared with other community members whose family obligations made attendance at these meetings a challenge). In total, I attended 15 of these neighborhood association meetings, each lasting around 2 hours.

I also attended various community and cultural events in the neighborhood that were publicly advertised, including events celebrating cultural holidays represented in East Boston, political marches and protests, and historical discussions promoted by the East Boston Public Library. This allowed me to document and engage with the social contexts within the locations where political struggle appear most intimately.

At every meeting and event, I brought my voice recorder, phone, and a pencil and notepad in order to take jottings that would become full field notes of my observations

(Emerson et al., 2011). This allowed me to record as much as possible relevant to the phenomenon of residents' reactions to gentrification in their neighborhood (Walford, 2009). I used my phone to take pictures from my own perspective of locations and events that felt meaningful to my understanding of what gentrification looked like, and how it was experienced, by neighborhood residents. I also often used my phone as a recording device for my own voice memos, using these memos to orally process field encounters and conversations in the moment. I used my notepad to jot down quick thoughts, quotes, thematic ideas, and personal feelings when engaging with the field. I spent a significant amount of time processing these voice memos, recordings, and jottings into full field notes after each day in the field, incorporating the corresponding photos and recordings. I followed Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's (2011) recommendations for framing the descriptive fields in my own field note taking, viewing the notes as "inscriptions of social life and social discourse" that transform witnessed events "into words on paper" (p. 12). The field notes describe experiences, my thoughts and reflections on them, as well as the date and time for each event or observation.

4.2.2 Analysis

These artifacts of data – the field notes, the voice memos, the audio recordings of public events, the written memos – amounted to hundreds of pages of single-spaced writing and hours of audio recordings. I wanted to be as close to the data and experiences as possible as I wrote up my findings, so I returned back to the written memos and field

notes and listened back to the audio recordings during my analysis, as I was writing, and often as I was walking through the neighborhood. Through this iterative process, I continuously immersed myself into the field. I was able to use these moments to reprocess previous interactions outside of the fog of the immediate moment, informing the writing process and analytic process of the other methods.

Finally, my engagement in the field has been a constantly iterative process. As a resident of East Boston, I am always returning and reimmersing myself into the field. Every walk down to one of the three bodegas on my street, or to the Italian bakery next to the packie (the locals' term for the liquor store), or to the subway (and for that matter every ride on the Blue Line); every moment in a park or playground with my toddler; every innocuous conversation with a neighbor; all of these moments were in constant conversation with this research. It is the process of eternal return that makes up field work. Up until the point of submission, the writing of this dissertation has constantly been colored with new contexts, thoughts, feelings, and experiences that only residency in the neighborhood allows.

Both Jeffery and Troman (2003) and Pink and Morgan (2013) describe ways of more intensely engaging in field work as including: supplementing with in-depth interviews, the use of audiovisual components and artifacts, being purposeful and selective about conducting fieldwork in areas of heightened research relevance, and strong research-oriented dialogue with theory. I heeded this advice; my ethnographic field work was complemented by additional qualitative and quantitative methods: walking interviews, photovoice, and geospatial analysis.

4.3 Walking interviews

4.3.1 Sample

In order to better understand the social and spatial context alongside the stories and lived experiences of residents, I conducted walking interviews with 10 current residents of East Boston (Lyons et al., 2017; Yi'En, 2014). Participants' self-reported demographic data can be found in Table 1. I recruited participants for the walking interviews using a convenience sampling approach. The process began with Mutual Aid East Boston and Neighbors United for a Better East Boston (NUBE) discussing the research with prospective participants and referring them to me. From there, I used a snowball sampling approach by asking participants if they knew of anyone else who might like to be interviewed. I asked the participants to give my contact information to those they thought might be interested in order to respect the boundaries of residents.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of walking route participants

	Race/Ethnicity	Household Income	Sub-neighborhood	Rent/Own
WI 1	Hispanic	50,000 - 99,000	Eagle Hill	Rent
WI 2	White	>100,000	Maverick Square	Own
WI 3	White	>100,000	Eagle Hill	Own
WI 4	Hispanic	<49,000	Eagle Hill	Rent
WI 5	White	>100,000	Orient Heights	Own
WI 6	White	50,000 - 99,000	Eagle Hill	Own
WI 7	White	50,000 - 99,000	Eagle Hill	Own
WI 8	North African	<49,000	Maverick Square	Rent
WI 9	Hispanic	<49,000	Eagle Hill	Rent
WI 10	Hispanic	<49,000	Eagle Hill	Rent

4.3.2 Procedures

After recruitment and conducting the informed consent process, I worked with each participant to determine the walking route of the interview (Clark and Emmel, 2008). In preparation for the walking tour, I asked participants to think about an area in their neighborhood that they felt has experienced the most change, an area of the neighborhood that they felt they had the strongest relationship to the change that is occurring, or an area of the neighborhood they believed was important for me to see. All but three (70%) of the participants chose to conduct the interviews in their immediate

residential neighborhood, which meant that I frequently met them outside of their homes to begin the tours. One participant chose to conduct the interview in her car as, at the time of the interview, the temperature was below freezing and her own mobility issues made driving the most accommodating and inclusive option.

Upon meeting participants at the chosen location, participants dictated the route and I asked participants to describe the route they were taking me on and why it was chosen. Follow-up interview questions focused on participants' perceptions of neighborhood change, social cohesion, and informal and formal systems of social control. Participants were asked to describe the structural (new housing, new construction) and social (their perceptions about the demographic composition of the neighborhood, interactions with neighbors) changes that they perceived in the areas of the neighborhood they were showing me. I also asked about their perceptions of police interactions with the community and whether and how those have shifted over time. Aside from the formal questions prepared for the interview, I asked probing questions, following the lead of the participants to more fully understand their experiences.

Interviews were recorded using an EVISTR L157 voice recorder and were transcribed verbatim (Charmaz, 2006). By transcribing verbatim, I sought to keep the participants' words intact to ensure that my analytic focus remained on the meanings that the participants abstract from their experiences and so that their words would be present throughout the analysis and presentation of the results (Charmaz, 2006). I took extensive notes during each of the interviews and wrote analytic memos following each interview containing phrases, words, intuitions, hunches, and connections to other interviews as

they related to the dissertation as a whole (Saldaña, 2013). I mapped the walking routes during the interview using the MapMyRun phone application on my phone. I then downloaded the KML file for each interview route using the MapMyRun online platform and uploaded to ArcGIS for use in the geospatial analysis.

4.3.3 Analysis

I began the analysis of the walking interview data by recording voice memos at the conclusion of each interview to capture immediate themes and concepts while they were fresh and while I was still embedded in the interview's physical context. Concurrent collecting and analyzing of data allowed me to test and refine my understanding of the relationship between the content of the interviews and the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that bound the research. As I developed insights between interviews, I sought confirmation of my understandings of the themes being exposed in the interviews through discussions with community partners and peers. I did this by bringing ideas I had around early themes and concepts to meetings with community organizers, collective discussing what these themes and concepts might mean within their own knowledge to the neighborhood. I also brought these themes in their early stages to my advisor and other academic peers to offer another interpretation and meaning-making through this collective process. This process helped shape follow-up questions and further theories that I would continue to engage with throughout the rest of my interviews, ethnography, and photovoice sessions.

I then transcribed each of the interviews verbatim and uploaded the transcripts, memos, and field notes into NVivo for qualitative analysis. I used inductive and deductive coding (Saldaña, 2013). Prior to analysis, I created a set of codes that were directly pulled from the theoretical frameworks that ground this study: collective efficacy (ex. development directed policing, social cohesion, sense of community), postcolonial concepts (ex. root shock, loss, trauma, slow violence) and hauntology (ex. hauntings, lost futures). I returned to my written memos, voice memos, and field notes to triangulate the data; using the memos and field notes as a reference point allowed me to reflect and refract on the pre-established codes, the developing codes, and themes being discovered within the transcribed interviews (Anasti, 2018; Saldaña, 2013).

Once the codebook was created, I used open coding to capture new insights and to allow for further exploration (Saldaña, 2013). For example, *"they didn't do this for us"* and "*a forgotten community"* were two such codes that came through engagement with the coding and memo writing process. "*They didn't do this for us"* is another example code, one came up as a quote in multiple interviews and in my observations of community meetings and rallies throughout the ethnographic field work. This code appeared most regularly among participants who identified as Hispanic, and conveyed the message that new projects within the neighborhood that were meant for public use (ex. waterfront parks) were not created for the residents who currently live in East Boston, but in order to attract new residents to the neighborhood. As a sort of precursor to "*they didn't do this for us*", "*a forgotten community*" was a concept that came through in various forms across nearly all of the interviews, regardless of socioeconomic and

cultural identities. This concept speaks generally to the historical connection that East

Boston has as an Italian neighborhood and as an island not connected to the rest of the

city. That is, prior to the influx of new development over the course of the past 10 years,

most Boston residents outside of East Boston didn't visit the neighborhood and most

politicians running for an office within the wider Boston community would not campaign

in East Boston unless they were directly tied to the Italian political structure within the

neighborhood.

I also engaged with an external auditor using the guidelines outlined by Miles and

Huberman (2014). The external auditor, Lily, is a Hispanic female who has lived in East

Boston her entire life. Lily was involved with the dissertation early on, as an active and

founding member of Mutual Aid East Boston and prior staff member at NUBE and has

been active in organizing community events surrounding gentrification and neighborhood

well-being. In her role as the external auditor, Lily reviewed three interview transcripts to

determine their own thoughts and understandings of what emerged from the interviews.

Once they completed their audit, Lily and I met to discuss our collective codes. In

instances when Lily presented new understandings and concepts that I hadn't seen, we

discussed their meanings collectively and inserted them into the codebook to be used

with the second cycle of coding. I then conducted a second cycle of coding to condense

codes into broader themes (Saldaña, 2013). These themes were brought back to Lily for

further discussion and coming to a consensus.

4.4 Photovoice

Often the most noticeable impact of gentrification is its visual dimension. The processes of gentrification can change the environmental and demographic characteristics of the neighborhood, through the destruction, rehabilitation, and/or building of new housing and businesses. Thus, the use of photographic/visual methods is a key component of this dissertation. Photovoice was developed in the late 1990's by Carolyn Wang and Mary Ann Burris (1997) and entails participants taking photographs that represent their experiences with a particular topic (in this case, their perceptions of gentrification), followed by a group process where participants collectively imbue the meaning of each of the selected photographs. It is a method that has been used in a broad range of communities world-wide (Golden, 2020). The three original goals of the photovoice method, as outlined by Wang and Burris (1997) are: "(1) to enable people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small group discussion of photographs, and (3) to reach policymakers" (p. 369). The use of photovoice as a research method is inherently participatory and action oriented, as it entrusts participants to act collectively as recorders and as agents of change within their own communities (Wang and Burris, 1997).

4.4.1 Sample

I conducted recruitment for photovoice separately from the walking interview portion of the dissertation, although the exclusion criteria remained the same - that is, participants needed to have lived in the neighborhood for 10 or more years and be at least 30 years old. I collaborated with Mutual Aid Eastie and NUBE, who advertised the photovoice opportunity through their own email and WhatsApp networks. I also posted fliers online on listservs and social media sites such as Nextdoor and Facebook.

In total, four participants attended the first informational meeting (Session 0), and an additional three attended the subsequent meetings (Sessions 1-6), for a total of seven (n=7) participants. Likely because I recruited for the dissertation in collaboration with Mutual Aid East Boston and NUBE, the majority (86%) of the participants identified as Hispanic. All of the participants were renters of the neighborhood, with 57% (n = 4) living in the Eagle Hill sub-neighborhood. The socioeconomic demographics of the participants are listed below in Table 3.

Table 3: Demographic characteristics of photovoice participants

	Race/Ethnicity	Household Income	Sub-neighborhood	Rent/Own
PV 1	Hispanic	<49,000	Maverick Square	Rent
PV 2	Hispanic	<49,000	Maverick Square	Rent
PV 3	Hispanic	<49,000	Eagle Hill	Rent
PV 4	Hispanic	<49,000	Eagle Hill	Rent
PV 5	Hispanic	<49,000	Eagle Hill	Rent
PV 6	Hispanic	<49,000	Eagle Hill	Rent
PV 7	White	<49,000	Central Square	Rent

As mentioned previously, the majority of residents in East Boston identify as

Hispanic. What's more, NUBE and Mutual Aid East Boston, who I relied on for much of

my recruitment, primarily and intentionally serve Hispanic residents. In order to assure

accessibility for residents who were most comfortable with, or primarily spoke Spanish, I

hired a bilingual interpreter to assist with translating written materials, slideshows, and to

interpret during each of the sessions. The translator assured that the true meaning of

Spanish-speaking participants' words were retained as much as possible. I recruited the

translator from within the East Boston community so the translator would be able to

participate meaningfully and understand the neighborhood context. The role of the

translator extended beyond merely translating and interpreting documents and discussions; she quickly became another valuable voice and perspective that added rich insight to the discussions.

4.4.2 Overview of the sessions

I obtained informed consent from each participant prior to initiating the first session. The photovoice project consisted of 7 sessions and a community showcase. I audio recorded each photovoice session and took written jottings during and after each session. I used analytic memo writing after each session to grasp the immediate thoughts, feelings, and themes that arose. The photovoice sessions followed the methods developed by Wang and Burris (1997) and are described below.

4.4.3 Informational Session (Session 0)

As I was planning and scheduling the photovoice group with community partners, we decided together that it may be best to hold an informational session (Session 0) prior to the first actual session (Session 1) of the group in order to foster greater interest. *Session 0* was held at the same time and location that the rest of sessions would be held, but a week prior to *Session 1*. The goal of *Session 0* was to offer a space for community members to ask questions about the photovoice method and the dissertation overall. This session lasted 30 minutes, and consisted of me presenting a brief Powerpoint presentation

in English with a Spanish interpreter providing translation. In total, 4 members of the community attended this session, each of which would attend the full photovoice group through the rest of the sessions (Sessions 1-6).

4.4.4 Session 1

The first session consisted of introduction and building a shared working definition of gentrification. I began by introducing myself, my positionality, and my reason for doing this dissertation, followed by an opportunity for participants to describe their own reason for coming and their relationship to the neighborhood. I followed this with an ice-breaker activity to build group cohesion and mutual understanding where participants were asked to describe what gentrification meant to them. Difficulties arose at this point due to issues with translation and interpretation of the word gentrification. The term *gentrification* does not have a direct Spanish translation, although the "spanglish" term *gentrificación* is often used by Spanish-speaking community members in the United States. Conversely, the term *aburguesamiento* is often used within activist circles, which directly translates to "the process of things becoming more bourgeoisie." The term *aburguesamiento* is not a common term in the Spanish-speaking Hispanic community. For this reason, two participants who did not speak English expressed confusion about this term, thus the rest of the session involved building a collective understanding, in English and Spanish, of what gentrification means.

4.4.5 Session 2

The second session began with a review of the collective understanding of gentrification as discussed and agreed upon at the end of session one. The rest of the session involved building a collective understanding of the photovoice research methods, where participants learned why the photovoice method is being used in this dissertation and provided guidelines that will allow for participants to engage creatively with the photovoice methodology (Wang and Burris, 1997). To help build this understanding of how photographs can be used to convey meaning and tell stories, I presented three images I had taken myself while conducting field work, presented below in Figure 4. Participants then engaged in a group discussion describing the story that they thought was being told by these photographs, and how the stories may relate to their own relationships to the neighborhood.

Figure 4: Slide used to build an understanding of the photovoice method.

4.4.6 Session 3

The third session consisted of building a communal understanding of research ethics and preparing the participants to go into the community to take photographs. I briefly discussed what is meant by the term *research*, followed by a group discussion of what it meant to be a *community researcher*. While I presented a working definition of what I believe a *community researcher* was, participants were also encouraged to think of what the term meant for them and discuss as a group how they could engage in the community research with their neighbors respectfully. Following this, I presented a few case examples of how community research was conducted unethically to help present the

real-world implications of community research ethics. Finally, I discussed ways to

conduct ethical research in the community while participants were encouraged to think of

the ethical implications of their role as community researchers.

At the end of the *Session 3*, participants were asked if they would prefer to use

their own phones or to borrow Apple iPod Touches to take photos. Only one member

chose to use the iPod Touch, and I assisted by providing a brief technical training on how

to use the camera function. The remaining participants decided it would be easiest for

them to send me their pictures before the next session. We ended with an overview of

what *Session 4* would consist of and ensured that the participants understood what their

roles would be as community researchers between *Session 3* and *Session 4*.

4.4.7 Session 4 & 5

Session 4 and *Session 5* began the contextualization phase of the project. Prior to

Session 4, participants who used their phones messaged me their photographs via

WhatsApp, which I then downloaded to my computer with their permission in order to

present to the larger group. During these sessions, participants presented the pictures they

took to the group and discussed why they felt that the photos best described gentrification

in their neighborhood (Wang and Burris, 1997). Throughout the discussion, participants

told the stories of gentrification illustrated in their photos using the **SHOWeD** method: 1)

What do you **S**ee here?; 2) What's really **H**appening here?; 3) How does this relate to **O**ur

lives?; 4) **W**hy does this situation or concern exist?; 4) What can we **D**o about it? These

discussions were held as a large group, where meaning was collectively determined and agreed upon for each of the photographs shared by the participants. I wrote emerging themes down on a large easel pad as part of the process of embedding a shared meaning on the photographs (Wang and Burris , 1997).

4.4.8 Session 6

In session 6, each individual participant created a poster using the photographs of their choosing and drawing on the large group discussions related to what actions participants considered to address the concerns that emerged through the group process. Between *Session 5* and *Session 6*, I printed the photographs taken by each participant. The photographs were presented on a table alongside poster-boards, markers, scissors, and glue for each participant. Multiple participants stated that they preferred to write their descriptions and themes in Spanish as to convey the direct thematic content of their messages. While doing this, I encouraged participants to discuss how they wanted to present their work to the community and who they would like to invite such that the process for disseminating findings and determining actions steps was democratically decided by all participants.

4.4.9 Community presentation

On February 1st, the group held its first public presentation of their stories, findings, and photographs for the larger East Boston community. The presentation was

held in collaboration with Mutual Aid East Boston, and was advertised throughout their

WhatsApp network and throughout other neighborhood organizations, including

PUEBLO, City Life/Vida Urbana, and NUBE. I also invited members of the Boston City

Council and other local political representatives to attend. We held the presentation in the

same location as the photovoice sessions took place and participants presented posters in

an 'art gallery' style that allowed for attendees to walk through and converse with each

participant to understand their findings. Many members of the community, including

family members of participants, attended the presentation. One City Council member and

a staff member from the office of another City Council member attended and each chose

to make remarks to the audience. Members of Mutual Aid East Boston also made

remarks to help describe the broader context of their work on gentrification and to

introduce the participants. I also arranged for the posters to be publicly displayed at the

East Boston Public Library, where another community presentation will occur over the

summer of 2023.

4.5 GIS Methods

In order to situate the ethnography, walking interviews, and photovoice findings

within more standard indicators of neighborhood change, I collected neighborhood-level

administrative data and conducted a geospatial analysis of the demographic changes and

changes in East Boston's physical environment. I operationalized gentrification using

Davidson and Lees (2005) three indicators of gentrification: reinvestment of capital,

landscape change, and increases in high-income demographics. To measure "the reinvestment of capital" and "landscape change", I obtained data on building permits in East Boston. To measure "increase in high-income demographics" as well as "the indirect and direct displacement of low-income groups" (Davidson and Lees, 2005), I collated Census data on income, race, and family and household structure. I conducted the geospatial analysis and created Geographic Information System (GIS) maps. GIS maps are comprised of three distinct domains: tables (the data), shapefiles (a non-topological format for storing geometric location and attributed geographic features), and layers (the visual representation of the spatial data) (Gorr and Kurland, 2008). Below I describe the data sources, procedures, and analytic methods for each of the above mentioned indicators.

4.5.1 Demographic changes

I used data from the decennial census and the American Community Survey (ACS) to conduct a descriptive analysis of the demographic changes that occurred in East Boston between 2000 and 2021. The Decennial Census, occurring every 10 years, provides rich demographic data at multiple levels of aggregation, while the ACS is a sample survey that provides similar points of data in the intervening years (Teixeira, 2014). Gentrification-related shifts in demographic characteristics may include changes in racial/ethnic composition of the neighborhood, income, family structure (single vs. family household), and educational attainment. As such, I downloaded and collated the

following variables from the Decennial Census: race, ethnicity, family household size, median household income, individual and family poverty rate, educational attainment, and public school enrollment.

Comparing ACS data to the decennial census data may result in inaccurate findings. This is because the ACS pulls from a much smaller sample of the population that the Decennial census' long form does, using data scattered across multiple years to make multi-year estimates. In order to prevent inaccurate comparisons across years, used the 2000, 2010, and 2020 Decennial Census variables (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). In order to accurately compare across years at the smallest available level of aggregation, I downloaded variables at the census tract level. In order to represent demographic indicators at the smallest available level of aggregation for the closest year to the start of this dissertation, I also downloaded ACS 1- year estimate data at the block group level for demographic data for 2021. I combined and cleaned the decennial census data by first uploading the data into STATA. For the race and ethnicity data, removed all race and ethnic categories aside from White non-Hispanic and Hispanic. I made this decision based on my discussions with community members, who consistently reported that East Boston is largely a Hispanic neighborhood, with the White non-Hispanic population identified as newcomers as a result of gentrification. To represent changes in median home income, categories were condensed to the following categories: Less than $25,000, $25-$50,000, $50-$100,000, $100-$200,000, more than $200,000.

I also used Census data to measure change in household size because this came up in many of the conversations I had with members of the community. Community partners

made the claim that many of the new luxury apartments that have been built or are being

built are not only more expensive, but also predominantly one bedroom and meant for

single renters, a change in the general family-oriented nature of the neighborhood. In

order to show the change in household size, I created two categories: Single and Family.

The single category combined the male and female census categories "In nonfamily

households living alone" into a single category. The term 'family' can be quite broad, so

I chose to limit this to include households that had children, including adopted children

and foster children, excluding households that had other family and non-family relations

living in the home.

In total, I created seven files for each category: one showing the total for each

year (2000, 2010, and 2020), a file that showed perfect change between each year (2000-

2010, 2010-2020), and a final file showing total percent change between 2000 and 2020.

I exported each file from STATA as a .csv file type and then uploaded into the ArcGIS

geodatabase for this dissertation. ACS files for 2021 were spatially joined with shape

files provided by the city of Boston's online data portal Analyze Boston at the census

block group level by matching block group ID's in both files. Decennial census files were

matched using the same process at the census tract level.

4.5.2 Building permits

I downloaded data that addressed the number of building permits approved by the

Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) from the city of Boston's online data

hub, Analyze Boston. Analyze Boston contains over 240 publicly available datasets produced by the city related to a range of city services including public safety, transit, and building and property issues. The city of Boston requires different levels of building permits for nearly all aspects of work done to a home, including everything from small scale electrical work to replacing a storefront sign to large scale demolition for both commercial and residential properties. I downloaded data on building permits from Analyze Boston. In order to clean these data, I first removed all sites outside of East Boston. Next, because my focus is on changes to residential buildings, I removed all commercial and non-residential city-owned properties. For the properties that were not labeled, I read the description of the type of work done, removing any properties that indicated the work was being done on a commercial property, unless the work was being done on a mixed-use property.

Finally, I looked at the different types of permits included in the dataset. The city has 13 types of permits:

- Amendment to Long Form

- Certificate of Occupancy

- Electrical Fire Alarms

- Electrical Low Voltage

- Electrical Permit

- Erect/New Construction

- Excavation Permit

- Foundation Permit

- Gas Permit

- Long Form/Alteration Permit

- Plumbing Permit

- Short Form Building Permit

- Use of Premises

I consulted the city of Boston's Guide to Variances and Permits (2014) to

determine what each permit's function was. I ultimately decided to keep only the

Certificate of Occupancy permits, as these permits were granted at the end of large-scale

construction, such as a major renovation or a new construction. *Certificate of Occupancy*

(*COO*) permits were necessary before individuals could move in to the property, even if

the occupancy status of the building did not change (i.e. a recently renovated building

would need a *COO* even if stayed a 3-family residential building once the work was

completed). All properties that did not have an approved *COO* on file were deleted from

the dataset, along with all properties that did not have a parcel ID in the dataset. The

parcel ID is the unique identifier given to each parcel of land by the city of Boston. The

dataset contained all permits between the years 2009 and 2022, although the data for both

2009 and 2022 were incomplete, containing only a few months of each year, and were

thus removed. In total, 711 properties were identified as having an approved *COO* in East

Boston between 2010-2021. Once data cleaning was completed, the dataset was broken

into individual files for each year between 2011 and 2021. I also created a master file that contained all building permits across all years. I spatially joined these data with the East Boston parcel-level layer by parcel ID.

4.5.3 Geospatial analysis

I used GIS to create a series of choropleth maps to illustrate demographic changes at the block group level and landscape change and reinvestment at the parcel level for the neighborhood. Choropleth maps are descriptive, thematic maps that use different colors or shades to represent classed values and categories (Esri, 2008). In order to represent demographic change at the block group level, I created choropleth maps that show the changing values of each Census variable described above over time. For parcel level data, I used shades to represent the increase in property valuation provided to the city by the developers once the renovation was completed.

Prior to the mapping, however, I prepared the data. I used ArcGIS to create a geodatabase, clip shapefiles, and join tables to the appropriate shapefiles. I obtained multiple shapefiles including the neighborhood boundaries, census tract and block group boundaries, and 2020 parcel boundaries from Analyze Boston. In order to draw maps that only included the East Boston neighborhood boundary, I had to clip the shapefiles. Clipping is a geoprocessing tool within ArcGIS used to cut out an area of interest from a larger map (Teixeira, 2014). I first created an East Boston shapefile from the Boston

neighborhood shapefiles available on the Analyze Boston website, creating a shapefile that only included the geographic area of East Boston as a distinct layer to be used for the clipping process. I then used the East Boston shapefile as a 'cookie cutter' to clip out the block group and parcel-level features to the neighborhood boundaries of East Boston (Teixeira, 2014).

After all of the demographic and building permit data was cleaned using STATA and exported to Microsoft Excel, as described above, I imported these data to the geodatabase and merged the data with the shapefiles using a spatial join in ArcGIS (Teixeira, 2014). When joining tabled data with shapefiles, a commonly shared field is used as the basis for the join. I joined building permit data at the parcel-level using the parcel-level identifier contained within both the shapefile and the building permit data. I joined demographic data for the years 2000, 2010, and 2020 to the census tract based on the 12-unit numerical spatial identifier of the census tract. For 2021 ACS data, I joined demographic data tables to the block group shapefile using the 15-unit numerical spatial identifier.

In order to triangulate across methods, I also added walking routes from the walking interviews and geocoded photographs from photovoice participants to the maps. I downloaded KML files, which use multiple data points to create a singular data frame to be mapped onto geospatial software, for each walking route from the MapMyRun portal and uploaded them to the geodatabase using the KML to Point feature in ArcGIS. This allowed KML files to be visually represented on ArcGIS. The locations where the photos were taken show up as hyperlinks on the map, such that clicking the point opens up the

photo taken at that location. Figure 5 below shows the map of East Boston alongside the

walking routes and photovoice locations.

Figure 5: Map of East Boston showing interview walking routes and photovoice locations.

4.6 Establishing Trustworthiness

Where quantitative researchers rely on the standards of reliability and validity,

qualitative researchers often prefer the standards of dependability and credibility when

establishing the trustworthiness of their analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Guba &

Lincoln, 1998). Dependability and credibility generally mirror the standards of reliability

and validity while also more distinctly reflecting the goals of qualitative research (Glaser,

1965; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Guba & Lincoln, 1998). Below I will describe the ways

that I worked to establish dependability and credibility in my dissertation.

Dependability, which speaks to my effort to map my procedures to collect,

analyze, and interpret the data, was established in multiple ways. First, I engaged in

member-checking with a member of the community who has lived here their entire life to

test the level of accuracy of my findings. I also conferred frequently with my field notes,

voice memos, and written memos that created an audit trail to track my analytic process.

Finally, I engaged deeply with the theoretical foundations outlined above. As Figure 6

below shows, each of the theoretical foundations informed the research aims, research

questions, and analytic methodologies. This process of 'thinking with theory' maps an

iterative methodology that establishes theory, scope, methods, and analysis as equally

coexistent.

Figure 6: Showing how theory, aims, research questions, and analytic methods map on to one another.
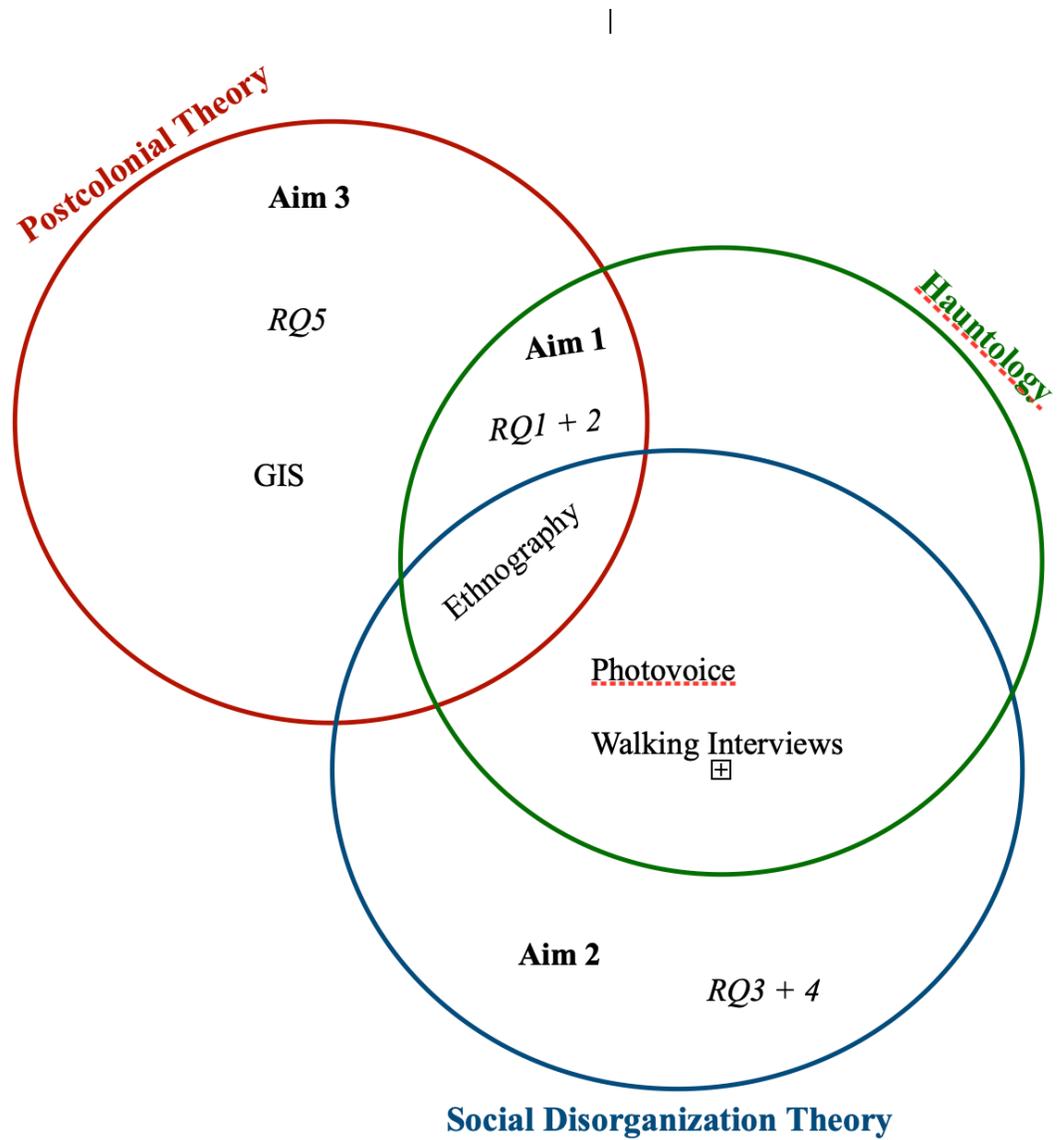
In order to establish credibility, I reflected on my positionality throughout the dissertation process. This process of reflexivity allowed me to understand my own bias as a function of my own life experiences. In order to limit bias, I engaged in substantial and prolonged involvement in the field as part of the ethnographic field work. This allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of East Boston and the residents that call it home. My methods are also constructed in such a way that I explicitly sought out multiple sources of data across resident perspectives and administrative data. My involvement with various community organizations also allowed me to confer initial findings with community members who proved to be a valuable source of contextualizing and analyzing the immense amount of collected data. As another step in establishing credibility as a storyteller and researcher, I will now describe my positionality.

