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"Bushwick was Mine," "Bushwick es mio:" Gentrification and the Emotional Displacement of Latinas

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“Bushwick was Mine,” “Bushwick es mio”:
Gentrification and the Emotional Displacement of Latinas

Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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For my mother, Maria Ferreira,

And for all immigrant women,

Whose calloused hands and broken backs

Carried us to where we stand now

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Introduction

Inner City Latinas and Emotional Displacement

Latinas residing in the American inner city confront various obstacles to meet their basic needs and prosper in their disinvested communities. In the U.S., Latinas, along with black and Native American women, are more likely to experience the destabilizing effects of poverty, sexual violence, racial discrimination, underfunded schools, and the prison industrial complex in their lives than white women (National Women's Law Center, 2013, Byrant-Davis et.al, 2009, Guerino, et. al, 2009). The constraints Latinas and other women of color face have developed from a historically hostile political and economic state that consistently misrepresents and devalues the bodies and lifestyles of Latinas as sexual deviants and welfare queens (Collins 2005, hooks 1981, Roberts 1998). The stigma constructed around Latinas is not only grounded in their physical bodies and moral character but is also geographically situated within the confines of the "inner city," a euphemism used to describe impoverished communities of color living in the central areas of American cities.

As the place of residence for many Latinas, the city was perceived as the locus of poverty and crime in the American imaginary. With the rise of globalization and the growth in the service industries of finance and real estate over the past couple of decades, there has been a slow yet definite shift in the representation of many American cities. Cities are now conceptualized by local public officials and large economic interests as centralized sites for global capital. This representative shift, however, has not erased the spatial and socio-economic inequities that mark the urban landscape. The city has become increasingly polarized as high-profit professionals and low-income marginalized immigrant workers, in particular Latinas, compete over urban public space (Sassen 2005). The term gentrification is utilized in both academic and public discourses to describe the process in which the reinvestment of the inner

city by large cyclical movements of capital has altered the urban class structure, introducing an influx of middle-class professionals and severely displacing existing working-class residents (Lees et.al. 2007, Slater 2011).

Beyond this macro approach to gentrification, little has been written on its impact on the lives of those who experience it at its most local level, working-class Latinas. By solely framing gentrification under the context of large political and economic forces, studies on this phenomenon fail to acknowledge how gentrification is intimately experienced in the lives of marginalized working-class communities. Although gentrification in U.S. cities has significantly altered the social and physical landscapes in which urban Latinas live, gentrification is not mentioned as a severe constraint impacting their livelihood. This work seeks to fill in the gap by placing Latinas and their everyday experiences with gentrification into broader political and economic contexts.

From Class to Gender, Sexuality, Race, and Class

Although an often-contested definition, gentrification is understood here as a class-based transformation in which the physical, social, and economic qualities of working-class neighborhoods are revalued and reinvested in by the middle-class and larger political and economic interests. Through collaborative reinvestment projects between the local political elite and global business interests, the spatial, social, political, and economic components of the inner city have been restructured to meet the needs of high-profit service industries (Smith 1986, Logan and Molotch, 1987). This elite set of public and private partners have altered the urban landscape, enticing a whiter, educated, and more affluent class of “gentrifiers” to work and live in the inner city. Gentrifiers have proven to be powerful in their consumption capabilities. Their search for “authentic” places, rich with diversity and a sense of community, has created a large

demand amongst many young, professional and middle-class individuals for housing and entertainment areas in the inner city that are then supplied by political and economic actors interested in generating profit.

Inherent in the coinage of the term gentrification by Ruth Glass in the 1960s is the notion of class conflict in the urban socio-spatial arena. The term captures the class inequities that plague capitalist urban real estate markets. The two decades after Glass' coinage of the term consisted of heavy contention over the term's viability in defining what was occurring in the inner city. The works of various neoclassical economists in the 1970s rejected the term gentrification and with it, its implication of class inequality (Lipton 1977, Schill and Nathan 1983). Instead, they redefined what was occurring in the inner city as the "redevelopment" of urban areas by the invisible forces of the market. Such a development was to be celebrated as the reemergence of valuable and profitable cities for middle-class professionals in the midst of urban decay and poverty (Slater 2011).

The demand and supply side arguments that would come to dominate the gentrification discourse in the 1980s were both responses to the neoclassical approach that simplified what was occurring in the inner city as a byproduct of the natural forces of the market. Both sides of the gentrification debate attempted to reemphasize the definition of the phenomenon as a multifaceted process that was simultaneously reshaping socio-cultural dynamics at the local neighborhood level and the occupational structure and real estate market at the global level. Where the two sides of the gentrification debate differ is in where and with whom they place power and agency in the processes of gentrification. Demand side scholars focused specifically on the "gentrifiers" as a distinct group produced from changes in the occupational structure and the cultural environment. Gentrifiers act as the "urban pioneers" that initiate gentrification (Ley

1980, Butler 1997, Caulfield 1994, Jager 1986). Supply side theories have examined gentrification as the restructuring of urban space through the capitalist mode of production (Smith 1986, Marcuse 1986). Smith's famous rent gap theory suggests that gentrification usually occurs in plighted urban areas where prior abandonment and disinvestment in the infrastructure of the neighborhood provided an incentive for profitable redevelopment by the political and economic elites. As this paper will do, scholars have incorporated both arguments into their work to prove the complexity and multidimensional quality of gentrification (Slater 2006, Lees 1994, Zukin 1982, 1987).

Researchers on gentrification observed that while socioeconomic class was driving gentrification, gentrifiers were also carrying a range of identities that were not being fully examined by the literature. Rose (1984) argued that the phenomenon of gentrification was usually studied as a singular process that ran along the limited Marxist capitalist and worker binary, rather than as a complex and multidimensional one that incorporates not only economic shifts but changes in the structures of lifestyles as well. In the 1980s, the roles of gender, sexuality, and race in the process of gentrification were undertaken by scholars to broaden the literature.

Scholars particularly interested in the different relationships between gender, sexuality, and gentrification observed how households that consisted of single women and gays were playing an active role in reshaping urban space (Rose 1984, Bondi 1991, Warde 1991, Castells 1983, Rothenberg 1995). Markusen (1981) pointed to the "breakdown of the patriarchal household" to explain for why these groups were seen at the forefront of gentrification. Some scholars have based their theories on this notion by arguing that the greater involvement of women in the labor force in the mid-twentieth century accounted for their higher incomes and

their motive to postpone marriage and childbearing (Beauregard 1986). As the inner city increasingly became the site for the high-profit service industry, young single professional women remained in the inner city to network and gain better access to these high paying jobs.

Similarly, gay gentrifiers were free from the ties of having to raise a family and found the city to be a site to congregate and build social networks. Gay men and women began to build “gay ghettos” in such neighborhoods as Castro in San Francisco and Greenwich Village and Park Slope in New York City. They renovated its abandoned buildings and opened up dense networks of businesses and services geared towards the gay community (Castells 1983, Rothenberg 1995). Rose (1989) coined the phrase “marginal gentrifiers” to refer to the results of these empirical studies which showed that marginal populations such as women and gays were attracted to the inner city due to the variety of social services that were unavailable in the suburbs.

In terms of the relationship between race and gentrification, gentrifiers are typically characterized as white while working class residents are identified as black (Ley 1996). This race and class binary organizing the gentrification literature has provided little room for research on black gentrification, the phenomenon in which black members of the middle-class move into inner-city working class communities (Lees 2000). The few studies on black gentrification in historically black neighborhoods such as Harlem and North Kenwood-Oakland in Chicago show that the black middle class is enticed by the sense of racial pride and connection to the businesses and services in these neighborhoods that symbolize blackness and provide a “sense of belonging” (Taylor 1992, Patillo 2007). While potentially rewarding for the black middle-class to serve as “role models” for the black poor, these studies also show signs of social and political contention between the two groups. Class distinctions often set the two apart. The black middle class show “soft” signs of their class status through the way they speak, dress, and interact with

others. Despite the poverty and crime that mark black working class neighborhoods, black gentrifiers see it as part of their duty to ensure that their poorer counterparts receive equal services through increased political involvement.

The literature on gentrification has exposed the complexity of gentrification as a phenomenon that is caused not only by changes in the economic occupational structure but also changes in social and cultural structures as well. The definition of a gentrifier has expanded to include a multitude of identities that work in conjunction with socio-economic class to shape the urban landscape. However, despite the attempt in academic circles to broaden the examination of gentrification with the identities of gender, sexuality, and race, the literature has remained heavily focused on its relationship with the middle-class rather than on the ways in which these identities intersect with working-class communities.

From Physical to Emotional Displacement

Most of the literature that touches upon the effects of gentrification on low-income residents focuses primarily on displacement. A generally accepted definition of displacement developed by Grier and Grier (1978) describes this phenomenon as the movement of residents from their household due to a set of physical and economic changes such as the loss of Single Room Occupancy units or an increase in rent (LeGates and Hartman 1986, Marcuse 1986, Barconi and Freeman 2005). Studies on displacement rely on federal or city-wide housing surveys to determine quantitatively how many people move from a rental unit due to a series of responses such as the inability to pay for rent, landlord harassment, or the conversion of the building into a condominium (Newman and Wyly 2006). As these studies show, most of the theoretical and empirical data on displacement conceptualize it as an economic phenomenon exclusive to the housing market. By theorizing displacement through this economic lens,

scholars typically assume that the only characteristic of a displaced resident is their working-class socioeconomic status.

I posit that there is an emotional dimension to displacement that has yet to be fully explored. Approaching displacement as an emotional process highlights the complexity of spaces and identities impacted by gentrification. I suggest that emotional displacement not only impacts residents' ability to stay put in their household, but also radically alters the relationship residents have to their neighborhood. Long-term residents of gentrifying neighborhoods become emotionally displaced as the people and the spaces that once provided them with a rich social network and a sense of place and identity slowly disappear. The corner store that blasted salsa music while people bought inexpensive food products and the neighbor who once took care of local children while parents were at work are no longer present in the community. These people and spaces are replaced by an influx of white, middle-class migrants, and the bars, clothing boutiques, and expensive gourmet food markets that appeal to them. The social network and sense of self and place of long-term residents are severely damaged, as they can no longer access the people and locations that supported their subsistence.

A small strand of the displacement literature has focused on the relationship between neighborhood life and the livelihood of local residents. Marcuse's (1985) "displacement pressure" suggests that working class families are dispossessed of their support system by the transformations occurring in their neighborhood. As friends leave, stores shut down, and social services change, the pressure of displacement becomes so severe that the neighborhood is no longer livable for working-class families. Similarly, Cahill's (2007) "cultural displacement" points to theories of place attachment to argue that place, in particular the environment in which one grows up in, is crucial in the development of identity and provides the individual with a

sense of security and cultural connection. The alteration of the social and physical fabric of a neighborhood due to gentrification results in an erasure of personal and cultural heritage that stimulates a lost sense of cultural identity and self. Hummon's (1992) summary of research on the relationships between identity and community finds that when individuals who strongly identify with a locale are forced to move, they experience emotional grief caused by the traumatic separation between the self and the community.

Based on her studies of displaced African American residents who experienced the urban renewal projects of the mid-twentieth century, Fullilove's (2005) notion of "root shock" suggests that displacement from changes in the structure of a community results in a "profound emotional upheaval." Displacement complicates an individual's ability to build trust and destroys the relationships that once provided the social, emotional, and financial support essential to their livelihood. Root shock is a "traumatic stress reaction" that could have serious implications on the mental health of displaced residents by increasing their risk to stress-related diseases, such as depression and substance abuse. Fullilove's root shock is reflective of what is defined in psychology as societal, intergenerational, or historical trauma (Byrant-Davis et.al, 2009). Societal trauma is experienced not only at the level of the individual but at the level of a group or community as well. Scholars interested in societal trauma point to the acts of dispossession and displacement in the histories of such communities as Native Americans and Jewish Holocaust survivors to explain for the mental health effects that still impact these groups and their descendants to this day (Brave Heart, 1998). Experienced at the community level, displacement from gentrification can also be viewed as a form of societal trauma as poor inner city residents are collectively being dispossessed of the people and spaces that support their existence.

As the research on the relationship between gender, race, and gentrification implicates,

the phenomenon of gentrification can also be experienced as a racialized and gendered process. By placing Latinas into the literature on gentrification and displacement, one becomes aware of its impact not only at the level of individual housing units but also at a level of neighborhood interactions and functions. The existing literature on women of color in the inner city claim that women depend on informal social network ties to support their livelihood (Stack 1973, Dominguez 2003). They found that women rely on local family members and friends in the neighborhood or surrounding areas to draw upon resources through an exchange of goods and services that would be inaccessible due to a lack of money. The livelihood of Latinas is therefore contingent upon their attachment to the neighborhood and the functions that provide social, financial, and emotional support. Because their very survival is dependent upon the neighborhood, I argue that a disruption to such a delicately intricate network, like displacement, can stimulate strong traumatic and emotional responses from Latinas and can bring detrimental consequences to their wellbeing.

The point of this research is not to study women and emotions in a way that resurrects old stereotypes that delegitimize women's experiences. Studies have shown that the phenomenon of 'community' in poor inner city neighborhoods is a heavily gendered one, with many claiming that the stages of motherhood and widowhood are linked to the way women see and experience their neighborhoods (Stack 1973, Dominguez 2003). Therefore, focusing on the experiences of women in this study makes sense when examining the connections between the lifecycle and gentrification. To substantiate this intuition, I make two hypotheses. First, I will study Latina's emotional response to gentrification according to their position in their life cycle. I contend that women become sentimentally attached to their community through their use of their neighborhood, and especially through their mobilization of local networks of support. The

literature has repeatedly shown that this use and mobilization vary systematically according to one's position in the life cycle (Gans 1962, Harding 2009, Stack 1973). Therefore, interviewing women at various stages of the life cycle would yield nuanced insights into various kinds of emotional attachments to the neighborhoods and therefore into various kinds of emotional distress triggered by gentrification. A woman's sentimental attachment to a neighborhood may vary widely depending on whether she's a childless young woman, a mother, or an elderly woman. Because these three sub-populations have different sentimental attachments to the area, the pressures of gentrification may then produce different emotional reactions from each sub-group.

The second hypothesis proposes the idea that if residents are being emotionally displaced from their neighborhoods, then this study should also find that people have developed certain strategies to uphold their attachment to the neighborhood by reinvesting into it with renewed sentimental value. Through a conscious effort to keep the cultural elements of their neighborhood alive, residents may actively participate in events native to the neighborhood, such as an annual block party, and perform and celebrate their neighborhood identity to others and to themselves to cope with the disappearance of the spaces and people that once contributed to everyday neighborhood life. Rather than act as passive victims against the forces of large global urban restructuring, as the literature on community trauma suggests, I posit that a resident's emotions can become a site for strategic resistance. This expands upon past research that has highlighted the coping strategies long-term residents of gentrifying neighborhoods have developed to stay put in their neighborhoods. For many, staying in the neighborhood means doubling up with friends, increasing their rent burden, succumbing to a local homeless shelter or moving to less expensive, lower-quality housing in even more distressed neighborhoods (Center

for Budget and Policy Priorities 2013). These strategies respond to the threat of physical and economic displacement. The threat of emotional displacement calls for an emotional response that actively resists larger political and economic urban inequities through localized cultural affirmations.

