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A Nonprofit working with Latino Youth on the Westside in Los Angeles amidst the Looming
Threat of Gentrification and Increasing Foundation Reliance

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Chicana and Chicano Studies

by

Isabel Coatlicue Durón

2017

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

A Nonprofit working with Latino Youth on the Westside in Los Angeles amidst the Looming
Threat of Gentrification and Increasing Foundation Reliance

by

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Master of Arts in Chicana and Chicano Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2017

Professor Abel Valenzuela, Chair

I utilize Bronfenbrenner's ecological model as a conceptual framework to consider the challenges of primarily low-income, Mexican American youth living on the Westside in Los Angeles. Through a case study method I analyze the ways in which the Urban Youth Program (UYP) a program of the Family Leadership Center (FLC) a community based organization (CBO) provides a vital resource for youth. Although UYP strengthens the ecological environments of youth involved, I argue that a positive youth development framework, which underscores the functioning of UYP is ill-equipped to address macro-level issues such as the new and emerging challenges of gentrification and increasing foundation reliance which can potentially undermine the youth's ecological environment. I argue that FLC should shift its program towards a youth organizing model.

The thesis of Isabel Coatlicue Durón is approved.

Genevieve Carpio

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I. INTRODUCTION

Although the Westside in Los Angeles usually conjures images of the beach, wealth, whiteness and luxury, I center this study on the primarily Mexican-origin, low-income, working class families and youth served by the Family Leadership Center (FLC), a community based non-profit. Empire Street, where the center is located, contrasts to the images of privilege usually associated with the Westside. These families struggle with financial insecurity, illegality, educational opportunities, and gangs. A set of federal urban housing projects are located near the FLC. However, FLC and its Urban Youth Program (UYP), which serves youth 13 to 18 years of age, appear to be a bright spot for many of these families offering hope for opportunities that may improve their life chances and outcomes. However, increasingly macro-level changes such as increasing financial constraints and threat of gentrification form emerging challenges that the organization must contend with. I focus on these shifts, because they both increasingly impact and impose on the youth.

Drawing on the work of psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), I outline important aspects of the youth's ecological environment. Bronfenbrenner's *The Ecology of Human Development* (1979) urges scholars to consider the various ecological environments that shape the formation of human development. Utilizing an ecological framework, I consider important ecological environments that shape the lives of UYP youth including FLC, family relationships, gang violence, connections to police, illegality and racism. Considering that various environments impact youth development, I focus on both financial constraints that FLC faces and increasing gentrification. I focus on both these areas in order to bring to light how they threaten the work of FLC and the development of youth. The research questions framing this study are:

1. How do emerging constraints imposed on community-based organizations (CBOs) such as increasing foundation reliance and gentrification limit its efforts to work with youth?
2. Which model of working with youth is best equipped to challenge macro-level forces that increasingly place youth and families in an increasingly precarious environment?

The challenges that the youth involved in UYP—primarily Mexican American from low-income and/or mixed status families—live in a precarious environment. Racism and illegality that shape many of the youth’s lives limit opportunities for them. However, FLC provides a resource with distinct opportunities that reinforces micro-system environments. FLC’s current model reflects a positive youth development model that provides youth primarily with skills based outcomes, confidence building exercises, access to role models and educational enrichment programs that focus on getting youth to college. Though these skills are important, youth are not provided tools to develop a critical consciousness to question and critically examine differential power relations. Though youth are provided a space to discuss issues in their life they are not provided the best tools that can challenge these macro-level forces.

However, examining youth through an ecological lens urges me to examine emerging constraints and challenges that may also impact these youth. Therefore, I examine the increasing reliance on foundations that shape staff member’s ability to carry out their work. I contend that FLC’s financial constraints as a non-profit and their actions of “chasing the money” creates an environment of staff burnout and organizational disempowerment. I use the term “organizational disempowerment” to reflect the ways in which staff who work the closest with the youth feel pressure to develop new programs without sufficient infrastructure amidst the possibility of grant funding, job insecurity, and the increasing pressure of quantifying programmatic outcomes. Staff

feel an organizational pressure to focus on quantity over quality to meet foundation reporting and evaluative standards. These adaptive tactics, therefore, appear rather piecemeal. In this way, I examine the ways in which increasing foundation reliance may constrain an organizational shift towards a youth organizing model.

In a related manner, I examine how gentrification threatens the work that FLC does. Through this type of neighborhood change, families may be forced to move by being priced out or evicted. Displacement through gentrification can rupture the supportive microsystem that FLC has helped to strengthen for its youth and families. Because of the complexity and opacity of how gentrification works, the dangers of such shifts are not always clear to community members. Because this was not something the organization or youth seemed particularly aware of, I draw attention to it here. I consider the dangers and the prospect that addressing gentrification may be one issue that a youth organizing model can address at FLC. I point out that a positive youth development framework is unable to adequately address this type of neighborhood issue because it fails to mobilize youth politically.

This case study utilizes multiple methods that include gathering and analyzing: (1) census data; (2) organization documents including an in-depth analysis of 98 youth reflections; (3) participant observations of Friday leadership meetings; and (4) 21 in-depth interview with key staff, current youth participants, and alumni UYP participants. In addition, I spent considerable time at FLC as a field observer conducting research and observations from June 2015-August 2016. Through these methods and data, I give voice to the various ecological challenges that the youth, their families, the staff, and the organization face.

My literature review examines: (1) Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework; (2) youth development and youth activist oriented frameworks; (2) issues that CBOs frequently encounter,

including the decision of whether and how to engage in advocacy; and (3) gentrification research. After I review the literature, I provide more detailed information on the various methods that I employed in carrying out this study. In the fashion of ethnographic research, I provide rich descriptions of the community-neighborhood context and the institutional context in terms of the structure of the programs offered at FLC for youth. I provide a portrait of the youth participants using both quantitative and qualitative data highlighting four youth in particular to provide a more nuanced understanding of the challenges that these youth face. These four youth provide an image of a variety of challenges that youth affiliated with the program face including illegality, covert and family related drug and substance abuse, and a developing self-confidence.

My analysis includes a discussion of the shortcomings of a youth development model. I include recommendations for FLC to facilitate a shift towards a youth organizing model. Finally, I conclude by considering the value of a youth organizing model in a post-Trump election era.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, I begin by introducing Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model. I then cover four different frameworks—deficit oriented, positive youth development,, youth civic engagement, and youth activist—in the field of youth development. I point out that youth activist frameworks seriously contend with youth empowerment in a way that connects individual level growth to community change. I then examine the role of non-profits in civil society, highlighting the possibility and limitations of political engagement for community-based organizations. I then discuss gentrification research. I provide basic definitions and research, highlighted gentrification battles taking place in Los Angeles. I attempt to provide a regional view of gentrification related tensions.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model provides a basis for understanding different levels of systems, environments, and interactions of these system that influences a persons' development. In 1979, Urie Bronfenbrenner published *The Ecology of Human Development* outlining a way to consider the overarching environments that influence an individual's environment. He envisioned this ecological environment as a set of nested structures that began with the individual. This considers the individual's personality, role, education etc. The microsystem makes up the next level and consists of those environments in which the individual is directly involved in for example, family, school, afterschool activities, church, and peer relationships. The mesosystem involves the "linkages between settings, those in which the developing persons participates in" (7). For example, this might consider how local non-profits provide tools and encourage parents to actively participate in local school activities (i.e. parental engagement). Next, the ecosystem considers the impact of settings in which the individual does not directly participate in, but nevertheless directly impacts them. An example provided by Bronfenbrenner is a parent's work environment. A parent's working conditions may limit the amount of time, energy, or resources they have available to provide their children and therefore may limit or open-up opportunities for healthy development. Finally, Bronfenbrenner considers societal ideologies that shape the macro-level context in which development occurs. This may include the overarching political context, national ideologies, racialization, illegality, or beliefs about people experiencing poverty. Trained as a psychologist, Bronfenbrenner's model critiques psychological research for failing to account for the impact of different environments and the ways in which various individuals depending on their social location fit into these ecological settings. Bronfenbrenner recognized that these environments are not static both because an individual may

change their relationships to these environments or the environments themselves may change over time.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model allows for the consideration of and interactions amongst various environments that either directly or indirectly impact an individual's development. Through this model, it becomes clear that macro-, exo-, meso-, and micro- level systems are linked and seek to make more apparent how they may impinge or support positive development. The Family Leadership Center (FLC), which I describe in greater detail later, is particularly concerned with facilitating an environment that aids youth in their development. Part of the central components of the center's model is to increase parental engagement in their children's lives. In many respects, the center focuses on strengthening the microsystems that youth engage in. Though larger systems pressures such as the threat of gentrification and increasing foundation reliance also have the potential to restrict youth development particularly by impacting the microsystems that shape youth's lives, considerations of these challenges is much more muted than apparent in how the center orients its youth program. An ecological model also suggests that interventions are possible and important. These systems, however, can change; they are not static nor fixed in place. Thus, I will argue that shifting towards a youth activist model may give youth the skills, abilities, and tools to enact changes both within their microsystems but also empower them to distinguish these systems and the negative implications that they may have on their development. Youth activist models also aim to have youth challenge structures of power that may work against them, to engage in organizing work to pressure the political system thus enabling change that reverberates throughout larger geographical regions and systems-level contexts.

Having provided an overview of Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework—an overarching theory of human development—I next provide an overview of the various frameworks that proliferate the youth development field more specifically.

Youth Development

Youth development models¹ provide both a theory and approach for working effectively with youth. There are four distinctive models that I review here—deficit-oriented models, positive youth development, youth civic engagement, and youth organizing. Though these models are distinctive they simultaneously can be viewed as lying along a spectrum. This spectrum approach recognizes that these different frameworks are distinctive and yet may overlap in certain aspects, that is, they bleed into one another. However, particular characteristics can be attributed to each of the different youth models. I utilize youth development research as an umbrella term that encompasses the different theories of youth development as opposed to positive youth development, which refers to a branch within youth development research. Table 1 below provides a summary of the distinctions between the different models that I will review. Before I argue that the Urban Youth Program (UYP) currently operates within a positive youth development framework, I review the youth development literature in order to provide a foundation on which to understand different models that consider what youth need during this critical stage in their life. I examine the spectrum of research and argue that youth activism provides the best framework for researching and uncovering power structures that limit youth opportunities, working towards collective solutions and thus empowering youth to advocate on their own behalves that link individual challenges to community-level, exo-, and macro-level forces.

¹ I use the terms model(s) and framework(s) interchangeably.

Deficit Frameworks

Deficit-oriented frameworks start from the vantage point of labeling youth as “at-risk” of engaging in behaviors that impede their own development and possible life outcomes. Joining gangs, engaging in substance abuse or getting pregnant are examples of risky behaviors that prevention programs often attempt to curtail. Early conceptions of these frameworks largely assigned blame to individual-level decision making and even cultural deficiency (e.g. racialized meanings). For example, high teenage pregnancy rates among Latina women that situates blame on culture utilizes a deficit-oriented framework. Rather than considering the lack of opportunities or sexual education (i.e. macro-level forces) they place blame on an entire culture that is embedded with racialized meanings that maintain the superiority of whiteness.² Deficit-oriented frameworks have historically been used against marginalized populations. Rather than recognize that these parents may be unable to attend because of conflicting work schedules or child-caring responsibilities, parents are blamed for not caring.

Although deficit-oriented frameworks are considered outdated, they often work their way into the fields of public education or public health (Irizarry 2009; Valenzuela 1999). Deficit-oriented frameworks fail to recognize both what youth offer and the systemic issues that youth and their families encounter. Consider, for example, when teachers, school officials, or other parents complain about the lack of parental involvement of Latinx³ or low-income families and implicitly or explicitly blame parents for not caring about their child’s educational achievements rather than considering the structural inequalities that may impact parents’ ability to be involved (Valenzuela, 1999; Irizarry 2009; Ochoa, 2013).

² I draw on Lipsitz’s (2011) definition of whiteness. “Whiteness is this society is not so much a color as a condition” (3). By privileging whiteness—people who have been deemed white—have unjustly historically benefitted both materially and immaterially to the detriment of other racialized groups in the United States.

³ I use the term Latinx instead of Latina/o to recognize the variety of gender identities that people of this group may ascribe to.

Table 1.
Youth Development Frameworks

	Deficit-Oriented Models	Positive Youth Development Research	Youth Civic Engagement	Youth Organizing
General Philosophy	Youth are at-risk of engaging in dangerous behaviors (gangs, teen pregnancy, drug use etc.), providers should work with youth to prevent negative behaviors.	Youth are not just problems (i.e. turn away from deficit-oriented models). Aim is to identify positive assets, requirements, features, goals etc. that youth need in order to develop into healthy adults.	Youth can and should be civically engaged. Youth are encouraged to engage in a democratic political environment through traditional means for example, visits to state capitals, learning about voting rights, talking with elected officials etc.	Recognize, understand, and challenge social injustice (i.e. status quo that normalizes marginalization). Youth conduct power analysis, develop critical consciousness, advocate on their own behalf, and hold power-holders accountable.
Guiding Questions	How can [we] prevent risky youth behaviors?	What do youth need in order to thrive and become productive adults?	How can youth become more involved in the democratic system in preparation for continued civic engagement in adulthood?	How is power differentially maintained in ways that marginalize specific populations and what is needed to challenge the systemic nature of that especially marginalize youth of color?
Key Attributes	Preventative work	Space that provides cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral growth. Adult role models. Educational activities.	Traditional political engagement	Challenge power, status quo, and marginalization
Authors/Models of Research Literature	• Hall, 1904	• Search Institute, 1997 • Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 1998 & 2003 • Connell, Gambone, & Smith, 2000	• Andolina et al., 2002	• Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002 (SJYD*) • Ginwright & James, 2002 • Sullivan et al., 2003 • Ginwright, Noguera, &

		• Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth, Eccles & Gootman, Eds., 2002 • Catalano et al., 2004		Cammarota, Eds., 2006 • Jennings et al., 2006 (CYE**) • Cristens & Dolan, 2011
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*SJYD = Social Justice Youth Development

**CYE = Critical Youth Empowerment

Research demonstrates positioning youth within deficit-oriented frameworks negatively impacts their educational achievement and social identity. Angela Valenzuela's (1999) study of Mexican youth in Houston, Texas critiques school officials and teachers for imposing a "subtractive schooling process." Rather than empowering Mexican youth, the schooling process, itself, disempowers and disrespects youth's backgrounds. Though teachers or school officials primarily view youth as disengaged from their schooling process, youth in fact recognize when teachers do not care, therefore students become disinterested in participating.

Utilizing an ecological approach aids in the analysis of the limitations of deficit-oriented frameworks. First, it makes apparent that deficit oriented models largely assign blame and merely consider an individual's role, mindset rather than consider larger level systems at play. Conversely, utilizing an ecological lens makes one consider how individuals operate within a larger ecological environment. That is the researcher is forced to consider the impact that a macro-U.S. ideology that marginalizes Latinos within a socially racialized hierarchy operate to foreclose resources and opportunities at an exo-, meso-, and micro-level. Therefore, an ecological approach considers a variety of structural factors rather than merely assigning blame at an individual level.

Positive Youth Development

Positive youth development frameworks emerge from a direct critique of deficit-oriented frameworks. Rather than starting from the point of asking what's wrong with youth, positive youth development models consider the assets, skills, environments, and opportunities that youth need to succeed (Search Institute 2007; Epstein 2011; Catalano et al. 2004; Eccles & Goodman 2001). This field also considers basic human needs such as sufficient nutrition, shelter and health (Connell, Gambone & Smith 2000). Positive youth development models attempt to link youth to

their ecological environments, considering the individual-level traits, extended relationships with role models and parents, and the space both physical and emotional that youth should have access to in order to develop into healthy adults. Though these models consider individual level, micro-, and meso-system linkages, they rarely consider macro-level processes for example, issues of illegality or exclusion that minority youth encounter.

Scholars in this field generally identify positive youth development programs as those that provide a way for youth to develop socially, emotionally, cognitively, behaviorally, and morally, though they have been categorized differently amongst various scholars (Eccles & Gootman 2002; Catalano et al. 2004). The Search Institute from Minneapolis, Minnesota, a leader in positive youth development research identifies and describes 40 developmental assets that youth need to become caring and responsible adults (Search Institute, 1997; Roth et al. 1998). Twenty internal assets identified reflect individual social and moral competencies. Examples of internal assets include: motivation to achieve in school, demonstration of integrity, display of honesty, ability to resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations, and optimism about their own future. These assets. These internal assets largely consider and breakdown factors important to youth development at an individual level. The 20 external assets listed consider how youth engage and are engaged by their neighborhood, school, family, peers or other adult role models categorized into four areas—support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. Though these assets provide an important pivot away from deficit-oriented frameworks in identifying assets of healthy youth and their communities, they are also limited in their consideration of macro-level forces that help shape the environment in which youth find themselves in.

Family, community, neighborhood, school and peer supports are especially salient within the positive youth development field. Utilizing an ecological framework, it becomes more apparent that the focus is primarily on the individual and microsystem level. The field of positive youth development primarily calls for neighborhoods, community adults, and family members to be more involved in working towards creating these positive assets for youth so that these opportunities are found in multiple settings of the youth's environment rather than one. In addition to the Search Institute's development assets, Connell, Gambone, and Smith point out that "family is the single most critical source of support, encouragement, moral development, love and sustenance for a young person" (291). Jodie L. Roth and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn (2003) describe positive youth development programs as having a family-like and hopeful atmosphere with formal and informal educational opportunities. As a foundation and primary relationship, it is no surprise that the ideal of healthy family relationships are considered especially important and sought to be replicated throughout a youth's micro-system. However, what might this mean for youth that do not have families or whose families are unlikely to develop a healthy relationship without additional resources? This is not to question the ability of people to change, but rather to indicate that unfortunately some family members are confronted with the precarity of life; they may work long hours, take on multiple jobs, face mental health issues related to trauma they have experienced or continue to experience etc. Unfortunately, it is likely that some families will never provide the type of encouragement, support or love that is suggested.

