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Survival Under Oppression: The Puerto Rican and Allied Struggle for Representation in Chicago, 1950-1983

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

SURVIVAL UNDER OPPRESSION: THE PUERTO RICAN AND ALLIED STRUGGLE
FOR REPRESENTATION IN CHICAGO, 1950-1983

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN HISTORY

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Dime con Quién Andas, Y te Diré Quién Eres is a typical phrase Latino youth hear while growing up. The idiom translates into “Tell me whom you hang out with, and I will tell you what and who you are,” or “You are judged by the company with whom you associate.” The saying applies to the political sphere in Chicago. The company a person affiliates with, social networks, and political allies or adversaries can make or break a political career, affect employment prospects, and determine social and economic opportunities in cities run by established political systems. When Richard J. Daley won the election as mayor of Chicago in 1955, he exerted de facto reign over the city.¹ As the Democratic political establishment solidified, Latinos migrated to Chicago in larger numbers during the 1950s through the 1970s.² Nevertheless, Latinos found themselves without political representation and with few opportunities for political empowerment or economic improvement in the city.³

¹Richard J. Daley as mayor of Chicago held the power as both chair of the Cook County Democratic party in Chicago as well as the mayoral office, asserting control of the Democratic political structure within the city. This allowed him to shape the city itself as he saw fit through the use of city services, infrastructure, patronage, and bossism.

²Though migrating in more significant numbers, it should be noted that Mexicans migrated to Chicago as early as the 1910s and Puerto Ricans migrated more heavily during the postwar years. See Arrendo, Innis, Rua.

³See Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Post War Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), loc 5186. Patricia Mendoza, “Latinos and the Growth of Political Empowerment in Illinois,” in *La Causa: Civil Rights, Social Justice and the Struggle for Equality in the Midwest*, edited by Gilberto Cardenas, 601-973 (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 2004), 602-678; *Congressmen Harold Washington Briefing Notes* in Box 25, Folder, 7 and *Harold Washington Supports the Latino Community* in Box 25, Folder 5 (Chicago: Harold Washington Pre-mayoral Collection).

The literature on Chicago politics demonstrates that the origins of the powerful Democratic political structure emerged with the election of Anton Cermak as mayor in 1933.⁴ The Chicago Democratic Party, controlled by ethnic whites, particularly the Irish, monopolized politics and controlled the vast majority of city and other local governmental positions. Democratic Party leaders valued loyalty above all else and exchanged it for “patronage,” including jobs, promotions, and multi-million dollar city contracts. Chicago’s government adhered to a hierarchical structure in which everyone knew what was expected of them, from the ward boss to the precinct captain to the voters themselves. Those placed in positions of power would work for the good of the party, delivering votes from their ward to the appropriate candidate, or face the loss of their employment and patronage.⁵ Generations of early Irish American immigrants dominated the Democratic Party and did not readily permit other migrants’ participation. Access to high paying, steady, job opportunities, and the ability to advance within Chicago required connections to the correct people. These networks were positioned beyond the social networks of most Latinos.⁶

Therefore, Latinos often found themselves outside the halls of political power. Yet like earlier ethnic white groups, Latinos realized that obtaining power was necessary for group advancement. This dissertation will investigate the political evolution of Latino empowerment by

⁴Adam Cohen and Elizabeth Taylor, *American Pharaoh: Mayor Richard J. Daley: His Battle for Chicago and the Nation* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), 48-57; Roger Biles, *Richard J. Daley: Politics, Race and The Governing of Chicago* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University, 1995), 23-24.

⁵Cohen and Taylor, *American Pharaoh*, 1-169; William Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit: Black Politics and the Chicago Machine, 1931-1991* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 94-107; Milton Rakove, *Don't Make No Waves, Don't Back No Losers: An Insider's Analysis of the Daley Machine* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 9-10 and 106-131.

⁶In this dissertation, *Latinos* will refer to Puerto Ricans and Mexicans and their US-born descendants unless otherwise noted.

exploring three Latino organizations in Chicago from the Puerto Rican migration during the 1950s through the election of the first African American mayor of Chicago, Harold Washington, in the 1980s: the Young Lords Organization (YLO), the Latin American Defense Organization (LADO), and the Spanish Action Committee of Chicago (SACC). The experiences of the organizations overlapped. These groups comprise progressive Latino organizations in the aftermath of the 1966 Division Street riots—many times, working in conjunction to gain more equity for their community within the city. The YLO began as a youth gang in the 1950s and grew into a political organization by 1968.⁷ All three organizations grew from Latino dissatisfaction with their lack of political power and representation within Chicago’s political arena. Denied representation within the city, these three organizations were politically progressive groups that worked to create political access in the 1960s.⁸

Latinos sought to gain empowerment as they moved into the city, yet found themselves with no political representation and no one to defend them. In a city based on a system of *quid pro quo*, they required an avenue to enter the political sphere. Their long journey for empowerment generated distinct approaches. Some groups worked outside the system as protest organizations voicing their concerns about social and economic needs of Latinos.⁹ While these

⁷During their years as a gang, YLO membership began with adolescents near their early teens. Membership in this type of organization was not out of the ordinary for ethnic teens. Whereas this activity allowed access to ethnic whites to gain “whiteness” and all of its privileges, the same cannot be said for all ethnic minorities who followed the same path. This will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

⁸LADO, SACC, and YLO were officially founded as community organizations in the 1960s after the Division Street riots. The Young Lords existed previously as a gang but participated in community activities. Gilberto Cardenas, *La Causa: Civil Rights, Social Justice and the Struggle for Equality in the Midwest* (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 2004), 1-75.

⁹This is especially the case when traditional methods of access like the ethnic athletic club become a closed avenue for advancement. Membership of ethnic whites in athletic clubs—which functioned as gangs for political patrons—could be utilized for political advancement and access to city positions. See Chapter Two and Andrew

methods created an avenue for local representation for the marginalized, government entities supported by the Richard J. Daley administration met the radical approaches of these community groups with violent state oppression.

Latinos and African Americans in Chicago concomitantly suffered racial and class discrimination. Scholars have established that the conditions minorities faced in major cities in the first half of the twentieth century were characterized by endemic urban poverty and discrimination.¹⁰ In *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, Thomas Sugrue links urban poverty to the deindustrialization of cities as early as the 1950s.¹¹ As minorities came in search of jobs, these industrial positions ceased to exist, or ethnic whites already in such occupations denied them employment.¹²

Various scholars concur that urban poverty for minorities—including dismal housing, lack of employment, and poor educational opportunities—in Chicago is structural in nature.¹³ In *Race Riot*, William Tuttle discusses housing conditions and racial tensions between the white

Diamond's, *Mean Streets: Chicago Youths and the Everyday Struggle for Empowerment in the Multiracial City, 1908-1969* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009) for more details.

¹⁰Edward Escobar, *Race, Police and the Making of Political Identity: Mexicans Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 165-213; Thomas J. Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), loc. 626-808 & 3552-4016 Kindle Edition and William Tuttle, *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919* (Champaign: University of Illinois, 1996), 161-173.

¹¹Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 626-808 and 3552-4016.

¹²Ibid & William Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 32-57.