4.7 Positionality

In their study of how class antagonisms underlay social relations in South Boston in the 1970's, Sennet and Cobb (1972) noted how their presence in working-class communities as members of an educated class was itself an intrusion that affected their ability to gain trust and entreé into the community. They describe their perception in the community as members of what Patricia and Brendan Sexton call "The New Class" - highly educated professionals that were replacing working class residents in large urban cities (Sexton and Sexton, 1971). This description of a budding class of wealthy, highly-educated individuals is not a relic of the 1970's, however - this idea maps on to how we

understand the indicators of gentrification (Davidson and Lees, 2005; Glass, 1964). In the same way that this New Class represented how Sennet and Cobb (1971) saw their intrusion into working class communities in South Boston, there is no escaping from the fact that I find myself in a similar position in my relationship to the community in East Boston. In many ways, I represent the face of the problem of gentrification in the neighborhood - what Dr. Lisa., a longtime resident of East Boston, called "the New Eastie" - White, college-educated, and entering the neighborhood because of relatively low rent and easy access to downtown. And, in the same way that Sennet and Cobbs' (1971) realization of their own perceived "members of a class that made workingmen uneasy" (p. 38) caused them to engage in critical self-reflection, I, too, engaged in my field work in a manner that made me intimately aware of my own positionality.

Qualitative and action research necessitates that the researcher acknowledges their own particular identity and political and theoretical groundings as they relate to the research task and its political and social context (Dean-Coffey, 2021). I hold a number of identities that shape my positionality and approach to this dissertation. I am a White, straight, cis-gender man who was raised in an upper-middle class household. As a White person who grew up in predominantly White, English-speaking spaces, I have had a very limited use of Spanish, which is the language preferred by many of the residents I was connected with in East Boston.

My positionality granted me access in some significant ways. I have spent years as an activist working in housing access and safety, harm reduction, and justice for current and formerly incarcerated individuals. My previous work as a housing activist

and community organizer helped me gain the trust of the community organizers in East Boston. In gaining their trust, I was also able to gain the trust of community members who trusted them. As a White man, I was also able to gain access to the White, old-timer contingent of the neighborhood who, in my experience, might not have been as receptive to those holding other identities. In my observations, I believe this shared identity may have given these participants a level of comfort to open up in ways that they might not have otherwise, because I seemed to be 'one of them.' As an example, in some instances some of these 'old-timer' participants shared with me their views that were hostile to historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups. In these cases, I did not immediately push back, allowing for them to feel heard while also finding opportunities to move on to different lines of questioning. I attempted to navigate these moments by balancing my belief in the importance of being an avid listener while also not being seen as endorsing these hostilities. At the same time, my positionality as someone with activist credentials allowed me access to organizations who have earned the trust of the Hispanic community. Earning this trust by proxy allowed me entrée into the Hispanic community that would have been significantly more difficult without them vouching (and translating) for me.

As a resident of East Boston, it would seem natural to include myself and my family in this story. Although there is no escape of the acknowledgment of my embodiment in this work, as it is my perspectives, theoretical groundings, and general temperament that are at the heart of this dissertation, it would be a mistake to center myself and my experiences. However, though I have done my best to center the stories of

the participants through their own eyes, there is no escaping my own intrusion into these stories. I nonetheless present what I believe to be the closest representations of the stories, struggles, joys, and histories provided to me under the esteemed cloak of trust from members of the community.

Chapter V: Findings

This dissertation was concerned with understanding the experiences of East

Boston residents and their interpretations of gentrification related processes and their

impacts. The findings presented here were gleaned through the iterative data collection,

immersion, and analysis process described above. Through this iterative process, three

core themes emerged, along with eight sub-themes:

Table 4: List of themes and sub-themes from the analysis.

Theme	Sub-theme
Contested Spaces	Naming and Using Space
	"They didn't do this for us"
	Differing Experiences Across Culture and Identity
Neighborhood Hauntings	"What we lost"
	"When am I next?"
Defending the Community	A Forgotten Community
	Informal and Formal Social Control
	Broken Promises of Development

These themes are interrogated and discussed in detail below.

I will begin by describing my initial forays into East Boston in my official

capacity as a researcher and provide a history and deeper description of the key sub-

neighborhoods that became the focus of this dissertation. This provides a foundation for understanding East Boston as a place and a common understanding of the neighborhood in which to situate residents' perceptions of its shifts over time. I then detail the findings, organized by key theme.

5.1 On the Ground - The First Month

I began my ethnographic field work on April 22nd, 2022. The goal of this first month of field work was to set about understanding what Yi'En (2014) describes as the "everyday-ness" of urban existence, capturing the ordinary and mundane social and spatial aspects of city life (De Certeau, 1984). Capturing these mundane, yet highly vibrant and nuanced experiences allow for a richer telling of the stories, struggles, achievements, livelihoods of East Boston residents as the neighborhood is rapidly undergoing changes in its character and structure (Yi'En, 2014). To do this, I set about my first month of field work walking each of the streets within the geographic boundary of East Boston, including non-private alleyways and walking paths. These observations shaped my understanding of the neighborhood and, together with data from the dissertation's other methods, are described below to provide context for the dissertation.

5.1.1 East Boston's history and description of study neighborhoods

I'm sitting on a park bench in Condor Street Urban Wild with Ronaldo as we near the end of his interview. We're looking out across the Chelsea Creek that separates East Boston from the city of Chelsea. It's a particularly windy day in late August, and I struggle to find a position for my recorder to face so that it might pick up the conversation over the gusts of wind. Behind us there is a new playground and basketball court across the street from the park where families and children are running around, screaming and playing. A steady barrage of airplanes fly overhead, mostly commercial flights with a few private jets thrown in. Our presence under the flight path disrupts our ability to complete any sentences as the planes take off behind us, roaring above our heads every 2-5 minutes.

"I did my reading once … about this place, that actually this creek right here was in the American Revolution that there was a naval battle in this creek." Ronaldo is 31 years old, and recently moved back to the city after living in the suburbs with his family when they sold their house and moved out of the neighborhood a few years ago. Ronaldo's fascination and love for the neighborhood is evident immediately, and he takes any opportunity he has to pepper in any conversation with pieces of history of the area he learned in school or in his own research.

"Oh really?" I respond.

"And it was the first naval battle in the American Revolution."

"Really"

"Yep. It happened right here…" Ronaldo motions to the creek in front of us, now the site of scattered industrial clean-up sites and boat docks for the many large container ships that dock along the creek every few days, dropping off jet fuel on the East Boston side and road salt on the Chelsea side. To our right, just past the natural park that has recently been created, lies the broad sprawl of jet fuel containers. To our left, where the park ends, is an empty area that Ronaldo tells me used to be an industrial site, now overgrown and unused aside from the growing houseless population in the neighborhood. Across the creek you can see the empty industrial areas, warehouses and cement lots. Further down you can see a series of mountains of road salt, most under a heavy tarp.

Another plane flies over our head. A large jet that flies low as it takes off. I don't get a good look, but I assume from its size that it's an international flight.

"That's crazy I had no idea…" I say back to Ronaldo, thinking about the use of land in the overall story of the neighborhood.

"Yeah, yeah. Now you know." Appearing happy that he gets to share something new about the neighborhood; the excitement in Ronaldo face and voice are obvious.

"They should have more fanfare about that…"

"You would think! The only thing that has something about that, the rocks that are over there, each rock as a story that's significant to this place." He points to a circle of large stones about thirty feet from us that frame the base of the walking path that leads up a hill that centers the park. A sidewalk splits away from the water, hugging alongside the rocks, then spirals itself up the small, manmade grassy hill.

"Oh, okay. I'll have to check that out then."

"Yeah yeah if you ever have time, check that out. Ummm one of my absolute favorites is, the first inhabitants here, ummm it says the first inhabitants are the Algonquin Nation, and I ummm did research on them, they're an indigenous people. They were one of the people that still had that indigenous language that, that, uhhh…you know is getting lost these days. And I did even more research on Algonquin Nations…"

A private jet flies above us. It's not loud, but it's noticeable.

Ronaldo continues: "But, uhhh…yeah I did my research…I don't know why that spoke out to me, the Algonquin Nation. Uhhh it's cool to know who were the first, as far back, how far back can we go, because I feel a sense of home here, and they felt a sense of home here, so maybe I have some of that…inside of me. Maybe I have some Algonquin in me."

In a way, Ronaldo's discussion about his own attachment to the place he chose to meet me at for the interview reflects the hauntological nature of gentrification. Ronaldo describes his relationship to the neighborhood by looking backwards and attaching himself to the earliest recorded inhabitants of the land that became East Boston. Ronaldo appears 'haunted' by this history of the Indigenous population, finding himself attached to a community that no longer exists in this place; he is describing an attachment to a community and a memory that has largely been intentionally pushed out of this place. And yet, Ronaldo reels an attachment to that community and their history such that their ghosts inhabit the area all around him.

A thorough examination of the land East Boston occupies would not be complete without an acknowledgement of the history of this land. Although it is not within the

purview of this dissertation to engage in an in-depth historical analysis of East Boston and its development from disconnected islands to a single connected landmass, the general strokes of this history are nonetheless an important starting point.

The landmass that makes up East Boston was once five separate islands: Noddle, Apple, Governor's, Bird, and Hog islands. These, of course, are not the original names of these islands. Prior to European colonial expansion, these islands were inhabited by First Nations peoples from early spring to late autumn for the purposes of hunting, growing crops, and fishing the rich marine life of the Boston Harbor (National Park Service, 2021). As Indigenous resistance to European settlement rose, culminating in King Phillip's War, the islands that were once their own became an open-air internment camp for Indigenous communities. Indigenous people who attempted to leave the islands at this time risked death. Low estimates put the number of Indigenous peoples removed to the islands at around 1,100, though Indigenous scholars dispute this number as much lower than the actual number due to the tendency of colonists to not count Indigenous peoples in their documents. As many as half of the Indigenous peoples forced to the islands died due to malnutrition, starvation, and/or inadequate health care (National Park Service, 2021).

Over time the conflicts between Indigenous peoples and European colonists slowed as Indigenous communities left the violence of the colonies, the Indigenous peoples held on the islands were dispersed to various tribes across the Northern seaboard (National Park Service, 2021). Around the 1850's, Irish immigrants began coming to the United States during the famine. Many of those who came to Boston were originally sent

to Deer Island under the pretext of medical containment, where many died of disease and were buried in anonymous graves overlooking the city they believed would bring them freedom.

In the 1830's, a plan was developed to fill and combine the two largest islands to create a single, continuous landmass. Throughout this 150-year process, the neighborhood that would become East Boston began to take shape. A grid-like pattern was applied to the streets and the blocks of the neighborhood, making it the first 'planned' neighborhood in Boston (Boston Landmarks Commission, 1994). Between the 1830's and today, East Boston maintained its status as an immigrant community. Irish immigrants who weren't placed in medical containment were the first to begin populating the neighborhood, working as laborers filling in the islands and creating the neighborhood. Soon, Russian and Jewish immigrants came to the neighborhood, making it the largest Jewish immigrant community in New England at the time (Boston Landmarks Commission, 1994). At the turn of the 20th century, many residents began to leave as Italian immigration in the neighborhood expanded. Due to its status as a neighborhood with 'undesirable immigrants', East Boston was a redlined neighborhood (Guerra, 2019). In the 1980's and 90's, Italian-American communities began to leave as immigrants from Central America and South Asia moved in in greater numbers.

This brief history helps to frame the discussion surrounding the current attitudes, discourses, and physical and demographic make-up of the neighborhood that is the subject of this dissertation. More than a brief history, however, this historical context allows us to lay the foundation for the postcolonial understanding of place surrounding

East Boston. Postcolonial theory contends that we often view history from a 'Eurocentric' lens. Above, Ronaldo reminds us what is lost when we forget, intentionally or unconsciously, the history of the neighborhood prior to and including European colonialism. East Boston often boasts its credential as an 'immigrant community', but this is only partly the story. The history of East Boston is that of a place that was once a land for Indigenous People's summer subsistence, a location for the containment of 'undesirable' populations, and finally a place to abandon once other 'undesirable' populations moved in. The history of violence that frames the existence of what is now East Boston has replicated itself since the beginning of European colonialism into North America. The way postcolonial theory, alongside hauntology and collective efficacy, interplay throughout the stories and experiences of gentrification frame the themes that emerged throughout this dissertation research is discussed in greater detail below.

Prior to grappling with the themes that emerged from this dissertation, a deeper engagement with the physical space that constitutes each sub-neighborhood of East Boston follows below.

Figure 7: Map of the land reclamation creating East Boston
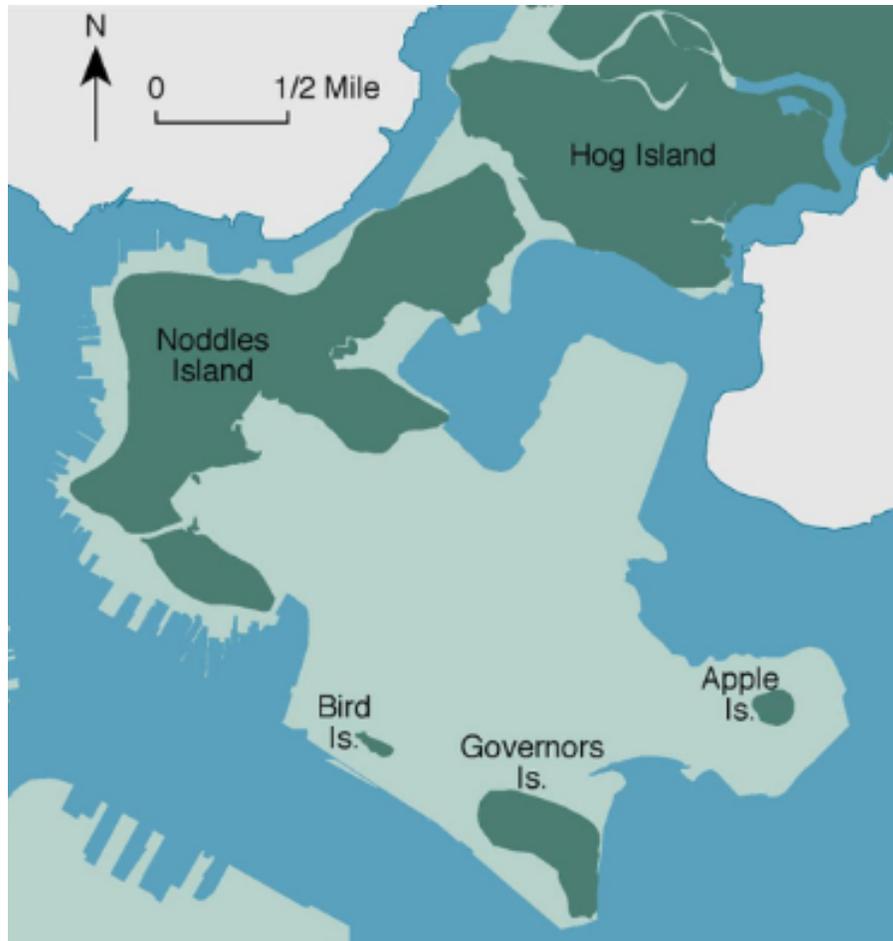
Copyright (c) The Muriel G. and Norman B. Leventhal Family

Foundation. Cartography by Herb Heidt and Eliza McClennen of MapWorks

Orient Heights. Located at the North end of the neighborhood, largely on a hill

overlooking that overlooks the city, Orient Heights is quite often considered the 'suburbs'

of East Boston by most residents I have talked to throughout this dissertation. Orient

Heights' visual character is reminiscent of the suburbs, with high rates of homeownership

that visually translate to a neighborhood composed of single-family houses with

relatively large yard space. Just like any attempted geographic definition of an area, this does not present the full picture of Orient Heights. Orient Heights is generally understood to be bounded by the highway 1A to the South and the city of Revere to its North. The area described above as the 'suburbs' consists of two areas - the area that sits atop a large hill that famously houses the Madonna Queen of the Universe Shrine, visible in most areas of the neighborhood, and contains some of the only single-family homes in the neighborhood. The lower part is bounded by the Boston Harbor, the Orient Heights Beach, and the Belle Isle Marsh Reservation that contains a mix of single- and multi-family homes, most of which remain owner-occupied. This description, however, leaves out the area that makes up the base of the hill - a section of small businesses, restaurants, renter-occupied multi-family homes, and, most notably, Brandywyne Village, a largely low-income and subsidized apartment village.

Eagle Hill. Making up most of the area directly south of Orient Heights sits Eagle Hill, the current site of much of the neighborhood conflict surrounding gentrification. Similar to Orient Heights, Eagle Hill could be considered as consisting of two areas - an 'upper' area that rises from Bennington Street up the hill, then back down the other side ending at the Chelsea Creek waterfront, and a 'lower' part bounded by Bennington Street, the Bremen Street Park, and highway 1A. The 'upper' area of Eagle Hill contains some of the more historic areas of the neighborhood. It is the only area of the neighborhood with an active Heritage Neighborhood Program that designates homes as 'historic sites' that acts as a preservation for the particular aesthetic of the neighborhood. In 1997, in coordination with the Mayor's office and the Landmarks Commission, the Eagle Hill

Civic Association created the Eagle Hill Homeowner Handbook meant to be distributed to new and current homeowners and acts as a type of informal social control on the neighborhood, putting pressure on homeowners to maintain the original aesthetic of the housing. The homeowners guide details the history of the area, the different styles of houses that make up the area, and guidelines for painting and revitalizing your house. The guide describes its intent on fostering a revitalizing aesthetic they call "gift to the street" that contains three aspects: 1) retain existing architectural ornament, 2) restore existing fenestration patterns, and 3) remove artificial siding (Boston Landmarks Commission, 1997).

Figure 8: Example from Eagle Hill Homeowners Guide describing different styles of homes in the area.
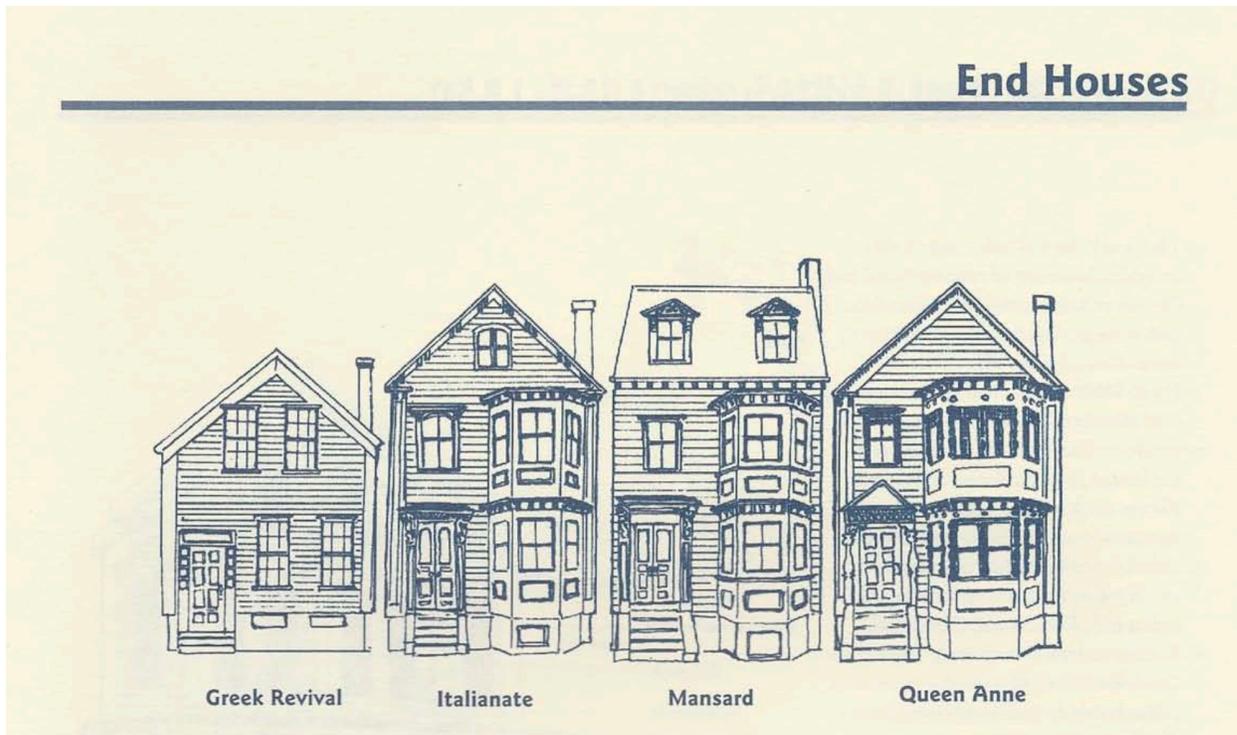
Interestingly, this is perhaps the first publicly available document in East Boston that describes the anxieties of the current state of urban renewal and the neighborhood's response to these anxieties in a manner that attempts to maintain some control over the direction revitalization would take. This is potentially best stated by then-Mayor Thomas Menino's letter to homeowners that opens the handbook, where he describes the Eagle Hill Civic Association as a "community that is committed to working together, with each other, and with the City of Boston, to safeguard Eagle Hill as a special place to live." (Boston Landmarks Commission, 1997, p. 4). The history of the region that is meant to

be preserved is one that is directly linked to East Boston's history as a maritime neighborhood. The hill that makes up the majority of Eagle Hill was, during the mid-1800's when ship building in East Boston was at its zenith, the area of the neighborhood that housed the neighborhood's most prominent ship buildings and maritime merchants (Boston Landmarks Commission, 1997). Initially meant to be a distinctly elite area, homes were built reflect the 'country villa model' of home building preferred by prominent builders of the day. Soon, however, there was a need to house a growing number of Irish and Italian maritime laborers, and thus the transition from large stand-alone houses towards row houses and Greek Revival styled homes began to dominate the area (Boston Landmarks Commission, 1997).

The effect of this handbook is evident when walking through portions of the neighborhood today. Walking up and down portions of Lexington Street, Eutaw Street, and Trenton Street, particularly the areas bounded by Putnam and Meridian Street, you can see the distinct character of the houses that are left, each of which containing a plaque signifying the year the home was built and the type of labor the original owner engaged in. Outside of this little corridor, however, are the areas of the neighborhood that the Heritage Neighborhood Program did not get to - chipped paint and crumbling facades are interspersed with new developments that skirt the original aesthetic of the neighborhood for a more modern, boxy, 4-story look that nods towards the aesthetic direction much of the neighborhood is heading.

This contradiction is also playing out in the other ends of the Eagle Hill area on either side of the hill - the area described above as the 'lower' area, the area boxed in by

White, Condor, Meridian, and Brooks Street, and the entire stretch of Condor Street. Condor Street is the area of the neighborhood that has the most visible changes occurring due to development, where the single-family housing that has remained is snug between the newer, box-like luxury apartment buildings.

Also included in Eagle Hill is the Day Square, a small region of the neighborhood that consists solely of restaurants and small businesses. Most notably, this area consists of some of the oldest, and more famous, Italian restaurants in the neighborhood, although some of the older ones went under during the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic.

Jeffries Point. Jeffries Point is the neighborhood where I live with my family in East Boston. One of the first things you hear about Jeffries Point when talking to long-time residents of East Boston is how gentrified it is already. "We lost Jeffries Point already. It's a lost cause at this point" says Dr. Lisa., a community activist and professor who has lived in the neighborhood for 30 years. This is largely because of the multiple luxury apartment buildings that sprung up along the waterfront in the past 10 years – developments that all residents have pointed to as a symbol of gentrification. These developments sent shockwaves throughout East Boston, signaling to other landlords and property managers that "hey, look, we can charge more for rent" remarks Dr. Lisa. "All the waterfront, that happened within a space of 10 years" continues Dr. Lisa., who rarely holds back in her disdain of landlords, property managers, their realtors, and the city departments that approve of new developments. "There were no plans for sea level rise. The city wasn't paying attention to it, developers didn't care about it, and no one was forcing them to do anything".

Another housing activist I spoke to, E., talked about how the community fought for the new waterfront developments to ensure that they also included units that are affordable for low-income residents. "We pushed for 30%, and the city and developers kept pushing back. We eventually were able to get 20%, but that's only because we wouldn't leave them alone" she tells me when we first meet. She and other residents would later describe how the waterfront development was supposed to contain public park space, but that promise was eventually dropped.

Despite the association of Jeffries Point with the waterfront developments, most of the neighborhood consists of the three-family buildings, known in Boston as "triple deckers" that are also found in Eagle Hill. Walking up and down Sumner Street and Maverick Street, the two major roads in and out of the neighborhood, it is impossible to miss the immensity of the development occurring. Through my field work walking through the neighborhood, I noticed how Sumner Street is seeing mostly a rehabilitation of homes into more luxury rentals and Maverick Street is seeing an influx of larger complexes of luxury rentals. Banners indicating development projects to come and what the neighborhood will soon look like string across temporary fences outside construction sites along Maverick Street. At the bottom of some of the larger developments, empty storefronts still sit with signs promising upscale community markets soon to be arriving.

The above explanation of the space that constitutes the neighborhood of East Boston is meant to lay the ground for the way that space is understood and engaged with as gentrification is occurring. The remaining sections of this chapter discuss the findings, organized by key theme. I will begin with the theme of Contested Spaces and its

subthemes *Naming and Using Space*, *"They didn't do this for us"* , and *Differing Experiences Across Culture and Identity.*

4.2 Contested Spaces

Figure 9: Marianne's photovoice presentation.
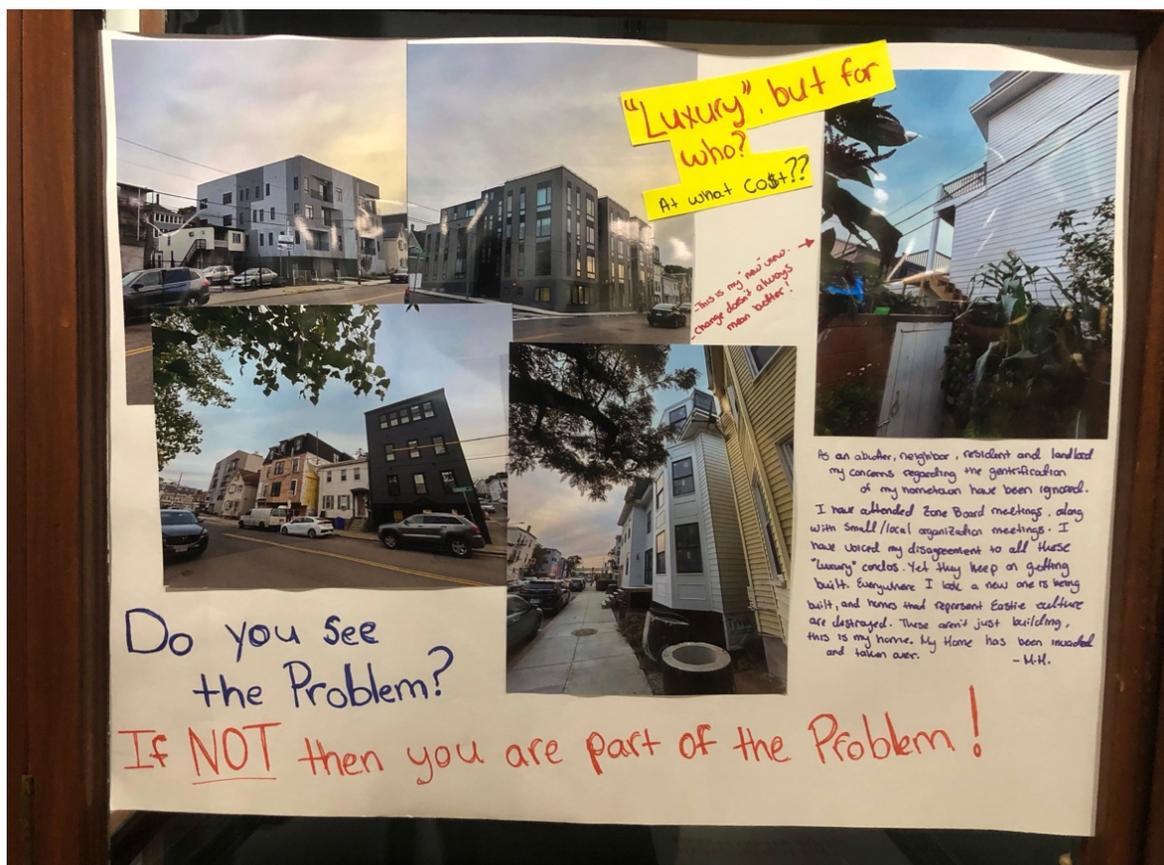
"I just get so angry" Marianne says her first session as part of the photovoice group. She's apologizing and wiping back tears while the rest of the members either comfort her or sit listening intently. Marianne is a Hispanic woman in her 30's and grew up in East Boston, in the same home she has lived in since she was a child. Her parents

first bought their home after immigrating from El Salvador. Her home is a three-family unit like much of the neighborhood, where her parents take one floor, she takes another, and the third floor is rented out. She notes that this not only makes her a resident, but also a homeowner and a landlord. For her, these three intersecting identities are an important tool to understand her relationship to her relationship to gentrification in the neighborhood.

The concept of 'contested spaces' came up often and throughout each domain of this dissertation – from the walking interviews, to the ethnographic field work, to the photovoice group, to the geospatial analysis. Although there isn't a clear definition of 'contested spaces' in the research, the general understanding is that place itself "both as a concept and as a discrete space on the earth, is a contested terrain" (Schneekloth & Shibley 2000, p. 132). That is to say, place can often be defined by who gets to lay claim to it, who gets to name it, and who feels safe entering into it. Space is actively produced through the social processes that are active within it (Harvey, 2019). When neighborhoods change, these social processes come into conflict with one another. Throughout these conflicts, different groups grapple for a defined meaning in public spaces. Keeping with my relational approach to ethnography, my field of study explored both the physical space that these contestations and grappling for meaning occur.

