There Goes the Barrio: 
Measuring *Gentefication* in Boyle Heights, 
Los Angeles

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**Abstract**

This thesis develops a methodological approach to gentrification that reveals the extent to which gentrification of Latinos by Latinos—otherwise known as *gentefication*—has occurred in the neighborhood of Boyle Heights in downtown Los Angeles, California. It posits that *gentefication* is a “distinctive process of urban transformation driven by patterns of [ethnic] and class stratification” and suggests that overlooked forms of gentrification are not captured by contemporary quantitative methods that spatially identify gentrified census tracts (Moore, 2009, p. 119). This thesis adapts existing quantitative methodological frameworks in order to confirm through spatial analysis that middle class, educated Latinos are a gentrifying force in Boyle Heights. It does so by arguing that in order to identify self-gentrifying communities, socio-economic indicators used to determine gentrification must be racially relative. By exploring gentefication as a process through four methods each comparing Latino-specific data at the census tract and city level in different ways, this thesis concludes that Boyle Heights is being *gentefied* by Latinos with varying capacities to gentefy. Finally, the thesis explores the implications that this type of gentrification has for urban planning and economic development in Latino communities like Boyle Heights.
INTRODUCTION

Background

Like many poor, inner-city neighborhoods in large cities across the United States, Boyle Heights—a historically low-income Mexican-American “Chicano” community east of downtown Los Angeles—has gentrified. Gentrification, as Marcuse (1985) writes, is the neighborhood evolutionary process by which:

“new residents—who disproportionately are young, white, professional, technical, and managerial workers with higher education and income levels—[displace] older residents—who disproportionately are low-income, working-class and poor, minority and ethnic group members, and elderly—from older and previously deteriorated inner-city housing” (p. 198-99).

Quantitative methods for measuring gentrification reveal that this evolutionary process has occurred in Boyle Heights for some time. For example, UCLA's Luskin School of Public Affairs’ map of gentrification of Los Angeles shows that between 1990 and 2000, 5 of Boyle Height’s census tracts gentrified, while the rest were gentrifiable, or capable of being gentrified (Zuk and Chapple 2015).\(^1\) Similarly, a 2014 study by Governing Magazine identified that a number of Boyle Height’s census tracts gentrified in the same period, while the rest of the neighborhood’s census tracts remained gentrifiable (Governing, Los Angeles Gentrification Maps and Data).

\(^1\) “Gentrifiable” census tracts are those census tracts with the capacity to gentrify. These are usually census tracts with low incomes, low levels of educational attainment, high poverty rates, a high proportion of low-skilled workers, and, due to the strong relationship between income and race in the United States, populated by racial minorities.
Escalante 4
While both studies suggest that no census tract in Boyle Heights gentrified between 2000 to 2013, more recent account prove otherwise. In 2013, for example, a *New York Times* article explored Boyle Heights’ “self-gentrification,” which Chan (2016) conceptualizes as the urban evolutionary process in which individuals of communities threatened by gentrification seek to improve themselves and their own communities while conserving the “heritage landscape.” Although Medina (2013) in her *New York Times* article does not use the word “self-gentrification” explicitly, she nevertheless describes this distinctive form of gentrification conceptualized by Chan (2016). As Medina (2013) depicts, in Boyle Heights, this self-gentrification can be clearly seen in the influx of new businesses with roots in Latino culture that cater to second-generation upwardly mobile Latinos, such as “La Monarca Bakery, a Latino coffee shop and bakery that sells...a vegetarian chorizo quiche...[and] Guisados, a taco joint that advertises its selection of tacos as ‘gluten-free’” (Delgadillo, 2016).

The owners of these Latino-centric businesses, who would prefer to see the neighborhood maintain its Latino population and culture, see change as inevitable and perceive their investments in the community as protection from character change through invasion by richer and whiter outsiders (Delgadillo, 2016). As Guillermo Uribe--owner a sleek wine bar that caters to Chicano (Mexican-American) hipsters or “Chipsters”--states, “If gentrification is happening, it might as well be from people who care about the existing culture....[I]t would be best if the *gente* [Spanish for people] decide to invest in improvements because they are more likely to preserve its integrity” (Herbst, 2014).

While Chan (2016) would describe this form of community improvement through Latino investment as self-gentrification, Uribe prefers the word “gentefication,” a portmanteau created
from the words gente (Spanish for “people”) and gentrification (Herbst, 2014). Considering the continual ethnic stratification of Latinos in US society, the term gentefication can be conceptualized as a “a set of counter-hegemonic spatial rhetorical practices that create new spaces for [Latinos] to re-imagine contemporary traditions and identities that tell differentiated stories” (Trujillo, 2008, p. ix). In other words, gentefication is neighborhood change that resists the transformative social and cultural effects of gentrification by creating spaces of consumption and identity expression for a racial-minority class.

For many though, gentefication, while maintaining the cultural heritage of the community by higher class Latino patrons, still has the power to displace low-income residents, and many long-time Boyle Heights residents see these new Latino establishments as clear signs of imminent removal of poor households (Medina, 2013). To extrapolate, gentefication may maintain the cultural character of a neighborhood, but it fails to maintain its social character. Provide example of class conflict here. Thus, while Boyle Heights may remain Mexican in its heritage landscape, through gentefication, its social landscape is changing, causing friction between the younger, more upwardly mobile Latino newcomers, and the older lower-income residents. The Latino millennials’ appropriation of gentrification processes into a distinct ethnic one has not been able to ease the increasing class conflict amongst different generations of Latino residents, since, after all, gentefication is gentrification.

**Research question**

Herein lies the issue: current quantitative methodologies for identifying gentrification ignore this intra-ethnic class conflict in self-gentrifying inner-city neighborhoods. For example, while the aforementioned studies on gentrification in Los Angeles suggest that between 2000 and
2013 Boyle Heights census tracts did not gentrify, the accounts of the existing processes of gentefication in Boyle Heights suggest that such methodologies are overlooking instances of gentefication. This revelation suggests that a revision of the methods used to quantify gentrification is needed if intra-ethnic class conflict is to be identified and properly acted upon.