¹³Gabriella Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago, Race, Identity, and Nation: 1916-1939*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 98; Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 177-254; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 1991-3418; Judson Jefferies, "From Gangbangers to Urban Revolutionaries: The Young Lords of Chicago," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 96 (Autumn 2003): 298-301; Bradford Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 3599-3656; James Ralph, *Northern Protest: Martin Luther King Jr., Chicago, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 99-134; Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 626-808; Tuttle, *Race Riot*, 109-162.

and black communities in 1919. Landlords neither fixed nor cared about the state of their properties. They charge exorbitant rental fees regardless of the condition due to the influx of newcomers and the general housing shortages.¹⁴ African Americans confined to the black belt section of Chicago defended themselves against incursions by ethnic European-American youth gangs engaging in terroristic activities in an effort to counter perceived declines in property values and lost job opportunities.¹⁵ Scholarship notes that the tension over housing and economic opportunities did not dissipate in the following years. Tuttle points to a foundation for the economic distress that Chicago's African American and, later, Latino communities faced as migration continued unabated throughout the World War II period.

As more Latinos came to Chicago, during the post war era, they settled in areas with housing shortages, competing with European ethnics and African Americans.¹⁶ At the time, the only housing available to Latinos was deteriorated by use from previous ethnic tenants. The Daley administration used Latinos as a "buffer" against African Americans in the South and West Sides of Chicago.¹⁷ Darker-skinned Latinos experienced housing discrimination from Italian and Polish landlords who often refused to rent apartments to them.¹⁸ Unlike many of their

¹⁴Tuttle, *Race Riot*, 105-119 and Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 46-53.

¹⁵Tuttle, 32-34. The black belt of Chicago was an area where African Americans were segregated on the South Side starting along State Street.

¹⁶Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 1285-1310; Thomas Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 42-48; Michael Innis-Jimenez, *Steel Barrio: The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago: 1915-1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 960-1078.

¹⁷Ibid and Gary Rivlin, *Fire on the Prairie: Harold Washington, Chicago Politics, and the Roots of the Obama Presidency* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), 438-487.

¹⁸Ibid.

Euro-American counterparts, Latinos found themselves unable to move into better neighborhoods after the war. Most scholars on Latinos in Chicago agree that the issue of Latino racial identity depends on where they were placed in the already constructed racial black-white binary.¹⁹ Migrants who could pass for so-called “white,” were afforded better living conditions than their darker-skinned counterparts, who were more likely to be confined to inferior housing conditions and to face harsher forms of discrimination.²⁰ This is important to note because housing and racial discrimination were not limited to the African American population, but also affected Latinos.

In *The Truly Disadvantaged*, William Julius Wilson argues that the reasons for the creation of a minority underclass are multifaceted, with the combined effects of historical discrimination and modern discrimination responsible for their current situation.²¹ He argues that in Chicago, the problem of increased African American migration from the South to the North combined with the occupational market’s change from blue-collar jobs requiring little education to jobs requiring more education contributed to the lack of occupational opportunities for minorities. It all laid the foundation for the creation of a growing underclass that impacted the job prospects of not only the African American community but also for the Latino community

¹⁹Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*, 1-9; Nicolas DeGenova and Ana Ramos-Zayas, *Latino Crossings: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and the Politics of Race and Citizenship* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 3-17; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 267-655; Merida Rua, *A Grounded Identity: Making New Lives in Chicago’s Puerto Rican Neighborhoods* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), xiv-xv.

²⁰Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 362-387; 1503-1709; Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*, 78-79.

²¹Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, 32-57.

who entered into the city seeking similar employment ambitions.²² This scholarship also indicates that patterns of urban poverty and discrimination persist into the present.²³

The opportunities presented to ethnic Europeans to achieve political power, and to improve their situation in Chicago were continuously denied to minorities. For example, ethnic Europeans with attachments to “athletic clubs” found a way into political representation: joining the Democratic political organization through participation in ethnic gangs.²⁴ While ethnic Europeans could gain access to the political realm through violence sponsored by political patrons, non-European minorities did not have that option.²⁵ The white ethnic gangs used violence first against each other and then towards minorities, to prove their manhood and their whiteness, eventually gaining access to representation within Chicago’s governmental and city structure through their actions.²⁶

²²Ibid, 32-60.

²³Escobar, *Race, Police and the Making of Political Identity*, 165-213; Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 626-808; 3552-4016; Tuttle, *Race Riot*, 161-173.

²⁴Roger Biles, *Richard J. Daley* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University, 1995), 20-23; Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit*, 12-16; John Hagedorn, *A World of Gangs: Armed Young Men and Gangsta Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 66-82 and Rakove, *Don’t Make No Waves, Don’t Back No Losers*, 2-11. Athletic clubs at this time were akin to what we know as gangs, except under the protection of local politicians.

²⁵I will be using Noel Ignatiev’s explanation of “whiteness” to illustrate whiteness as a power construct connected to oppression. Ignatiev writes, “...the white races consists of those who partake of the privileges of the white skin in the society.” See Ignatiev, page 1.

²⁶Biles, *Richard J. Daley*, 20-23; Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit*, 12-16; Hagedorn, *A World of Gangs*, 66-82 and Rakove, *Don’t Make No Waves, Don’t Back No Losers*, 2-11. Athletic clubs at this time were akin to what we know as gangs, except under the protection of local politicians. See Andrew Diamond’s explanation of manhood and masculinity in *Mean Streets*. Diamond demonstrates that white ethnic youth would fight each other in physical altercations to prove their manhood. Diamond argues that young males internalized examples of masculinity depicted in the media through westerns, action movies, and films like *Tarzan*. These depictions of manhood turned away from the earlier middle to upper class acceptable version of manhood such as the “dandy” to a version that depicted more physical strength while still retaining refinement. Questions of racial supremacy arose as Chicago Jack Johnson demonstrated that African Americans could achieve what was stereotypically conceived as white manhood in the boxing ring by defeating his white opponent and outside the ring through his wealthy lifestyle as well as his relationships with white women. See also Gail Bederman’s explanation of how Jack Johnson’s victory

Latinos and African Americans also used ethnic gangs as a means to establish manhood, but the gangs did not provide the same opportunity for minorities to gain representation in the city.²⁷ As Noel Ignatiev explains in *How the Irish Became White*, minorities could not climb the same ladder.²⁸ He shows that during the Jacksonian era, African Americans could not form gangs, as those attempting to defend themselves or their property against white mob action through the use of force were arrested.²⁹ Constables did not get involved when white mob violence occurred against African Americans, however, since they were connected to their constituency, which excluded minorities.³⁰ Denied access to policing and the militia, African Americans had no one to protect them and fell victim to mob action.³¹ Ignatiev writes, “The denial to black people of their most elementary right of citizenship (to say nothing of humanity), the right of self-defense, was long enshrined in law.”³² The ethnic European population, however, could use arms and mob action against African Americans without reason and without

made white males question their manhood at the turn of the century in *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Race and Gender in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1-45.

²⁷See Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 139-144. Ignatiev’s work demonstrates a distinct double standard. While white ethnics could form gangs during the Jacksonian era, African Americans could not because if they defended themselves from white aggression through violence they would be arrested. They would be victim of ethnic white mob violence with no protection because the constables did not get involved on behalf of African Americans. European ethnics gained political access through violence as well as occupational opportunities, while minorities could not secure the same opportunities. European ethnics in athletic clubs-also known as gangs-could gain positions of power within the city because of their access to social networks. Political patrons ensured their sponsored members could gain access to political power and occupations. By the time minorities began politically organizing their gangs/clubs, white ethnics solidified their positions and blocked this method of mobility.