Returning to Marianne, the contested space of her immediate surroundings is not only in her and her family's proximity to the changes that are occurring, but also in the developers and newcomers who are causing her and her family the most distress in their lives. Marianne's family home is located on the Northern edge of the neighborhood in an

area along the Chelsea Creek, an area adjacent to much of the development occurring on

Condor Street. This area of the neighborhood, defined largely of the stretch of Condor St.

from Border St. to the Condor Street Urban Wild park (Figure 10 below). This area is

part of the larger sub neighborhood of Eagle Hill, and an area that has been noted by

many participants, especially photovoice participants, as being particularly contested. Its

identity as a contested place is visible when one looks at the volume of new construction

along Condor Street, as indicated in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10: Map of Condor Street showing Marriane's photographs and Ronaldo's walking route

(blue) alongside parcels that were recently renovated.
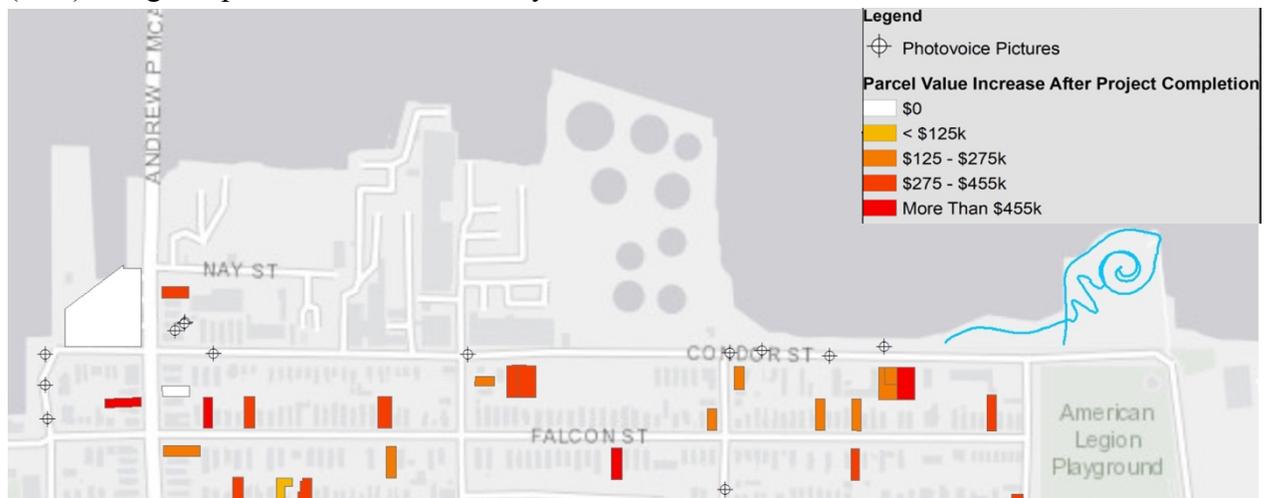
During Session 1 of the photovoice group, Marianne gets increasingly emotional

talking about the renovation to the home that abuts the back of their property, which

added a fourth floor. This addition blocked much of their view of the Chelsea Creek

behind them, but also blocked much of the sunlight that fed their back garden. Perhaps

most distressing to Marianne was the disrespect she felt from the developers.

> "They were just totally disrespectful of our property. They broke our backyard
>
> fence, and we had to call and complain so many times, and they said they would
>
> fix it, but they never did. Once they were done they just packed up and left."

This feeling of disrespect was also reflected by Rose, a woman in her 90's who still

lives in her family home that her grandfather built when he moved to the neighborhood

from Italy. During our walking interview, when we returned back to her home she told

me how the developers that put in a six story luxury apartment building that abutted her

backyard. Rose's story unfolded just as Maryanne's had: they broke her fence and, in the

process, ruined much of her backyard garden. Rose spent much of the time they were

building behind her watching every moment from her kitchen. In her backyard, she has a

ceramic statue of Mother Mary. It's faded now, but it has been in her family since her

mother and father bought it and put it in the backyard when she was a child. "I was so

scared they were going to break it" she tells me, angry and talking quickly:

> "I called the developers over and over again, and they kept assuring me they
>
> would move it for me. I can't move it. It's too heavy for me. I just wanted it under
>
> my porch so it was safe. I kept calling, and then they switched developers, so I
>
> had to call a new person. Finally, they agreed to move it for me, so it's safe."

Figure 11: Photographs taken by Marianne, from the alley between her home (left) and her neighbors (right) of the new development behind her home.

Figure 12: Photographs taken by Marianne of the new development behind her home and its effect on her backyard.

The below maps and accompanying images (Images 13 and 14 below), illustrate how contested spaces can be identified by the combination of qualitative and geospatial analysis. The two maps represent two different ways of seeing the neighborhood: through the distribution of higher-income households and through the distribution of Hispanic

households. At the block group level, the GIS maps show that many of the census block groups in 2021where the distribution of higher income households was highest also have a lower percentage of Hispanic households. What is perhaps most interesting is where photovoice participants identified areas of gentrification from their own experiences. The areas chosen, represented in the maps as crosshairs, were largely on the edges of the Eagle Hill sub neighborhood (on the maps, the areas bounded by the black box). This area also represents block group boundaries where the Hispanic population differs from the non-Hispanic White population, though not necessarily differences in wealth distribution.

These photographs in Figures 13 and 14 show the dichotomy between the newer developments and the older buildings – what is and what once was. The parcel-level data on the maps show the parcels that obtained permits for new developments or extensive renovations, and their changes in value after the renovations were complete. These are represented at the parcel-level using an orange to red color palette, where the red parcels have a higher valuation and the orange and yellow have a lower valuation. When viewing the locations of the photovoice photographs, represented by crosshairs on the map, alongside the parcel-level data, we can see how nearly all of the photographs along Condor Street were aimed at these new developments. Two of the photographs taken by Marianne are represented in Figures 13 and 14 below. The discussion that participants had about these spaces during photovoice sessions were surrounding two main dynamics: 1) developers were not respecting the previous aesthetic of the neighborhood by building modern looking buildings that tower over the single-family homes, and 2) the fear that

these changes were an indication that they may no longer feel welcome or be pushed out due to increased rent.

Figure 13: Map showing the proportion of Hispanic population at the block group level for 2021, accompanied by a photograph taken by Marianne.

Figure 14: Map showing the percent of households earning over $100,000 at the block group level for 2021, accompanied by a photograph taken by Marianne.

Legend

Photovoice Pictures

Parcel Value Increase After Project Completion

- $0
- < $125k
- $125 - $275k
- $275 - $455k
- More Than $455k

Median HH Income Over 100k

- <5%
- 5-10%
- 10-20%
- 20-30%
- >30%

The importance of these contested spaces lying largely on the outer edges of the neighborhood was made most clear through the assessment of Sandy, a Hispanic woman in her mid 50's and one of the most well-known and active residents of East Boston who was a participant in the photovoice project. "They're building all of these big apartments by the parks, the train station, the waterfront…at the edges of the neighborhood…because they don't want to meet us." The feeling that Sandy was communicating was one of feeling "Othered" through the process of development. Sandy's assessment that these larger developments are being built outside of the core of the neighborhood may be due to zoning restrictions for larger apartments – the center of the neighborhood has few, if any, large parcels of land available to house such buildings compared to the outer edges. That is largely irrelevant to Sandy and the other participants, however, as the inclusion of the buildings on the edges creates a feeling that newcomers don't want to truly engage with the long-time inhabitants of the neighborhood.

Sandy's feeling of being 'Othered' by the developments going in on the outside of the neighborhood reflects the postcolonial conceptualization of 'The Other.' 'The Other' is defined largely as an undesirable population compared to the more desirable population (Khair, 2009; Roy, 2015; Triandafyllidou, 1998). It is an act of alienating residents that those in power do not find desirable to the neighborhood. By making one feel as though they do not belong, even in their own neighborhood, you've created a hierarchy of residents: The newcomers, largely higher-earning, are most desirable, and the working-class population who have lived in the neighborhood the longest are less desirable.

The reasons developers are building these larger buildings on the outer edges of the neighborhood may be multifaceted. While attending various neighborhood association meetings where new developments were being presented by developers and their lawyers, the proximity to subway stations was always indicated as a benefit to the development as it would, in theory, reduce road stress due to traffic and parking. There is also a case to be made that these developments signal a shift by the city towards Transit Oriented Development (TOD), a strategy that attempts to build housing-dense developments close to transit lines for the purposes of reducing carbon emissions, traffic density, and public safety by reducing the need for residents to have cars in an urban environment (Bai et al., 2023; Calthorp, 1993; Liu et al., 2020; White and Yang, 2023). In either case, it is not the intention of the development that makes them contested, but in how different resident groups experience them. Sandy's description of her photograph in Figure 15 below makes this more clear. Although developments like the one Sandy is describing may be fitting into larger developmental patterns and strategies, this doesn't change the feelings evoked by these developments: that her and her community are being 'Othered' by these new developments.

Figure 15: Sandy's photograph describing that they are building many of the new, luxury apartments surrounding parks and the subway station, not in the heart of the neighborhood, because "they don't want to meet us."

The two maps below (Figures 16 and 17) show the same region of the waterfront, an area indicated by most residents I talked to, formally and informally, to be one of the areas with of the most obvious indicators of gentrification. The new developments along the waterfront were described as being particularly offensive to most people I talked to as part of this dissertation. Nearly all participants all pointed to the waterfront buildings – The Mark, Clipper Ship, Portside – as the clear markers of gentrification. In particular, Yazmin and Ellen, both White women and homeowners in their mid-30's, and Evelyn, a Hispanic woman in her mid-30's, made these developments a central figure in their discussion of gentrification. Sandy also indicated this location as part of her participation in the photovoice group. When describing one of the pictures she presented, shown in Figure 17 below, she stated: "I remember when we used to be able to see the city. It was beautiful … Now all we can see are these new ugly buildings."

Figure 16: Map showing percent of Hispanic households at the block group level for 2021 accompanied by a photograph by Arial.

Legend
⊕ Photovoice Pictures
Big C
—
Evelyn
—
**Parcel Value Increase
After Project Completion**
- $0
- < $125k
- $125 - $275k
- $275 - $455k
- More Than $455k

**Hispanic Households by
Total Households**
- <30%
- 30 - 45%
- 45 - 60%
- 60 - 70%
- >70%

Figure 17: Map showing percent of median household incomes of $100,000 or more accompanied by a photograph by Sandy.

Like the maps in Figures 13 and 14 showing Eagle Hill, the maps in Figures 17 and 18 above show the relationship between class and ethnicity in the Jeffries Point and Maverick Central sub-neighborhoods. And just like the Eagle Hill maps indicated, the block groups in Jeffries Point and Maverick Central with the highest proportion of Hispanic population also has the lowest proportions of individuals making over $100,000. It should also be noted that the block groups with the lowest proportion of individuals making over $100,000 and the highest proportion of Hispanic population make up Maverick Landing, a former public housing development turned mixed-income development through the HOPE VI federal funding program. What the maps are unable to show are the more subtle interactions between residents of different demographic identities. The parcel shape files haven't caught up with the new developments that created parcels along the waterfront.

We can't therefore see some of the areas of the greatest contention. As an example, near the southwest portion of the map, in the middle where Evelyn walked, there exists a housing development for fixed-income older adults that has existed for many years. This location is surrounded by the new, luxury apartments on the waterfront, separated only by a small park. Sitting in this park, it is hard not to notice the dichotomy between new residents and longer-term residents. While both spaces were being used by White residents, the age and class dynamics were different. Older adults who make up the old-timer contingent were talking in small groups and talking to the many different friends they noticed walking by, sitting on the park benches on the outer edges of the park. In contrast, the younger White population of newcomers were out in their own form

of leisure: walking their dogs, wearing expensive athleisure clothing, with headphones on that signaled isolation from the people around them.

Ronaldo talked about this space during our interview. In particular, he noted the class differences in its relationship to the class character of the neighborhood when he was younger:

> "that it's more people, more money coming in … now definitely starting to see more uhhh on the Maverick side, uhhh…people with like…you know walking their dogs that look like cost a lot of money. You know those little dogs … that you see on TV that like the celebrities have, like I see that more."

The income demographic represented in the maps does not capture this nuance – the block group puts both of these locations in the same group, washing out the complexity of each of these buildings. What's more, the maps can't capture what is happening on the ground – how the location has created a situation where residents can be completely isolated from the rest of the community. They have their own small grocery store, coffee shops, and an entrance to the Blue Line that doesn't require walking around to the main entrance where most of the rest of the community goes.

In my interview with Ellen, she described the tension in this area through an example:

> "When they were building [Portside] there was nobody right there. But they chose to put their dog park, for example, as far away from their buildings as possible and as close to, you know, an already existing building of low-income people."

When I asked her if she thought the residents were aware of this tension, she said in no uncertain terms that she doesn't think they care:

"I don't think they know and I don't think they care … They're not attending neighborhood meetings. They're not, they might go to like Cunard and Tall Ship or Reel House [new restaurants within and immediately surrounding the waterfront properties], but they're not really getting to know the layout of the neighborhood. They, they don't have any idea that there's any hostility."

Embedded within the theme of contested spaces are three sub themes that reinforce and contextualize how these contested spaces are experienced for different groups. These three sub themes relate to the way language plays a role in how different groups use public spaces, how many residents feel left out of the creation and renovation of these public spaces, and how the experiences within these public spaces differ depending on the neighborhood groups you most align with.

4.2.1 Naming and using space

The grappling of meaning-making in shared, public spaces is often most notable in who gets to name that space. Evelyn was the first person I interviewed as part of this dissertation, and we met down the street from my house right outside the Sumner St. location of the East Boston Health Center. She walked me down Orleans St. to the waterfront developments where we spent most of our conversation. At the beginning of

our conversation, I asked her the same question I asked all interview participants: *Why did you choose this area for the interview?* She told me:

> "Like, I was in third grade when El Parque Azul opened. El Parque Azul is Piers Park. Ain't no one in the Spanish speaking community calls it that, if you say Piers Park they'll say no, it's El Parque Azul."

> Her answer led to a lengthy discussion on the how different spaces have different

names depending on the community you come from. El Parque Azul is Spanish for "the blue park", called that by Spanish-speakers because the playground structure and the soft, artificial ground of the playground are all blue. When I asked her about this and the names of other parks, she said simply: "There's a theme. You call it by its obvious name."

In Evelyn's description, the three large parks in the neighborhood each have their own separate name in the Hispanic community: El Parque Azul (Piers Park), El Parque de Maverick (Lopresti Park), and El Parque de Aeropuerto (Memorial Park). The significance maintaining a communal name rooted in the native language of the Hispanic community is deeper than simply giving it a Spanish name: it is a way of laying claim to an area, in this case laying claim to a public space. This process is described by critical geographers as claiming a 'right to the city' (Harvey, 2019; Lefebvre, 1996). 'The right to the city' is an idea that deals with the social relations, expressions of power, and the feelings of alienation involved in regulating the accessibility and function of public space (Banerjee, 2001).

El Parque del Maverick is named due to its proximity both to the Maverick Landing housing project and to the Maverick subway station. El Parque del Maverick's given name is Lopresti Park, named after Michael Lopresti Jr., a well-known and beloved Italian-American Massachusetts Senator who was lived most of his life in East Boston. This clash of names is itself important as it also represents how contested spaces are experienced between the Hispanic community and the Italian-American community. Evelyn describes this through her and her family's experiences growing up:

> "Oh they hated us. They hated us. I don't know why … if you walk home from airport, from the Maverick T stop, after a certain time, after 10pm or something like that, if you were by yourself you were going to get jumped by these Italian thugs or whatever you want to call them. It's like, gahhh, didn't they just do this thirty years ago forty years ago to your parents and your grandparents. Like, what the hell. So, there was definitely like … this divide. All the Italian places, like you didn't go … because you grew up and you didn't mess with the Italians because they hated you."

The usage of 'El Parque del Maverick' in place of Lopresti Park is, in a way, a way to maintain their own cultural identity that felt threatened by the Italian-American community when the Hispanic community first began arriving. It is also true that many of these parks are either newly created or newly renovated along the same timeline as gentrification in the neighborhood. The feeling of not being included in these new park systems and public spaces also plays a role in the maintenance of the Spanish descriptors for these parks. This was stated in various ways by Evelyn during our walk. "it's a way

for people, I think, to hold on to something. To hold on to their roots" she told me. This was also reflected in the various conversations I would have with Hispanic residents through my field work, many of which refused to call the parks by their stated name.

On the other end of this, the naming of the park, Lopresti, is also significant for many of the remaining Italian-American old-timer community. Rose had mentioned the naming of Lopresti during my interview with her. She was there during the opening ceremony alongside her husband and then Mayor Menino. "It was so nice to be there with everyone. To finally have our community represented here again" she told me. For the community that Rose is a part of, Senator Lopresti was not only an important figure himself, but what he represented, what his name represented, was important.

The history of the Italian community in the United States is itself fraught. Italian immigrants who came into the United States were treated themselves as undesirable immigrants, leaving them to inhabit neighborhoods that were unwanted by other communities (Lucioni, 2003). This isolation also led to many of these neighborhoods being redlined, further reinforcing the undesirable nature of the neighborhoods and its residents (Lucioni, 2003). East Boston was one such neighborhood for Boston, and the resentment felt by the Italian-American community because of how they were treated when they moved in is still carried by the great-grandchildren of those early Italian immigrants.

Evelyn reiterates the social relations created in this cultural resentment when she says, "didn't they just do this thirty years ago forty years ago to your parents and your grandparents?" This social tension is no longer represented in explicit violence as it once

was. Instead, one of the ways it is now manifested is in the naming of public spaces as a way of laying claim to them. Through this tension, the questions remain: *Who gets to name these spaces? Who gets to claim these spaces? Who gets to be represented in the history of them?*

The way Evelyn describes the renaming guidelines the Hispanic community follows for public parks is itself a declaration to claiming a 'right to the city.' It is attempting to claim the right to "shaping power over the processes of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and remade, and to do so in a fundamental and radical way" (Harvey, 2019, p. 5). This also extended beyond the simple naming of locations. One of the more common discourses that occurred at events led by the Hispanic community was a constant commenting on their desire not to have to translate their comments for the broader English-speaking community. "Maybe you will start to learn Spanish so we don't have to keep doing this" said one of the community organizers at an eviction protest before translating the words of a previous speaker facing eviction.

One of the things I had to grapple with the most during my field work was this very feeling: without the free translation services activists were providing, I would be completely excluded from taking part in the events. I was part of the problem. I found, over time, that my limited Spanish actually went a long way. The more I was able to respond with broken Spanish, showing my attempts to communicate in their preferred language, the more informal access I was granted in these spaces.

The claim to the 'right of the city' through language and naming of public spaces from the Hispanic community is contested on two fronts: from the Italian-American

community who want to lay claim to their own heritage and from developers who want to lay claim to a naming process that is welcoming for the newcomers, i.e., not Spanish. Both the Hispanic community and the Italian-American old-timers are holding on to the signifiers of their heritage, and thus their claim to the city, through the use of language and the naming of public spaces. Each is reacting to the threat of development in similar fashions, which also puts them in conflict with each other. When I asked Evelyn why she felt the Hispanic community expressed a preference for English speakers moving into the neighborhood to learn Spanish, she told me that "it's a way for people, I think, to hold on to something. To hold on to their roots."

For the Hispanic community, by maintaining a Spanish name for these spaces, and for maintaining the speaking of Spanish in public spaces, we can see these moments as moments of resistance.

4.2.2 "They didn't do this for us"

The way contested spaces and the 'right to the city' manifest themselves in East Boston also shows up in the way development is perceived. That is, *who is this development for*? In this sense, development is not only in the actual structures of the buildings themselves, but also in the creation and rehabilitation of public spaces in the form of parks. The question of who this development is for is ultimately asking who gets to feel included, and is answered clearly by Evelyn in our interview: *"They didn't do this for us."*

During our interview along the waterfront and around the developments along the waterfront, Evelyn kept returning to this theme of who gets to be a part of this development:

> "And so then I was just like "ohhhh" you didn't redo the park and the station for us… you did it to bring in people. Ohhh you didn't give us a beautiful park, because this is the end of "this." I remember what this used to look like. It was just wilderness and the old train tracks of some railroad … it's like "ok good, we're gonna have a space to go ride bikes" and it's like "oh, this wasn't for us" it's for, it's because there was this grand master plan, this update, urban renewal type of situation where it's just like "ohhh that's why MassPort's doing this" not for the people who are already here, but for the people they want to come here."

For Evelyn, this is all intimately obvious: these changes were to attract new residents into the neighborhood. They wouldn't have upgraded the parks, created new parks, created new public spaces, if it weren't going to bring new people into the neighborhood.

> " It's…and a lot of us, well myself and my bestie, we get so frustrated. Like we did everything right. We did well in school … I actually went to like a private school in the Boston area. She went to BLS, Boston Latin School, which is a whole other subject on like how White it is in BLS and she's like one of the few Latin women from East Boston to be in BLS. Obviously we were smart, or academically strong, we did very well, we went to four year schools, we got our bachelors and are working, and we cannot afford to do anything here."

Residents' sentiments about the purposes for the changes in the neighborhood was also reflected in how their memory of how the neighborhood used to be prior to development. In a group discussion in a photovoice session, Lily was listening intently as the group shared their photographs. While the group was collectively making meaning from a set of photographs from another participant, she made the remark: "I miss the old days when Eastie was violent because at least then we didn't have all of these developers. It feels like we're either fighting ourselves or fighting the system." Her remarks are reminiscent of those from Tim Robbins' character in Mystic River, a movie that largely took place in East Boston (in particular, Condor Street, where the Northern edge of the neighborhood is experiencing the most changes): "This city needs a fucking crime wave. Get property values where they belong."

Lily's comments reflect the message that "they didn't do this for us." They reflect the sentiment from most people I talked to – that development is kicking people who are already here out so they can bring in wealthier newcomers. Embedded in this statement is also the belief that community violence is better than development, because with community violence, developers will stay away and the neighborhood will keep more of its residents. There is a pessimism inherent to the theme of "they didn't do this for us." You can't have both things. You can't have a safe community without displacement; you can't have renewal without displacing those who already live here.

My experiences in the field engaging and interacting with residents in more informal ways gave greater context into how these experiences manifested in the 'everydayness' of residents. During the Summer of 2022, the city of Boston began

promoting 'block party kits': a pilot program to provide residents with resources to conduct

city-sanctioned block parties. The first of these to occur in East Boston took place on one

of the streets parallel to where I lived, directly behind us on Everett Street. The gathering

was well-attended, sprawling about half of the block from Lampson Street to Jeffries Street.

Neighbors brought out tables for food, games and activities for all the kids, and numerous

coolers with plenty of alcohol. My partner and I went there with our toddler, who spent

much of the time running around and playing with the other kids. Our landlord, a friendly

man in his 40's who runs a videography company when he's not running, surfing, or on

one of the many vacations he takes with his family, spotted us and took it upon himself to

introduce us to as many people as he could. I started taking field notes on my phone,

through voice memos and written memos, reflecting on the conversations and interactions

we were having. I began to notice that, of the many people and families we had interacted

with, most hadn't lived in the neighborhood longer than five years. Of this large gathering

of neighbors, we were among a large crowd of people and families who were just like us:

newcomers.

The social dynamic became more apparent as the evening went on, and the

disparities between who was 'inside' and who was 'outside' began to uncover

themselves. These social dynamics of insiders and outsiders played most clearly in two

intersecting examples. The first began earlier in the evening, as the party was growing,

and the live music began. I noticed a woman in one of the houses in the middle of where

the party was who was peeking out of her front window every few minutes to see what

was happening, moving the curtains as she did so. Through the foggy glare of the

window, she appeared to me to be Hispanic, perhaps in her 30's or 40's. Throughout the entire time I was there, she never came out, though she didn't stop looking out every so often. I can't project motive on to her – her decision not to attend while also seeming curious about the party could stem from any number of personal and communal motives. However, it's worth noting that, had she attended, she would have been one of what I estimated to be only three Hispanic women in attendance.

The second, related example came about later in the evening. As I was walking down the sidewalk to get more drinks at my apartment to bring back, I noticed three groups of people, each of them spread out just past the outer edges of where the party unofficially ended. The people who made up these groups were people I recognized, some of which I had talked to casually, some related to the dissertation. They all made up the Italian-American old-timers and their adult children. They were taking part in their own gathering, intentionally separated from the block party occurring one or two houses down from them. They did end up joining the party briefly, however, coming into the space to watch and sing along to Eastie DC, East Boston's AC/DC cover band. Soon after the set, though, they left – back to their designated positions just outside of the boundaries of the party, choosing not to take part.

In this one evening, the social dynamics at the center of the grappling for meaning in the contested spaces of gentrification was playing out: the newcomers, the old-timers, and the Hispanic community. For the old-timers and the newcomers, it appeared clear that there was an intended separation from the space inhabited by the newcomers – that of the party. There is a way in which these two worlds were both excluded and

exclusionary – two excluded groups that have their own grievances but don't connect on their shared experiences in the neighborhood. The question remained: *Who was this for? Who gets to be included?*

This social dynamic at play in the statement "they didn't do this for us" came up often in the photovoice sessions, in particular with Susan. Susan is a low-income White woman who lives in the public housing development across from a new development that is under construction. She is someone who has experienced homelessness before and moved to East Boston when a place opened up for her in the housing development. She would often come into the sessions late and stay long after everyone else had left. She was the only photovoice participant who identified as White, and also the only one who didn't speak any Spanish, and she had to be reminded often that we needed to give the translator time to repeat what she said in English to Spanish. This didn't bother her, though. She seemed happy to be included and appeared to enjoy sharing with everyone, even if she couldn't always understand everyone.

For Susan, the core issue of gentrification was its class dynamic. Her participation in the group centered on understanding the change in the neighborhood culture through a class-based narrative. She focused much of her photographs and discussions surrounding the new development going in across the street from where she lived, which she personally saw as a threat to her own livelihood. She was scared the public housing she lived in will soon be bought out and turned into a mixed income and she will no longer be able to afford to live there. Without that place, she was afraid she would once again be homeless.

"What you have are all these…yuppies moving in. They're changing the class

consciousness of the neighborhood … I can barely ride my bike down the road

anymore because of all the construction and new cars. It's the only way I can get

groceries but all these new people are just mean about driving down the road."

This quote came from when she was sharing her own pictures during Session 5 of

the group, although the themes in her discussion were constantly being stated in one form

or another when she spoke. She was critical of many of the new shops that were going

into the neighborhood, describing them as "bougie" and for "all the new yuppies." For

Susan, her feelings spread beyond "they didn't do this for us" into a feeling that "they're

trying to get rid of us." The images she shared are included in Figures 18, 19, and 20

below.

Figure 18: Susan's photograph of a new development being built across the
street from her home (1).

Figure 19: Susan's photograph of a new development being built across the

street from her home (2).

Figure 20: Susan's photograph of a new development being built

across the street from her home (3).

Another example of this came later in my field work. In the beginning of

November 2022, I was walking with my son down Sumner Street to get some snacks at

our favorite bodega. Sumner Street has five different avenues between Cottage Street and

the Catholic Church, each with a few housing units crammed into them. On the opposite

end of one of these avenues, there was a two-story home that had just recently begun a

gut rehab, including new siding and an additional level on the top. As I was walking on

the opposite end of the street with my son, I approached an older woman standing at the corner of her avenue, silently watching the construction crew as they worked. I asked what she thought about it, the work being done on the house. She shrugged and shook her head. "I hate it" she told me in a thick Eastie accent that hinted at her Italian-American identity. She told me how it felt like development is happening all over the neighborhood and she felt it wasn't going to stop. She asked if it will ever be *enough*.

We talked a little longer before my son was ready to move on. We exchanged goodbyes after she talked to my son in a manner similar to how most of the other older women in the neighborhood do – as if he were their own grandson – and he and I walked back up the street. In the intervening months that home has since been completed, but is still sitting empty. A large banner covers most of the building advertising the real estate company responsible for the rehabbed house: Responsible for the noise and clutter in the neighborhood that construction brings; for the rising rents. "Invested in Eastie" it reads in large letters under an image of four smiling women. Across the street, down one of the avenues, a different banner has been raised between the houses. This banner, however, is one of defiance. "No Development on Noble Court" faces the main road in big White lettering against a black background.

Figure 21: A renovated home on Sumner Street with an added third story and an advertisement for the real estate company responsible for the renovation.

Figure 22: A sign across Noble Court hung by residents as a

message against any development on their alleyway.

4.2.3 Differing experiences across cultures/identities

East Boston is connected to the mainland of East Boston through two underwater tunnels, the Sumner Tunnel and the Williams Tunnel, as well as the Blue Line of the subway that connects the city of Revere to East Boston and then Downtown. Two other smaller bridges connect East Boston to the city of Chelsea, but for most people working outside of the neighborhood, taking either tunnel to the network of highways that run underneath Boston's Downtown is the fastest and most convenient way to get to work. In early Summer, due to infrastructural neglect, the Blue Line tunnel between Maverick Station and the Aquarium stop, and then soon after the Sumner Tunnel, were closed for months at a time, hugely impacting residents' abilities to get out of the neighborhood for work.

The city's solution to this was to follow through on a request that residents have been asking for years – bringing back the water ferry between East Boston's waterfront and the docks that sit adjacent to Boston's North End. The original ferry was a mainstay for East Boston residents, particularly the Italian American community that made up the neighborhood throughout much of the 20th century. For them, this was the most convenient way to visit the North End, generally known as the city's 'Little Italy', where much of their extended family and social circles also lived. The ferry in those years carry more than just people, and residents were able to take their cars back and forth, making this trip a Sunday ritual for many families.

"Oh yeah, we used to take the shuttle every week to visit family. We'd all pile in my dad's car…you used to be able to drive right up onto the ferry. It was slow as shit, but it got us there." I'm talking an older gentleman over drinks outdoors at a block party sponsored by the city on Everret Street He's in his 70's, wearing a Boston Police Department ball cap, a thin sweater vest overtop a white polo shirt that are tucked into his tan cargo shorts. "Everyone used that ferry. All the Italian families in their Sunday's best going across the harbor to visit with more family."

All around us there's competing distractions - children running around from activity to activity, different tables of food neighbors provided, live music performed by local artists. The greatest distraction, however, is that everyone seems to know the person I'm talking to - every few sentences we are having back and forth are curtailed by the intrusion of another person saying hello, or him seeing another old friend.

This isn't an altogether strange occurrence for many of the old timers in East Boston. Those members of the Italian-American community that held out and stayed in the neighborhood maintain fairly close contact. I came to realize, however, through continued conversation that the reason everyone knew who I was talking to was because he was Dom, a notorious columnist for a small newspaper primarily focused on representing the Italian-American community. One of his staples is a weekly opinion column that showcased a view of antipathy toward 'progressive' policies towards immigration and criminal justice, to name a few. In a lot of respects, Dom was the epitome of the Italian-American old-timers: A deep love for his community, a deep resentment to developers, and an attachment of that resentment to the current political

situation. He represented conservatism that was against change on all fronts: from immigration to gentrification.

Starting in mid-to-late September, I began taking the ferry from East Boston to the Long Wharf so I could bike to campus. It became quickly apparent that there was a difference between those taking the ferry to and from the mainland, and those who were taking the subway. That is, on the ferry I was almost always among White folks who were either biking or walking to work. In contrast, the subway between 5am and 9am and 3pm - 6pm was generally packed shoulder to shoulder with a predominantly Hispanic population.

