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Karessa Irvin
Maintaining Community
Roots: Understanding
Gentrification Through The
Eyes of Long Standing
West Oakland Residents

ABSTRACT

The study was undertaken to understand how long-standing African Americans residents of West Oakland believe they can maintain community roots during processes of gentrification. A second major question was: What are the implications for community based social workers.

Snowball sampling and convenience sampling were the methods used to recruit participants for the study. Thirteen in-person interviews were conducted, regarding study contributors' perceptions of the West Oakland neighborhood, neighborhood changes, and understanding of community roots and how to maintain them.

The major findings of the study were congruent with some previous research of gentrification as participants defined gentrification in terms of displacement. Respondents viewed unity as a way to maintain their community roots. Further research needs to be done to explore the connection of theories of root shock and ecological systems theory to understanding the impacts of gentrification on gentrified individuals.

Maintaining Community Roots: Understanding Gentrification through the Eyes of Long-standing African American Residents in West Oakland

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

Karessa Irvin
2016

Smith College School for Social Work
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I started this thesis with Brooklyn in mind- the love hate and relationship I had with my city. Brooklyn is still my home, but it is becoming a different place that I sometimes hate. Oakland is often compared to Brooklyn and of course residents who are as prideful as I am turn their noses up at this and I don't blame them. I am truly grateful for West Oakland taking me in and all the people who shared oral history of their community with me. We have to keep our history alive in us. My thesis advisor kept me on track and believed in me. I didn't think I could write a thesis and she kept reminding that it was practice and voila! I did it, flaws and all.

"The ache for home lives in all of us. The safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned."

-Dr. Maya Angelou

"There is something about black neighborhoods, or at least poor black neighborhoods, that seem to make them irresistible to gentrification. Just look at U Street in Washington or Tremé in New Orleans. "Everywhere I travel in the U.S. and even in Brixton, in London, a place as culturally vibrant as Harlem, wherever people of color live, we and the landmarks that embody our presence, unprotected, piece by piece, are being replaced"

Valerie Jo Bradley, Save Harlem Now! Advocacy Group

I am located in the margin. I make a definite distinction between that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance - as location of radical openness and possibility. This site of resistance is continually formed in that segregated culture of opposition that is our critical response to domination. We come to this space through suffering and pain, through struggle. We know struggle to be that which pleasures, delights, and fulfills desire. We are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world.

-bell hooks

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to answer the following question: “In the process of gentrification, how do long-standing African American residents in West Oakland maintain community roots: Implications for community based social workers”? For the purposes of this study, the researcher grounded the study’s understanding of gentrification as that of Causa Justa, Just Cause (CJJC), which defines *gentrification* as “a process that is embedded in the context of disinvestment and segregation of urban communities of color that increases the rental costs for existing lower income residents of color in favor of higher income earning individuals to move into neighborhoods” (Henderson & Phillips, 2014, p.8). The term, *community roots*, was defined as “the key elements of the community that give residents a sense of place and belonging” (Huyser & Ravenhorst Meerman, 2014, p19). However through interviews, the researcher was able to gather in-depth, narrative data about 11 participants meaning making process of the terms “gentrification” and “community roots” as it exists in West Oakland, California

One reason for the study is because there has been little research on the implications for social workers who work with clients who live in gentrifying communities. Huyser and Ravenhorst Meerman (2014) point out that more awareness about gentrification will increase social workers’ understanding of their clients’ systems. Early social work research was grounded in environmental assessment. It is important to return to the previous social work tradition of neighborhood assessment in the tradition of Jane Addams and Bertha Capen Reynolds that can better prepare social workers for confronting and understanding the complexities of gentrification.

The second reason for this study is because there has been minimal research on resident perceptions (Shaw & Sullivan, 2011), except those studies that portray them as mere victims (Huyser and Ravenhorst Meerman, 2014). Huyser and Ravenhorst Meerman identified several duties of social workers working in gentrifying communities. These duties included: finding ways to elevate the voices of residents, creating opportunities for community members to engage in community building, and honoring the individual dignity and worth of every single person. Considering that long-standing African American residents of West Oakland represent a historically oppressed group, the findings of this study may provide an opportunity to understand more about these residents' perceptions of community change.

Several speculations can be drawn about why there is a dearth of literature on gentrification in the social work field. One potential reason is that most of the literature written about gentrification appears outside of the social work field and comes from scholars in areas such as sociology and urban planning. However, social work has been concerned with providing affordable housing to oppressed individuals since the 1890s (Soska, 2013) which is an issue that also becomes raised in gentrification studies (Henderson & Phillips, 2014).

I conducted the study by interviewing a sample of thirteen (two interviews were taken out) long standing African American residents in West Oakland to understand more about resident perceptions of maintaining community roots and how social services can support them through processes of gentrification. Study participants were recruited via snowball sampling and convenience sampling. I networked with a colleague who connected me with a few other residents. I developed an interview guide for data

collection. My thesis advisor and I developed interview questions based on the information I was hoping to collect from participants based on my initial research question.

Similar to the lack of literature about gentrification in the social work field, there is no single theoretical framework that the social work profession conforms to when conducting neighborhood research (Rhine and Hartinger-Saunders, 2012). The early history of social work and the findings confirm the need for social workers to provide residents dealing with processes of gentrification with opportunities for education and the importance of outreaching to the neighborhood's most vulnerable including the elderly is important. One of my hopes in conducting this study was to provide individuals with an opportunity to brainstorm ways to maintain their community roots and nearly all participants agree that through coming together this can be established.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Historically, urban America has been marked by significant change. From receiving large arrivals of European immigrants to seeing an overwhelming increase in the numbers of African American migrants from the south during the Great Migration, cities have experienced considerable change (Zuk, Bierbaum, Chapple, Gorska, Loukaitou- Sideris, Ong, & Thomas, 2015). Academics have been studying gentrification for the past fifty years (Zukin et al., 2015). Most of the literature written about gentrification appears outside of the social work field and comes from scholars in arenas such as sociology and urban planning. However, social work has been concerned with providing affordable housing to oppressed individuals since the 1890s (Soska, 2013) which is an issue that also becomes raised in gentrification studies (Henderson et al., 2014). Traditionally, social workers helped European immigrants assimilate into mainstream American culture when they were arriving into the city. Black migrants entering the north from the south were not served by White social workers and had to depend on the creation of social services designated specifically for Black people by Black social workers (cite). Early researchers paid attention to better understanding urban areas from the perspective of ecological and deterministic models to know how social groups could assimilate and become part of mainstream society (Zukin et al., 2015). However, these early studies left out an analysis of policies and those public sector figures that helped facilitate this change (Zukin et al., 2015). Black sociologists noticed that African Americans were not able to assimilate, were perceived as dissimilar to European immigrants and were confined to segregated urban spaces (Zukin et al., 2015).

The purpose of this study was to understand the effects of gentrification in urban areas of the United States, specifically West Oakland, from the perspective of people who are long-standing African-American community members. The research question that guided this study was: “In the process of gentrification, how can long-standing African American residents in West Oakland, California maintain their community roots?: Implications for community based social workers. Freeman’s (2006) breakthrough research explores indigenous residents’ perceptions of gentrification. Freeman (2006) believes that up until his research, studies have not centered on the perspectives of people on the ground, particularly the gentrified so as not to paint them as helpless victims or simply displaced persons. He finds that long-standing community members have nuanced responses to gentrification; they do not view gentrification as either all good or all bad.

In this literature review, the researcher will first examine what has been written on the phenomenon of gentrification in the urban United States. Next, the investigator will provide a brief overview of the relationship between social workers and gentrification, including social work involvement in urban renewal processes and collaboration with urban planners. Then, the researcher will provide a profile of Oakland with demographics and history and will narrow specifically into the West Oakland neighborhood. Subsequently, the review will focus specifically on the gentrification experience in West Oakland considering the impacts of gentrification on the African American population in West Oakland. The researcher will conceptualize who the gentrified and gentrifying groups are in the US and (West) Oakland. Finally, the literature review will define the term *community roots* as it relates to the study and utilize root shock theory and ecological systems theory as the two theoretical frameworks for understanding the study.

What is Gentrification?

The first person to coin the term, *gentrification*, was the urban sociologist Ruth Glass (1964) in her investigation of the displacement of lower class people by the higher classes in London. Gentrification is a heavily contested phenomenon that has been analyzed by a number of different people and disciplines.

Lees (2000) provides a thematic review of literature on gentrification since the mid 1990s and outlines the three areas she believes that gentrification writing has taken up. Lees (2000) argues that gentrification writers have discussed gentrification in terms of 1) the gentrified space as an emancipated space and gentrification as an emancipatory practice, 2) a focus on the “new” middle class including the tensions between older and newer gentrifiers and the super-gentrification that is happening by the newer classes who actually have more money than previous gentrifiers, and 3) the concept of modern day colonialism in which the middle class is taking back the city through violent and non-emancipatory means. Lees (2000) believes that there have been several gaps in writing about gentrification including a focus on geography of gentrification or in other words the relationship between space and the practice of gentrification.

Gentrification is a part of neighborhood change. The movement of people, public policies and investment, and flows of private capital are all determining factors that facilitate gentrification. These dynamics operate interdependently and are mediated by such influences as race, class, place, and state (Zukin et al., 2015). Although researchers have noticed gentrification happening outside the city (Clark, 2005), for the purposes of this study, the focus is to understand gentrification in the context of urban cities. The researcher is grounding the study’s understanding of gentrification in that of *Causa Justa*,

Just Cause (CJJC), which defines gentrification as a process that is embedded in the context of disinvestment and segregation of urban communities of color that increases the rental costs for existing lower income residents of color in favor of higher income earning individuals to move into neighborhoods (Henderson et al., 2014, p.8).

Who are the Gentrified?

Elizabeth (2008) argues that the racial elements of gentrification have been understudied. Elizabeth (2005) cited Vigdor (2002) who said, 'Much of the gentrification debate is actually a coded reference to the contestation of blacks and whites for urban space', and asserted that analyses that fail to consider race and the 'shifts over time in racial as well as class composition within neighborhoods 'are incomplete' (p.19). Vigdor (2002) examined gentrification in several neighborhoods in Boston, MA. He found that gentrified people usually have lower educational levels than those who gentrify.

Gentrified people also represent former populations and descendants of individuals who once worked in the declining manufacturing sectors (Beauregard, 1986). Compared to gentrifiers, the gentrified have more children (Beauregard, 1986; Vigdor, et al., 2002). Vigdor (2002) argues that gentrification also represents racial change. Betancur's study (2009) highlights the impact that gentrification has had on five Latino communities in Chicago that have experienced gentrification. He noted that gentrification ruptures the social fabrics of Latino groups in these communities because they have historically relied on their social networks to survive. Betancur's (2012) research shows the significance that gentrification had on particular racial and lower income groups. Strong racial tensions have followed revitalization developments that are processes of gentrification in

neighborhoods including Harlem, New York and Columbia Heights in Washington DC (Vigdor, et al., 2002).

Social Work and Gentrification

Affordable housing as a basic social work tenet. Gentrification exasperates the availability and affordability of housing for lower income people (Kennedy & Leonard, 2001). Therefore, it is no surprise that the social work profession concerns itself with the broader issues of affordable and suitable housing conditions for individuals, rather than narrowly focusing only on issues of gentrification.