In comparison to deficit oriented frameworks, positive youth development programs also often identify youth empowerment as central (Search Institute, 1997; Roth et al. 1998; Roth and Brooks-Gunn 2003). Youth engagement in community service, taking on positions of leadership, developing positive self-esteem, a sense of efficacy, meaningful opportunities for involvement

and membership, for example are often identified as aspects of youth empowerment (Search Institute 1997; Roth et al. 1998; Connell, Gambone, and Smith 2000). A critique of deficit-oriented models is embedded in identifying empowerment as important. Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) findings of programs espousing prevention goals, i.e. those that sought to limit teen risk behaviors, is that prevention programs were less likely to create an empowering environment, offered fewer skill building activities, less likely to offer peer mentoring and provided fewer opportunities for youth to expand their horizons. Roth and Brooks-Gunn define an empowering environment as one in which “program staff and activities encourage youth to engage in useful roles, practice self-determination and develop or clarify their goals for the future...activities such as decision-making, leadership development, and community service empower youth” (101). However, these descriptive factors of youth empowerment reflect an individualized perspective of empowerment as opposed to an overall sense of empowerment that consists of a larger group or community. In these conceptualizations of empowerment youth are not explicitly encouraged to understand sites of power or to develop socio-political competencies. Individual empowerment “includes psychosocial aspects, such as a sense of personal and social responsibility; self-esteem; self-determination; sense of self- and political-efficacy; and perceived control” (Susskind 2010, 213). Susskind (2003) however defines empowerment as *“both the increase in the capacity of an individual, group or community to create change as well as the process and outcomes of actual change in the conditions that oppress people, resulting in an enduring redistribution of power and resources”* (italics in original, 231). Unlike positive youth development’s empowerment framework, Susskind, more in tune with youth activist frameworks, argues that empowerment results in change that redistributes power.

The assets, environments, skills, and normative behaviors that positive youth development literature lists may identify what youth need thereby providing a framework for adults and families working with youth, however it does not speak to structural inequalities nor does it articulate youth agency in combating structural inequalities. Ginwright and Cammarota (2002) have eloquently critiqued positive youth development models on two primary counts: (1) “the strategy to promote youth assets runs the risk of dismissing serious social, economic, and political influences in the lives of urban youth. Consequently, we are left with an over-romanticized, problem-free view of youth” (84); and (2) “current formulations of positive youth development are based on universalistic, white middle-class conceptions of youth. This view of youth homogenizes their experiences, simplifies their identities, and conceptualizes them through one dominant cultural frame” (85). Though the model is meant to be inclusive, the Search Institute recognizes that more research is needed to understand how the framework can be more relevant and inclusive to specific marginalized communities including communities of color. Therefore, as Ginwright and Cammarota point out, positive youth development frameworks have not centrally located youth of color within this paradigm.

Youth Civic Engagement

Similar to positive youth development frameworks youth civic engagement models consider how youth can be more engaged in their community, however civic engagement models focus and engage youth in political education and awareness (Sullivan et al. 2003; Lerner et al. 2003). These models focus on more traditional conceptions of civic education such as learning about the political process to encourage future involvement in the electoral system. Lerner et al (2003) encourage youth civic engagement so that youth can become adults that are willing to contribute to their own self-growth, family, community, and to civil society.

However, questions of power and who gets to participate and who does not are left unexamined. For example, undocumented populations who are impacted by political processes cannot vote—a basic and often taken for granted concept in civic engagement education. This is particularly problematic because undocumented populations are in an especially precarious position. U.S. immigration policy dictates their lives although they cannot engage in what civic engagement models often consider to be one of the most basic forms of political engagement. In the U.S. especially it can be a long and disheartening process for immigrants, particularly immigrants from Latin America to legalize their status.

Youth Organizing

Youth organizing models differ from positive youth development models in two essential ways they: (1) consider and analyze systems of power and the multiple levels of marginalization that youth may face including police brutality, gang violence, discrimination, racism, deportation, undocumented status, drug abuse, gendered violence etc.; and (2) empower youth to engage in direct action and political mobilization (Ginwright & James 2002; Ginwright & Cammarota 2002; Sullivan et al. 2003; Jennings et al. 2006; Cristens & Dolan 2011). Building on community organizing, youth organizing models also consider power relationships between youth and adults, the development of alliance networks, and uphold respect for youth culture and perspectives. The emphasis on transformative systemic change recognizes the power that youth hold now rather than looking at youth as simply adults in the making.

Youth organizing models centers the experiences of marginalized youth. These models encourage youth that are facing macro-, exo-, meso-, micro-, and individual level struggles to consider their lived realities and to question the normalization of certain policies, practices or lived realities. This encourages youth to examine the systems and connections between these

systems that limit the kinds of opportunities that youth and communities can access. Because this model centers the experiences of youth, they do not prescribe assets that youth can work from, nor does it assume that youth have access to or brings to the table the same experiences. In this way youth are encouraged to reflect on their own life and critically examine how power is distributed across society and in ways that are particularly relevant to their lived realities. These models therefore aim for youth to develop a critical consciousness (Ginwright and Cammarota 2002). Ginwright and Cammarota (2002) describe critical consciousness as increasing: (1) self-awareness, which includes a critique of stereotypes; (2) social awareness in which youth begin to engage directly with institutions that maintain power and opportunities out of their hands; and (3) global awareness, which allows youth to connect with various struggles across the world. This model centers the challenges that youth face, encourages youth to question the status quo, and to mobilize on their own behalves. Ginwright and Cammarota's inclusion of global awareness also considers how the struggles that youth face here may be similar to other youth's struggles, thus encouraging global solidarity and global citizenship. In addition to conducting a power analysis and critically examining community issues and the systemic nature of the status quo and mobilizing strategies for enacting change, Cristens and Dolans (2002) argue that youth organizing allows youth to "[choose] the issues that are most important to them through collective decision-making process" (529) and youth are the central decision-makers rather than adults; adults support youth. In comparison to other models of youth development, youth are given the reins to orient and drive the initiatives to enact change rather than adults. Though adults provide guidance and support it is not their decision making that overrides youth power.

I have attempted to make clear that youth organizing models center youth, aim to develop critical consciousness within youth, and mobilize youth to engage with powerbrokers to enact

change to improve the lived realities of people who are similarly disadvantaged. Youth organizing frameworks also recognize that important strategies utilized through this process is reflection, research, and collective decision-making (Jennings et. al 2006; Ginwright & Cammarota 2002; Christens & Dolans 2010). Youth reflection is important so that youth have the space to both individually and collectively deeply consider not only their lived realities but also to analyze their own strategies. Reflection can include examining what went well, what could have been improved, and how to continue to tackle the identified issue (i.e. ongoing strategizing). For youth to tackle a problem and identify possible solution they must also engage in research. Research may include reading more about the issue, talking to various individuals impacted by the problem, identifying and conducting a power analysis to identify powerbrokers who can enact change. Additionally, collective decision-making becomes central so that youth are not only learning how to work together, recognizing each other's voices, but in this way they can also be the leaders of change initiatives. Ginwright and Cammarota (2002) Social Justice Youth Development (SJYD) model also indicate that embracing youth identity and youth culture can help to engage youth and positively recognize and validate visual and sonic embodiments (e.g. rap music, baggy clothes) of youth identity--particularly in low-income, under resourced, minority communities—that are often criminalized (Rios 2011).

The community organizing initiatives of the Inland Congregations United for Change (ICUC) located in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties is an example of the kinds of changes that can be brought about by utilizing a youth organizing model. However, Christens and Dolans (2012) analysis of ICUC recognizes that in practice youth organizing practices take long term commitment that builds community relationships, power, and grassroots leadership. The ICUC is a member of People Improving Communities through Organizing (PICO), a national faith based

organizing network. The ICUC began their youth organizing efforts after a 16-year-old girl was gunned down in a drive-by shooting. The girl's peers were especially struck by her murder and began organizing among themselves in order to address the violence they experienced in their communities. With the assistance of a local university, the youth were able to survey and collect 15,300 surveys from 2007-2008. They turned these surveys into research papers that called for violence prevention programs rather than increased policing and more restrictive laws as well as defunding of schools. This was important in the ICUC campaign because a youth council was created, however their ideas were not really taken into consideration by city council members and ultimately the council was disbanded. In this way, adults still dictated the agenda. Though the disbanded council fell short of ICUC goals, this reiterates that constant reflection, centering of youth is vital. They outlined a cycle of youth organizing that was enacted at ICUC which included relationship building, research, power analysis, action/mobilization, reflection, evaluation of successes and failures, and celebration of success. At the community-level this led to program implementation, policy change, and institution building. However, they noted that although these community level outcomes were necessary they did not yet amount to "transformative changes," suggesting that transformative changes are not easily won and take much longer than expected of goals sought by positive youth development research. They point out that organizing is more than reaching "short-term policy objectives" but rather it must also include building up grassroots leadership so that the efforts to battle systemic inequalities are more sustainable.

In summary, youth organizing models differ from other youth development models in several key ways. Youth organizing models do not assign blame nor see youth culture as problematic. Instead youth organizing recognizes the structural inequalities that consider the

micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro- levels systems that may impede youth opportunities. Unlike positive youth development, youth organizing models go beyond the goal of individual empowerment. Rather youth can the skills and knowledge to works towards community empowerment. As mentioned earlier, Susskind's (2003) definition of empowerment acknowledges that empowerment leads to "*an enduring redistribution of power and resources*" (231). Additionally, youth organizing models recognize that youth may face various challenges based on their positionality and therefore instead of identifying a general list of assets that may or may not be present in youth's lives, youth organizing models center youth's collective lived realities that may reveal or complicate assets not identified or transform 'deficits' into assets. Additionally, because youth organizing models center youth, they are more apt to recognize that undocumented youth may not be able to engage in traditional forms of civic engagement (e.g. voting) in the future. Thus, community organizations utilizing youth organizing approaches may consider alternative forms of mobilization and question the various systems (e.g. ideologies, laws, etc.) that limit undocumented youth political, economic, and social power.

Although nonprofits are not the only places in which youth organizing can occur, nonprofits working with youth can provide a space for this to occur. I next highlight the increasing social role that nonprofits have taken since President Johnson's War on Poverty, and I examine the challenges, particularly the financial constraints that they encounter. I focus on this in order to highlight the challenges that may hinder or prevent nonprofits from engaging in activist oriented work.

Community Based Organizations

Community-based organization operate on a micro-level often creating and reinforcing a sense of community among participants and those that live in the community but may not

directly participate. Community-based organizations describe organizations that (1) serve a particular geographic area; (2) increase attention to the needs of marginalized residents of that locale; and (3) community members significantly participate in daily activities (Marwell 2004). Though CBOs often fall under the umbrella of non-profits—assuming they maintain a tax-exempt status—not all nonprofits are CBOs. Reflecting issues in the non-profit sector at large, this literature review examines the role and challenges of CBOs in the context of my thesis topic and research questions. I consider CBOs roles in advocacy and financially related challenges.

The increasing rise in the nonprofit sector occurred following President Johnson’s War on Poverty initiatives which began to funnel money to a third sector of organizations and shifted the responsibility of providing direct services away from the federal government (Marwell, 2004). Privatization and devolution in the 1970s and 1980s further expanded the need for nonprofit organizations to provide services to individuals, families, and communities in need (Levine, 2004; Garrow & Hasenfeld, 2014). Today, neoliberalism has increasingly impacted nonprofits to mirror and accept neoliberal values including individualism, market-oriented solutions amidst the decreasing power of government (Garrow & Hasenfeld 2014). Elizabeth A. Mulroy’s (2004) research indicates that the human services sector is increasingly privatized, i.e. services to populations are increasingly provided directly by private for-profit and non-profit entities that apply for government contracts. These macro-level processes provide a clearer picture of the expanded growth, demands from community, and pressures from various funding entities that shape the nonprofit industry.

Advocacy

Although nonprofits can organize their members, encourage and lead advocacy efforts to benefit their members they do not always do so. Elizabeth A. Mulroy (2004) argues that non-

profits not only should be mobilizing people, but they have a duty to do so for their own survival because these organizations increasingly depend on federal, state, and foundation grants which operate within a political paradigm. If these organizations do not advocate in support or against issues that directly affect them both in terms of policy and funding streams, they run the risk of not being heard while these political decisions are made. However, it is imperative to keep in mind that non-profits do not always do so because they lack the legal expertise or confidence to know where they can draw the line. Kelly Leroux and Holly T. Goerdel's (2009) study reveals that "a lack of relevant staff expertise, combined with concerns about violating laws and fears of losing public funds, often keeps nonprofits out of the political arena altogether" (515). Their survey data, based on a sampling of 119 nonprofits in Michigan, reveals that the following factors significantly increased advocacy efforts: (1) receiving government funding; (2) having a board with registered lobbyists; (3) frequent interactions with funders that provide information about the policy environment; or (4) organizations experienced in external collaborative effort. Their findings indicate a certain level of expertise required for organizations to engage in advocacy efforts.

Additionally, the type of underlying organizational logic has bearing on non-profits decision to advocate (Garrow & Hasenfeld 2014). Based on surveys of 641 human-services nonprofits in Los Angeles County, Garrow & Hasenfeld (2014) research indicates that 44% of the organizations sampled report that they engage in advocacy. Organizations that primarily work from a deficit-oriented framework were the least likely to engage in advocacy. Organizations that viewed clients as victims of structural inequalities were more likely to engage in advocacy efforts.

The relationships that non-profits and funders maintain is increasingly important. As Leroux and Goerdel's (2009) research reveals funders are not only able to provide nonprofits with information about the policy environment, but doing so increases a non-profits probability of engaging in advocacy. Jeremy R. Levine's (2004) research of CBOs in Boston, argues that "the existing literature rarely considers CBOs' relationships with private funders as 'political,' but like government bureaucrats, private funders are critical players in contemporary urban governance" (10). Levine's research reveals that CBOs targeting of private funders for political action lead to significant increases in monies. What can be concluded is that CBOs relationships with foundations are not only important, but that they are also political and may themselves require political interventions. As foundations increasingly seek to shape policy in their area of giving, the political nature of the relationship between CBOs and foundations is likely to expand. However, these macro- shifts in funding—away from the government—have brought about new challenges as nonprofits increasingly rely on privatized foundation giving.

Spread Too Thin

Nonprofits are often constantly concerned with financial uncertainty, which can be due to a confluence of factors including economic downturns, decreased federal funding, private foundation interests and expectations. Increased financial uncertainty greatly contributes to a much more fragile environment for non-profits. To deal with financial uncertainty, nonprofits take on adaptive tactics—adding new programs, reducing staff, or discontinuing current programs (Mosley et al. 2012). These financial constraints not only impact the organization at large but also suggests the loss of programs, mentors, and support systems for populations that may already be living in an exceptionally precarious state.

The UCLA Center for Civil Society (CCS) has produced several reports that shed light as to the increasing precariousness that nonprofits must contend with. Following the most recent national economic downturn CCS concluded that the “Los Angeles human services nonprofit sectors is stressed and stretched...since the recession began, the sector has seen a dramatic increase in hiring and salary freezes, furlough programs, lay-offs, and increased reliance on volunteers. In small organizations, the loss of just one person, who often does multiple duties, can be crippling” (Hesenfeld et al. 2012, vi, vii). This report points out the impact of decreased funding on employment opportunities in the Los Angeles nonprofit sector. I would add that these decisions are likely to have rippling effects that are likely to impact staff morale, organizational agency and empowerment, and clients and the surrounding service community as less people are available to do the work. Additionally, increasing reliance on volunteers suggest that there may be less consistency and less expertise for those that have sought to fill the void left behind by paid staff. Two years later, CCS also reported that individual giving in Los Angeles continued to be less than what it was before the recession occurred. However, these changes suggest not just the continued impact of the economic recession but that “individual giving patterns reflect growing inequality...many of the wealthy appear to be making more and giving less” (Ong et al. 2014, 4). If this pattern continues nonprofits will increasingly face greater financial constraints representing new financially related challenges. CCS 2013 report focuses on human services organizations located in impoverished census tracts in Los Angeles. The findings conclude that these nonprofits are more reliant on private donations including support from foundations and they receive significantly less government funding than similar organizations located in better off neighborhoods. This report indicates a geographic disparity of government giving for those most in need. Additionally, the overreliance on funders further strains nonprofits. Many of the

nonprofits interviewed indicated that funders “preoccupation with innovation promotes mission drift and undermines the work at hand” (Hesenfeld et al. 2013, 23). Taken together these reports demonstrate that nonprofits in Los Angeles are in serious trouble because of the financial constraints that they face. Overall there is less government money for nonprofits located in the neediest areas, less individual giving, increased reliance on private foundation which undermines the intended work of these nonprofits. The CCS provides a regional portrait of financially related challenges that nonprofits face in the Los Angeles areas.

Increasing foundation reliance and expectations also appear to not only be a regional issue, but a national one as well. INCITE!’s (2007) *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* presents various cases and argument of the ways in which foundations are increasingly dictating the work of non-profits. They argue that this imposes a corporatist logic onto nonprofits that must attempt to prove their success. Therefore, the work of nonprofits trapped within this system are unable to engage in radically transformative work. They argue that in this way the primary focus of foundations has been on containing the problems of poverty, class inequalities, racism, patriarchy etc. rather than getting at the root of these issues. Given the types of challenges that increasing foundation reliance and limited funding places on non-profits, it can be difficult for organization to attempt to tackle more controversial neighborhood issues such as gentrification.

Gentrification

“Gentrification typically refers to the influx of economic capital into previously poor or working class neighborhoods that is driven by commercial investors and new, affluent residents. The influx of capital, new residents and businesses drives and reflects a broader series of changes in the physical, political, social and cultural terrain of the neighborhood, resulting in longtime residents’ displacement.”