During the height of the pandemic, ridership across all MBTA Subway lines was down, save for the Blue Line. The Blue Line, bringing communities from the largely Hispanic East Boston, portions of Revere, and folks from Chelsea who take the bus to Maverick Station, consists largely of the working-class residents who had to continue to work during the pandemic - hospital custodial staff and food service workers, custodial and cleaning staff at the large buildings downtown, maids and other cleaning staff.

There is a luxury to taking the ferry. To leisurely arrive to work on your bike, or to be able to walk into the Downtown or Financial District at your own pace, where the majority of the well-paying professional jobs are located. It is a luxury I was keenly aware of in my own use of the ferry and in the other riders who all resembled me: late 20's to late 30's and White.

One particular ride on the ferry, I sat down next to Tom, an East Boston resident you see quite often riding his bike around the neighborhood. He has a basket on the front

of his bike and in the summer he puts his guitar and amp in to take down to the waterfront by the Yacht Club and the tennis courts to play guitar to his family, friends, and anyone else walking by. He's got shoulder length hair and is usually wearing Rayban sunglasses. He looks like he belongs in Southern California, riding his bike from taco joint to surf spot then back home to a little bungalow.

Tom is also the person who hosted the block party I mentioned earlier. I make small talk mentioning the block party and ask how long he has lived in the neighborhood. He tells me it's been about 5 years, although his dad first immigrated from Ireland to East Boston in the first half of the 20th century. The lore he tells me is that his father came here with $20 and a fiddle trying to make a life for himself and his family. Tom's excited to be back in the same neighborhood that it all began for his father, and therefore his family, having lived in Everett and then Somerville for much of his life. Tom is a series of interlocking contradictions: he works at the Prudential Center, is immensely supportive of and outwardly recognizable in the community, openly worked for and supported the city council candidate who was the "progressive" faction and who had the greatest support from the working class and Hispanic community, all the while supports the majority of the changes occurring in the community. He told me that "neighborhoods change all the time. This used to be an Irish neighborhood, then an Italian neighborhood, then a Hispanic neighborhood, now it's just going through another change."

Figure 23: View of the waterfront development from the ferry.

Dom and Tom hold both ends of the historical view of East Boston simultaneously: the fondness of the past and the promise of the future. What lies in the middle of these views are those who are struggling for a place in the present landscape of East Boston. Caught in the middle of the fond past and the rosy potential of the future is the present landscape of gentrification. It fills the void between these two spaces, and can be best represented by the Hispanic community. The Hispanic community is the community left out of both of these conversations: their arrival marked the end of 'the past', and the image of the future is one that they are increasingly left out from.

I asked Ellen, a White woman who considers herself part of a contingent of residents called the "yuppies who care", about what she felt the future of East Boston would look like. "I think it's gonna become more and more White. More and more and

more expensive. Ummm…and…you're gonna lose all the diversity. You're gonna be the new Southie." Couple this with the comment from Yazmin, another White resident, when talking about people who were being displaced due to gentrification:

> "Yeah, I mean I think that's unfortunate…ummmm…but it's also, again it's unfortunate for the people who've been here, right? But it provides an opportunity for young people, like us, who don't have, like, family support to get a down payment in the South End or something right? [laughs] and it gives us an in which is nice. It's nice to get some fresh blood in the community."

This "fresh blood" was not meant in a wholly negative way that someone with more unsavory politics might mean it, but it does represent the general message of development: new residents from different demographics are good for the community, even at the expense of those who already live here. These different experiences of the changes occurring in East Boston are ultimately what constitutes the contested spaces of gentrification. They play out in the public discourse, the public spaces, the historical interpretation of East Boston's past, and in a vision of its future that is not shared across these three groups. In the next section, I discuss the theme *Neighborhood Hauntings* and its subthemes, *"What we lost"* and *"When am I next."*

4.3 Neighborhood Hauntings

Staring out the window at your old apartment

Imagining the old you stumbling through

Tacky renovations that the landlord wanted

To cash in on the boom

And you don't know where to go now

You've got nowhere to go now

- Jeff Rosenstock, "Staring out the window at your old apartment"

It's a hot day in early September, the sun is high in the sky, adding an immensity to the heat that I'd rather not bear. Somehow a pick-up game of fùtbol has commenced in the field behind me. I'm standing at near the edge of the water, in the center of small, walkable spiral that's littered with cigarettes and empty nips. In the center of that spiral is a stone block that is meant to pay homage to the minds who constructed the neighborhood of East Boston - once a series of islands, it was the first example of the landfill that would come to the ports and downtown of the city across the harbor, and the first area in the city that was created with a purposeful grid pattern for the roads. When you stand in front of the block, facing the city, you can read the quote "A city is not an accident" (Figure 24 below). I suppose this is meant to inspire a sense of community, or maybe harken back to the intentionality that the early (colonial) residents of East Boston created the neighborhood with. But I can't help but think about the other truth within that statement: if a city is not an accident, then neither are the disparities it creates.

Figure 24: A City is Not an Accident" reads across the top of a stone monument celebrating East Boston.

Sitting on top of that stone cube is Big C. Big C is a heavy-set man in his late 60's, and I'm meeting him soon after he is coming up from taking his daily swim in the harbor. He's shirtless, revealing all of his many tattoos that cover his arms, chest, stomach, legs, and back. He agreed to meet me for an interview under the condition that I meet him here, in this spot, around this time. I had made two previous attempts to catch

Big C for an interview, but since he wouldn't give me his phone number, I was completely reliant on his schedule. Throughout most of our discussion, he sunbathes next to his small charcoal grill that he tells me he plans on using to cook dinner.

"Oh yeah, this whole area used to be pretty empty…like, where cement trucks and other trucks would park. There used to be docks right over there where those apartments are…" he says, pointing to the infamous luxury apartments that make up the most visible portion of the waterfront. "I used to work on those docks. I was kind of a rough kid, but that was a good job…I worked on those docks most of my life." It's not always easy to keep Big C on track through the interview - he tells stories in a stream of consciousness sort of way. I do my best to follow along, interjecting the comments and follow-up questions in the spaces between thoughts.

Although largely siloed to the realm of politics and popular culture, the notions of a "lost future" haunting our present are very much important to the story of gentrification. Whereas the "lost future" of Derrida and Fisher was Marxism, and the specter was Marx himself, the "lost future" witnessed in gentrifying neighborhoods is a little less clearly fleshed out.

The specters of gentrification, on the other hand, are much more clear. Gentrification-related hauntings come in many forms in East Boston: an empty hole in the ground with excavators sitting by where a multifamily home once stood, a busy auto shop on Condor Street surrounded by brand new luxury apartments, a sidewalk crowded with the left-over belongings of a family who could no longer afford rent, the comments between neighbors describing how there's no longer any good Italian food in the

neighborhood. The intrusion in these spaces is both material and emotional - it is in both the physical structures themselves and what they represent.

One of the clearest representations of haunting-in-the-form-of-physical-structure is "The Eddy", a 17-story luxury apartment building with rents starting at around $3,000 per month for a 400 square foot studio apartment, located on the waterfront. The Eddy stands above all other buildings in a neighborhood largely comprised of three-story multi-family households. As such, its structure feels as though it is visible from almost every corner of the neighborhood. Aside from bordering the waterfront, The Eddy is immediately adjacent to a public-housing-turned-mixed-income residential neighborhood, and its presence represents a stark contrast to the two forms of housing. During much of the day, the structure of The Eddy casts a shadow over the adjoining neighborhood where there used to be unobstructed views of the sun and the waterfront.

The encompassing presence of The Eddy was captured by Arial, a participant in the photovoice project (Figure 25 below). Arial is an immigrant from El Salvador who attended the groups with her husband, Pablo. Pablo and Arial only spoke Spanish, and I was completely reliant on our interpreter to understand their experiences. When describing why she took this photograph, she described how the building "just towered over everything. Everyone in there must be so rich, and they look like they are looking down on all of us."

Figure 25: The towering image of The Eddy as taken by Arial.

In a similar vein, a separate participant, Sandy, who has lived in the neighborhood nearly 30 years, took a photograph of their commute that brought them down towards the waterfront of the neighborhood (Figure 26 below). Here, she wanted to capture what they feel was lost by the new luxury apartment buildings along the waterfront. In her

description to the group, she stated: "I remember when we used to be able to see the city. It was beautiful … Now all we can see are these new ugly buildings." The presence of these new, "ugly" buildings themselves also signifies what is absent: the view of the harbor and the city.

Figure 26: The 'lost' view of the harbor as taken by Sandy.

Embedded within the statement is the idea that these new buildings do not belong in the neighborhood, in their style and in their location. And yet, their existence in the neighborhood calls into question who belongs in the neighborhood after all - the neighborhood that felt like home for many residents is changing in such a way that they no longer feel included. These hauntings are of the 'lost future' that Mark Fisher (2012) speaks of. It is the lost future of belonging.

In both instances, the hauntological is manifest in the presence of something that was not formerly there - buildings whose presence also signifies the absence of what once was. In the second image, the absence is not only in the lost view of the harbor and the downtown, but in what the lost view and the new buildings represent. In the second image, the absence is the sunlight that is now obstructed for residents in the immediately surrounding blocks. Their presence is obstructive for most of the neighborhood residents, and its existence represents an area that prior residents no longer feel is for them. The view of the harbor and the city itself, the sunlight, is no longer for them.

The hauntological at the heart of gentrification manifested itself in multiple ways across all the participants I spoke with. It was also reflected throughout my field work, and came out often as I was reflecting on my field notes, memos, and voice memos. The hauntings of the physical structures were the most visible and easily recognizable, but it was the way in which the physical structures represented the other hauntings of the neighborhood: that of the experiences of loss.

4.3.1 "What We Lost"

Sometimes the specters of gentrification are actual community members - friends, families, and neighbors whose absence is a presence. The displaced community makes up the "present absence" of the neighborhood - their absence is marked across all aspects of the city, like the manifest shadows of humans and objects left behind after a nuclear blast. Each renovated building is a manifestation of this absence, and this is felt deeply by those who are closest to its epicenter.

It's a cold morning in May, and I'm standing on the sidewalk after helping set-up a makeshift press conference location in front of an abandoned church in Maverick Central. We are located directly behind the new East Boston Community Health Center dental, vision, and medical offices building. At the end of the street you can see cranes holding the steel beams that are making up the structure of a new mixed use building on Sumner St., across from the Maverick T Station. Next door to the church, there is an empty lot full of left over bikes, mattresses, and alcohol containers - the space left behind for the currently houseless to reside in before it, too, turns into another apartment building. In the lot next to the empty lot, a crew of largely Hispanic workers are showing up to begin their renovation work on a multi-family home being converted into a series of condominiums.

I am here with other community members to listen in to a conference put together by a local housing organization that has been fighting displacement and evictions for years. Three families in East Boston are currently facing no-fault eviction due to the

landlord's desires to increase rent. Those families are here to tell their stories, in Spanish with an English translator, and we, members of the press and community, are here to listen. Each person speaks briefly, stating their story, the conditions of their family, and what they fear will happen if they are evicted. The first is Maribel, a single mother in her 40's who immigrated to the neighborhood over a decade ago. She is small, soft spoken, and visibly sad in the angriest way she can muster. She speaks about how she volunteers for the local urban farming community, members of which are here to show their support for her. How, through this volunteer work, where she distributes fresh produce to families in need across the street from the Umana School, a predominantly Hispanic charter school in East Boston, she gets to meet and talk to the kids as they are leaving school. She takes a sense of ownership over this; she cares deeply for and is protective over the children leaving the school.

She talks about how her two children have asthma. That she's scared of what will happen if she has to move, about having to find a new care provider for her children, and what their health outcomes might be. This sentiment is reflected in the other two speakers, Jorge and Gabbie, who are both the parents and primary caregivers to their family members. Jorge's wife cannot work due to a medical condition, and he has had trouble finding work due to his own medical conditions, supporting his family on federal benefits alone. His children both have medical concerns, most notably his oldest daughter who experiences schizophrenia. He, too, is concerned about no longer being in walking distance from his and his family's primary care providers. Gabbie keeps things more

vague, not wanting to speak in the first place and thus keeping her remarks brief and thankful for the support.

All throughout, after each speaker, there is a collective attempt at holding back tears. Most of the people here have known these families for years, and their sense of grief at this loss is palpable. When the news conference is over, Gabbie and Maribel join the crowd, who in return offers back hugs and crying and voices of support as best they can.

This sense of grief at the loss of community hovers over every aspect of the conversation surrounding gentrification. When talking to Evelyn during our walking interview, she remarked about this sense of loss:

"Yeah. I don't really know anyone. It's a lot of new people coming in now ummm it's, it's weird to run into…it's like [people who moved out will say] "yeah I just couldn't fight in East Boston. I couldn't buy my children's home, I couldn't live with my parents." Like it's wonderful to live here in East Boston. You're so close to downtown, you have all these wonderful things that have been happening. You can walk to everything. But people couldn't stay. Every one has had to leave."

She goes on to talk about her own feelings of frustrations about feeling "left behind" in this new development.

"It's just like dude we did everything right what more could we do? It's 'cause we weren't greedy, we didn't want to go into finance or we didn't want to be a corporate lawyer. Like I didn't want to give up 7 years of my life to become some world class surgeon which I probably could have been, I don't know. [laughs] But

we wanted that work-life balance, you know. We wanted to give back to the

community and like, where's my community? It's not even here."

When loss is mentioned across interviews and photovoice participants, it is rarely

in the individualist meaning of the word. That is to say, loss is often experienced and

expressed communally. We can see an example of this expressed in Evelyn's quote above

when she remarks: "Where's my community? It's not even here." This same sense of

communal loss was shared at the housing event mentioned in the introduction. After all

the speakers who were scheduled to speak were finished, there was an invitation to

everyone in the audience to speak if they wished. At this time, a young woman, who

appeared to be a Hispanic teenager, nervously asked to speak. As she began, she became

increasingly nervous, relying on the encouragement of the crowd cheering. She spoke for

only a little under two minutes, growing increasingly emotional as she shared with the

crowd how she and her mother were evicted from their home in East Boston in 2020 and

currently live in Revere. "No tiene las personas que amo. No tiene la gente que yo amo.

No tiene mis favoritas restaurantes. Y no tiene la comunidad que yo amo." *It doesn't*

have the people I love. I don't have the people I love. I don't have my favorite

restaurants. And I don't have the community I love. At this, she became too emotional to

keep talking, and moved the microphone away from her face. Sandy, moved in quickly

and gave her a big hug. While holding her, she reminded her that "you will always be a

part of this community. You will always be loved here."

After this moment, the speaker went back into the crowd where she was held and

comforted. D took the microphone back and reminded us all that:

"Gentrification is painful. Not only because of the buildings, right? That's just the physical aspect. But, people who live here, this is our home and we feel it. People are coming in and treat us like shit. And that hurts … we cry, and it may look silly from the outsiders, right? Like, from the developers. But this is real life. Like, real lives, real tears."

This communal sense of loss is often expressed differently depending on the generation of East Boston residents you identify with. That is, old timers will express collective loss at a community that is largely gone - the strong Italian heritage that was connected with the North End, the food, the celebrations, the rich family dynamics and history. On the other hand, the Hispanic community largely expresses loss as a currently unfolding history - an urgency that doesn't allow time for grieving.

There is a difference here, too, in the manner of the loss. According many of the old-timers I spoke with, most of the old-timers who left did so voluntarily – they chose to leave East Boston for the suburbs of Winthrop, Everett, Revere, or further up the North Shore. For them, this was a realized dream - an ability to move up and advance in the world. But in doing so, it left many behind. Rose talks about this to me when we are walking around her home.

"My sister used to live here" she tells me, pointing to the home next door. "And down there – my cousin and her family grew up there." House after house on her block, she names different Italian-sounding last names, in some form related or close friends to her and her family. Across the street from her home there is a parking lot. "That used to be an ice cream factory. And next to it, where that brick home is – my brother moved in

there after he was 18. He ran illegal gambling in the basement. I still have the pictures if you want to see." She laughs and shrugs her shoulders. I asked where everyone is now. "Gone. They're all gone. One after one they all left. It's just me here."

I was finally able to meet Rose for a walking interview on a cold autumn day after talking with her on and off the phone for a few weeks. During our time on the phone, she was sure to remind me that everything she is saying on the phone is "off the record" before she began talking about some of her particular anxieties about the neighborhood.

When I showed up on my bike, the first thing she asked me, before I was able to get my helmet off was if I had a mask. It had completely slipped my mind, and I apologized, telling her I left it at the house. Rightfully so, she appeared annoyed, and walked back towards her house telling me to go home and get one before the interview. I, of course, abided, stopping on my way home at the health center to grab a mask from the front desk before quickly riding back to her home.

Rose is in her 90's and has lived in the same house for her entire life. "My great-grandfather built this house. He built it after he came from Italy with his family"[9] she tells me, sounding both prideful of this and, in a way, grieving it. Rose's entire family lived in that house with her - her parents, her siblings, and, after they left, her husband and son. Now, it is only her. Her husband died a little over a decade ago, and her son died while he was in the Army serving in Iraq. "It's just me here now" she reminds me often throughout the interview. She now rents out the top two floors of her three-family home

---

[9] The rest of the quotes from Rose are from our 'on the record' interview.

to people. The rent is quite cheap for the area, and she is very selective about who she allows to stay in her place. "They need to be quiet, professional…they can't smoke. And no families. The noise bothers me" she tells me flatly.

Rose shows allows me into her home to show me the top floor, the room that is currently sitting empty for the next week until the new tenant moves in. It's a small space that hasn't been updated in some time, but it's clean and quite nice. She's proud of the space. It is, after all, her old room. She lived in this area for her entire childhood, only moving into the first floor as an adult. I asked her if she plans on staying here as long as she can. "I don't have any other choice. Where am I going to go? I don't have anyone to give the home to … it's supposed to go to my niece when I die, but I don't know what she's going to do with it."

For most of the Hispanic population, on the other hand, displacement is often not a choice. And when it is, for many, it is in order to get out while they can still afford to leave. This is what happened with Ronaldo's mother and father when they ultimately decided to sell their house that they were planning on leaving to their children and move up the North Shore.

"My sister, when her and my dad convinced my mom to sell the house - because they needed both my mom and my dad to agree. She didn't want to go, but…my sister was, you know, doing research that, you know…the difference of what was happening…rent's going up, things are going up…and…who knows if we can, uhhh maintain the place once we, you know once our parents gave it to us. And … I guess like

I see a lot of new houses being built. Meaning people used to live there, sold it to get out, probably for the same reason that my sister did."

When we think about the ways that displacement represent the hauntological effects of gentrification, maps can also be a useful tool. Figures 27 and 28 below show a few different indicators: the overall change in the Hispanic and non-Hispanic White population between 2010-2021, rehabilitated parcels with their change in value, and the geolocated walking routes and photovoice photographs. What is noticeable here are two things: 1) that the majority of census tracts in East Boston have actually seen decreases in the Hispanic population, but 2) the areas residents associated the most with gentrification, shown by the crosshairs and the walking routes, have seen increases in the Hispanic population over the past 11 years.

Figure 27: Map showing the change in Hispanic population of East Boston at the census tract level between 2010 and 2020.
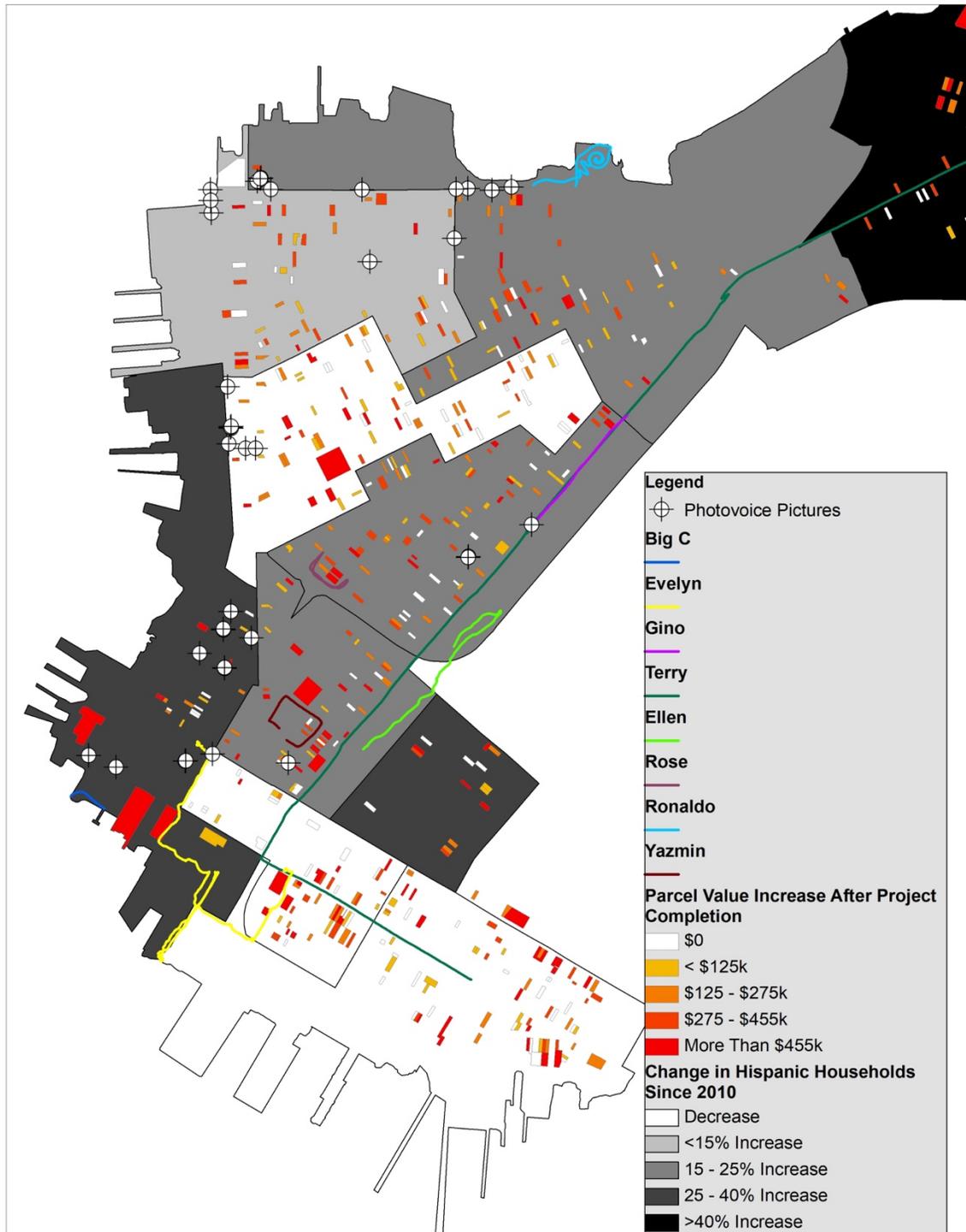
Figure 28: Map showing the change in Hispanic population of East Boston at the census tract level between 2010 and 2020

Legend

⊕ Photovoice Pictures

Big C

Evelyn

Gino

Terry

Ellen

Rose

Ronaldo

Yazmin

Parcel Value Increase After Project Completion
- $0
- < $125k
- $125 - $275k
- $275 - $455k
- More Than $455k

Change in White Households Since 2010
- >20% Decrease
- 10 - 20% Decrease
- 5 - 10% Decrease
- <5% Decrease
- Increase
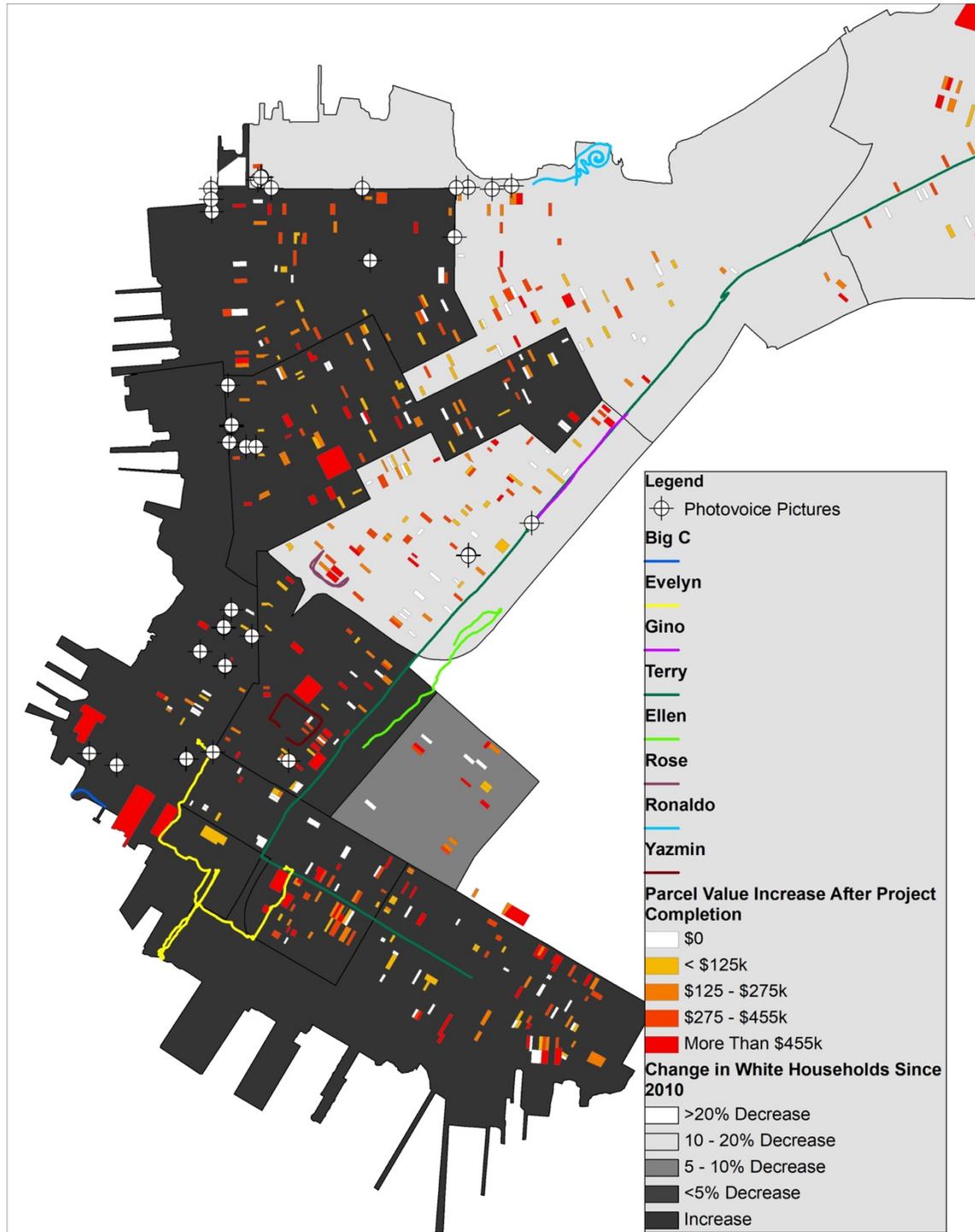
There may be a few things going on here. The first is that the census tract may not be a small enough geography to capture more granular changes occurring in neighborhoods. As an example, one of the tracts with the largest increases in Hispanic population, along the southern waterfront, is an area with both an increase in public housing and luxury housing over the last 5 years. The maps are also unable to highlight individual stories of displacement. While there may not have been noticeable levels of displacement according to the administrative data, photographs show how displacement is noticed on the micro level. The maps and the photos, therefore, do not necessarily tell a contradictory story, but a similar one where each adds context to the other.

Sandy's final photovoice presentation communicates this feeling. In her collage, she shows off four pictures: two from the Condor section of Eagle Hill, and two on Chelsea street heading into the Maverick/Jeffries Point area. For her, these all represent points of loss. Her description reads: What we lost: our homes, our views, our families (Figure 29 below). All of these points are points of loss, and they are shared collectively.

Figure 29: Sandy's photovoice presentation showing "what we lost"

4.3.2 "When am I next?"

According to the participants, experiencing loss related to gentrification often takes two forms: experiencing the communal loss, and experiencing the fear that you soon will be the one being displaced. This fear of being next was shared openly by Sandy during Session 5 of the photovoice project. Having previously shared one set of photographs, she came in the next week eager to share more pictures that she took since the last session. As she had gone already the week prior, she let everyone who hadn't shared go

first, waiting patiently and contributing to the general discussion. When it came time for

her to share, she shared two pictures: Figure 30 and 31 below.

Figure 30: Image of what remained after a family eviction as

capture by Sandy (1).

Figure 31: Image of what remained after a family displacement as captured by Sandy (2).

The pictures Sandy took are of what was left behind after one of the family's that lived across the street from her was evicted through a no-fault eviction. She told us all that they were evicted after their building was sold to a new landlord from California who bought the property as an investment opportunity. She remembered seeing them drive up soon after purchasing the building in a car that she describes "like a Mercedes or something", inspecting the property, and then leaving, and she hasn't seen them since.

The families that lived there saw their rent increase $500, and had a month to agree to the new rent or face eviction. The families that left took whatever they could and left the rest behind. Sandy described this story through tears, and then followed it up by telling us that she approached her landlord and "asked my landlord: "Am I next? When am I going to be kicked out?" He told me I have nothing to worry about, but I don't know. I don't know."

This sense of not knowing is a sensation that many renters in East Boston live under. It is the unsteady foundation that renters face when gentrification begins to happen in the neighborhood. The precarious nature of renting where housing is a commodity means that one is at the whims of the landlord. Landlords, for their part, are increasingly looking towards the market to guide how much monthly rent should be. The more luxury units that were being rented out, the higher the average rent would increase, the more landlords down the line were able to justify charging. Dr. Lisa described this as 'sending shockwaves' through the neighborhood in our discussion – new buildings signaled to other landlords and development companies that there was money to be gained. As East Boston continues to be touted as a the 'up and coming' place to live, the market gave landlords something to point to as reason to charge more each month for their property. I saw this process occur in the lives of some of the participants. In particular, by the end of our photovoice sessions, we learned that Arial and Pablo were soon facing eviction because their landlord was raising their rent $500, demanding that they pay the next month or move out. Due to disabilities, both of them were on a fixed income and could not afford this increase. In the end, they were able to connect with lawyers from City

Life/Vida Urbana and work out a plan to stay in their apartment for the moment, but this uncertainty of the future remains for them.

What participants were reflecting on here can also be conceived of as "hauntings" - the visual cues of recent evictions are themselves haunting reminders of the impacts of gentrification. The market is another such ghost that haunts everything in East Boston. The term 'market rate' has become ubiquitous in discussions about the cost of rent. During neighborhood association meetings where a new property was being discussed, the term 'market rate' was always used by developers and their lawyers as the prepared response for when neighbors would ask what these new units will cost. "Well, we can't say right now because the market may look different when we're done, but they will reflect the market rate when completed" was stated, in various forms, at most of these meetings. The market appears as something that is ungraspable for most people – something that can only do things to you but not something that can be controlled itself.

These ghosts continue to haunt the neighborhood: the market, the new developments, The Eddy, the leftover materials of an evicted family, the empty lots. Participants never used the words "ghosts" or "specters" or "hauntings" in their descriptions of gentrification, but often what they were describing and showing were just that: hauntings, ghosts, and specters. In the following section, I describe the final core theme, Defending the Community, and its sub-themes, *A Forgotten Community*, *Informal and Formal Social Control*, and *Broken Promises of Development*.