Given the decentralization of government in providing affordable housing and the overall decrease in affordable and available housing (Soska, 2013 & Reamer, 1989), it is imperative that social workers' presence remains in the housing arena. There is a need for social workers to reengage and have a stronger voice in matters of housing. According to Soska (2013), social workers' voice on housing issues has weakened over the years. Nowadays, social workers have been less engaged in the realm of policymaking and activism and are becoming part of the growth of psychiatric and medical services and are locating themselves in private practice settings (Bowen, 2015, p.14).

As noted earlier, much literature on gentrification comes from disciplines outside of the social work field. However, historically social workers have viewed housing as a social issue that can be a determinant for other needs in a client's life. Since the Progressive Era social workers have been involved with urban development processes to 'improve the health and vitality of urban neighborhoods often focusing on the social implications of physical and infrastructural planning' (p.2). During the Settlement House era, social workers advocated on behalf of individuals to have adequate and affordable

housing (Soska, 2013), and this is a basic tenet of the social work profession (National Association of Social Workers, 2008). Social workers used the settlement house to engage in political action by studying people in the context of their environments and developed data aimed at creating policy change to have better housing structures for very poor people (Cohen, et al, 2014, p.511).

Social work and urban renewal. Between 1949 and 1974, the United States engaged in urban renewal processes, which featured rehabilitation of homes and buildings as well as notorious slum clearance and redevelopment (Bowen, 2015, p.3). “Social workers participated in a range of roles in urban renewal, including relocating displaced residents, educating residents about renewal plans and obtaining their support, and community organizing to foster citizen participation” (Bowen, 2015, p.12). Social workers’ roles in urban renewal processes speak to the tension in the social work profession between social control and social justice. Additionally, it is important to locate the context of social work practice within the times, and urban renewal begun during the McCarthy era when advocating for social reform might have threatened to target social workers as either being “subversive or communist” (Bowen, 2015, p.12).

Relocation. Social workers were lauded for being able to put to use many of their skills to help out in relocation efforts (Bowen, 2015, p.167). Bowen cites Norwood who notes that major cities employed social workers to perform many relocation efforts with families in order to: 1.) gain awareness of the family’s housing wishes, 2) assess the family’s interests and eligibility for public housing, and 3) to partner with private realtors to locate affordable housing for residents.

Relocation processes had challenges. Social workers noticed that families who had to relocate were given insufficient financial resources in order to do so (Bowen, 2015, p. 168). For example, Bowen cites Montgomery who reported that in “Philadelphia, the average relocation payment at the time was \$80, and about one-third of relocated families received no payment” (p168). Additionally, social workers were challenged in trying to secure housing for Black residents as their neighborhoods were most impacted by slum clearance during the urban renewal period (p. 168) because of the discrimination and segregation in the 1950s and 1960s (Bowen, 2015, P.168).

Social workers had various roles in Commissions that were formed during this period and some of which still exists today to deal with segregation and other challenges (Bowen, 2015, p.168). Settlement house social workers were involved in creating programming opportunities to bring together different ethnic groups and encourage multiracial community leadership (Bowen, 2015, p.168). The Urban League critiqued the role of social workers as staff and not as policy level holders in urban redevelopment efforts and expressed a desire to see people of color participating more directly in neighborhood planning processes (Bowen, 2015, p.169). Between 1971 and 1973 the Urban League’s demonstration to promote neighborhood conservation had occurred when urban renewal processes had already unfolded.

Community education. Social workers were charged with educating community members on the urban renewal process often from a perspective of “education for compliance, rather than active participation” (Bowen, 2015, p. 169). In other words, social workers attempted to get buy-in from residents after decisions were made rather than by including them in the decision-making processes. One of the most controversial

urban renewal programs occurred in Boston's West End community where residents did not perceive their neighborhood as a slum. Yet the Elizabeth Peabody settlement house complied with the city and allowed for their settlement house to be relocated and to offer fewer services to residents (Bowen 2015, p.169). Part of the settlement house's job in the words of the head Elizabeth Peabody settlement worker Jane Dale was for settlement workers to work with residents to "help (them) in accepting the inevitability of their move" (Bowen, 2015, p.169).

Community organizing. Social workers also engaged in community organizing to resist urban renewal processes, especially which came in the form of slum clearance (Bowen, 2015, p. 170). The 1954 Housing Act mandated citizen participation in urban renewal processes that were federally funded (Bowen, 2015, p.170). Bowen (2015) cited Benz who noted that the Civil Rights Movement and Urban Riots of the 1960s facilitated the trend of including marginalized groups in policy and planning processes (p.171). Bowen (2015) provides an example of community organizing among social workers' in the Germantown Settlement of Pennsylvania.

Germantown was ethnically mixed with Whites and Blacks (who without precedent were able to own single-family homes during a time when housing discrimination prevented many other Blacks from doing so) (Bowen, 2015, pp. 171-172). Internally the community worked to renovate their neighborhood without the outside interference of urban renewal (Bowen, 2015, p.172). Bowen cited NFSNC who noted that in the end, the settlement reported success in rehabilitating 67% of the neighborhood's substandard housing, with the majority "brought up and beyond Code standard through cooperative action" (p.172).

Social workers and urban planners. During the 1960s, there were attempts by urban planners and social workers to integrate their practices for urban development. Encouragement of social planning or the inclusion of social workers in urban planning was concretized in various laws including the Metropolitan Development Act of 1964 or Model Cities Program, the Partnership for Health Act of 1966, and the Dept. of Labor Programs including Cooperative Area Manpower Planning System of 1966, and civil rights legislation (Cafferty & Krieg, 1979, p.2) . With this integration of social workers and urban planners came a decentralization of the federal government and an emphasis on building local governmental leadership (Cafferty & Krieg, 1979). Although, the goal was to increase social worker involvement, their integration proved limited because 1. It was hard to organize local bodies to gain community perspective and 2. There were not many social workers familiar with urban planning (Cafferty & Krieg, 1979). However, social workers' ability to do social assessments had benefits that would prove to be cost effective in the long run (Cafferty & Krieg, 1979).

Social work and housing partnerships. In the 1960s, programs that combined housing and social services, "housing partnerships" emerged and reemerged in the 1980s. For example, the creation of the Boston Housing Partnership (BHP) in 1983 combined the public sector and private sectors (of which social workers were a part of) to restore deteriorating multifamily properties in Boston (Reamer, 1989, p. 4). These programs were centered on the idea that housing alone is not sufficient to foster a sense of community in residents' eyes. In other words, these housing partnership programs believed that fostering a sense of community for residents is the most cost-effective means to housing preservation because this enables residents to feel a sense of ownership (Cohen &

Phillips, 1997). In the 1990s, social workers were part of the Department of Housing and Urban Development's HOPE IV mixed-income housing initiatives that targeted universities as allies in addressing community issues. Soska (2013) cited Kreutziger, et al., who cited the Campus Affiliates Program at Tulane University as an example of a university sponsored program that provided Hope VI case management services to individuals from a New Orleans community.

The future of social work and gentrification. Moving forward, it is clear that social workers have a vested interest in issues related to housing and gentrification. Their clients are living in contexts of economic crisis, collapse of the housing bubble, and with many other social identities that are interconnected to their housing needs (Soska, 2013). Social workers are equipped to serve as educators, mediators, and advocates in communities. Soska (2013) cited Mulroy who said over 10 years ago that housing was a key issue for social workers. Unarguably, it remains a key issue of the times. Social workers are in a position to work with the interconnecting social issues (people impacted by ableism, the aging community, children, emancipated foster youth, previously incarcerated individuals, and other vulnerable groups) of people who are affected by gentrification and housing needs. These are the people who are also among the most vulnerable in our society (Soska, 2013).

Brief Overview of Oakland and West Oakland Early History and Black History

Early (West) Oakland history. Through the course of Oakland's settlement history, the city has been settled by many and varied people arriving from both near and far. Oakland's fate has been historically linked with that of its neighboring city, San Francisco. The mid-1700s was defined by the initial stages of Spanish colonization and

the reduction of native peoples in the Americas (Oakland Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal). The Mexican-American War of 1846 resulted in the annexation of California to the United States (Oakland Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal). The Ohlone people are the native inhabitants of Oakland. However, 50,000 were killed by genocide and experienced forced removal by the Spanish (Henderson et al., 2014). By 1852, the Spanish established Oakland as its colony. Following Oakland's colonial establishment, the city was impacted by the commencement of the Gold Rush in 1848, which brought many settlers into the area seeking gold (Oakland Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal). The 1906 earthquake in San Francisco brought an influx of new residents to Oakland (Oakland Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal) As Oakland was developing into a city, many immigrant groups arrived who provided low-cost labor to industries which helped to strengthen the economic base of the Bay area. Although African Americans were not immigrants from another country, many migrated from southern parts of the United States eventually transforming West Oakland into a center for Black cultural life on an international scale (Oakland Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal).

The year 1869 marked the arrival of the transcontinental railroad to West Oakland. West Oakland was the final stop on the transcontinental railroad (Oakland Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal). Thus, the railroad shifted Oakland into a major transportation hub that connected California to the nation (Oakland Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal).

African Americans in (West) Oakland. After the Civil War, many African Americans worked as Pullman porters on sleeping cars. Thanks to the organizing efforts of people including A. Phillip Randolph and C.L. Dellums who formed the Black Labor

Union: Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, African American men who were employed as Pullman porters were the first Black union recognized by the Federal Government (Jersey, 1996). Due to racism at the time, some Pullman Porters were overqualified for the job (Jersey, 1996). Pullman porters were considered “the astronauts of the Black community” because they were able to travel out into the broader world and then bring their stories back to their communities (Jersey, 1996).

During the Great Migration (1910-1970), many African Americans migrated to the Bay Area. In Oakland, the African American population increased from 8,000 to 42,355 between 1940 and 1950 (Henderson et al., 2014). African Americans migrated out of the southern states for several reasons including their desire to escape the slave reminiscent system of sharecropping and to take advantage of the existing wartime and manufacturing employment opportunities present in northern states (Henderson et al., 2014). Oakland held a lot of promise for African-Americans because the city had transformed into a manufacturing center by the early twentieth century (Henderson et al., 2014). One of the first stops for newly arriving Blacks from the south was West Oakland (Oakland Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal). Many African American newcomers from the south came to West Oakland with a desire to own their own property because they were used to Black ownership that shaped their southern experience (Jersey, 1996).

With the increasing emergence of African Americans into West Oakland, it became known as a center for Black cultural life on an international scale (Henderson et al., 2014). Slim Jenkins, a hustler from Louisiana opened a nightclub in West Oakland named The Slim Jenkins that has been compared to the Cotton Club in Harlem. Locations such as West 7th Street became a home to black music and entertainment (Oakland

Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal). Artists and performers such as Dinah Washington and Louis Jordan performed in West Oakland (Oakland Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal).

Demographics and Population of (West) Oakland

The city of Oakland. Oakland has an estimated population of 413,775 people. *Visit Oakland* cited the US Census Bureau which reported that Oakland is the eighth largest city in California (2015). Although African Americans are the largest ethnic group in Oakland, the city has seen a decline in the number of African Americans and an increase in the number of White people (Bay Area Census). In 2000, the Census reported African Americans as 35.7 % of the Oakland population. By 2010, they were only 28.0% of the population. The 2000 Census also recorded 31.3% of the Oakland population as self-identified as White. By 2010, White people made up 34.5% of the population. According to Shabazz (2015), “Over a quarter of Oakland’s Black population left the city since 2000.” Keen (2011) reported that the 2010 census showed a similar national pattern in other Black metropolitan centers where African Americans moved away from cities and into the suburbs.