-Anthony Orurn and Zachary Neal, in *The Gentrification Debates*, 2010, xvii

Gentrification is a complex process that can transform entire neighborhoods from working-class or low-income communities into neighborhoods that cater to and meet the needs of upper-class residents. Rather than creating more opportunities for communities in need, through displacement gentrification is both about erasure (i.e. displacement) and the maintenance of racialized and classed boundaries. Urbanists Orun and Neal's (2010) quote above underscores that gentrification both reflects and facilitates destabilization of entire microsystems. As lower income families find themselves pushed out and priced out of their neighborhoods their political and social power also seemingly diminishes in comparison to that of higher income neighbors and developers moving in. In this section, I provide an overview of gentrification research. I then highlight research that considers how nonprofits are both impacted and have organized to combat gentrification. Finally, I consider current sites of gentrification in Los Angeles and argue that gentrification on the Westside is overlooked.

Defining and Identifying Gentrification

When Ruth Glass, a sociologist, first coined the term gentrification in 1964 she was principally concerned with urban changes occurring in which working class communities were transforming to middle-class and upper-middle class communities in London. Rather than changing the plight of working class communities, these changes seemingly maintained class boundaries. She wrote, "new minority groups have appeared. But none of this movement is matched by an increase in genuine social mobility. The old class alignments are being maintained—or copied" (as cited in Brown-Saracino 2010 21). Central to Glass' definition is the displacement of the original working class residents so that the character of the community is transformed. Displacement can take a variety of forms "direct and indirect, economic, and exclusionary—and may result from either investment or disinvestment" (Zuk et al. 2015, 27).

Through displacement, gentrification can threaten and transform supportive environments and relationships for low-income communities.

Considering youth specifically, these changes often occur without youth input even though it directly impacts their lives. Through displacement, youth may be forced to attend new schools, move to similar or more disadvantaged neighborhoods that may expose them to more violence, may place them in poorer housing conditions. These changes may also move them away from family, neighbors, and community services that may provide supportive networks during youth development. If parents are concerned with being served eviction notices, youth may also experience this stressor. Formoso, Weber, and Atkins (2010) analysis of scholarly literature pertaining to child development, neighborhoods, and gentrification argues that resulting positive or negative consequences of gentrification are likely to be dependent on whether affluent newcomers are willing to give of their time and resources (financial, political, etc.) to advocate or connect with low-income families. However, as a literature review their study is unable to provide information as to how or when gentrification may lead to beneficial outcomes. This article largely leaves unexamined the ways in which low-income residents are marginalized already. For example, evidence has recognized that police are often unwilling to respond to the needs of low-income members or when they do over-criminalize youth (Rios 2011). However, because gentrification changes the class dynamics in a neighborhood, police are often much more responsive to the needs of middle-class or wealthy residents (Martin, 2008). Gentrification related policies might also exacerbate tensions between new and long-time residents. Leslie Martin's (2008) study of three gentrifying neighborhoods in Atlanta, GA indicates that there are clear tensions between long-term residents and newcomers and a mismatch in how middle-class newcomers view youth presence, drug use, and leisure time.

Geographer Geoffrey DeVerteuil's (2011) comparative study of nonprofits experience with gentrification related displacement in Los Angeles and London reveals that nonprofits in Los Angeles experience more displacement pressure than in London. He suggests that this is because of Los Angeles organizations inexperience with gentrification, the greater extent of homelessness in Los Angeles thereby facilitating NIMBYism, less government support of nonprofits facing gentrifying forces and racism in the United States. His findings indicate that of 46 non-profits interviewed, 85% experienced displacement pressure, 61% experienced entrapment or the inability to grow or move because of gentrification, 26% decided to leave (voluntary mobility), 20% experienced displacement, and only 4% decided to 'stay put' in their locale—voluntary immobility. Although the study results indicate that 26% of the organizations decided to voluntary stay put, DeVerteuil clarifies that based on the study results there is no way of knowing whether mobility was voluntary or in fact involuntary. The study suggests that in gentrifying neighborhoods, non-profits experience the pressure of gentrification more than they experience actual displacement. However, in addition to financial insecurity that nonprofits increasingly face, displacement pressure puts more pressure on non-profits who may have to contend with an inability to afford their physical space, shrinking the client population thereby leading to the shrinking of services, or creating community opposition to the non-profit because of who it serves. Gentrification and related displacement pressures therefore have serious consequences for local community micro-systems. This may increase the precariousness that youth and their families must continue to contend and navigate. Cahill (2007) argues, "gentrification is experienced as a loss of self, community and culture" (219). Gentrification is about who maintains economic, cultural, political, and social power, all of which produce material and immaterial consequences.

Though researchers have contested and questioned the usefulness and negative consequences of gentrification (Vigdor 2002; Brown-Saracino 2010), I maintain that gentrification connects neighborhood-level change to macro-processes linking the changes in the built environment more directly to continued divisions within society be it class, race, citizenship status, or wealth. Rather than merely accepting (re)development efforts as positive it provides an analytic to reveal the negative implications of neighborhood change.

Though it can be argued that neighborhoods are expected to change, gentrification implies both an acceleration to that change and a power imbalance in which these powerful actors appear to have more say-so over the redevelopment efforts (Zuk et al. 2015). Zuk et al. (2015) found that neighborhoods generally change slowly often taking decades. The wielding of power is a significant feature of gentrification and points to the ways in which wealth and power are accrued through property in a settler colonialist state⁴. Sarah Kennan, in the legal field, has recognized that property is the right to exclude and thereby provides a social power, which have “significant material effects” (Kennan 70). In many respects, gentrification is about property and who inhabits not only property but space. In the U.S., property rights have historically privileged whiteness, so that as a group people who have been deemed white have benefited from racial exclusion (Lipsitz 2011). Homeownership which is central in wealth creation in the United States have maintained not only class boundaries but racial ones (e.g. redlining, racial covenants, housing discrimination, sub-prime lending) (Lipsitz 2011). Analyzing urban planner Chester Hartman’s research on gentrification in San Francisco, oral historian Nancy Raquel Mirabal states

⁴ Settler colonialism refers to the process in which a colonizer, upon encountering foreign land, settles on it (as opposed to ruling from afar), calls the land their own, and erases native population who hold previous claims to the land (Wolfe 2006; Veracini 2010; Byrd 2011).

“Hartman explains how urban renewal and the politics of space are connected to the preservation of whiteness. When it comes to gentrification, whiteness holds currency. For it to be successful, whiteness has to be embedded within a language of space that is rarely articulated as part of a larger revitalization strategy. This is also an acknowledgement, unspoken or otherwise, that the displacement of populations of color will eventually lead to the redefinition of communities and neighborhoods on the basis of whiteness” (17).

These macro level ideologies about property, whiteness, and class therefore facilitates gentrifying processes. Because these macro level changes are often supported by power-brokers including politicians, urban planners, developers, and landlords amongst others, it can seem especially daunting to combat gentrification on a local or regional level. Even in this environment, anti-gentrification efforts emerge seeking to empower communities and youth

Youth Programs Taking on Gentrification

Anti-gentrification work has been primarily conducted either by community development corporations (CDCs), non-profits who focus on building affordable housing, tenant rights organizations, or other organizations that have emerged to specifically do anti-gentrification work. One CBO involved in Lifting New Voices (LVN), a five-year project geared towards increasing youth involvement in community change in low-income communities, focused its efforts on addressing gentrification (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster 2004). As part of their work, they conducted a treasure hunt to gather information on new housing developments, reveal disparities in schools, and analyze racial and class inequalities. The knowledge that they produced along with five other CBOS located throughout the country were used as tools for working towards change in their communities. This reflects a youth organizing model to combat gentrification. Rather than just learning about a problem or gaining new skills their work was to create change.

YouthPower, a youth focused community-service program of a Community Development Corporation (CDC) in Holyoke, Massachusetts, examined the ways in which youth participated in a community master plan (Breitbart & Kepes 2007). Though youth's particular skills such as being open, listening to, and exploring each other's ideas, adults often underestimated or undermined youth input. In a youth organized conference, more than 100 youth developed a Youth Vision Map. Adults supporting the work of the youth also assisted in guiding, mentoring, and supporting the work of the youth. The adults involved in the program sought not to undermine the youth's work and when confronted shut down adult condescension. The creation of a master plan suggests a proactive approach to envisioning an alternative neighborhood plan that is youth centered.

Through a project entitled "Makes Me Mad" young women of color in New York City researched gentrification in their neighborhoods. Through this project, they analyzed cultural and actual displacement, stereotypes imposed on them, disinvestment, and white privilege. Ultimately, they advocated for community involvement, including their own in neighborhood development foregrounded young women of color experiences.

Los Angeles Gentrification

Gentrification within the greater Los Angeles area appears to be increasing on a regional scale. Boyle Heights, Chinatown, Inglewood, Downtown, Highland Park, and Venice are places that are in the process of increasing pressures and tensions (Beach 2007; Deener 2007; Lin 2008; Reese, Deverteuil, and Thach 2010; Ong, Pech, and Ray 2014; Lopez 2015; Holland 2015; Aron 2016; Carroll 2016; Chang 2016; Carroll 2016, April 19; Carroll 2016, Nov. 4; Medina 2016; Mejia 2016, March 3; Mejia 2016, Nov. 2; Romero 2016; Smith D. 2016, Oct 9). The various debates and anti-gentrification actions in Los Angeles have highlighted the role of galleries,

artists, hipsters, businesses, stadium complexes, major developers, Metro-rail development, landlords, police and gang injunctions. Local community organization have not only brought increased attention to gentrification, many have pointed out the economic and racial inequalities furthered by gentrification. Although gentrification is a regional issues it is also primarily invisible on the Westside of Los Angeles.

These battles emerge amongst a backdrop of increasing income inequality and the lack of affordable housing. Median household incomes in Southern California have dropped by 8% since 2000; median rents and home prices have increased by 28% and 40% respectively (Southern California Association of Governments [SCAG] 2016). In southern California, the median home price is \$507,886, making it more expensive than in California overall where the median home price is \$460,800 (SCAG 2016). California home prices are 2.5 times the national average (SCAG 2016). Additionally, African Americans and Latinos in Los Angeles suffered some of the highest foreclosure rates during the recent housing crisis (De La Cruz-Viesca et al. 2016). Mexican households in Los Angeles have 1 percent of the wealth of white households; Mexican have a median net worth of only \$3,500 while white households have median net worth of \$355,000 (De La Cruz-Viesca et al. 2016). These numbers demonstrate the ways in which inequality, especially those related to homeownership, is both raced and classed in Los Angeles.

Boyle Heights and North East Los Angeles are two areas with a major Latino presence that has developed resistance to gentrification pressures. Groups such as Union de Vecinos, Defend Boyle Heights (DBH), and Boyle Heights Against Artwashing and Displacement (BHAAD) are all anti-gentrification groups that have highlighted the increases in rents, the unaffordability of proposed “affordable housing” projects, Metro-rail plans that fail to speak to the needs of low-income residents, displacement of small businesses, and the role of galleries

moving into the Boyle Heights area. The North East Los Angeles Alliance (NELAA) is another community group that has helped tenants hold a rent strike against landlords threatening evictions in the Highland Park Area (NELAA 2016; Smith, D. 2016, Oct. 9). John Urquiza, an organizer of NELAA, who was on a panel at Occidental College as a part of the *Arts + Gentrification: Community Expression & Urban Transformation* conference maintains that gentrification is directly linked to the increasing homelessness witnessed in the Arroyo Seco area of northeast Los Angeles (2016, Nov. 19). These groups demonstrate neighborhood activism and organizing against gentrification. These communities point out that the benefits that developers, urban planners, Metro, or other profiteers of these neighborhood changes, are over-emphasized. Though these changes sound good, these groups amongst others have been critical of the ways in which this does little to alleviate the challenges that low-income, especially immigrant Latino communities face.

The Youth Justice Coalition (2013), a local Los Angeles based non-profit, has published an on-line report that links gang injunctions to gentrification in Echo Park, highlighting the ways in which gang injunctions limit both criminal and non-criminal behavior of individuals who are labeled as gang members by local police. Other communities in Oakland and the Mission District in San Francisco, Santa Ana, and Hawaiian Gardens have also been critical of the ways in which gang injunctions aid and accelerate the displacement of low-income communities. This link points to the ways in which targeting is directed predominantly towards men of color revealing the racialization of both gang injunctions and gentrification. There are currently 46 active gang injunctions throughout the city of Los Angeles involving 72 different gangs (LAPD, 2014) and the LAPD has promoted gang injunctions to other cities and police departments across the county claiming that this is an effective tool towards combating gangs. However, the Youth

Justice Coalition and other communities argue that these tools are also dragnets for boys and men of color who may not actually be gang members.

Through a comparison of demographic data using the 2009-2013 American Community Survey estimates, *GOVERNING*, a news platform, has attempted to assess gentrification across 50 of the most populated cities in the U.S, including Los Angeles. They have mapped and color-coded census tracts into three categories—gentrified, not gentrified, or not eligible to gentrify. Based on their mapping, most of the Westside⁵ is ineligible to gentrify. Based on their methodology, tracts are ineligible to gentrify if the tracts median household income and median home value are not in the bottom 40th percentile of all tracts within the metropolitan area or if the tract has less than 500 residents. As I will demonstrate, smaller communities such as Empire Street are missed through this analysis.

Because the Westside is generally thought of as being white and affluent, smaller communities such as that of Empire Street and the families that FLC serves specifically are erased. You would be hard pressed to hear someone think of the need and poverty of Empire Street when thinking of the Westside. Additionally, the census tract data measured here eclipses the gentrification and pockets of poverty that still exist in the Westside. Several recent studies from UCLA have also noted that gentrification is primarily occurring in Downtown Los Angeles and that the building up of the Metro particularly threatens communities where transit oriented development is planned (Cranor et al. 2015). While these studies are important in understanding how and where gentrification is and will be emerging, gentrification on the Westside is often overlooked.

Under California law, the Ellis Act allows landlords of rent-controlled apartments to demolish rental units or convert rentals into condominiums as a way to exit the rental market.

⁵ *GOVERNING's* gentrification map excludes Santa Monica area census tracts.

Landlords must serve each of their tenants with a 120-day notice terminating their tenancy, provide them with information of their rights including a Notice of Interest in Renewing Tenancy Form. Within 15 days of notifying renters, landlords are expected to pay relocation assistance costs up to \$19,700 to tenants (City of Los Angeles, 2016). As is evident, tenants under rent-controlled units have several legal protections. However, news reports as well as organizations such as the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, which documents anti-eviction resistance in the Bay Area, link the ways in which Ellis Act evictions often serve as indicators of ensuing gentrification. This is because landlords often utilize the Ellis Act to evict renters by claiming that they are converting the rental units and then failing to do so or demolition means that they have decided to sell the rent-controlled unit to a major developer who can turn rent-controlled apartments into luxury apartments, condominiums or multi-million dollar homes.

Recent reports of Ellis Act applications in Los Angeles indicate that rent-controlled apartments have increasingly been removed since the recession (Poston & Khouri 2016). The *Los Angeles Times* reported that in 2015 1,075 rent-controlled apartments were taken off the market (Poston & Khouri 2016). Further investigation indicates that since 2007, Sawtelle and Beverly Grove, two Westside communities, had the most Ellis Act evictions. Other news sources have indicated that West LA, Century City, Venice, and West Hollywood have experienced increased Ellis Act applications (Wattenhofer 2016). While Ellis Act applications do not necessarily demonstrate that gentrification is occurring, they do signify that this is a likely possibility.

III. METHODOLOGY

I utilize a case study method (Hammersley & Gomm 2000; Flyvbjerg 2006; Yin 2009) in order to better understand the specific context of the Empire Street neighborhood, the UYP youth,

and the Family Leadership Center (FLC). With any research, issues of ethics and confidentiality must be considered. In order to gain trust and protect research participants at an organizational and individual level, I have utilized pseudonyms for Empire Street, the Family Leadership Center, and youth participants. My aim through this project is to consider which youth model is best equipped to challenge gentrification. Because I am concerned with maintaining confidentiality of the site and its participants, I provide only a general portrait of FLC and its programs.

Founded in the 1970s, FLC provides low-income communities with educational based resources and offers a variety of programs that focus on the various development stages of an individual, including early childhood, pre-teen, teen (youth), parent involvement, and senior citizen. This study focuses on its teen program, though I use the term youth for two reasons: (1) in order to reflect the fact that its teen program include high school seniors that may be 18 years of age, and (2) interviews revealed that youth who have gone on to college at times return to the center seeking support from staff members that run the program and in this way maybe peripherally involved with the program. Therefore, involvement in the program was not so strictly defined by age. According to the organization's 2013 990-tax form, FLC secured just under \$1 million in grants or private donations and employed over 50 individuals demonstrating a neighborhood institutionalization, growth in its youth participants, and steadfastness in program offerings and youth development.

In describing Robert E. Stake's perspective of the value of a case study, Roger Gomm and Martyn Hammersley (2000) wrote, "what is required of case study researchers is not that they provide generalizations but rather that they describe the case they have studied properly: in a way that captures its unique features" (7). Part of the uniqueness of FLC, is the fact that it is

located on the Westside of Los Angeles. Its location makes it an anomaly on the Westside, though it fits in with most images of Latino barrio communities. While the Westside generally elicits ideas of wealth, celebrity, and whiteness, according to interviews with staff and current participants, Empire Street is primarily low-income, Latino families, many of which work as gardeners, housecleaners, or housecleaners for the wealthy. Within generalized notions of the Westside, this Latino barrio is invisible and relatively unknown. I was interested in understanding how the context and proximity to wealth, highly educated, and white individuals might shape the ways in which youth interpreted their circumstances. Therefore, the goal was to develop an in-depth understanding that is not possible simply through surveys, one-on-one interviews, or multivariate analysis; instead, I employ various data collections and analysis.