²⁸Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 139-144.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid, 141-142.

major consequence.³³ Formalized in the 19th century, ethnic Europeans used violence as a means to political representation well into the 20th century. Meanwhile, non-whites could not utilize this method.

While many people see street gangs as a minority racial problem, the literature clearly shows that gangs in Chicago started with the Irish and other European ethnic groups who had yet to achieve “white privilege” and that these gangs were connected to political empowerment.³⁴ John Hagedorn, in his article “Race Not Space,” posits that race, not territory, was the motivating factor of gang formation.³⁵ Gang culture began with ethnic European youths struggling for protection from rival ethnic foes and as displays of masculinity during the turn of the century.³⁶ Andrew Diamond further demonstrates this in his monograph *Mean Streets: Chicago Youths and the Everyday Struggle for Empowerment in the Multiracial City, 1908-1969*, in which he argues that European American ethnic gangs would instigate violence against each other to achieve “whiteness.”³⁷ Later, to solidify their “whiteness,” they turned their attention to racial minorities. Young European Americans, usually with the support of their elders, would inflict physical injury on minorities as well as destroy minority-owned property.³⁸ Diamond argues that the

³³Ibid, 139-144.

³⁴Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 10-12; 301-302; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 3495-3950; Guglielmo, *White on Arrival*, 55-58; John Hagedorn, “Race Not Space: Revisionist History of Gangs in Chicago,” *The Journal of African American History* 91 (Spring 2006): 194-208 and Tuttle, *Race Riot*, 32-34.

³⁵Hagedorn, “Race not Space,” 194-208.

³⁶Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 1-28 and Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 1705-1723.

³⁷Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 5-6.

³⁸Ibid., 10-12; 301-302; Hagedorn, “Race not Space,” 194-208; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 3495-3950; Tuttle, *Race Riot*, 32-34.

continual threat of violence by white youth gangs forced minority youths to create gangs to protect themselves, especially in the post-war era.³⁹

These European ethnic gangs were considered athletic clubs under the umbrella of local politicians, and members were assured access to jobs in Chicago, an outlet unavailable to Latino and black youths.⁴⁰ Aldermen, who had grown older but were still attached to the ethnic gangs, ensured that loyal gang members received government jobs in exchange for their continual support of the machine. A number of Chicago political scholars illustrate that this environment produced Richard J. Daley, who in 1924 became a leader of the Hamburgs, an Irish gang in Bridgeport known to have engaged in physical violence during the 1919 race riots.⁴¹ Roger Biles, in *Richard J. Daley: Politics, Race, and the Governing of Chicago*, indicates that through his affiliation with the Hamburgs, Daley gained a job within the Democratic political machine. In time, he rose to become Cook County Democratic chairman and later mayor of Chicago.⁴²

Daley's power was so great at its height that he could control most aspects of politics and government in the city. Political impropriety in the Chicago area was not out of the ordinary.⁴³ During his tenure, the Democratic Party became the behemoth that held political control not only within the Chicago area, including Cook County, but reached into the national arena, helping to

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Brenda Coughlin and Sudhir Venkatesh, "The Urban Street Gang after 1970," *Annual Review of Sociology* 29 (2003): 52.

⁴¹Biles, *Richard J. Daley*, 20-21; Hagedorn, "Race not Space," 194-208.

⁴²Biles, 55.

⁴³Ibid., 40-47.

secure the election of John F. Kennedy.⁴⁴ Latinos found themselves attempting to gain political power under this system of political patronage and bossism.

As the gang as a means to representation closed, minorities explored other methods of empowerment. Though the city attempted to deny agency to young minorities, they established other outlets. For example, using the Black Panther Party (BPP) as a model, the YLO transformed itself from a violent street gang into a more political organization. They established direct action programs such as a children's breakfast program and a health clinic to assist people within their communities and positively affect their everyday lives. Many times, by organizing with other groups, they found solidarity in the struggle against gentrification, attempting to address issues such as police brutality and the lack of real socioeconomic opportunity. Groups struggled against government repression as they worked to help their communities gain access to representation. The evolution of community based groups like the YLO, demonstrates that the radical protest methods they employed during times of extreme frustration, blazed a route to political empowerment, but testimony from their members indicates that they would ultimately fade as more moderate yet progressive options became available.

Eventually, individuals pushed against the political establishment and tried to obtain political power by engaging in more formal political methods. For example, one of the founders of the YLO Jose "Cha Cha" Jimenez, ran for the aldermanic office in the Uptown area. He did so not necessarily to be part of the system but to highlight those unhappy with the establishment and to bring together a coalition of people against the established democratic structure.⁴⁵ Progressive,

⁴⁴Ibid., 69-74 and Cohen and Taylor, *American Pharaoh*, 264-265.

⁴⁵See Jackobi Williams, "We Need to Unite as Many People as Possible': The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords Organization in Chicago," in *Civil Rights and Beyond: African American*

radical, grassroots organizations interacted with each other and established social networks that allowed reformers outside the favored, established political system to successfully enter politics. The legacy of radicalism of community based groups aided in the election of some progressive politicians in Chicago and even served as a conduit in helping to elect Harold Washington as mayor in 1983. Although community organizations such as the YLO were helpful during times of political racial crises, however, many considered them to be too extreme, and not worthy of participation in official capacities within the Chicago political structure. This dissertation will demonstrate that though activist groups created change in their environments and brought attention to major social issues requiring redress, radical elements eventually gave way to more accommodationist methods. Radical progressive organizations and leaders found themselves assaulted by government entities that obstructed their goals, and they learned that they could achieve more positive, tangible change from within the established political structure.⁴⁶

and Latino/a Activism in the Twentieth-Century United States, editor Brian Behnken (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2016), 105-126.

⁴⁶The legacy of government suppression still continues through less overt methods. This dissertation would benefit, for instance, from the plethora of information in the archives located at the Chicago History Museum. The Red Squad was part of the Chicago Police Department that spied on individuals and infiltrated groups engaged in community activism. Due to legal restrictions, however, information about the Red Squad gleaned from this archive cannot be disclosed. These files are open to the public, but even before gaining access to the category key, anyone who wants to read them must sign an affidavit not to discuss the details of the contents in either print or speech, which is distinctly unhelpful for creating new knowledge. A librarian stated that even committee members cannot know the contents unless they signed the paperwork. The archive contends that these measures protect the privacy of those within the files, yet simultaneously claims that those under surveillance were not necessarily criminals. Nevertheless, these restrictions place a veil of silence on the victims of atrocities that government entities committed. The products in the archive are truly a testament of their time. The files provide insight on the scope, frame of mind, and prejudice of city leaders and police inspecting those considered hostile organizations, groups, and individuals. Nearly forty years after the events in the file, elite restriction of their contents controls the contemporary discourse. Allowing access only to individuals who can travel and read them personally is better than none at all. Nevertheless, this still contributes to the culture of silence by restricting access for the masses. Because of these restrictions on files kept in the Red Squad archive, people must turn to other published works and interviews on the Red Squad to gain information on the acts of repression that organizations and individuals suffered during that time.