Twenty percent of Oakland residents live in poverty (US Census Bureau, 2010). Oakland’s unemployment rate is 12.5% (Epstein, 2015). About 51% of the population identifies as female (US Census Bureau, 2010). Between 2009 and 2013, about 80% of the population had a high school diploma or higher (US Census Bureau, 2010). Between 2009 and 2013, 40% of Oakland residents were homeowners (US Census Bureau, 2010). The median household income from 2009 to 2013 was \$52, 583 in Oakland (US Census Bureau, 2010). Technology, shipping, and healthcare are the major industries in Oakland

(Tourism Facts and Figures, 2015). The city has the 5th largest port in the United States (Tourism Facts and Figures, 2015). In 2013, median rent in Oakland was \$1,039.

West Oakland. West Oakland has a population of 36,223 people (City-Data, 2013). African Americans make up about 60% of West Oakland (City-Data, 2013). In 2013, the median household income was \$38,480 (City-Data). The median rent was \$807 in 2013 (City-Data, 2013). In West Oakland, White, Latino, and Asian/Pacific Islander homeowners and renters have increased between 1990 and 2000, while the numbers of Black / African American homeowners and renters have declined” (Henderson et al., 2014, p.21). In 2013, City-Data reported a total of 17,678 females and 26,877 males living in West Oakland. 33.9% of people in West Oakland are living below the poverty line (City-Data, 2013). The median age of men in West Oakland is 34.7 years old with women at 35.7 years old (City-Data, 2013). Over one quarter of the population has less than a high school education (City-Data, 2013).

Gentrification in the Bay Area and (West) Oakland and the Effects on African Americans

Causa Justa, Just Cause (CJJC), recently released a report where they emphasized that in the Bay Area, gentrification and displacement are closely linked (Henderson et al., 2014). CJJC defines *displacement* as the relocation of low income people and people of color from their existing neighborhoods due to conditions that make their neighborhoods no longer affordable and/or livable for them (Henderson et al., 2014). Cai and Freeman (2013) cite Lee, Spain, and Umberson (1985) whose research found that White peoples’ entrance into Black neighborhoods led to significant displacement of Blacks in San Francisco. As CJJC’s report (2014) illustrates, gentrification has an impact on the African

American community in Oakland as well. In 1990, African Americans/Blacks comprised almost half of the homeowners and renters in North Oakland. Yet, by 2011, African Americans dropped to a third of all owners and renters. Whites then made up the half who owned and rented their residences in North Oakland (Henderson et al., 2014). Displacement can lead to disruptions in employment, social supports, and cultural fabrics (Henderson et al., 2014).

First wave. In the Bay area, the first wave of gentrification occurred during the 1990s technology boom. The 1970s marked the shift in the United States from a manufacturing economy to a financial and speculative sector (Henderson et al., 2014). San Francisco emerged as the center of the technology economy that led the way for this first phase of gentrification in the Bay area (Henderson et al., 2014, p). The Mission, a historically predominant Latino community in San Francisco began to see the arrival of new millionaires from the tech boom that led landlords to engage in a historic process of evictions (Henderson et al., 2014, p.). At the same time, Oakland's Black residents also began to experience displacement as \$10 million condominiums were built with only a few affordable units in place. The first wave of gentrification fueled the rent gap such that the predominantly African American communities of West Oakland and Bayview in San Francisco experienced major increases in rent and consequently, evictions. According to Henderson et al., (2014), "Between 1998 and 2002, the number of "no fault" evictions tripled in Oakland at the same time that rents increased 100 percent" (p.22).

Second wave. The second wave of gentrification emerged as a result of the housing crisis that impacted low income people of Color on a national level (Henderson et al., 2014). Once the technology stocks began to depreciate, investors looked to the real

estate industry for profit (Henderson et al., 2014). Many low income people of Color were offered predatory loans or loans that were given to them without income verifiability. Thus, millions of Black and Latino families' homes were foreclosed. Henderson et al., (2014) cited that "Foreclosures resulted in 35,000 homes lost in Oakland between 2007 and 2012, 392 million in California by 2012 and many more millions nationally (p.24)). It was not only homeowners that were affected, an estimated 40 percent of households facing evictions due to foreclosures were tenants." (p.24)

Third wave. Henderson et al., (2014) argue that the Bay area is currently facing its third wave of gentrification that is once again being sparked by tech industry moguls including Google and Facebook and is continuing to be courted by private commercial developers (Henderson et al., 2014, p.25). New retail businesses are opening up and replacing long-standing community staples that existing residents coveted (Henderson et al., 2014, pp.33-34). Evicted residents from San Francisco are moving to Oakland after previous evictions in San Francisco (Henderson et al., 2014, p.25). Overall, the new wave of gentrification of the Bay Area is marked by increased eviction, rental prices, and homeownership as in the previous gentrification waves (Henderson et al., 2014).

Negative impacts. West Oakland has experienced four major urban renewal projects that have created displacement for its residents. The 1957 Cypress Freeway was constructed in West Oakland and destroyed many of the neighborhood's Victorian homes (Jersey, 1996) The highway also split the neighborhood in half and West Oakland residents begin to think of themselves in terms of the section of West Oakland they resided in (Jersey, 1996). Another urban renewal project: the construction of the Post Office in the 1960s displaced about thirty stretches of homes (Levin, 2014). The West

Oakland BART opened in the 1970s and some residents report that deterioration ensued and led to a lifeless West 7th Street (Jersey, 1996). More recently, the West Oakland Specific Plan (WOSP) was passed to create opportunities for investors to develop parts of Oakland that have been demarcated as ‘opportunity areas’ but Causa Justa has expressed concern that the plan doesn’t adequately support implementation of affordable housing (Levin, 2014).

The Henderson et al., (2014) report outlines a number of negative impacts of gentrification on low-income communities. At times, writers paid specific attention to the unique effects of gentrification on African Americans. The report contributors, Henderson et al., (2014) cited Fullilove and Wallace who identified *serial displacement*, as a term to describe the legacy of urban policies on Black communities (p. 47). Henderson et al., (2014) also cited Fullilove and Wallace’s list of urban policies: segregation, redlining, urban renewal, deindustrialization, planned shrinkage/ catastrophic disinvestment, Hope VI, and present day gentrification that have continued to impact the mental and physical health and disrupted social networks by contributing to intra-community violence in Black communities (p. 47) What is striking about the CJJC report is that it also emphasized the public health impact of gentrification on low income and communities of Color. Without a doubt, African American communities in West Oakland who are experiencing displacement, loss, social supports disruption, and feelings of alienation are dealing with a public health dilemma. The report notes: historically, public health has had a narrow understanding of health that excluded place as a determinant of people’s health; however the field is beginning to consider where people

live as a component of their health (Fullilove & Wallace, 2014). What becomes important is for public health to understand that gentrification is a challenge to public health.

Who are the Gentrified and Longstanding Residents in the Bay Area and (West) Oakland?

As the 2010 US Census reports, African Americans are the predominant ethnic group in Oakland and represent a major group impacted by gentrification. Since the 1940s, African Americans have become the predominant ethnic group in West Oakland as Blacks from the south begin to move in and Whites left (Crossroads, 1996). “During the 1950s 82,000 Whites, one-quarter of the total White population of Oakland, left the city” (Oakland Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal). In 1940, Blacks made up only 2.8% of the population of Oakland. However, by 1950, Oakland’s African American population increased to 12.4%. (Oakland Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal).

People who are the gentrified residents represent the majority of the population of Bay area cities but hold less of the financial wealth (Henderson et al., 2014, p.). African American, Filipino, Latino, and other people of Color are being displaced by gentrification because they have less wealth, usually are renters and thus are susceptible to evictions, and as homeowners may have been negatively impacted by foreclosures of the subprime housing bubble (Henderson & Phillips, 2014, p.5). The poor, working class, elderly, and ailing individuals of the Bay Area are all vulnerable and represent the gentrified in the Bay Area (Henderson et al., 2014, p.5). The Henderson et al., (2014) report emphasizes the class and racialized dynamics of gentrification in the Bay area. The media has reported on the cultural clashes that have taken place between long-standing residents and gentrifiers in Oakland (Chambers & Ospina, 2015). Black churches,

creative artists and drummers have been fined as a result of noise complaints from newer Oakland residents, which suggest that tensions are on the rise (Chambers & Ospina, 2015).

Who are the Gentrifiers?

Gentrification researchers have examined the prototypical *gentrifiers* (Beauregard, 1986; Zukin, 1989; Syed, 2014). Syed writes, “They (gentrifiers) are mainly white, or interethnic families, with a smattering of buppies (black urban professionals). They love the city, and want the ‘ethnic background ambience’ gentrifying neighborhoods have to offer” (p.84). Beauregard (1986) looked at the subjectivity of gentrifiers. He finds that gentrifiers are typically young individuals who delay having children, engage in consumption for public display, and possess jobs as professionals and managers within the service worker industry. Gentrifiers may not be rich but are people who financially plan for the future. They cannot afford to buy homes in the suburbs but enjoy living in close quarters to facilitate their social life (Beauregard, 1986).

Zukin (1989) has described the shift in the kinds of places people choose to live in as emblematic of those who are gentrifiers. As Zukin writes, “Until the 1970s, living in a loft was considered neither chic nor comfortable—if the possibility was considered at all.” (p.175). Living in lofts represents the return of middle class people from the suburbs to the cities. Further, Zukin illustrates how these individuals who settle into living in lofts where space is a symbolic gesture of wanting to have it in the physical sense as well as in their lived experiences as people who are on a quest for individuality (Zukin, 1989). Zukin (1989) echoes Beauregard’s belief that the prototype gentrifier is a young person

but adds that they may be single or a couple. Moreover, Zukin utilizes the emergence of loft living to show, as Beauregard does, that gentrifiers are people whose patterns of consumption are representative in their choice of living.

Who are the Gentrifiers in the Bay Area and (West) Oakland?

In the context of the Bay Area, the medical, electronics, and financial industries have created more millionaires and billionaires per capita than any other major city (Henderson et al., 2014, p.4). Thus the wealth is only in the hands of a small elite group (Henderson et al., 2014). White people are less represented in Bay cities, but possess most of the wealth (Henderson et al., 2014). The Causa Justa report describes gentrifiers in the Bay Area as individuals who are mostly White but include a few who are also Asian Americans who are wealthy and earn excellent incomes (Henderson et al., 2014, p.5).

The gentrifiers in Oakland are often compared to those who live in Brooklyn because of the similar trend of gentrifiers who are young and wealthy people who reside in and find entertainment in the urban environment (Henderson et al., 2014, p.25). Oakland's other gentrifiers are the evicted residents of San Francisco (Henderson et al., 2014, p.25). The tech employees who live in Oakland are another group of gentrifiers in Oakland who take advantage of the rental and transit developments (Henderson et al., 2014, p.25). Tech companies have sought Oakland out as a new home for their companies because of its affordable commercial space (Henderson et al., 2014, p.25).

What are Community Roots?

For the purposes of this study, the researcher is defining *community roots* as “the key elements of the community that give residents a sense of place and belonging”

(Huysen & Ravenhorst Meerman, 2014, p.19). Fullilove cited Wallace who writes about ‘mazeway disintegration’ in examining the disintegration of Indigenous communities (p.78). In similar terms, the researcher believes that the words community roots resonate with ideas of the mazeway that Wallace expressed. The *mazeway* is ‘the sum of the lifeways in a community, a collective construct that depended on a shared history of life in a given place’ (p.78).