It does not matter if we choose to call this process ‘emotional’ displacement over ‘sentimental’ or ‘personal’ displacement. What I believe is important is that we understand the subjective consequences of loss and struggle that occur when the relationship these women have to their communities is threatened by gentrification.

Research Method

Over the winter of 2013 to 2014, I conducted one-on-one interviews with eighteen Latinas at various stages of their lifecycles. I primarily met women through personal connections at a local church and at the Make the Road New York office and snowballed the rest of the sample. Four of the participants were childless young women between the ages of twenty and twenty-six, three were mothers who ranged in age from thirty-five to forty-seven with children younger than eighteen, ten were mothers with children older than eighteen and ranged in age from forty-two to sixty-eight, and one respondent was forty-one years old and had no children. All of the women interviewed were considered “low-income” according to the poverty threshold rubric of the 2012 U.S. Census and were current residents of Bushwick, Brooklyn, a predominately working-class Latino neighborhood experiencing the slow yet definite changes of gentrification.

Latinos constitute the majority of Bushwick’s ethnic composition, making up 72% of its population (New York City Department of City Planning 2013). In a 2007 study, the poverty rate for the neighborhood was 32%, making Bushwick one of the poorest neighborhoods in New

York City (Furman Center for Real Estate & Urban Policy). While harboring a notorious history of poverty and crime that still marks the neighborhood to this day, Bushwick also sits on the verge of change. In the popular media, Bushwick has been awarded the title of being the “next new neighborhood” for artists and hip young professionals (Sullivan 2006, Mooney 2011). Recent articles point to the new art galleries, restaurants, music venues, and renovated apartment buildings and factories in Bushwick as signs of a new “vanguard” entering the neighborhood and generating social and cultural spaces for artists. The one-on-one interviews conducted in this study provided a space for long-term residents of Bushwick to share their personal accounts with the changes occurring in the neighborhood due to gentrification. Participants were asked a series of questions on how they felt towards the neighborhood and the changes that it has been recently undergoing.

Results and Outline

Through the interviews, I found that the second hypothesis on emotional resistance did not appear in women’s responses. I will further elaborate on why there were no findings to this hypothesis in the conclusion. As I expected, women’s orientation to the neighborhood was heavily dependent on their stage of the lifecycle. However, I found that the experiences of participants tended to fall into two, rather than three categories, ‘young women’ and ‘older women.’ These categories were created not so much because of the differences in age amongst women but because of their different positions on the lifecycle. Young women, who were under the age of thirty and did not have any children, shared romanticized notions of Bushwick and were most concerned about the presence of gentrifiers in the neighborhood. In contrast, ‘older women,’ which is a category comprised of both young mothers with children under eighteen and older mothers with adult children, perceived Bushwick in terms of its practicality and were most

worried about abusive landlords. This study showed that the lifecycle was not tied to the way in which women utilized resources in the neighborhood but rather to the formation of their identities. Young women connected to the neighborhood as a means to develop a sense of self as working-class Latinas. The responses of young mothers produced a counter-intuitive result. Although they were initially believed to be the most vulnerable to the pressures of gentrification, young mothers did not exhibit signs of feeling threatened by the phenomenon. Their identity and emotional attachments were intimately tied not to the neighborhood, despite their heavy utilization of its resources, but rather to their families. Now that their families were grown, older mothers were invested in formal social functions of the neighborhood because it prevented them from complete social isolation. Older women constructed politicized Latina identities in the face of the discrimination they felt was directed towards them by abusive landlords.

The rest of this project is divided between the two categories of population presented here. Chapter one describes the ways in which young women construct their Latino identities based on the scenes and interactions of the street. Their accounts follow a similar rhetoric as the journalist and activist Jane Jacobs, who valued the vitality of street life over the organized and controlled city of modernist urban planners. The second chapter focuses on how young women stir up issues of class resentment through their perceptions of themselves as working-class Latinas and gentrifiers as the personifiers of an indulgent middle-class lifestyle. Chapter three describes how older women negotiate between safe and unsafe public spaces in Bushwick to claim those they felt most connected to. The final chapter discusses the construction of a Latino identity or “Latinidad” centered on the discrimination from landlords that older women felt they face because of their status as working-class Latina immigrants.

Thus, this project provides an outlook on how long-term Latina residents of a gentrifying neighborhood, representing different stages of the lifecycle, construct their cultural and political identities around their usage and connection to the local community.

Chapter One

Jane Jacobs in Bushwick: How Young Women Find Latino Identity on the Street

When asked how they would describe Bushwick and where in the neighborhood they felt most connected to, many young women responded similarly, choosing to describe Bushwick as an experience that triggers certain markers of Latino identity. Young women were more likely to respond with open or semi-public spaces found on the street, such as their local bodega, or entire commercial and residential areas, such as Knickerbocker Avenue, than older women in the study. Young women did not hold back on their descriptions of Bushwick, developing a rich portrait of a neighborhood painted with various images, sounds, and smells. In their descriptions of Bushwick, these young women spoke about feeling connected to Bushwick through their daily interactions on the street. It was through observing and participating in these interactions, that the young women understood themselves to be working class Latinas. Their sense of self was therefore heavily tied to the social function of the street.

The social function of the street is a critical issue examined by journalist and activist Jane Jacobs, who responded to the extensive urban renewal projects occurring in many American cities in the mid-twentieth century in her popular book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). In her book, Jacobs denounced modernist planning methods for its failure to recognize how people truly utilized the city. Instead, she advocates for the diversity and “chaos” of the street that respects people’s messy yet meaningful relationship to the neighborhood. It is this call for diversity in the use and meaning of spaces in Bushwick that is reflected in the young women’s responses.

Bodega Dreams

Bianca (24) joined Make the Road New York (MRNY), a local community organization, ten years ago when she was fourteen years old. As an active and dedicated youth member, she

was asked to speak at a televised press conference for one of the organization's events. When it later appeared on the television, the woman at Bianca's local bodega remembered her as one of her patrons, "It came out on the news and my mom was like, the lady from the store recognized you! And it was like the cutest thing because she's like, isn't that your kid? Isn't she always here?" Bianca shared this story to explain her connection to bodegas in Bushwick, one of the places most frequently mentioned by young women when asked where they felt connected to in the neighborhood. For many of the young women, the bodega is a site of recognition, familiarity, and a vibrant beacon of Latino identity in the inner city.

Since their introduction to the streets of New York City in the 1970s, bodegas have become an established Latino urban institution (Kaufman and Hernandez 2001, Kizilbash and Garman 1975). Although the literal translation in Spanish refers to a wine shop, bodegas in an American context are small, local retail stores owned by Latino immigrants, largely of Puerto Rican or Dominican origin, that serve inner city neighborhoods (Krohn-Hansen 2013). While many Korean, Middle Eastern, and South Asian immigrants are also in the New York City grocery store business, usually catering to their own or to the neighborhood's local ethnic community, (Park 1997, Khandelwal 2002) the bodega itself has remained an icon of the Latino urban landscape.

Characterized by their large awnings, an exterior covered in advertisements, bilingual store owner, Spanish music, and Latin produce, bodegas provide neighborhoods with certain services that are not usually obtained in larger retail stores, such as supermarkets, where owners are less likely to know customers by name and cater to their specific needs. Studies have found that while food produce at supermarkets is actually less expensive than in bodegas, Latinos were still more likely to patronize their local corner store to buy food and other basic necessities

(Nayga and Weinberg 1999, Kaufman and Hernandez 2001). This extensive patronage is usually explained by location. Bodegas are closer to resident's homes because there are more bodegas in the neighborhood than supermarkets, a common occurrence in many low-income inner city communities such as Bushwick where there are 131 bodegas and only 10 supermarkets (Graham et.al 2006). The relatively high number of bodegas and low number of supermarkets is obvious when compared to upper middle class neighborhoods such as the Upper East Side, where there are 46 bodegas and 26 supermarkets (Gordon et. al 2007).

Although some researchers, particularly those interested in public health, have been critical of the role of the bodega in low-income communities by arguing that the highly processed foods on its shelves help to explain the high rates of obesity, diabetes, and other health-related diseases in low-income neighborhoods (Kaufman et.al 2007), others are careful to not throw bodegas aside as an harmful institution of low-income communities but rather as a center of customized cultural services (Kaufman and Hernandez 2001).

Due to its smaller size, the space of the bodega is more intimate and controlled; owners are able to develop personal relationships with their customers that address their direct needs. In poor Latino immigrant communities this means paying for items on informal credit or with food stamps, speaking to the storeowner in their native language of Spanish, and buying products from their native Latin American countries. Since the owner must trust that the customer will eventually pay him back, exercising informal credit signifies a strong relationship between the owner and his or her patrons. In extending credit, storeowners also become important figures in the neighborhood as people who can be relied on.

In addition to this customized economic benefit, storeowners and their bodegas build deep relationships to their mostly Latino patrons because of the cultural services they provide.

Although much of the food is processed, bodegas carry essential items of the Latino family diet such as rice, beans, and plantains. Customers also tend to utilize the space as a place to hang out, gossip, and catch up with each other while also performing aspects of their Latino identity, such as speaking Spanish, listening to Latin music, and playing dominoes. In providing these services, the bodeguero, or the owner of the bodega, falls under Jane Jacob's definition of a "public character" (145). Their bodega becomes an economic and cultural hub that plays an essential role in Latino urban living by regulating and protecting sidewalk life, transmitting community news, and maintaining a viable local social network.

The Bodeguero as a Public Character

Because bodegas play such an integral role in the Latino city landscape, the young women who participated in the study frequently mentioned it in their answers to the question on where they felt connected in the neighborhood. Their responses highlight the bodega's role as a site of recognition and validation. This sense of familiarity is particularly centered on the public character of the bodeguero. In watching the sidewalk, transmitting local news, and having a space for people to congregate and develop a social network, the storeowner becomes a well-known figure in the neighborhood. By acknowledging the young women and establishing a relationship with them, however minimal it may be, the storeowner also provides them with a personalized service that is founded on sharing similar ties of ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status and immigration status. In other words, the young women can see themselves in the shoes of the storeowner due to their similar histories. Bianca expresses this connection when asked if she felt involved in the community of Bushwick. She responded saying:

We try our best, and when I say we I mean me and Anna because we're like a duo, to support local shops and we're not perfect so sometimes we'd be like "Yo, but I want something from this diner" so we'd go there but we try a lot to support the bodegas and the delis and the stores that

have been here forever because at the end of the day that's someone's mom that has to go home and support her house too.

Bianca feels that there is a need to support the owners of stores that have been in the neighborhood for a long time because she feels connected enough to them to empathize with their situations. She understands that the owner of the bodega is another working class member of the community struggling to support their household just as much as she and her family.

Time also plays a large role in the connection between storeowner and client.

Acknowledging and being acknowledged by the person who you bought candy from as a child and who continues to make your sandwiches or coffee every morning, defines the space as one of comfort and familiarity. The fact that neither the person behind the counter nor the store itself has changed in the past twenty years arouses a sense of ease and expertise with the people and the space that becomes key to a young woman's sense of belonging and connection.

Genesis is a 20-year-old Dominican-American student who attends a small liberal arts college in upstate New York. She spent most of her childhood in the Lower East Side but moved to Bushwick about twelve years ago with a large part of her extended family. Although she has become "paranoid" walking around at night after spending long periods of time in rural New York, Genesis still feels safe and at home in Bushwick due to such spaces as her local bodega.

She explains this sense of comfort and safety in the following statement:

Bushwick is still like... I see familiar faces all the time. Like I know the guy that works at the corner store and people are friendly so I don't see Bushwick as an unsafe area like a lot of my friends that come from the Bronx.

Being able to recognize people on the street allows Genesis to categorize them as friendly, as opposed to outsiders in the neighborhood such as her friends from the Bronx, who, because they are unfamiliar with the people and spaces of Bushwick, see its streets as potentially dangerous.

Alicia, a 26-year-old Dominican-American social worker who has lived in the neighborhood her whole life, doesn't know the name of her local deli's storeowner but still values her relationship with him. His cordiality and ability to remember a small detail about her life, that she has two dogs, allows her to feel connected to the neighborhood:

There's the guy at the deli at the corner who I see every morning, "Hi good morning, how are you?" I don't even know his name but every morning he's like, "How are you doing? How are the dogs?" and we just have a conversation but I don't even know his name and I doubt he knows mine but its kind of like one of those things where at that deli, I know the sandwich guy's name, he's like "oh these are for the twins."

Similarly, Anna, a 23-year-old Puerto Rican youth worker at MRNY, feels connected to her local bodega because of the storeowner, who she has known since she was a child and who still recognizes her and her mother:

I'm connected to the guys at Bushwick Deli or Dunkin Donuts because they know at this point like, "You want the usual?" At night if I go there late he's like, "Hi, how you doing?" Because he knows me since I was a kid when he owned a candy store by Wilson and he remembers me because of my mother so it's more like the day-to-day interactions with the people around Bushwick, that I go into their stores all of the time.

The storeowner is able to provide Anna with a personal order by not only knowing what her "usual" is but by also asking how she is doing, an amiable and friendly interaction that Anna values. Anna then concludes her thought by grouping the interaction she has at the bodega as an example of the kind of day-to-day interactions she has with people in the neighborhood, including branded retail stores such as Dunkin Donuts. Bodegas, as a semi-public space associated with the street, therefore, act as one example of the many other kinds of public spaces and specific activities performed on the street where daily social interactions occur.

Many of the public spaces and daily interactions the young women mention in their interviews are the foundation of Jacobs' argument on the functions and livelihood of the sidewalk. For Jacobs, both feeling safe amidst strangers and participating in short yet frequent

public interactions on the sidewalk are qualities a healthy street in any city maintains for itself. Such qualities of the street exist because there is a clear boundary between public and private spaces and because there are many passersby, shoppers, residents, and workers, who by utilizing the spaces on the sidewalk also act as its “eyes”, observing and informally maintaining peace and order. These qualities of safety and contact generate the sense of a collective public identity that breeds trust and respect and that also acts as a resource when needed by local residents. It is particularly these small subtle contacts with people like the bodeguero that connect the young women of this study to the streets of Bushwick.

Contact on the Street

Although Anna (23) was initially hesitate in answering the question about connection, saying that it was “weird” and pointing to her upbringing in a strict Puerto Rican and Pentecostal household to explain for her hesitation, “I grew up not leaving my house so for me since moving out, I’ve kind of been exploring Bushwick more”, her description of Bushwick was heavily detailed. The connection she felt at her local bodega was one of the many she felt for the other daily interactions and scenes she found on the street. From watching men play dominoes in front of her office to the distinctive smell of the shoe store she patronized as a child, Anna touched on various sensational memories to describe the way she felt connected to Bushwick as a whole. She articulates this before she begins listing the people and places she felt connected to, “I feel connected to...its weird... I think just walking the streets, I think just being in Bushwick makes me feel connected to it because I’ve lived here all of my life.”

Feeling connected to the neighborhood by walking through its streets was a shared sentiment with the other young women interviewed. Bianca (24) felt specifically connected to Bushwick through her interactions with the people she grew up with, “People-wise I feel

connected. Sometimes I'd be walking down the street and you say hello to four or five people on the block and its just because you know each other because you grew up together." Bianca recognizes these people because they attended the same schools, were raised in the same buildings, and had played in the same parks as her neighbors. Feeling connected to the neighborhood "...because I've lived here all of my life" as Anna states also rings true for Bianca who, because she has grown up in the neighborhood, feels familiar enough with its residents to participate in small daily contacts, such as saying hello to one another.