4.4 Defending the Community

During the fifth photovoice session, Sandy was eager to be the first presenting her photographs to the group for discussion. When she first started her presentation, Sandy showed three different photographs, each of them indicating a different location in the neighborhood that she noticed while she was driving around: a walking bridge in disrepair, a few homes in the process of being rehabilitated. She concluded her presentation by showing a picture of the Farmer's Market from earlier in the day (Figure 32 below). For her, this represented two things: 1) the potential of what could be lost in the process of gentrification, and 2) the spaces of joy and community that still exist in the neighborhood.

> "I wanted to show something positive. I feel like we're always talking about the negative things that are happening, but we need to also see the positive things we have. There is still so much we have."

The final theme that came up throughout this dissertation research: the concept of 'defending the community.' 'Defense' can come in many different forms, and itself carries a connotation of aggression, violence, or force. However, defense can also be expressed in the way organizations and neighbors build cohesive, trusting communities as a stalwart against what is seen as extractive and intrusive development. It is not my intention to draw a moral distinction against these forms of defense, but instead simply to draw a distinction and to better define terms. In the framework of collective efficacy, this is shown through the processes of collective willingness to take action on behalf of the

neighborhood fostered by social ties (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003; Sampson et al., 1997;

Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999). It is in this latter category that residents and

participants expressed the theme of defense in service of protecting the community.

Figure 32: Image of the farmers market in Central Square Park on a summer evening as taken

by Sandy to represent the things that are worth fighting for.

One of the strategies that homeowners had previously attempted to maintain the demographic make-up of the community was to maintain rent at a lower level. Dr. Lisa described this when we talked as a way the older Italian community maintained a working-class demographic in the neighborhood through selective renting. For decades, when families had an extra level in their multi-family home to rent out, they would intentionally keep rent at a value that working-class families and individuals could afford. Even after many of those families moved out of the neighborhood as Hispanic immigrants began to move in, those families who stayed continued this practice with the new Hispanic immigrants.

"The problem is that most of their kids don't live in the neighborhood anymore. Their parents or grandparents are dying off and leaving them the property. And they don't want to maintain it themselves or move back to East Boston from Everett or Malden or Winthrop. So they sell it" Dr. Lisa shares with me, describing how the process of development for multifamily homes has occurred in the neighborhood. "They see money. They don't want the property, and there's a lot of developers offering a lot of money to take it off their hands for them. Neither of them care about the character of the neighborhood, or in keeping working-class families in their homes the same way their parents or grandparents did. It's just about money."

The idea of defending the community comes in many forms in East Boston, with different groups all involved at various levels: Mutual Aid East Boston, Neighbors United for a Better East Boston, Green Roots, City Life/Vida Urbana, and Stand Up 4 Eastie being the most prominent of the groups. At various times, these groups attempt to

coordinate and work together, at one time forming the PUEBLO coalition, although at this time it is mostly quiet and there hasn't been a regular meeting scheduled in 6 months. When I asked L. about this, why there hasn't been more coordination across groups considering most members share membership, he shrugged and asked: "I don't know. Have any ideas?" It can often be hard to see beyond the immediacy of the moment when you are an activist, and especially when that activism and community organizing is surrounding putting out all of the little fires of displacement in the dried prairie of a gentrifying neighborhood.

One of the major outliers of these organizations is Stand Up 4 Eastie, an organization that formed out of neighborhood anger towards development in Eagle Hill. L. tells me that the group formed after a particularly heated neighborhood association meeting between some of the old-timers in the neighborhood and some of the notoriously hated lawyers in the neighborhood. "Eagle Hill meetings are legendary", L. tells me with an excited grin, "for a while most meetings would end in shouting." The anger in these meetings were almost always directed at developers and their lawyers, who they felt were disrespectful of the neighborhood writ large. What makes Stand Up 4 Eastie notable compared to the other organizations mentioned is its demographic make-up: it is entirely made up of the White, homeowning, old-timer, Italian-American cohort of neighborhood residents. Largely for this reason, it has been hard to integrate the organization into events with the other organizations, who are largely made-up of the Hispanic community. The group's insistence on starting their own group within this demographic pool, rather than joining the already existing efforts from the Hispanic community, speaks to the

broad tensions between the two demographic groups. This is all despite the fact that both demographic groups, and each organization, are all struggling against the same mechanisms of gentrification and feelings of being forgotten about.

4.4.1 A forgotten community

When it comes to defending the community, a lot of the work is described by organizers as 'catching up' from being a community that felt 'forgotten' to a neighborhood with rapid development. The theme of living in a previously 'forgotten community' came up often throughout my conversations with residents, organizers, and participants. By this, I mean that residents have, for a long time, felt as though they didn't belong in the greater Boston community. Despite being able to see Downtown from the waterfront and on different hills throughout Orient Heights and Eagle Hill, East Boston residents have felt disconnected from the city at-large. Geographically, East Boston is completely disconnected by land from the city, not too dissimilar from Charlestown.

The feeling of being forgotten can also be represented in the political structure of Boston and East Boston's political representation. Politically, East Boston is located in District 1 along with two other neighborhoods, North End and Charlestown (See Figure 33 below). The North End and Charlestown are predominantly White, with 71% of Charlestown residents and 86% of North End residents identifying as White only (Analyze Boston, 2020). That's compared to East Boston's 37% White only population. What's more, Evelyn, who heads up a community organization that promotes political

engagement, talked about the organizations efforts to get the Hispanic population to vote. "We have really low voter turnout here", she says, "So many [Hispanic immigrants] don't want to vote. Most of what we do is educate people that you are allowed to vote, that you can and should speak up for yourself. Just so many immigrants don't want to rock the boat – they want to just be grateful that they are here and not make any trouble. We're trying to teach them that you can do both." The other problem she and her partner talk about is the voting structure in the United States. "So many of [Hispanic immigrants] come from countries where you might vote once a year. They don't have special elections, midterms, any of that. It's confusing here."

Figure 33: Map showing the outlines of District 1 for the city council districts of Boston

City Council Districts - District 1
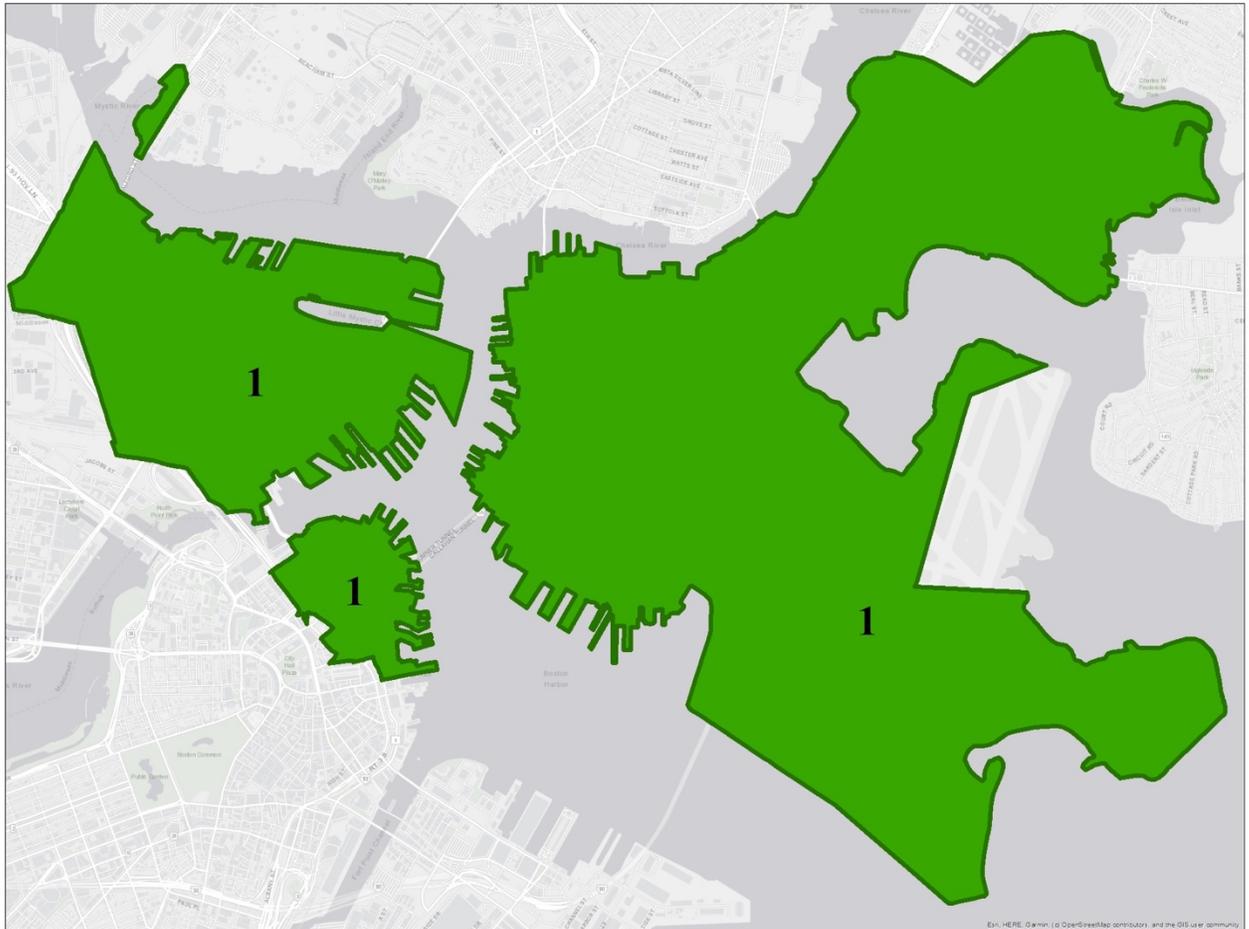
When you take in to account the two main factors, the spatial make-up of the

voting district and the turnout challenges of the broader Hispanic community that makes

up the majority of the neighborhood, you create a condition where East Boston is often

ignored by the political structure of the city. The feeling of being ignored itself creates

the feeling of being forgotten. Ronaldo voiced this very thing in our conversation. For

him, this was a major point of contention, and one of the larger disappointments he

experienced from living in the neighborhood. He recalls when he became personally politically involved in high school when he joined an organization dedicated to creating more park space in East Boston.

> "A good example for that is…ummm…when…Mayor Menino was getting out of office there were candidates…ummm…obviously doing their public speaking you know to get peoples votes. And one of the events we were helping, ummm where they were gonna go speak, and…it was I believe either at Maverick Landing's, ummm community space, or…ummm…the East Boston Social Center. I can't remember where the event was it was like 10 years ago. All I remember is that like, I think like two of the candidates showed up? And the rest didn't show up. Cuz it felt like uhhh we don't need their votes. You know, and… …and that kinda was an eye-opener…that's definitely the first and biggest time I ever felt like…East Boston didn't matter as part of Boston. And…you know, it really stung…"

When I asked what it was about that situation that stung for him, he told described for me a feeling many other residents felt. He told me:

> "Just the fact that, to me, it felt like, oh, they're votes don't count, because we need the greater Boston, we just need their votes, and it's just like, no, we're people to, you know. We want to make our voices heard. And that felt like…they didn't care about our voices. Like nahh that's the part of Boston that you can overlook."

It hadn't always been this way, though. During my interview with Rose, she was quick to point out that East Boston used to have a long history of strong political engagement in the city. Rose herself played a large part in this. Soon after I left my interview with Rose, she sent me some pictures of herself when she was younger, of her now deceased son, and of her and her now-deceased husband meeting Mayor Menino. She describes this era of her life as a point of pride, as a moment where the people she most identified with were represented in the community. That people, of course, were those who have had their family's Italian heritage represented in East Boston for generations.

With new developments coming in, the sense that East Boston is now a desirable place has reinforced it's 'forgotten community' designation – it was forgotten, but now it is found.

> "A lot of people wouldn't come here … no one would come here and then when I was going to college it's like "Eastie's up and coming" like what were we before? Like, it wasn't desirable at all. No one would even come visit me."

Evelyn mentions this to me while we're on our walking interview. The description of East Boston as an "up and coming" neighborhood is immensely common. From the participants I talked to, to developers and their lawyers that attended neighborhood association meetings, to the language in casual conversations with people I would have unrelated to the dissertation: the messaging that East Boston was seen as "up and coming" was omnipresent and all-encompassing. For residents like Ronaldo and Evelyn, this messaging carry with it a sense of loss in itself. Evelyn discussed this

previously in her description of how the changes in the community were "not for us", that is to say her community was not the intended recipient of the changes occurring in the neighborhood. For Ronaldo, this loss was also a longing – feeling left out of the changes in thinking about how much he would have enjoyed the parks had they existed for him.

"…and now we have these parks and parents who take their kids here. It almost makes me envious that they get that when I was growing up it'd be like, throwing rocks and pinecones, you know they got like swings now and basketball courts. I remember we would have to uhhh…[laughs] if any of my teachers in elementary school I'm sorry, but we used to sneak and jump the gate because they used to have a basketball hoop at James Otis, so it would be after hours and we would just jump the gate because that was the only basketball hoop they had. Ummm like so I am glad definitely that kids are experiencing, you know the big potential that Eastie has to offer, but it definitely makes me feel a tad envious that I didn't get that and, you know, just…I guess like why did it take…it shoulda, I feel like it shoulda already arrived for us. Ummm why did it have to take all these years and so much hard work?"

A forgotten community means also that those who live in the community were themselves forgotten about. Whether this is only a perception or not is irrelevant for residents of East Boston – it is a shared feeling that, in some way, they didn't matter. But this being forgotten also presented itself as an opportunity for other residents. I met with Yazmin at her home, a recently renovated single family home on a small road between Meridian and Chelsea St. We met on her back deck for her interview before she showed

me around her neighborhood a little. Yazmin is not only a homeowner, but is also a landlord, owning two other properties with her husband that they rent out. Yazmin is pretty open that her and her husband have benefitted from the changes in East Boston. For her and her husband, East Boston was a place that they could find affordable housing that was also clean.

> "…when we moved to Boston we started looking after we got jobs, and started looking for our first place to rent. I mean we saw mice running around…so we finally said okay is Boston [the place we want to live] even though like it's more segregated, it's a little further from where we wanna be. It doesn't, at that point there were no bars that … were known to others. People asked me like where do you live by the airport? Like I don't even know if there's homes there…so we benefited from finding a place that was mice free and at our price point … and then we obviously benefitted when we bought our first home on [redacted] because at that point again it was kind of turning around. There was definitely new places, people were definitely starting to get to know where East Boston was. Like that wasn't a question at work anymore. Ummm…but we were able to find a cheaper rate, there's been equity growth there, and we were able to buy some rental property and benefit from that as well."

This benefitting from living and owning property in a neighborhood that has been 'found' also points to Yazmin's belief that there are positive sides of gentrification. Ellen reported a similar sentiment. When I met with her at Bremen Street Park, she told me she chose this area to be interviewed at because she felt like it represented some of the

positive aspects of gentrification. Bremen Street Park is a long green park that runs from under the highway to the East Boston Public Library. For many who had been in the neighborhood a long time, this new park is a much-welcomed change from the concrete slab it used to be. In a similar story to Yazmin, Ellen described her and her husband's excitement of 'finding' East Boston before others:

"I felt like it was a gem. And that's why we were sort of rushing to buy a place and saving up as soon as we can because when people don't know where it is and it's one stop or two stops away from downtown, like if you could walk there, it'd be a mile. That's pretty amazing."

Ellen went on to discuss how these changes in the neighborhood were starting to be noticed many years ago when she and her husband were looking to buy a place in the neighborhood:

"Yeah…I've seen the tipping point, right? Like, I would say … 2015-16, is where the tipping point, like, oh, people discovering this neighborhood this is cool, and then the developers start to see money signs in their eyes, and that's when gentrification … that's when gentrification starts becoming, the … in my estimation it's no longer … [talking to kid] … that's when gentrification to me becomes a negative rather than a positive."

One of the interesting aspects of this feeling of 'forgotteness' for participants is that it is experienced nearly the same across groups, but the interpretation of the feeling of forgotteness varies. For residents like Yazmin and Ellen, there is a complicated relationship to the changes occurring in the neighborhood. On the one hand, it was

exciting to get in early and find an affordable home in the city where they may not have been able to otherwise. On the other hand, they have a hard time grappling with their own role in the promotion of changing the neighborhood – they can point to all the ways that gentrification may be a negative process for the neighborhood, but they seemed to view their own actions as part of the positive aspect of gentrification. The ability to buy and rehab homes in the neighborhood is a good thing, if only it doesn't also lead to displacement.

Another aspect of the 'forgotteness' of the neighborhood that has to be mentioned is what it means to 'find' a neighborhood. The way Ronaldo describes feeling as though he was part of a population in Boston that was ignored, forgotten about, is of feeling hurt. Even when he noticed the changes that were occurring from being 'found', the new parks in particular, he felt envious that these things weren't occurring for him and his family when he was younger. There is a transition of East Boston from a neighborhood that Rose described as being a part of the larger Boston community, to that which Ronaldo described as being 'forgotten' about, and finally to Yazmin's and Ellen's description of 'finding' a hidden gem. This transition also follows the general timeline of demographic changes in the neighborhood. The neighborhood was forgotten about because of who lived there, the largely Hispanic population, and then 'found' by a new cohort of White newcomers who brought with them profit potential.

4.4.2 Informal and Formal Social Control

Beck's (2020) framework of 'development-directed policing' and the research that indicated changes to social control in gentrifying neighborhoods (Kochel and Gau, 2021; Kozey, 2020) was an important framework for me in understanding the various impacts of gentrification. My interview protocol included a question asking participants if they had noticed any differences in the way police interact with residents in the area (protocol in Appendix B). The responses across all walking interview participants were varied, and participants did indicate that they noticed a difference but often also voiced that this was not something they thought about often.

Like anything else, viewpoints surrounding police presence in the neighborhood are complicated. Discussions surrounding the police presence and interactions in the neighborhood seemed to be different depending on the race/ethnicity of the participant. That is to say, as might be expected, Hispanic participants were more likely to point towards a difference in police presence in the neighborhood over the past 10 years, even if a smaller one. This perspective follows similar findings that show Hispanic residents are more likely than White residents to report racial bias in police interactions (Huggins, 2012; Nadal et al., 2017). When Ronaldo was asked about this, he thought for a bit and then responded that:

"There's obviously police surrounding the Bremen street park now. Uhhh when back then, like, when it was, when I was going up and it was just gravel and rocks

and cracked pavement. I don't ever recall seeing a police officer patrolling or anything … so…maybe that's happening. I hope I'm wrong."

For many of the Hispanic residents I asked about changes in police patterns, few noted feeling as though there was a distinct change in police interactions. Some had mentioned that there appear to be more police, often citing the increased police presence due to increased construction in the neighborhood and police serving as detail for most of the construction jobs in the neighborhood. Each could point to an instance where they saw police more often, but it wasn't a top concern among most of the Hispanic population I talked to as part of this dissertation.

White residents, on the other hand, largely reported any changes were inherently a good thing, often voicing a need for a stronger or more visible police presence. This was especially true of the Italian-American contingent, both in interviews and in general discussions through the field work. This is particularly true during my discussions with Gino and Tony, two old-timers in the neighborhood who have lived in the same home they grew up in and can trace their family lineage back generations to when their distant family members came to the neighborhood from Italy.

"The cops here get a bad rap. They're treated poorly everywhere for just doing their job. And they're saying they want to abolish and defund the police? Give me a break. I don't know why they keep trying to help. I'd like to see these people without the police, see who comes to help them when the police stop showing up."

Gino's remarks were shared by Tony and Rose, each believing that attitudes towards the police were unfair, and that there needed to be a stronger police presence throughout the neighborhood. It's difficult to separate this from the growing discourse surrounding police presence nationally in light of the Black Lives Matter protests and the growing Blue Lives Matter counter discourses that followed. To that end, from participants like Gino, there didn't appear to be a separation between national discourse and localized discourse, the one bleeding into the other.

This sentiment was also true for Rose. When I asked her if she had noticed a difference between police presence since new developments starting going in, she gave me a confused look that made me immediately feel uneasy. As if I had unwittingly found myself in a deeply political and emotional debate about the purpose of police in this country. "I'm not sure what you mean…" she said, breaking the silence, "but I can tell you there need to be more of them. They don't respond enough or do enough when called."

The feeling that police were not maintaining enough of a presence in the neighborhood was shared among residents who took part in neighborhood association meetings. At a neighborhood association meeting for the Maverick Center Neighborhood Association, the neighborhood association that makes up the area from Lopresti Park to Central Square Park, between Meridian St. and the waterfront, they had a police officer as a representative of the police department attend and speak at the top of the meeting. There were two concerns from residents: theft, and the homeless population in Central Park. With excitement, the officer gave numbers to how many homeless people they had

removed from the park, without detailing where they took them or where they ended up. The residents who attended were excited about this and spoke out loud how they would hope that soon the police can remove all the homeless from the neighborhood.

That area, Central Square Park, was described in much different terms by Ronaldo. Since Ronaldo was a child, little has changed regarding that space. During our interview, he described to me how his father was a recovering alcoholic and would take him to Central Square Park to do outreach to the homeless population in the park, many of which were struggling with alcohol dependence. Ronaldo called these people 'borros', a slang term for alcoholic.

> "[My dad] was heavily, ummm involved with the AA community here. He was definitely big time, ummm…invested in that sort of, in that area, and it would be like…a place for…you know, people who were dealing with alcoholism who didn't speak English to go there … he fought his alcoholism when he moved here. And, and you know found this place and it changed him and he wanted to give back … we would hand out flyers for our events we would try to do it bilingual because it's definitely a Hispanic place. And we wanted umm people to know that lived here for a while that…you know that they do matter, that they have voice just because they don't speak English or it's not their first language, you know doing stuff like that."

This community that Ronaldo is describing still exists in the park, largely Hispanic adult men who gather in a social manner, while also often openly carrying alcohol. At the events that occur in this space, organizers know who most of the folks in

this community are and grant them as much free food as they need. Informal social control is functioning in two separate but distinct ways here. For residents like Ronaldo father and folks in Mutual Aid East Boston, engaging in outreach and support is a means to enforce social values of caring for and supporting all residents. For homeowners like those in the Maverick Central Neighborhood Association, informal social control functions largely to reinforce formal systems of social control, employing police to remove this community from the space entirely. In this latter activation of social control, many of the residents voicing the necessity for police presence did so under the explicit intention of wanting to make the park and the surrounding area more inviting for newcomers, including new businesses.

Over time, I observed that many of the concerns brought by residents to the police during neighborhood association meetings were relating to the new police station location. Up until April 2023, the police station was housed in a government building shared by the courthouse on Meridian St. near the Maverick subway station. A few years ago, as the changes in the neighborhood were beginning to increase, the precinct was proposed to move to the far end of Eagle Hill, along the waterfront between the Condor Street Urban Wild park and the fish processing plant. This new location, show in Figure 34 below, would place the police station deeper in the Eagle Hill area, and between Eagle Hill and Orient Heights. The idea for this change was twofold: 1) The old building was falling into disrepair and it would cost too much to bring it up to code, and 2) it would place the officers more conveniently in the middle of the neighborhood.

Resident concerns were largely surrounding the location, with many residents afraid that this would mean the police would no longer respond to crime happening in the Maverick Center neighborhood. On the other end, many residents who attend meetings surrounding the new police station were concerned that, in their new location, the police wouldn't be able to respond fast enough to concerns in Orient Heights. To each of these, the police chief, and other police officers who attended these meetings, reassured everyone that the police would continue to respond in the same way that they always have. For Yazmin, living on the same street as the police department while it was at its former location, was ideal. Yazmin and her husband are landlords who also rent out the basement level of their single-family home through AirBnB. In our interview, she told me how she liked having the police station so close:

> "It feels safer because we have the AirBnB. I think it's also something that we can mention. Because people always mention like "is it safe" like "can I walk alone at night" and I always mention like I feel safe at night … It's funny 'cause it's like on moving day there were cars parked in our spots, and I called the police station and they came and moved in, and then another car came and they came back. He's like "it's your personal police station.""

Figure 34: Site of the old and the new District A-7 police station.
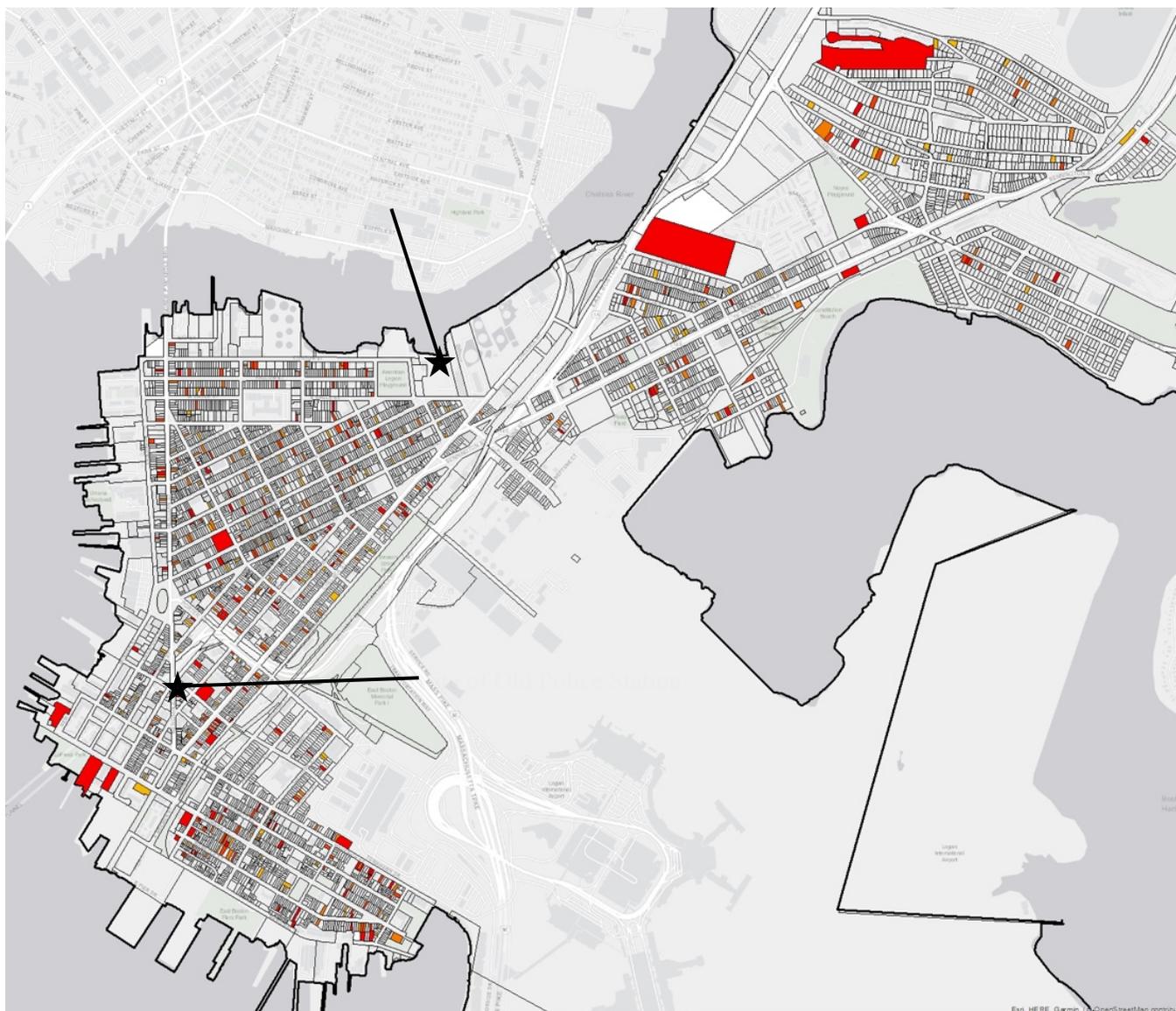
This was also notable in a secondary concern to the police in moving the station: what will happen with the old station. None of the officers who were asked about this in various meetings wanted to be clear about this, but each said some variation of "it will remain a government building." Rumors that it would be a half-way house for individuals experiencing homelessness and/or substance use disorder are abundant, and often come directly from the police themselves who always caveat that this is just "something that's being talked about." This is of deep concern to many of the most vocal residents, largely older White residents, in these meetings. Concerns about a rise in crime and homelessness weigh heavily for residents in neighborhood association meetings, and these concerns were voiced alongside concerns about the cost of home prices in the neighborhood.

I made it a point to try and bring police officers themselves into this conversation in various ways. My first approach was to begin talking to police who I saw at various events or out on the beat and asking them if they didn't mind answering a few questions. Across the board, the police I approached this way refused to answer any questions after the first question asked: *East Boston has seen a lot of changes in developments and demographics over the last few years: have you noticed any difference in the way you or other police officers interact with the community with these changes?* The question was asked the same way for each officer that I talked to, and it was also the end of every conversation I was able to have with an officer. Each officer, when asked, immediately responded with some variation of "That's not something I want to talk about" or "I'm

going to need permission from our publicity team to even begin thinking about that question."

One officer did entertain the question, albeit in a limited way. I caught him as he was leaving one of the neighborhood association meetings where he gave updates on crime in the area and the new police station. As he was walking down the hall of the high school where the meeting was being held, I caught up to him and he allowed me some time to talk. His answer reflected a general sentiment that the police have always treated the community with respect and they will continue to. When pressed a bit further one what that means, he responded that almost all of the officers are East Boston residents, which he pointed out wasn't the norm across precincts. He talked a little more about how, if there were ever any complaints of poor treatment of officers, that they should make a complaint to the police. And at that, he let me know that he needed to get back to the station, and quickly moved on down the hallway.

The discourse surrounding social control throughout these dynamics all seem to be circling a singular central theme: the loss of informal social control for the old-timer, White population. For participants like Rose and Gino, their feelings towards the perceived loss of informal social control appeared to stem from the feeling that they had become a minoritized demographic in the neighborhood. "These people," Rose tells me as she points to the home to the left of hers, "they stand outside smoking all night. They don't speak English. I'm sure they're illegal. I have called in to report different violations on them for trash and placed notes on their doors, but they don't understand English. Or they don't care. I don't feel comfortable being around them." Rose's comments speak to

the way in which informal social control is may be used to enforce perceived social norms in the neighborhood, often with the aid of more traditional forms of social control. This is reflected in the conversations I had with Gino and Tony – the lack of informal social control was tied to a desire for more formal social control in the form of police and administrative enforcement.

While the old-timer, White population express their loss of informal social control through a desire for stronger systems of social control, the Hispanic community largely expresses neither. The expression of social control is complicated, as there is an inherent distrust of formal systems of control due to many being immigrants and being fearful of immigration enforcement officers. At the same time, there is a sense voiced by many in this community that safety and security are lacking. This was the predominant theme of Lia, a participant in the photovoice group. Her photographs all centered around security and safety in some capacity (Figure 35 below).