Root Shock Theory

Fullilove (2001) uses words like disruption, unspeakable sadness, traumatic, grief, and stress to describe African American communities’ experiences with urban redevelopment. “Root shock is the traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one’s emotional ecosystem.”(Fullilove, 2004, p. 11). It is to say that when individuals’ attachment to their community roots becomes disrupted they can suffer traumatic stress reaction (root shock). Notable author Mindy Thompson Fullilove (2001) wrote about the sense of loss that residents feel when neighborhoods change. Fullilove (2001) writes about an experience with a man, David Jenkins, who she worked with in New York City through a homeless agency who had experienced displacement as a result of urban renewal processes in his Philadelphia hometown. Fullilove (2001) writes, “In that move, he lost the neighbors, church people, teachers, friends, and—perhaps most important—the nature center that had helped him make sense of his troubled life” (p. 77). This example illustrates the potential aspects of community life that can be lost in processes of gentrification and the emotional impacts of these losses of community roots on individuals.

Fullilove (2001) argues that the author of the book “Death and Life of Great American Cities”, Jane Jacobs produced this text to describe the social and esthetic damage urban renewal was causing to cities (p.73). As noted above, gentrification impacts peoples’ mental and physical wellbeing, thus it is important to investigate how urban redevelopment and/or gentrification can take place in communities in a way that feels natural and not forced as to hurt people’s sense of connection to the place.

Ecological Systems Theory

According to Vogelsang (2013), “the ecological systems theory was first used in the 1970s by Urie Bronfenbrenner and it emphasizes the interactions between people and their environments” (p.19). Carol B. Germain and William E. Gordon who come from ecology and systems theory backgrounds respectively, provided the utility of the ecological systems theory for use in the social work profession (Dybicz, 2009, P.167). Vogelsang (2013) cited Bronfenbrenner who noted that ecological systems theory includes 5 types of environmental systems: 1) microsystem, 2) mesosystem, 3) exosystem, 4) macrosystem, and 5) chronosystem (p.15). Vogelsang (2013) further referred to Bronfenbrenner who states that ‘these different levels of systems interact dynamically, forcing people and their environments accommodate each other through change, negotiation and compromise’ (p. 20). Although each of the systems has its own definition, it is important to note that an individual is influenced by all five systems on a daily basis as all systems are constantly interacting with each other.

Gentrification operates on all levels of the ecological systems theory framework. The following will concretize the five levels of the model with examples of their relation to processes of gentrification. A microsystem happens in a person’s immediate

environment and is how interpersonal relationships are experienced (Vogelsang, 2013, p.15). This can include a person's encounters with family, peers, and their neighborhood. To consider gentrification, newcomers may impose changes to the immediate environment. For example, West Oakland newcomers issued a noise complaint in response to what they described as noise coming from one Church's choir practice. Although this practice may be common for long-standing residents, newcomers may have a different connection to the immediate environment and feel opposed to this practice. From this illustration, it is clear that gentrification has the potential to create tension among individuals living in a neighborhood as they negotiate how they believe the environment should to be.

Mesosystems describe the ways that multiple systems interact with each other (Vogelsang, 2013, p.15). For instance, in West Oakland multiple forces including real estate investors, city government, African American individuals who have sold their homes to other ethnic groups, and a host of other factors have worked together to decrease the number of Blacks living in West Oakland over the years.

Exosystems comprise the systems that the individual is not directly involved in but that still impacts them because they affect the systems the individual lives in (Vogelsang, 2013, p.15). To illustrate, younger generations may not have lived during the crack epidemic but are currently feeling its effects. For example, due to this era, African American homes were sold diminishing the number of Black owned homes and families in West Oakland.

Macrosystems describe the larger societal culture that an individual is located within. For instance, systems such as racism and ideas about power and privilege are

reflected in the values of the larger societal structures. One can speculate that the emergence of White newcomers to West Oakland may increase the quality of education to Black children unless displacement pushes all African American families out of the community.

Chronosystems, which were not in the original Ecological Systems Theory framework (Vogelsang, 2013) express the “changes or consistencies of the individual over the course of time” (p.20). West Oakland has shifted from being a predominantly Black neighborhood to now having a larger White presence.

Summary

The need for further study of gentrification is reflected in this literature review due to the lack of academic research in regards to this area. This study will hopefully promote more research in the social work field. Additionally, the researcher hopes to encourage community based social workers to examine the impact that gentrification has on the individuals and communities they are working in. This study highlights the need for further understanding on how gentrification impact on community based social work.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The research question that guided this exploratory study is: *In the process of gentrification, how do long-standing African American residents in West Oakland maintain community roots: Implications for community based social workers?* The purposes of this study are 1) to understand how gentrification impacts the community roots of African-Americans and 2) to provide lessons for community based social workers in how to support these residents dealing with the impacts of gentrification.

Qualitative methods using a narrative and semi-structured interview guide containing open ended questions was selected as the basis for this study's design for several reasons. Harvey (2014) cites Rubin and Babbie (2013) who argue that qualitative data is flexible as it allows the research to evolve as the researcher continues to make meaning out of the observations they gather due to being in the human experience (p.1). A search of the literature revealed that most gentrification research has been conducted outside of the social work field and in areas such as urban planning, economics, and sociology. There has been some minimal gentrification research on resident perceptions (Shaw & Sullivan, 2011) and not until recently did researchers begin to explore the implications for social workers who work with clients who live in gentrifying communities (Huyser & Ravenhorst Meerman, 2014). Furthermore, gentrification studies have been concerned primarily with issues of displacement (Huyser & Ravenhorst Meerman). According to Rhine and Hartinger-Saunders (2012), there is no single theoretical framework that the social work profession conforms to when conducting neighborhood research. Thus the perspectives of residents in gentrifying neighborhoods

have been limited. As Huyser and Ravenhorst Meerman (2014) note, there has not been much academic literature available that explores the perceptions of gentrified groups, except those that paint them as mere victims. Huyser and Ravenhorst Meerman identify three duties of social workers working in gentrifying communities: 1) finding ways to elevate the voices of residents, 2) creating opportunities for community members to engage in community building and 3) honoring the individual dignity and worth of every single person. As Huyser and Ravenhorst Meerman's (2014) point out, more awareness about gentrification will increase social workers' understanding of their clients' systems. For these reasons, the researcher chose qualitative methods to "develop an authentic understanding of a social process..." (Engle & Schutt, 2013, p.69).

A general inductive approach was used in this study. Engle and Schutt (2013) state that in this type of study researchers are trying to develop a deeper understanding of a social phenomenon. (p.116). Harvey (2014) cites Rubin and Babbie who argue that 'an inductive qualitative method begins with observations and looks for patterns, themes or common categories' (p.2). Exploratory or inductive research can feel authentic because it allows us to hear from the people in their own words and to understand how they make sense of the world (Engle & Schutt, 2013, p.117).

Sample

Participants in this study are long-standing African American residents of West Oakland who met the following criteria: 1) were 18 years of age or older and 2) are individuals who were born and raised in West Oakland and 3) currently live in West Oakland. Although the original study criteria required that individuals currently live in West Oakland, the researcher made a decision to include one participant who was now

living in East Oakland but fit other eligibility requirements upon their request to remain a participant after being in a focus group.

A total of 13 participants participated in this research study, however only 11 interviews were included in the present study. Participants represented various segments of the West Oakland community and included people who lived and worked in West Oakland, older residents who acted as neighborhood historians, high school students, a recent college graduate who had just returned home from college and ordinary people who daily commuted via bus and/or the West Bart to their daily locations.

Recruitment

Convenience or availability sampling and snowball sampling were used to find research participants. Engle and Schutt (2013) point out that, “An availability sample is often appropriate in social work research—for example, when a researcher is exploring a new setting and trying to get some sense of prevailing attitudes...” (p.258). As a new resident in the Bay area, the researcher benefited from convenience sampling due to being able to learn more about the research topic. Furthermore, convenience sampling permitted the researcher to be able to “approach particular individuals while observing activities in a social setting (Engle & Schutt, 2013, p.258). Snowball sampling is a good method to use in social work research because it allows the researcher to be in contact with more harder-to-reach groups and allows people to “identify other people with similar status” (Engle & Schutt, 2013, p. 264). Snowballing was utilized because of the effectiveness of word of mouth in engaging members of the African American community. Also, snowballing provided a sense of familiarity for participants that increased their sense of confidence in the researcher.

The researcher acted as a participant observer and attended a demonstration sponsored by the “Keep Oakland Creative campaign” and volunteered at an event in Oakland related to the anti-displacement movement sponsored by the grassroots housing rights organization, Causa Justa: Just Cause in Oakland at the West Oakland Youth Community Center.” Through participation in these events, the investigator was able to gain more insight into the climate of gentrification in Oakland. Additionally, the researcher hoped to establish rapport and credibility with Causa Justa: Just Cause to create a joint thesis project that might benefit Causa Justa:Just Cause by providing information about an issue central to their work. However, Causa Justa: Just Cause was unable to commit to partnering for the research project.

Snowball sampling was used throughout the recruitment phase. The researcher unsuccessfully attempted to recruit individuals by reaching out to contacts on Facebook and sent emails (Appendix A) to a list-serve group. Next, the researcher began outreaching to potential participants by networking with a colleague who connected her with three of his West Oakland contacts. One of the contacts was a man who owned a local Barbershop, who was not eligible to participate in the study. However, he provided the investigator with permission to use his shop as a recruitment site. A client/friend of the barber later participated in the study.

Because the researcher wanted a diverse representation of the West Oakland community, particularly people who might not normally be visible in academic research, the researcher intentionally entered into many community spaces. The investigator went to various West Oakland staples including the West Oakland library, DeFremery Park, McClymons High School, the Senior Citizen Center of West Oakland, Beth Eden Church

and Taylor Memorial United Methodist Church. Upon arrival to the above locations, the researcher attempted to make on the spot connections by: 1) distributing flyers (Appendix B), 2) introducing the investigator and the research project, and 3) inquiring if people were present and available who fit the study criteria. The investigator conducted on the spot interviews at all the above places except for the Mandela Cooperative, Beth Eden Church, and Taylor Memorial Methodist Church. Follow up interviews were scheduled with individuals recruited from these three sites.

At Taylor Memorial Methodist Church, the researcher met one-on-one with the Pastor who called his cousin in front of the investigator to receive her permission to be contacted at a later time for an interview. During a follow up conversation with the Pastor's cousin to schedule an interview, the researcher invited the cousin to invite additional family and/or friends who met study requirements. This individual reached out to two childhood friends who also became contributors. While recruiting at Beth Eden, the investigator was remarkably supported by the Church's administrative assistant who contacted McClymons High School and the Boys and Girls Club introducing the researcher on behalf of the Church. The high school staff warmly provided the researcher with a schedule and best times for outreaching and interviewing students. Notably, the main office staff consulted with other staff and invited students who they believe were most appropriate to participate in the interviews. All students obliged and are included in the study. One former Boys and Girls Club member also consented to the study after she connected with the researcher on telephone after the Administrative Assistant introduced her to the Boys and Girls staff.

Once research contributors confirmed their participation, study participants received consent forms on the day of the interview. Participants were provided with two copies of the Consent Form (Appendix C), one to return, and the other to keep as a record of their participation. All interviews were completed in person. One was completed with two participants and another with three interviewees at a time.