Latinos' lack of real political representation until the 1980s, translates into a void in their inclusion in the historiography of Chicago politics. Only recently are traditional scholars giving them more thorough consideration. Paul Thompson argues in *Voice of the Past* that the story of the powerful controls narratives in history.⁴⁷ The process of recording history becomes more democratic by employing oral histories.⁴⁸ The voices of the forgotten come to light when oral histories receive the same weight as other methods of data collection.⁴⁹ Therefore, this dissertation will use oral histories to illustrate the story of Latinos in Chicago and their roles in gaining empowerment within the city from the 1950s to the 1980s.

One major source of the oral histories used in this dissertation is the Young Lords in Lincoln Park Collection at Grand Valley State University archive. This archive houses digital video and audio interviews, many of which Jose Jimenez, one of the founders of the Young Lords gang and YLO, conducted from the 2010s to the present. Collection efforts are ongoing and it continues to grow. Not only does this archive salvage information that could otherwise be lost forever, but its creation is also an act that demonstrates agency against silencing. Unlike the Red Squad files, this archive is available to anyone with a computer and internet access. The archive is invaluable as it contains interviews that range from many within the YLO and allies of the YLO plus members, former members, and allies of the BPP, to prominent members of the Latino community and others who lived in the areas discussed in this dissertation. Not all

⁴⁷Paul Thompson, "The Voice of the Past: Oral History," in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson (New York: Routledge, 1998), 21-28.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹See Popular Memory Group, "Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method," in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson (New York: Routledge, 1998), 75-85. The Popular Memory Group argues that the elite's narratives are the ones that battle for supremacy, while the voices of non-dominant narratives are often forgotten. Oral history represents a source where those who would usually not have a voice in the dominant narrative can now be represented.

interviews are completely positive or adhere to the agenda of Jimenez, yet they are accessible and included online.

The author also conducted some oral history interviews. Since oral histories are derived from individual living beings rather than other written sources, however, one cannot always obtain all of the oral histories one wishes to, as access to people is not guaranteed. Some individuals did not respond to requests for an interview. Others, though responding to the request would continuously cancel or not show up on the day of a scheduled interview. The health of many key individuals has deteriorated to the point where they can no longer engage in meaningful conversations and still others have passed away. Inconveniences such as canceled appointments, no shows, illness, and death are all usual occurrences of oral historical work. Unlike a book or newspaper, one cannot simply go to an individual and place them on and off a shelf at will.

Oral histories are as reliable as other more traditional methods of written data.⁵⁰ Interviews provide insight that otherwise may be lost through more traditional written sources.⁵¹ Many times, an oral history interviewee was present at an event or knew the people and/or subjects more intimately than another written source. Ronald Grele writes in “Movement without Aim”:

Problems, those centering on research standards, can be met most forcibly simply by insisting that the highest standards of research and training be expected of oral historians. These are problems faced by all historians and the same canons of practice should apply. Sources should be checked, documentation should be provided, evidence must be

⁵⁰Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 1998), 64 and Ronald Grele, “Movement Without Aim: Methodological and Theoretical Problems in Oral History,” in eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 1998), 41-42.

⁵¹Grele, “Movement Without Aim,” 41.

weighted carefully. In this sense, oral history interviewing does not represent any major deviation from the methodology of other forms of historical research.⁵²

Moreover, written sources are hardly infallible and also must be analyzed with scrutiny.

While oral histories can supplement already existing written sources, which would add more to the story of Latino representation in Chicago, this dissertation will use oral history as a major element of analysis to delve deeper into elements that written sources cannot explore thoroughly such as subjectivity and the creation of meaning. Michael Frisch's position on the traditional argumentation of "more history" versus "no history," which posits that there is more to oral history than simply supplementing sources that are already available, will be taken into consideration. Frisch argues that those who support the more history model believe that the information gained from oral histories is the same as other more traditional sources.⁵³ Therefore, the information acquired can simply be used to supplement traditional sources.⁵⁴ This method prevents the scholar from using them to explore new avenues of research or to analyze an interview and its implications for subjectivity.⁵⁵ Equally problematic, the no history position claims that oral history is the most genuine, as it comes straight from the sources. As Alessandro Portelli notes, oral histories must be analyzed to understand the meaning of the narratives as they relate to the culture under study, as the sources cannot stand on their own.⁵⁶

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Michael Frisch, "Oral History and Hard Times: A Review Essay," in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 1998), 32-33.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Grele, "Movement Without Aim," 45-49.

⁵⁶Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," 67-68.

While oral histories make the recording of history more democratic, they also provide the opportunity to study issues such as subjectivity and to understand how interviewees create, shape, and alter the structures, frames, and narratives of a story. Subjectivity in oral history allows the historian to investigate aspects within a culture that more traditional historical methodology may have neglected, as the voices of those interviewed have sometimes been suppressed. Renowned expert in oral history, Luisa Passerini states, “[That subjectivity] ...connote[s] the area of symbolic activity which includes cognitive, cultural and psychological aspects.”⁵⁷ It is unique to every person, culture and ever changing according to one’s and other’s perceptions. Thus traditional written sources do not provide the same opportunities as oral history interviews. For example, Alessandro Portelli writes,

Language is also composed of another set of traits, which cannot be contained within a single segment but which are also bearers of meaning. The tone and volume range and the rhythm of popular speech carry implicit meaning and social connotations which are not reproducible in writing....The same statement may have quite contradictory meanings, according to the speaker’s intonation, which cannot be represented objectively.⁵⁸

Portelli elucidates the importance of oral history as a source that is not comparable to any written document. He shows through his analysis of workers in Italy, that the death of labor martyr Luigi Trastulli was changed in the narratives of various interviewees because the actual date rendered Trastulli’s death meaningless.⁵⁹ Though the date remembered is incorrect, their changing of it created meaning for them. This created a truth for workers, which provides insight to the way

⁵⁷For a good in depth definition of subjectivity, see Luisa Passerini, “Work Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism,” in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 1998), 54.

⁵⁸Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 65.

⁵⁹Ibid., 68.

they think and reflect on the past. Similarly, Passerini in her work on Italian workers under fascism demonstrates that subjectivity can be explored through areas of silence.⁶⁰ Her interviewees jumped across time periods during fascism. She found that workers in Italy did not grandly unite to fight Mussolini, as implied by traditional scholarship.⁶¹ Instead workers focused on their own lives and well-being.⁶² These examples demonstrate that those who employ oral history can understand how the actors within the narrative and those who surround it frame and view their own story, giving insight to the creation of meaning.

Oral histories reveal the formation of the narrative. Through careful analysis, they can show how people shape meaning in the events that occurred in or around their lives.⁶³ To this end, this dissertation will make specific use of Kathryn Anderson's and Dana Jack's techniques set of listening and analytical techniques. One can use "the logic of the narrative" to understand how the subject constructs his or her story through "noticing the internal consistency or contradictions in the person's statements about recurring themes and the way these themes relate to each other."⁶⁴ Through this method, the speakers structure what they believe is most important in their story, what they believe are dominant discourses, and how their story relates or does not relate to that overall framework. In addition to the logic of the narrative, the scholar must pay

⁶⁰Passerini, "Work Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism," 58-59.

⁶¹Ibid., 56-57.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid and Grele, "Movement Without Aim," 45-49. Grele argues that oral histories can be utilized to explore the subject's subjectivity which might not be available through other sources; also see Frisch, "Oral History and Hard Times: A Review Essay," 36.