So what do current methodologies omit in their assessment of gentrification that would otherwise reveal processes such as gentefication? In their study of gentrification in Chicago, Hwang and Sampson (2014) point towards the need to account for social inequalities to better understand the distinct economic mechanisms that operate in minority communities. As they observe,

“neighborhoods that showed signs of gentrification and had higher proportions of minorities...had lower or slower degrees of reinvestment and upgrading relative to neighborhoods with larger white populations, which may be due to factors such as racial inequalities in wealth or biases by external sources of reinvestment.” (p. 33).

In other words, the different levels of reinvestment and economic development in minority neighborhoods are due to the economic stratification of racial minorities in American society. Hence, quantitative measures of gentefication and other forms of minority self-gentrification must take into account the socio-economic differences between different races. This study, in an effort to measure gentefication in Boyle Heights, thus proposes new quantitative methodologies to measure gentrification by adapting existing methodologies and incorporating data that takes into account the intersectionality of race and class and how those two play a role in a capacity to gentrify.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Boyle Heights, Neo-Colonialism and Chicano Identity

In order to fully understand the current developments of gentefication in Boyle Heights, a review of the history of Boyle Heights and Mexican-American activism is necessary. To begin, the Latino community in Los Angeles is no stranger to spatial exclusion. For example, the annexation of California after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 led to an influx of Anglo emigrants who, in an effort to improve the city-center, “demolished Mexican adobe homes and replace them with brick buildings that were considered a symbol [of] progress” (Avila-Hernandez, 2004, p. 7). Finding the city-center unaffordable, Mexican-Americans were displaced to communities such as Boyle Heights, which were located near the city center and provided access to employment in industry. In the early half of the 20th century, the concentration of the Mexican community in places like Boyle Heights was further compounded by “restrictive racial covenants [that] excluded the Spanish-speaking [population] from desirable suburbs” (Rios Bustamante & Castillo, 1986, p. 127). After WWII, industry began to leave Boyle Heights; this, along with the concentration of poor Mexican-Americans and Mexican immigrants due to racist spatial policies, led the community to be considered “blighted” by city policy makers. Policy makers’ urban renewal projects of the 1960s, such as the construction of two freeways, destroyed many homes and displaced Mexican-Americans from Boyle Heights (Avila-Hernandez, 2004, p. 12). More recently, in the 1990s, policy makers drafted a strategic plan meant to revitalize the abandoned downtown through projects such as the

Today, the ongoing effort to revitalize the downtown city center is reminiscent of the historical spatial exclusion and displacement of Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles. Connecting these exploits to legacy of colonialism, Candelaria et al. (2004) state that Mexican-Americans today “experience the same types of exploitation as colonized people in more traditional colonial settings” (p. 364). Given its invasion and transformation of supposed new territories, the current threats of gentrification of Latino neighborhoods are indicative of the continued legacy of colonization of brown bodies and their land. Working within systems of class prejudice and institutional racism, gentrification functions as an exploitative mechanisms reminiscent of the race and class structures of Latin American colonialism acted upon brown bodies. As Wharton (2008) states, gentrification “is a continued obsession of modern era settlement in supposed new territories” similar to the colonization of Native Americans by European powers obsessed “with conquering, disempowering, politicizing and capitalizing over other individuals for their own gain” (p. 7).

Given the neo-colonialist nature of gentrification, the **gentefication** of Boyle Heights can be better understood as an explicitly resistive Latino counter-imaginary of gentrification when considering the ideologies of the identity-based activism of the Mexican-American “Chicano” Civil Rights Movement (Miranda Alcazar, 2015, p. 6). The 1960s Civil Rights Movement energized Mexican-Americans to fight for social liberty and empowerment of Mexican-Americans. In the process, activists and intellectuals constructed for the Mexican-American community a new “Chicano” identity that validated the Mexican-American
experience and celebrated Mesoamerican heritage; this identity subverted oppressive colonialist attitudes towards brown bodies and their history and culture, and replaced those attitudes with counter-hegemonic ideologies based on Mexican-American self-affirmation.

The validation of Mexican-American identity was made most visible through public displays of Mesoamerican iconography, particularly in the form of murals. Considering the Mexican-American experience with displacement, dislocation and conquest, such public display of Chicano art is consistent with the resistive nature of the movement, as such public displays symbolize the movement’s combative self-affirmation and claim to territory. Today, Chicano iconography can be found throughout east Los Angeles, which was a hotbed of Chicano activism and culture. In Boyle Heights, which itself became a canvas for the movement’s artistic expression, Chicano art reflected the imaginations of the social movement and articulated in public space a “Chicano utopia” (Miranda Alcazar, 2015, p. 7). Today, murals depicting Mexican and indigenous iconography can still be found throughout the streets of Boyle Heights, creating in the neighborhood a visual landscape that is affirming of Mexican culture and identity.

The Latino-centric iconography and self-affirming Chicano culture of Boyle Heights is attractive to college-educated Latinos who, while in college, become more self aware and affirming of their Latino identities. As Teranishi (2007) explores, through their experience in higher education, Latino college students develop a strong “awareness of structural inequalities, and connectedness to community…[while increasing their] civic participation, career preparedness, and understanding of diversity” (p. 52). It is not difficult to understand why many college-educated Latinos, with their heightened sense of identity and knowledge of structural inequalities, decide to move back to places such as Boyle Heights; many, in an effort to connect
to their Latino identity and community, Latino gentrifiers engage in a counter-hegemonic adaptation of gentrification in order to fight racial and class oppression and preserve Latino culture and space. In this way, the current expressions of gentefication are in line with self-affirming ideologies of chicanismo. The gentefication of Boyle Heights, which resists new waves of the old history of colonization of Mexican-American spaces in order to preserve the cultural character of this historically Mexican-American neighborhood, can thus be understood as a self-affirming Chicano resistance against the neo-colonialist nature of gentrification and a counter-hegemonic contestation against conquest.