Bianca compares these sentiments to her new neighborhood of Brownsville, Brooklyn, which she moved to about a year ago when she and her family were physically displaced from Bushwick. Her family could not afford to pay her old apartment's \$1,350 a month price tag and decided to apply to public housing. They were soon offered an apartment in Brownsville:

They picked me up and we moved to Brownsville about a year ago and even that's a culture shock because in Bushwick, you're used to knowing everybody. In Brownsville its literally you look to your right, you look to your left and it's all housing complexes or projects, straight 'hood projects and it's just now our life style is different. Now you come home early, now you watch what you wear all the time, now you get stopped by the cops all the time because cops are on all the corners trying to figure out who has what and what people are doing. I've adapted. I'm not happy. I miss Bushwick. Bushwick is like my skin, my home.

Bianca doesn't feel as connected to Brownsville as she does to Bushwick not only because she grew up in Bushwick and is familiar with its people and spaces, but also because the physical layout of her new neighborhood does not foster the same kind of community she found in Bushwick. What is missing from the picture she describes of Brownsville is what Jacobs often criticized of the urban renewal projects of the 1960s in New York City and in other major American cities. For Jacobs, low-income housing projects that were constructed to house the displaced residents of "slums" were unable to create a healthy and safe environment because the nature of these projects, from their tall height and their homogeneity in terms of uses, limit the

amount of “eyes on the street”. Formal measures of control, such as the heavy police presence on every corner, try to compensate for the lack of “eyes” on the street, but fail in maintaining a truly safe and functional neighborhood. The physical structure of the public housing buildings as isolated residential islands, constrain the sense of safety and the kinds of interactions that would typically arise organically in mixed-use areas. Most of the public housing in Bushwick does not look similar to the high-rise complexes of Brownsville and of other New York City neighborhoods. Instead, public housing in Bushwick has been integrated into the local landscape in the shape of three story buildings, known as Hope Gardens (Gottlieb 1993). The residential and commercial diversity, which Jacobs so heavily praised, is therefore visible on the streets of Bushwick.

Young women in their interviews frequently mentioned the liveliness of these streets, particularly the main shopping strips of Myrtle Avenue and Knickerbocker Avenue. As the commercial center of the neighborhood, the intersection of Myrtle and Knickerbocker holds many memories for the young women interviewed. Young women mentioned shopping on this intersection as children with their parents or continue to spend time there on the weekends.

Alicia (26) reminisces over these streets in her interview:

Rosemary: Where are the places in Bushwick that you feel most connected to?

Alicia: Like street names you mean?

Rosemary: Street names or like places, maybe stores or like your building...

Alicia: Well okay definitely Knickerbocker and I grew up right around Knickerbocker and after I moved but right now I live close to where I used to live. Knickerbocker, I used to go down there with my mom shopping on Saturday so Knickerbocker is huge and I feel at home there. Myrtle Avenue, it's really long but like between Myrtle and Broadway and Myrtle and Wyckoff. I'm really familiar with that area. Just that area, that neighborhood, and along Wyckoff.

Rosemary: And what about those spaces make you feel connected?

Alicia: I think it's because, like I said, since I grew up in that area, there's a lot of faces that twenty years later are still around, or stores, places that my sister and I would see and I'm like “This place is still here?” I think that's what it is. You see people that you remember seeing growing up.

Rather than focusing on a specific place in Bushwick, Alicia chose whole streets in her response, pointing to the value she places on the daily interactions she finds while on the street. These interactions are not hostile but rather friendly and comforting because of the sense of familiarity she has with the people and the spaces of Bushwick that have been in the neighborhood for years. Later in the interview, when asked if she felt involved in the community, she expands on her sense of connection to Bushwick:

Even though it's a big place it kind of feels small because you see a lot of the same faces and even if you never spoken to someone, you see their face enough, you come to recognize it and you eventually start smiling at each other. It just kind of happens. It feels like everyone is aware of everyone else. Even if we're not at like block parties together it feels like if I was walking down the street and God forbid anything was to happen, I feel like enough of the people in the area or my neighbors would know me and would be like "Hold on, something's happening" and that's kind of the cool part about Bushwick because I went to school in Hunter and it may be nice to live in that neighborhood but everybody is just watching out for themselves and nobody stops to take in anyone else, talk to anyone else, but in Bushwick I feel like we kind of have that.

Large communal affairs such as block parties aren't exactly where Alicia finds a sense of community. Neither is the Upper East Side, a wealthy neighborhood where her alma mater was located. Instead, she finds community by simply walking the streets of Bushwick and recognizing and trusting in her neighbors. This sense of community arises from residents acknowledging each other albeit strangers through informal contacts on the street.

Jacobs argues that it is these small and subtle contacts between strangers on the street that foster a sense of public identity. For the young women interviewed, this public identity is intimately tied to their notions of what it means to be from a working class and Latino neighborhood. Young women felt connected to spaces like the bodega and to other elements of the street, such as other retail stores, certain sounds and scenes of people yelling, men playing dominoes, and the smell of a shoe store, because it connects them to their own identity as

working class Latinas. The intensity in which they connected to the neighborhood through the people, sounds, and smells of its streets, is tied to a collective and public Latino identity.

A Pan-Ethnic Latino Neighborhood

Young women's connection to Bushwick was also made visible in the way they portrayed the neighborhood when asked to describe it. In describing Bushwick, participants had to decide on how to frame the neighborhood and selectively choose the people and spaces they found important enough to share. In their descriptions, young women tend to speak proudly of Bushwick, breaking stereotypes of it being an unsafe neighborhood and choosing to describe it as a vibrant community rich with indicators of Latino identity.

In her interview, Genesis (20) highlights the complexity of the relationship between a collective sense of Latino identity and neighborhood life. She mentions feeling less Dominican - the nationality of her parents - than her friends who grew up in predominately Dominican sections of the Bronx. Genesis' desire to identify more closely to her family's country of origin is a shared sentiment amongst Latinos in the U.S. In a Pew Hispanic study, Latinos were more likely to identify themselves using their family's country of origin, 52%, than using pan ethnic terms such as Latino or Hispanic, 20% (Taylor, etc. 2012):

Sometimes I feel like I'm less Dominican because of it. Because my friends can be very Dominican sometimes in the way they speak Spanish or they talk about certain things and I'm not used to it. I never thought of myself as less Dominican but because I grew up in a completely different environment, I don't have the experience of seeing people play dominoes in the middle of the sidewalk. I mean there are Latinos here, and they do play loud music but it's not the same. Like going out on weekends at night in the Bronx, it's like a party outside the building, like they socialize outside the building. Here's not the same way. Here everyone's inside their homes, their buildings, and its interesting to see how that changes the way your socialized in a way because sometimes I just feel like I don't fit in because all of them are born and raised in the Bronx and its completely different. They're definitely louder than I am.

Earlier in her interview, Genesis mentioned feeling comfortable in Bushwick due to the familiarity of the people and spaces she finds on the street. However, in this portion of the

interview she admits that the neighborhood can also feel isolating. According to Genesis, while Bushwick may be a Latino community that actively expresses its identity by playing loud music, it does not hold the same kind of intimate bond that a shared Dominican identity in the Bronx has. Again, Genesis is not alone in her sentiments. The same Pew Hispanic study found that the majority of Latinos in the U.S., 69%, do not believe that Hispanics share a common culture (2012). Bushwick may therefore feel like a more isolated neighborhood because the cultural differences amongst nationalities in Latin America result in the fragmentation of the streetscape. Because of the greater concentration of Dominicans in the Bronx, Genesis feels as though there is a more open and collective sense of being on the street in the Bronx than in Bushwick. This common Dominican culture portrayed in the streets of the Bronx is enough to shape the way that Genesis believes she has been socialized.

Although Genesis represents the attitude of many other Latinos growing up in the U.S., the rest of the Latinas who participated in the study were able to overcome the fragmentation that Genesis' illuminates in her interview, by laying claim to the general sounds, smells, and sights of the street. They developed a common understanding of Bushwick as a pan-ethnic Latino neighborhood by choosing to describe and connect to people and places that were not specific to any Latin American nationality. In doing so, they focused on a broader cultural collective centered on a shared connection to the Spanish language, loud Spanish music, and living with family.

Bianca (24) also described Bushwick as a vibrant neighborhood by focusing on its residents, particularly the ethnic diversity amongst the local population, "Bushwick is the epitome of a melting pot. You can literally walk down the block and there's reggae coming out of the window, there's bachata coming out from another window. You have such a diverse group

of people.” Bushwick is relatively diverse in its representation of several Latin American nationalities. While 72% of the population identify as Hispanic, no one Latin American nationality completely dominates the other, as is the case with parts of the Bronx where Dominicans for example constitute half of the foreign born population (NYC Department of City Planning 2013). Puerto Ricans may have a slightly more visible presence in the community due to their longer history in Bushwick as the neighborhood’s first minorities along with blacks in the 1960s, but with the more recent migration of Dominican, Mexican, and Ecuadorian immigrants to New York City, Bushwick has experienced a rapid expansion of its foreign born population, particularly from Latin America (NYC Department of City Planning 2013).

Anna (23), who was at first hesitant to respond when asked about her connection to Bushwick, was heavily detailed in her description. She chose words such as “loud”, “gritty”, “dirty”, and “beautiful” to describe the neighborhood and connected to the subtle scenes of everyday life that trigger sensational memories, “Bushwick was smelling all of the different foods and listening to the Spanish music and hearing all of the older people talk crap about the young folks or give them advice on how to talk to girls.” Although not explicitly described as a Latino neighborhood, the various sensations mentioned in Anna’s description such as the smell of different foods being cooked, the sounds of Spanish music and the familial-type relationship she describes between older generations and younger generations, are all parts of Bushwick that act as subtle examples of the neighborhood’s collective Latino identity.

Alicia’s (26) description of the neighborhood is similar to Anna’s in that it also focuses on various sights and sounds and includes the way family relationships are shown on the street, I would describe Bushwick as a place that is definitely full of life and very colorful as far as different characters and like in the summer time you can’t even have your windows open to hear T.V. because there’s always different music playing and like people screaming, well not people screaming violently, but like at their kids like, “Hurry up” and things like that. It’s vibrant,

there's a lot of activity going on, and particularly I think where I live, I live along Myrtle so there's a lot of stores and a lot of foot traffic.

In her description, Bushwick is full of life due to the abundance of people patronizing the sidewalk. The street is described as a space where many people congregate to visit stores or talk to friends and where the loud noise that comes from the sounds of different music playing and the shouts of families, symphonize into a rich portrait of Bushwick as an animated Latino neighborhood.

As Bushwick undergoes the process of gentrification, the movement of gentrifiers into the area has inevitably altered the streetscape. Their physical presence as an “other” in the neighborhood due to their racial and socioeconomic differences, and the new kinds of spaces that have been introduced into the neighborhood to cater to their needs, from condominiums to art galleries, has produced tension on the street. This tension rests on the different uses of space in the neighborhood. As the social and cultural dynamics of the street change, the young women expressed their confusion and frustration for their newfound neighbors. The presence of social and economic differences embodied by the gentrifiers forced the young women to reflect upon their own personal identities and the evolving public identity of Bushwick.

Chapter Two

“I’m Not a Fucking Museum”: Young Women’s Perception of Gentrification

The young women who participated in the study utilized the spaces of the neighborhood to not only survive, but to also develop a sense of self. As young women who spent most of their lives in Bushwick, their identities as young working-class Latinas are tied to, and reflected by, the communal Latino and working-class identity found in the subtle scenes and interactions on the street. As gentrification alters the public identity of the neighborhood, the sentiments of confusion and frustration expressed by the young women in their interviews are at the core of this project’s notion of emotional displacement. Emotional displacement occurs as resident’s emotional ties to the neighborhood, such as their sense of place and identity, change and disappear due to the phenomenon of gentrification. As we shall see in this chapter, young women share stories observing and interacting with gentrifiers and gentrified spaces that make them not only feel frustrated and uncomfortable but also forces the young women to question their sense of belonging to the neighborhood.

“I’m Not a Fucking Museum”

One of the main concerns young women had over the changes occurring in Bushwick was the branding of the neighborhood as a hip and “up and coming” area. Sociologist Sharon Zukin speaks of the attractiveness of working-class neighborhoods like Bushwick in her studies on the cultural and economic incentives that produce gentrification (1982, 1995). In her latest work entitled *Naked City* (2010), Zukin uses the term “authenticity” to argue that there are certain aesthetic qualities of the inner city that are of cultural and economic value. According to Zukin, the modern aesthetic qualities desired by gentrifiers are centered on the quality of experience obtained within urban space. Working-class neighborhoods with a predominately immigrant population like Bushwick hold certain experiences, from buying three dollar tacos

from a truck to watching Ecuadorian immigrants play volleyball at Maria Hernandez park, that gentrifiers believe make up the “real” Bushwick. While much of the gentrification literature seeks to explain why such qualities of the inner city are valuable to gentrifiers, this study refocuses the lens on long-term residents as their experiences growing up in Bushwick are suddenly objectified.

For Anna (23), the sudden attention Bushwick has obtained from gentrifiers and the media has made her frustrated, “I feel like all of a sudden Bushwick is exotic! Bushwick is live and happening and the music and blah, blah, blah. I’m not a fucking museum. Don’t talk about Bushwick like that.” The qualities of the working class Latino neighborhood Anna so tenderly described in chapter one have become exoticized to a point where Anna believes they are observed by outsiders like artifacts placed in museums. The spaces of the neighborhood, which were of comfort and familiarity, are therefore reduced into the confined imaginary of the gentrifier.

Other young women shared similar sentiments as Anna. Alicia (26) describes the objectification of Bushwick as an “experiment” where outsiders are able to observe the “natives” of the neighborhood:

When it feels like it’s an experiment and people are coming in and like observing the natives that’s where it bothers me. As long as you pay the rent you can live wherever you want but I also feel kind of protective over Bushwick because it’s not like a little ant farm where you watch everything as it unfolds and that’s how it feels sometimes. I’ve never personally had to deal with it, anyone behaving that way, but that’s how it feels like sometimes and that’s where the struggle is.

Alicia understands that she has no control over who can live in Bushwick but she still finds herself feeling “protective” over the neighborhood. This sense of protection arises in Alicia because she finds that outsiders are suddenly objectifying the essence of Bushwick, an essence

that she understood simply as the way of life in the neighborhood, to sell a false projection of the community.

Alicia continues expressing her frustration by mentioning the rebranding of the neighborhood from Bushwick to East Williamsburg, a practice done by the media and real estate agents to blend the identity of Bushwick into the already “hip” and heavily gentrified neighborhood of Williamsburg which lies west of Bushwick:

It’s like people have been living here for years! I hate that because it feels like come on there are people here. My sister and I... there’s people who call Bushwick, East Williamsburg and it honestly like irks me. It’s Bushwick! My sister is like “What do you mean East Williamsburg? You mean West of Williamsburg and East of Ridgewood? Because yeah that’s Bushwick, that’s what you call that, it’s not East Williamsburg.” Making improvements to the community? Awesome. But trying to change the community entirely that’s where I don’t like the idea, it makes me feel kind of icky.