⁶⁴Kathryn Anderson and Dana Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses," in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 1998), 168.

attention to body language, tone of voice, misplaced laughter, pauses, “meta-statements,” and “moral language” to try and interpret how the interviewee creates meaning in his or her life.⁶⁵

Moral language, as defined by Jack, is self-judgment through an internal monitoring of how the subject adjudicates him- or herself, giving the historian insight into what the subject considers the moral norms of dominant culture and how he or she feels about him- or herself in relation to those norms.⁶⁶ Jack states, “In a person’s self-judgment, we can see which moral standards are accepted and used to judge the self, which values the person strives to attain.”⁶⁷ Meta-statements on the other hand, are external value judgments. Interviewees see what the dominant culture expects of them but do not see themselves fulfilling that culture’s expected norms.⁶⁸ Regarding the meta-statement in interviews, Jack writes,

These are places in the interview where people spontaneously stop, look back, and comment about their own thoughts or something they just said. . . . Meta-statements alert us to the individual’s awareness of a discrepancy within the self—or between what is expected and what is being said. They inform the interviewer about what categories the individual is using to monitor her thoughts, and allow observation of how the person socializes feelings or thoughts according to certain norms.⁶⁹

The way in which interviewees construct their narrative will indicate what they believe is most important in their story, and possible internal conflicts or consistencies in the themes within their story may reflect the culture in which they lived and how it impacted them. When people speak

⁶⁵Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 1998), 65-70; Anderson and Jack, “Learning to Listen,” 165-169.

⁶⁶Anderson and Jack, 165-166.

⁶⁷Ibid., 166.

⁶⁸Ibid., 167-168.

⁶⁹Ibid.

for themselves, the historian can understand how discourses arise and where they may be challenged or change as other stories come into the discussion.

Subjectivity is used to understand the creation of meaning for forty-seven oral histories in this dissertation, with testimony from over thirty-five individuals. As stated previously, the primary collection utilized in this dissertation is from the Young Lords in Lincoln Park Collection. The author of this dissertation contributed three interviews. The remaining came from archives at DePaul's Collection on the Young Lords at DePaul University, with the exemption of one oral history located online on a gang research website. Thirty-seven interviews compiled and conducted primarily by Jose Jimenez are analyzed. The Jimenez interviews not only provide more information regarding the Young Lords, but because he was a pivotal figure within the group they are instrumental in understanding subjectivity and the creation of meaning for those within the sphere of the Young Lords.

In addition to oral histories from the Young Lords in Lincoln Park Collection and the Collection on the Young Lords at DePaul University, this dissertation draws from other repositories, as well as newspapers, monographs, journals, and archival material from the Harold Washington Pre-Mayoral Campaign, housed at the Harold Washington Library. This dissertation consists of four chapters that demonstrate how Latinos gained more representation in the city despite the adversity they confronted. These early leaders helped establish legitimacy of Latinos seeking political power and representation, a goal that would be realized by other progressive individuals concerned about the plight of underrepresented populations who made progress in the political realm through the use of more formal social networks established by so-called radicals.

Chapter One will concentrate on Puerto Ricans' migration to Chicago during the post-World War II era. It will argue that from the beginning of widespread settlement, the methods by which they organized in an attempt to gain power within the city, overcome barriers to opportunity, and stem discrimination differed substantially. The chapter will begin with a discussion on the U.S. expansion, imperial pursuits, and the creation of "othering," which will provide the context necessary to better understand Puerto Ricans' experience with discrimination and urban poverty in Chicago. Then this chapter will examine the importance of the Catholic Church to the Puerto Rican community. Due to its influence on the island through Spain, the church attempted to assist in the assimilation of Puerto Ricans as a means of recapturing their flock as they settled in Chicago.⁷⁰ The Catholic Church believed in integration of Puerto Ricans into the mainstream. It helped Puerto Ricans create an organization named *Los Caballeros de San Juan*, or the Knights of Saint John, which became the most powerful Puerto Rican organization in Chicago politics until the 1970s. Due to imposed notions created by othering, many in the Puerto Rican community chose to refute negative stereotypes by attempting to integrate within the larger Chicago political structure.

The establishment of *Los Caballeros* presents the foundation of one community-based attempt at political empowerment through assimilation. The organization arose from the need for self-defense against state violence and businesses' willful economic retardation of new

⁷⁰Spanish priests left Puerto Rico when the United States gained it as a territory due to the War of 1898. Prior to this, the island's Catholics were underserved as there were not enough priests for the population. This led to the importance of laity, which preserved Catholicism on the island when people from the United States attempted to proselytize the inhabitants into Protestantism.

immigrants.⁷¹ Puerto Ricans found navigating Chicago's political structure and contending with racial discrimination challenging, as avenues open to ethnic whites to gain empowerment within the city had closed by the time of their arrival. This chapter argues that Los Caballeros provided a legal method to fight discrimination through procedures acceptable to Chicago's political structure, but this organization did not always represent a means for immediate relief from discrimination on Chicago's streets.

Chapter Two examines a second method of resistance that the Puerto Rican community used against discrimination and attempt to gain agency: the ethnic gang. Ethnic whites had traditionally used gangs as a means of acquiring political power, but the method became extralegal once racial minorities attempted to use it. Puerto Ricans who were surrounded by violence still used the method as an attempt to overcome suppression from other ethnic gangs. This chapter will briefly show how the fathers and uncles of members of later Latino gangs, such as the Young Lords, laid the groundwork for a different path to empowerment. The use of violence by Puerto Rican gangs demonstrates that other methods of integration did not render the results needed to satisfy the immediate concerns of the community. It grew out of frustration with the seemingly impotency of assimilationist tactics and the real need to protect themselves from ethnic aggression and establish their manhood. This chapter will also show how the Young Lords initially functioned as a gang. Like other ethnic youths of the time and those who came before them, a group of boys created the gang to establish their masculinity and protect their community against ethnic aggression. Oral history will be used to understand the effects of

⁷¹State violence and repression takes on many forms. The state may use terror tactics against its own population through the killing of those that openly question the legitimacy of those in power. Another example would be methods utilized by the Red Squad. State sponsored violence such as police brutality against their own citizens, is yet another form of state sponsored repression.

racism in the lives of the older generation through examining how individuals tell their stories. Additionally, the way participants frame their narratives around the origin of the Young Lords shows the process of creating meaning as well as the emerging of competing discourses in their foundation stories.

Chapter Three will elucidate how the city government's harassment in conjunction with police repression that the interviewees experienced demonstrates the state's ability to destroy antiestablishment political organizations. This chapter will also explore how Chicago's democratic political structure viewed activist community groups as a threat to the political establishment and used the Red Squad to disrupt and destroy some ethnic organizations. The negative effects of gentrification and urban renewal in Lincoln Park, Wicker Park, Old Town, Lakeview, and, later, Uptown on neighborhood organizations and the population of Chicago's West Side produced a significant form of oppression that many resisted. As Latino youth grew more frustrated with their experience, they became more militant and demanded change. This created the rationale that radical progressive organizations could prove effective in obtaining real benefits for their communities or at least protect their people from the larger political structure. Filling voids with methods that assisted the Latino community nevertheless did not guarantee the longevity of any association. Organizations established without the support of or in contention with the Chicago political establishment found themselves constantly suppressed. Research indicates that the Red Squad targeted and successfully broke Puerto Rican organizations that emerged after the 1966 Division Street Riots, such as SACC and LADO. These groups found themselves besieged by government entities using tactics that ranged from state intimidation to espionage and infiltration to destroy their operations. Multiple interviewees corroborate that city

officials' repression broke organizations or at the least caused them irreparable harm. Oral histories reveal that rather than only causing mere inconvenience, government suppression tactics went so far as to take individuals' lives and caused some participants stress and paranoia that they still experience.