**Implications for Urban Planning**

While upwardly mobile Latinos protest the neo-colonialist nature of gentrification in order to maintain the cultural character of a neighborhood and keep white gentrifiers out, their re-imagination of gentrification may lead to consequences not too dissimilar from those of white gentrification. In an attempt to maintain the cultural character of the community, economic improvement efforts by upwardly mobile Latinos in Boyle Heights may be transforming Boyle Heights into a more digestible ethnic community for white consumerism, and thus leading to white gentrification. As Anderson and Sternberg (2012) analyze, sanitized portrayals of Latino culture, which usually focuses on its art and food, are commonly used by developers and politicians to “sell ethnicity” to white consumers. For example, a 2012 advertisement in the LA lightrail encouraging visitors to Boyle Heights depicted “three white men in business suits dining at a Mexican restaurant being serenaded by a mariachi ensemble” (Miranda Alcazar, 2015, p. 2). It is possible that such depictions, which white-wash consumerism in Boyle Heights, are
encouraged by the more digestible twists to Latino culture meant to cater to an upwardly-mobile millennial Latinos population.

The economic transformations that encourage such depiction put in danger communities beyond Boyle Heights and Los Angeles; across the country, the US Latino population has the numbers and economic power to operate such gentrification processes. To begin, Latinos make up a great extent of the US population. The 2010 Census revealed that more than 16 percent or 50 million people of the total U.S. population were of Latino origin, making Latinos the second largest ethnic group after Whites (Ennis et al., 2011, p. 2). Increasing by more than 40 percent between 2000 and 2010, more than half of the total growth in the US population was due to the increase in the Latino community (Ennis et al., 2011, p. 2). By 2060, it is projected that 38% of the total population under 14 will be of Hispanic or Latino descent, and only 33% will be Whites.

As the US becomes more ethnically and culturally diverse, where minorities become the majority, economic and spatial processes like gentrification will not necessarily be fully tied to inter-race conflict. Alternative forms of gentrification such as gentefication are sure to rise, making it important to identify neighborhoods at risk for intra-race conflict. However, contemporary views of gentrification still approach and measure the process as a race-driven one between wealthier whites and poor minorities, which ignores the existence of processes like gentefication. This research thus suggest that instead of approaching gentrification as a race-driven urban process, it is essential to explore how race and class interact and how class works within racial and ethnic boundaries.
**On the importance of the strategy used to identify gentrification**

Due to lack of consensus concerning the definition of gentrification and the nature of its effects, researches have developed numerous quantitative methodologies to measure it. Barton (2016) identifies two different census-based strategies for measuring gentrification, those by Bostic and Martin (2003) and Freeman (2005), and applies them to New York City to study how their results differ. His findings, which show that the two strategies differed in the number of neighborhoods that each identifies as gentrified, suggest that the ways in which methodological frameworks are set up result in disparate conclusions of gentrification for the same census tract.

The methodology developed by Bostic and Martin (2003)--which in Barton’s (2016) study resulted in fewer census tracts identified as gentrified when compared to Freeman’s (2005) method--was used to determine whether black homeowners were a gentrifying force in the United States. This strategy uses census tract-level data to determine black gentrification by measuring, among other variables, the proportion of black residents and the proportion of white non-family households. While Barton (2016) suggests this strategy is a better match to qualitatively documented cases of gentrification in New York by the *New York Times*, its reliance on measuring the increase in white residents implies a “racial dynamic...whereby White households replace [racial minorities] as neighbourhood incomes rise” (Bostic & Martin, 2003, p. 2427). This racial component prohibits the exposure of communities undergoing what Bostic and Martin (2003) calls a “minorities moving in, minorities moving out” transitional process (p. 2428). Bostic and Martin (2003) thus recognize that their methodology for identifying black homeowners as a gentrifying force provides a methodological basis for measuring not
self-gentrification, but rather gentrification by minorities. As this methodological approach cannot identify black self-gentrification, it is likewise unsuitable for measuring gentefication.

Freeman’s (2005) methodology, on the other hand, does not use race as a variable in identifying gentrification and thus proves promising as a basis for measuring gentefication. His methodology uses a two step process: first, it determines gentrifiable census tracts with median incomes that are less than the median for the city and contain a proportion of housing built within the last 20 years lower than the proportion found at the median for the city; then, it identifies gentrified census tracts as those with increases in educational attainment greater than the median for the city and an increase in real housing prices during the study period. As this methodology studies gentrification without concern for race, it should encompass processes of neighborhood change such as self-gentrification. Nevertheless, as proved by Governing Magazine’s study of Los Angeles which used this exact method, it was unable to to identify the documented instances of gentefication in Boyle Heights from 2000 to 2013. Due to this, this research suggest that, instead of measuring gentrification by comparing socioeconomic variables of different races or by disregarding race completely, in order to identify self-gentrification, it is essential to use socio-economic indicators in racially relative terms instead of comparing these across racial lines.

The Racial Wealth Gap

Central to the argument of this research is an understanding of the racial inequalities in wealth that exists between Latinos and their white peers. An overview of the wealth and income inequalities in the United States helps justify the need for racially-relative data when measuring self-gentrification.
Today, the racial inequalities that the Chicano Movement fought against continue to create great disparities in economic power between Latinos and their white peers. For example, as Sullivan et al. (2015) find in their research, “in 2011 the median white household had $111,146 in wealth holdings, compared to just... $8,348 for the median Latino household”(p. 1). In simpler numbers, for every $1 in wealth accrued by Latino households, white households accrue $5.37 (Sullivan et al, 2015, p. 3). This considerable difference in wealth between Latino and white households creates stark disparities between each racial group’s capacity to stir economic change in low-income communities.