On the day of the interviews, the researcher spent a few minutes before initiating the interviews to review informed consent and provided an opportunity for participants to ask any clarifying questions in order to ensure that participants had a clear understanding of what their participation would entail. They were informed of the following: 1) their participation was voluntary, 2) they could refuse to answer any of the questions the researcher asked them, 3) they could stop at any point during the interview, and 3) they could decline their participation in the study up to April 1st when the final report was to be written.

Ethics and Safeguards

Protection of confidentiality. Participation in the study was kept confidential. The researcher met study participants for an in-person interview in a place that felt comfortable for them. The investigator separated informed consents from notes and transcripts, and each participant self-selected a pseudonym to be used to identify them in the research. Audio recordings and notes were in the researcher's hands only. Participants were encouraged to not give any identifying information about themselves or others. All information that contained names or other potential identifying information was redacted and not included in the study.

All research materials including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent documents are stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period. No information will be included in any published report that would make it possible to identify study participants.

Risks and Benefits of Participation

Risks. Study participants were provided with a consent form prior to the interview that outlined potential risks for the study (Appendix C). It is possible that participants may have experienced feelings of uneasiness related to discussing community changes depending on if they have been positive or negative experiences or both. The researcher tried to pay attention to any of the non-verbal and verbal communication that might suggest participant discomfort. All research participants were provided with a resources list of local mental health resources and gentrification and tenants' rights advocacy groups in the West Oakland neighborhood to receive additional support (Appendix D).

Benefits. Participants may have felt a sense of empowerment from their participation because they shared their stories and added their voices to matters of gentrification on the ground. Through participating in interviews, participants might have also learned more about how to work with others in order to maintain community roots in Oakland. Participants may also have felt a sense of pride in knowing that their stories will contribute to future research on gentrification.

This research project is a part of the researcher's degree requirements. This study permitted the researcher to learn additional information for future work as a community based social worker with impoverished communities impacted by processes of gentrification. Understanding of gentrification is particularly important to social workers who help to facilitate community organizing in urban communities impacted by gentrification. This type of research is reflective of early social work practice and also helps to fill a gap in current social work studies. One of the basic tenets of social work is the right of individuals to have housing. This study sought to have the voices of people impacted by gentrification elevated- thus aligning with social work's basic value of self-determination of individuals.

Data Collection

Qualitative interviews have an emphasis on "capturing how participants experience their social life instead of focusing on pre-determined groupings by researchers (Engel &Schutt, 2013, p.69). Intensive interviewing is a type of qualitative method that provides an understanding of people's experiences, thoughts, and feelings (Engel &Schutt, 201, p.120). In this research study a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix E) was used as the qualitative measurement instrument. There were several benefits for using a semi-structured interview guide. First, this instrument allowed the researcher to reach people of various literacy levels (Steinberg, 2015, p.107). The researcher was able to have the opportunity to receive the information they were seeking and also ask clarifying questions (Steinberg, 2015, p.107). "The interview guide becomes a tool for ensuring that key topics are covered, rather than a guide to the ordering of language of specific questions" (Engel &Schutt, 2013, p.552).

Pre-testing. The interview guide was pre-tested with one volunteer. The pre-tests provided the researcher with an opportunity to modify questions and to also practice having a greater awareness of when the interview was over.

Close-ended questions. The researcher completed the demographics section of the interview guide with participants. Examples of demographic questions were, 1) highest educational level and 2) years living in West Oakland. These questions allowed the researcher to gain a better understanding of the range of similarities and differences within the study participants.

Open-ended questions. Some of the interview guide questions asked participants to critique the definition of key terms: *gentrification* and *community roots* that the researcher may have already defined or sought to gain understanding about from clients. Examples of questions include: “How has the West Oakland community changed over time” and “What do you think is the best way for residents to deal with community changes”?

Procedure. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 1.5 hours minutes. First, the researcher allocated about 5 minutes to introduce themselves to the participants and brief them on the format for the interview which included first reviewing demographics and then an interview with open-ended questions. The researcher found that briefing time was helpful for establishing rapport and creating a more comfortable environment. Once demographic data were collected, the tape recorder was turned on and the interview began. After the interview was over the participant and the researcher debriefed. In some case interviewees offered additional commentary following the interview; therefore in a few cases the researcher asked the participant for permission to keep the recorder on.

After each interview, the researcher took notes in a research log that included general information on time, date, location, and length of interview as well as the researcher's perceptions of the participants' body language and any other additional impressions of the interview.

Data Analysis

Gillian Harvey (2014) cites Drisko who argues that in the social work field content analysis is used in research (p.10). In order to complete the content theme analysis, the researcher tape recorded all interviews in order to be able to return to them at a later time. Interview guides were printed and the investigator used them to take notes during interviews. Upon completion of interviews, the researcher completed reaction sheets for the first six meetings.

All interviews were transcribed on one long document and all participant responses were subsumed under each question. The researcher highlighted, bolded, italicized, and added various colors to emphasis quotes that were recurring, provided insight, and/or were distinct from other interviewees. The investigator tracked the similarities that they noticed between participants in a chart and updated it throughout the interview process. Additionally, the researcher kept a mental note of repeated themes that emerged among participants. The next chapter will present the findings of the study participants.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter contains the findings from semi-structured interviews conducted with eleven self-identified African American long-standing residents of West Oakland. It is not surprising that most participants identified gentrification as displacement and noted a gentrifier as a White person who moved into the neighborhood. The original sample included thirteen participants; however two participants' interviews were taken out. One interview was inaudible on the tape recorder and the other included a participant who did not meet the interview eligibility criteria (i.e. being raised in West Oakland).

The research questions were designed to gather information to understand how residents felt that they could maintain community roots while living in a neighborhood where gentrification processes are occurring. This finding chapter consists of four major sections that include: 1) demographic data about the participant, 2) questions about neighborhood perceptions, 3) questions about neighborhood changes and 4) questions about how participants think about community roots and how to maintain them. In order to understand the meaning making process for participants, the researcher did not provide definitions for the terms “gentrification”, “gentrifier”, and “community roots” in section four, instead, asked participants to share their own definitions for the words.

Interview Section 1: Demographic Data

Of the eleven participants interviewed, 8 self-identified as male and 3 as female. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 79 years old. The mean age was 50. All participants identified as African American with two individuals also describing themselves as very

Black and African. Most participants (n=8) identified as having a spiritual or religious background: 3 participants identified as Baptist, 3 as spiritual, 1 identified as practicing African spirituality, 1 as Catholic.

Most participants (n=6) lived in apartments that they rented and other participants (n=5) lived in homes that they owned. Resident streets varied, however two participants lived on Peralta Street in West Oakland. Three participants reported that they had not lived in West Oakland their entire lives but had left for different purposes that included relocating, transitioning to college, and one was now living in a new neighborhood.

Participants (n=7) reported having family outside of members in their immediate household who lived in the West Oakland neighborhood. Seven participants reported their social economic status as middle income and 3 reported it as lower income.

Educationally, backgrounds varied among participants. Participants (n=6) had a Bachelor or Masters Degree and 2 participants were still enrolled in high school.

Interview Section Two: Understanding Neighborhood Perceptions

The second interview section had five questions designed to elicit responses in order to understand participant perceptions of the West Oakland neighborhood. The five questions that participants responded to were: 1. What has been your experience with social services in West Oakland? 2. What do you know about the history of West Oakland? 3. What comes to mind when you think about West Oakland? 4. What are the top 3 problems in West Oakland? and 5. What are the advantages of living in West Oakland?

Social services. During the interviews, all participants (n=11) asked me to clarify what the term, social services, meant. Some participants (n=2) discussed that social services was increasing in West Oakland. For example one participant said:

They tend to fund a lot of money more in East Oakland than in West Oakland but now since you have a new city council person here that's working with the State Representative that's here they inputting a lot of money into West Oakland that shoulda been here a long time ago".

Another interviewee contemplated that the increase in social services in West Oakland was due to amplified presence of Whites moving into the neighborhood. She imagined that in the future the Oakland education system would change due to the enforcement of these new parents. The participant said:

Oakland public school system is gonna go through a huge change because these people are not gonna come in here and pay upwards of \$7-800,000 and still have to worry about another \$25- 30,000 a year to send your kids to a private school so they gon be on Oakland public schools until it turns around... .

A male participant also believed that White people were able to influence the social services in West Oakland. Another respondent discussed that newer residents in West Oakland did not need social services and he commented that social services should increase in West Oakland. Equally, another participant shared the same opinion that there should be additional social services in the neighborhood. Still, this interviewee reported that accessing the Boys and Girls Club posed a safety concern because it is located on dangerous street in West Oakland. Some participants (n=2) shared personal experiences about accessing social services in West Oakland. One described receiving medical

services at the West Oakland Health Council and the other recounted her experiences growing people involved in Church programs, the Boys and Girls Club and a program through her public housing authority. Several participants including one mentioned above (n= 5) discussed being involved with providing social services to other residents in the West Oakland and greater Oakland neighborhoods. One research contributor felt that he had limited experiences with social services because he had just turned 18.

History. In discussing the second question, most participants (n=10) had common knowledge of West Oakland's] popular culture including topics such as West Oakland as the birthplace of the Black Panther Party and 7th Street as a historic center for the blues and other entertainment. One participant recalled the history of the Pullman Porters in West Oakland and also recounted the experience of Blacks migrating to West Oakland. Another interviewee shared the migration experience of Blacks from the south to West Oakland when she said:

Immigrants coming here is no different than when Black people left the south coming to the north. Everybody wants a decent place to live; they want to be able to take care of their family in a respectful manner, that's all they want. Most people know we all won't be Oprah Winfrey's of the world, there's only so many of those but everybody can be a decent, kind, caring human being and that's all those people was.

This research contributor also described McClymons High School as a school that has a history of producing outstanding people and one another participant also expressed this viewpoint. Furthermore, this woman reported that Black children who inherited their parent's homes sold them. Two other participants told the same history to the researcher,

one of which was the only interviewee to begin the history of West Oakland with that of White people.

Moreover, she contributed a personal narrative of redlining, which was the practice that encouraged Blacks to not be able to purchase homes in certain areas that she and her family experienced as they tried to purchase a home in West Oakland. An aforementioned participant also related the redlining experience of Blacks in West Oakland and discussed the housing policies (Housing Act and Civil Rights laws) that promoted integration of Blacks into other neighborhoods apart from West Oakland and reported that housing desegregation deprived the West Oakland neighborhood of Black residents and the entrance of drugs made West Oakland “into one major battlefield of crime infestation where a once proud Black heritage of the South had degenerated into this design, social political design to destroy the Black community”.

This woman also felt that she had observed changes to the infrastructure of (West) Oakland that she did not believe were intended for the benefit of Black residents and said, “I remember when they were converting the power lines from above ground to below ground and my father told me they ain’t doing that for y’all.

However, two other participants who have personal experiences attending McClymons during a later time reported that the school system was not providing an adequate education to students. One of the participants who reported on the inadequacies of the school system also noticed the decrease in Black people living on his street. One other respondent reported that over time the number of Blacks has decreased in West Oakland and more Whites have entered. Additionally, he felt similar to an above participant that had observed changes to the infrastructure of (West) Oakland and said he

viewed the changes as unintended for the benefit of Black residents. This man also saw West Oakland's number of Black people decrease over time and mentioned that parenting practices had changed and was now influenced by White styles of parenting. This idea was illustrated when he said:

I can't really speak to the historic part but I can speak to the feel of it like I spoke earlier in that everything as a kid you were looking at the world through a black lens you know what I'm saying rather than a white one because everything around you was black..."