The renaming of the neighborhood does not come without heavy social costs. Alicia feels that the labeling of Bushwick into East Williamsburg is an attempt to change the nature of the neighborhood entirely. Her exclamations that “people have been living here for years!” points to the erasure of the cultural and physical presence of the community she grew up in. In her reflection of the neighborhood, Anna was similarly bitter over the attempt to rename Bushwick into East Williamsburg:

It was funny, it was like comical... Bushwick was... it’s for me... it was the best place to live because it was mine. A piece of Bushwick was mine for the experiences I had in my life and to have someone come in and one, call it East Williamsburg, like now its insulting because not only do you come in, kick people out, put up businesses where people in the neighborhood can’t work at because they don’t hire people in the neighborhood because they hire their friends, their roommates and more people start moving into the neighborhood and gentrifying it and then you bring in, and maybe you realize it or maybe you don’t, but you bring in more police officers now because the officers now, they’re here to keep the neighborhood safe, no they’re here to keep you safe. The residents who’ve lived here forever get harassed, young folks get harassed especially. More housing gets developed but its not developed in a way where large families in Bushwick can live in. It gets me angry and then you try to change names.

Anna uses past tense to claim a Bushwick that she no longer feels as hers. From observing physical displacement as people are being “kicked out” to the increase in police enforcement, Anna points to many of the social, physical, and economic changes the community has undergone in the face of gentrification. The rebranding of Bushwick into East Williamsburg, however, appears to be the final straw, as even the name of the neighborhood no longer represents the Bushwick that these young women came of age in.

Bushwick’s Social Contract

Alicia (26) was talking to her sister’s co-worker one day about a Latino resident they both knew who constantly played loud music at one in the morning. They both agreed that loud music playing that late at night was an annoyance. Alicia then brought up the story of how her new neighbors, whom she describes as young and from outside of New York City, were repeatedly playing loud music at four in the morning. Her mother, who was upset because her husband had to wake up at five to go to work, called the landlord and complained. Alicia’s sister’s co-worker disapproved of her mother’s action:

She told me, which I found interesting, you know she’s my age, she’s young, she’s like, “You have to understand that that’s just how they are” and I’m like “Who is they?” and she’s like “You know that’s how they live their lives” and I’m like “No, no.” I told her I said “Listen” again, I don’t want to make it about race but, “if it was a Hispanic family who lived here for years you would not hesitate, you would not think twice about knocking on that woman’s door and saying that’s unacceptable and because ‘this is how they live’ well this is our neighborhood and they need to know if that’s what they used to do wherever they’re from, they can’t do that here. This is a working family, everybody has to get up early, everybody’s got a job, you guy’s can’t just like play” and it was like very surprising to me to hear that from her like “You just have to give them a pass because that’s just the way things work for them back where they’re from” and I’m just like but they’re not there anymore, they’re here.

While loud music was a characteristic of the neighborhood that many young women happily used to describe Bushwick, in this scenario, playing loud music at four in the morning violated the neighborhood’s unwritten social codes. These codes, which are determined by the needs of

residents, shape public behavior. In Alicia's story, the violated code of loud music playing late at night disturbs the dynamics of a working class neighborhood, where many residents, such as Alicia's family, wake up early in the morning to work at physically demanding jobs and cannot afford to wake up prematurely.

The conversation between Alicia and her sister's co-worker also highlights the complexity in the attitude long term residents have towards gentrifiers. Although the co-worker agrees with Alicia that a local Latino resident playing music outside at one in the morning is a nuisance, she takes a more laid back attitude towards gentrifiers, believing that they have innate qualities that should be accepted by long-term residents. Alicia disagrees and while she doesn't "want to make it about race" she raises the point that if her neighbors had been Hispanic, her co-worker would have judged the situation differently. It is assumed then, that Hispanics, as the neighborhood's largest ethnic group, understand the unwritten social codes that govern public behavior in Bushwick.

As Alicia attempts to point out in the co-worker's line of thinking, Hispanics, because of their common ethnic tie, would be more severely punished if they violated such codes than gentrifiers. However, while the sister's co-worker was willing to adjust the neighborhood's behavioral codes for the gentrifiers, who may have been raised differently than locals, Alicia would not accept changing the codes of the neighborhood to accommodate gentrifiers. Instead she states, "they're here", meaning that the gentrifiers must find ways of assimilating into Bushwick's already existing social contract. Such a contract is realized through a common set of social ties that enables the development of mutual trust and the creation of collective goals for the neighborhood. Many of the young women's responses in the interviews highlighted the ways

in which the collective efficacy of the neighborhood was changing as the presence of gentrifiers in the neighborhood continued to alter and put into question the public identity of Bushwick.

From a Family to Single Adult Neighborhood

In some of the young women's descriptions of Bushwick, subtle scenes of family life such as parents yelling at their children and older generations advising younger ones, colored the way they described the neighborhood. The same women who valued observing such scenes, Alicia (26) and Anna (23), also mentioned feeling that Bushwick, as a family environment, was slowly disappearing. They pointed to the different lifestyle of gentrifiers to explain for this loss, arguing that gentrifiers as young single adults have altered both the social and economic dynamics of the neighborhood. In terms of social changes, Alicia feels like she is unable to connect to gentrifiers, as she has been able to with long-term residents:

It feels less like a family kind of neighborhood and more like a single adult kind of neighborhood. I'm sure that I've seen some of those new faces plenty of times but I can't remember any of them to say "Oh this is so and so from the store". Whereas the residents, I've seen for years, I'm like "Oh he works at this bodega or she works at the nail salon." It's becoming less of a family atmosphere and more like these people are going about their own business. These people are with friends and that's it.

As in many working class neighborhoods, some of the people who live in Bushwick also work there. Alicia built connections with these people, recognizing them in stores and connecting them to her sense of what a family neighborhood should look like. Alicia believes that gentrifiers would rather "[go] about their own business" than participate in the street life of stores like bodegas and the nail salon, which are essential to her understanding of Bushwick as a family neighborhood. She is therefore unable to familiarize herself with gentrifiers because they do not shop nor work in the same kind of spaces that she patronizes. She continues sharing her opinion on gentrifiers in the following:

Not to say that the new people aren't friendly. My neighbors are all young, you know, that came in from different states, none of them are from New York, but since they've moved in, the two main guys have stayed with the apartment but we've seen so many different people come in through that apartment that I've honestly stop keeping track. I've stopped learning names because there's no point! There are just the two main ones, we know their names, but the rest of them they've changed neighbors like maybe four times and they've lived there like maybe two years. People who come stay a few months but the lease is still in the two main guys' names.

What also inhibits Alicia from developing connections with her new neighbors is that they are more likely to reside in the neighborhood for short periods of time than long-term residents whose families and jobs force them to lay stronger roots in the neighborhood. Their temporariness in the neighborhood also causes for confusion:

It's weird for us to see that happen because my mom is like "Why does that person have the key to my door?" and I'm like "They probably live there Ma. You know how it is." Or I'll be standing in the doorway and this person I've never seen in my life is just coming and I'm like "I guess you're going to the first floor." It feels like there are a lot fewer families than there was before.

The short period of their stay in the neighborhood prevents Alicia and her mother from developing trust with their new neighbors. Because they constantly come and go and rarely participate in the street life that Alicia and her mother are accustomed to, they remain complete strangers. Although different from the typical living situation of Bushwick where people stay with family, Alicia accepts her new neighbors' lifestyle stating, "You know how it is" and assuming that any stranger that walks through her front door is a new temporary tenant of the first floor apartment. Unlike in the scenario with the loud music where she was able to defend the social contract of the neighborhood by complaining to the landlord, Alicia recognizes that she has less control over who and how long gentrifiers stay in their apartments. While she has accepted the gentrifier's different living situation, it does not mean that she has not sensed that there has been a loss in the social atmosphere of the neighborhood.

Anna (23) also felt disconnected to gentrifiers and their lifestyle. In her discussion of “gentrified spaces” such as the new art galleries and boutique shops opening in Bushwick, she compares the culture of gentrifiers to her notion of Latino identity:

It’s like I’m not interested. It’s not homey, it’s like very I don’t know it’s just not... their culture is not for me at all. I don’t think I would survive in it. I think I would lose my culture as a Latino young woman being constantly in that space and I’m just a young woman who is beginning to really get more into the Latino side of my roots because I’ve been here in this space at Make the Road and its very much about heritage and understanding you’re a Latino person but you’re also black and being more conscious and I feel like if I was part of their culture more I would really lose identifying with my community, because there’s nothing of my community in that world. There’s no Spanish music, there’s no dominoes, there’s no talking, there’s not enough of that family kind of feeling for me there [...]

Anna, as a young woman, is still developing her own personal identity, in which being Latina and understanding the complexity of such an identity, plays a huge role. She finds the culture of gentrifiers to be so isolated and disconnected from her own culture that she feels like she would not be able to “survive” participating in it. The sensual qualities of her community, which she had used to describe Bushwick earlier in her interview, such as the playing of Spanish music, dominoes, talking, and a sense of family, has no cultural presence in these gentrified spaces.

Her desire to have a neighborhood that maintains these qualities is important for her as she decides when she will have children, “As a young woman I want to raise kids here with people they can relate to. I don’t want to raise a son in Bushwick if its been completely gentrified because I know he’ll get harassed all of the time by officers. I just know he will.” Anna wants her children to grow up in a neighborhood where they can easily identify with others as working-class Latinos. As she stated earlier, she does not believe a gentrified environment would be inclusive to her own Latino community. Her fears, however, lie not only in the cultural differences that arise in gentrifying neighborhoods but also in the harsh reality of the criminalization of young people of color. She fears that programs such as NYPD’s Stop and

Frisk, which has historically impacted Blacks and Latinos, would target her son. While Bushwick may one day become a family neighborhood for gentrifiers, as have other neighborhoods like Park Slope, it may not be as welcoming to working-class families of color.

The loss of a working-class Latino family atmosphere in Bushwick, therefore, threatens the very livelihood of long-term residents. From the violation of certain social codes to the increase in the criminalization of families of color, the young women interviewed sense the social foundation of the neighborhood cracking. As a result of the rocking of this foundation, Alicia finds economic pressures that also threaten the livelihood of long-term residents:

Traditionally speaking like in Hispanic families, you live with your family, personally, because I know there's a lot of ways to do things, but let's say my family and my extended family, from what I've seen you live with your family and you pay rent between you. But a lot of young people moving in that are like four, five, six people to an apartment and they can afford each of them to pay \$500 or \$600 and their rent is a ridiculous amount they can afford to do it because its not falling on one household over the other, where if you live with your family it falls on one household.

Alicia points out that because gentrifiers live with roommates rather than with family, as is typical within Hispanic communities, gentrifiers are able to split the expensive rent among themselves. Living as single, young adults therefore enables them to afford rent that single households consisting of families could not support on their own. Landlords may therefore discriminate against Hispanics, choosing to accept gentrifiers as tenants because of their ability to pay expensive rents.

Culture of Leisure

Rather than spend their income supporting both themselves and family members, gentrifiers are free to spend great parts of their income participating in activities that would be considered leisurely for long-term residents. Such activities include attending art shows in funky galleries, shopping at hip boutiques, and sitting down in trendy cafes drinking expensive lattes.

While urban geographer Tom Slater (2006) dismisses this indulgent lifestyle of gentrifiers in his criticism of contemporary gentrification literature, claiming that such a focus sugarcoats a phenomenon that has heavy social, political, and economic consequences on the working-class inner city poor, this study finds that the leisurely aspects of gentrifier's lifestyles should be taken into consideration. By examining the lifestyle of gentrifiers not from the side of those drinking the lattes but rather from those observing them from afar, we see how the young women in this study were insulted by the presence of a bourgeois culture.

In their interviews, many of the young women felt frustrated observing the public behavior of gentrifiers. Bianca (24) angrily questioned their style of living:

Who are these people? Who stands around and paints shit on the floor with weird ass music and have their hippie hipster friends at three in the afternoon sitting around drinking bougie wine? You don't work? You don't have a job? You don't have responsibilities? That's all you do all day?

In a generally homogenous working-class neighborhood, observing people who are not working throughout the day disturbs Bianca. She questions the very existence of the gentrifiers by observing their behavior as they "paint shit on the floor", listen to "weird ass music" and drink "bougie wine" at an hour of the day where most people in the neighborhood are traditionally working.

Anna (23) shares similar sentiments in her observations of gentrifiers. While describing Bushwick, Anna spoke of her interest in the neighborhood's history and mentioned how her father would half-jokingly tell her how white people were going to return to Bushwick one day.

Although she only thought of it as a joke, she finds that her father's prophecy was oddly correct:

[...] It's crazy because they did come back but they came back in a way where it's like a bunch of hipsters who can afford to like literally be at the bar until 12 like you don't go to work? And that's because they have a job and they make a lot of money and it's like fine live here but you don't even care that you've been displacing people who have lived here forever.

Alicia uses the term “hipster” here to describe gentrifiers who perform such leisurely activities as drinking at unusual hours of the day. The label of a hipster has been particularly used in the media and popular discourse to describe a young hip urbanite whose cultural and intellectual tastes do not pertain to the mainstream. Henry Alford’s “How I Became a Hipster” in the New York Times, for example, follows Alford as he consumes his way through Williamsburg and Bushwick, buying a \$225 plaid shirt and a fixed-gear bicycle, to prove that his tastes in style and fashion align to those of hipsters. The best way to define a hipster is therefore through a brief examination of French sociologist’s Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of ‘taste’. For Bourdieu, the creation of cultural taste is heavily contingent upon class position. Particular goods and access to certain experiences such as traveling, visiting museums, and listening to the opera, act as symbols that demarcate class positions and are contingent upon Bourdieu’s other notions of economic, social, and cultural capital. The hipster’s specific preferences in taste, which has them drinking “bougie wine”, painting “shit” on the floor, listening to “weird ass music” and patronizing bars at odd hours of the day therefore highlights their middle-class lifestyle to the young women in this study.

While Anna finds that most whites in the neighborhood are “hipsters”, she also finds that not all hipsters are white. Instead, as she dabbles in the art world of Bushwick as a poet, she discovers that people of color also participate in this hipster culture:

[...] It just feels like this separation, like if I hang around a person of color that’s some artist it’s just weird because they’re a hipster and they congregate with that group and they have this culture and this atmosphere and way of being and shit that I’m just like I just don’t get how are you guys like... I feel like they live the vida loca and all oh free and not worrying about anything. What? How could you be this ignorant? It’s part of my frustration.

Anna believes it is not so much the racial differences that are changing the social dynamics of the neighborhood, as much as it is class differences. What frustrates Anna is the carefree attitude

gentrifiers, including gentrifiers of color, appear to have. For Anna, gentrifiers do not seem to be carrying the weight of supporting both themselves and their family members, as many natives of the neighborhood must do on a daily basis.

Culture of Survival

Bushwick has one of the highest poverty rates in New York City standing at 32% (Furman Center 2011). The level of poverty and substandard conditions of the neighborhood is evident in the high rate of children's obesity, asthma, and lead paint poisoning (ibid). While Bushwick may still be the vibrant Latino neighborhood that the young women cherished in their descriptions, the harsh reality of Bushwick as home to a large poor population has also heavily shaped the lives of these women. In her interview, Anna shared her story of leaving an abusive home at seventeen-years-old and having to find a job to support herself. She shares this story as a way to compare her life to those of gentrifiers, who she believes do not understand the culture of survival that supports the existence of long-term residents:

Folks that are coming to the community don't understand the survival culture that folks in the neighborhood have to live and that's really what it is and it's sad [...] I think when you're trying to balance survival with trying to live and better yourself, it gets very hard because it affects how you prioritize things and the decisions you make. For a long time, my priority was to get a job first, school was not going to save me, school was not going to stop me from being homeless, it's not going to put a roof over my head and lock my doors at night to keep freaking idiots from coming. It was not going to do any of that. I think I'm very lucky and I don't think there are a lot of young women who are lucky.