Oral histories also exhibit how unstable narratives, such as the one surrounding the "takeover" of the Armitage Methodist Church, can become more established as individuals involved in the event recall it with others. Unstable narratives are indicative of a story still in the process of being shaped—a story that does not necessarily show solid truth or untruths.⁷² They also illuminate the process by which participants create meaning in their narrative. The facts in question are not always what is most important about an oral history. Instead one can see how people relate a story and how meaning is created, shaped and sometime changes according to the interpretation of the individuals retelling the event. The way in which individuals remember the people involved in the story impacts the narrative of the story. It displays how the creation of an oral history is a collaborative process between the interviewee and the interviewer.

Further, this chapter will show that despite the government repression, individuals and organizations continued to function to some extent and provided a positive means for representation. Understanding the limits of radical protest-type methods, progressive individuals used the city's political system to bring attention to their socioeconomic conditions by entering electoral politics. The social networks used for politics proved useful for progressives in the future.

⁷²Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," 66.

Chapter Four will assert that politically progressive individuals benefited from the experience of radicals and that their methods enabled them to establish social networks that could successfully be utilized in the future. Yet analysis of these oral histories indicates that there is an ambivalence toward the turn of events that prevented Jose Jimenez from gaining a favorable position within the new city administration.⁷³ Jimenez, deemed too radical, was unable to enter the established political sphere, but he did assist in placing reformers like Harold Washington within it. Considered too problematic as radicalism lost political legitimacy, Jimenez and radicals like him were pushed aside for more mainstream, progressive, and politically acceptable candidates. Individuals with less radical ties and more traditional reputations penetrated the political sphere. Those who accommodated the Democratic political structure found working within the system yielded positive results.

With the aid of oral histories, this dissertation explores how Latinos attempted to gain access to the political realm and representation for the community. Latinos' contribution to the protest movement in Chicago deserves more thorough investigation as a means to understand coalition building between racial groups in the 1960s and 1970s and the subsequent political mobilizations and representation that emerged in the 1980s. The role of the gang as a means of representation must also be traced, since it once functioned as a traditional method for advancement. It transformed from a means of opportunity for ethnics to enter into politics to one that did not provide the same prospects for minority advancement. Yet organizations such as the BPP and the YLO worked together and with others in similar situations to bring more resources

⁷³This chapter illuminates the use of oral history in understanding the creation of meaning within a person's life. Though Jimenez claims that he understands the reason he did not attain a position within the city after the election, an oral history discussion between Jimenez and his interviewee Gregorio Gomez indicates that he may indeed feel as though he should have pushed for a job within the administration. See Chapter Four for more details.

and attention to the plight of their communities despite government repression.⁷⁴ The eventual engagement of individuals within the same circles of protest organizations, including the BPP and the YLO, into the political realm provided the opportunity for networking to occur.⁷⁵ More palatable to the status quo than Jimenez, individuals including Harold Washington and Helen Shiller, used these social networks to successfully access the political realm.

⁷⁴The BPP and the YLO worked together on numerous occasions during protests in their youth and later in the electoral political realm on campaigns against the established political structure. They collaborated with one another and other groups, many times providing support for a cause. For example, when James Lamb, a Chicago policeman killed YLO member Manuel Ramos, the BPP provided support for the YLO.

⁷⁵The Intercommunal Survival Committee-which Helen Shiller contributed to- originally associated as a white offshoot of the BPP, later becomes the Heart of Uptown Coalition see John McCarron's *Chicago Tribune* article "Shiller Guards Against Uptown Progress," September 1, 1988.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIGIN STORY: EARLY MIGRATION, EXPERIENCES AND ORGANIZATION IN CHICAGO

Look, when I lived in “La Clark” I went to a bar that belonged to a guy that was Puerto Rican. And the police would come in and arrest you. They took you to extort money from you... The cops on Chicago Avenue...they would later put you there [in jail] and you had to keep your mouth shut. Because if you said anything, they would give you a beating.

Higinio Lazano¹

Puerto Ricans faced massive discrimination as they migrated into Chicago during the late 1940s through the 1960s. Higinio Lazano’s experience as a dark skinned Puerto Rican is emblematic of the blatant racism minorities confronted within the city. In *Chicago’s Daily Tribune*, Mary Merryfield’s words demonstrate that some of her readership within did not fully welcome the Puerto Rican population. The established population believed the newcomers resisted assimilation into the mainstream culture, since Puerto Ricans did not speak English.

“You may think, neighbor, that all is well when we accept a newcomer group in Chicago. All is not well however unless *they* accept *us*, too. And I get the feeling of late that the Puerto Ricans haven’t completely accepted us. They seem to be waiting for us to speak Spanish.”²

Further in the article, Merryfield implies that perhaps the citizens of Chicago should be willing to treat Puerto Ricans more fairly. For the most part, however, her article’s connotation implies that Puerto Ricans are at fault for their problems within the city, despite the discrimination they

¹Higinio Lazano, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, July 12, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI. *Quote translated from Spanish to English.

²Mary Merryfield, “They Need What is in Our Hearts,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 15, 1961.

encountered. In addition to the unwelcoming attitudes by established communities, Puerto Ricans migrating to the city found their options for housing limited forcing many to endure poor conditions. Entering a city already embroiled with racial tensions and urban poverty, they attempted to carve a space for themselves within Chicago, but found avenues for advancement once opened to white ethnics blocked to them as they arrived.

It is my contention that Puerto Ricans in Chicago sought to empower their community against prejudice and lack of opportunity through employment of legal and extralegal means. First this chapter will explore how the evolution of U.S. imperialistic culture and the concept of “the other” applied to the mistreatment of Puerto Ricans in their homelands and abroad. Then this chapter will show that the image of “the other” created by the U.S. imagination in mainstream culture, followed Puerto Ricans from the island to the mainland. Later, this chapter will focus on how the Catholic Church in Chicago provided a legal means by which Puerto Ricans could attempt to integrate into the mainstream. Though the Catholic Church provided a means to integration, its emphasis was on accommodation and assimilation. Some Latinos found this method repugnant.

To better understand the experience of Puerto Ricans in Chicago, one must be familiar with the history of the United States’ expansion and understand the myths of “the other” utilized to justify the initial interventions in Puerto Rico—myths that remained as a basis for xenophobia towards Puerto Ricans. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said writes that “othering” is reflected through European popular literature, which maintained the supremacy of imperial culture over that of “inferior” races.³ Frederick Jackson Turner spoke about the end of the U.S.

³Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 18-166.

frontier at the Columbian Exposition in 1893.⁴ Turner's frontier thesis sparked European American's imagination with the fantasy of a virgin land to the west, which still permeates the American mentality.⁵ In reality, there was no "virgin" land; as empires, civilizations, and nations already occupied those areas. Many of the inhabitants of those lands however, fell victim to the "othered" categorization imposed by the United States' imagination.⁶

The propensity of the United States to engage in imperial warfare overseas did not emerge without precedent. The highly contested territory to the west had various claimants, as people of European empires such as Spain and France regularly came into contact with indigenous populations and those who would become "Americans," creating a multicultural landscape.⁷ The United States government and settlers likewise participated in warfare against indigenous nations as it expanded. In *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*, Patricia Limerick describes the conquest of the west in an unromanticized manner, contrary to Turner, showing that the United States took land by force if it was unable to

⁴Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1893* (Washington, DC, 1894): 199-227.