Other participants including abovementioned ones reported that over time the number of Blacks have decreased in West Oakland. Additionally, two participants aforesaid discussed the loss of Black owned businesses over time in West Oakland.

Perceptions of West Oakland. When participants discussed the third question responses varied. Participants (n=2) interviewed who were from the high school focused on the here and now and discussed issues such as intra-community violence and pollution. One of the high school aged interviewees and an additional research contributor discussed the spirit of West Oakland. The younger participant referred to the spirit of fun in West Oakland. The older participant discussed the mentality that created the kind of spirit present in West Oakland and framed it this way:

West Oakland is not just a physical location, it is a spirit. It's a mindset. It's a mindset that no longer is there anymore except for the people who were there during its glory days. It was magnificent...It's a once upon a time story that will never come back again....

Participants (n=2) reported feeling that West Oakland was home and talked about being familiar with the people in the neighborhood. Similarly, a participant described West Oakland as being family oriented and discussed the history of DeFremery Park. One participant talked about shopping and being social with others at the 10th street market that was open years before. An interviewee also mentioned noticing the White presence in West Oakland now and the changes to physical infrastructure. One respondent mentioned that many great and famous people had come out of West Oakland.

Top 3 Problems. Similar themes emerged in participant responses for Question 4. Interviewees (n=2) reported the lack of grocery stores as a problem in West Oakland. Drug use and illegal distribution was also reported as a problem (n= 3).The lack of affordable housing was also discussed as a problem in West Oakland (n=2) Respondents reported low Black property ownership as a problem in West Oakland (n=3). One research contributor illustrated this sentiment when he said,

Some people my age that parents own these homes... their parents gonna end up selling those homes and they gonna end up being displaced or in some other city... And I'm not selling. I'm not going nowhere. Eventually, I'm not gonna have any Black people, people who look like me that I can socialize with you know. The fear, the fear of the white place...

Violence was reported as a problem in West Oakland (n=5).Some participants (n=2) reported air pollution as a concern. One participant reported that the school system was inadequate. One interviewee mentioned that the mentality among residents in West

Oakland has shifted from being more collective to now individualistic. One respondent said the trash was an issue in the neighborhood.

When asked about what the advantages of living in West Oakland were, a common responses from participants (n=5) was that West Oakland was in a location that was convenient for residents to get around. Two of these respondents also described the idea of being looked after by other community members as an advantage of living in West Oakland. Participants (n=2) reported that the history and reputation of West Oakland was its benefit. One participant described the advantage of living in West Oakland as having friends. One participant shared that being from the neighborhood gave him advantage in his job as a police officer because he was able to relate more easily with the people who came into his custody because he knew most everyone.

Interview Section 3: Impacts of Gentrification

Changes in West Oakland. Residents noticed numerous changes occurring in West Oakland due to the impacts of gentrification on the neighborhood. All participants reported that more White people have moved into the West Oakland neighborhood. Some participants along with describing newer residents as White people also used the phrase different ethnicities to describe the changing demographics of who inhabits West Oakland. One participant illustrates this theme when he said,

It's happened in West Oakland which was predominantly Black to predominantly white. As a matter of fact in the city of Oakland the largest minority was Black all until recent years. Whites have moved back into this area. What has led to uh Blacks moving or leaving is uh the death of uh parents who left their homes to uh their children and their children sold their homes uh to whites and to the uh uh

property owners...primarily White and Asian now and specifically uh the West Oakland area.

The theme of West Oakland becoming less family oriented emerged in participant responses. Respondents referred to the changing patterns of how West Oakland is becoming populated and the ways that individuals now relate to one another to discuss the diminished sense of family that exists in West Oakland nowadays. A male participant described the differences in how Victorian homes are lived in now compared to when he was growing up when he said,

...it's become less family and I guess more like...with people from different places. And you see like, ok, see like this house that was one house now its two, so instead of having your usual apartments like that... they've taken these Victorians like that house right there has seven rooms... and split em up...and make them apartments... Everything was one family... When they started you know fixin em up and splitting them that's our version of apartments you know. So that's a change, that's a big change...

The phrases "rotation of renters" was used by one participant to describe the practice that he has observed landlords employ with newer residents. This same interviewee reported examples of the newer residents impacting how the West Oakland neighborhood normally runs when a Church in West Oakland was fined after allegedly newer, White residents sent the city a noise complaint. Interestingly, he also shared his ambivalence about whether or not gentrification was good or bad. The participant shared positive effects of gentrification such as the neighborhood becoming quieter and having fewer drugs. Additionally, he stated that there is an increase in the value of his home

because of the housing market. Another research contributor talked about the Church fine incident as disruptive to West Oakland community norms. She described her experience returning back to West Oakland after completing a bachelors degree and noticed gentrification in the form of infrastructure improvement such as the BART station due to her belief that White people are now in West Oakland.

Other participants (n=2) reported observing the changing nature of relationships among adults and children or among adults in order to care for children. One of these interviewees illustrated this finding when she recounted growing up:

They had their own communication to keep everybody intact in the neighborhood. If Deucey's mother saw me doing something, she didn't have to worry about if she had to discipline me, she just did it and I wouldn't go home and say anything about it because there was a closeness in this neighborhood that doesn't exist anymore.

Another participant reported seeing the creation of mixed houses and businesses, artists' colonies, and affordable houses in West Oakland. One participant believes that outside forces have destroyed West Oakland and said, "Everything that was iconic and nostalgic that was a part of this once Afrocentric and Latino centric neighborhood has been carefully picked apart". A participant reported that parents were more involved in the school system as members of groups like the Parent Teacher Association and he described the structure and practices that existed for young people during his time that he believes do not exist today.

Defining gentrification and gentrifier. Words and phrases that participants used to respond to what gentrification was in Question number 7 were "removal", "people

getting pushed out “moving Black people out”, “middle class pushing out poor people”, “displace” and “not being able to afford to live in a community”. Interviewees (n=3) reported that infrastructure was improving in West Oakland for White people who are moving in to the neighborhood. One of these research contributors discussed how gentrification could benefit younger generations because it will offer more convenience and resources due to the arrival of Whites. One participant response highlighted this sentiment when he said, “When gentrification happens, things that should have happened before Caucasians moved into the neighborhood start happening, things that should have been happening before start happening”.

A participant described gentrification as bringing in more education to West Oakland and reported that, “There’s a study going on that this is going to be a city within a city like Detroit where Motown was, it’s gonna be like that but it’s gonna be a West Oakland Motown.” Other participants (n=3) reported the sense of loss that they have experienced. One interviewee discussed witnessing a school he grew up seeing all his life close down. Another participant reported a loss of businesses. Finally, a respondent explained the loss of people in the community to describe the impact of gentrification on West Oakland when she said, “Gentrification causes the sense of community to leave because some people end up not being able to afford to live in a community”.

Many participants (n=7) identified gentrifiers as White individuals moving in to West Oakland and some participants (n=2) considered the local government as a factor that contributes to gentrification. One interviewee described West Oakland as a “rainbow city” now that “is diverse and all nationalities”. One participant narrowed in on gentrifiers and described them as:

Watching all these white kids come here and they want to assimilate into this culture [Black experience]...for those of us who engage them they want to prove that they like us and that, a lot of them feel sorry for the ills of their grandparents and parents but they come over, they purchase the property and they clean it up. I can't be angry at em, they clean it up.”

Interview Section Four: Community Roots

Defining community roots. Two interviewees used imagery to describe community roots that included a tree and the idea of family. One of these participants used the representation of a tree to describe how community roots have been pulled out of West Oakland like the pool hall he frequented while growing up that became loss property after the original owner died and passed the property off on to his son. This man further added that he is concerned that his best friend will lose his family home if he is unable to take certain steps to keep it. Another man who used the imagery of a family to describe community roots mentioned that part of the roots was keeping a certain rotation of West Oakland families in the neighborhood. He goes on to suggest that it is becoming harder for people to live in West Oakland and he believes that families don't realize the value of West Oakland until it is too late and they try to return but are unable.

Another research contributor provided an example of how former West Oakland residents have a hard time returning to Oakland once they move to other cities, when he shared that families are unable to take their Section 8 back with them to Oakland once they leave. Also, this participant brings up the issue of how individuals are being forced out of West Oakland to other cities such as Antioch and Stockton. He used the phrase “the people that can see or know the beginning” to also characterize community roots. An

additional contributor compared to community roots to “the beginning”, “the foundation”, “ where everything starts” and referenced past experiences he had in West Oakland such as being sponsored by the Coca Cola company when he was a Little League Baseball player.

A woman further described community roots by providing examples of sharing practices that existed for her family and others while she was growing up including gardening, buying from Black farmers in Hayward, California. She added that community roots were for her “is to be thankful for what I have and don’t be worried about what I don’t have” and referring to other focus group members whom she had invited to partake in the interview said, “We could not see each other for fifty years and something happen and we gon all show up....And we look out for one another and that’s a part of our roots”. Similarly one woman talked about former places that she visited while growing up in West Oakland and the ways that things use to be to consider community roots and mentioned DeFremery as part of her childhood experience.

Another man shared that “Roots means having an origination, community. It means going back and having a beginning. Starting from the basic inception...” A participant used the word culture to define community roots and felt that there were a lot of roots in Oakland. He said that community roots are also how people want to be looked at. A final contributor identified community roots as tradition and considered what has been in the community for a long time as representative of community roots such as churches, DeFremery Park and the West Oakland library.

Dealing with community changes. The theme of the need to come together surfaced in responses to Question 9 to talk about how residents can deal with community

changes. One participant illustrated this when he said, “If people want a change, they have to actually work together to stop the crime. Stop the drugs. Just come together”. Another respondent stated that Black homeowners need “to pool together” and “govern their own”. Another contributor suggested that residents need to “come together for a common cause”. A woman encouraged residents to “take care of their own” and used an example of how people do not want to take care of people with Alzheimer nowadays and shared that before that would not have been an issue. She further stated that she tries to encourage elderly people to consider selling their homes to Black people who have the money to purchase them. This participant identified gentrification as a discussion about land ownership. She said that churches have power because they still own land in West Oakland.

Correspondingly, one man agreed that the power of religion and the Church has been a key for Black people and says that Churches are able to go into the community and provide services. He used an example of a Church in Oakland that he reported is the 2nd largest Church in Oakland that has social service programs because of the leadership of the clergy. Two participants expressed the importance of residents being involved in City Council. One man who shared this belief also said that family homes need to be kept and that fighting in the beginning is important. He also expressed a sense of hopelessness when he said there is, “nothing we can do”. Another woman took the same position as the former participant and felt, “It ain’t nothing you can do”.

The other participant who felt that participation in City Council is important mentioned that town hall meetings can occur where public housing tenants can meet with City Council officials. Additionally, she thought programs could enter into public

housing areas and teach people about the law. Another contributor discussed the importance of making sure people are informed about community changes and said that everyone does not use modern technology so it is important to reach out to people in old fashioned means like door knocking. He further shared that using accessible language that people can understand is also a means to deal with helping people to understand community changes.