I utilized multiple methods that included gathering and analyzing: (1) census data, (2) organizational documents including an in-depth analysis of 98 youth reflections, (3) participant observations in various settings including Friday youth leadership meetings, afterschool tutoring, and Tuesday core leadership meetings, (4) in-depth interviews with key staff, current youth participants, and alumni UYP participants. I conducted research at FLC from June 2015-August 2016. Table 2 provides an overview of the methods that I utilize.

Table 2.

Data Collection Methods

Source	Methods
(1) <u>Census Data</u> a. 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates	-Comparison of FLC census tract with three other select Westside communities.
(2) <u>Organizational Documents</u> a. Youth Reflections (2001-2011) b. Youth Rosters (2011-2014) c. Parent & Youth Program Survey Results d. UYP meeting notes e. UYP national conference planning documents	-In-depth analysis of: a. Youth reflections (n=98) b. Youth rosters -Review of organizational documents (c) through (h)

f. FLC website information g. FLC organizational manual h. FLC & UYP yearbook and photo album	
<u>(3) Youth related meetings</u> a. Weekly Friday youth meetings (Jan 2016-June 2016) b. Monthly Parent Meetings c. STEM sessions for youth d. Tuesday Core Youth Meeting	-Informal Interviews -Observations -Field notes
<u>(4) Interviews</u> a. Staff interviews (n=5) b. Current Participants (n=12) c. Past Participants (n=4)	-In-depth, one-on-one interviews, 30-90 minutes in duration, tape recorded, and transcribed

I analyze 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates of the census tract where FLC is located and compared it with three other Westside communities—Culver City, Santa Monica, and Marina Del Rey. I conducted a purposeful selection of three Westside communities to provide a ‘snapshot’ of the range in wealth and diversity on the Westside. This was done in order to better understand the Empire Street neighborhood in relation to the Westside.

I then began trying to understand the organization by reviewing various organizational documents. This includes an in-depth analysis of 98 youth reflections that the center had collected from the youth documenting their experience with various programs offered at FLC. These youth reflections had been written by youth during the years of 2001 and 2011. While most of these documents were undated, the earliest dated documents appeared to be from 2001, while the most recent was from 2011. These youth reflections document the positive experiences that youth had with the center and highlight several salient themes, not only of the youth experiences with the center, but in relationship to their lived experiences overall. They reflect on new skills that they gained or ways that they improved, in areas such as communication,

leadership, presentation, and confidence. I began primarily by coding each of these documents based on the program or experience that the youth focused on. I also guessed at a youth's sex based on their name so that I could analyze how their gender might affect their experience. These youth reflections ranged from one paragraph to three pages. Some were handwritten with simple sentence structure others were more elaborate and better written. My best estimate is that some of these reflections were written by youth age 13.⁶ Others appeared to have been a draft of a personal statement for college applications.

In addition to this, I analyzed youth rosters collected from the past four years of cohorts (2011-2014) in order to develop a demographic profile of the youth and their families involved. These rosters included de-identified demographic information, which I analyzed in order to develop a quantitative profile of the youth and their families. Through these rosters I was able to capture: (1) the number of youth involved each year (i.e. size of the program); (2) the number and percentage of families that met national poverty guidelines; (3) self-reported median income of youth families; (4) the number and percentage of youth who would likely be the first in their family to be college bound; (5) the highest level of formal education that the youth's parents completed; (6) the primary language spoken at home; and (7) the parental structure of these families (i.e. single or two-parent household). This quantitative analysis provides insight into the economic status of the youths and their families (see Table 8).

I also examined additional organizational documents that were provided to me. These additional documents include survey and evaluation results that had been collected from both parents and youth participants, youth meeting notes, previous youth conference documents, website information, organizational manual, a yearbook, and photo album that details the work

⁶ Age 13 is the youngest age that the Family Leadership Center allows youth to volunteer to be summer camp counselors. A couple of the essays referenced that it was their first-year volunteering as a camp counselor, signaling that this was the youngest of ages represented in the youths' reflections.

of the site and the youth program over the past decade and a half. These documents provided a rich trove of insight on the growth, satisfaction, and inner workings of the Urban Youth Program (UYP).

The third phase of data collection included attending and observing various meetings related to the youth program. These observations were conducted from January 2016 to August 2016. I began by primarily attending weekly Friday youth leadership meetings. During these meetings the program sought to develop the leadership skills of all of the youth. Youth discussed various themes or engaged in collective activities. All youth were expected to attend these meetings, however, only half of the youth attended these sessions each week.⁷ The youth program coordinator often planned these Friday meetings with a core team of youth leaders that met weekly on Tuesdays. These core youth were often the most involved and considered leaders of the program by both staff and other students. I attended one of these core youth meetings in order to better understand how these functioned. I also attended drop-in tutoring that was held for the youth in the afternoon from Monday to Thursday. As part of their involvement with the youth program, they were required to attend at least two of these sessions per week. I also attended three monthly parent meetings as well as three STEM sessions for youth. These STEM sessions were held in partnership with a local university and provided youth who attended these weekly sessions with a 6-week course that provided youth with lessons on topics related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics using a hands-on approach. Participation in STEM was optional.

The fourth and final phase of data collection consisted of conducting participant observations and in-depth interviews. In January of 2016, I began attending weekly Friday youth

⁷ Attendance varied but seemed in part due to other extra-curricular activities, illness, lack of interest, or tiredness from the academic week.

meetings in order to understand the topics covered. During or after the meetings I began to write down jottings and type up field notes of my experiences attending these meetings. I also attended at least three monthly parent meetings, one STEM session, and one Tuesday youth leadership-planning meeting. Once I began conducting in-depth one-on-one interviews with youth, I also had the opportunity to see the tutoring environments.

I focused on interviewing three different sets of key stakeholders involved with the youth program: staff, current participants, and past participants. In speaking with staff, I hoped to understand the current operations of the organization as well as some of the larger challenges of the community. In speaking with current participants, I hoped to fill in the demographic profiles and youth reflections that I had previously analyzed. Because most of the youth reflections were positive, I hoped that by interviewing youth I would be able to learn of critiques they had of the program. In comparison, through interviews with past participants I hoped to speak with individuals who had graduated from the UYP program at least 5 years earlier. In this way, I hoped to understand the ways in which past participants understood and appreciated the influence of the youth program. Interviews with staff and current participants were conducted on-site in an office setting. Interviews with past participants were either held at FLC or at a setting of their choice. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded. I conducted interviews with 5 staff members, 12 current youth participants, and 4 past participants. Interviews lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to about 90 minutes.

Several of the staff members had also either grown up on Empire Street or attended FLC programs at one point or another. In these interviews, I asked staff not only to share about the program and organization in terms of how it currently operated but also provide a picture of their experiences growing up in the community and the growth of FLC. Because of the small numbers

of staff involved, I do not provide more detailed information in order to protect their anonymity and at times I refer to their experiences as past participants in order to protect their confidentiality.

Table 3 below provides an overview of the interviews I conducted with 12 current participants. I interviewed 6 female participants and 6 male participants. All participants will be referred to with pseudonyms in order to protect their identity. One of the participants included a youth who was attending a local community college and was still connected with the center. I recruited participants who were highly involved and considered leaders as well as those participants who are less involved.

Table 3.

Profiles of One-on-one Interviews with Current Youth Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Youth Age	Lives on Empire St. or in Projects	Current Educational Level	High School Year
Fernando	M	21	Yes	College	1st year in College
Margarita	F	17	No	High School	12th
Araceli	F	17	No	High School	12th
Santiago	M	18	Yes	High School	12th
Teresa	F	16	Yes	High School	11th
Silvia	F	16	No	High School	10th
David	M	15	No	High School	10th
Veronica	F	15	Yes	High School	9th
Miguel	M	14	Yes	High School	9th
Javier	M	14	Yes	Middle School	8th
Yolanda	F	14	No	Middle School	8th
Arturo	M	13	Yes	Middle School	8th

The goal of interviewing past participants was to understand how the program had changed over time and to begin to understand the influence that the center and its programs had on past participants years later. I recruited participants who had completed the youth program at least 5 years earlier. To protect the privacy of individuals, FLC first reached out to alumni of

UYP. If these individuals indicated that they were interested in participating, I followed up with them. Most of the participants were in their late 20s or in their 30s.

IV. RESEARCH SITE: COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Empire Street

“I grew up in this community a lot of people who grow up here they expect so little of themselves. They don’t see themselves going to college, minimum wage jobs or like becoming gardeners um and I think violence and drugs it keeps them there because if there’s violence in our community you feel like um you can never get out of here because um you know you lived through that”

-Teresa, Current Youth Participant

Giving voice to the loss of a community member, “R.I.P. Felon” is spray painted in red on the concrete sidewalk on Empire Street (see Image 1). Gang taggings in red spray paint naming the local city gang fills in space on the pavement, on the trunks of trees, and on the modest food trucks that fill the street. Los Angeles gang injunctions have been implemented in this area in an attempt to limit gang activity.⁸ In comparison to the 80s and 90s, past participants and staff members claim that gang activity in the area has decreased, though there remains a

⁸ Gang injunctions label particular individuals as gang members thereby limiting their civil rights including, but not limited to their ability to associate with other ‘named gang members,’ and impose curfews and clothing restrictions. Although the California Supreme Court has indicated that gang injunctions are lawful and do not violate civil rights, various civil rights organizations such as the ACLU remain critical for various reasons including: (1) the low-level criteria that police need to add gang members to the CalGang Database, California statewide database of “gang members”—for someone to be added to the database they only have to have two of 10 qualifying criteria (National League of Cities) some of which are associating with “known” gang members, tattoos that indicate gang membership, and having been photographed with known gang members (Muniz and McGill, 2012); (2) low-income racial minorities are more likely to be targeted and labeled as gang members. According to a report by the Youth Justice Coalition (YJC) a Los Angeles based non-profit analyzed data from the CalGang Database and found that at least 86% of those identified as gang members are racial minorities; (3) a link between gang injunctions and gentrification. A report published on-line by the YJC (2013) indicates that the gang injunctions in Echo Park, for example, were established at a time when the crime rate was in fact decreasing and new developments were starting to attract new businesses. Other community groups in Oakland, Mission District in San Francisco, Santa Ana, and Hawaiian Gardens have also been critical of this link.

definite gang presence. These food trucks are relatively modest, large white trucks whose open backdoors reveal fresh fruits and vegetables along with snacks that children eat after school or that families can use for their daily dinner without having to trek to the local Latino grocery store. A commercial drop located within a mile's distance caters to Latina/o families and includes a health clinic, WIC office, and Latino-owned grocery store. Modest apartment buildings, mostly two-stories high line Empire Street and are filled with multigenerational Latino families. At one end of the block are small businesses including a *lavanderia* and small taco shops. In the middle of the week, day laborers can be seen around this small commercial strip. Forming the end of a cul-de-sac, the Family Leadership Center (FLC), a local non-profit that works with low-income families in this community, is an anchor institution. Located next to FLC are federally funded housing, also known as "the projects" (see Image 2), which serve as visual markers of class divisions especially when compared to newly renovated homes located just a few blocks down. Though this community is mostly Latino, immigrant, and low-income, apartment buildings have been recently renovated or built both on the street and a few blocks away signaling neighborhood change. Around the corner from Empire Street is an elementary school that according to California Department of Education School Accountability Report Card (SARC) over 90% of its students are Latino and over 95% are socioeconomically disadvantaged.⁹ Unfortunately, less than a quarter of students meet or exceeded state standards in English Language Arts, and less than one fifth of students meet or exceeded state standards in Mathematics. Empire Street is acutely different from what one generally thinks of as the Westside in Los Angeles. The geography of Empire Street makes the concentration of race and

⁹ The label "socioeconomically disadvantaged" is an official term used in the SARC reports. The State Board of Education uses this to describe students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch program or whose parents have not received a high school diploma (California Department of Education 2016).

ethnicity, poverty, and immigrant population even more pronounced. I demonstrate this through census and FLC data of family demographics served through their youth programs.

Image 1.

“RIP Felon” spray painted on the ground



Image 2.

The projects next to FLC



Understanding the Westside in Comparison to FLC

Through an Angeleno and popular imaginary, the Westside of Los Angeles is thought of as affluent, upper middle class and highly educated community. Although there are no formal demarcations of the Westside, the *Los Angeles Times* Mapping LA project defines this area as

consisting of 23 neighborhoods some of the more recognizable ones include: Santa Monica, Bel-Air, Westwood (home to UCLA), Beverly Hills, and Venice. The proximity to the beach, ideas of leisure time, celebrity, and of whiteness are likely to accompany this popular image (Lipsitz, 2011). However, census data as well as organizational data demonstrate the stark differences in demographic markers including, class, ethnicity, and race.

Census tract data indicates that the neighborhood where FLC is located has a lower educational attainment, a greater foreign-born population, and a greater Latino origin population than other neighborhoods in the Westside. In order to provide a greater detail of the differences, I compared three prominent local Westside cities—Culver City, Santa Monica, and Marina Del Rey—from the census tract where FLC is located, as seen in Table 4. Highest educational attainment is based on the population 25 years and older living in these four areas. In the FLC census tract, more than one third (34.4%) of the population have less than a high school diploma, with 26.5% who have less than a ninth-grade education. This amounts to fifty percent of individuals whose highest educational attainment is either less than or a high school graduate (or equivalency). In comparison, only 20% of adults living in Culver City, 15% of adults living in Santa Monica, and 11% of adults living in Marina Del Rey highest educational attainment is a high school diploma or less. Rather Culver City (51%), Santa Monica (65%), and Marina del Rey (65%) have higher rates of Bachelor's, graduate or professional degree attainment. FLC census tracts Bachelor's, graduate or professional degree attainment is just less than 30%. The discrepancy between highest educational attainment between FLC and these three different Westside communities demonstrate that adults living in FLC have received much less formal education. This suggests that there is likely a ceiling on the types of jobs and income earnings that individuals living in FLC hold because of their lower educational attainment.

While the Westside has seen a growing Latino population and presence, the area is predominantly White. In nearby Santa Monica, 68.1% (i.e. over two-thirds) of the population self-identifies as White alone, 71% of Marina del Rey identifies as white. Only 14% of Santa Monica self-identifies as Latino and 7.9% of Marina Del Rey self-identifies as Latino. Culver City is more diverse; 48.8% of residents self-identify as White alone, 23% of residents self-identify as Hispanic or Latino origin, and 14% of residents self-identify as Asian alone. In comparison, FLC census tract residents are predominantly Latino. Just less than two-thirds (64.6%) of FLC census tract population self-identify as being of Hispanic or Latino origin, only 22.5% self-identify as White alone, and 10.4% self-identify as Asian alone. Nearly half (47.7%) of FLC census tract residents are foreign-born, with 81% of the foreign-born population tracing their roots to Latin America. Culver City has about half as much (23.7%) of a foreign-born population. In general, the area has relatively few individuals that self-identify as Black or African American; there is 1% in the FLC census tract, 10% in Culver City, 4% in Santa Monica, and 6% in Marina Del Rey.

Table 4 also demonstrates the disparity between income of Culver City, Santa Monica, and Marina Del Rey residents as opposed to those living in the census tract where FLC is located. Marina Del Rey is not only the whitest of the census tracts analyzed but it is also the wealthiest; median household income of residents is above \$95,000 and the median family income of residents is just shy of \$105,000. Culver City has the next highest income with a median household income just over \$77,000 and a median family income just shy of six figures. Santa Monica families earn over \$112,000 and household income is just below \$75,000. In comparison, residents living in the FLC census tract are much further below median income earnings of these three cities with median household income at \$55,458 and a median family

income at \$54,250. As I will demonstrate later, the income and educational attainment rates are much lower than these census figures suggest, and Latino origin figures are much higher for youth families served directly by FLC.

Family Leadership Center (FLC)

Shared Responsibility Model

Founded in the late 1970s, the Family Leadership Center (FLC) has a clear presence in this neighborhood and has been both a part of and witnessed the changes and development of the community. Originally begun as a preschool, the new preschool building was burned down just three weeks after construction was completed in the early 1980s. This not only reflected the high crime experienced during this time but also demonstrated the rising tensions between the local gang and the highly educated primarily white women who had helped to get the preschool program started. According to the center, this made them refocus their programs to include a Shared Responsibility Model that sought to both engage parents in the development of their preschoolers and empower them to get rid of the fear they had of the gangs in order to work towards creating a community they wanted.

The Shared Responsibility Model recognizes the particular assets of children, parents, and youth, who all have the potential to activate, further develop, and acquire new assets to build a whole, healthy, and integrated community. In instances of interpersonal conflict, staff are trained to ask five questions: (1) What is the problem; (2) What do you want?; (3) What are you doing?; (4) Is it working?; and (5) What are you willing to do to make it work? This challenges youth to take a step back, think about their actions, and consider alternatives. Other activities with youth, adults, and children also have students take a step back to consider someone else's point of view. These point of view activities acknowledge that there isn't necessarily one truth

but rather it is based on one's perspective. Staying in line with their preschool curriculum they also focus on empowering people to ask for what they want. This encourages direct communication as well as taking stock of their emotions. The curriculum of shared responsibility focuses on reflection, communication and empowering someone to take action if they would like to see a change.

Over the years, FLC focused on developing its parental engagement. One of the expectations of their children and youth related programs are that parents are consistently involved. Because its model of parental engagement has been effective in bringing together and developing a stronger sense of community, FLC has presented and worked with local schools to implement parental engagement programs. I know focus on the structure and participants of UYP.