Figure 35: Photovoice poster presentation of Lia indicating her perception of

safety and security and its relationship to her experiences with gentrification.
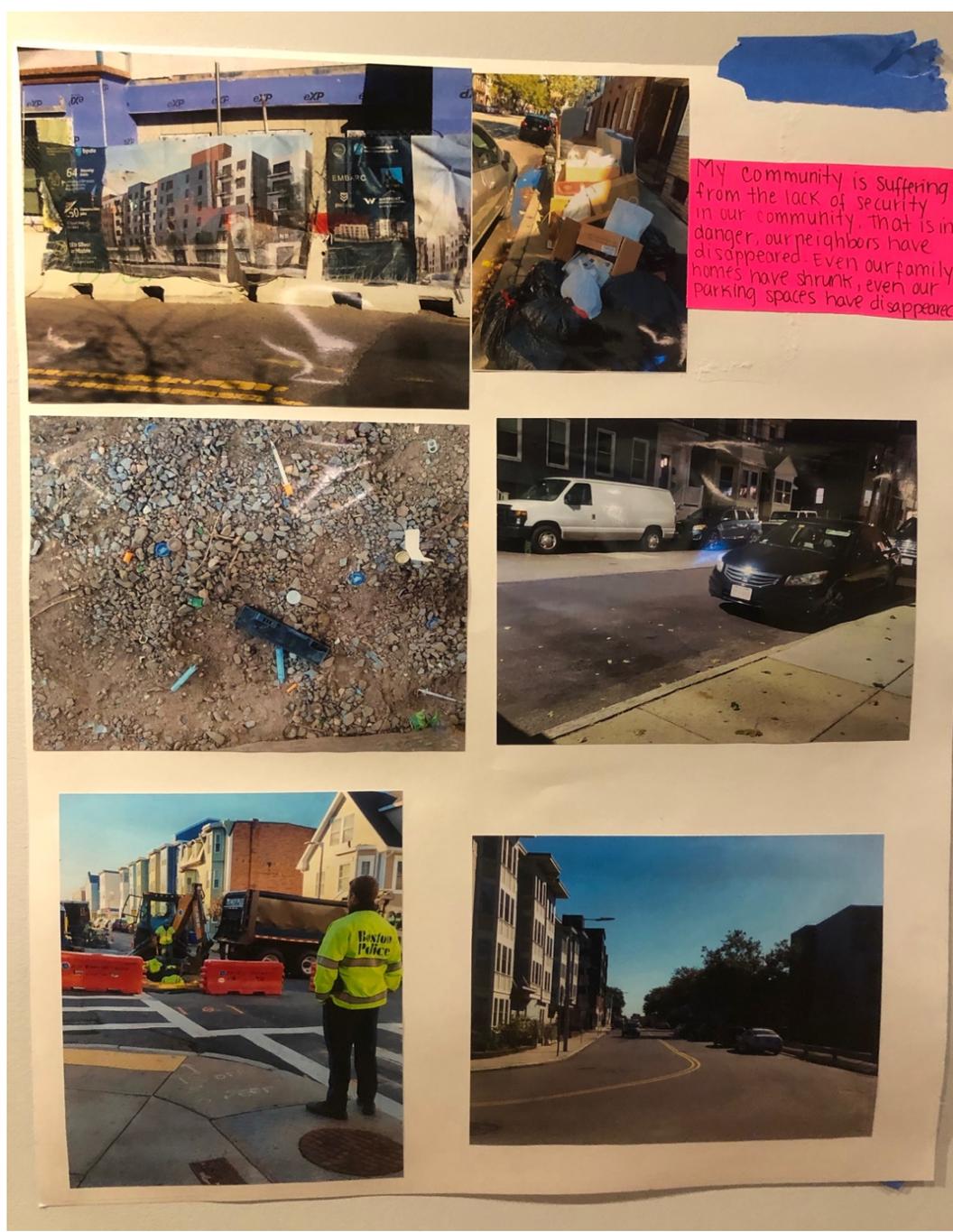
What is different about this concern of safety from that of the more White, old-timer residents is that the safety and security aren't necessarily embedded with enforcement. Safety and security held multiple meanings. This can be seen in the way Lia describes her photovoice poster. She writes: "My community is suffering from a lack of security in our community. That is in danger. Our neighbors have disappeared. Even our family homes have shrunk. Even our parking spaces have disappeared."

This caption is placed among pictures of police officers on detail, used syringes in dirt, the new developments going in on Condor St., her street with only one parking space available, and the remnants of a family eviction. For Lia, each of these things are representative in a lack of security and safety in the neighborhood. This sentiment was largely shared amongst members of the Hispanic community and other low-income residents I talked with. In these instances, informal social control came in the form of the community protecting itself from these outside forces that created a sense of insecurity.

Across these instances, we can see how formal systems of social control in the police were used as enforcement mechanisms to protect property and enforce desirable social norms. As lack of informal social control rose for the older generations of White residents, the reliance on police as an enforcement mechanism rose. The opposite appeared to be true for Hispanic residents, who generally distrusted the police and formal social control measures, but also felt as though their ability to enact informal social control was lessened overall.

4.4.2 Broken promises of development

On one occasion traversing the streets up and down Jeffries Point, I walked up to three White older adults smoking on the corner of Everett and Orleans St. next to an old warehouse that was recently converted into a CrossFit gym. I asked them if they wouldn't mind if I asked them a few questions, and two happily agreed while the other finished their cigarette and decided to walk back to their apartment. I would soon find out they all lived in the retirement complex across the street, which has a strict 'no smoking' policy, so they walk across the street to work around that policy. The accumulation of cigarettes in an empty flower pot next to the building suggests they aren't the only ones to take part.

I come to know them as Jules and Robert. Both in their 70's, Robert has lived in East Boston his entire life, while Jules moved here later to live with him. She tells me she's "only lived here 30 years", itself an indication that separates those who have been here for generations from the 'newcomers.' In East Boston, as in Boston, you aren't really ever from here unless your family has been for generations. They are both married and have been for quite some time. I ask them what they think about the changes happening in the neighborhood. Robert had grown up on Everett St. and spoke at great lengths to how things used to be on the street we were standing on.

"When you didn't have nothing, and we didn't, you could go to this neighbor for food, this neighbor for drinks, and…" he gestures on and on, "But you can't do that any more. These developments totally ruined that." Jules echoes this frustration and sense of loss. "I don't even want to be here anymore…" Jules says, "I hate the congestion. There's

too many people on this island. There's a reason why most people have moved to Everett [a town bordering East Boston]."

Throughout the conversation, Jules and Robert make it a point to lay the blame for the changes in the neighborhood culture on three groups: the developers, the politicians, and what Dr. Lisa calls the 'new-new' residents. For both, the newest groups of people to move into the neighborhood have no interest in the neighborhood or in building community. Jules makes it a point to distinguish herself from her peers who lay the blame on the Hispanic community who came in a generation before this newest group.

"A lot of people my age are saying all these things about the Latin families moving in. They say all these mean things, and I always tell them - when you smile or say hi to someone on the street, who says it back? And they always admit that I'm right. It isn't the Latin people. I'm not racist, I'm White, but it's the White people who aren't saying hi back."

Robert followed this up with: "You can always tell if someone is really from East Boston." I continued that thought by asking them if it was because people from East Boston will say hi and smile back on the street, and they both nodded. For Jules and Robert, being from East Boston was not about your racial or ethnic heritage, but how you treated your neighbors. The more neighborly you were, the more you said hi and smiled, the more you belonged. Belonging was a feeling that was getting lost and unappreciated by new groups of people moving into the neighborhood. Robert finished off this thought

by saying: "at one point I could name you everyone who lives in East Boston. Now, they're mostly all gone. I couldn't name you anyone."

This sentiment is reflected by Mary as she was driving me around the neighborhood. When I asked her if she felt the people moving in cared about the neighborhood, she quipped back: "I don't think so. I mean, maybe they want to, but where are they? I've been to all the meetings, I'm at all the events, and I never see any of them there. If they are interested in the neighborhood, they sure aren't showing it."

The tendency to blame developers and their relationship to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) for the changes in the neighborhood was common among all people I talked to as part of the dissertation. There was a sense of agreement that the relationship between developers and the ZBA was obvious and corrupt, and that the ZBA acted as a rubber stamp for developers. This was perhaps put most succinctly, and angrily, by Gino:

> "It's those motherfuckers – excuse my French – but it's those motherfuckers in
> the ZBA. They're the ones to blame … and these damn developers. I'm old
> school. I don't carry a gun – I used my fists. But I'll take a Louisville Slugger, the
> same one they use at Fenway, and bash those developers' heads in."

The disdain felt towards developers and the government board that oversees them came out universally in my observations, although not in the same violent language. The perceived cozy relationship between developers and the ZBA may be a valid concern. When I talked to a reporter for the Boston Globe, he mentioned how the ZBA is largely funded through property taxes on new developments – a mechanism that reinforces the favorability towards new, luxury developments. The ZBA has also been at the center of

multiple bribery scandals between board members and developers (Thompson, 2019), and many current board members themselves are directly tied to the real estate industry.

The purpose of the ZBA is to enforce zoning ordinances for new developments. In East Boston, this largely looks like maintaining the amount of lot space a development is allowed to take up, building heights, and the number of floors for multi-family dwellings. A recent report by Infranca and Farris (2023) found that this enforcement didn't often occur. Through an analysis of variance applications and meeting minutes from the ZBVA, they found that 90% of variances requested to current zoning guidelines were approved by the board. After attending 15 neighborhood association meetings, I don't find this wholly surprising. In each of the meetings I attended where a development was either being voted on or being introduced, I witnessed variances being requested for nearly all zoning guidelines. The goal of asking for these variances is clearly profit-driven – the more space and the more units you are providing, the more money you will be making from rent or the sale of each condo, depending on the end product. When I talked to Dr. Lisa, she told me how often developers claim 'financial hardship' as a reason for requesting the variances – she was quick to follow that up with "lost profit isn't financial hardship, it's just greed."

Each of the meetings where there is a vote on approving a development allots time for debate and concerns voiced by voting members of the neighborhood association. Residents are only allowed to vote on a development's approval if they meet two conditions: 1) They are an abutter, meaning they live on a property that adjoins the proposed property, and 2) They have attended at least two previous monthly meetings

that weren't voting meetings. The last requirement is particularly difficult for working

families, as the meetings generally run from 6pm – 8pm, when families are either getting

dinner together or trying to get their kids to sleep, or both. What's more, most residents

complain that they are not properly notified of a meeting when a development is coming

up for a vote. Lawyers and developers are required to notify all abutters when a meeting

about an adjoining property is going to be discussed, but this is largely done through

placing flyers on doors, many of which are seen blowing down the sidewalks on any

given week. Even when residents do attend these meetings and voice their concerns,

voting members largely approve developments and all of the variances being asked for.

Defending the community is thus a complicated and multi-faceted phenomenon.

Members of the community who are attempting to slow down the progression of new

development in the neighborhood are tasked with a battle on three fronts: 1) against the

developers, 2) against the ZBA that oversees the developers, and 3) against neighborhood

associations often friendly to developers and their lawyers. What's more, this three-way

fight is being fought by two contingents that often do not work cohesively together, and

are often suspicious of one another.

Figure 36: Changes in rental units between 2010 and 2020 at the census tract level.

Legend

⊕ Photovoice Pictures

Parcel Value Increase After Project Completion

$0
< $125k
$125 - $275k
$275 - $455k
More Than $455k

Percent change in rent between 2010 and 2020

Decrease
<15% Increase
15 - 25% Increase
25 - 40% Increase
>40% Increase
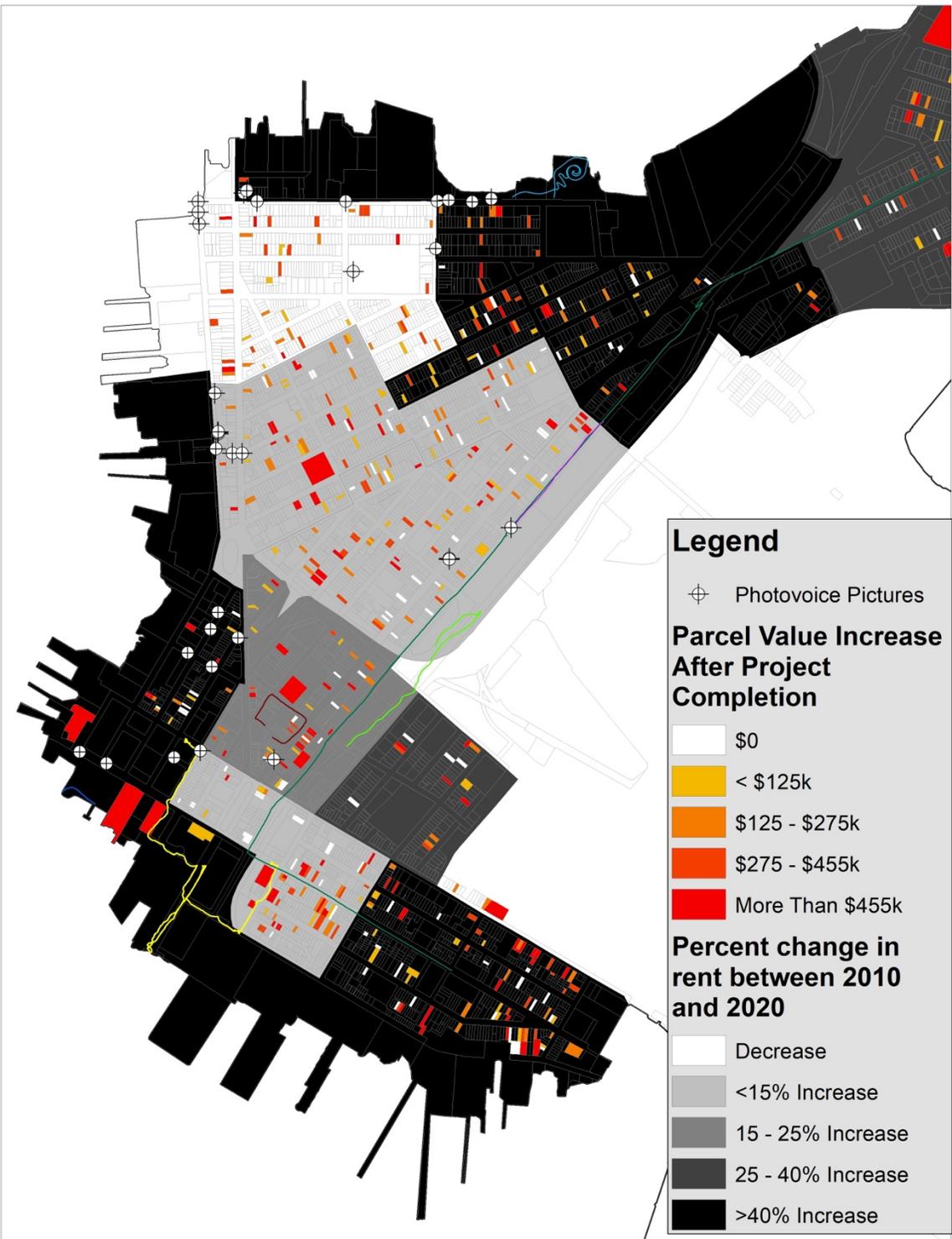
One of the promises of development I would often hear in neighborhood association meetings was that they wanted to keep the "character of the neighborhood" intact. Figure 36 (above) can give us an idea of how this character is changing the neighborhood at a structural level. Not only is there a large amount of developments that have been approved throughout the whole neighborhood, that has also coincided with large increase in rental units across the neighborhood save for one census tract. As we might expect, the largest increase in rental units is in the Jeffries Point area and along the waterfront. The increase in rental units came up often across conversations with residents and participants, as well as in neighborhood association meetings. There is broad concern that rental units bring a transient population who is not intending to "put down roots" in the neighborhood, and that that will change the family-orientated feel of the neighborhood for the worst.

To this end, we can view the lack of enforcement of zoning ordinances on behalf of the ZBA as a different type of enforcement – by lending legitimacy to the primacy of development over residents' concerns surrounding established zoning ordinances, a new set of social norms is being established. This places the developers and their lawyers, with permission given to them by neighborhood associations and the ZBA, as a primary enforcement mechanism of informal social control in the neighborhood. Changing the landscape of the neighborhood, bringing in newcomers, and doing so in a way that replaces the previous landscape, creates new systems of communal cohesion and social control that lends more legitimacy to the social values of those moving in.

This lends itself to a continuous cycle: the discourse of social cohesion is being used to promote more development, which undermines current structures of social cohesion, which further undermines current structures of informal social control within the neighborhood, which then makes it harder to fight new developments moving in. There is a reproduction in the discourses of 'urban renewal' that trace back to the first times the term was used. The concerns surrounding 'undesirable' immigrants and lower-class residents moving into urban centers by business owners and politicians led to the first attempts at 'urban renewal' in the United States. These original claims were often made against the Italian immigrant community, who predominantly made up Boston's West End – the location of one of the first examples of large scale urban demolition in the name of 'slum clearance' and 'urban renewal.' I could noticed this often while out in the field – new developments advertising rendered images of what the development would soon look like most often showed White families walking in front of the new buildings. It's reflected when Evelyn says "they didn't do this for us" and when Sandy says "they don't want to meet us."

These discourses of deserving vs. undeserving, desirable vs. undesirable, are being replicated and reproduced in the same language of 'urban renewal'. The mechanisms that these discourses are serving, however, are different. Herbert Gans (1962) found that the rich social ties within Boston's West End neighborhood were not considered, or willfully ignored, when declaring the neighborhood a slum. In East Boston, the discourses surrounding the rich social ties and the neighborhood cultures are instead being weaponized as a mechanism to promote further gentrification, displacing

current residents (the undesirables) and promoting a "new blood" of residents (the

desirables). This theme of the 'broken promises' of gentrification is connected throughout

each of the themes of this dissertation: from the idea that "they didn't do this for us", to

the experiences of loss, to the necessity to defend the community.

Chapter VI: Discussion

"Oh your friends say Boston's beautiful

But they didn't dream here, they didn't scream here

When no one hears"

- Have Heart, "Bostons"

My dissertation responds on the call from Thurber and colleagues' (2019) for social workers to reimagine their role in gentrifying communities. In order to respond to this call, I engaged in an in-depth, mixed-methods, and community-based study that set out to understand the relationship between gentrification and perceptions of well-being through five interrelated research questions:

RQ1: How do long-time residents perceive individual impacts of gentrification-related cues?

RQ2: How do long-time residents perceive collective impacts of gentrification-related cues?

RQ3: How do long-time residents perceive changes in mechanisms of informal social control in their neighborhood?

RQ4: How do long-time residents perceive changes in mechanisms of formal social control in their neighborhood?

RQ5: What is the spatial distribution of gentrification related indicators?

These research questions, alongside the theoretical foundations of postcolonialism, collective efficacy, and hauntology, guided my exploration through

223

understanding East Boston residents' experiences with gentrification. The neighborhood of East Boston is one with an immense and complicated history that both mirrors the history of the United States and bleeds forth into the current context of gentrification that my dissertation explored. What I observed throughout my dissertation was a series of interlocking stories of struggle, contestation, communal meaning making, and joy. Through my ethnographic field work and my in-depth analysis through walking interviews and photovoice, three primary themes of residential relationships to gentrification emerged, described in broader terms as: 1) the differing ways resident groups understood and made meaning out of the contested spaces of gentrification, 2) the process in which the physical and interpersonal signifiers of gentrification appeared as specters representing loss and fear, and 3) the different ways residents engage in resistance to the impacts of gentrification and building the strength of the neighborhood of East Boston. Below, I will reengage with these themes by contextualizing them in the research questions that guided my dissertation. I will also discuss the implications of my research on social work practice and policy. Finally, I will discuss how the theoretical foundations of hauntology and postcolonial theory can be further utilized in research to understand the gentrification-related impacts experienced by communities.

6.1 Perceptions of the Individual and Collective Impacts of Gentrification

There were few instances of individual impacts of gentrification that did not, themselves, function within the larger collectively experienced impacts of gentrification.

The first two research questions sought to understand how these two experiences, the individual and the collective, functioned. These questions were intentionally broad in their scope, attempting to grasp the totality of experiences for residents of East Boston across social and economic domains.

The results show how residents experience loss as an impact of gentrification. Participants would often describe feeling as though they were losing their community and a place in their neighborhood when discussing the ongoing gentrification in East Boston. These losses were represented in various forms, from the images of left-over belongings from a recent eviction to the ongoing construction and renovations occurring all around. These experiences were both individual and collective in their manifestation. Participants would describe these relationships to loss in terms that highlighted individuals and families that they knew who were either displaced or who chose to move due to housing prices, while also pointing to the collective loss of families, business, and spaces they felt safe in. These notions of experiencing loss and alienation in a changing city as both collective and individual reinforce findings from previous research that has found associations between displacement/witnessing displacement and traumatic psychological effects (Fullilove, 2004; Koelsch et al., 2017; Pain, 2019; Thurber et al., 2019).

The experiences residents had in the various neighborhood spaces most impacted by gentrification were, in various ways, simultaneously different and similar in their manifestations across demographic groups. Members of the Hispanic community often reported feeling as though they did not belong in the new and upgraded parks that came as the neighborhood underwent gentrification. Koelsch and colleagues' (2004)

examination of life-long residents of the Hill District is particularly prescient here. Through interviews they found that life-long residents felt both a strong sense of *belonging* to the neighborhood they have been living in and a growing alienation from that very neighborhood as the community underwent development. Throughout my dissertation, many participants across racial and ethnic groups also indicated feeling as though these new public spaces were not created for them, instead created to attract new residents – a realization that compliments Koelsch and colleagues' (2004) research on the feelings of alienation that arise in residents undergoing gentrification.

Findings also show ways that the Hispanic community attempted to claim these new public spaces through the use of language: both in the form of maintaining the use of Spanish language in public spaces and in their naming of public parks. The reclamation through language that the Hispanic community complements the concept of the 'right to the city' advocated by Lefebvre (1996) and Harvey (2019). 'The right to the city' is a framework that situates the urban environment as a space where meaning is developed through the everyday struggle for survival of its residents (Lefebvre, 1996; Purcell, 2022). By claiming a 'right to the city', residents are claiming a fundamentally radical and democratic process of shaping the ways public space is developed, maintained, and experienced (Banerjee, 2001; Harvey, 2019). While Harvey (2019), Banerjee (2001), and Lefebvre focus much of this concept on resident engagement in the process of development, my work has shown the role of language in making these claims. Engaging in the ways these informal processes make claims to a 'right to the city' should be explored further in future research.

My dissertation has also shown how public spaces are not only claimed, but experienced differently across neighborhood demographic groups. These differing dynamics of making meaning in the changing neighborhood follow continued research that interrogates how gentrification is experienced beyond traditionally material understandings: from Fullilove's (2004) conceptualization of 'root shock', to the traumatic experiences of residents living through the 'slow violence' of a city undergoing gentrification (Pain, 2019; Till, 2012), to the growing tension between belonging and alienation long-time residents feel in a changing neighborhood (Koelsch et al., 2017).

6.2 Mechanisms of Informal and Formal Social Control

The third and fourth research questions attempted to understand how social control, both formal and informal, were conceptualized and experienced by residents of East Boston. Furthermore, I sought to understand how these understandings of social control related to the ongoing gentrification in East Boston. Understanding the ways in which social control manifests in neighborhoods is an important factor in understanding the mechanisms that residents use to respond to perceived social problems within the neighborhood (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003). In particular, informal social control has been shown to be an important mechanism of creating and maintaining strong communities when complemented by acts of collective social cohesion (Coleman, 1988; Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003; Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson et al., 1997; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999).

Social control showed up in various ways throughout my dissertation and field work in East Boston. Participants' experiences with social control in East Boston largely expands upon and complicates the experiences reported in the growing research that engages with the impacts of gentrification on social control. In particular, residents and participants often described feeling as though the newcomers were less engaged in the neighborhood, less friendly towards long-time residents, and were viewed as transient residents who were not intending on laying down roots in the neighborhood. These discourses reflect and expand upon Kozey's (2020) study on residents experiencing gentrification in Chicago, where long-time residents who had the greatest perception of neighborhood change due to increased White and middle-class residents also reported the greatest decreases in perceived markers of collective efficacy (i.e. social cohesion and the ability to take action to intervene on behalf of community safety). In addition, my findings show how this had the effect of creating a feeling of being 'Othered' by residents, especially for those who viewed the changes in the structure of the neighborhood as something occurring specifically to invite new residents into the neighborhood. Furthermore, whereas Kozey (2020) and Kochel and Gau (2021) used survey data to understand informal social control, I was able to expand on Sampson and colleagues' (1997) framework by showing how it manifested in the everyday language of East Boston residents.

The experiences of this loss of informal social control were also different between the Hispanic community and the old-timers. That is, old-timers were more likely to believe that the loss in informal social control necessitated more police officers as a

means of creating a greater sense of social control. This reinforces findings from studies in New York and Chicago that have shown an increase in police activation in gentrifying areas, often at the behest of newer residents (Beck, 2020; Kozey, 2020). My dissertation also hints towards indications that White residents, particularly newer White residents who moved in during the early stages of development, tended to appreciate an active police presence in the neighborhood. These observations were most notable amongst a few White residents in my sample and at public meetings, and a more thorough study into these dynamics would be necessary to parse out the extent to which this is a notable finding. These findings complicate the findings of Kozey (2020) and Beck (2020) in that these findings were observed outside of the lens of violence and crime. This may indicate that our understandings of social control in gentrifying neighborhoods is incomplete when solely looking at perceptions of violence and crime amongst neighborhood residents.

6.3 The Spatial Distribution of Gentrification

The final research question, research question five, attempted to interrogate the spatial distribution gentrification through geospatial analysis. This was done through a combination of qualitative and quantitative GIS mapping, using both administrative data and resident data to build a cohesive understanding of how gentrification plays out and is associated with demographic shifts in East Boston. The geospatial analysis provided a visual contextualization of the stories and themes that emerged from the walking

interviews, photovoice, and my ethnographic field work. This application of GIS analysis follows research that has utilized GIS to show the social construction of geographic phenomena and interrogates alternative forms of geographic meaning (Cope and Elwood, 2009; Pavlovskaya, 2009; Teixeira, 2018).

Geospatial analysis of gentrification-related indicators in East Boston provided context that told a complicated story of gentrification in East Boston. Analysis of parcel-level data showed that new development and the renovations of previous developments was distributed throughout the entire neighborhood, though appeared to be concentrated largely in the Jeffries Point and Eagle Hill sub-neighborhoods. This analysis also showed that the re-valuation of the properties after the development was concentrated in the $500,000 and above category. In the analysis of the demographic data provided by the decennial census, it was found that tracts that saw the greatest decreases in the Hispanic population between 2010 and 2020 also saw the greatest changes in median household income and increases in the number of rental units between the same times. While there is little research at this time that has used GIS in order to analyze the spatial components of gentrification, these results do follow the results of recent attempts by researchers in Europe who used GIS to understand the different patterns of displacement in gentrifying European cities (Döring and Ulbricht, 2018; Först and Bernt, 2018; Helbrecht, 2018; Koch et al., 2018). While my geospatial analysis was not able to address displacement, my findings nonetheless complicated the findings of these authors by indicating the demographic changes that are occurring largely at the edges of the neighborhoods instead of the city centers (Döring and Ulbricht, 2018; Helbrecht, 2018; Koch et al., 2018).

Finally, the addition of the qualitative data in the form of geocoded photographs and walking interview routes provided an insight into how participants experience gentrification, juxtaposed against the administrative data. GIS data is, in particular the GIS analysis that was done for this dissertation, is generally descriptive and therefore unable to fully realize the causal relationships. The addition of qualitative data into the GIS analysis further complicates the story of gentrification, showing that participants largely had the strongest reactions to gentrification at the outer edges of the neighborhood. These areas were not necessarily the areas of the largest demographic changes in the neighborhood according to census data, but instead areas that saw the greatest changes in physical structures in the neighborhood – that is, larger developments that did not match the physical characteristics of the housing rather than renovated homes that better matched the characteristics of the housing. When describing the location of the photographs or the walking interviews, however, participants used language that indicated larger social and economic changes in the neighborhood. These additions build upon the overall foundations of qualitative and critical GIS while also pointing towards its potential for continued use for research into gentrification-related impacts and indicators (Döring and Ulbricht, 2018; Cope and Elwood, 2009; Pavlovskaya, 2009; Teixeira, 2018). Whereas Döring and Ulbricht (2018), Först and Bernt (2018) and Koch and colleagues' (2018) are using administrative data to present displacement, I am following the suggestions of Cope and Elwood (2009), Pavlovskaya (2009), and Teixeira (2018) to pair the administrative data with the in-depth stories and perceptions provided by qualitative analysis.

6.4 Advancing Theoretical Foundations of Gentrification

Alongside the social policy and social work practice implications of my dissertation, there are implications to furthering the theoretical foundations of gentrification that may advance our understandings of this phenomena in future research. I explicitly sought out two underutilized social theories that I believed would add a greater depth of understanding to the social and political phenomena of gentrification: postcolonial theory and hauntology. Throughout the course of my discussion of the findings, I engaged with these theoretical frameworks in various ways to create a richer understanding of the social and political contexts that situate residents' experiences with gentrification in East Boston. Below, I will describe more explicitly the ways I believe these theoretical frameworks can advance social work theory and the theoretical groundings of gentrification-related research.

Hauntology is largely a theoretical framework, often saved for the confines of philosophical debate and convoluted texts. This is, however, not the full picture, nor is it the full potential of hauntology. Best and Ramirez (2021) and Kindynis (2019) have demonstrated that there is something to be learned from bringing the hauntological into the realm of urban research. Although there still remains little present engagement, hauntology provides a theoretical framework that allows us to explore the spaces that occupy the material and more-than-material impacts of gentrification on communities. Hauntology allows for space to be more than just a collection of material objects, but as a

collection of embodied emotions. According to Fullilove's (2004) and Pain's (2019)

theoretical frameworks, and as illustrated in the art installations explored by Best and

Ramirez (2021) and the graffiti excavated by Kindynis (2019), space is embedded with

trauma. The application of the hauntological allows us to reframe how the embeddedness

of urban trauma exists in the everyday-ness of urban existence.

The connection of the everyday specters of urban trauma expressed through the

hauntological is framed by the impact of power and violence expressed by the

postcolonial critique. Whereas hauntology finds its analysis in the domain of time,

postcolonialism provides the critical political context of the space in which the analysis

takes place. The postcolonial framework allows us to grapple with the way gentrification

creates experiences of alienation for residents; it is the framework for understanding the

creation and replication of chronic urban trauma and root shock that hauntology allows us

to witness. Postcolonialism contends that the historical violence of the past has not

remained in the past, instead replicating itself throughout time in cyclical manner – a

process that began with European colonial endeavors into and against First Nations

communities in the Americas.

We should also not escape from the fact that postcolonialism and hauntology are

inherently Marxist analyses - and with that comes the understanding of an inherently

class-based narrative (Derrida, 2012; Fisher, 2012, 2014). The class-based narratives

embedded into the gentrifying urban landscape are represented in who gets displaced, and

who is allowed to move in. The 'lost futures' described in the hauntological framework

allow us to see whose futures are being lost, and in what way. That is to say, the poor,

working-class, often Hispanic residents who are being displaced are themselves losing a future that, at one time, represented a hope for social mobility. During the process of gentrification, it is both the racial and ethnic dynamics that change, as well as the class dynamics. As Harvey (2019) points out, this is an intentional feature of neoliberal capitalism in the urban environment - to promote middle and upper-class individuals to a neighborhood so that capital can be extracted from that space in greater quantities. The loss of a particular view is not just an inconvenience, but the realization that the future you had hoped to build in the community has been replaced by the capitalist drive to extract value in ways that you are excluded from. This was manifested most clearly in the experiences of Sandy and Arial in this dissertation, where both pointed to particular developments were both structurally inconvenient (i.e. they blocked views of the harbor) but were also representations of their own feelings that the neighborhood was *losing* something – its culture, its identity, its people, and so on.