Although she has her high school degree, Anna did not have the privilege of attending an institution of higher education. Instead, she had to neglect opportunities to "better [her] self" like going to school, in order to survive the day-to-day struggles of being a homeless youth.

This is the culture that Anna feels, along with many of the other young women, characterizes Bushwick. To her, even potentially dangerous situations in the neighborhood such

as having a drug dealer on the corner of your block, did not frighten Anna. She understood that drug dealers were a part of the culture of survival ingrained in the neighborhood:

Bushwick has always been a place where, I don't care that I used to live across the street and know at a certain time of night I couldn't go outside because the corner was the drug dealer's corner and he was going to do his business and that was what was going to happen. But there was just kind of like an understanding of how things worked and if you stayed in your lane you were fine you know?

While gentrification may receive praise from scholars for its ability to bring safety to crime-ridden neighborhoods (Florida 2002), Anna's comment on her relationship with the drug dealer complicates such a view of gentrification. For Anna, her "understanding of how things worked" enabled her to feel comfortable with the drug dealer. She understood the positions of both herself and the drug dealer in the neighborhood, and knew that if she just "stayed in [her] lane" she wouldn't get into any trouble. However, her interactions with gentrifiers are much more unclear. She finds that she must constrain herself in the presence of gentrifiers without understanding why:

I cringe. I get quiet in my deli where I've been having a conversation with the owner who knows me and I get quiet and cringe like I don't belong in that store when they walk in. It's like really? I shouldn't have to feel that way. My family has lived in Bushwick their entire life, my entire life I have lived in Bushwick. I've walked these parks, I've been scared to walk at night, and I've been chilling walking at night. I've been all types and sorts of feelings that I've experienced Bushwick for what it is and now it's like sad. I think what's happening in Bushwick is sad.

Anna feels that because she has experienced the neighborhood in every possible way, from the good to the bad, she should be able to understand why her interactions with gentrifiers are different from the typical interactions she has in such spaces as her local bodega.

However, because she cannot connect to the culture of gentrifiers, she finds herself questioning her own position in the neighborhood:

I don't feel like it's my place when I walk into Bushwick Deli and I know the fucking owner and some hipster looks at me up and down, like what am I doing in this store. Like excuse me? Are you crazy? [...] Don't come into our neighborhood and look at us like we don't belong here and

that's what gives it the separation feeling and its weird because the majority of them are white, because some people are like "Oh some of them are black and Latino." Okay that's great but guess what? That rich black person can't relate to me as a poor, black woman. A rich Latino person can't relate to me as a poor Latino woman. They're going to look at me like I made it, you can make it too.

The stares Anna feels from gentrifiers are loaded with messages of who belongs in such public spaces as the bodega and who does not. While Anna felt deeply connected to Bushwick Deli, the stares she feels from gentrifiers shake her sense of belonging. The power dynamic between outsider and insider, new resident and old, reverse as Anna now feels like she must accommodate gentrifiers by constraining herself and remaining quiet in a space where she usually talks freely to the store owner. Anna also feels like gentrifiers of color use their racial and ethnic ties to long-term residents in a condescending manner. While they may believe that their individual successes into the middle-class should place them as role models for the working-class blacks and Latinos of Bushwick, Anna finds that their class position situates them as outsiders who cannot relate to the stories of struggle and survival that characterize Bushwick.

Access to Gentrified Space

Awkward encounters between young women and gentrifiers, as in the case with Anna in Bushwick Deli, highlight the differences between the lifestyles of long-term residents and gentrifiers. These experiences of confusion and discomfort occur in public spaces that young women are already familiar with such as in the bodega, as well as in new spaces of the neighborhood, defined here as "gentrified space." Such spaces buy out and displace the small businesses that once served long-term residents, to cater to the needs and consumer preferences of gentrifiers.

The women who participated in the study were asked if they felt like they had access to gentrified spaces. Many of the young women shared ambivalent views. While they felt like they

could enter gentrified spaces as young and Americanized individuals, they felt like older immigrants of the neighborhood could not. Alicia shares her awkward encounter in a new restaurant that opened up in Bushwick:

I feel like I can definitely go in but I feel really out of place, like I stick out. I remember the first time going to this pizzeria or restaurant by my house. I went with my sister for lunch and we went in and sat and we looked like we've never seen chairs before because we were like "Where do we sit? Do I just pick a spot?" And they were like "Oh pick any seat" and we were like "Alright!" I just felt so out of place because it's such a different atmosphere than what I'm used to. I mean I've gone in a couple of times and now I know the drill but it felt strange when we first went in.

For Alicia, while she felt like she did have access to a gentrified space, she did not feel comfortable being inside of the restaurant. Because the people and the structure of the restaurant are different than what she is usually accustomed to, she found herself questioning the use of the space. However, she still feels like she had enough access to the space to enter it voluntarily and has continued patronizing the store now that she is more familiar with the way the space functions.

Although she may find that she can enter such spaces, Alicia believes that the majority of the residents in the neighborhood, recent working class immigrants, do not have similar shares of access as she does:

[...] The majority of residents who were here before might just look at it like well why would I go there when I have to go shopping, I have to go feed my kids, I have to do this. They lead a much busier life and that's one of the things that it feels, to those who've always live here, that these people moving in now are living life a different way. They have all the time to spend their time in an art gallery, which to us, to people who've worked in factories their whole lives, don't feel like work. Yeah they work, they're getting paid for that but if you ask my dad whose worked twenty, thirty years in a factory, he'd be like that's not a job, that's just hanging out and getting paid for it.

Alicia points to the differences between the culture of leisure gentrifiers appear to be bringing into the neighborhood and the culture of survival that has long characterized Bushwick. For long term-residents, like Alicia's father who is employed in a physically demanding job at a factory,

occupations that do not appear to be as labor intensive, such as working at an art gallery, seem to be jobs where people work for fun rather than work to survive.

When asked to further explain why she believed she felt more comfortable in gentrified spaces than her parents Alicia answered with the following:

I think that I would have less trouble going into these places than my parents based purely on well one, age and two, well their English isn't bad but its not their first language so I think that that would keep them from going anywhere. Maybe it is my age because I'd be like "Yeah that sounds like fun let's do that" and they'd be like "But why? What do you need there?" "Nothing I just wanted to try it". "Well great, I have to go cook." They've worked all of their lives, and I don't want to generalize but most of the population of Bushwick falls into that category where they've worked all of their lives, and they're thinking well okay how's it going to help the household? So that's why I would have an easier time because I would just want to try it because it looks cool. That's it.

Alicia believes the reason for the inability of older residents like her parents to access gentrified spaces lays in both age and language differences between gentrifiers and long-term residents.

She thinks that older long-term residents are preoccupied in trying to support themselves and the rest of their household because they have greater responsibilities than the younger population of Bushwick. According to Alicia, older residents do not feel like they have the time to enter gentrified spaces because they do not believe that participating in them would improve their own livelihoods.

Bianca (24) answered the question on access in a similar manner as Alicia. She begins with the way she has personally experienced gentrified space and then expands her thoughts to how she feels other members of the community would utilize or not utilize similar spaces. In terms of her own personal experience, Bianca felt like she could access these spaces without being turned away. However, she did not feel comfortable enough in such spaces to continue patronizing them. When speaking about other members of the community, she felt like older immigrants with lower English skills in particular would have even less access than she does:

Bianca: Access, I mean I can walk in and automatically I'm going to get looked at because it's happened. I'm a coffee fanatic so if anything new opens with coffee I might walk over and then I see it's \$5 for a cup of coffee, I kind of go but I walk in and you get stared at almost and it's amazing to feel like an intruder where you've been your whole life because that's what they make you feel like. So do I have access in a sense where I can go and look and stuff but it's not really for me. I wouldn't say I have a ton of it.

Rosemary: So would you say some of the other long-term residents would also feel the same?

Bianca: Some of them have even less access. The language barriers are ridiculous. There's people who don't speak the same language as you do and there are grandmothers who wouldn't go in there and feel intimidated to go inside or won't because it's just not their deal. It's just not what they do, it's not normal for them.

Although some gentrified spaces may initially entice long-term residents, specifically the young people of the neighborhood, the expensive prices and hostile environment of the space may keep them from coming back. Unlike Alicia who, after her initial uncomfortable encounter at the restaurant, continued patronizing the space, Bianca does not feel welcomed enough in gentrified spaces to become a regular customer. But like Alicia, Bianca also finds that older long-term residents, such as grandmothers, would choose to not even enter such spaces not only because of the fear of there being a language barrier but also because entering a bar or coffee shop midday is just something that is "not normal for them." Bianca, therefore, also believes that the kinds of products and services that gentrified spaces provide to the community are neither attractive nor useful for older residents.

The attitudes of older women towards Bushwick and gentrification are explained by the older women themselves in the following chapter. As we shall see, older women share ambivalent views both about their neighborhood and about gentrifiers. Rather than focusing on the social and cultural aspects of the street as young women did, interweaving their own personal identity to the public identity of sidewalk life, older women tended to focus heavily on the practical usages of Bushwick. They valued the neighborhood for its location and proximity to Manhattan and to modes of public transportation and were distraught not over the public

behavior of gentrifiers, but over rent increases, landlord harassment, and the sudden buyout of their buildings to Jewish landlords, who they found to be discriminatory towards Latinos. It is through this discrimination and the collective struggle they face due to their ethnicity and immigration status that older women in the study understood themselves to be Latina.

Chapter Three

The Stakes of the Street: Older Women and Public Space

‘Older women’ in this study is a category that is distinct from ‘young women’ not so much because of age differences but because of older women’s later position in the life cycle. The period that differentiates the two groups of women is the motherhood stage. Whereas the young women were under thirty and childless, the older women category consisted of both young mothers with children under eighteen and older mothers with adult children. Because these two groups of women were on different stages, young women and older women perceived and utilized the neighborhood in distinct ways. While the young women were still in the process of figuring out their Latina identity through the public identity of the street, older women divided public spaces in the neighborhood between those that were safe and unsafe. Older women felt vulnerable to the street in comparison to young women because it posed a threat to either their children or to themselves.

When public spaces in the neighborhood were seen under this concern of safety, both young and old mothers perceived the neighborhood in terms of its practicality, valuing its affordability and location to resources over its aesthetic or cultural worth. Older women were more likely to feel connected to specific and enclosed sites in the neighborhood that were close to home and provided essential resources, such as their child’s local school, the church, the elderly center, or the office of Make the Road New York (MRNY) than to the sensory qualities and experiences of the street. The functions of these enclosed or semi-public spaces are determined by the ages of the women and their families. Mothers with young children tended to talk about the spaces that helped support their children. Older mothers with grown up children felt more connected to spaces that enabled them to fulfill the roles of leader and caretaker that they could not perform anymore now that their families are grown.

Motherhood in Bushwick

The motherhood stage in the life cycle is a point in women's lives, particularly for working class single mothers, where women are more likely to seek out, and become dependent upon, the social network that manifests itself in daily neighborhood life. Mothers find themselves depending on their local social network to help them in the process of raising their children. This is especially true in Bushwick where a quarter of the population lives in female-headed households with children younger than eighteen (Department of City Planning, 2010). Although some of the mothers interviewed are still relatively young in age, we find that their views towards the neighborhood are still tied to its practical uses, much like the perception of older women with grown up children, than it is to the romanticized notions of Bushwick that the young women had.

Angela is a married 36-year old Mexican immigrant mother of two young sons. She has been living in Bushwick with her family for fourteen years. She particularly values the neighborhood for its easy accessibility to childcare resources. In her response to the question on where she felt connected to in Bushwick, she mentions spaces that support the wellbeing of her children:

Angela: Close to where I live on Putnam, like two blocks away from the house, there are places where I can find systems of support, for example, for the children, for whatever, it's very close to the house.

Rosemary: Like what?

Angela: Like the daycare, the library. They are all very close to the house.

While Angela points out places that provide her with support for her children, she also frequently mentions how close these childcare resources are from her home, which hints to the idea that she may be valuing the proximity to these spaces just as much as the spaces themselves. However, while she may appreciate Bushwick's proximity to childcare services, Angela does not feel like

other spaces in the neighborhood are safe for her children. She answers the question on what has changed in the neighborhood with the following:

Not that much because for example in the park, more than anywhere, the park close to the house, they have fixed it and it looks very nice but there still lacks a lot of security in that park. I feel like the children aren't safe in these parks because there are a lot of drug addicts. In terms of what else has changed, there are more commercial centers, more stores but in the parks that's where I'll still give a complaint because its close to the house but we can't use it because we don't feel safe to have the children there. There aren't enough people watching around to make one feel safe to be there.

For Angela, public spaces in Bushwick such as its parks are not sites of friendly interactions and sightings as is the case with younger women. Instead, Angela considers these spaces to be unsafe for her young children due to the presence of criminal behavior and the lack of Jacob's "eyes on the street".

Tatiana is a single 35-year old native born Puerto Rican mother of two young children. While she has lived in Bushwick her entire life, Tatiana chose to respond with the school her daughter attends for the question on connection, "My daughter's school where I go to the PTA meetings and volunteer [...]" Like Angela, it is the spaces that her children occupy in Bushwick that she feels most attached to. She connects to Bushwick therefore through her family. Yet also like Angela, Tatiana does not feel like Bushwick is a safe neighborhood for her children to grow up in. When asked if she would ever consider moving from Bushwick, Tatiana responded with the following:

Tatiana: I would because my sister lives in Forest Hills and I would want something more family oriented where you feel more comfortable with your kids. But maybe it's because my sister lives there that I would want to go there but I just feel like its nicer.

Rosemary: Like it's nicer to look at it and for the children? You feel like Bushwick isn't the same?

Tatiana: Right. There's not a lot for kids and what there is for kids like lets says they went to this park behind Bushwick High School, I don't know if its called Bushwick High School anymore...and then I took my kids there and then they started smoking weed a few feet away. I didn't like that so I feel like if you go to a nicer neighborhood, people know okay I can't do that here. They would be more private about it.

For Tatiana, Bushwick does not exhibit a child friendly environment as the neighborhood of Forest Hills, Queens does, which is where her sister and a mostly white, middle to upper middle class population live. Instead, Bushwick is not considered to be a “nice” neighborhood because of visible criminal behavior in public spaces, such as smoking weed in a park. She therefore does not feel a strong enough connection to the neighborhood, despite having grown up there, to want to continue living in Bushwick.

Tatiana’s emotional detachment to Bushwick is also made visible in her response to the question on support systems. She primarily finds support, outside of the neighborhood, “If not in Bushwick, than in Ridgewood. I try going to church and they’re really supportive.” Ridgewood, the neighborhood west of Bushwick, is where not only her church is but also where her mother and aunts live, who provide her with the emotional support she needs raising two children alone as a single mother. However, in terms of financial support, she is supported by her children’s social security checks and is currently living in public housing in Bushwick. Therefore, Tatiana may not be content with the social environment of the neighborhood but she is financially stable enough to live in Bushwick. Similarly, Angela may be concerned over the public safety of Bushwick but she finds the proximity to resources, valuable. Bushwick is therefore a neighborhood that is practical in its affordability and location, which are aspects of the neighborhood that are also taken up by older women with grown children later in the chapter.