Urban Youth Program (UYP)

Structure of UYP

Begun in 1992, the Urban Youth Program (UYP) focuses on providing leadership development, opportunities for personal growth and educational enrichment for youth 13 to 18 years of age. The youth program has many different components that include afterschool tutoring, leadership development groups, preparation for college, parental involvement, mentorship and volunteer opportunities. From Monday to Thursday afternoons, youth receive after school tutoring and academic assistance. Volunteers, which include local college and university students, assist in tutoring. A core leadership team of youth meets once a week to help plan and coordinate weekly Friday leadership meetings. Three youth are elected to serve in an official role, as youth board members, which lead the planning of these Friday meetings.

Table 4: *Census Comparisons between the Family Leadership Center, Culver City, Santa Monica, and Marina Del Rey*

	Census Tract-FLC		Culver City		Santa Monica		Marina Del Rey	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
Total Households	1,296	100%	16,605	100%	46,439	100%	5,421	100%
Educational Attainment								
-Population 25 years & over	2,773	100%	28,958	100%	71,019	100%	7,664	100%
-High School graduate or less	1,374	50%	5,721	20%	10,366	15%	834	11%
-Some College (no degree) or AA	607	22%	8,584	30%	14,694	21%	1,860	24%
-Bachelor's, Graduate or Professional Degree	792	29%	14,653	51%	45,959	65%	4,970	65%
Place of Birth								
-Total Population	4,225	100%	39,105	100%	90,752	100%	8866	100%
-Native Born in U.S. or territories	2,211	52.3%	29,844	76.3%	69,635	76.7%	6453	72.8%
-Foreign Born	2,014	47.7%	9,261	23.7%	21,117	23.3%	2413	27.2%
-Foreign Born in Latin America	1,633	81.1%	3,487	37.7%	5,398	25.6%	178	7.4%
Median Household income (dollars)	\$55,458	--	\$77,333	--	\$73,649	--	\$95,248	--
Median Family income	\$54,250	--	\$99,750	--	\$112,016	--	\$104,459	--
Race & Ethnicity								
-Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	2,728	64.6%	8,987	23.0%	13,052	14.4%	697	7.9%
-Not Hispanic or Latino	1,497	35.4%	30,118	77.0%	77,700	85.6%	8169	92.1%
-White Alone	950	22.5%	19,068	48.8%	61,794	68.1%	6317	71.2%
-Black or African American	47	1.1%	3,778	9.7%	3,388	3.7%	535	6.0%
-American Indian/Alaska Native	0	0.0%	56	0.1%	24	0.0%	0	0.0%
-Asian	440	10.4%	5,498	14.1%	9,012	9.9%	820	9.2%
-Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	42	0.1%	96	0.1%	41	0.5%
-Some other race	0	0.0%	177	0.5%	131	0.1%	125	1.4%

-2 or more races	60	1.4%	1,499	3.8%	3,255	3.6%	331	3.7%
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Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). Selected Social Characteristics in the United States, 2009-2013 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*. Retrieved from <https://www.factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

However, youth who do not have an official board position but are interested in participating further are encouraged to attend, and 8-12 youth generally gather to plan the Friday meetings.

On Fridays, youth generally receive a form of leadership development that integrates both a curriculum that is based on the organization's Shared Responsibility Model and considers the needs and interests of the youth. These Friday meetings also serve as a forum for youth to discuss issues that they encounter in their community. These meetings are primarily youth led, and the specific topics covered generally reflect the interests of the youth. For example, prior to Donald Trump's presidential win, the youth debated his platform and considered his messages about Latinos. At times, guest speakers are invited to attend and speak directly with the youth.

Youth and their parents also receive further academic enrichment in having access to a staff member that discusses with them the steps to get to college including A-G requirements necessary for admittance into University of California (UC) system, scholarship opportunities, FAFSA applications, assistance writing personal statements, what college life is like etc. Furthermore, their educational program coordinator generally presents college information sessions for parents of the youth. In the previous two years, UYP has prided itself on the fact that all of their graduating seniors have attended an institution of higher learning.

In keeping with its focus on parental engagement, parents also attend monthly meetings. During these meetings, parents are often presented information on youth related topics such as drug and substance abuse. They also can coordinate community events or fundraisers for the center.

UYP youth also have the opportunity to serve directly as mentors and role models when they participate in a yearly summer camp as counselors or counselors in training. This provides youth the opportunity to further develop their leadership skills, communication skills, conflict-

resolution skills, and listening skills. Many of the youth look forward to participating in and serving as counselors during the summer. This also provides youth with summer employment. Youth who are most active with the UYP program usually apply and are accepted as summer camp counselors.

In the past, the youth have also coordinated a national conference for youth. In the summer of 2001, the youth planned the first conference with the intended goal of bringing together youth from across the United States to exchange youth leadership strategies within their communities. Because of more recent budgetary constraints the yearly conference has remained local.

Table 5.
Summary of Youth Activities at FLC

Activity Name	Description
After School Tutoring	Youth enrolled in UYP are expected to attend two afterschool tutoring sessions per week regularly held Monday to Thursday. Volunteers from local universities often come to assist youth.
Friday Leadership Meetings	On Fridays youth come together to discuss or engage in different activities that are aimed at increasing their leadership skills. Activities include debates, presentations, point of view activities, nutrition-related games and discussions. The core leadership team is involved in the planning and sometimes helps to facilitate the Friday meetings.
Core Leadership Team	The core leadership team meets once a week to help plan weekly Friday leadership meetings. Formal positions include a president, vice president, and secretary, however approximately 10 youth are actively involved.
Summer Camp	Youth as young as 13 and alumni of UYP serve as camp counselors or assistant counselors in leading children ages 6-12 involved in camp. UYP youth generally serve as role models.
College Related Fairs & Presentations	Staff actively provide youth with college related presentations some of which are conducted in-house, other regional opportunities are often shared with students. Topics include college requirements, financial aid, one-on-one college essay assistance. These presentations are also provided to UYP parents

UYP National Conference	Youth help plan, facilitate, and present at the FLC youth conference. Generally, this is once a year, however recent financial constraints and staff limitations has prevented a national conference from occurring.
FLC Related Fairs & Events	UYP youth often volunteer to assist in putting together FLC events for example a yearly Halloween event.
STEM	Youth can sign-up to attend a weekly STEM course. Four courses are offered, one in each of the different STEM fields (Science, Technology, Math, Engineering). Each course lasts five weeks.
Volunteer led Programs	Over time FLC has supported various volunteer led programs including a business class. These programs provide youth with various activities, however because they rely on volunteer leadership there may be a lack of continuity from one year to the next.

Youth Participants

In comparison to surrounding Westside community, youths' families of FLC's Urban Youth Program (UYP) have much less formal education, are predominantly low-income, and primarily self-identify as Mexican or Mexican American. I begin this section with an examination of qualitative data that provides a portrait of the families and youth served by the program. As I delve into the struggles that these youth and their families face, including multiple issues related to poverty, illegality, gang violence, self-esteem, and drugs, I then highlight four youth, Santiago, Margarita, David, and Verónica that help to demonstrate the ways in which these issues are both layered and nuanced. I demonstrate the hope and opportunities that the Family Leadership Center provides to some of these youth as well as some of the shortcomings.

An analysis of local census data and organization documents reveal that the families that FLC serves have less education, are low-income, and Mexican or Mexican American in comparison to the overall census tract where FLC is located. This division is further pronounced when comparing the families that FLC serves to census data of surrounding Westside neighborhoods. Almost all the youth and their families self-identify as Mexican or Mexican

American. A majority of the youth and families also indicate that Spanish is the primary language spoken at home.¹⁰

Based on an analysis of intake forms collected for four UYP cohort years (2011-2012; 2012-2013; 2013-2014; and 2014-2015), almost all of the youth and their families self-identify as Mexican or Mexican American. A majority of the youth and families also indicate that Spanish is the primary language spoken at home.¹¹ During this time span, FLC has had between 67-80 students register to participate in their UYP program. The number presented here, indicate that these are large groups of students that register to participate. Because several of the youth continue to participate from one year to the next, this is not the total number of unduplicated youth. From 2011-2014, a total of 294 duplicated youth have participated in the UYP program.

Table 6.
Number of Youth Per Cohort Year

Cohort Year	Total
2011-2012	79
2012-2013	67
2013-2014	75
2014-2015	72
Grand Total	293

Poverty

An analysis of intake forms collected for four UYP cohort years (2011-2015) indicates that the families of youth participating in the UYP program are primarily low-income. Several of the families fall below the median household income. Over two-thirds (67%) of the 2014-2015 cohort in fact met the poverty guidelines¹² for last year (See Table 7). While nearly a quarter of

¹⁰ Data not available for cohort year 2011-2012.

¹¹ Data not available for cohort year 2011-2012.

¹² The poverty guidelines are used to determine eligibility requirements for several federal programs. The poverty threshold is set by the Census Bureau and generally determines whether families meet the federal poverty line.

families were above the poverty guidelines, most of these families would still be considered low income. The median income of youth families was less than \$21,000 for the cohorts 2011-2015 (see Table 8).

Table 7.
Number and Percentage of Youth Families (Cohort 2014-2015) that met the poverty guidelines for 2014.

	No.	Percent
Meets poverty guidelines	48	67%
Above poverty guidelines	17	24%
N/A	7	10%
Total	72	100%

Table 8.
Self-Reported Median Income of Youth Families

Cohort Year	Median Income
2011-2012	\$17,640
2012-2013	\$20,800
2013-2014	\$20,000
2014-2015	\$20,400

First Generation: Education

Most of the youth are the first generation in their family to be college bound, speak Spanish at home, and come from two parent families. Although, the percentage of youth that are first in their families to go to college are less than 50% for both cohorts 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 (see Table 9 and 10) organizational data of youth cohorts from 2011 to 2015 indicate that over 60% of the youth's mothers and fathers for each cohort year have a middle school education or less (see Table 11). This demonstrates that many of the youth would be the first generation in their families to go to college. It is likely that older siblings have begun to attend college. Over 80% of youth from 2011-2015 cohorts speak primarily Spanish at home (see Table 12). Most of

However, the poverty threshold considers the number of children under 18 years of age as well as any senior citizens living within the household. Because of the level of detail needed to determine whether a family meets the federal poverty level (i.e. poverty threshold) the poverty guidelines were used for comparison instead.

the youth come from two-parent households rather than single-parent households. For youth who attended the program from 2014-2015, 77% came from two parent households, 21% came from single parent households (see Table 13).

Table 9.

First in Family to be College Bound, Cohort Year 2013-2014

	Number of Youth	Percent of Youth
Yes	30	41%
No	44	59%
Unknown	1	>1%
Grand Total	75	100%

Table 10.

First in Family to be College Bound, Cohort Year 2014-2015

	Number of Youth	Percent of Youth
Yes	34	47%
No	33	46%
Unknown	6	7%
Grand Total	73	100%

Table 11.

Highest Level of Formal Education Completed-Middle School or Less

Cohort Years	Mother	Father
2011-2012	71%	75%
2012-2013	66%	74%
2013-2014	61%	61%
2014-2015	73%	70%

Table 12.

Primary Language Spoken at Home

	English		English & Spanish		Spanish	
Cohort Years	Number of Youth	Percent	Number of Youth	Percent	Number of Youth	Percent
2011-2012	7	9%	7	9%	62	82%
2012-2013	6	8%	6	8%	67	85%
2013-2014	5	7%	4	5%	65	88%
2014-2015	4	5%	10	14%	59	81%

Table 13.
Parental Structure of Youth Families

Cohort Years	Single Parent		Two Parent	
	Number of Youth	Percent	Number of Youth	Percent
2011-2012	14	18%	65	82%
2012-2013	10	13%	70	88%
2013-2014	11	15%	62	83%
2014-2015	15	21%	56	77%

Though these data tables provide a quantitative portrait of the youth and the families involved in the youth program, it does not illustrate the various types of challenges that the youth's and their families face. In order to understand why nonprofits like FLC need to adapt their organizing models, I provide profiles of four youth that begin to reveal the overlapping and different challenges that these youth contend with in their lives. Therefore, I showcase different snapshots of youth's ecological environments and attempt to shed light on some macro-processes that operate in everyday life.

Youth Profiles

Santiago and Margarita are both in their senior years and are considered youth leaders of the program. However, Santiago is much quieter than Margarita, and I find that his gender and immigration status, and demeanor provide a comparison to Margarita who no longer lives on Empire Street. In this section, I also profile David and Verónica who are both in the 10th and 9th grades respectively. My aim here is to attempt to represent different youth who are involved in the program, but have not yet fully developed their leadership skills. David, though not gang-affiliated has gotten in trouble with the law. David, no longer lives on Empire Street but he has several relatives who continue to live here and who are involved in the programs offered at FLC. Though some of the youth interviewed had relatively little family on Empire Street, others had several family members that help to create a sense of community within the Center itself.

Verónica is the only youth I interviewed that revealed she lived in the projects. These youth reveal the overlapping challenges of immigration status, experiences with violence, criminal engagement and unexpected life changes that speak to both the ways in which FLC has provided encouragement and growth and reveals some gaps. I hold off on shedding light as to youth perceptions about gentrification, which I will speak to in the findings.

1.) Santiago

Santiago was raised in Mexico on a farm where his family mostly harvested corn, but they also grew rice and beans and maintained a few livestock. Santiago primarily grew up with his mother, sister, and grandparents who he describes as spoiling him. Because his father migrated to the U.S. for better work opportunities, Santiago lived without his dad for about four years before he immigrated with his parents and sister when he was just shy of his tenth birthday. Santiago stated that the decision to migrate was so that he and his sister could have more opportunities for education and careers. “One of [my dad’s] cousins made it through high school and college but um once he started looking for a job nobody was accepting him so he felt like if you have a contact or someone inside that was easier to get a job and here you need it but not as much as over there. To get a job here you just need to work hard and study.” Santiago describes the challenges of attaining career opportunities in Mexico, and describes a classic portrait of attaining the American Dream though hard work. However, Santiago’s own life experiences indicates that this is not so simple

Santiago has lived on Empire Street since he left Mexico. In comparison to Mexico, Santiago describes Empire Street as being one that had several rules, “well usually you need to be at home inside before 8 ‘cause your gonna get shot. Don’t wear red or blue. Um don’t walk alone.” These rules of the street inform his daily experience that he navigates around. Santiago’s

interview reveals the risk that youth must contend with. He shared that “once in front of my house some guy got shot and we could see through the window he was lying there. Blood all over.” Although Santiago didn’t know this individual personally, he knew “that he wasn’t a gang member and he was at the wrong place at the wrong time.” Although this experience with violence can be traumatic Santiago indicates that “it was normal at that time people were getting shot all over the place.” Santiago indicates that police patrol the area more often now and so this appears to decrease gang related violence. However, the increase in police presence also connects youth with the police. Although Santiago cannot conjure up a personal experience of when the police stopped him or someone he knows without reason, he indicated that although he felt safer with increased police presence he still had fears; “you don’t know when they’re going to stop you for no reason just cause you look suspicious.” It was unclear where exactly Santiago’s fears derived from. He indicated that because he knows that local police do not transfer or hold people based only on their immigration status this is not where this fear derives from. Either way, Santiago describes an uneasy relationship with the police which may or may not produce material consequences in the future.

In addition to gangs, Santiago points to the lack of parental involvement that affects his community. “Parents working most of the time so they don’t have time for their kids or just some parents don’t feel responsible for their own kids. They feel like whatever about their kids. That’s some of the reasons, some challenges.” Though given the low-wage jobs that many of the youth’s families have it is no surprise that working parents often work six days of the week rising early and finishing in the late afternoon to earn an income. The one-on-one interviews I conducted indicate that the youth’s parents often work as gardeners, housekeepers, as day laborers, or restaurant industry. Taking into an account the exosystem of the parents work, it is

important to consider that undocumented workers often face job insecurity, exploitation, and wage theft which may all impact parents ability to give emotionally and physically to their children.

As an undocumented youth, Santiago realizes that he cannot currently attain a work permit and may not qualify for scholarships. His status, and U.S. immigration laws therefore structure Santiago's future plans most apparent in terms of job and educational opportunities. Instead, he plans on attending a local community college, like his sister. It was during a mandatory 5th period school conference in his junior year that he remembers learning more about the qualifications for getting into a college. Though the education coordinator at FLC often stresses college opportunities and hosts similar meetings for parents, this event stuck out to Santiago "mostly cause most of my friends were excited about it and they wanted to apply for UCs and Cal States so they make me feel excited about it too." His peers' excitement influenced Santiago to more strongly consider going to college.

Santiago first started attending FLC in his freshman year and has gained confidence and has had the opportunity to mentor pre-teens. Now in his senior year, Santiago has been a part of the youth program for four years. At about six feet tall, Santiago is usually very quiet during the leadership meetings however he is part of the core leadership team. In response to his own growth in the program he stated, "I feel more confident when I speak to like in the [UYP] room. I don't speak that much but I feel more confident because I know most of the leadership kids." For Santiago, this is especially important because he describes his lack of confidence as one that created a barrier between him and his peers. "I feel like they were, because they, they speak so confident I feel like they, I, I was like less than them. *Yo sentía mas, mas chiquito*. So I didn't feel comfortable like you speak in front of people. For me it was something really hard. So that

was the disconnection.” The “they” he is speaking about refers to other youth like him, predominantly Mexican-origin, those attending UYP thus revealing intraethnic divisions that were based on linguistic barriers, but which translated not only to a lack of confidence but a diminishing of self-worth. Through the UYP program, Santiago feels that he has gained this confidence as well as developed growing relationships. Though Santiago reveals that because of the growth of the program he doesn’t necessarily know all of the youth names insinuating that the relationships between youth are not necessarily very deep. Santiago has substantially increased his involvement in UYP since he first started coming. In his freshman, year Santiago stated he attended the program three times a week, but now comes every day. Santiago not only has involved parents, fostered by the UYP program, but he also has several aunts and uncles that also live on Empire Street that serve as older role models.