The application of 'lost futures' also allows us to understand what has been lost beyond the material. The radical potential of hauntology is in its ability to navigate the relationship between material structures and the more-than-material implications of root shock and trauma. Where the postcolonial frameworks of root shock and chronic urban trauma help us to understand the impact of displacement and the changing environment in a trauma-informed capacity, hauntology allows us to engage in the physical structure itself as the traumatic signifier. That is, in its relation to root shock, hauntology is represented in those who have been forced to leave and the structures that have taken their place. The discourses of urban renewal often whitewash the trauma of displacement

and is encapsulated by the ways in which new buildings can be viewed alongside the remnants of those who have been displaced. In the middle of the great meandering nature of gentrification, these frameworks allow us to look at space in a new, unnerving way.

In a way, a hauntological and postcolonial lens focused on the urban environment asks us to interrogate the question: How do we explain the present absence of a community? That is to say, how do we grapple with what is left behind - structurally, culturally, emotionally, spiritually - as a community is being forced out? In the language of postcolonialism: What is the violence experienced by the communities experiencing and witnessing these absences? In the language of Hauntology: What *ghosts* are lingering in these contested spaces? In the case of my dissertation, we can see how these *ghosts* manifest in Arial's description of The Eddy, Sandy's relationship to the remnants of a family eviction, Ronaldo's attachment to the Indigenous People's that once populated this land, and Rose's memories of her time growing up in the family home she still lives in. We can also see how the reoccurring violence of housing policy creates the conditions for these *ghosts* to become manifest.

It is my hope that we have only begun to understand the implications and applications of engaging in hauntology and postcolonial theory as legitimate urban theoretical frameworks. As prior authors have indicated, there is a room for these theoretical foundations to grow and advance in the field of urban research, and in doing so explore new relationships to urban environments and their residents. It is our duty, then, to excavate these specters that lie in between the material and more-than-material within the gentrifying urban landscape, bring them into the sunlight, and grapple with

them. And in doing so, we must contend with the troubling histories and realities they present us with.

6.5 Implications for Social Work Policy and Practice

While there has been much development in the study of gentrification that has pushed us to understand its impacts beyond an analysis of material factors, such as rental and housing value, there has been a lack of research that has approached these impacts from a social work lens (Thurber et al., 2021). This dissertation suggests that there are many potential benefits to including neighborhood residents into the conversations about developing the intervention aimed at alleviating the worst impacts of gentrification. This may be most applicable for residents who are most impacted by gentrification-related effects.

6.5.1 Implications for Practice

Research into the impacts of gentrification has shown an unwavering relationship between displacement and feelings of belonging, alienation, and loss (Fullilove, 2004; Koelsch et al., 2017; Pain, 2019). My findings also bear this out. Residents I observed and engaged with in this dissertation described experiencing much of the same levels of loss and alienation in their relationship to the neighborhood as it is changing. These findings have implications for social work practitioners by pointing to the relationship

between neighborhood-level indicators and individual mental health and well-being. My dissertation provides empirical support to bolster prior theoretical work that has suggested that individuals' perceptions of their immediate surroundings affect their perceptions of themselves (Fullilove, 2004; Koelsch et al., 2017; Pain, 2019; Till, 2012). When residents feel as though they no longer belong in their home and neighborhood, this alienation may relate to their sense of self and belonging in other aspects of their lives. Numerous participants pointed to the intense personal emotions they felt when watching or hearing stories about community members being evicted. Viewing the impacts of gentrification from a trauma-informed lens can add to social work practitioners' ability to best treat the root causes of mental health challenges for individuals and families from historically oppressed communities living in gentrifying neighborhoods. An example of this is the development of trauma-informed community development as a model for developing a participatory approach to neighborhood social renewal that acknowledges and mitigates the historic trauma disinvested communities experience (Neighborhood Resilience Project, n.d.).

Another way of understanding the practice-level impacts of this dissertation for social workers is by making the claim that policy often acts as violence on communities. We are often trained to understand violence as coming in the form of acute, subjective acts that risk the immediate safety of an individual. This understanding, however, does not take into account the community-level violence that occurs through policy decisions that create conditions of housing and financial precarity for historically oppressed communities. Through this understanding, social workers should consider housing

precarity how social policies effect their clients when making diagnostic case decisions –

not in adding a diagnosis, but in making case and treatment recommendations.

Furthermore, social workers can begin viewing housing precarity as a public health issue

when contextualizing the need for more equitable social policy at the state and federal

level.

6.5.2 Implications for Policy

One of the suggestions that came up most often in conversation with various

residents of East Boston was the desire to be invited to the table when it comes to

creating social welfare policy. My dissertation helps to show how residents are the

experts on their own experiences and needs. The avenues for residents to have a voice in

housing policy appear sometimes to be intentionally obfuscated and there are countless

barriers to resident participation in the creation and advocacy for policy at the city and

state level. While neighborhood associations are where residents are supposed to have the

most say in their community, these can often enforce their own social norms that leave

out working-class and historically marginalized communities: meetings that run into the

night, the necessity to attend multiple meetings in a row before you are allowed to vote

on developments, and not have translation services to name a few. We can increase

participation in these systems for more residents by simply removing these barriers.

At the city-level, we have seen that even if a neighborhood association votes

down a development, it is likely the zoning board still approves it. This is likely because

zoning boards are appointed by the mayor and are not made up of average community

members. Allowing for residents from low-income and historically marginalized communities to make up these boards could allow more voice in these decisions. Perhaps more acutely, we might advocate for the abolition of these boards, that often act like a bureaucratic arm of enforcing housing policy that benefits large investment at the expense of community cohesion. Replacing these boards with neighborhood-run and specific boards that uplift the voices of all communities, while reducing the barriers of participation, may bring about more equity in development decisions. Questions of equity in the representation of these boards would need to be monitored, however, in order to guarantee the tyranny of the majority does not outweigh the necessity of liberation.

In Boston, organizations like City Life/Vida Urbana have been on the frontlines of advocating for equitable housing policy in the city. They have played a key role in bringing a policy of rent stabilization to a successful city council vote for the first time in decades. They have also been a key partner in helping the development of the Boston Neighborhood Community Land Trust, a model for community preservation where a nonprofit purchase an already existing development in order to keep prices low for current and incoming residents (Boston Neighborhood Community Land Trust, n.d.). East Boston is beginning to see the impact of such models, with the East Boston Community Development Corporation working with local organizations and the City of Boston to purchase 114 housing units that will remain mixed income (City of Boston, n.d.). Residents of these units would, in theory, retain governance over the properties, although the true scale of this governance will need to be examined closely as this model develops.

Social workers should be on the front lines of these fights alongside community members and advocacy organizations. Our training in understanding the ecological relationship between macro-level policy and individual-level impacts allows us a unique position to lend credence to the work already being done and to show our commitment to collective and individual social justice.

6.6 Limitations

Although the present dissertation offers a contribution to the growing knowledge base surrounding the more-the-material impacts of gentrification, it is not without important limitations. The primary limitation is that I do not speak fluent Spanish. I have a cursory understanding of the Spanish language that allows me to understand and communicate in a limited fashion, and thus limits my ability to engage with community members who are most comfortable speaking Spanish. What's more, when I was able to rely on an interpreter, doing so opened the door for mistranslations and loss of primary meaning for words that do not have a direct translation into English. In order to mitigate this, I had a close working relationship with the translator, and we would spend time after each session discussing any moments during the translation where she felt further explanation was needed. What's more, often the translation would undergo a spontaneous group translation as a form of member checking, where different members would correct the translator or add context depending on the cultural background of each member (i.e.,

Spanish words may have different meanings amongst people from El Salvador and Puerto Rico, for example).

Another limitation is in the sample. While I attempted to recruit through multiple modalities, I relied heavily on my community partners for recruitment and participation. My community partners were also activist organizations in their own right, who were organizing around gentrification in the neighborhood in various ways and could thus present bias in the perspectives represented in this dissertation.

Furthermore, one of the methods I engaged with in this dissertation was an ethnography. There is research and frameworks that indicate that the amount of time spent in a field is less important to an in-depth ethnography than the types of interactions, the intensity of the interactions, and having a strong theoretical grounding (Desmond, 2012; Jeffery and Troman, 2003; Pink and Morgan, 2013; Tedlock, 2000). Because this is my dissertation, however, I was bound by the external force of dissertation guidelines for determining a timeline for exiting the field. Having spent 12 months in the field at the time of writing, I can speak to the amount of physical changes that have occurred in the neighborhood during my dissertation and writing, and that will undoubtedly continue to change long after the completion of my dissertation. While more time in the neighborhood would undoubtedly yield more points of context and more stories, I nonetheless came into the analysis of this dissertation with a large array of in-depth data. What's more, as a resident of East Boston, I plan on continuing my work in the neighborhood, both academically and through activism and community organizing.

Although the photovoice and walking interview participants collaborated in the collection and analysis of much of the data, I was the primary interpreter of the results, and I chose what to report. This process is largely inescapable within the dissertation timeline and within academic scholarship, but it, by nature, leads to bias in the reporting. I lived in East Boston for nine months prior to the start of the dissertation and then formally engaged as a dissertation researcher in East Boston for another 12 months. I will continue to live in the neighborhood for the foreseeable future. I built long-term relationships through community partnerships and activism that allowed me an "insider" access and rapport that appeared to build legitimacy and allowed me to have comfortable rapport with the participants in this dissertation. I also used multiple sources of data, including a community member to member-check my analysis, in order to triangulate my interpretation of the results and ensure a limitation of bias in data collection and analysis.

Finally, a reevaluation of my positionality is important when discussing the limitations of this dissertation. On multiple occasions, my Whiteness provided an aura of trustworthiness for many of the old-timer residents that may not have been granted by a non-White scholar. As noted in my conversations with Rose, Gino, and Tony, I was offered perspectives on the neighborhood that reflected political and cultural values that I did not share. Despite this, they felt comfortable sharing these views without asking in an assumption that I was 'safe' to discuss these topics with. In a similar way, my positionality as a White newcomer to the neighborhood allowed me to navigate throughout public spaces without issue and as if I inherently belonged there. On the other hand, my positionality also meant that I entered into predominantly Hispanic spaces as an

'outsider' and my inability to speak much Spanish meant that I was reinforced my 'outsider' status in these spaces. I have relied on trusted members of the neighborhood to vouch for me, and within these spaces I was never made to feel like an 'outsider', though I was certainly not an 'insider.' I was able to earn trust from the members of the Hispanic community I engaged with by attending as many events and meetings as I could, in particular activist events and cultural events, and through that gaining the legitimacy of trusted community members and organizers who vouched for my legitimacy. It may also be the case that members of the Hispanic community outside of the spaces I occupied viewed me as an intruder, or at the very least, meet me with greater skepticism.

6.7 Where do we go from here?

A few weeks before finishing this, I was in the Mutual Aid offices working and helping out with various tasks. That day, Lance's parents came in to visit from out of town and he was excited to show them around the Mutual Aid offices, have them meet some of the team members, and show them the work he and the rest of the team has put in. Sandy, ever the excited sharer, wanted me to talk to them about this dissertation while Len was helping out with a neighbor facing concerns about safety in his home. As I shared the overall dissertation, themes, and methods with them, the father began to grill me on what the message of the dissertation was – what was I trying to communicate to city councilors, law makers, developers, about what could, and should, be done. "I'm a city councilor back home" he said, "and if I'm looking at this, but I'm also seeing that I

raised the tax base of the neighborhood by bringing in higher income people and having more valuable housing, what do I care about the changes in the culture of the neighborhood?"

This was a question that was asked in good faith, and was made clear that it was more in line with playing "devil's advocate", but it was a question that took me a little bit to wiggle my way through. Cynically, there was truth: what is the worry in losing a community's culture to a politician when the property tax revenue increases? In a neighborhood like East Boston, this is even more prescient. The City Council Ward that the neighborhood sits in also includes the neighborhoods of the North End and Charlestown – two neighborhoods that are predominantly White and a much different cultural character than East Boston. At the time the Wards were created, this may have made cultural sense – East Boston, the North End, and Charlestown have been Italian strongholds nearly since these immigrant communities began coming into the neighborhood. But East Boston has changed in ways that the other two haven't. What's more, the voter turnout in East Boston is significantly lower than that of Charlestown and North End. Much of this can be pointed to as a result of the large immigrant population who have difficulty navigating the complex voting structure of the United States, and some could also point to the fact that East Boston has been a "forgotten community" for decades prior to the influx of capital in the form of development. So the question remains: Why should a politician care about any of this?

The truth of the matter is: I don't know. Scholars and policy-makers from various backgrounds have suggested various interventions aimed at alleviating the systemic

inequalities in the housing market while attempting to maintain the financial

incentivization of commodified housing. I find myself asking myself in response: is it

possible we may never get to a place of systemic liberation while maintaining the

commodification of housing?

Chapter VII: Concluding Thoughts

"I conclude that all is well" says Œdipus, and that remark is sacred. It echoes in the wild and limited universe of man. It teaches that all is not, has not been, exhausted.

- *Albert Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus"*

As I was wrapping up the writing of this dissertation, I took some time out of the isolating act of writing to join my family in an Earth Day clean-up of the Condor Street Urban Wild park and the American Legion Playground. The clean-up was organized by GreenRoots and was part of a neighborhood-wide clean-up effort on the part of various organizations to celebrate Earth Day. It was a cold and windy Spring morning when we got there, signed in, and grabbed our thick garbage bag, gloves, and a broom and shovel. We walked through various areas in the park, deciding to spend the most time at an area towards the back that volunteers hadn't gotten to yet. In this moment, picking through the grass and the leaves that collected against the cement bleachers to find candy wrappers, empty and crushed cans of beer, broken glass bottles, and the plastic remnants of syringes, the sense of community was palpable. There is a way in which all of my experiences, the various themes that emerged from the analysis, the historical context, all collapsed into themselves in this moment.

All of the volunteers, save for a few individuals, my family included, were Hispanic. Men, women, young, old – the people who live here, and the people who have felt they are the most disposable in the community. In the park itself, there were White

newcomers and families running through the turf of the soccer field and playing in the playground. In the smaller, practice field, there was a youth soccer program beginning full of largely Hispanic children and coaches. The park and the urban wild are both areas that hadn't existed in their current form until around 5 years ago – replacing an overgrown park, thickly wooded trees, and municipal buildings with a large, family friendly area.

The park was being utilized and enjoyed by mostly White newcomer families and Hispanic children while a largely Hispanic population spent time cleaning the garbage from the park. This is the space of contestation.

The park itself represents a new image of the neighborhood in the same location as the old park. It is the new contrasting and covering up the old. The remnants of empty alcohol bottles and used syringes, the hauntings of those that may not feel a part of the neighborhood and its changing environments. This is the hauntological analysis.

The park was being cleaned on a volunteer basis to keep it clean and safe for all families by a majority Hispanic group of volunteers. This is the act of informal social control.

Unlike Camus, who leaves Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain so that he may continue to find joy and meaning in the isolating act of individual labor and punishment, I will instead continue to join in with the community in these acts of meaning-making and community defense. If joy can be found in isolation, it can be made active in the collective. The ways in which this the future of gentrification research may be made manifest through this process of collective engagement on the part of social work and

urban scholars is discussed below. Finally, I will close off with an invitation for social workers and researchers interested in exploring the human effects of gentrification.

7.1 Green Gentrification

One of the aspects of gentrification-related discourse that came through in various ways, but was not fully developed in my dissertation, is its relationship to environmental justice. As cities begin to grapple with the current and oncoming effects of climate change in urban environments, they have increasingly looked towards the process of 'urban greening' – the process of integrating and creating green spaces within public spaces (Escobedo et al., 2019; Mendes et al., 2020; Nesbitt et al., 2017). At the same time, researchers and activists are grappling with the way this greening of public spaces has attracted further development and investment, itself furthering the process of displacement for historically oppressed communities – a process called 'green gentrification.' As a recognition of these tensions, some communities have attempted to take an approach of being 'just green enough', that is, a process of environmental justice that is driven by the community and decoupled from luxury development and investment (Curran and Hamilton, 2017).

These tensions came up often in through my dissertation research. As an example, most of the parks and public spaces that were created and/or made better over the past 10 years were noted as spaces that were contested by many members of the Hispanic community – feeling as though these spaces were not meant for them or that they don't

belong in them. As an example of the way the discourse of environmental justice is being used to further development for developers and investors: As part of the ethnographic process, I was attending as many of the neighborhood association meetings as I could, an attorney for one of the developments was asked a series of questions about how this new three-story building would take out all of the trees on the property to fill in all the space of the parcel. His response was: "Look, I love trees. I helped plant some as part of the tree planting in one of the parks. So I hear you, and I will try to get approval to plant a new tree on the sidewalk in front of the building."

This act of displacing the effect this new building would have environmentally by taking out older trees and reducing the green space and soil inherent to the property, both of which soak up rainwater that now pools in the concrete streets, is a common occurrence in the neighborhood. The process of 'green gentrification' and the discourses surrounding environmental justice that have been coopted by developers and investors is an avenue that urban researchers, including social work researchers, are beginning to explore (Bauer, 2022; Cucca and Thaler, 2023; Krings, 2021; Sax et al., 2022). The specific effects of this on East Boston, alongside the contentious ways differing communities are engaging with this, should be further explored as a companion to gentrification-related research. What's more, future research should continue to look not only on the effects of 'green gentrification', but also the ways in which the discourse of urban climate and environmental justice has been coopted to promote developments that are, in actuality, not taking climate justice into account.

7.2 Development-directed policing

The interactions between informal and formal social control are discussed above as one of the sub themes explored in my dissertation. However, this may only be part of the story. Recent research is beginning to explore the ways policing changes not only in gentrifying neighborhoods, but also in the proximity of new developments (Beck, 2020). An aspect this that hasn't been mentioned in prior research is the way this shows up in neighborhoods and cities that practice police detailing, or the assignment of one or more police officers for a particular duty, a common occurrence throughout Massachusetts. In Boston, police detail often takes the form of one or more police officers accompanying construction projects to maintain road safety. Future research should explore the effect of development-directed policing, including in communities that have a police detail presence, through a participatory and community-engaged approach that allows the voices of residents to explore the impact of these practices. Similarly, future research should utilize administrative data on police contacts and arrests in order to explore these interactions through geospatial analysis, mapping and analyzing police interactions in proximity to new developments in neighborhoods.

Another aspect of community policing that I had noticed through my ethnographic field work was how the majority of renovated housing and new developments added a Ring Doorbell, or similar video-enabled doorbell security system. The implications of these innocuous security systems on community policing has yet to be explored through gentrification-related research, and may itself have implications on

the way neighbors interact with one another and the way these systems communicate issues of development-directed policing against long-time and historically marginalized residents. Similarly, a deep exploration into neighborhood social media, such as NextDoor, has been used by upper-class and newcomer residents into neighborhoods to communicate fear-based representations of the neighborhood and its relationship to gentrification should be explored by future research.

7.3 School enrollment as a measure of gentrification

One of the distinguishing points about East Boston that you hear when you are asking about the neighborhood is about how 'family-oriented' it is. It is something that drew me and my partner here, and it's something that our landlord told us multiple times when he knew we were a family moving into the neighborhood. School enrollment, however, is down across all census tracts in East Boston. While this may be, on the one hand, another story of displacement, it could also be explored as a 'broken promise' of gentrification. Developers who attend neighborhood meetings typically sell their development by saying how the units going in will be perfect for families. But residents have come to learn that this is not the case. The majority of new units going into these buildings are one-bedroom apartments, and those that are beyond one bedroom are unaffordable to working-class and working poor families in the neighborhood.

The way in which the family orientation of a neighborhood can seemingly shift should be explored by future research as a potential indicator and impact of gentrification

in neighborhoods. Using the school enrollment data alone, however, may not be enough to tell the full story of the shift in the family orientation of a neighborhood. I had initially done just this as part of my original analysis, using the census data to map out the change in public school enrollment in East Boston. My findings showed a great drop in enrollment, however, as mentioned the validity of the data led me to exclude it from this dissertation. Future research should follow Bailey-Fakhoury and colleagues' (2022) research and couple school enrollment data with other administrative data, namely the number of family households as indicated by the census and the average size and cost of new housing in neighborhoods. Presented alongside in-depth community-based analysis of the stories of school enrollment from residents and school employees may show a more rich understanding of the impacts of gentrification and displacement on school enrollment.

7.4 The newcomer experience

When I first began advertising on NextDoor and Facebook for participants, I received a few comments on my posts from newcomers to the neighborhood who were put off by my use of the term 'gentrification.' These commenters seemingly felt as though they were being 'othered' through this language, and made to feel as though they didn't belong in the neighborhood. One person in particular went so far as to say that they shouldn't be blamed for "bettering the neighborhood" by renting high-value apartments in East Boston.

Throughout my dissertation, I intentionally sought the perspectives of long-time residents. While I was not setting out to demonize or other the new-new residents, it is true that by focusing on the impacts of gentrification for long-time residents I am missing one chapter of the story of gentrification. Although participants and residents that I talked to as part of this dissertation often described feeling as though new residents were unaware of the rich history and culture of the neighborhood and their own intrusion into these spaces, the extent to which this is reflected in the understandings new-comers have of their place in the neighborhood has yet to be explored in the research. Future research should begin to take these perspectives into account as they can provide a deeper understanding as to the complex social interactions and neighborhood perceptions that occur within the contested spaces of gentrification. Furthermore, by including these perspectives, researchers may begin to develop interventions that can collapse the differences between newcomers and long-time residents and work towards creating a stronger, more integrated, and more equitable community. Possible interventions such as the block party tool kits sponsored by the City of Boston are one such avenue to explore further.

7.5 Social movements' role in organizing against gentrification and its related impacts

As one of the acts in my role as both a member of Mutual Aid East Boston and a researcher in the neighborhood, I attended a neighborhood association meeting in Day

Square that was voting on a proposed development of a well-loved Hispanic market to include three units of condos above the marketplace. Mutual Aid East Boston and other organizations organized for community members to come to the meeting to show support for the market due to the developer not guaranteeing a contract with them that would allow them to stay in the location as part of the development. Throughout the meeting, community members pushed the developer and the lawyer to respond to why they hadn't shown a good faith commitment to the market, and to ask the voting members of the association to vote it down. All but one voting member of the association voted for its approval, and the development was thus stopped and had to return to the beginning stages.

This community and activist organized protest against this development is similar in many ways to the way various organizations and members of the community organize resistance of development throughout the neighborhood, a theme discussed above surrounding defending the community and informal social control. Thurber and colleagues (2021) have discussed the need for continued social work engagement in gentrification-related research that also actively involves community participation and forms of resistance. In their discussion of the Kotti and Co housing project in Berlin, Heidsieck (2018) and Card (2018) noted how, when the largely working class and immigrant community that occupied Kotti and Co., were facing displacement as part of a larger attempt at de-socializing housing they employed overlapping forms of resistance. Tenants at Kotti and Co employed large protests, developed a strong tenants union, and coordinated messaging across large media outlets with the help of legitimized Left wing

political groups in an effort that has largely been successful (Card, 2018; Heidsieck, 2018). Similarly, Sarmiento (2021) has proposed guerilla urbanist interventions (GUI), a form of resistance that is inherently more confrontational in their disruption of gentrification that she observed amongst residents of Boyle Heights and Santa Ana, California. Future research should continue to engage with local organizations and activist organizations to document and analyze the ways in which communities are formally and informally attempting to resist gentrification. This area is particularly germane to social work because of our code of ethics that necessitate a focus on social justice that calls on us to engage in efforts to undermine systemic injustice and oppression.

This also brings into focus the idea of activist scholarship. In their book *The Activist Academic*, Cann and DeMeulenaere (2020) describe their journey through the academy from PhD candidate to faculty. Throughout, they explore the shifting ways in which their activism has taken part in their research and their role within the academy while attempting to maintain their identity as activists (2020). Their book discusses the importance of academics to maintain their activist identity and how it can complement academic scholarship in various ways despite taking part in an institution of higher education often hostile towards explicit forms of activism inside and outside of scholarship (Cann and DeMeulenaere, 2020).

Throughout my dissertation, I attempted to maintain my identity as an activist in the community as a form of academic rigor and community engagement, falling short in various ways while seeing the ways it complemented my own work. To be an activist

academic is a dialectical experience of navigating the embedded contradictions between community activism and your membership into the halls of academia. To exists as an activist academic is to be embedded into both worlds, and to be utterly torn asunder in pushing beyond their embedded contradictions. I believe that if academics are going to continue to explore the more-than-material effects of gentrification, as Thurber and colleagues (2021) call us to do in community-engaged and participatory ways, then it is also important that we maintain our activist identities. This is not only because it can help in granting access to 'on the ground' work that communities are already engaged in, but it is also the best way for academics to guarantee their work is meaningful to the communities we are working within.

7.7 Come and See: An Invitation for Social Workers and Urban Researchers

In the Soviet-era film from 1985, director Elem Klimov uses the title of the film, *Come and See*, as an invitation. For Klimov, the goal was to invite viewers to witness the horrors and immense violence at the heart of the Nazi occupation of Eastern Europe as the Soviet Union confronted them on the Eastern Front of the Second World War. The result was a film so unapologetically realistic in its depictions of violence that the viewer had no choice but to witness; forced to withstand the emotional blows of a brutality any of us would wish not to confront.

My goal for this dissertation is not all too dissimilar from that of Klinov's. Whereas the violence of *Come and See* was objective, outward, and in your face, the slow

violence of gentrification at the heart of this work is subjective, ethereal, and difficult to fully grasp. This is not to say the violence is nonexistent, however - structural, subjective violence is nonetheless still violence in its effect on those who experience it. Throughout the discussion above, I pondered the various implications my dissertation has on the field of social work: from social work practice to social policy. Many of these implications came directly from the voices of participants and residents of East Boston whom I engaged with as part of this dissertation. As such, I feel as though the greatest suggestion for any social workers who wish to engage with this work would be an invitation - an invitation to engage with the areas of your own community that represents the greatest area of struggle. An invitation to bear witness. To engage with your neighborhood as an accomplice. An invitation to *come and see* for yourself.

I wanted to end this dissertation where it began – on that hot summer day in Central Square Park while residents were sharing their stories. I wanted to make sure D's poem was completed, and I feel her voice belonged as a bookend to this entire work. She finishes the poem with an invitation to those she dedicated the poem to in the first place: "to East Boston, to neighbors, to people moving in, the 'newcomers' moving in, the BPDA, the ZBA":

> *I now welcome you*
>
> *And I encourage you to meet*
>
> *The Anas*
>
> *The Marias*
>
> *The Jose's*

And the Carlos'

I encourage you to ask me

Ask with me

Que esta posando?

I encourage you to questions your surroundings

I now say "Te Amo", and if you don't know what that means, Google it

I no longer have hate in me

But I do have pain

It's not my pain, though

I have Ana's, Maria's, Jose's, and the Carlos'

I have pain and a lot of questions

Jay Ragario from the BPDA: "What the fuck are you doing?"

Joe Ragario from the ZBA: Que putas estas a ciendo

Jack and Lynn Nunez from Wonder Group: What the fuck are you doing?

Richie Lynds[10]: Que estas a ciendo

Look around you

This is not normal

Look around you

Rick Beliveau from Volnay Capital and EBO: How much more money do you need at the expense of others?

---

[10] Lawyer for many of the developers in East Boston

This is not normal

Estoy no es normal

Gabriella Colletta[11]: What are you going to do?

Lydia Edwards[12]: When are you going to vocally protect your community against development?

Michelle Wu[13]: When are you going to pick a side to fight for?

Adrian Madaro[14]: Are you going to keep fighting for us, but also with us?

¿Y tú?

And you?

¿Qué es loque tudas hacer?

What are you going to do?

A few months ago, while walking back from the Maverick subway stop late one night, I found myself thinking about all the families in the neighborhood. All the families and individuals I hadn't talked to. Hadn't had the time, or the energy, or the right 'in', or built up enough trust, to make a connection with. Each of them with their own story, their own concerns, their own hopes and fears. It's unreasonable that any one researcher, or

---

[11] City Councilor representing District 1, which includes East Boston

[12] State Senator who represents Third Suffolk, the district that includes East Boston

[13] Mayor of Boston

[14] Representative in the State House for First Suffolk district, which includes East Boston

researcher team, could take all these stories into account – talking to each family, each individual, each household, and putting together the full scope of how residents are reacting to the changes taking place around them. I've attempted this in the way that I felt I could best represent the community's voice in a broad, in-depth, rigorous way. And while this may satisfy the halls of academia and the community partners who I have built strong and lasting relationships with, it does not capture every story.

Camus remarks that "when the images of Earth cling too tightly to memory, when the call to happiness becomes too insistent, it happens that melancholy arises in man's heart." (2004, p. 591). This is a melancholy I found myself in quite often throughout my time in the field. I found it continuously difficult to process the joys of community alongside the pains of hearing stories and witnessing that community lose itself. And I found it difficult to navigate and process these pains in my intersecting positionalities as a White newcomer, an activist, a participant, a neighbor, and a researcher. I soon found that it became impossible to delineate each of these identities and ways of being in the world. I found my own joy and meaning through my continued immersion in the field and engagement with members of the neighborhood I would come to call friends – within a neighborhood I would grow to love.

From the outset of this dissertation, I continued to hear stories of families being displaced. The longer I worked in the community, the more I began to recognize those names. Stories of landlords raising rents $500 or more a month before the renewal for a family's lease is up have become ubiquitous. But with each story of displacement, each story of a family deciding how much longer they can live in the neighborhood, each story

of an individual feeling trapped in a sublet apartment with roommates they don't feel safe around but for the threat of homelessness – accompanying each of these stories are also the stories of neighbors coming together to support one another. Neighbors showing up at an eviction court hearing to support a family fighting to stay in their home, working with their landlords to open up a vacant unit to a community member in need even at a cost to that tenant, sharing food, clothing, kitchen supplies, housing and education resources through a broad network of neighbors supporting neighbors. There are still stories that deserve to be told. That are begging to be told. Tiny dots on an endless timeline. Come and see.

References

Ali, S. (2007). Feminism and postcolonial: Knowledge/politics: Introduction: Feminist and postcolonial: Challenging knowledge. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *30*(2), 191-212.

Anasti, T. (2018). Survivor or laborer: How human service managers perceive sex workers?. *Affilia*, *33*(4), 453-476.

Arribas-Ayllon, M., & Walkerdine, V. (2008). Foucauldian discourse analysis. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research in psychology*, 91-108.

Avila, E., & Rose, M. H. (2009). Race, culture, politics, and urban renewal: An introduction. *Journal of Urban History*, *35*(3), 335-347.

Bailey-Fakhoury Chasity, Perhamus, L. M., & Ma, K. M. (2022). Feeling Displaced, Enacting Resistance: Race, Place, and Schooling in the Face of Gentrifying Forces. *The Urban Review, 54*(1), 1-40.

Bai, L., Xie, L., Li, C., Yuan, S., Niu, D., Wang, T., Yang, Z., & Zhang, Y. (2023). The Conceptual Framework of Smart TOD: An Integration of Smart City and TOD.*Land, 12*(3), 664.

Balazs, C. L., & Morello-Frosch, R. (2013). The Three R's: How Community Based Participatory Research Strengthens the Rigor, Relevance and Reach of Science. *Environmental justice*, *6*(1).

Banerjee, T. (2001). The future of public space: Beyond invented streets and reinvented places. *Journal of the American planning association*, *67*(1), 9-24.

Banton, M. (1963). Review of The urban villagers: Group and class in the life of Italian-Americans. *The Sociological Review, 11*(3), 377–379.

Baum-Snow, N., & Hartley, D. (2016, May). Causes and consequences of central neighborhood change, 1970–2010. In *Research Symposium on Gentrification and Neighborhood Change* (pp. 57-85).