Considering that measurements of gentrification use increases in education as a way to measure gentrification, as used by Freeman, it can be assumed that highly educated Latinos have a similar gentrifying force as their educate peers. However, as Asante-Muhammad et al. (2016) find, “even after obtaining a four-year degree, the wealth returns generated by that education is much more valuable to White graduates ($55,869) than it is for... Hispanic ($4,191) graduates”(p. 9). Thus, even though education continues to be one of the surest ways to improve economic conditions, it is not enough to close the racial wealth gap.

Racial inequalities ensure that Latinos continue to have less economic power--and thus a different capacity to enact economic change in their neighborhoods --relative to white gentrifiers. Indeed, as Hwang and Sampson (2014) state, the different levels of reinvestment and economic development in minority neighborhoods are due to the racial inequalities in wealth in American society (p. 33). Given that distinct economic mechanisms operate within minority populations, measurements of minority self-gentrification must account for such mechanisms by keeping the various socio-economic indicators racially relative. This study does so by adapting Freeman’s
methodology and incorporating data that considers the intersectionality of race and class and different racial groups’ capacity to gentrify.
METHODOLOGY

As Freeman’s (2005) methodology omits race as a variable and thus allows the possibility of a “minorities moving in, minorities moving out” transitional process, this research measures self-gentrification using Freeman’s (2005) method adapted through the use of socio-economic variables that are kept racially specific. By approaching the capacity for gentrification in racially relative terms, where class privilege allows one racial group to gentrify relative to the economic power of others, this research adapts Freeman’s methodology by using data specific to Latinos in order to 1) identify gentefiable Latino census tracts by requiring gentrifiable census tracts to be majority Latino, and 2) identify gentefied census tracts by using socio-demographic data specific to Latinos.

Expanding on the UCLA and Governing studies that showed no instances of gentrification in Boyle Heights up to 2013, this study goes beyond that study period and tests four different approaches to measure gentrification in order to determine whether gentefication has occurred since the previous studies, as well as to analyze whether the more developed signs of gentrification observed in Boyle Heights are due to gentefication. Each methodology analyzes the change in demographics between 2000 and 2015 in various approaches to racial relativity. Demographic data for this thesis comes from the US Census Bureau. Data for 2000 comes from the 2000 Decennial Census Summary File 3. 2015 data comes from the American Community Survey 2015 5 year estimates. Data was checked for compatibility using the standards provided by the US Census Bureau. The unit of analysis for this research are the 2010 census tracts.
Adaptations

Rather than compare sociodemographic indicators of majority Latino census tracts to those of all populations, the methodologies proposed in this research isolate demographic descriptors of the Latino community in order to better analyze economic and educational thresholds that lead to the self-gentrification of Latino neighborhoods. For example, instead of comparing median income and education measures of all populations in each census tract against the same figures for the entire city, this method compares Latino median incomes and levels of educational attainment against the same measures for the Latino population in the entire city.

Some variables used by Freeman (2005), such as the proportion of housing built within the last 20 years and the increase in housing prices, are kept racially non-specific, as this information is not readily available by race. In lieu of this, additional variables used in the adaptation of Freeman’s methodology include the increase on Latino population and change in Latino tenure.

In the process of measuring gentefication, it may be possible that in a given census tract, the same number of high-income, educated Latinos could be displacing low-income, long-term residents. However, a negative change in the Latino population would suggest that other economic changes are driving the Latino population away. Thus, the additional requirement of an increase in the Latino population is incorporated into Freeman’s methodology in order to adapt it for the purposes of measuring gentefication. Furthermore, as it is presently impossible to

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2 Median home value by race was collected in the 2000 Decennial Census SF3. However, the American Community Survey 5 year estimates do not separate property values by race meaning that it isn’t possible to identify the change in Latino-owned home values. A substitute for this variable could have been rent, as most people in Boyle Heights are renters. Still, rent values are likewise not collected by race by the ACS.
measure the change in value of Latino-owned property, a more appropriate representation of
gentrification is the change in tenure. As most of the Latino population in Boyle Heights are
renters, this thesis looks at increases in Latino-owned occupied units as a measure for gentrified
census tracts.

**Methodological Approach**

The methodology for this thesis takes on an in iterative process, adapting Freeman’s
methodology by incorporating or adapting variables particular to Latino socio-economic
realities. The methodology is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Method 1:** Freeman’s original methodology | Gentrifiable:  
   - Have a median income less than the median for Los Angeles  
   - Have a proportion of housing built within the past 20 years lower than the proportion found at the median for Los Angeles  
   Gentrified:  
   - Have a percentage increase in educational attainment greater than the median increase in educational attainment for Los Angeles.  
   - Have an increase in real housing prices during the study period. |
| **Method 2:** First adaptation of Freeman’s methodology | Gentrifiable:  
   - Have a median income for the Latino population that is less than the median for Los Angeles **  
   - Have a proportion of housing built within the past 20 years lower than the proportion found at the median for Los Angeles.  
   Gentrified:  
   - Have a percentage increase in educational attainment for Latinos greater than the median increase in educational attainment for Los Angeles **  
   - Have an increase in real housing prices during the study period. |
| **Method 3:** Second adaptation of Freeman’s methodology | Gentrifiable:  
   - Have a median income for the Latino population that is less than the median income for the Latino population in Los Angeles**  
   - Have a proportion of housing built within the past 20 years lower than the proportion found at the median for Los Angeles.  
   Gentrified:  
   - Have a percentage increase in educational attainment for Latinos greater than the median increase in educational attainment for Los Angeles**  
   - Have an increase in real housing prices greater than the increase for the city. |
| **Method 4:** Third adaptation of Freeman’s Methodology | Gentrifiable:  
   - Have a median income for the Latino population that is less than the median income for the Latino population in Los Angeles** |
Before exploring the results of each methodology, this research provides an overview of the different variables used to identify gentefication. Where appropriate, 2000 and 2015 figures are presented for side by side comparison, along with figures on variable changes, and identification of census tracts above or below median thresholds. This is done as a way to justify the need to use racially relative data.