New Sites of Socialization

The older women with grown up children also valued single enclosed spaces in Bushwick but for different reasons than young mothers. The need to participate in semi-public spaces is particularly important for older people in the inner city because they no longer have to structure their lives around older social networks of family, and for some, work. To avoid isolation and

maintain social ties, older people search for new spaces to socialize in. A recent article in the New York Times, for example, documented the controversy that recently escalated in a McDonalds in Queens, when a group of elderly Koreans who spent their whole day talking and munching over a pack of French fries, were asked to leave the fast food restaurant by the police for ‘loitering’ in the dining area. Doctoral candidate of sociology at NYU, Stacy Torres, argues in an op-ed piece that it is the shrinking of the social network of the elderly that pushes them to find new gathering spots. For the older women included in this study, the church, the elderly center, and the office of MRNY, become semi-public spaces where older women are able to construct and maintain a sense of community.

The only older participant who mentioned feeling connected to an open public space in Bushwick was Luna, a 59-year-old Dominican immigrant who came to Bushwick at the end of the neighborhood’s darkest historical period, where the presence of gangs, looting, and acts of arson were common scenes on the street. In her response to the question on where in the neighborhood she felt connected to, Luna mentions the block she has lived on for more than twenty-five years:

On Putnam. When I first moved to Putman, it was drugs twenty-four hours a day. We couldn’t go to the park. We would leave the school with fear. In 1991, I organized a block association and now my area is good for the people who have money but not for me. It was good in the 1980s because it was for me. You wouldn’t see me leaving Bushwick. I have thirty-three years living in this country and twenty-six of those on Putnam. I can’t go to Williamsburg, which is the first area I lived in, in Queens I’m not going to find anything, in Manhattan I’m not going to find anything. I won’t find anything. (Luna)

Unlike the young women who mentioned entire streets in their responses because they valued its aesthetic quality and cultural significance, Luna’s connection to the street is tied to a form of political action. The crime on the street, and the fear she felt for herself and her family, motivated her to organize a block association. However, she mentions that the improvements that

occurred in the neighborhood after the establishment of the block association were not for people like her but rather for “people who have money”. Similarly to Anna, the 23-year-old youth work at Make the Road, who in chapter two, claimed Bushwick as her own despite observing criminal public behavior, Luna also believes that the Bushwick prior to gentrification was one she could claim ownership over.

The Office of Make the Road New York

For the other women in the study, spaces of connection were usually spaces where they were able to socialize with other members of the community. One such space was the office of Make the Road New York (MRNY), a local community organization with offices in the largely immigrant neighborhoods of Bushwick, Brooklyn and Jackson Heights, Queens. Many of the older women I interviewed have been members of the organization for many years and actively participate in the meetings of the organization’s Housing and Environmental Justice Project. I spent a lot of time in the waiting room of the Bushwick office, where I waited for the community organizer to introduce me to some of the women he worked with. While I was there, I observed the space, taking note that the waiting room was a heavily gendered space. Every time I made a visit, a group of four or five women would cook lunch for the entire office from the open kitchen behind the receptionist. After making sure everyone in the office had a plate, the women would sit in the waiting room and talk over mouths full of rice, pigeon peas, pork, and salad. They spent their time gossiping about people they saw from outside of the large office window, sharing family and neighborhood news, and talking to the organization’s staff, who would briefly pop in to get coffee or water. It was this sense of community, taking care of and feeding office staff, socializing with friends, and participating in meetings, that many of the older women valued about MRNY.

Manuela is a 62-year-old Puerto Rican who first settled in Bushwick when she came to the U.S. thirty years ago. She recently moved to the neighborhood of Clinton Hill, where she lives with her husband and grandson. She finds herself coming back to Bushwick, however, to do all of her shopping, talk to friends, and to visit the MRNY office. She particularly felt connected to MRNY for its ability to unite community members:

Here, the only place I feel connected to is at Make the Road. There isn't any other place. You can come here and you're with people who are more or less like you, that have more or less the same problems. They at least unite us and if they can't do something they refer you to another place. (Manuela)

Manuela finds that the MRNY office is able to unite local residents because it provides a space for people to share similar backgrounds and stories. Indeed, in many of the Housing and Environmental Justice Project meetings that I attended, members were given the opportunity to share their stories of landlord harassment, poor housing conditions, and the attempts of new landlords to buyout their apartment. All of the stories were told in Spanish to a crowd of twenty to thirty Mexican, Puerto Rican, Ecuadorian, Dominican, and Colombian immigrants, who would either solemnly or angrily nod in agreement. Therefore, for Manuela, the MRNY office is one of sharing the difficulties of living in Bushwick and constructing a sense of unity amongst working class and Latino residents.

Nancy, a 60-year-old widowed Puerto Rican, who lives in Bushwick with her daughter and two grandchildren, also felt connected to the office of MRNY as well as to her local senior center and while visiting stores and friends. When asked to expand on her role in these spaces, she responded with the following, "Here [MRNY] I spend time with my friends talking, sometimes I help out in the kitchen and in meetings." She continues describing her connection to the office of MRNY when asked how she first became a part of the organization:

Oh, because when they opened this place, I was just moving in and I was walking by and they invited me. I came and I never left, I stayed. I've met a lot of people. I used to cook a lot, go to the meetings. Their meetings are always good. I go to protests. I have just stayed here socializing for fifteen years. I won't leave this organization. For me everything is good. The rent? What can we do?

For Nancy, the office of MRNY is a space to socialize with friends and meet new people while also participating in certain leadership roles in the more domestic space of the kitchen and in the more political space of the organization's meetings. While she seems to consider rental increases as something out of her control by asking, "What can we do?" she still has no desire to leave the organization because she finds herself satisfied by its social and political functions.

The Catholic Church

The Catholic Church was another site in which many of the older women felt connected to. Since most older women grew up in Latin America, a region which has the largest number of Catholics in the world, it is important to acknowledge the role that the Catholic Church has in being an essential religious and semi-public space in many large cities and rural areas of Latin America (Pew Research Center, 2013). Many Latin American immigrants bring their Catholic traditions with them to the U.S. and pass them along to following generations. 62% of Latinos in the U.S., for example, say that their religious affiliation is Catholic (Taylor et. al 2012).

Mariel, a 62-year-old Colombian widow attends her local church in Bushwick on a weekly basis and finds herself most connected to that space, "In church. I go to church. St. Martins of Tours that's the one on the corner of my block. I go there to help people, the elderly women." She goes on to give an example of how she was able to counsel someone who had recently lost her son through prayer, "In that way I helped the lady and we had a reunion to pray for her son". Like the women in MRNY who take on positions as leaders and caretakers in the space, Mariel finds similar roles to fulfill at church.

Maya is a 47-year-old Dominican immigrant who lives with her husband and 23-year-old son. Like Mariel, Maya is also heavily involved at her church, where she is a lector and organizer of many of the church's events. However, in her response, she also highlights the lack of other kinds of public spaces, particularly parks, in Bushwick:

For me it's more in the church. The church is where I most go. But I am aware that here in Bushwick there's no park that one can go recreationally. There are small parks you know but sometimes one feels scared of going to those parks. I prefer to go to other parks in Brooklyn like Prospect Park or Forest Park in Queens or Central Park in Manhattan to spend some time in rather than in a local park because sometimes I'm a bit scared of being there for too long. (Maya)

Because of their potentially dangerous quality, Maya finds herself having to go outside of the neighborhood to enjoy herself recreationally in other parks. It is this fear of crime that also influences both Mariel and Maya to restrain themselves in other public spaces in Bushwick.

In their interviews, both women mention how anti-social they are in other parts of the neighborhood. Mariel, for example, does not find herself with many friends in Bushwick outside of her church or the office of MRNY:

In the community, I don't have that many friends. With my neighbors I tell them "Hello, hello, good morning" but we're not friends. [...] I'm not the kind of person to visit other people's homes. When I go visit people, I visit my nieces that live here or the people from church. My parents never taught me to go to other people's houses. I don't like to play. I like to entertain myself with the people here [MRNY], the people from the organization but it's "Hello, how are you?" But from there nothing more. I'm not the kind of person to hold conversation. It's only here where I participate a lot and I like to go to Albany, Washington DC, Boston, wherever I like to volunteer for that. I like to talk and be a part in the meetings but in the streets with people I don't know, I don't know what they like, I don't drink, I don't smoke. I know they like to drink and smoke but not me. (Mariel)

Unlike the young women who sought out interactions on the street, Mariel does not feel comfortable participating in these exchanges. The simple hellos and goodbyes that young women valued are not considered of great importance to Mariel. Instead, she chooses to socialize with people at MRNY than with people on the street. Although she contradicts herself in stating that she does not like to hold lengthy conversations with members of the organization, she still

“like[s] to talk” and “entertain [her] self with the people [there]” more so than with people on the street, whose behavior do interest her.

While Mariel points to the behavior of people on the street to account for why she chooses not to be social in those spaces, she also factors in the way she was raised by parents who “never taught me to go to other people’s houses.” Maya also states several reasons for why she believes she isn’t involved in the community, “I don’t participate much in anything because I don’t know anyone. Because of my job there’s not that much time to go out and maybe it’s also because of my personality.” Maya points to her job, which occupies much of the time she could be using to socialize, and her personality, to explain for her lack of involvement in the community. However, later in the interview, she also brings up her age and the fact that she no longer has young children in school as other reasons:

I know its there, and years before, I used to participate in English classes in the center at Saint Barbara’s for women and minorities. They help people find jobs and they helped me learn English and gave me computer lessons. So I know there’s good places but with my age I’m not that involved because I don’t have children in school, which is what makes people search for more outside help. (Maya)

Maya acknowledges that places for community involvement exist in Bushwick because she has utilized them before. She has gained valuable skills from participating in these programs, such as learning English and taking computer classes. These skills were important for her in the past when looking for jobs that would help support herself and her young family. Now that her family is older, she no longer feels the need to depend as heavily on community resources.

Location, Location, Location

Aside from the specific sites of socialization in the neighborhood, many of the older women, both young mothers and older mothers, mention valuing Bushwick’s prime location to resources, particularly to public transportation, in their interviews. Only fifteen to twenty

minutes away from Lower Manhattan by the popular L, J, M, and Z lines and with several bus routes cutting through the neighborhood and linking it to the rest of Brooklyn and Queens, Bushwick is indeed well connected and in close proximity to jobs, schools, and other resources around the area and in other boroughs. Bushwick's location in the midst of the fast paced and exciting City of New York was also of great value to older women, who enjoyed living in a city famous for its undying movement.

Mariel, the 62 year-old widow mentioned earlier, has been living alone in her Bushwick apartment for years. She has finally decided to cave in to the demands of her son and move to Florida to be with him and other family members. The only reason why she appears to be hesitant of making such a decision is because of Florida's suburban sprawl:

I've been to Florida and I feel lonely even though I have three of my sisters and my nephews there. I have lived here in New York for so long. I love to visit Manhattan. I love to visit the Empire State Building. When the Twin Towers were there, I would go. On Sundays and the weekends, I go to museums, to the Bronx Zoo, all of those places I like to visit them on weekends. So I think to myself 'Oh my god where am I going to go over there if everything is in car?' Here I can just take the train and I'm right there. I'm going to miss that. [...] I'm going to miss it. I'm going to miss New York because over there everything is too far to visit like my sister's houses. That's the only thing I'm going to miss and all of the functions of New York.

Despite living alone in Bushwick, Mariel finds that she can remain entertained by all of the attractions New York City has to offer. Her access to these spaces is reachable only by public transportation, which she is easily able to utilize from Bushwick.

Juana, a 58-year-old Ecuadorian immigrant, similarly values Bushwick for its public transportation and for its location in the inner city. She has been living in the neighborhood since she first came to the U.S. in 1986 and finds herself not liking any other area other than Bushwick:

Rosemary: So you said you like to live in Bushwick, what exactly about it do you like?

Juana: I prefer to be here because without even six months of leaving my country, I came here to this area and I don't like Queens, Staten Island, Connecticut. I don't like any except for this area, Brooklyn.

Rosemary: What is it about this area that you find interesting? The stores?

Juana: Yes, for the stores, for the trains, for the buses. Because in New Jersey you always have to wait a long time to get the bus that comes here. In Connecticut, you have to wait for the buses to come at a certain time and if you pass that time, you're staying there. In New York, there exists the largest movement in the world. That's why they say it's the city that never sleeps because you can go to any area and find someone awake. I'm not leaving from here. I'm staying. I don't like any area except this one. The problem is that people talk bad about Bushwick. There is a lot of news on Bushwick, Bushwick, Bushwick. But in other areas it's the same thing. If you don't mess with anyone you can live peacefully. [...] The neighborhood doesn't do anything; it's the people themselves who do things.

Juana compares the public transportation and energy of New York City to the surrounding regions of New Jersey and Connecticut and finds these other areas to be inefficient in the amount of time wasted on public transportation. She enjoys living in New York City, and particularly in Bushwick, because of its rapid and dependable transportation and for its liveliness. However, Juana finds herself having to defend Bushwick because of its negative reputation in the media. In the neighborhood's defense, she believes that it is not Bushwick itself that is bad but rather the kinds of people that one interacts with. These older women therefore enjoy living in Bushwick because it's position in the middle of the vibrant and lively City of New York, keeps them both connected and entertained.

As older women navigated between safe and unsafe spaces in Bushwick, they chose enclosed spaces to avoid the neighborhood's more threatening streets and parks. Older women particularly valued the neighborhood for two practical reasons. The first was the proximity to services within the neighborhood and the second was the modes of public transportation that connected them to resources in other parts of the city. Both young mothers and older mothers saw the neighborhood through these pragmatic lenses. However, they utilized enclosed spaces to satisfy different needs. Young mothers felt connected to Bushwick through their children but

appeared to hold no strong emotional attachment to the neighborhood because their families already fulfilled their emotional needs. Older women, by contrast, no longer had to ground their lives around their families. They found themselves heavily invested in the formal organizations of the neighborhood, such as its local non-profits and churches, because it allowed them to re-fulfill their roles as leaders and caretakers. Living in Bushwick therefore kept older women, many of who were living alone, from being isolated (Klinenberg 2002).

Both mothers utilized and felt most connected to formal resources in the neighborhood. However, these spaces were under no impending threat by gentrification. The experience of mothers in the gentrification process, therefore, is mediated by this orientation to the neighborhood. Young mothers perceived gentrification as just one more constraint they must face as they raise their children in the inner city. Older women saw the phenomenon as a social, political, and economic arena to both recreate a personal sense of self-efficacy and to form a Latino identity constructed through struggle and resistance.

Chapter Four

A traves de la lucha: The Development of Latinidad in Older Women

Most of the older women who participated in the study, with the exception of three American born Puerto Ricans, were born abroad in Latin America and immigrated to the U.S. in the past forty years. For many, Bushwick has been the first and only neighborhood they have lived in. As the neighborhood gentrifies, many of the older women saw themselves involved in a tumultuous struggle as they sought to support both themselves and their families in the face of rising rents and landlord harassment. However, they did not find themselves battling alone in this struggle. Many of the older women spoke of the need to construct a more unified community amongst Latino immigrants to combat the harassment and discrimination they felt was directed towards them. Their connection to Latino identity is therefore not in the subtle interactions and public behavior found on the street but rather in the political struggles of a marginalized minority.