Bauer, W. (2023). Reframing Urban Nature-Based Solutions Through Perspectives of Environmental Justice and Privilege. *Urban Planning, 8*(1), 334-345.

Best, A., & Ramírez, M. M. (2021). Urban specters. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, *39*(6), 1043-1054.

Beck, B. (2020). Policing Gentrification: Stops and Low–Level ARrests during Demographic Change and Real Estate Reinvestment. *City & Community*, *19*(1), 245-272.

Boston, A. (2020, September 1). *Gentrifying the City: From Racialized Neglect to Racialized Reinvestment*. Items. https://items.ssrc.org/layered-metropolis/gentrifying-the-city-from-racialized-neglect-to-racialized-reinvestment/.

Boston Landmarks Commision (1994). East Boston: Exploring Boston's neighborhoods. https://www.cityofboston.gov/images_documents/east_boston_brochure_tcm3-19117.pdf

Boston Landmarks Commission. (1997). *Eagle Hill homeowners handbook.*

Boston Neighborhood Community Land Trust. (n.d.). How it works. https://www.bnclt.org/how-it-works.

Boston Planning and Development Agency. (2021). *2020 Census Redistricting Data for Boston*.

Boston Planning and Development Agency (n.d.) Zoning Board Administration. http://www.bostonplans.org/zoning/zoning-board-of-appeals

Bulger, M., Joseph, M., McKinney, S., & Bilimoria, D. (2023). Social inclusion through mixed-income development: Design and practice in the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, *Journal of Urban Affairs, 45*(2), 168-190.

Calthorpe, P. *The New American Metropolis: Ecology, Community, and the American Dream*; Princeton Architectural Press: New York, NY, USA, 1993.

Cann, C., & DeMeulenaere, E. (2020). *The activist academic: Engaged scholarship for resistance, hope and social change*. Myers Education Press.

Camus, A. (2004). *The plague, the fall, exile in the kingdom, and selected essays*. Everyman's Library.

Card, K. (2018). Thinking across tactics of tenant movements: Los Angeles and Berlin. *Progressive City*.

Carmon, N. (1999). Three generations of urban renewal policies: Analysis and policy implications, *Geoforum, 30*(2), 145-158.

Chakrabarty , D. (2000). 'A Small History of Subaltern Studies' in Schwarz, H. and Ray, S. (2000). *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* , Malden Mass and Oxford UK : Blackwells Publishing.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Sage.

City of Boston (n.d.). Acquisition and expansion of affordable housing in East Boston announced. https://www.boston.gov/news/acquisition-and-expansion-affordable-housing-east-boston-announced.

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American journal of sociology*, *94*, S95-S120.

Cope, M., & Elwood, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Qualitative GIS: A mixed methods approach*. Sage.

Courtois, C. A. (2004). Complex trauma, complex reactions: Assessment and treatment. *Psychotherapy: Theory, research, practice, training*, *41*(4), 412.

Couture, V., & Handbury, J. (2020). Urban revival in America. *Journal of Urban Economics*, *119*, 103267.

Cucca, R., & Thaler, T. (2023). Social Justice in the Green City. *Urban Planning, 8*(1), 279-282.

Curran, W., Hamilton, T. (2017). *Just Green Enough*. (First ed.). Routledge.

Davidson, M., & Lees, L. (2005). New-build 'gentrification'and London's riverside renaissance. *Environment and planning A*, *37*(7), 1165-1190.

Davis, C. (2005). Hauntology, spectres and phantoms. *French Studies*, *59*(3), 373-379.

Dean-Coffey, J. (2021, August 25). Positionality. *The Equitable Evaluation Initiative.* https://www.equitableeval.org/blog-main/positionality

Derrida, J. (2012). *Specters of Marx: The state of the debt, the work of mourning and the new international*. Routledge.

Desmond, M. (2014). Relational ethnography. *Theory and society*, *43*(5), 547-579.

Döring, C., & Ulbricht, K. (2018). Gentrification hotspots and displacement in Berlin. A quantitative analysis. *Gentrification and Resistance: Researching Displacement Processes and Adaption Strategies*, 9-35.

Dozier, D. (2019). Contested development: Homeless property, police reform, and resistance in Skid Row, LA. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *43*(1), 179-194.

Duneier, M., Kasinitz, P., & Murphy, A. K. (2014). An introduction to urban ethnography. In Duneier et al. (Eds.). *The urban ethnography reader*. Oxford.

Easton, S., Lees, L., Hubbard, P., & Tate, N. (2020). Measuring and mapping displacement: The problem of quantification in the battle against gentrification. *Urban studies*, *57*(2), 286-306.

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. University of Chicago press.

Escobedo, F. J., Giannico, V., Jim, C. Y., Sanesi, G., & Lafortezza, R. (2019). Urban forests, ecosystem services, green infrastructure and nature-based solutions: Nexus or evolving metaphors?. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, *37*, 3-12.

Fanon, F. (2007). *The wretched of the earth*. Grove/Atlantic, Inc.

Fisher, M. (2009). *Capitalist realism: Is there no alternative?*. John Hunt Publishing.

Fisher, M. (2012). What is hauntology?. *Film Quarterly*, *66*(1), 16-24.

Fisher, M. (2014). *Ghosts of my life: Writings on depression, hauntology and lost futures*. John Hunt Publishing.

Frisby, W., Reid, C. J., Millar, S., & Hoeber, L. (2005). Putting "participatory" into participatory forms of action research. *Journal of Sport Management, 19*(4), 367-386.

Fullilove, M. (2004). Root shock: Upheaval, resettlement and recovery in urban America. New York: The Random House Publishing Group.

Gans, H. (1979). 1962. The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans. Glencoe.

Garrett, P. M. (2020). 'Disordering' the world: Frantz Fanon's contribution to social work's understanding of decolonization. *Critical and Radical Social Work*, *8*(3), 305-322.

Gearhart, M. C. (2019). Preventing neighborhood disorder: Comparing alternative models of collective efficacy theory using structural equation modeling. *American journal of community psychology*, *63*(1-2), 168-178.

Glass, R. (1964). *London, Aspects of Change*. MacGibbon and Key.

Glaser, B. G. (1965). The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis. *Social problems*, *12*(4), 436-445.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Aldine.

Goetz, E. G. (2010) Desegregation in 3D: Displacement, Dispersal and Development in American Public Housing, *Housing Studies, 25*(2), 137-158.

Gorr, W. L., & Kurland, K. S. (2008). *GIS tutorial: workbook for ArcView 9*. ESRI, Inc..

Gordon, A. F. (2008). *Ghostly matters: Haunting and the sociological imagination*. U of Minnesota Press.

Government Accountability Office. (2003). *HOPE VI Resident Issues and Changes in Neighborhoods Surrounding Grant Sites.*

Graves, E. M. (2011). Mixed outcome developments: Comparing policy goals to resident outcomes in mixed-income housing. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, *77*(2), 143-153.

Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1998) Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and issues* (pp. 195–220)*.* Sage Publications.

Guerra, C. (2019). Redlining was codified racism that shaped American cities and this exhibit shows it still exists.

https://www.wbur.org/news/2019/04/25/redlining-exhibit

Hall, C. (1992). *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History*, London: Polity Press.

Harrington, M. (1964). *The other America*. Simon and Schuster.

Harvey, D. (2019). *Rebel cities: From the right to the city to the urban revolution*. Verso books.

Helbrecht, I. (2018). Gentrification and displacement. *Gentrification and Resistance: Researching Displacement Processes and Adaption Strategies*, 1-7.

Heidsieck, L. (2018). Kotti & Co: New Forms of Displacement, New Forms of Protest. *Gentrification and Resistance: Researching Displacement Processes and Adaption Strategies*, 131-160.

Herman, J. L. (1992a). Complex PTSD: A syndrome in survivors of prolonged and

    repeated trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 5,* 377–391.

Hock, J. (2012). *Political Designs: Architecture and Urban Renewal in the Civil Rights*

    Era, 1954-1973 (Doctoral dissertation).

Howard, M. (2023). Making too little to get affordable housing — and other problems

    with trying to stay in Boston: As the cost of living drives friends out of the city,

    I'm eyeing apartment applications with a creeping sense of hopelessness.

    https://www.bostonglobe.com/2023/04/21/opinion/boston-apartments-high-rents/.

Huggins, C. M. (2012). Traffic stop encounters: Officer and citizen race and perceptions

    of police propriety. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, *37*, 92–110.

Hwang, J., & Lin, J. (2016). What have we learned about the causes of recent

    gentrification?. *Cityscape*, *18*(3), 9-26.

Hwang, J., & Ding, L. (2020). Unequal Displacement: Gentrification, Racial

    Stratification, and Residential Destinations in Philadelphia. *American Journal of*

    Sociology, 126(2): 354-406.

Jameson, F. (1993). 'Marx's Purloined Letter', in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium*

    on Jacques Derrida's 'Spectres de Marx', ed. by Sprinker M. London: Verso. 26–

    67.

Jeffrey, B., & Troman, G. (2004). Time for ethnography. *British educational research*

    journal, *30*(4), 535-548.

Keating, L. (2000). Redevelopment public housing. *Journal of American Planning*

    Association, 66(4), 384-97.

Khair, T., & Khair, T. (2009). *The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness* (pp. 3-18). Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Kindynis, T. (2019). Excavating ghosts: Urban exploration as graffiti archaeology. *Crime, Media, Culture*, *15*(1), 25-45.

Koelsch, L. E., Bennett, E., & Goldberg, S. G. (2017). Listening for home: Urban women's experiences in an uprooted community. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, *45*(4), 367.

Kozey, K. (2020). Collective Efficacy, Group Threat, and Urban Change: Examining Informal Social Control Forces in Areas of Gentrification. *Sociological Research Online*, *25*(4), 549-570.

Krings, A., & Colette, C. (2021). Environmental Justice Organizing in a Gentrifying Community: Navigating Dilemmas of Representation, Issue Selection, and Recruitment. *Families in Society, 102*(2), 154-166.

Krings, A., & Schusler, T. M. (2020). Equity in sustainable development: Community responses to environmental gentrification. *International Journal of Social Welfare, 29*(4), 321-334.

Kubrin, C., & Weitzer,R. (2003). New direction in social disorganization theory. *Journal of Research Crime and Deliquency 40.* 374-402.

Lees, L., Slater, T., & Wyly, E. (2013). *Gentrification*. Routledge.

Lefebvre, Henri. 1991. *The Production of Space*. (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). Blackwell Publishers Limited.

Liu, Q., Qian, Z., Huang, H., & Huang, D. A Reflection on Future Smart TOD Development: Discussion on the Pro-TOD and De-TOD. *Planners* **2020**, *36*, 5–11.

Lyons, T., Krüsi, A., Pierre, L., Small, W., & Shannon, K. (2017). The impact of construction and gentrification on an outdoor trans sex work environment: Violence, displacement and policing. *Sexualities*, *20*(8), 881-903.

Luconi, S. (2012). Contested Loyalties: World War II and Italian-Americans' Ethnic Identity. *Italian Americana*, *30*(2), 151-167.

Mahato, S. G. (2018). Hispanics in the neighborhood: A case study of refugees in towns. *Feinstein International Center Tufts University.*

Mandl, D. (2015, October 14). *The gentrification of Boston's South End*. https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-gentrification-of-bostons-south-end/

Map Works, Inc. "Boston shoreline 1630." Map. 1999. *Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center*, https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:q524n430n (accessed April 24, 2023).

Marques, N. (2020, February 14). *East Boston residents demand affordable housing*. Liberation. https://www.liberationnews.org/east-boston-residents-demand-affordable-housing/.

Mazzara, A. (2019, December 10). *Rents Have Risen More Than Incomes in Nearly Every State Since 2001*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

https://www.cbpp.org/blog/rents-have-risen-more-than-incomes-in-nearly-every-state-since-2001.

Mendes, R., Fidélis, T., Roebeling, P., Teles, F. (2020). The institutionalization of nature-based solutions: A discourse analysis of emergent literature. *Resources*, 9, 1–19.

Miller, Y. (2019, June 12). *New East Boston homes out of reach for residents*. Bay State Banner. https://www.baystatebanner.com/2019/06/12/new-east-boston-homes-out-of-reach-for-residents/.

Modestino, A. (2019). The greater Boston housing report card 2019: Supply, demand and the challenge of local control.

Mosher, H. (2013). A question of quality: The art/science of doing collaborative public ethnography. *Qualitative Research*, *13*(4), 428-441.

Morenoff, J. D., & Harding, D. J. (2011). *Final technical report: Neighborhoods, recidivism, and employment among returning prisoners*. Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan.

Nadal, K. L., Davidoff, K. C., Allicock, N., Serpe, C. R., & Erazo, T. (2017). Perceptions of Police, Racial Profiling, and Psychological Outcomes: A Mixed Methodological Study. *The Journal of Social Issues, 73*(4), 808-830.

National Association of Social Workers. (n.d.). *Code of Ethics*. https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics

National Parks Service. (n.d.). Native Americans and the Boston harbor islands. https://www.nps.gov/boha/learn/historyculture/native-americans-and-the-boston-harbor-islands.htm.

Neighborhood Resilience Project. (n.d.). We are resilient together.

https://neighborhoodresilience.org.

Nelson, A. C., & Hibberd, R. (2023). Influence of Transit Station Proximity on

Demographic Change Including Displacement and Gentrification with

Implications for Transit and Land Use Planning After the COVID-19

Pandemic.*Transportation Research Record, 2677*(1), 1721-1731.

Nesbitt, L., Hotte, N., Barron, S., Cowan, J., & Sheppard, S. R. (2017). The social and

economic value of cultural ecosystem services provided by urban forests in North

America: A review and suggestions for future research. *Urban Forestry & Urban

Greening*, *25*, 103-111.

Padeiro, M., Louro, A., & da Costa, N. M. (2019). Transit-oriented development and

gentrification: a systematic review. *Transport Reviews*, *39*(6), 733-754.

Pain, R. (2019). Chronic urban trauma: The slow violence of housing dispossession.

Urban Studies, *56*(2), 385-400.

Pan, D. (2020, June 10). *Boston is the third most 'intensely gentrified' city in the United

States, study says.* Boston Globe.

https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/07/10/metro/boston-is-third-most-intensely-

gentrified-city-united-states-study-says/.

Pavlovskaya, M. (2009). Critical GIS and its positionality. *Cartographica*, *44*(1), 8-10.

Pink, S., & Morgan, J. (2013). Short-term ethnography: Intense routes to

knowing. *Symbolic interaction*, *36*(3), 351-361.

Platoff, E. and Stout, M. (2023). Massachusetts Legislature, hostile to rent control, includes more landlords than renters. https://www.bostonglobe.com/2023/04/21/metro/massachusetts-legislature-hostile-rent-control-includes-more-landlords-than-renters.

Purcell, M. (2022). Theorising democratic space with and beyond Henri Lefebvre. *Urban Studies*, *59*(15), 3041-3059.

Ramsden, E., & Smith, M. (2018). Remembering the West End: social science, mental health and the American urban environment, 1939-1968. *Urban History, 45*(1), 128-149.

Renewing Inequality. (n.d.). Family Displacements through Urban Renewal, 1950-1966. https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/renewal/#view=0/0/1&viz=cartogram

Richardson, J., Mitchell, B., & Franco, J. (2019). Shifting neighborhoods: Gentrification and cultural displacement in American cities.

Rinehart Kochel, T., & Gau, J. M. (2021). Examining police presence, tactics, and engagement as facilitators of informal social control in high-crime areas. *Justice Quarterly*, *38*(2), 301-321.

Rothstein, R. (2017). The color of law: A forgotten history of how our government segregated America. Liveright Publishing.

Roy, A. (2016). Who's afraid of postcolonial theory? *International Journal ofUurban and Regional Research*, *40*(1), 200-209.

Rucks-Ahidiana, Z. (2022). Theorizing gentrification as a process of racial capitalism. *City & Community*, *21*(3), 173-192.

Rukundwa, L. S., & Van Aarde, A. G. (2007). The formation of postcolonial theory. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, *63*(3), 1171-1194.

Saldaña, J. (2013). The coding manual for qualitative researchers. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sam, C. H. (2019). Shaping discourse through social media: Using Foucauldian discourse analysis to explore the narratives that influence educational policy. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *63*(3), 333-350.

Sampson, R. J. (1997). Collective regulation of adolescent misbehavior: Validation results from eighty Chicago neighborhoods. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *12*(2), 227-244.

Sampson, R. J., Raudenbush, S. W., & Earls, F. (1997). Neighborhoods and violent crime: A multilevel study of collective efficacy. *science*, *277*(5328), 918-924.

Sarmiento, C. S. (2021). Defend, disrupt, and build: Guerrilla urbanist interventions and fighting gentrification in the barrio. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 49, 3178– 3193.

Sax, D. L., Nesbitt, L., & Quinton, J. (2022). Improvement, not displacement: A framework for urban green gentrification research and practice. *Environmental Science & Policy, 137*, 373-383.

Schneekloth, L. H., & Shibley, R. G. (2000). Implacing architecture into the practice of placemaking. *Journal of Architectural Education*, *53*(3), 130-140.

Seisha, M. (2018). Systemic violence in Winnipeg's street sex trade: Methodological and ethical issues. In MacKinnon, S. (Ed.), *Practising community-based participatory Research*. Purich Books.

Sennett, R., & Cobb, J. (1993). *The hidden injuries of class*. WW Norton & Company.

Sexton, P., & Sexton, B. (1971). *Blue collars and hard hats.* Random House.

Stam, R., & Shohat, E. (2012). Whence and Whither Postcolonial Theory?. *New Literary History*, *43*(2), 371-390.

StataCorp (2017). Stata 15 Base Reference Manual. Stata Press.

Sunjata, J. K. (November 9, 2021). *Gentrification as Settler-Colonialism: Urban Resistance Against Urban Colonization.* Hampton Think. https://www.hamptonthink.org/read/gentrification-as-settler-colonialism-urban-resistance-against-urban-colonization.

Sutton, S. (2020). Gentrification and the increasing significance of racial transition in New York City 1970–2010. *Urban Affairs Review*, *56*(1), 65-95.

Tach, L., & Emory, A. D. (2017). Public housing redevelopment, neighborhood change, and the restructuring of urban inequality. American Journal of Sociology, 123, 686-739.

Tedlock, B. (2000). Ethnography and ethnographic representation. *Handbook of qualitative research*, *2*(1).

Teixeira, S., Spielvogel, B., Hwang, D., Lown, J., & Coley, R.L. (2023). *Short- and Long-Term Effects of HOPE VI Redevelopment on Neighborhood Housing Conditions.* (Unpublished Manuscript).

Teixeira, S. (2014). *"It seems like no one cares": Youth Perspectives on Housing Abandonment and Urban Blight.* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh].

Thurber, A., Krings, A., Martinez, L. S., & Ohmer, M. (2021). Resisting gentrification: The theoretical and practice contributions of social work. *Journal of Social Work, 21*(1), 26-45.

Tiernan, E. (2020, February 17). *Greenification: Environmental policy is fueling Boston's housing crisis*. Boston Herald. https://www.bostonherald.com/2020/02/16/environmental-gentrification-pushing-up-prices-of-coastal-development/.

Till, K.E. (2012) Wounded cities: Memory-work and a place-based ethics of care. Political Geography 31: 3–14.

Triandafyllidou, A. (1998). National identity and the 'other'. *Ethnic and racial studies, 21*(4), 593-612.

US Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2015). *Choice Neighborhoods 2015 Grant Report*.

von Hoffman, A. (2008). The lost history of urban renewal. *Journal of Urbanism, 1*(3), 281-301.

Wang, C., & Burris , M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health education & behavior, 24*(3), 369-387.

Walford, G. (2009). The practice of writing ethnographic fieldnotes. *Ethnography and Education, 4*(2), 117-130.

Wells, W., Schafer, J. A., Varano, S. P., & Bynum, T. S. (2006). Neighborhood residents' production of order: The effects of collective efficacy on responses to neighborhood problems. *Crime & Delinquency*, *52*(4), 523-550.

White, M., & Yang, T. (2023). Cool Urbanism: The Radiant Exitance City: A.D.*Architectural Design, 93*(1), 62-71.

Yarin, S. (2022). *If Hispanics hate the term Latinx, why is it still used?* BU Today. https://www.bu.edu/articles/2022/why-is-latinx-still-used-if-hispanics-hate-the-term/

Yi'En, C. (2014). Telling stories of the city: Walking ethnography, affective materialities, and mobile encounters. *Space and Culture*, *17*(3), 211-223.

Zielenbach, S., & Voith, R. (2010). HOPE VI and neighborhood economic development: The importance of local market dynamics. *Cityscape*, 99-131.

Zielenbach, S., Voith, R., & Mariano, M. (2010). Estimating the local economic impacts of HOPE VI. *Housing policy debate*, *20*(3), 485-522.

Zipp, S. (2013). The roots and routes of urban renewal. *Journal of Urban History*, *39*(3), 366-391.

Appendix A:

The Characters

Reducing the complexities of individuals is a difficult task, and I don't always feel as though I am wholly doing each participant and resident justice in my descriptions of them. Although I did my best to give context for each person I talked to in the main narrative above, I wanted to provide further context in the appendix to create a visual of some of the 'main characters' in the story. I chose to stay away from physical characteristics here, such as height and skin color, instead focusing on their general disposition and concerns to ensure who they were, and not what they looked like, was respected. I could never include everyone that I spoke to, but those 'main characters' are described below:

Lily: Lily is a young Hispanic woman in her early 20's. Her family moved to East Boston from El Salvador in the 90's, and she has lived here her entire life. She has a warm personality and her near constant smile often hides her intense passion about her neighborhood. Her dream is to make a movie about East Boston, telling the history and the stories of the people she loves in the neighborhood she calls home.

Lance: Lance is not originally from East Boston, or Boston for that matter. He's White, in his late 20's, and fluent in Spanish, a skill he learned from spending years abroad in Colombia after college. He's a community organizer at heart, having moved to East

Boston at the suggestion of other activists in the Greater Boston area to organize in the neighborhood. Lance is busy, excitable, and deeply passionate about organizing at all levels.

Ronaldo: Ronaldo is a Hispanic male in his early 30's. He had lived in East Boston his entire life up until about two years before we met, when his parents decided to sell their house fearing the cost of living would be too high when he and his sister were supposed to take the house from them. He spent about a year and a half living in a town North of East Boston before moving to another Boston neighborhood, and then back to East Boston. He appears most excited when talking about the history of East Boston and about environmental justice.

Dr. Lisa: A former lawyer and professor, Dr. Lisa has had a hand in shaping much of organizing efforts in East Boston. She has done this largely from the background, however, coming out occasionally to community events when they were held outdoors. During the heights of COVID, she largely stayed inside out of a fear for her own health. Her and her husband have been living in the neighborhood for nearly 20 years. She is very outspoken about how little she thinks of the developers and their lawyers.

Gloria: Gloria is a passionate organizer and leader of one of the neighborhood organizations. She is in her late 30's, a mother, and an immigrant from El Salvador. Her and her partner at the organization work tirelessly nearly every day in an attempt to get

greater voter turnout amongst the Hispanic population in East Boston. You can see Gloria at nearly every event, laughing amongst the crowd.

Marianne: Marianne is a Hispanic woman in her late 30's. She lives in the home she has always lived in with her parents, who bought the home when they immigrated from El Salvador. Marianne joined us for the photovoice portion of the dissertation, though she was very skeptical at first. A few weeks in, she missed two sessions in a row. I reached out and wanted to make sure she knew that she could keep coming if she wanted even though she missed a few sessions. She thanked me for reaching out, saying that she gets so down about development and never feels like there is anything she can do about it. She wasn't sure if the photovoice project was something she wanted to keep doing, but she came to the next session and every session after. She can appear quite bitter, angry towards the developers who she feels have caused her and her parents an immense amount of stress.

Rose: An older White woman in her late 80's, Rose was described to me as a "firecracker" and "someone you don't say no to" from one of the local politicians. The call, I should add, was at the behest of Rose, who texted him and demanded he talk to me about the dissertation I was doing. She has been in politics in one way or another her whole life, and makes sure she is connected to every politician who represents the neighborhood in some way. She has lived in the same home her entire life – her

grandparents built it when the immigrated to East Boston from Italy. She has no problem saying what is on her mind and what her concerns are.

Sandy: A Hispanic woman in her mid 50's, Sandy is a political powerhouse in East Boston, though she'll never admit it. Sandy is on every committee, goes to every event, and is in the ear of every politician in East Boston (and some important one's across the state). Sandy also has no problem telling the politicians she has on her phone when she feels they're wrong or if she's "pissed off" at them. She's a deeply respected member of the community, and you'll see her at every event, smiling and hugging everyone she knows – and she knows everyone.

Yazmin: A White woman in her late 30's and a recent first-time mother, Yazmin has lived in the neighborhood for just over 10 years. Her and her husband moved to Boston from Florida, and were unsure if they could afford to stay in the city when they moved here. They were able to buy in East Boston early on, before the developments started to really come in. They then moved to a new home, renovated it, then moved again, keeping the prior two homes as rental properties. Yazmin is kind and soft-spoken, appearing to be skeptical of questions related to gentrification. She's excited about the changes in the neighborhood, and finds it a point of pride that she now gets to show her friend the cool neighborhood that "no one used to visit".

Ellen: Ellen is a White woman in her late 30's, a recent mother, and a homeowner in East Boston. Similar to Yazmin, her and her husband moved into the neighborhood around 10 years ago excited that they were able to buy a home in a neighborhood they could feel was going to become popular soon. She cheekily considers herself a "yuppie who cares", a classification that, to her, means she is a homeowner and from the upper-class, but she cares about the neighborhood and doesn't want to see her community displaced.

Evelyn: Evelyn is a Hispanic woman in her early 30's and a mother of two who has lived in the neighborhood her whole life. Like many others, she lives in the same home she grew up in with her parents. She laughs when calling her dad her landlord, but is worried how much longer they will be able to stay in the neighborhood. She often describes a sense of great resentment about living in East Boston, feeling as though she did "everything I could" by going to a good school and getting an education to still struggle to afford to live in the neighborhood.

Susan: A White woman in her mid-50's, Susan was the only White participant in the photovoice group. Susan has a lot of opinions and a lot to say, having to be asked on more than one occasion if she wouldn't mind pausing so someone else could speak during the sessions. She was formerly houseless, now able to afford a coveted place in low-income housing in East Boston. She rides her bike everywhere, an act that has recently caused her a lot of distress as she feels like the new-comers aren't respectful of

bikers on the road. She now works as someone who helps houseless folks obtain housing and other services, and is deeply passionate about housing justice.

Dom: An older White man in his 70's, Dom is a writer for a state-wide newspaper that focuses entirely on the Italian-American population. He has been a writer for most of his career, and has lived in East Boston most of his life. He is a kind man, but rough in the "good ol' boys" way that old-school Italian-American Bostoners present.

Tom: Tom is a White man in his late 30's, a father, and a homeowner. Tom is a recent resident to East Boston, moving here with his family only a few years ago. Tom's grandfather, however, immigrated to Boston from Ireland when he was a young man, and Tom beams with excitement when he talks about being in East Boston and what that would have meant to his grandfather. Tom can be seen riding his bike around the neighborhood or playing guitar near the waterfront in the Summer.

Big C: A true symbol of his given and preferred name, Big C is a heavy-set man in his 60's. Big C is is covered in tattoos, scattered all around his body in no particular pattern and mostly faded at this point. He has lived in the neighborhood his entire life and loves living here. He tells me excitedly that he "gets to be" Santa every Christmas at one of the local yacht clubs, a position he takes much joy in. In the heat of Summer, Big C and be found sunbathing near Lopresti Park in between swims in the harbor.

Arial and Pablo: Arian and Pablo are a married Hispanic couple in their mid 30's, both immigrated to the United States from El Salvador. Arial doesn't talk much, often appearing tired from a long day at work. Arial and Pablo never made it past an elementary school education and neither could write, a fact they both seemed embarrassed about. Towards the end of the photovoice sessions, they learned that they may be facing eviction soon as their landlord was trying to raise their rent. Despite this, they both attended every meeting and event they could, helping other recent immigrants find jobs where they worked when needed. They are both parents to a delightful and funny daughter.

Terry: Terry is an older woman in her 60's. She has lived in East Boston for nearly 30 years, having lived in Orient Heights for most of it. She's Jewish, and she recalls when she moved into the neighborhood with her husband how they were treated like outcasts. "They would openly say "there goes the neighborhood"" she told me during the interview. She seemingly uses that experience as a point of empathy with the Hispanic population, and has been a tireless advocate since she entered. She spends much of her time organizing for environmental justice and waterfront preservation.

Gino: An older White man in his 60's, Gino has lived in the same home in East Boston his entire life. Gino is brash, excitable, funny, and angry all at once. He feels that the city and developers are always trying to "screw us over", and is leery of everything said by either group. Gino cares a lot about the neighborhood, and is part of a contingent of

neighbors that would resist every change occurring in the neighborhood if they were able to.

Lia: Lia is a Hispanic woman in her late 30's, a mother to two children, and a Zumba instructor at various locations around the neighborhood. At every photovoice session she brought her two children, who spent much of their time coloring and eating the snacks I brought. Lia always wore a headwrap and workout clothes, often rushing from her work to get to the sessions. She could speak a broken English, which made communication between her and I a bit of a fun guessing game. She was always smiling, always joking, and always supportive of the other members of the group.

Jules and Robert: Jules and Robert are an older White couple, both in their 70's, currently living in a retirement village in East Boston. They have both lived in East Boston for over 30 years, though Robert has lived here his entire life. Both appear to be heavy smokers, and spend much of their time outside on the corner socially smoking with other residents in their apartment building. Jules and Robert attempt to be as disconnected from the discourse of gentrification in the neighborhood as they can be, though Jules tells me she has friends who attend all the meetings and are constantly stressed out because of it. Both spend time reminiscing about the way the neighborhood used to be and the social connections that used to exist.

<div align="center">

Appendix B

</div>

Walking Interview Protocol

Hi, my name is Josh. We're here today because I'm interested in understanding how gentrification, and the changes in the community it often causes, impacts neighborhood residence's sense of individual and communal well-being. I want this to be a relaxed, informal process--we're just here to gather your opinions and learn more--there are no wrong answers! I will be interviewing about 25-30 people where you work and I'll put together all of the responses so your answers will be grouped with others and your privacy is maintained. I may use some quotes from the interviews but I will remove any identifying information. This interview is not expected to last more than one hour. Throughout I may be taking pictures, but I won't be taking pictures of you. If you would rather me not take any pictures during the walk, please let me know. Do you have any questions?

Ok, let's get started! I was wondering if we could start by you telling me a little bit about yourself:
- How long have you lived in East Boston?
- Have lived in the same area the whole time?
- Who do you live with?

Next, I want to thank you for taking me on this walking tour! Tell me a little about where we are.
- What is the route you are going to be taking me on?
- Why did you choose this area?

What is it about this area that speaks to how you understand gentrification?

How would you define gentrification?

What has your experience with gentrification been thus far?

Do you know of anyone that has had to leave the neighborhood because of the cost of housing?

Have you noticed a change in the types of houses being built in the neighborhood?

Have you noticed any changes occurring in the way neighbors interact with each other?

- Have you noticed any changes in the way police interact with residents in the area?

_____

That wraps up the formal questions I wanted to ask. Is there anything I forgot to ask or anything else you feel like I should know?

Thank you for your time and help with this study. If you decide you have any

further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at: lownj@bc.edu