Santiago describes several nodes of his ecological environment including parental involvement, gang violence, police, FLC and his peers. These aspects represent part of Santiago’s micro-system. His experience with each indicates the extent to which he maintains more positive relationships as opposed to more negative ones. His experiences mentioned above with his extended family, FLC, and his peers point to the ways in which these supportive relationships aid him. In comparison, gang violence, police, and linguistic divides also impact his relationships in his ecosystems and suggest much more negative experiences. Additionally, Santiago indicates the ways in which his undocumented status a reflection of macro- processes of illegality in the U.S. limit his opportunities, namely job and future academic experiences.

2.) Margarita

Margarita is an active youth leader that began her involvement with FLC as a summer camper in the third or fourth grade. Margarita is not herself an immigrant, but the child of

immigrants (i.e. second generation) and has had to deal with several family related misfortunes; she admits she often keeps to herself and has at times turned to drugs in order to cope. Her uncle, who she describes as a “father figure” was deported approximately two years ago. Margarita not only had to deal with the loss of this father figure, but she also had to deal with her own father’s alcoholism and depression. Her father also had a seizure and was hospitalized for two months during her sophomore year and so it appears that the health issues were related to his alcoholism, depression, and the deportation of his brother. The deportation of her uncle, from Margarita’s perspective also caused rifts between herself and her oldest uncle. While her oldest uncle turned to church, he apparently chastised Margarita and her younger sister for not going. “He’s like pushed us away um, me and my sister and since we don’t go to church um for different reasons he thinks that we’re not, he judges us a lot, and says that we’re not going to get far in life so like definitely we’ve drifted away from family. Um from both sides. The other side we stopped talking a good three years ago. Um so I feel like I don’t have a lot of family. I don’t have any family.” Additionally, Margarita’s grandmother who she maintained a close relationship with passed way in the winter. The distance between her extended family demonstrates a disintegration of a support network that used to be available to Margarita.

Though Margarita doesn’t live on Empire Street, she considers it a part of her community and wants to continue to give back. Originally, Margarita had considered going to college on the East Coast, but decided against it since, “[FLC] has done so much for me that if I leave so far away I can’t come back and help. You know? ‘Cause that’s always been my mentality to come back and help.” As a current youth leader, Margarita feels the personal responsibility to attend the program everyday though she describes it as also being fun. It was through being a camp counselor that Margarita attributes her growth. “Like me personally when I first came um I was

very closed like as a person I didn't want to participate or anything, but then I became a counselor. And um my group they really taught me how to um basically like get out of my shell you know?" Margarita's growth that she attributes to FLC is primarily based on being an example and role model to other youth as well as an increase in confidence. Margarita has found a network at FLC, however, she reveals that no one at the center knows that she has used drugs recreationally and as a coping mechanism. Additionally, she indicates that there are several "rude youth" that keep some of the other youth from fully participating because they are afraid of being judged.

However, Margarita also reveals that the connection that UYP attempts to build between parents and the youth is lacking. "I feel like we're really based on that like the youth group really wants to like make us better connected to our parents but I feel like they don't do enough to do that, like they try but it's just that I feel like they don't try hard enough." Margarita supported her statement by sharing her experience when they did hold a parent meeting that included a parent-youth activity. "I mean like once in a while they do like activities with our parents at the parent and youth meeting, but I feel like it's not really helpful. Like they should, they should do better ideas like uh, like not just playing games you know, like cause I feel like that helps for a moment, but then you go back to reality and it's just not the same you know?" The activities that FLC has employed that Margarita references are role-playing activities. Although they attempt to have the youth understand what it's like to be a parent and for parents to consider their youth's feelings, Margarita iterates that the lack of directions undermined this particular activity. Margarita also demonstrates that these activities appear to be more beneficial in the short run rather than in the long run and suggests that mixing up the activities as well as providing clear directions and a structure would benefit the relationship building.

Margarita is a graduating senior and has been accepted to a University of California (UC) north of Los Angeles. She is excited to go and is most attracted to its emphasis on activism and social justice. “Their really big on activism and all that. That sounds pretty fun but scary at the same time, but I feel like that’s what I’m excited about...Just um I feel like there’s still a lot of racism. Like you know in California and in the United States where they just try to hide it, but it still exists. It’s just not, I mean when you think of racism you think of African Americans you know cause of the civil war and slavery and all that so I feel like definitely showing that there’s they’re not the only race that has like that gets discriminated and all that. And even white people get discriminated you know for being white. It’s not just minorities...Umm so there’s like, there’s only one white kid in my IT class. A lot of them are Asian. So I feel like they always make fun of him because of that.” Speaking prior to Donald Trump’s election to presidency, Margarita reveals the racism that lay just underneath the surface of U.S. society. She is revealing the myth about a post-racial society that was silenced prior to the election. Margarita’s statements also reveal the different racializations of groups that may be different from other places in the United States. As a majority-minority state Californian residents now come from predominately historically underrepresented groups (Baldassare 2000; U.S. Census Bureau 2016). Partly because of the demographic shifts, Asians for example make up the largest racial group of UC undergraduate students (University of California 2015). Though Margarita reveals racial conflict in her high school, she does not delve in deeper into an understanding of the ways in which historically minority groups have been pitted against one another.

Unlike Santiago who appears to have a relatively strong and supportive family, Margarita’s family relationships have disintegrated over time with the deportation of her uncle, her father’s alcoholism and related health issues, and another one of her uncle’s judgement of her

for not going to church. In her interview, she reflects on the important and distinct opportunities that FLC has provided her to be a leader and role model, however she also expresses that FLC could do more to help improve relationships between youth and their families. However, it appears that FLC in part has aided her in getting accepted to a UC.

3.) David

When I first met David, he asked me if I wanted to sign his cast on his arm. He apparently had broken his arm skateboarding. I was initially surprised because I didn't know David and yet he reached out to me revealing the ways in which he is able to reach out to people. David has never lived on Empire Street, but has attended FLC since he was about six years old as the youngest in his family; his older brothers have also attended FLC programs. He also has quite a bit of family that live on Empire Street and that have been or are currently involved in FLC.

Even with these relationships and networks, he shared that one of his brothers is struggling with drugs and that his parents have asked him not to share with anyone outside of his family. It is apparent that David struggles with trying to make sense of this on his own. "It's just something that's always in the back of my mind like at first I never knew what it was, like what was wrong...I don't know it would just come like, it would just hit me. Like now I know it's because of my brother. And like my family they're always in the back of my mind." David constantly struggles with both making sense of this as well as communication with his family. He explained that there were really bad days where "like I would just come home and like they wouldn't talk to me 'cause they're just not in the mood or like not just my mom or not just my brother but like all of them. They wouldn't say a word or something. So like we don't talk." David acknowledges that this lack of dialogue is in part due to the long work days that his father

experiences as a gardener. The lack of parental engagement that David describes is one that Santiago suggests happens in other families on Empire Street.

David recognizes that his parents work all day and although he recognizes that he respects his parents for this, there is an obvious desire to interact more substantially with his family. However, the lack of parental interaction is layered and contradictory. David later explains in his interview that seeing his brothers going through things and having his parents talk to him has helped him be a better person. “Um like my parents would talk to me a lot. And like not just like small lectures but like real life lectures...about like what goes on in the world. What’s really happening. You know? And like it’s not so easy as you think it is.” Through the course of the interview, David reveals however that when he was younger his parents’ lectures “went in one ear and out the other.” The contradictions it appears may be due to his own unwillingness to listen as well as his parents’ communication about certain topics. This reveals that youth want and desire positive forms of parental engagement. David’s reflections suggests that he values this and that it makes a difference in his life.

When David was in the 8th grade, he was charged with and cited for theft, vandalism, and trespassing his school. He along with some other peers broke into the school, vandalized a classroom of a teacher he felt always picked on him, and stole some candy. Because of this, law enforcement became involved and David had to complete 30 hours of community service. David reveals that gang violence is not the only way that youth find themselves caught up in the criminal justice system.

One of the reasons that David likes coming to FLC is because it is a distraction from home. “I feel comfortable and it’s a good distraction. I mean I know it’s not much to offer and all that but like it’s a good community. I like coming here, not just to like learn but to like show the

younger kids too.” As someone who was not raised on Empire Street, he indicates that the community does not have much to offer. By this he suggests that there is a lack of resources as well as gang violence that he does not encounter in his own community. In many respects, David’s language mirrors a macro dialogue that undervalues communities of color. However, as an anchor institution, David realizes that the opportunity to serve as a role model at FLC has helped him decide to be a better person. I will return to this point shortly.

4.) Verónica

Verónica’s mother is a housekeeper and takes care of children. Her father is a handyman that looks for daily work opportunities. Verónica lives in the government housing projects just next door to the center. Prior to living here, she lived somewhere in Downtown LA, but because her uncle was almost shot in a drive-by while sleeping on a couch in the living room, her family decided to move. Verónica started coming to FLC in the 8th grade when she learned that the center had a tutoring program. Although just next door, Verónica acknowledges that she didn’t realize what FLC offered until several years of having moved into the neighborhood. This reveals a disconnect and distance that exists between some of the neighbors and the center itself. Verónica shared that her mom hates living in the projects and hopes to move, but that “[my mom] likes [FLC] so that’s why we stay here.” FLC is a safe space for many of the youth and their families.

As an undocumented youth, Verónica worries about what this status may mean for her college and career opportunities. “I guess the fact that I’m an immigrant. Cause like I don’t get the same um advantages as others. Like my friends are like um, like sometimes I get mad at my friends cause they could do stuff but they don’t do it that would help them, and I’m here wishing that I could do it.” Verónica would like the opportunity to go on a class trip with her French

class, but recognizes that she can't travel. She also desires a job so that she can start saving for college. Having migrated at the age of one, Verónica unlike Rodrigo has never traveled or gotten to know her native country. Though this is one of the biggest challenges that she faces, Verónica admits that she doesn't believe anyone at FLC knows about her status. She admits that she feels "like people would look at me differently." Although many of the staff are aware of the issues that undocumented youth face and help to create a supportive environment, her statement reveals the limitations of FLC as a safe space for an undocumented person. For her, FLC is not a place to reveal or discuss her status even though it impacts her future opportunities and she could use support in navigating and learning more about this. However, Verónica reveals that her uncomfortableness with revealing her status is not only about FLC, but also points to the larger environment. When she indicates that she fears people would look at her differently she is not only considering the FLC community but individuals that she encounters in other places. Verónica's fears speaks to the ways in which undocumented people are marginalized and stereotyped within the U.S. (De Genova 2007; Abrego 2014)

However, Verónica recognizes the ways in which FLC has helped her grow. "It's helped me be less shy um it's also motivated me sometimes because I know, like people here, they just talk and I'm like that's nice I want to do that, like they just inspire me sometimes." FLC has not only helped her confidence, but she admits that it gives her and her mom something to talk about. Additionally, the STEM courses that have been offered at FLC have added to her education. Verónica still has quite a bit of growth to do however. When I asked her if she considered joining the core leadership team she responded, "No, not really. I've thought about it, but then I'm not really a leader kind of person." I asked, "Why do you say that?" She responded, "I don't

know leaders are supposed to be like not shy so yeah.” Verónica reveals that she still views herself as a relatively timid person and believes that she is not yet a leader.

Santiago, Margarita, David, and Verónica represent four youth with a variety of experiences at FLC. The experiences of these four youth help to construct a map of their environment of micro-systems that include, but are not limited to family, peers, school, extracurricular activities including FLC and outside sports teams or music bands, church, gang violence, and police. The youth hold varied relationships with each of these spaces, but they all considered gang violence an issue. Santiago and Verónica both struggles with their undocumented status pointing to the ways in which macro processes inform and limit opportunities that might otherwise be available to them. Their undocumented status and as residents of Empire Street, Santiago and Verónica live much more precarious lives. Both they and their parents have less access to opportunities, and live in an environment with frequent gangs and violence. Though Margarita and David do not live on Empire Street, they consider this place as part of their home. For these youth, FLC offers distinct opportunities that would likely not be available without FLC. FLC represents a supportive ecological system that attempts to strengthen parent and child relationships, lend support to youth and families navigating schools that can be hostile or unresponsive to them, and provides a rich environment with various educational opportunities. These interviews also reveal personal experiences with macro-level forces of racism and illegality. Next, I discuss my findings and consider the benefits and limitations of UYP’s positive youth development model that guides the UYP program. I also shed light to the threat of gentrification and financial constraints that are exogenous shocks to FLC, but which also have the propensity to negatively impact the youth.

V. FINDINGS

In the previous section, I provided an overview of the Urban Youth Program (UYP), demographic information on the youth involved, and various challenges that they face. I present three major findings about UYP. First, UYP reflects a positive youth development model that provides a vital ecological support for the youth. Youth build their confidence and self-esteem, access and become role models, and receive educational support. I point out however how this model can be limiting in that it primarily encourages individual empowerment rather than community empowerment. Second, I point out that the staff are vital support for the youth and are central to FLC's ability to carry out its mission. I point out that financial constraints however limit the attention and care that the staff can provide to these youth. Third, the Empire Street community, like other Los Angeles communities, is beginning to experience gentrification. I present this through an analysis of rent-controlled apartments, one indicator of gentrifying forces at play, as well as through interviews.

1. UYP Reflects a Positive Youth Development Model

Prior to discussing which model of working with youth is best equipped to challenge overarching pressures that threaten FLC, I point out that UYP operates within a positive youth development model. A positive youth development model, as I have outlined in my Literature Review provides cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral growth opportunities. The program itself is organized to provide a variety of skill building opportunities to increase youth facilitation, presentation, planning, conflict mediation and communication skills. The aspects of the program that are most salient for youth and that fit within the positive youth development paradigm are (a) confidence and self-esteem building opportunities; (b) access to role models and opportunities to be role models; and (c) educational enrichment opportunities. I focus on youth

positive experiences with these aspects of the program before I consider limitations to this framework.

A. Confidence & Self-Esteem Building

One of the primary foci of the youth program is to build up youth self-esteem. One of their programmatic goals is explicitly to increase the self-esteem of youth over the course of their involvement. Based on their own internal survey results, 83% of youth participants (cohort 2014-2015) surveyed exhibited improved confidence, self-esteem, and communication skills. An analysis of written reflections and one-on-one interviews reveal that many of the youth attributed UYP for their improved self-esteem and confidence.

Attaining the skills addressed above youth reveal that this has helped them build up their confidence and self-esteem. One student wrote, in a personal reflection that had been collected by FLC, “before coming to [the Family Leadership Center] I was considered a timid person, especially people in my age. Having no self-confidence was one of the biggest barriers that I had to deal with. It stopped me from getting involved in activities that people my age do. For example, interacting with people my age.” Another youth revealed that anxiety about presenting led her to skip class as a strategy for not having to present. Through the UYP program, the youth gained the self-confidence, which directly translated into her changing her behavior at school—she no longer felt the need to skip class to avoid presenting.

When I asked one of the youth in a one-on-one interview, “What do you feel like you’ve learned in [UYP]? What has [UYP] helped you with?” she responded that confidence was one of the main things. She explained that

“to speak in front of people definitely. A lot of things, just to be more educated and involved in my community. Um it’s helped us a lot. Um organization skills. Just a lot like a lot. Like personally um having uh you know like I have I’m very I guess outspoken so I probably wouldn’t have gained the confidence to stand up for myself or say what I think

or stand up for other people if I hadn't come to [UYP] or leadership only because the leadership group is very, well a lot of them are my friends, well all of them are my friends. Um and I feel really comfortable in that group so feeling comfortable with them helped me gain the confidence to talk to people I'm not comfortable with because I've already practiced it um especially with the [UYP] group when we talk, when I help out with the [UYP] group on Friday meetings. I have to talk. I feel comfortable raising my hand or stating my opinion or what I know. Um definitely in the real wo-, in school it's helped me with how I act in a classroom or to participate. Like you know like ask for what I want. They helped me a lot with that."

This youth reveals that improved self-confidence is intertwined with learning particular skills. The ability to practice speaking in front of people also improved her confidence. It appears that improved self-confidence is part and parcel of being more involved in her own community.

B. Role Models-Access & Opportunities

University Volunteers

FLC has been able to develop and leverage relationships with local university students from institutions such as UCLA and Loyola Marymount University. FLC's geographic proximity to both universities, allows students from these institutions to volunteer their time either apart from or as a part of class credit. Students from these universities have provided afterschool homework assistance, led weekly leadership meetings, have organized and implemented new programs such as a STEM mini-series and a business skills class. This provides students with role models in addition to expertise in other areas. It is especially powerful when these university volunteers are especially passionate and believe in the youth. However, the youth have also experienced college students that convey white supremacy. I utilize the term white supremacy to convey the belief that 'white' people are superior to 'non-Whites'.¹³

¹³ I use a single quote around 'white' and 'non-White' to signify that these racial categories are arbitrary, however as a society it is apparent that who is deemed as white (i.e. Whiteness) have historically received privileges. History also demonstrates that over time who is deemed as 'white' has shifted. For more information see Jacobson 2003; Lipsitz 2011; Painter 2011.

During one of my field observations, a local university student was leading a weekly STEM course, the students had an opportunity to learn more about blood pressure and diabetes. The university student shared how this chronic disease unfortunately impacted the Latino population. Furthermore, he shared his personal interest relating to the fact that his Latina aunts suffer from diabetes. The pre-med student connected with the students by sharing his personal familial experiences with them and further demonstrated the power of these youth. He stated that they “gave him motivation to keep going.” He went on to explain that the youth “can do anything they want,” instilling a sense of hope. This was an especially powerful moment as the youth seemed not only gracious, but also awed by his words. They ended this STEM course by clapping enthusiastically for him. This moment demonstrated and communicated the power of the youth as a source of inspiration for him. The access to role models is a vital component of what the center provides. It provides youth with motivation, inspiration, and in cases such as the one presented above the ability to connect with a positive influence.