Social services and community changes. One participant felt he was too young to know about social services but noticed that social services could assist people when he offered, “I know there is a need of just help like housing, food, money and clothing and like better living environments for Black people because there’s a lot of people living in like just nasty properties and areas on the street”. Three participants expressed the need for social services to care for the elderly. One of these respondents said that elderly services such as hospice and supporting elderly people are important. This same interviewee also mentioned that preparing young people for the global world where they are competing with not just the person seated next to them is necessary. Furthermore, the need for people to maintain their homes through solar panels was also discussed by the participant. A man who believed that social services needs to care for the elderly shared that preventing the elderly from displacement was critical. A final participant who commented on services for the elderly felt that the system overlooked this population.

Participants (n=3) think that education is a way that social services can help people deal with community changes. To illustrate this, one of the correspondents said that homeownership education would make a difference and focused on education about how to build credit and also for current renters to begin dialogue with homeowners

respective of their age so they can have the opportunity to become homeowners. This same man went on to say that counseling services would also benefit West Oakland residents because of the trauma and believes that Black people are unable to afford counseling or may not know about it. He says young people in particular would benefit from therapy because of the frustration that “comes from not being able to, not being equipped you know to be responsible for what they need to be responsible”. He imagined that counselors could act similar to Pro Bono lawyers where they offered services 5 days per week with enough therapists to provide counseling to the people in the community.

Another participant who discussed education in terms of social service agencies holding meetings for the public housing authority to provide resources and teach people about how to deal with the changes if they are unable to stop it. This interviewee used the Boys and Girls Club as an example of how social services can step up and offers that they could hold meetings and provide resources to parents to learn what they can do to fight these changes. Another research contributor commented that she views the library as a social service although it is not promoted as one. Moreover, she says in her role she tries to encourage children that come to the library to pursue education and college. The participant shares that children are bussed into the library twice a week for a program.

One interviewee used a metaphor of teaching a man to fish on his own to explain how he believes social services can become involved. He wants social services to help people become non-dependent. He said that social services is a system designed to perpetuate the divide between the haves and have nots because “if you wipe out the impoverished and the poverty, then wipe out...a lot of social services and entities that would exist so a lot of people progress and live on the backs of those who are basically

have not. He believes that social services provide “just enough to shoot down the revolution”.

Another participant echoes some of this sentiment when he supposed that the system is “helping other people but not Black people. He further added that banks do not want to give loans to Blacks, which leads to people giving up when doors are repeatedly closed to them. The research shared a personal example of not being informed about his unemployment benefits and how he was denied of the benefits because he was retired. He expressed that Black people were helping other groups of people.

Summary

This chapter has presented major findings from 10 questions asked to 11 long-time African-American residents of West Oakland. It is possible that generational differences, class, gender, and living situations and environments were some or all factors that intersected and impacted interviewee responses and overall experiences in the neighborhood. Many older participants at times seemed to romanticize the former West Oakland. In the most significant section of the Findings Chapter that addressed preservation of community roots, despite age, most participants agreed that this could be maintained through residents coming together. The majority of respondents appeared to notice similar ways that social services could support with some outliers that for instance discussed counseling as a social service need. What rings true from these findings is that West Oakland is no longer an all Black community and each participant is grappling with what this means.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to understand gentrification more profoundly by learning from the perspectives of people impacted on the ground level. A second objective was to investigate how long-standing African American residents who live in West Oakland believe they can maintain community roots during gentrification. Hopefully the perspectives of participants can help to elevate the consciousness of community based social workers when working in neighborhoods impacted by gentrification. Historically, social workers have been committed to housing reform and access to affordable housing is a core social work tenet.

The major sections of this chapter are presented in the following order: 1. Key Findings: Comparing and Contrasting the Relationship between the Findings and the Literature, 2. Implications for Social Work Practice, 3. Implications for Theory and 4. Recommendations for Future Research (including considerations of the strengths, limitations, and potential biases of the research that can be addressed and examined in potential studies).

Key Findings: Comparison with Previous Literature

This section examines the relationship between the findings and previous literature. The following major areas include: 1. Demographics, 2. Understanding Neighborhood Perceptions, 3. Impacts of Gentrification, and 4. Maintaining Community Roots.

Demographics

Participants reported noticing that West Oakland had become a Whiter neighborhood. This finding was in accordance with the Bay Area Census that found that despite African Americans being the most represented ethnic group in Oakland, the number of African Americans has declined and the number of White people has increased. Furthermore, Henderson, et al., (2014) noted that between 1990 and 2000, the number of Black renters and homeowners had decreased in West Oakland.

Understanding Neighborhood Perceptions

The results of this study showed that some residents identified being impacted by the legacy of “serial displacement” that Henderson et al., (2014) described as marked by urban policies such as redlining and segregation. The information that study contributors provided to discuss the history and cultural life of West Oakland matched the previous research. However, participants added further information on the history of West Oakland that was not included in the literature that the researcher used as a guide to find study participants in places identified as “community roots” and provided the researcher with greater understanding of precipitating factors (i.e. impacts of crack epidemic on West Oakland residents selling property to other racial and ethnic groups) that might have led to the increased presence of White people in the neighborhood and the decline of Black people that were not listed in the research.

Respondents discussed improvements to infrastructure that they believed were not intended for their benefit but for newer residents. Some discussed the inadequate school system in Oakland and a few residents reported currently utilizing social services in West Oakland. Henderson et al., (2014) supports these responses when they speak about

gentrification being a process that is embedded in the context of segregation and historic disinvestment of urban communities of people of Color (p.8). Participants positively noted that the value of living in West Oakland is the convenience of the location. Researchers have discussed the importance of location in respect to gentrification processes (Henderson, et. al., 2014).

Impact of Gentrification

The definitions that participants offered in regards to defining key terms including “gentrification” and “gentrifier” were congruent with some of the literature. In the research there are contested definitions of the terms gentrification and gentrifier, because of its complexity. Many interviewees defined gentrification in terms of displacement, which was similar to Henderson, et al’s., (2014) definition that gentrification is a process that is embedded in the context of disinvestment and segregation of urban communities of color that increases the rental costs for existing lower income residents of color in favor of higher income earning individuals to move into neighborhoods (Henderson et al., 2014, p.8).

Additionally, most participants shared observations of gentrifiers as White people and this was a claim maintained by some researchers. Elizabeth (2005) cited Vigdor (2002) who said, “Much of the gentrification debate is actually a coded reference to the contestation of blacks and whites for urban space”, and asserted that analyses that fail to consider race and the “shifts over time in racial as well as class composition within neighborhoods ‘are incomplete’” (p.19). Furthermore, this perception manifested in Henderson et al., (2014) who described gentrifiers as largely White individuals with a

few Asian Americans who can be characterized as wealthy, high income based people (p.5).

Maintaining Community Roots

Participants conceptualized community roots with similar understandings as presented in past literature. The researcher was unable to successfully locate the term, *community roots*, in past writing. However as noted in the research, scholars have used other phrases to conceptualize a similar idea that can be seen articulated in the example of the “mazeway” concept. Participants spoke of feeling a sense of loss of culture, observing loss of Black property ownership, and community connectedness. Fullilove (2001) cites Wallace’s concept of the *mazeway* that is ‘the sum of the lifeways in a community, a collective construct that depended on a shared history of life in a given place’” (p.78). Moreover, Fullilove (2001) also identifies *root shock* as an effect of gentrification and is the traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one’s emotional ecosystem.”(p. 11). Study interviewees said that unity, civic engagement, and the participation of the (Black) church in dealing with gentrification could be relevant ways to maintain community roots. The literature offers examples of social work efforts to deal with urban renewal processes which included community organizing and education efforts (Bowen, 2015) that speak to study contributors own ideas.

Implications for Social Work Practice

Although this study includes a small sample that is not generalizable, it is clear that participants felt that social services were needed and could impact their neighborhood in several ways. The homeless and the elderly were two populations that many participants wanted to see social services support in their community. Henderson,

et al., (2014) also maintained this stance when they reported that the elderly of the Bay Area are a vulnerable group and also represent the gentrified in the region (p.5). This information might be important for social workers and social service agencies in the Bay Area to be aware of as they intervene in communities and re-assess effectiveness of services to the vulnerable populations mentioned above.

Currently in the field of social work, there has been much attention and research given to trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. What becomes evident from this study is that people are impacted emotionally and psychologically by the effects of gentrification, particularly gentrification that is marked by displacement. Therefore, trauma in response to displacement and other housing concerns need not be taken for granted; rather social workers should receive more training in terms of how to support clients who may present with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as a result of gentrification. Social workers should also have familiarity with the communities they serve. Social work as a field needs to return to its early tradition of being engaged in issues of housing and produce scholarship that deals with gentrification.

As the research supports, social workers have had a long history of involvement in housing rights and affordable housing is a core social work tenet. There are many opportunities for social workers to become involved in gentrification through some of their earlier practices of community education, organizing, and relocation efforts (in cases where gentrification may be inevitable).

Implications for Theory

For this study, the researcher framed the research question through the lens of ecological systems theory and root shock theory. Based on the responses of research

participants, it is clear that these theories were viable frameworks to ground the study. The five concentric circles of ecological systems theory were echoed in interviewee discussions. Respondents discussed displacement as a micro systems level issue because residents are being forced to leave their homes. One participant believed that a part of gentrification was about, "...just moving Black people out and tearing down. I think the White people are the gentrifiers or the government because they want to change our communities, our urban communities...and push the Black people out.

At the mesosystem level, study contributors contemplated how the presence of White people has or will affect West Oakland. One respondent believed White people's ideas of child rearing had interfered with the child rearing practices of Blacks and said,

The parenting styles have changed...It's not our style anymore, it's basically theirs because they (white people) make the laws, they make the rules and were subject to penalty if we deviate from that and some parents do their own thing but only to a degree."

Research contributors explained that the Church represents an exosystem for Black people dealing with gentrification. This makes sense because although all African Americans do not identify as Christian, the Church is a part of the history of these individuals in context of social justice in the United States. One contributor held,

Am I a strong religious person? No. Personally. Do I think religion is of tremendous essence? Has religion been used to control? Yes. But, religion I think has been key for our people. The church in other words has been very strong mainstay and has been supportive even in terms of the Civil Rights Movement.

The Church played a major role.

From a macrosystems level perspective respondents discussed the importance of shifting the culture of West Oakland to one that emphasizes Black property ownership.

One person shared,

I believe that the people that are still here who own their own homes can pool together and if they want certain things to remain the same or as far as any negative stuff to keep the community with people that you know and not necessarily... when we govern our own, we take care of our own, I think we'd be in a lot of better place.

Gentrification emphasizes community change and participants voiced the many changes they witnessed and also speculated gentrification might contribute to West Oakland. One participant point discussed the chronosystem when he said, "I would say that you know like with them it might be a good thing (pointing to youth across the street)...I'll say in the next 10-15 years there'll be a mall, a grocery store."

Root shock theory relates well to ecological systems theory because it suggests that people impacted by gentrification can develop traumatic stress reactions to the disruption of their ecosystem (which includes their community roots). Several participants discussed gentrification in terms of significant loss of their community roots and ecosystem experiences. The respondents validated root shock theory's capability in understanding how the gentrified experience gentrification. One study contributor expressed his fear in suffering loss in his ecosystem that can arise from gentrification when he said, "Eventually, I'm not gonna have any Black people, people who look like me that I can socialize with you know. The fear, the fear of the white place".