Methodology 1 replicates Freeman’s methodology in order to identify if and how many census tracts within Boyle Heights were gentrified between 2000 and 2015. It is also used to assess whether this methodology can identify gentrification that encompasses gentefication.

Methodology 2 modifies Freeman’s original methodology by comparing the income of the Latino population in each census tract against that of the median of the entire city. Similarly, the percentage increase of the Latino education is used instead of that of the entire population in each census tract. This is done in order to omit data of other ethnic groups that may be skew the income data in those census tracts where a minority of wealthier non-Latinos may influence the data. Furthermore, this method is used in order to measure the effect of racial socio-economic relativity on the number of census tracts identified as gentefied.
Methodology 3 makes income and educational attainment ethnically relative. Similar to methodology 2, it compares the income and educational attainment of the Latino population in each census tract against that of the Latino population in Los Angeles.

Methodology 4 adapts Freeman’s method by substituting the proportion of housing built within the past 20 years with a required 50% for the Latino population in order to identify gentrifiable census tracts. It also substitutes the increase in real housing prices with an increase in Latino owner-occupied units greater than the median increase for Los Angeles.

After analyzing the spatial results of each methodology, this research then compares these different approaches and identifies which strategy best describes the gentrification by Latinos in Boyle Heights.
ANALYSIS

General Overview of Data

Before analyzing the methodologies used to measure gentrification in Boyle Heights, the different variables for measuring gentrifiable and gentrified census tracts are analyzed in order to justify methodological decisions.

Income

In the methodologies analyzed, income as a priority for gentrifiable census tracts is analyzed in three different ways: 1) comparing the median income of all populations in each census tract against the median income for all populations in LA county; 2) comparing the median income of Latinos in each census tract against the median income for all populations in LA county; and 3) comparing the median income of Latinos in each census tract against the median income for all Latinos in LA county. These three methods are compared to determine the effect of using income data specific for Latinos on the results of each methodology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All population</td>
<td>$56,677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Latino populations</td>
<td>$51,772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All populations in Boyle Heights</td>
<td>$35,042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino population in Boyle Heights</td>
<td>$34,402</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above illustrates that the median income for Boyle Heights’ Latino population is considerably less than the median income for all populations as well as the Latino population in Los Angeles. Likewise, the maps below illustrate that, when compared to both the median income for all populations as well as the Latino population, the median incomes in Boyle...
Heights are much lower than most census tracts. This means that, based on Freeman’s (2005) definition of gentrification, Boyle Heights is prone to gentrification.
**New housing stock**

In order to identify gentrifiable census tracts in all but the fourth methodology, the methodologies requires that the proportion of housing built in the last twenty years for each census tract be lower than the city median. The table and maps below show that in 2000, Boyle Heights’ proportion of new buildings was less than the city median. However, considering the UCLA and *Governing* studies that showed that all census tracts were gentrifiable due to this variable, it must be pointed out that some Boyle Heights census tracts were actually above the city average, pointing to significant development between those studies and this current research. Nevertheless, most census tracts continue to be gentrifiable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Median proportion of units built in the last 20 years (from 2000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyle Heights</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Map showing proportion of housing built in the last 20 years]
Housing value

The real increase in housing value is used to determine gentrified census tracts in all but the fourth methodology. As the table below illustrates, the increase in property values in Boyle Heights was less than that observed for the entire Los Angeles county. This general analysis would suggest that Boyle Heights did not gentrify.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Median percent change in home value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyle Heights</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, as the following maps illustrate, all but one census tract in Boyle Heights had a positive increase in real home values. Furthermore, out of the twenty-five census tracts in Boyle Heights, five of the census tracts had a change in real home values above the median, suggesting that there was significant investment in these census tracts in Boyle Heights. Regardless of this observation, a real positive increase in home value, rather than an increase above the median, is used in order to determine gentrified census tracts. This is done for consistency with Freeman’s (2005) method, as well as to compensate for the lack of racially-specific home values that would make this analysis more relevant to gentefication.
**Education**

Just like income, the increase in educational attainment to determine gentrified census tracts is analyzed in three different ways: 1) comparing the median increase in educational attainment of all populations in each census tract against the median for all populations in LA county; 2) comparing the median percent change in Latino educational attainment in each census tract against the median percent change for all populations in LA county; 3) comparing the median percent change in Latino educational attainment in each census tract against the median percent change for all Latinos in LA county. These three methods are compared to determine the effect of using educational attainment data specific for Latinos on the results of each methodology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Median percent change in proportion with Bachelor's</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All populations in Los Angeles</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino population in Los Angeles</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino population in Boyle Heights</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above illustrates that the median percent change in educational attainment for Boyle Heights’ Latino population is considerably less than the median increase for all populations as well as the Latino population in Los Angeles. The percent change in educational attainment for Latinos in Los Angeles is almost twice the percent change in Boyle Heights. Still, the increase in Latino educational attainment in Los Angeles is still lower than that observed increase for all populations. Given this, it would be accurate to compare the increase in Latino education against that of all populations. *Gentefication* thus suggests that a representative
methodology would compare educational increases of Latinos in Boyle Heights against those by Latinos in Los Angeles.
The proportion of Latino population is used to identify gentefiable census tracts in the fourth methodology. In this method, census tracts with a population proportion of at least 50 percent Latino are considered for gentrification. As seen in the table and map below, Boyle Heights is almost exclusively Latino, and the Latino population has stayed the same.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyle Heights</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, looking at the change in Latino population in Boyle Heights in the map below, it is apparent that some census tracts have lost a proportion of their Latino population, while in others it has increased. Due to this, not all census tracts are considered for gentrification. This also suggests that while Latino self-gentrification may be occurring in some census tracts, gentrification of other forms--most likely white gentrification--may be occurring at the same time in other census tracts.