In a reflection written by a youth they recognized that the tutors from the local colleges provided motivation to continue to do well in school. The youth wrote, “the tutoring program really emphasized the importance of school and doing my homework. Not only was it very helpful but it was also a lot of fun. I also liked that the tutors were from local colleges because that gave me more motivation to study hard and get good grades. The tutoring program was such a great experience for me that I requested to complete my tenth-grade service hours by tutoring the kids at [FLC]. I had lots of fun tutoring the kids and helping them out with their homework.” This youth not only gained the help that he needed, but he was further inspired by having access to role models.

Margarita, on the other hand explained an incident with a white university student volunteer. “He was a white guy...he came into the room and he was like minorities shouldn’t go to college and all that. And then colleges just uh accept um Mexicans and all that because their um what’s it called, they feel pity for them and all that. And then he was like uh what else did he say? He was like the only reason why you guys get accepted is because um universities want to look good, but you guys are uneducated and all that. And so, I wrote about that.” Margarita references the fact that she wrote about this situation in her college application. Margarita shares that several other youth were in the room when the student volunteer made these comments. Although these comments infuriated Margarita, she decided not to say anything “cause you know it’s his opinion and all that.” It is evident to see FLC’s curriculum at work. Margarita’s acceptance of his opinions reflects the lesson of point of view activities that everyone is entitled to their point of view. However, this incident is especially troubling because although the university student was here to volunteer he clearly expressed racist beliefs. Margarita’s interpretation of his comments indicate that his views were white supremacist; minority students (i.e. non-whites) did not deserve an opportunity for higher education. I use the term white supremacy specifically because the university student’s comments indicate that only whites appeared of deserving to go to college. These views are especially contradictory to what FLC hopes to instill in the youth. However, this incident also makes apparent how macro-ideologies of racism and white supremacy penetrate the lives of these youth.

Staff Role Models

Interviews with staff personal reveal that several of them attended various FLC programs in their childhood and youth and have since returned as staff members. These staff view FLC as an important site that provided support to them and their families and which encouraged higher

education. These staff members see the value of FLC and in their community which is not always evident in other types of non-profits. Those staff members that did not attend FLC, come from similar *barrios* in which they can relate to both the struggles of the youth and their families. These staff members become role models to the extent that youth see these staff as similar to themselves. Through these staff, the youth may be able to imagine that they too, like the staff can achieve a Bachelor's degree. Staff are central to the daily operations of FLC, often putting in extra time and energy that they are not necessarily compensated for.

Opportunities to be a Role Model

UYP youth who have asked to volunteer or who are recognized as leaders, have the opportunity to tutor younger youth, serve as counselors or counselors in training in the organizations yearly summer camp. The written reflections indicate that the summer camp is one of the most important leadership opportunities that they have. The summer camp provides 120 children between the ages of 6-12 the opportunity to participate in a free summer camp.

Many of the youth leaders describe being a counselor as a challenging and difficult opportunity that got easier over time. They noted some of the challenges such as having to motivate and connect with the campers, serve as a role model, and mediate conflict. Additionally, they recognize that through this experience they learned and valued how much work goes into being a counselor. The youth reflections reveal that many had previously attended this summer camp and had not realized how much work it was. One youth wrote, "I have to admit I didn't always listen to my counselors but this year I got to experience the hard work they put into the camp to make it fun for the campers. This year I had to talk to a camper because he did something he wasn't suppose to be doing as I talked to him I remembered when I had a counselor have a similar talk with me." As counselors, some of the youth are asked to have difficult

conversations with children such as that noted above. Another youth indicated that he as a counselor in training he not only “felt as if I had more responsibilities. I had to set an example for the little kids because some of them looked up to me and I would like to leave a good impression.” This youth recognized that as a leader he also felt the responsibility and weight of setting a good example. Some of these youth reflections also recognize that telling children what to do wasn’t enough to get them to accomplish a goal, but rather they learned how to motivate their group. Several of the reflections also indicate that they grew from this experience and had now learned how to interact with younger siblings or nieces and nephews in a more productive manner.

Many of the youth also expressed that they hoped to return as a counselor the following year. This leadership opportunity had provided these youth with a fun and immersive experience in which they hoped to continue to serve as a role model. Many of the youth appreciated that they felt recognized for their talents and were graciously thanked by the campers. This not only made them feel special, but also validated the fact that they had done well. One of the youth indicated that this opportunity had motivated her to consider a career in child development. Another youth wrote, “All I know is all the rest of my experiences that I had in this camp were fun and great because of the kids. I would take the job in a heartbeat.”

An analysis of the written reflections reveals that a few of the youth indicate that as a FLC participant they also had the opportunity to provide tutoring help to students who were younger. “Working at [Family Leadership Center] as a tutor has been one of the greatest experiences of my life. I have learned a lot working with elementary school students. Just by talking and listening to many of the children from the tutoring program have inspired me to keep

on fighting and to never give up on my goals and dreams that I haven't accomplished yet.” This youth speaks to the motivation that being a tutor provides.

David shared that the opportunity to serve as a role model at FLC has helped him decide to be a better person. After David vandalized his 8th grade classroom, he fulfilled his required community service hours at FLC. Through this experience, David had the opportunity to be a role model for other youth which helped him consciously make a change in his life. “I like the interaction with [the elementary kids] and like I enjoyed it. I found myself having a good time and like when I started helping out with little kids and showing them things and teaching them things you know then that’s when I really decided this is the type of person I want to be this is who I want to be and what I want to do.” David not only had the opportunity to offer assistance and guidance to younger youth, but he was also able to contribute in a way that he was not aware of prior to this experience.

C. Educational Enrichment

One of the primary ways in which UYP defines empowerment is through education. The program itself has been structured to provide various educational opportunities including afterschool tutoring, college information sessions, STEM courses and other educational opportunities that have arisen out of volunteers wanted to share their specific skill sets with the youth. The STEM courses have developed into a more formalized relationship with a local institution of higher education and have provided youth with more knowledge about the STEM field. One of the youth interviewed revealed that in one of their classes they had been tested in this area and without the STEM classes they would not have known the information. Other educational opportunities that have arisen are business class sessions held with university student volunteers. The business classes provide youth with not only enriching educational experiences,

but with social and cultural capital. The strongest aspect of this focus is the ways in which the program works to prepare youth and their families for college. The staff members hold college workshops to inform parents about the college process, A-G requirements to get into college, the differences between institutions (i.e. university, California State Universities, community colleges, University of California institutions). For the past few years, FLC has had 100% of its graduating high school youth have attend college or career/technical school the year after graduating.

In practice, UYP realizes empowerment through education. By achieving higher education and encouraging youth to attend college UYP indicates that this is the way to improve their community's situation. When asked what a staff member aims to impart on the youth involved they stated "Definitely hope...that there's hope for them. That's the main one for sure because like I mentioned we grew up in, this community with family members that don't have that idea of going off to college or they don't support that...Um second definitely their education. Empower their education, that they know and that they learn that they have the power to, to, to be someone and you need to get educated first. So that's something definitely that I want to make sure [UYP] gives that and that sense of like, 'okay education is important.'" In many respects empowerment through education is the foundation of the UYP program. This staff member's goals of imparting the importance of education reiterates a positive youth development framework. To the extent possible, youth are provided with a safe and caring environment at FLC to become healthy adults that later contribute. This staff member's comments however indicate that they may not be recognizing the power of youth as youth. However, another staff member recognizes that defining success and empowerment through education may be problematic for youth who are unlikely to take a traditional path to higher education because of

structural inequalities or because their talents don't fit into this traditional framework. Consider youth who because of financial difficulty or lack of citizenship status may be unable to attend higher education continuously. This staff member states, "And I think that society has, has always told us that success is defined a certain way. But in, in a multicultural and diverse community such as this one, how do you define it... You know like education is, like if you don't go to school you're not going to be nobody. If I'm messing up in school, if I'm not doing well in school, then I must not be doing something good. But then you turn around and these kids are great artists, they're great writers, you know, they're great chess players. They're awesome team members." This second staff member's comments point to the issues in defining empowerment or success only through education.

It is apparent that FLC provides distinct opportunities that provide emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and educational support and opportunities that youth may be lacking at home, at school or in other areas of their ecological environment. However, I want to shed light as to some of the limitations of its current model.

Though youth are provided a space at FLC to engage in educational opportunities, build supportive relationships, and develop social competencies youth are not generally provided the tools to analyze power, question the status quo, and collectively act to address an issue as one would be encouraged to do in a setting that utilizes a youth organizing model. For example, during my research the program was encouraged to apply for a grant that asked youth to identify an issue in their community and to develop a plan of action in order to address it. In this case, youth identified two or three issues, including drugs, gang activity, and lack of access to healthy foods. The youth ultimately decided to begin an initiative surrounding healthy foods. One of the staff explained that the reasoning behind choosing a healthy foods initiative is because drugs and

gangs are “like a non-ending problem right? It’s a problem where we feel like as much as we want to solve it, it, it’s like a non-ending problem. Even like authorities can’t end it right? Um so it’s still, it’s still, you can still see it, but it’s less.” Even though this staff member recognized that the issue has decreased in the neighborhood, he along with the youth specifically look to authorities to address this issue instead of questioning why people join gangs. Rather the youth and staff member accepted that this was a situation that they could do nothing about that is they communicated their lack of empowerment in reconciling this issue that most the youth and staff used to describe their community. This is especially interesting because the organization has in the past done gang intervention work thought their work is now more gang preventative. This is in part due to funding cycles that have cut their ability to engage in gang interventions. This example demonstrates the limitations to which youth are empowered within the center under its current model.

From my observations, though staff understood the plights of undocumented families, a few of the youth of undocumented or mixed status families felt embarrassed or ashamed of their status. Sharing of one’s status can be both stigmatizing and fear inducing because of the risk that it carries. However, the undocumented student movement has demonstrated the ways in which some of these fears can be transformed into collective efforts to organize. Each individual must surely way the risks of revealing one’s status. This is of course a very personal choice, however the ways in which undocumented youth seemed ashamed of their status demonstrated the limits of the form of empowerment they received at FLC. That is, they have yet to develop a critical consciousness that questions the ways that U.S. society criminalizes them as a person.

Before I argue that FLC should consider moving towards a youth organizing model, I take time to reflect on two other stressors that constrain the work of FLC—financial constraints and gentrification.

2. Financial Constraints

As I have noted above, staff are vital to the functioning of FLC. Their commitment and dedication to the importance of working with youth is apparent in both how they engage with the youth and in how they approach them. However, decreased funding to youth programs and a general feeling of financial constraints has deeply affected the staff. Staff reported feeling stretched too thin, experiencing salary cuts and simultaneously given more responsibilities, and overtaxed in terms of needing to prove and report outcomes to foundations. Staff have also developed entirely new programs to conform to emerging funding opportunities. These adaptive tactics however further strain the staff and the work of FLC.

FLC primarily relies on private foundations funding rather than government grants which may further exacerbate the pressure that staff members feel of having to cater to foundations. One staff member shares the impact that an over-reliance on private foundations has impacted their work.

“The need for our organization is to reinforce and reinvest in the programs that we already have because of the need for funding we’ve been sort of stretching ourselves out thin looking for other kinds of funding that we, for programs that we have not even established yet. But because there is an interest in funding that we establish out of nowhere a program to be able to cater to this funding requirement or whatever. So that’s when you have different staff members taking on more responsibilities. Writing more reports and still getting paid the same and still with the constant threat that our salaries can go further down at any moment. Um I guess that’s just the nature of the beast when you talk about non-profits. That uh especially a non-profit like ours that’s funding 100% by private funders that um it almost seems that any moment our funding can be taken away. And so then we have to scramble to look for different modes of funding. Um just to keep our doors open to keep our salaries intact. So that’s been tough to deal with.”

As expressed above, the increasing reliance on private foundation money therefore creates a psychological stressor on several of the staff. Rather than working on improving the programs already in place at FLC, the staff critiques the addition of new programs that are more stressful for staff. Furthermore, at least one staff member indicated that this impacts their relationship with the organization overall. This staff member described feeling like a mediator between the CEO and families in that the CEO's emphasis on numbers conveyed a lack of concern about the quality of the programs. This staff member indicated that this same concern was at times brought up by family members. The concerns that staff members shared pointed to low staff morale in this respect.

Staff express a sense of disempowerment when they iterate that they feel quantifying their work is more important than providing quality data. Though data can provide information and help to provide benchmarks for staff to help them determine how they can improve their program, staff currently find this work more overwhelming than helpful. I contend that this is overwhelming for different reasons including: (1) staff members don't use all of the data they are asked to collect to improve their programs; (2) the data does not provide helpful means to understand what they could do to improve; and (3) staff members don't have enough time and resources to collect useful data. Though staff members express attempts to share their challenges with the Executive Director of the organization, staff members feel more pressure than support. The disempowerment that staff members feel operates at an organizational level; as staff members feel the need to be more responsive to foundations and funding agencies rather than their own constituent requests, the organization has difficulty in truly utilizing its own agency.

Over the past four cohorts, FLC has served between 60-80 youth each year. There are only two staff members that primarily oversee the UYP program and this is in addition to other

responsibilities that have been added over time. The responsibilities only associated with UYP include overseeing the daily afterschool tutoring program, facilitating weekly meetings where a core youth leadership team plans weekly leadership meetings, assisting in the coordinating of a yearly youth conference, checking in with each student and following their progress in school, hosting educational workshops for families, facilitating monthly parent meetings, coordinating guest speakers for weekly leadership meetings, coordinating and having youth attend educational funding opportunities or college fairs. On top of this the staff are exceedingly dedicated and recognize that they actively try to maintain a one-on-one relationship with each youth to prevent anyone from slipping through the cracks. They attempt to maintain case management files on each student to assess and understand where they are developmentally, and what needs they may have. Although their goal is to do this systematically, the staff recognize that unfortunately they can fulfill all of their job duties. As this list demonstrates, it is not for a lack of trying or commitment, but rather all of these tasks would surely take at least one or two additional staff members to complete. Staff members indicate that there is a growing list of responsibilities partially as a result of the center's adaptive strategies of "chasing the money."

I aim to highlight the stressors that FLC comes up against. The decision to shift towards foundation money is partially as a result of decrease in government funding over the years for the type of work that FLC was doing with youth. However, foundation funding can also be inconsistent or shift unexpectedly from one year to the next. FLC has experienced these unfortunate shifts and as a result has had to at times close the center for longer than they expected. FLC has also lowered staff salaries because of unforeseen decreases in foundation funding. On several occasions, the staff took pay cuts and even volunteered their time to keep the center open for the youth and families. The staff is clearly one of the most important assets to the

organization. Their commitment and love for aiding these families is clear. While these strategies resolve these issues in the short term they are not long term solution. These adaptive tactics I believe disempower the staff involved. Rather than feeling like they have control, staff members are more consistently in a state of fear of not being able to provide for their own families. These adaptive tactics thus impact FLC's provision of services.

3. Gentrification on Empire Street

GOVERNING, a leading news platform especially amongst government leaders, measures the progress of gentrification amongst 50 most populous cities including Los Angeles. According to their maps however, most of the Westside¹⁴ is ineligible to gentrify. Census tracts that have a median household income and median home value that are not in the bottom 40th percentile of all tracts within a metro area in 2000 are considered ineligible to gentrify. Though the Westside is in comparison to the greater Los Angeles region is a much wealthier area, these maps fail to account for pockets of poverty and gentrification such as that, which is beginning to hit the Westside. I found that interviews with staff members and youth of Empire Street and analysis of rent control data substantiate that the community is beginning to experience and at increased risk of experiencing gentrification. I highlight gentrification because of it can shift and shock the ecological environment of youth and may increase the precarity that they and their families must contend with. Just as the financial constraints on FLC may continue to redefine and weaken over time the work that they do to support youth and their families, so to may gentrification.

An analysis of property information in relationship to the organizational data indicates that this community is at risk of severe gentrification. The Zone Information and Map Access

¹⁴ *GOVERNING*'s gentrification map excludes Santa Monica area census tracts.

System (ZIMAS) is a database with various zoning information on properties throughout the City of Los Angeles. Using ZIMAS, I analyzed property information of 70 parcels that line Empire Street. The Office of the Assessor numbers each parcel with a unique number. Parcels may include multiple units or apartment addresses. According to this data, 55 of the parcels examined have at least one unit that is subject to rent control (under the Rent Stabilization Ordinance). Many of these parcels have multiple units and so as many as 324 units may be under rent control. Because major developers have a lot to gain financially from converting rent control apartments into market based homes, they can be especially eager to conduct this conversion furthering gentrification in this area. Recent home sales further indicate the potential land value that is beginning to be realized in this area. Based on information acquired through ZIMAS, a 5-unit parcel was sold in April for over \$1.2 million. Another recent sale of two single-residence homes went for \$2.6 million. This type of investment is likely to solicit extremely wealthy homebuyers or renters. Additionally, the emergence of Silicon Beach, a community emerging from recent tech investment in Southern California, is likely to create an emerging demand for housing that developers are likely to capitalize on.

News reports in addition to interviewees personal experiences indicate that tenants are often misinformed about the process or the rights that they are entitled to. Owners threaten renters with evictions. This works to scare tenants into leaving prematurely not realizing that an Ellis Act application has yet to be filed, thereby forgoing entitlements to relocation costs. A few of the staff members expressed that they had personally started to experience gentrification through unsubstantiated eviction tactics. One of the staff member's, whose wife had grown up in the community and whose extended family continues to live in the area explained,

“The owner of that apartment said that he was going to sell it, well he sold the complex and the new company that came in said ‘we’re going to tear it down.’ So three months after that, they were like you have three months to move out. Well the grandparents were like fighting against it because they didn’t have nowhere to go. They didn’t have no savings. Pretty much, if they were kicked out they were pretty much out on the streets. They probably didn’t have, you know, I’m not sure, but [money] to pay a deposit and everything. And they fought companies, so they gave them some money for living there for quite a long time and the families, because there were 4 apartments so all the families got some money too and they moved, all of, all of them out and then they never teared down the building. They just came in, fixed everything, boom, new people. Yea. Everybody knew. I guess they do it to raise rent, you know gentrification.”