Strengths, Limitations, and Biases

I inserted myself into the community in a unique way in order to understand the context of gentrification in West Oakland and the Bay Area. The researcher spent several hours over the course of numerous days embedded in West Oakland engaging in recruitment activities and interviewing people. The researcher anticipated interviewees might feel a sense of pride in sharing their experiences about gentrification for academic research. Most contributors were 50 years of age and older and some perceived their participation as part of their role as community historians that seemed to be important to them in maintaining West Oakland history. This study has the potential to help maintain oral history about the West Oakland neighborhood.

Within the social work field, there is a bias of literature that narrowly focuses on affordable housing and neglects gentrification. This absence of literature made it difficult for the researcher to develop a complete understanding of the connection between gentrification and social work. Due to limited time constraints, all literature on gentrification could not exhaustively be reviewed. Had the researcher had additional time, a second or third search for more information to include in the literature review would have been done. The generalizability of the reported findings cannot be assumed. Additionally, two interviews were administered in a focus group style format that might have facilitated issues of social desirability.

At times, the researcher experienced over-identification with study contributors. During some final interviews, the researcher may have biased the study by asking follow up questions to encourage participants about how they might deal with maintaining community roots. The follow-up questions may have elicited feelings of pressure to

respond or to feel connected to the issue. The researcher developed the Interview Guide and is the only person who coded the interviews, which may account for bias.

The research question was biased and implicitly suggested that community roots could be maintained by African American residents. No study interviewee received the Interview Study Guide in advance of interview. This lack of preparation might have impacted participants' responses. Due to the lack of gentrification research on the voices of people on the ground, some participants' responses may not be reflections of their true feelings. Although the researcher attempted to get a diverse sample, they might have showed bias in selection of participants. Due to the small scope of the master's thesis, limited time and funding, the researcher was not able to incentivize study participation in ways that may have attracted other individuals to participate who may have not normally participated in research studies.

Recommendation for Future Research

A larger sample size would have made the findings more generalizable. Therefore it behooves future researchers to continue to investigate West Oakland and other smaller cities because gentrification research often neglects them in place of studying larger cities. Gentrification is an expansive topic being influenced by many academic disciplines and the creation of a meta-analysis that integrates various disciplines would be helpful for scholars who are new or inquiring of the field. Future researchers should pay attention to their recruitment methods by offering additional compensation to enlarge and diversify the study sample. Although, the researcher posited the term "community roots" as "the key elements of the community that give residents a sense of place and belonging" (Huyser & Ravenhorst Meerman, 2014, p.19) The researcher did not notice in

literature a term used to define this attachment pattern among African American residents to their communities. This is another area for future investigation.

For this study, the theory of root shock was employed to conceptualize the effects of gentrification in West Oakland. Although this theory is borrowed from the public health field, social workers need to become more interdisciplinary in their scope and develop more familiarity with other disciplines studying gentrification in order to build up its own stance on the issue. Root shock is a theory that deserves further clinical examination and might help to bring greater awareness of the emotional and psychology effects of gentrification on gentrified residents. Currently, there are not substantive writings on the effects of gentrification on the mental health of pre-gentrification residents. This is poignant as gentrification can often include resident displacement. Further exploration of the mental health implications for displaced residents is needed. This is surely an area of focus that social workers can take on. Overall additional research on gentrification in social work is relevant.

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Appendix A

LIST SERVE RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Greetings.

My name is Karessa Irvin and I am a Master of Social Work graduate student at Smith College School for Social Work. I am conducting a research study about community changes in West Oakland. I am emailing to find research study participants who can take about 30-45minutes to complete an interview for this research project. Participation is completely voluntary and your answers will be confidential. All participants will be entered into a raffle for a \$50 Visa Gift Card.

The study seeks to gain the perspectives of people who are long-standing African American community members of West Oakland.

Participants will be asked to do individual interviews for about 30-45mins via skype, phone, or in person.

If you are interested or know someone who would like to participate in the study, please email me back as soon as possible but no later than March 1.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me (kirvin@smith.edu; (zzz) zzz-zzzz).

Thank you for your time.

Karessa Irvin
Master of Social Work Graduate Student
Smith College School for Social Work

This study protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee (HSRC).)

Appendix B



SMITH COLLEGE
School for
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VOLUNTEERS WANTED FOR A RESEARCH STUDY

MAINTAINING COMMUNITY ROOTS:
UNDERSTANDING GENTRIFICATION THROUGH THE EYES OF
LONG-STANDING AFRICAN AMERICAN RESIDENTS IN WEST
OAKLAND

Are you over the age of 18 and currently living in West Oakland?

Do you self-identify as a long-standing African American
resident of West Oakland?

If you answered YES to the questions above, I want to hear from
you! I am conducting a research study about the changes in
West Oakland and I am looking for volunteers to interview.

****Interviews should take between 30 to 45 minutes to be
completed.**

**Participants will be entered in to a raffle to receive a \$50 Visa
Gift Card for completing an interview.**

This study protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Smith College School for Social Work Human
Subjects Review Committee (HSRC.)

Interested in participating?
Contact Kareesa Irvin at
kirvin@smith.edu
or (781) 452-1684

Interested in participating?
Contact Kareesa Irvin at
kirvin@smith.edu
or (781) 452-1684

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or (781) 452-1684

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kirvin@smith.edu
or (781) 452-1684

Appendix C



2015-2016
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Smith College School for Social Work • Northampton, MA

.....
Title of Study: Maintaining Community Roots: Understanding Gentrification through the Eyes of Long-Standing African American Residents in West Oakland

Investigator(s): Karessa Irvin, School for Social Work, (ZZZ) ZZZ-ZZZZ).

.....
Introduction

- You are being asked to be in a research study about community changes in West Oakland.
- You were selected as a participant because you self-identify as an African American long-standing resident of West Oakland who is 18 years of age or older.
- We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study

- The purpose of the study is to understand how residents think community roots can be maintained during community changes.
- This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my masters in social work degree.
- Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences.

Description of the Study Procedures

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things: participate in a 30-45 minute interview via telephone, skype or in person, asked to meet with the researcher for a follow up for you to make any changes to the interview.

Risks of Being in this Study

- The study has the following risks. First, it is possible that you may experience feelings of uneasiness related to discussing community changes depending on if they have been positive or negative experiences or both for you.
- You can reach out to the following agencies if you want to talk about any of the good or stressful feelings you have because of the study: Crisis Response Program located at 568 W Grand Ave, Oakland, CA 94612. Their phone number is [\(510\)268-7836](tel:5102687836). [Additionally the West Oakland Health Council is also a resource you can contact. They are located at 700 Adeline Street, Oakland, CA 94607. Their phone number is \(510\)835-9610.](#) If you would like to be connected with a community based center that aims to support people who live in gentrified communities, you can visit Qilombo at 2313 San Pablo Ave, Oakland, CA 94612 or call them at [\(510\) 338-7933](tel:5103387933).
- For more resources related to gentrification and tenants' rights you may contact Causa Justa: Just Cause. They are located at 3268 San Pablo Avenue, Oakland, CA, 95608 and their telephone number is [\(510\) 763-5877](tel:5107635877). You may also reach the East Bay Law Center located at 3130 Shattuck Ave, Berkeley, CA 94705. Their telephone number is [\(510\) 548-4040](tel:5105484040).

Benefits of Being in the Study

- You will benefit from participation in this study because it will provide you with the opportunity to share your stories and add your voices to matters of gentrification on the ground. Through participating in interviews, participants might learn something about how to work together in order to maintain community roots in Oakland. Participants may also gain a sense of pride in knowing that their stories will contribute to future research on gentrification.
- The benefits to social work/society are: help social service providers working in urban communities know how to support individuals/communities that might be impacted by community changes.

Confidentiality

- Your participation will be kept confidential. The researcher will meet the study participant for an in-person interview in a place that feels comfortable to the participant or via Skype. The researcher will separate informed consents from notes and transcripts, and each participant will self-select a pseudonym to be used to de-identify them in the research. I will protect audio recording digital files with password protection. Audio recordings will be in the researcher and researcher advisor's hands only. After they are used for educational purposes, they will be erased.
- All research materials including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period. We will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

Gift Card

- You will receive the following payment/gift: You will be entered into a raffle with all other study participants to receive a \$50 Visa Gift Card.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* up to March 1 without affecting your relationship with the researchers of this study or Smith College. Your decision to refuse will not result in any loss of benefits (including access to services) to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely up to the point noted below. If you choose to withdraw, I will not use any of your information collected for this study. You must notify me of your decision to withdraw by email or phone by April 1. After that date, your information will be part of the thesis, dissertation or final report.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Karessa Irvin at kirvin@smith.edu or by telephone at (zzz) zzz-zzzz). If you would like a summary of the study results, one will be sent to you once the study is completed. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your participation, you may contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at (413) 585-7974.

Consent

- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep. You will also be given a list of referrals and access information if you experience emotional issues related to your participation in this study.

.....
Name of Participant (print):

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher(s): _____ Date: _____

.....

1. I agree to be [audio or video] taped for this interview:

Name of Participant (print):

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher(s): _____ Date: _____

2. I agree to be interviewed, but I do not want the interview to be taped:

Name of Participant (print):

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher(s): _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D
Resources List

Name	Telephone	Address	Area of Service
Crisis Response Program	510- 268-7836	568 W. Grand Ave, Oakland, CA, 94612	Emergency Mental Health Counseling (Available 24-hrs)
West Oakland Health Council	510- 835-9610	700 Adeline Street, Oakland, CA, 94607	Mental Health Counseling
Causa Justa::Just Cause	510-763-5877	3268 San Pablo Avenue, Oakland, CA, 95608	Counseling on tenants’ rights/ Opportunities for residents to get involved in anti-displacement work
East Bay Community Law Center	510-548-4040	3130 Shattuck Ave, Berkeley, CA 94705	Legal representation against evictions
Qilombo	510- 338-7933	2313 San Pablo Ave Oakland CA 94612	Community center in Oakland that has a community garden in West Oakland and offers childcare, weekly community breakfasts, a free store and other services with an emphasis on supporting people who are impacted by gentrification



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INTERVIEW GUIDE

Demographic Information

Pseudo Name: _____

Gender: _____

Age: _____

Race/Ethnicity: _____

Type of residence (i.e. apartment, condo, house): _____

Owner or renter of your residence: _____

Years living in West Oakland: _____

Other family who live in West Oakland (yes or no): _____

Street of your residence: _____

Occupation: _____

Income level: _____

Highest educational level: _____

Spiritual/Religious beliefs: _____

Introduction

What has been your experience with social services in West Oakland?

Tell me what you know about the history of West Oakland?



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INTERVIEW GUIDE

Understanding Neighborhood Perceptions

What comes to mind when you think about West Oakland?

What are the top 3 problems in West Oakland?

What are the advantages of living in West Oakland?

Impacts of Gentrification

How has the West Oakland community changed over time?



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INTERVIEW GUIDE

Impacts of Gentrification

If I said the words "gentrifier" and "gentrification" to think about West Oakland, what does that mean to you?

Community Roots

What does the words "community roots" mean to you?

Maintaining Community Roots

What do you think is the best way for residents to deal with community changes?



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INTERVIEW GUIDE

Maintaining Community Roots

As West Oakland deals with community changes, what would you like to see social service agencies in West Oakland do?

Appendix F



School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950F (413) 585-7994

January 12, 2016

Karessa Irvin

Dear Karessa,

You did a very nice job on your revisions. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Congratulations and our best wishes on your interesting study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elaine Kersten'.

Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.
Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Jean LaTerz, Research Advisor