⁵See Larry McMurtry, *The Colonel and Little Missie: Buffalo Bill Annie Oakley, and the Beginnings of Superstardom in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2006); Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁶For examples see, Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron. "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *The American Historical Review* 104 (June 1999): 815-816; Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); James F. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000); Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: Norton and Company, 1987); Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁷Ibid.

procure it through negotiation.⁸ Manifest destiny, the ideology that God desired the U.S. to push west, is merely one example of the attempt to justify the morality of such actions. Other myths like the ideological development of “the white man’s burden” established the false notion of U.S. obligation to render its assistance to those believed to be less fortunate.⁹ The U.S. engaged in wars of expansion since its inception to secure its interests.¹⁰

As the U.S. expanded, the enemy was “othered,” and fell victim to whatever imaginative propaganda necessary to validate imperialism.¹¹ Michael Hunt describes how ideas of race in the United States stemmed from 18th century perceptions about the protection of liberty against perceived threats by uncivilized cultures.¹² Hunt argues that the United States’ defense of liberty and its foreign policy ideology hinged on the concept that Natives—and later Mexicans and Blacks then those abroad—could be a threat to freedom as they were not yet civilized enough to protect it, therefore they required subjugation in order to defend said liberty for the benefit of property owners.¹³ Native Americans depicted as wild savages or ignorant children both created a justification in the American imagination that these “others” required the domination of the United States.¹⁴ These images and implications embodied negative representations of so-called

⁸See Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*.

⁹Ibid., 25-37.

¹⁰Michael Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 28-29.

¹¹Ibid., 3-166; Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 8-137; John Johnson, *Latin America in Caricature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), 117-312.

¹²Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 24-43.

¹³Ibid., 3-132.

¹⁴Ibid., 18-166 and also see, *A Trifle Embarrassed*, by Udo Keppler, 1898. Figure 1 demonstrates the notion of Manifest Destiny and the “white man’s burden” as Columbia and Uncle Sam take in dark colored children from

outsiders to the American imagination. These images were conveniently slightly metamorphosed over the course of American history dependent on the target of conquest.¹⁵



Figure 1. A Trifle Embarrassed, by Udo Keppler, 1898

The imagery created for domestic use of justifying violence during U.S. expansion on the continent, proved useful in these capitalistic imperial pursuits. With the close of the U.S. frontier in 1890, business interests in the United States believed that they needed to secure other markets and avenues of expansion. The demonization of Spain as a Catholic other harming a white

Puerto Rico and Cuba. The author implies they will raise them to be “civilized” like the children symbolizing previous U.S. conquests. Here the countries are “othered” through infantilization.

¹⁵Ibid.

damsel in distress embodying Cuba, gave justification for U.S. intervention in the Caribbean. Spain lost the war of 1898, ceding territories that were already waging wars of independence, including Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.



Figure 2. The Cuban Melodrama, by Charles Jay Taylor, 1896

The United States' perception of its own exceptionalism, and Puerto Rico's colonial past are important considerations as they colored the perceptions of those on the mainland, determined Puerto Ricans' treatment both by capitalists and established charitable organizations, such as the Catholic Church. As the U.S. became an empire, the tactics used to justify and gain territory ensured the exploitation of colonized populations and territories. Images created and

utilized by the United States likewise marked Puerto Ricans as “the other.” A distinction employed throughout the history of the U.S. to subjugate and rationalize the oppressive treatment of minorities by so-called “white” Americans.¹⁶ This outsider status created difficulties for Puerto Ricans who found themselves forced to migrate to the mainland to maintain their livelihoods as a result of the U.S. takeover in 1898. Puerto Ricans like many others before them, found themselves in the path of the United States’ economic interests. As access to land in the U.S. seemed to diminish, business interests looked elsewhere.

The U.S. attempted to industrialize Puerto Rico, although its agrarian inhabitants found the imposed changes jarring. World system theorists argue that capitalism and globalization enables the exploitation and underdevelopment of the periphery. The United States’ acquisition of Puerto Rico exemplifies this contention as the islands did not gain independence or benefit economically from the U.S. takeover. Ultimately Puerto Rico’s economy could not run without the intervention of U.S. business interests. In *Puerto Rican Chicago*, for example, Felix Padilla writes that small farms with varied crop yields could not compete with U.S. business interests, which invested in large scale production of sugar as a staple crop—transforming traditional substance farming into a capitalistic business venture.¹⁷ Many small farmers pushed out of agriculture had no recourse but to find jobs elsewhere as large scale American agribusiness

¹⁶I will be using Noel Ignatiev’s explanation of “whiteness” to illustrate whiteness as a power construct connected to oppression. Ignatiev writes, “. . . the white races consists of those who partake of the privileges of the white skin in the society.” See Ignatiev, *How the Irish became White*, 1. Whiteness is a malleable category based on power. Those that are now considered “white” did not automatically receive that category as they arrived from other countries see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1998) and David Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

¹⁷Felix Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 30-50.

destroyed Puerto Rican livelihoods.¹⁸ Some like Eldemira Cruz are nostalgic for the Puerto Rico of the past. She tells of the importance of food from the trees of her childhood home and how Puerto Rico's landscape changed significantly from the time she was a child to the present, with the deterioration of nature. Many interviews mention their family's agrarian background, yet they or the generation before found themselves forced to move to the U.S. as a result of a need for employment.¹⁹ Puerto Rico changed significantly as the United States urbanized the island.

The U.S. used the people it conquered from the periphery as resources that could be exploited within the metropole.²⁰ For example, Puerto Ricans gained citizenship during World War I, but while eligible for the draft they could not participate in the election of the president nor did they gain representation in congress while residing on the island. Later during the post-World War II period, the government saw the shortage of domestic service labor as an opportunity to export Puerto Rican workers to the United States.²¹

¹⁸Ibid., 38-41.

¹⁹See interviews with Eldermina Cruz, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, June 27, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI; Lazano, interview; David Hernandez, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, March 29, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI; Francisca Medina, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, March 2, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI.

²⁰See Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974). Immanuel Wallerstein suggests that in a world system, peripheral countries are made dependent on core nations.

²¹Wilfredo Cruz, *City of Dreams: Latino Immigration to Chicago* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2007), 68-69; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 596-1272; Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 52-58; Rua, *A Grounded Identity*, 5-22.

Using a Eurocentric lens, the government of the United States believed Puerto Rico's economic problems stemmed from overpopulation.²² U.S. officials proposed that Puerto Ricans should leave the island to find work on the mainland to relieve the population crisis. Therefore, the government sponsored migration through Operation Bootstrap in which men and women were placed in jobs on the mainland. According to Maura Toro-Morn in "Boricuas en Chicago: Gender and Class in Migration and Settlement of Puerto Ricans," officials within the U.S. government especially wanted woman of childbearing age to relocate as the government believed the migration would impede the proliferation of children.²³ In 1946, through the recruiting agency Castle, Barton and Associates, a group of Puerto Ricans came to Chicago to work and exploitation of this Puerto Rican workforce soon occurred.²⁴

Despite their citizenship, scholars write that Puerto Ricans arriving in Chicago under contract worked in harsh conditions and received less pay than European ethnics in the same positions.²⁵ Females pushed into domestic work, complained of employers forcing them to work outside of contracted hours without rest days. Males brought into foundry work lived in train cars with no amenities and took home little pay. In addition to problems with employment, Puerto Ricans in Chicago also faced other challenges, such as discrimination perpetrated by the police department, hostile receptions from established parishes, atrocious housing conditions, as well as

²²Maura Toro-Morn, "Boricuas en Chicago: Gender and Class in the Migration and Settlement of Migration of Puerto Ricans," in *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Historical Perspectives*, eds. by Carmen Whalen and Victor Vazquez-Hernandez 2005 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), 132-133.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Cruz, *City of Dreams*, 68-70; Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 52-54.