In speaking about his extended family, this staff member speaks to the vulnerability of low-income, immigrant senior citizens. Though his family was able to receive some compensation, as guaranteed by law, community members are not necessarily aware of their rights. Additionally, the staff member’s account points to the ways in which Ellis Act evictions are suspect. Though the landowner claimed that he was going to tear down the building, this never happened. In this case, the staff member recognized that he helped inform his family that they were likely entitled to some form of financial compensation. The market and profitability of the housing industry in Los Angeles provides an incentive for landlords to evict families from their apartments resulting in a facelift or conversion of rental units into condominiums or market rate apartments. In this case, the staff’s member’s family was luckily able to find another apartment in the same neighborhood and was therefore not displaced, but they weren’t the only family evicted from the complex. Additionally, the staff member had wanted to live on Empire Street, however because the available rental units were too expensive he and his wife now live in Orange County.

Additionally, the emergence of Silicon Beach, a newly formed community sprouted in Santa Monica and Venice to serve tech workers may continue to put increased pressure on the housing market and encourage landlords to engage in illegal, questionable, or Ellis Act evictions.

Landlords may also increase monthly rents of rental and commercial properties thereby reducing the affordability of this community. Silicon Beach is a new community on the Westside. It indicates the geographical shift and rise of the tech industry from the Bay Area—Silicon Valley—to the greater Los Angeles area. Silicon Valley and the tech industry have been one of the main actors in gentrifying the Bay Area particularly San Francisco and San Jose. The geographical shift and the continuation of gentrification to the Los Angeles industry is not lost on the critical observer. Another staff member recognized the tensions, sense of loss, and the stressor that Silicon Beach represents.

“All of those areas. And they’re getting to [be] known like the Silicon Beach right and so a lot of those folks are moving into the area, so they’re wealthy. I think that has, it’s going to create some tension. I feel like it within myself because it’s taking away like our community, our history. Um and so it’s, it’s, that’s scary. I do feel like a little sad inside me. And I have seen it. And I’ve talked about it. And we live in a community where it’s rent control so we don’t have that fear of boosting up our rents, but they can take our property. A lot of these owners are doing that. I went through that not too long ago this past year like 6 months ago trying to fight the owners because they’re trying to kick us out for no reason... They want to kick us out because they want to rent the property for more. So I already experienced that and I know a lot of folks here already experienced that. Um and they are and it’s going to continue so it’s definitely a concern.”

This staff member speaks to the displacement of residents through evictions and related scare tactics. Though he indicates that rent control should provide a sense of safety, it is evident that through his own lived experience, in this case it is not protecting residents from displacement (i.e. gentrification).

During one of the Friday youth leaderships meetings, the youth and staff discussed gentrification. Prior to this conversation, the youth interviews reveal that they had noted the changes but hadn’t considered what this might mean for their own lives. I interviewed Margarita prior to the youth meeting that discussed gentrification. Though Margarita in other contexts had noted some of the neighborhood changes occurring on Empire Street, in our interview she did

not indicate that this was a major issue in the community. Rather gangs and gang violence was. Verónica who missed the meeting that discussed gentrification stated that she was not aware of what gentrification meant. However, she was aware of the changes occurring and considered what this might mean for the future of her community. “Like there used to be like abandoned houses on the street. They flipped those houses. They’re really nice houses now so it’s like if that continues it could turn into a different community possibly like um more apartments will be torn down to create big houses...And it’s like oh my gosh if that’s down the block from where I live how much is my apartment worth if it is completely changed if they just fixed it up a little bit.” She demonstrates that the changes are evident to her. Her posturing demonstrates that she realizes that her and her family may be forced to move because of these changes. These tensions and concerns reflect the ways in which gentrification can both erase communities of color and maintain racial and class boundaries. These youth interviews indicate that gentrification is not an active topic of conversation among the youth. Gang violence represents a very clear threat to the youth and their families, though covertly, gentrification does too.

Santiago was one of the youth that I interviewed following the meeting on gentrification. When I asked Santiago about his thoughts on gentrification following the Friday leadership meeting, he revealed that he was more cognizant of how these changes might lead to him and his family being kicked out. “I seen it more now. Recently there were two houses they take down now. I think they’re going to build something big and then I’ve seen more buildings going up too and I feel like we’re going to get kicked out of here cause people with more money are moving into the neighborhood.” Santiago thought that if this might happen, his family might move to Inglewood or somewhere in Downtown, two other communities currently facing gentrification in Los Angeles. When I asked if he felt this is something that could be fought or prevented, he

responded, “I think yea we could fight against it but we would have to be, it has to be all the neighborhood. We should all stand up against them. Be more united. Inform people about what’s going on because most of the people don’t know that people are moving in. They just know that buildings are going up and they think it’s normal. They don’t know that the people that are moving in are going to kick them out. So just inform the neighbors.” Though Santiago understands that gentrification may very well lead to displacement, it is unclear whether he understands the macro-level forces of landlords and the role of city officials in creating or approving these changes.

Through displacement, gentrification has the capacity to separate these youths and their families from strong neighborhood resources and networks that have been cultivated. As is demonstrated in the literature, gentrification can displace residents and in doing so threatens the residences and sense of community for low-income Latino families on Empire Street. For families that are displaced, where will they be able to afford to move? And how will new residents interact with long-time residents? These questions bring to light the tensions between class, immigration status (i.e. documented versus undocumented), and race brought about by rapid neighborhood change. Though families may be able to develop support systems in other places, it is very possible that this geographic displacement will disrupt their lives. At the very least, families may be unable to continue attending FLC. Furthermore, because FLC is at continued risk, the services, skills and assets that youth and their families receive are also at risk. Without these families whom will FLC serve? The strength of the center, itself, partially resides in the fact that the staff and CEO are reflective of the families that live here. Many of them have received services here, and have lived or continue to live in this community. The displacement of families threatens FLCs ability to carry out its mission in empowering and providing services to

low-income, primarily immigrant families. In many ways, the insidious nature of gentrification along with all of the various challenges that these youth face make it difficult for them to understand or even research further what these changes might mean for them.

VI. DISCUSSION

Because CBOs service a particular geographic region, they in particular—as opposed to the overarching nonprofit industry—aim to improve the microsystems of the population that they serve. The Family Leadership Center (FLC), for example, has over the years made parental engagement a central component of all of its programs. They have worked with schools to share and improve parental engagement at schools. FLC over the years has also established relationships with locally elected officials and the police department that services the Empire Street area. As a program of FLC, the Urban Youth Program (UYP), provides a vital area of support for youth, providing them a safe space with distinct opportunities for youth to build their confidence and self-esteem, access role models, become role models, communicate more effectively, and attend an institution of higher education. While UYP provides an important resource for youth and their families, the positive youth development framework that underpins the goals and structure of the program fails to adequately address macro-level ideologies and shifts that can undermine or alter the youth’s ecological environment. For this reason, I argue that UYP should shift its program towards a youth organizing model. The foundation of its positive youth development framework provides a rich place to grow towards a youth activist model.

As I demonstrated earlier, research indicates that there are critical differences between a youth organizing model and a positive youth development model namely that youth organizing initiatives conduct and critically examine the role of power developing a critical consciousness in

youth and engage youth in challenging the systems that limit or fail to adequately address the issues that they are up against (Ginwright & Cammarota 2002; Ginwright & Cammarota 2002; Sullivan et al. 2003; Jennings et al 2006; Cristens & Dolan 2011). The Urban Youth Program (UYP) is centered within a positive youth development approach. At the most basic level it seeks to provide youth a safe space where they can grow and develop. The program provides various activities that focus on the social, emotional, and cognitive development of youth. Youth are given opportunities to be leaders within the organization through formalized roles (e.g. president of the youth group), relationships with peers, conversations with staff that position youth to lead an activity, working with and serving as examples to younger youth (e.g. summer camp counselors) or through attendance and engagement with Friday leadership meetings. Although youth reported having more skill sets and confidence to take on new projects, serve as role models, or even to give public presentations in schools, this level of empowerment is largely limited to an individual level. The individual feels more confident in taking on new challenges. The youth development model utilized at FLC largely emphasized prosocial norms. Youth were engaged and encouraged to develop new programs that they felt were needed. Because youth were not engaged in a community-organizing model, youth largely created programs that reflected a club-like environment. In this way, FLC reflected an extension of the school environment in that youth were encouraged to engage in different activities offered or to develop their own.

Though these are vital and important opportunities for youth to grow their leadership skills, these efforts do not provide youth the encouragement to become politically engaged in order to challenge structural inequalities that consider the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro- levels systems. Positive youth development frameworks instead look towards considering micro-level

systems and does not consider at any great length other level systems challenges. Interviews with youth reveal several macro- and micro- level challenges that shape their life including gang violence, ambivalent relationships with police, familial relationships, religious convictions, illegality, racism, and financial hardship. UYP has worked to various capacities to address more micro-systems level challenges such as encouraging and requiring parental engagement. Over time, they have developed relationship with police providing an intermediary role with the police. However, the emphasis of the program reflects a priority on individual level empowerment as opposed to a more encompassing definition of empowerment. Susskind (2003) defines empowerment as *“both the increase in the capacity of an individual, group or community to create change as well as the process and outcomes of actual change in the conditions that oppress people, resulting in an enduring redistribution of power and resources”* (italics in original, 231). UYPs programs emphasis instead reflects a notion of individual level empowerment which provides individuals with, among other things a sense of self-efficacy. The emphasis on self-esteem and confidence building for example demonstrates an individual level of empowerment. The UYP program for example decided to take on a healthy eating initiative because they felt that gang violence is not a problem that could be solved. Rather than deciding not pursue gang violence because of their own interests, they reflect how they fail to critically consider what leads to gang involvement. Or rather than reflecting on how the decrease of gang violence in their own community may reflect ways to address gang violence they opted for a healthy initiative. In many ways, this decision reflects an overall ideology of ‘not wanting to ruffle too many feathers.’ Utilizing a positive youth development model is limited because it does not address or adequately analyze systems of power, nor does it center youth in a way that

leverages their own power as youth to question and address macro-level issues that directly affect them and their community.

Research indicates that one of the building blocks of raising consciousness of individuals is for them to critically examine the structures that influence their lives and to question the ways in which these structures privilege certain identities above others. Through these types of exercises, youth can increase their critical thinking skills in a way that allows them to work to better their community. Developing and implementing an action plan for changing things in their community also demonstrates the ways in which youth can wield their own power to create a better world, rather than having to wait until after they attend an institution of higher learning. This action plan would not only consist of youth self-reflecting on their positionality (i.e. social identity), but to also engage in research to thoroughly understand the issue.

Shifting towards a youth organizing model may also help the youth to build stronger relationships amongst themselves that critically consider the privileges and resources that they do have at their own disposal. For some youth members their citizenship status or migratory status appeared to create boundaries amongst the youth. For example, youth who only knew Spanish when they immigrated reflected that this was a particular challenge for them and generated a social gap between them and their peers. In my observations it appeared however that some youth who had always grown up in the United States and had citizenship status seemed less aware of the insecurity and exclusion that these youth felt. Being able to have conversations that critically examine these overarching ideologies and that encourage youth to share their own stories may help to create a greater sense of community. Overtime, the organization has developed ties to political leaders that youth may be able to utilize to address an issue that they identify and take the lead on.

In its infancy, the organization utilized organizing methods to get its center operational. According to institutional history, in the first few weeks of its opening, the center was burned down by local gang members. In the aftermath of this fire, the organization learned that they needed to get the community, to the extent possible, more engaged in what they were doing. The utilization of organizing techniques therefore is not outside of the bounds of what the organization has done in the past. However, these strategies have largely not been developed in the UYP program. UYPs rich environment does though provide a space and framework to increasingly move towards a youth organizing model.

Addressing gentrification may be one issue that the youth can increasingly work to address. I call attention to gentrification because it can create what Dr. Mindy Fullilove, (2004) a research psychiatrist, refers to as “root shock.” In examining the history of displacement and urban renewal projects amongst African American populations, Fullilove considers how the destruction of one’s community or displacement of someone from their own community can significantly alter one’s emotional ecosystem, thus generating traumatic stress. Fullilove recognizes that similar to urban renewal projects in the 1950s, gentrification has the ability to also create a root shock. Gentrification often produces immaterial and material consequences including physical displacement from a known community. This can generate a sense of loss of community, significant increases in monthly rent, unaffordability of a community overall, and evictions (Cahill 2007; Zuk et al. 2015). If families are forced to leave this may alter a network of supportive relationships that they have generated in their community.

I have demonstrated that Empire Street is currently undergoing gentrification. Though much of the communities rental apartments are under rent control, the Ellis Act allows landlords to take rent controlled apartments off the market. Once these rent-controlled units are taken off

the market they are not necessarily replaced. As it is the Los Angeles housing and rental market is one of the most expensive in the U.S. Work by community organizations such as the San Francisco based Anti-Eviction Mapping Project has also shed light as the ways in which landlords often use questionable tactics to “rightfully” evict tenants. Because the Ellis Act allows for rent-controlled apartments to be taken off the market these landlords and developers working with these landlords often have the most to gain from gentrification; units that were underpriced can now be resold to a developer at a much higher rate. Interviews with staff members indicate that these questionable tactics are ensuing on Empire Street. Additionally, the development of ‘Silicon Beach’ is also creating a ripe environment for significant increases in housing and rental prices. This may also enable gentrification on Empire Street.

During one of the Friday youth leadership meetings youth had the opportunity to discuss gentrification. However, because of its complexity and opacity it can be difficult for anyone to begin to understand or examine how these macro-level shifts in capital will impact youth. As a community-based organization this may be one area that may also significantly impact FLC. If families are displaced and increasingly wealthier families replace this area FLC will increasingly be unable to fulfill its mission to provide services to low-income families. Furthermore, DeVerteuil’s (2011) comparative study of nonprofits in Los Angeles and London who have experienced gentrification recognizes that nonprofits face significant displacement pressure. DeVerteuil’s study also recognizes that there are less government aided protections to support nonprofits in Los Angeles. The organization already contends with significant financial constraints this added pressure may therefore further strain the organization.

I have argued that the limitation to working through a positive youth development model is the fact that it does not address or analyze systems of power nor does it center youth in a way

to leverage their own power to question and address macro-level issues that directly affect them and their community. Because of the complexity and opacity of how gentrification occurs, I argue that a youth organizing model is best equipped to challenge gentrification.

However, shifting towards this model may be difficult in light of larger challenges such as overarching financial constraints that limit the organization's ability to take on new or emerging programmatic goals. This is not unique to FLC, but many non-profits are limited in their ability to take on new initiatives because of funding (Mosley et al. 2012; Hesenfeld et al. 2013; INCITE! 2007). Though research considers the importance of utilizing a youth organizing framework, it does not always consider what stands in the way. The funding constraints limits not only the organizations to devote new resources to new areas, but their ability to bring in new staff who might be more experienced in organizing models, and willingness to take on controversial stances because it may impede funding opportunities. The ways in which the organization has dealt with these funding constraints through reflect adaptive tactics and a type of organizational disempowerment. Staff seemed to point to a sense of disempowerment in the ways that their main priority—the quality of programs—was seemingly put aside as the organization's priority was on catering to the needs of foundations. Staff expressed frustrations of feeling stretched too thin in terms of having to take on new responsibilities with less pay due to recent budget cuts. These funding constraints not only limit the implementation of new initiatives, but they also decrease staff morale in the process. Staff are clearly vital in the running of the organization.

Moving towards a youth organizing model may help the organization to reexamine its relationship to funders. Though financial constraints surely limit the organizations ability to take on new goals, its adaptive tactics demonstrate that the organization does attempt to take on new

programs and directions when funding resources seem available. However, these adaptive tactics have been particularly stressful on staff. If the program were to move towards a youth organizing model, this would provide an opportunity for the organization and staff to reexamine its own relationships to power. How does inequality become replicated in the organizations relationships to foundations? What might be strategies to decrease overall foundation reliance?

This thesis has examined the ways in which the center and program staff are extremely constrained because of limited funding and have been largely “chasing money.” On the one hand the organization is seeking out funding that they do not currently have the infrastructure to support. Alumni of the UYP program could be leveraged to provide additional resources and decrease the financial pressures that UYP face. As alumni of UYP, these individuals may be in the best position to understand and fully support the work of FLC. At least one alumni interviewee indicated that although he was very appreciative of the ways in which FLC helped him grow, he had not been considered or asked to donate money. What time to mind was providing active assistance to the organization even though as a married family with young children at home he recognized that he had limited time and energy to provide. This alumni reveals that there is an opportunity to grow an alumni base that can be much more generative in ways that the organization has not even considered. Given the limited amount of time and energy that staff have to give, it may be best to seek out a past alumni that is particularly enthusiastic about creating such a network with the goal of identifying various ways that alumni can be leveraged. Alumni may be able to provide energy, connections, IT skills, or funding that the organization is unaware of.

VII. CONCLUSION

The bulk of this research was conducted in the first half of 2016, prior to the November 2016 election. The new Trump administration's racist, xenophobic, homophobic, and misogynist rhetoric and policies increasingly place the types of communities that FLC represent at increased risk. I have argued that FLC should consider shifting towards a youth organizing model, because its current youth development model that underscores their youth program is ill-equipped to address macro-level issues that impact these youth and their families. Building up community-level empowerment and utilizing a youth organizing approach to push for policies that represent the needs and interests of this community is ever more pressing given this new political regime. Although it may seem evident that FLC may direct its organizing efforts to support its immigrant population given the increasing criminalization of Mexican and other non-White immigrants, it is important to keep in mind that Mr. Trump has made his money as a real estate mogul. Battling gentrification may not be insignificant.

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