Cultural anthropologist Arlene Davila (2004) identifies this sense of a Latino identity constructed through collective struggle, as “Latinidad.” The concept of Latinidad is defined as not only being a shared cultural identity amongst immigrants of different Latin American nationalities in the U.S., but as also being a network of various intersecting subject positions and historical locations, such as racial, sexual, class, national, and gender identities, that highlight the power relations within these social constructs and complicate the more homogenized ‘Latino’ or ‘Hispanic’ labels. (Laó-Montes, 2001). For the older women who participated in this study, the notion of Latinidad, which has been produced from the frameworks of domination and oppression and has acted as a form of resistance, best describes their relationship to their Latino identity.

Motherhood in a Gentrifying Neighborhood

The mothers with young children introduced in chapter three were not emotionally invested in Bushwick. Instead, they viewed the neighborhood in terms of its practicality, valuing its affordability and proximity to resources. Their perspective on gentrification is also colored through these pragmatic lenses. Young mothers tended to focus on how either gentrifiers would impact their child's school or on the rise of living costs in Bushwick. However, neither of the mothers found gentrification to be an impending personal threat to their families. I argue that this is because housing and the public dynamics of the street, which are the aspects of the neighborhood that are most threatened by gentrification, are not of severe concern to these young mothers.

Tatiana, a 35-year-old single mother of two young children, did not express sentiments of distress around being physically displaced. When asked about her experience with rent, she mentions living in public housing, "Well, right now I'm living in housing so I can't really compare it to the outside." By living in public housing, Tatiana cannot sympathize with the fears of private market tenants because her own rent is subsidized by the city and unlikely to change drastically. In terms of emotional displacement, the space in which Tatiana felt most connected to in chapter three, was her daughter's school where she actively volunteered as a Parent Teacher Association member. Public schools, however, are not typical sites of gentrification. Tatiana mentions the lack of gentrifiers and their children in local schools while vocalizing her description of the neighborhood:

Bushwick is very diverse, there's a lot of Latinos and also there's a lot of... I don't know what you would call them, hipsters? Yuppies? My mom calls them yuppies and I'm like I think they'd rather be called hipsters. It feels like there's like a line. I mean they're around because they walk their dogs, you see them in the supermarket, but I don't see their children going to school yet, maybe they haven't had children yet.

Rosemary: How do you feel about their presence when you see them?

Tatiana: I actually see them in church too. I really don't mind. I think it's good for the kids to see that there are not only Spanish people but that there are also African Americans and white Americans and now there are also Chinese, Asian, but I haven't had a problem so far.

Tatiana begins her description of Bushwick in a similar manner as the young women, mentioning its diversity and its Latino community. While most young women were protective over this very sense of a communal Latino identity, Tatiana appears to be more welcoming to the racial differences that gentrifiers may be bringing into the neighborhood. She believes that such racial diversity would be good for her own children's growth. However, Tatiana still senses a distinction between gentrifiers and long-term residents. By stating that "there's a like a line," Tatiana suggests that although she sees gentrifiers participating in other modes of daily neighborhood life such as walking their dogs and shopping in the supermarket, what sets the "line" or the clear distinction between long-term residents and gentrifiers, is that they either haven't had children or have decided not to send them to local schools.

Later in the interview, when asked how she felt like such a line between gentrifiers and long-term residents could be crossed, she partially responds with a question, "I do see some of them with carriages and stuff so I'm like maybe they are going to let their kids grow up here but are they going to send them to public school or are they going to bus them somewhere?" Tatiana raises an important point in questioning whether or not gentrifiers would be willing to send their children to local New York City public schools, which, according to recent studies, is the most segregated school system by both race and class in the U.S. (Kucsera, 2014). Such a point was considered by sociologist Judith DeSena (2009) in her study on the relationship between working class and gentrifying families in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. DeSena finds that gentrifying mothers overwhelmingly rejected local public schools and were more apt to send their children to other

school districts, believing that the high percentage of poor students in their gentrifying neighborhood would distract teachers from their more privileged children.

In her interview, Tatiana admits that she would also bus her children if she could, “If I had money to send my kid to a better school, I probably would too so...” Although she doesn’t have the funds to bus her children to the best schools, she was able to send her son with a disability to another school across the Brooklyn-Queens border in neighboring Ridgewood. She did so because she felt like her son wasn’t receiving the proper attention that he deserved by Bushwick teachers. Tatiana suggests giving more training to teachers in Bushwick so that children of gentrifiers would remain in the neighborhood, “That would be good because if not all the kids are going to be bussed out.” Tatiana is therefore open to the idea of having the children of gentrifiers participate in the local school system but believes that the only way that they would do so would be if the quality of the schools improved.

Similar to Tatiana, Angela, a 36-year-old married mother of two children, does not appear to be heavily threatened by gentrification. We see this view in the way she answered the question on what has changed in the neighborhood. Usually this question initiates the conversation on gentrification with participants typically mentioning the changes associated with gentrification. However, when Angela, a 36-year-old married mother with two young children, was asked the same question, her response was directed towards the concerns she had voiced in chapter three. These concerns were centered on the quality of the parks in Bushwick, “The park close to the house, they have fixed it [...] but there still lacks a lot of security in that park.” Her apparent disregard to concerns around gentrification is not because she is actively ignoring them but because, like Tatiana, Angela has not been impacted by gentrification as directly as others.

Angela's unawareness of the intensity of gentrification is because the spaces she feels most connected to, such as the local daycare and library are again not spaces typically infringed upon by gentrification. Angela also doesn't feel the pressure of physical displacement, despite living in private housing, because she has lived in her apartment for a long time:

Rosemary: So for you, you're comfortable with the rent? It's not too expensive?

Angela: For night now they haven't increased the rent because I've been living there for many years but if they did raise it, I would have to consider leaving.

While Angela admits that she may have to consider moving from Bushwick if her relationship with her landlord changes, the burden of rental increases is mitigated through her long length of residency in her apartment. For Angela, gentrification is therefore not at the forefront of her concerns. It is only until I mention issues of gentrification such as rental increases and the migration of gentrifiers into the neighborhood in one of the questions, that Angela shares her thoughts on the phenomenon:

Rosemary: Have you seen a change in the rent or in the kinds of people who live in Bushwick?

Angela: Where I live, there are a lot of Americans moving so the rent is rising, it's expensive now. Some of my friends tell me that one of the apartments is \$1000 to \$2000 in the area. Before it wasn't that much, it was less. For that reason, Americans are moving in. For the Latinos, the rent is increasing right now.

Angela defines the relationship between gentrifiers and long-term residents in terms of national and ethnic identities. She correlates the increase in rent, which has negatively impacted Latinos, to the migration of Americans into the neighborhood. For Angela, while her main concern about Bushwick is the safety of her children, when she is asked to think about gentrification, her concerns center on the economic struggles that Latinos in the neighborhood are collectively facing. At the end of her interview, Angela mentions a need to unite the Latino community in Bushwick:

Rosemary: Is there anything else you would like to say about Bushwick?

Angela: Well yes we have to work more united to better things that need to change and sometimes when we don't work together, things keep getting worse. Sometimes we feel like we have to abandon the neighborhood because of the family, the drugs, because a lot of things but if we work united, then we can make change happen.

Rosemary: Work together amongst immigrants and Latinos?

Angela: Yes, with Latinos so that we can keep the parks clean, to take care of everything so that the young people don't destroy things. We have to work together because imagine if just one person is doing it and everyone else isn't, that's not going to work.

Angela believes that it is only by uniting as Latinos, that long-term residents can combat the issues of not only gentrification but of the problems that have plagued the neighborhood for years.

Mothers with young children did not exhibit signs of feeling physically or emotionally displaced because of their position in the neighborhood. In both cases, issues of physical displacement, such as the fear of rental increases and landlord harassment, were not direct concerns to either woman because of their controlled rent and their stable relationship with the landlord. In terms of emotional displacement, the spaces that both mothers felt most connected to were spaces that were tied to their children and families. Because most gentrifiers do not have children or have decided to send their children to schools outside of the neighborhood, these spaces are not typically affected by gentrification. However, the pragmatic lens that mothers with young children had over issues of gentrification was similarly shared with older women with grown-up children.

In their interviews, many of the older women with grown-up children expressed their fears and frustration over the changes occurring in the neighborhood. Their main concerns were centered on aspects of physical displacement, which echoes their practical stance towards Bushwick. Issues that disturbed younger women in chapter two such as the discomfort they felt in the presence of gentrifiers and in gentrified space were not of great importance to older women. Instead, older women tended to voice concerns over rising living costs and landlord

harassment in the neighborhood. In doing so, they viewed themselves and the changes occurring in Bushwick through a more economic and political lens rather than a social and cultural one.

The “Blanquitos”

Unlike the young women who felt threatened and uncomfortable by the presence of gentrifiers in chapter two, older women appeared to be indifferent to their whiter and wealthier neighbors. Many of the older women called gentrifiers, “blanquitos” a colloquial term in Spanish to describe whites. The addition of the suffix ‘-ito’ is interesting here because it is usually affectionate and associated with young children. Many of the older women therefore saw gentrifiers as young white people who do not threaten or bother them. However, like in the experiences of the young women, the presence of white gentrifiers in the neighborhood also forced older women to reflect upon their conceptualization of what it means to be Latino in Bushwick. We find that for some of the older women, this means the internalization of white supremacist outlooks through their validation of the white middle class lifestyle gentrifiers exhibit in Bushwick.

Manuela, a 62-year-old Puerto Rican, was the only older woman in the study to express a negative attitude toward gentrifiers. Like the young women who mentioned feeling uncomfortable when they were stared at by gentrifiers on the street, Manuela also senses an antagonistic attitude from gentrifiers in her interactions with them, “But the new ones, that’s something different, they pass us and look at us over their shoulders as if we’re dirty, like we have the plague.” Manuela describes this stare as one of disgust towards long-term residents. She tries to understand this attitude of repulsion later in the interview:

Manuela: That’s something with Hispanics that once they get something they like to change it to this or that but the whites they don’t even use it. They come and throw a couch and sleep on it and they always go buy at second-hand stores. It’s not like us, where we, at least in that aspect, we’re proud. We go and we buy something new that we can use for new. They don’t. They don’t

live like that. [...] No one shops, they don't consume. Who consumes is us who like to be a little you know...

Rosemary: More show off?

Manuela: Show off... not show off but we at least like things. Maybe that's why they don't like us. I don't know what we have, what kind of plague we have that they don't like us.

In observing the presence of white gentrifiers in the neighborhood, Manuela compares the consumer practices of white gentrifiers to the long-term Latino residents of Bushwick. She finds that while Latinos are proud to purchase new products, whites do not appear to be active consumers. It is this difference in consumption between the two groups that Manuela believes may be the source of the antagonism she feels gentrifiers expel on her and other long-term residents.

While she may sense this negative attitude from gentrifiers towards her, Manuela does not approve of their unruly public behavior. She talks about their use of drugs, heavy drinking, and the ever growing bar scene in Bushwick to describe their disorderly conduct on the street. She also points to their whiteness to justify the police's laid-back attitude towards their behavior, "Now, if Hispanics did lines like that, like they did for Halloween that took up all of those blocks... and I had to ask myself but 'what is this?' But since they were white, the police were relaxed." The "lines" Manuela mentions are those of gentrifiers waiting outside of bars and clubs in Bushwick. Manuela believes that if Latinos in the neighborhood were standing on similar lines, they would be discriminated and harassed by the police because of their ethnic background. Therefore for Manuela, white gentrifiers are permitted certain privileges in the neighborhood that Latinos do not have access to, especially around issues of criminal behavior on the street.

In her description of gentrifiers, Juana, a 58-year-old Ecuadorian immigrant, also defines white gentrifiers in contrast to long-term Latino residents. Like the young women, Juana

characterizes Latinos through their loudness. However, while the young women cherished this characteristic of Latino identity, especially when it was compared to what they considered to be the bland culture of gentrifiers, Juana frames this loudness as something that is obnoxious and backwards when compared to the peaceful and respectable “blanquitos”:

Rosemary: Have you found that there is a new culture moving into Bushwick?

Juana: Yeah, of course because the white people are moving in. They say that all of the white people are from Manhattan, and why are they coming from there? Because of the rent. And there are landlords that discriminate, for the whites they make it higher and the blacks, lower, but not anymore. Now whites, blacks, mixed, we are all at the same level. Yes, it has changed because before they prioritized whites in Manhattan, and blacks here, but not anymore. Latinos have risen a lot.

Rosemary: And how do you think the arrival of white people has affected Bushwick?

Juana: They used to be in Upper Manhattan, Lower Manhattan, I don't know but to come here, they wouldn't even step in here. Three years ago they didn't even want to know about this area. Now you see everyone with their little bags in the laundry, white people, and young white women. It says that we have won.

Rosemary: So you think its for the best that they have come?

Juana: Yes, because they don't bother us. This is what I say, that for us Latinos, we're usually shit talkers but the white people aren't. We play the radio on the streets but the white people don't and the white people don't dance like us. They're quieter.

Because white gentrifiers have settled in a largely Latino neighborhood, Juana believes that racial discrimination in housing no longer exists. All races, according to Juana, are experiencing an exponential increase in rental costs. However, by stating “Latinos have risen a lot” and “It says that we have won” Juana adopts a white supremacist mentality in believing that the migration of white people into Bushwick now means that the neighborhood is of greater value. In her comparison between white gentrifiers and long term Latinos, Juana applauds Latinos for building a neighborhood that is good enough for whites to live in and yet also criticizes them for their rowdier behavior.

Diana, a 51-year-old widow from Ecuador who has been living in Bushwick for the past nine years, also contrasts the behavior of Latinos to the white gentrifiers in a similar way as

Juana:

Rosemary: How has Bushwick changed in the time you have lived here?

Diana: It's changing a lot. There are white people now. Different people. Because Latinos, we're louder, we're people with problems.

Rosemary: And how are the white people?

Diana: They're more relaxed. They're not noisy. They say hello, they're educated.

For Diana, the greatest change in Bushwick has been the migration of whites into the neighborhood. She connects this change in the racial composition of Bushwick with what she believes are the characteristic traits of Latinos. Like Juana, Diana believes that Latinos are louder and problematic while whites are calm, "educated," and friendlier in the way they approach people.

Therefore, for some of the older women, the presence of a racial "other" in the neighborhood has caused them to reflect upon the characteristics of their own ethnic group and that of the 'other.' While Manuela sided with the young women, believing that the behavior of gentrifiers is unruly, Juana and Diana believed the opposite, claiming that Latinos were the loud ones while gentrifiers appeared to be more relaxed. Still, others did not pin gentrifiers against Latinos but rather against landlords. Some of the older women believed that the increase in the cost of living in Bushwick is not the fault of gentrifiers but rather of greedy landlords who have been exploiting both gentrifiers and long-term residents.

Maya, a 47-year-old Dominican immigrant, shares this sentiment in the following response:

I don't want to put the blame on them for what's happening because they're not the guilty ones but the business owners and landlords that want to take money from everyone. For that I get frustrated. It shouldn't be like that.

Similarly, Luna a 59-year-old Dominican immigrant who organized the block association, does not believe gentrifiers are at fault for the changes occurring in Bushwick:

I'm conscious that it is students who are living there. The students, they don't have money. The ones who are buying the apartments, the Jews, they do have the money but the one's spending

the money are the students. I'm conscious about that. I'm a mother, a grandmother, I have my grandchildren. I know the struggle of being a student and they're going through problems too. It's \$3000 and they're also charging them for hot water, heat, and electricity!