Tenure

Latino homeownership rates are used in the fourth methodology as a substitute of real property value percent increases. This is done to compensate for the lack of data that would allow the identification of change in real property values occupied by the Latino population. Since this data is not readily available, meaning that value change cannot be studied in racially relative terms, Latino homeownership is used to identify changes in the housing stock.

The following table compares the proportion of Latino-owned occupied units in Los Angeles county and Boyle Heights. It reveals that Latinos in Los Angeles have a much greater ownership rate than those living in Boyle Heights. At the same time, it also reveals that while the
homeownership rate by Latinos has decreased between 2000 and 2015, it has actually increased in Boyle Heights. This suggests that, even while Latinos were particularly affected by the mortgage crisis of 2008 (Humphries, 2015), Latino investment in Boyle Heights real estate appears to have increased. Thus, comparing the trends of Latino homeownership in Boyle Heights to greater Los Angeles, it can be assumed that significant economic investment in Boyle Heights by Latinos could be a possible sign of gentefication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyle Heights</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This said, not all census tracts in Boyle Heights experienced an increase in Latino owner occupied units. Some census tracts experienced a decrease in Latino homeownership, suggesting other racial groups might also be investing in Boyle Heights, or that more Latinos are opting for rental units. However, it is not readily known what kind of rental units these are, as rent data
controlled by is also provided in the ACS. Thus it is difficult to determine if the decrease in homeownership here is due to an increase in higher-income Latino occupied units. It must be acknowledged, though, all census tracts that did experience an increase in Latino owner-occupied units also had increases in homeownership above the Latino median.
Methodology 1

*Gentrifiable*

This methodology, which replicates Freeman’s (2005) method, is consistent with other studies (UCB Urban Displacement Project) (Governing, Los Angeles Gentrification Maps and Data) that illustrate that Boyle Height’s census tracts are mostly gentryifiable. While the aforementioned studies shows that all census tracts in Boyle Heights were gentrifiable up to 2013, this updated research, spanning to 2015, illustrates that nearly all—with the exception of four census tracts—continue to be gentryifiable. This difference, showing that the percent of new buildings increased between 2013 and 2015, suggests that significant investment by Latinos or other racial/ethnic groups occurred in these census tracts over the span of two years in such a way that these once-gentrifiable census tracts became non-gentrifiable.
While the UCLA and *Governing* studies showed that no census tracts gentrified between 2000 and 2013, this updated study shows that only one census tract in Boyle Heights gentrified between 2000 and 2015. This suggests that some areas of Boyle Heights have experienced economic change after 2011, when gentefication in Boyle Heights was first documented. However, due to the nature of the methodology, it is not possible to conclude whether this gentrification, although minimal, was actually self-gentrification of Latinos by Latinos. In order to determine if this was the case, the subsequent methodologies make the processes of identifying gentrifiable and gentrified census tracts socio-economically relative to the Latino community in Los Angeles.
Methodology 2

Gentefiable

The second methodology adapts Freeman’s median income variable for identifying gentrifiable census tracts by comparing the Latino median incomes of each census tract against the median income for all populations of Los Angeles county. This adaptation produces the same gentrifiable same census tracts seen in methodology 1. This is expected, as previous analysis of incomes in Los Angeles shows that the median income for Latinos in Boyle Heights is considerably less than the median income for all populations in LA county.
In order to measure gentrified census tracts, methodology 2 requires that the increase in the median income of Latinos be greater than the increase in median income of all populations. As can be observed in the map above, only one census tract was identified as gentefied, the same one identified in methodology 1. Given that this census tract was already predominantly Latino and also saw an increase in the Latino population, it can be assumed that the increase in income observed is due to an increase in Latino income. This suggests that high income Latinos are moving into this area of Boyle Heights, and that the gentrification observed in methodology 1 captures the gentefication that methodology 2 identifies after making income racially relative.
Methodology 3

Gentefiable

The third methodology adapts Freeman’s median income variable by comparing the Latino median incomes of each census tract against the median income for all Latino populations of Los Angeles county. Besides identifying one fewer census tract as gentrifiable as methodology 1 and 2, this adaptation also provides the similar results seen in previous two methodologies. Again, this is expected, as previous analysis of incomes in Los Angeles showed that the median income for Latinos in Boyle Heights is less than the median income for all Latinos in LA county. This relativism, however, does determine one additional census tract as non-gentrifiable, as the increase in median Latino incomes in this census tract was greater than that for all Latinos in Los Angeles. Thus, while Freeman’s method would identify this census tract as gentrifiable, this method, which uses racially relative data, provides different results. This suggests that when identifying gentrifiable census tracts in racially relative terms, fewer census tracts are classified as gentrifiable.
To identify gentrified census tracts, the third methodology compares the percent increase in Latino educational attainment per census tract to the median increase in educational attainment of all Latinos in Los Angeles. Using this type of data reveals an additional census tract as gentrified that was not identified by methodology 1 or 2. It also reveals that, as methodology 2 showed, the gentrification observed in method 1 was also due to Latino influence; the increase in education and income observed were due to advancements by the Latino population and not other populations. At the same time, this methodology illustrates that the racially-neutral approach to measuring gentrification used by Freeman (2005) does identify census tracts where self-gentrification does occur. However, methodology 3 reveals that there are some census tracts that do experience *gentefication* that are not identified by method 1 or 2.
Methodology 4

Gentefiable

The fourth methodology makes one change to Freeman’s methodology for identifying gentrifiable census tracts; instead of measuring the proportion of housing built within the past 20 years, it requires for census tracts to be at least 50% Latino. This is done in order to identify census tracts that are predominantly Latino where, after accounting for lower than average median incomes, Latino incomes are also low. As the age of housing stock cannot be made racially relative given the available data, and as it may be possible for low-income Latinos to compose only a subset of populations living in census tracts with a high proportion of older building, this approach thus opts for identifying gentefiable census tracts by requiring such tracts to be predominantly Latino. The results of this methodology are consistent with the UCLA and Governing magazines, which identified almost all census tracts as gentrifiable. Comparing the results of this method to the results of method 3 reveals that the only non-gentrifiable census tract in the map above is identified as such due to the higher median income of Latinos in this census tract when compared to the median income of Latinos in all of Los Angeles. It also
Escalante 41 reveals that, even when accounting for an increase in newer construction in some census tracts, Latino incomes are still lower than the median, and that the same census tracts remain predominantly Latino.

**Gentefied**

This methodology also modifies Freeman’s method by substituting the use of increases in real housing prices with increases in Latino owner occupied units. Given previous research on minority homeowner’s capacity to gentrify (Bostic and Martin 2003), this methodology assumes that an increase in Latino homeownership above the median increase for Latinos is a sign of gentefication. Using this modification, this methodology reveals different gentrified census tract from those of other methodologies. While one of the census tracts identified through this method was also identified as gentrified with method three, the other two census tracts were not even considered as gentrifiable using any of the previous three methods due to their housing age prerequisite. Omitting this requirement, this methodology identifies that only a few of Boyle Heights census tracts that were gentrifiable experienced an increase in Latino homeownership.
rates and Latino educational attainment. This suggests that *gentefication* may be occurring in Boyle Heights, but not at the levels that media accounts suggest.

**Discussion**

The general overview of Los Angeles and Boyle Heights data, along with the iterative adaptation of Freeman’s (2005) methodology, reveals some interesting findings regarding the effects of using racially relative data to measure gentrification. As observed, the median incomes for census tracts in Boyle Heights were lower than LA’s Latino median income, which is also lower than the median income for all populations in LA. Comparing against Latino median incomes sets a lower threshold, meaning that gentrifiable census tracts identified with racially-non specific methodologies—which include incomes for other racial groups and thus compose a higher median income—should also identify those census tracts as gentrifiable. For example, methodology 1 and 2 provide the same results for gentrifiable tracts, as the median Latino income for census tracts in Boyle Heights is lower than that for the city. However, when compared to the Latino median income as seen in methodology 3, one fewer census tract is identified as *gentefiable* as this particular census tract had a median income for Latinos greater than the median income for all Latinos in Los Angeles. Still, this does not mean that this census tract is not gentrifiable by other racial groups; the lower thresholds used when applying the lower median income only suggest that this census tract is not *gentefiable*.

Racial relativity is important in the identification in self-gentrified census tracts, as can be observed in the different comparisons of educational attainment in the studied methodologies. As in the case of Latino median incomes, Latino educational attainment in Boyle Heights is lower than the educational attainment of all Latinos in Los Angeles, which itself is less than the
educational attainment of all populations in the city. Given this reality, it would be inaccurate, when measuring gentefication to measure the low educational attainment of Latinos against that of all populations. Racial non-relativity would otherwise provide the same results as racially neutral methodologies. To illustrate, the second methodology, which compares the educational attainment of Latinos to those of all populations, provides the same results as the racially neutral approach of method 1, as the higher median threshold prohibits the lower rates of educational attainment of Latinos in Boyle Heights to be considered for gentrification. The lower median threshold in educational attainment for all Latinos in Los Angeles, however, allows for the identification of gentefied census tracts. For example, the third methodology identifies one extra census tract as gentrified, where the increase in Latino educational attainment was greater than the median for all Latinos in Los Angeles.

As previously mentioned, some variable in the analysis were not compared using racially relative data, as such data is not readily available. For instance, to identify gentrifiable census tracts in methods 1 through 3, the proportion of housing built within the past 20 years was kept racially non-specific. This was done for two reasons: first, the data collected by Census Bureau through the American Community Survey does not separate this information by race; second, even if the data were available, this information would only reveal census tracts where Latinos occupy a higher proportion of older housing stock, which can simply be identified by requiring such census tracts to have a high proportion of Latinos and lower proportion of new housing when compared to the city’s median proportion. Given this, the fourth methodology required that gentrifiable census tracts have a proportion of the population to be at least 50% Latino. This modification revealed that while the Latino population in Boyle Heights has remained the same
over the years, some census tracts have seen a decrease in their share of Latino population, suggesting that other populations are also moving into Boyle Heights. This revelation suggests that, if gentefication occurred before these changes, gentefication might have created conditions that allowed for other forms of gentrification to develop in Boyle Heights.

Another racially-neutral variable used in methodologies 1 through 3 was the increase in real housing prices. Analysis of this data shows that some census tracts had increases in home value above the median for the city, pointing to significant investment in these census tracts in the two years between the UCLA and Governing studies and this current research. This information, along with the change in Latino population previously discussed, also suggests that gentrification of other forms may have occurred in Boyle Heights. As this data is not readily available in racially relative terms, this research cannot distinguish between the increase in Latino-owned home values and others, and thus cannot determine who is affecting and benefiting from such increases.

For this reason, tenure, which is available by race, was used. The analysis revealed an increase in Latino owner-occupied units in some census tracts and decrease in others. Again, this assumes that Latino gentrifiers are homeowners and not renters, and suggests that in those census tracts with a decrease in Latino renters, other populations may have caused this decrease. To expand this analysis, the rental prices relative to race would provide insight into the type of renters that are moving into or out of Boyle Heights. With such data, this research would have studied the increase of rents above a threshold in order to determine if higher rent-paying Latinos are moving into the neighborhood.
Given the available data, this research, using racially relative variables while substituting for other variables in an effort to increase this relativity, determined that gentefication did occur in Boyle heights between 2000 and 2015, although not substantially. The table below compares the number of census tracts identified as gentrifiable and gentrified by each methodology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Method 1</th>
<th>Method 2</th>
<th>Method 3</th>
<th>Method 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gentrifiable</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentrified</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reveals that when socio-demographic variables are not controlled by race (method 1), fewer census tracts are identified as self-gentrifiable. It also reveals that comparing such variables controlled at the census tract level but not the city level (method 2) results in the same conclusions as a racially-neutral approach to measuring gentrification (method 1). When controlling for race both at the census tract level and city level (method 3), fewer census tracts are identified as gentrifiable but more of those census tracts are identified as gentrified. Finally, when the proportion of the minority population as well as the proportion of minority homeowners are considered, more census tracts are identified both as gentrifiable and gentrified. Thus, in order to identify census tracts experiencing self-gentrification, socio-demographic variables should be controlled both at the census tract and city level, the proportion of minorities in the census tract should be considered, and all variables that represent changes between the two study periods should be kept racially relative.
CONCLUSION