Luna uses her status as a mother and grandmother to understand and sympathize with the situation of gentrifiers, who she sees primarily as young students struggling to pay expensive rents imposed on them by Jewish landlords. The issue of abusive landlords, particularly those of Jewish origin, is the largest concern older women expressed about gentrification in Bushwick.

The Verbal and Physical Sides of Landlord Harassment

I met Jessica, a 51-year-old native-born Puerto Rican from Bushwick a few minutes before the Housing and Environmental Justice Project meeting at Make the Road New York (MRNY) began. It was Jessica's first time at MRNY and like many first timers, she had been told by the head organizer Angel Vera to attend the project's meeting after talking to him about the problems she had with her landlord. In her interview, she spoke of two kinds of landlord harassment. The first she shared was the verbal harassment she received from her landlord, who would constantly threaten her vocally with eviction. The second was her landlord's unwillingness to improve the physical damages of her home. She shares the first form of harassment in the following:

Jessica: Well right now he's doing a lot of harassment, which is, you know, one of the ladies that I went to seek help from, she said it's freedom of speech, but he lives right next door to me so it's like, I feel on edge because I can't have no company, I can't have no music extremely loud, which I don't put music loud, but on holidays I have to go out. I can't celebrate holidays in my house.

Rosemary: Because then he complains?

Jessica: He'll call the cops. He did it to the other tenants. So the reason why I drew the line is because Monday night, his wife came up to my face because I put the garbage... because I missed the garbage early in the day. There was a lot of garbage out. Garbage hadn't been picked up because of the snow and all of that. So because I put the garbage behind the gate, this, excuse my language, pain in the ass told me to get out. So you know not to keep arguing with the lady, she was getting loud, I closed the door on her. I walked in; my husband had it with them. Especially now that he has PTSD because he served in the Navy, so he had it with them and I

feel like its harassment. You know they want me out because of the rent. Because everyone else is new except me and my other neighbor [...]

Due to the verbal harassment she receives, Jessica finds herself not only having to constrain her actions, such as her inability to celebrate the holidays in her own home, but also having to face tense situations with the landlord and his wife. This keeps her “on edge” because she cannot live in her apartment without fear of setting off another violent scene with her landlord.

Nancy, a 60-year-old Puerto Rican, also expressed feeling emotional distraught due to the pressures she received from her landlord:

Rosemary: So do you feel pressured to leave?

Nancy: That has affected me a lot but we can't do anything because we have no rights for a building with three families.

Rosemary: How does it affect you? Emotionally?

Nancy: Very emotionally because imagine, the landlord is always asking me ‘Can you move this day? Can you move that day? I need you to move.’ I’m not the owner of the apartment but she always asks me. She lives in Florida and she wants us to leave but if we can’t find an apartment, we can’t leave and with how expensive rents are, you can’t find an apartment.

Nancy finds the pressure to move intensified by the fact that her three-unit apartment building is not qualified for rent stabilization. In New York City, apartments are only rent stabilized if the building is of six units or more and if the monthly rent is under \$2,500. In rent-stabilized apartments, landlords can only increase the rent with a guideline rate that is set by the city. In addition to this limitation on rental increases, tenants of rent-stabilized apartments also receive the right to having their leases renewed, receiving essential services such as heat and water, and cannot be evicted unless the tenant has breached city law (NYS Homes and Community Renewal 2008). When Nancy states, “we have no rights,” it is these entitlements that she does not receive due to her apartment’s ineligibility for rent stabilization.

In her interview, Jessica also mentions the form of landlord harassment typically recognized by the city. In this form, the landlord cuts basic utilities such as heat and hot water

and deliberately neglects making repairs to the apartment. For Jessica, this means a poorly constructed bathroom, “I have holes, I have a dropped ceiling in my bathroom and there’s a piece of wood holding the wall up so that the ceiling won’t fall down.” The process to persecute abusive landlords, however, is an extremely bureaucratic one. Tenants are asked to write a letter to the landlord outlining the problems of the apartment. If the landlord does not respond, the tenant should call the city’s 311 hotline to make a complaint. The letter can then be used in housing court if the tenant decides to take their case to court (Department of Housing Preservation and Development).

Manuela (62) sums up the emotional and physical forms of harassment and its impact on tenants in the following:

Manuela: It’s an abuse. What they’re doing to us is an abuse. To the Latinos. They raise the rent however they want to, they do whatever they want, and out of fear, many of them leave. If they can’t pay the rent, they do so emotionally. It’s hurting people emotionally.

Rosemary: How?

Manuela: The nerves, waiting for people. You’re not secure. You have to work day to day, waiting that at any moment, they come and give you an eviction letter and tell you that they’re raising the rent. It’s a continuous harassment. [...] They cut basic services. They don’t let the inspector for electricity come in. You have to pay whatever is sent to you. They take away the hot water, they put the heat too high, and we can’t live with the heat like that. And it keeps going on and on until people have enough and leave.

Manuela centers this battle between mistreated Latino tenants and abusive landlords. She believes that the psychological and physical abuse of living in a home that is uninhabitable pushes many tenants to give up the fight and leave their apartments.

The “Jewish Landlord”

In the Housing and Environmental Justice meetings I attended at MRNY, many of the discussions members had on landlord harassment and displacement centered on “los judios,” the Jews. Long-term residents were most likely able to recognize these landlords as Jews because of the particular dress of Orthodox Judaism, which has a large community in nearby Williamsburg.

While Angel, the head community organizer of these meetings, tried to discourage members from using ethnic markers to describe abusive landlords, members continued to stubbornly and angrily speak against Jews in their testimonies. In many of these stories, and in the interviews with the older women, people believed that Jewish newcomers were buying properties in the neighborhood and renting them out to white gentrifiers at a cost that was too high for working-class Latinos. Mariel, a 62-year-old Colombian, shares this belief in the way she describes the changes that have occurred in the neighborhood:

I have seen that it has changed tremendously. My neighborhood used to have people from different Latino nationalities, from Argentina, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador. There were Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Dominicans. But now all of these people have been displaced and have moved out. Now the white people are moving in and the Jews have bought all of the properties and all that's left is my building. All of these new people that have come, the Jews are bringing in from different states.

Like Luna, Mariel finds that the displacement of a rich Latino community for white tenants is the workings of abusive Jewish property owners. White gentrifiers appear as only innocent pawns in a much larger game controlled by Jewish landlords. Marisol, a 47-year-old immigrant from Mexico, also believes that Jews, who she calls out as racists in her interview, have displaced Latinos by having brought in white gentrifiers into the area:

Rosemary: How has Bushwick changed in the time you have lived here?

Marisol: It's changed in that there used to be a lot of Latinos and now the majority of the Latinos they are making them leave and putting in whites. They are giving preference to whites. That's why I say there's a lot of racism.

Rosemary: How do you feel about these changes?

Marisol: I feel bad. Latinos are harder workers and deal with more things than other people.

Therefore, for some of the older women, the migration of white gentrifiers into Bushwick is not the source of their worries when it comes to gentrification. Instead, older women believe that the real root of the problem rests in the displacement and denial of housing Latinos face due to the discrimination inflicted upon them by Jewish landlords.

In their discussions on Jews, older women mention the employment of certain tactics Jewish landlords use to push Latinos out of their homes. When I asked Mariel to further explain the role of Jews in the neighborhood she responded with the following:

Mariel: Well because it's the Jews who are... they've come here to displace our people.

Rosemary: Do you see them in the streets?

Mariel: They come up to the apartments.

Rosemary: Your apartment?

Mariel: In my apartment, they've come up many times to displace me, to get me out of there. They offered me money, later when you tell them I want this much, they say "Ah no, that's too much." Eleven Jewish people have gone to my house.

Rosemary: And they're asking you what?

Mariel: Asking that they want this building for them to live in. To live and buy it.

Rosemary: And how do you feel about the Jews?

Mariel: Well I don't have anything against the Jews. What I'm saying is, how do they want to take us out of our homes, to displace us from our own homes? That's what bothers me. I don't like it much, that they come to one's homes to displace us and take away my good being. One wants to live here and they don't want you to, they want to take us out for them to then increase the rent. "You want to take me out of here?" Then I ask them for a lot...the point is to ask them for a lot of money, "Ah that's too much money." Well you don't want me to live here so you have to pay me whatever I ask for.

Mariel describes the tactic of a "buy-out," which other members at the MRNY meetings have claimed Jewish landlords exercise in Bushwick. In a buy-out, landlords approach tenants and offer them large sums of money, usually thousands of dollars, so that they may voluntarily leave their apartments. Although she does not want to move, Mariel plays along with the buy-out game, asking the "eleven Jewish people" who have come to her house for amounts that were much greater than they were willing to offer to prove to both herself and to those pushing her out that she was in control of the situation. However, while she may play along, it is these buy-outs and the insistent demands landlords place on her to leave her home that bother her more than their religious identity as Jews.

Still, Mariel and many of the other older women in this study, continued to use the term ‘Jew’ to describe the landlords who, they believe, are pushing Latinos out of their homes.

Manuela (62) shared similar concerns as Mariel:

Manuela: They raised the rent and everything and they’re trying to take me out of the apartment. I’m fighting because I don’t know if I can say it’s a race but they’re Jews, they’re the ones that are displacing us.

Rosemary: And how do you know it’s the Jews?

Manuela: Because they’re the ones that are buying, they’re the one’s that are destroying. We tried to buy a house in the same block where I live. It used to be of the police back then but now they fixed it and they told us that that house, that area was commercial and they didn’t want to sell it to us. Even though we had the credit, everything, they didn’t want to sell it to us because it was for commerce, it was commercial.

Manuela points to her inability to buy a home as another method Jewish landlords use to displace Latinos. Although very little of the population owns their home in Bushwick, Manuela was ready to settle and buy a house on her block. She does not believe them, however, when they told her that the area she was seeking to buy from was commercial, rolling her eyes and crossing her arms as she spoke to me. For Manuela, the inability to buy a home exposed her to what she believed to be the extensive control Jewish landlords have over properties in the neighborhood.

Latinidad through the Struggle

For the older women, the political and economic oppression they have experienced in Bushwick has resulted in the construction of a heavily politicized Latino identity that transcends the traditional ethnic markers of a shared region and language by incorporating their identities as working class women into the mix. The older women believe that it is because they are Latina that they have faced the extensive psychological and physical abuse from landlords. Manuela (62) shares this belief eloquently when asked if she felt pressured to leave Bushwick:

Of course. There’s a pressure all of the time. They cut basic services. You feel alienated. You ask what happened? I pay rent, I take care of the apartment. Why do they have to take me out? Am I that much of a monster? Simply because I’m Latina. And even being white with blue eyes, I’m Latina, I’m black. Why? What have we done? The Latinos? In this country, we’re the largest

minority that there is, in brutal work and dirty work. You won't see any whites out there shoveling and picking. You won't see a white woman cleaning someone's ass and doing dirty jobs or anything like that unless she earns a lot of money. So it's us who do the most difficult work. They want to throw us out and then eat us for lunch.

For Manuela, the pressures placed on the Latino community to leave Bushwick has taken a large emotional toll on their lives, not only but because it threatens their ability to stay put in their own homes but because it also lowers their self esteem and questions the value of their identity as Latinos. She assures herself of the strength and dedication of the Latino presence in the U.S. by mentioning the difficult and degrading kinds of work she believes Latinos, above all other ethnic groups, undertake and accomplish.

Some of the older women denounced certain qualities of the local Latino community, calling them loud and problematic. These statements were told in comparison to white gentrifiers, who they found to be calm and quiet. When compared to Jewish landlords, however, older women constructed Latino identities out of political defense and pointed to their hard working attitude to affirm their right to the neighborhood. Their stubborn inclination to use the religious identifier "Jew" to label abusive landlords may generate the same kind of racial tension that erupted in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn in 1991 between black minorities and Orthodox Jews (Shapiro 2006). However, I believe that there is a complimentary explanation for the persistent labeling of Jews. Older women in this study viewed the changes occurring in Bushwick in a much more clearer political economy lens than the young women. For the older women who were unable to verbalize the notion of political economy, the Jewish landlord represented the political and economic forces of gentrification. Older women felt sympathetic to white gentrifiers because they believed they were just as much victims of political and economic injustice as they were. Therefore, older women internalized the white middle-class lifestyle of gentrifiers as the ideal and respectable form of living not so much because they have blindly

succumbed to the frameworks of racial oppression, but because it enabled them to create and maintain a boundary between the two groups of white newcomers into the neighborhood.

Conclusion

Emotional Displacement and its Future Implications

This study aimed at exposing the emotional dimension of displacement in a gentrifying neighborhood. It deepened the literature on gentrification by shifting its focus away from physical and economic displacement so that it may recognize the existence of social and cultural losses also experienced by long-term residents. The study hypothesized that the emotional response of Latinas to gentrification would be contingent upon their position on the lifecycle as young women, young mothers, and older mothers. It found that each stage of the lifecycle signified a specific attachment to the neighborhood that enabled women to recognize their identities in different ways.

The responses of young women best embodied the notion of emotional displacement. Young women were most emotionally invested in maintaining the public identity of Bushwick as a working-class Latino neighborhood. They were heavily attached to the specific sensory qualities of the street that they believed symbolized what it meant to be Latino in Bushwick. For young mothers, gentrification acted as another constraint in a neighborhood they still deemed unsafe and unreliable for their children. Although they depended on various formal resources that the neighborhood provided, such as their child's school and local non-profit organizations, they did not claim any strong emotional attachments to the neighborhood. Older women reclaimed their roles as caretakers and leaders through the neighborhood in order to avoid social isolation. They constructed their Latina identity through the discrimination they felt was directed towards them because of their Latino working-class background.

The study also proposed that if women were experiencing emotional displacement, then there would also be signs of emotional resistance. However, women did not show signs of resisting the invasion of their subjectivities. The intermediate zone of emotional displacement,

where one is still physically present in the community, but is slowly experiencing emotional loss and grief, did not trigger the intentional practice of resistance in women. Such a result is surprising when compared to other studies on resistance. James Scott's work on how subaltern populations resist the forces of domination, for example, shows how miniscule, everyday forms of resistance occur in the "hidden transcript" away from the eyes and ears of authorities (1990). An explanation for the result shown in this project is that the place of the community and its relation to identity formation has not been considered as an arena of struggle between the oppressed and oppressor.

To fully test my hypothesis on the lifecycle, I would have had to follow the individual lives of female participants as they passed through its different stages. By doing so, I would have narrowed some of the different variables shaping my study, namely the generational effect for a more representative result. Along with this variable, young and older women's immigration status and educational attainment should also be tested. However, due to time constraints, I approximated these stages by dividing my sample into three categories – young women, young mothers, and older women. This study particularly focused on the lifecycle because studies have shown that the use of the neighborhood is dependent upon one's position in the lifecycle (Stacks 1973, Dominguez 2003). Further research on this subject should take into consideration the different processes that shape these women's lives and compare them to the findings of this study.

Gentrification is a multidimensional process. It is a deeply social, cultural, political, and economical phenomenon. This study examined this process through the eyes of long-term Latina residents in a gentrifying neighborhood. The study found that the relationship long-term Latina residents had to their neighborhood enabled them to construct their cultural and political

identities as working-class Latinas. It claimed that gentrification is also experienced as the loss of not only one's physical home but of one's emotional connection to a sense of self and community.

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