This research studies the self-gentrification of Boyle Heights, a predominantly Mexican American neighborhood in downtown Los Angeles. Boyle Heights’ gentefiers, who are upwardly mobile second-generation Latinos, see gentefication—Latino self-gentrification—as a counter-hegemonic process of gentrification that subverts the colonialist nature of white gentrification. While gentrification is regarded as changing the essential character of a neighborhood, gentefication welcomes upwardly mobile members of the Latino community in order to maintain the neighborhood’s cultural character.

Given the anecdotal accounts of gentefication in Boyle Heights, this research sought to identify in quantitative terms the extent to which Boyle Heights had self-gentrified. However, as no previous research into gentefication has sought to spatially identify this form of gentrification, this research thus proposed identifying gentefication by modifying existing methodological frameworks with data that is racially relative. This research argued that such data is needed in order to account for the racial inequalities in wealth that exist between Latino and white populations.

The research adapted Freeman’s (2005) strategy into four different methods, each changing the gentrifiable and gentrified variables to determine which method would reveal the most number of gentefied census tracts. It showed that gentefication is effectively occurring in Boyle Heights, and that gentefication affects the neighborhood more than gentrification as more census tracts were gentefied than were gentrified in a more traditional and colonialist nature.
A comparison of the results of these different methods revealed information that no one method could reveal itself.

The first methodology, which updated the *Governing* study, revealed that the number of gentrifiable census tracts decreased since 2013, pointing to fast economic development between the two study periods. However, this comparison itself does not provide insight into the populations that caused such economic development to occur. For this, the other methods provide additional insight. The second methodology exposed that the gentrification identified by method 1 was effectively caused by Latino gentrifiers. Still, this method was limited in its ability to identify *gentefication* in racially relative terms, as it compared the increase in Latino median income to that of all populations. If anything, this methodology reveals instances of *gentefication* in which Latinos have the same capacity to gentrify as their white peers.

In order to identify gentefication consistent with Latinos’ lower capacity to gentrify, method 3 established lower thresholds for gentrification by using racially-relative data when comparing Boyle Heights to Los Angeles. It confirmed that the gentrification identified by the two previous methods was due to economic advancements by the Latino population and not other populations. At the same time, the lower thresholds used here ignored the higher capacity for gentrification of those Latinos that gentrified the census tract identified as such by method 1 and 2.

Finally, a comparison of the fourth methodology with previous methods shows that two of the *gentefied* census tracts, which were not identified by the previous methods, did not have an increase in home value, but did have an increase in latino homeownership. The use of this variable might be more telling than the increase in real housing values used by the other
methods, as homeownership requires an accumulation of wealth, which is rather low within the Latino community. This detail suggests that an exploration of sociodeographic characteristics of the gentrifying and gentrified populations under question should be analyzed in order determine the most appropriate variables that can be used, in racially relative terms, to identify self-gentrification. In other words not only should variables be kept racially relative, the variables used in the methodology itself should be reflect the unique conditions of the population under question.

Taking all of the methods into account, this research shows that the various thresholds and variables used to identify gentrifiable and gentrified census tracts results in different conclusions for gentrification in Boyle Heights. Comparing methods using racially relative data to those that do not reveals that in Boyle Heights, different census tracts have been gentefied by Latinos with varying capacities to gentrify. The following map, depicts how the gentefied census tracts were identified by each methodology. This particular map illustrates that gentefication is not static, but rather an evolving process in which early Latino gentefiers establish the economic conditions that further attract wealthier Latinos. In this light, the different methodologies tested,
particularly methods 1 through 3, are a means to identify the stage of gentrification where method 3, which sets a lower threshold, identifies earlier stages and method 1 identifies more developed stages of gentrification. It also cannot be ignored that gentrification itself may only be a stage in the more traditional processes of gentrification, in which upwardly-mobile Latino transforms low-income communities into more attractive and sanitized spaces for white consumerism, occupation and gentrification. For example, the new Latino middle class establishments in Boyle Heights mentioned in the study and depicted in the map above, make Latino culture more accessible to non-Latinos and are no doubt helping in the selling of Latino culture to a gentrifying, upwardly mobile white population. Gentefiers can thus operate as middlemen that set up the foundation for top-down gentrification and push out poor Latinos from their communities while giving way to racial change.

Given this potential danger, this research recommends that this racially-relative data be applied to the measurement of gentrification in similarly vulnerable communities. Having explored a number of methodologies, this research provides planners the opportunity to develop similar approaches to measuring gentrification that keeps data racially relative in order to further identify communities in danger of self-gentrification. Given that distinct economic mechanisms operate in such self-gentrifying communities, and that such mechanisms can evolve with the introduction of minority gentrifiers, this research also suggests that such economic vulnerability be acknowledged in the development and implementation of mechanisms that can help vulnerable communities evolve economically without the danger of being gentrified. Finally, this research recommends that additional variables collected by Census Bureau in its American Community Survey, such as rents, property value, and housing age, be kept racially relative in
order to more accurately identify communities in danger of such change. Such data would facilitate the ability for urban planners and policymakers concerned with low-income minority communities threatened by economic change to identify such communities and create actions that would protect low-income communities from displacement.
Works Cited


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http://www.urbandisplacement.org/map/la