²⁵Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 968-1254; Toro-Morn, "Boricuas en Chicago," 131-132.

confrontations with other European ethnics who acted violently towards them for perceived encroachment in their neighborhoods.²⁶

In *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* Thomas Sugrue argues that urban poverty is structural in nature.²⁷ He along with other scholars contend that deindustrialization of cities occurred as early as the 1950s.²⁸ Puerto Ricans came to Chicago at a time when minority groups did not have the same opportunity for advancement in industry as European ethnic groups who previously arrived in the city. Jobs in industrial positions ceased to exist or were held by European ethnics who refused to allow access to outsiders. Additionally, substandard, degraded, and overpriced housing welcomed Puerto Ricans as they arrived in Chicago. An author wrote of a Puerto Rican family's plight with conditions, in a *Chicago Tribune* article,

It's been a busy morning for Joaquina. The apartment has been cleansed and swept, lunch made and [the] couch has been disposed of. A rat was found in [its] stuffing. She is not afraid. She is angry. "I call them up to remove the couch. And look with what they replace it!" A bedraggled, bilious green couch stands in the other's stead. What can she do? Nothing.²⁹

²⁶See Andrew Diamond, *Mean Streets*. See pages 46-49 for examples as to how white ethnic youth harassed African Americans. Also see pages 206, For an example of how Italian youth followed the Irish example by beating up Puerto Rican as well as African American youth who moved into the neighborhood.; Carlos Flores, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, March 12, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections, Grand Valley University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI; Hernandez, interview; Jose Jimenez, interviewed by Mervin Mendez, December 6, 1993; Lazano, interview; Jose Lopez, interviewed by Marisol Rivera, 2017; Carmen Rance, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, March 30, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections, Grand Valley University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI; Reboiler, interview; Maria Romero, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, June 2, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections, Grand Valley University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI and Tuttle, *Race Riot*, 32-34.

²⁷Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 626-808 and 3552-4016.

²⁸Ralph, *Northern Protest*, 99-134; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 1991-3418; Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 105; Sugrue, 626-808 and 3552-4016.

²⁹"The Harsh New World of Our Puerto Ricans," *Chicago Tribune*, November 24, 1963.

Migration from the south in addition to the conclusion of World War II, resulted in an increased demand for housing but an unsatisfactory supply.³⁰ As a result, the inadequate housing stock available in the city could be rented to newcomers regardless of condition encouraging landlords to neglect their property.³¹ In their search for housing, as in steady employment, Puerto Ricans found themselves in competition with established European ethnics and African Americans.

Scholarship forces us to reconsider and quantify the utilization of the term “white” depending on time period and location.³² Various ethnic groups gained whiteness and its privileges at different times throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The term “so-called” white is

³⁰Migration from the second great migration as well as the return of soldiers from the World War II exacerbated the housing supply problem. Whereas, white soldiers benefited from G.I. Bill and could take advantage of housing programs to leave the area, non-whites did not have to same access to these programs. For example, though Latino veterans served in World War II, they did not always benefit from entitlement programs that their white counterparts could readily secure. Veterans because of their ethnicity and race could not utilize housing programs due to extensive redlining. Rosales tells the story of a man who tried to buy a house but because of redlining found his search difficult. The uneven implementation of the GI Bill, also included problems with access to education. Rosales also states that Latinos at times, did not get their funding for school in a timely matter. Therefore, many could not stay at school as students as a result. See Steven Rosales, “Fighting the Peace at Home: Mexican American Veterans and the 1944 GI Bill of Rights,” *Pacific History Review* 80 (November 2011): 597-613; Racial covenants prevented the settlement of African Americans, Latinos and Asians in housing considered white only, which thwarted veteran minorities’ access to housing. The federal government encouraged restrictive covenants for the issuance of insurance and loans for housing. The housing program entitlement for veterans however, assisted in ushering white veterans into the middle class. See Louis Lee Woods, “Almost ‘No Negro Veteran... Could Get a Loan’: African Americans, The GI Bill, and the NAACP Campaign against Residential Segregation, 1917-1960,” *The Journal of African American History* 98 (Summer 2013): 396-410. Also See George Sanchez, “Reading Reginald Denny: The Politics of Whiteness in the Late Twentieth Century,” *American Quarterly* 47 (September 1995): 389 where he writes, “What needs further exploration...are entitlement programs set up for individuals by the federal government, programs which consistently, if covertly, heightened the racial divide. In particular, the GI generation of World War II, emerging from highly segregated fighting units, became the chief beneficiaries of legislation and policies designed to integrate white ethnics into a vast suburban, consuming middle class...” While so-called whites could move to created suburban areas due to the GI bill providing them with resources, non-whites found housing more difficult to secure. Blockbusting, contract buying, and deterioration of available housing stock while price per foot rose, further exacerbated the problem of finding adequate and fair housing for minorities. See also Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis* and Sattler, *Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009).

³¹“The Harsh New World of Our Puerto Ricans,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 24, 1963; James Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 1682-1742; Tuttle, *Race Riot* (Champaign: University of Illinois, 1996), 109-162.

³²See Diamond, *Mean Street*; Ignatiev, *How the Irish became White*; Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*; and Roediger, *Working towards Whiteness*.

utilized because of the history of white racial formation. Southern and Eastern Europeans gained whiteness later than those from Western European countries. In *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, Matthew Jacobson writes,

The Irish, Armenians, Italians, Poles, Syrians, Greeks, Ruthenians, Sicilians, Finns, and a host of others—who came ashore in the United States as ‘free white persons’ under the terms of reigning naturalization law, yet whose racial credentials were not the equivalent to those of the Anglo-Saxon ‘old stock’ who laid proprietary claim to the nation’s founding documents and hence to its stewardship. All of these groups became Caucasians only over time: and all of them . . . faced certain challenges to their racial pedigrees along the way. As races are invented categories—designations coined for the sake of grouping and separating peoples along lines of presumed difference—Caucasians are made and not born.³³

Jacobson goes further still by arguing that though a group may be the color white, this does not mean they are historically racially white.³⁴ Though they gain whiteness, this category is new and not yet solidified and in many cases this insecurity manifests in violence against “the other” in order to prove their whiteness. For example, Diamond shows that white ethnic youths, not yet secure in their whiteness engaged violence to differentiate themselves from minorities.³⁵ While some Mexicans considered themselves white because it was a “status” conferred to them upon the conclusion of the U.S. Mexican war—and thus fought in the court systems for its privileges—not all Mexicans can attain whiteness.³⁶ Similarly, while Puerto Ricans are citizens their situation is dubious as many fall closer to the so-called black category.

³³Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 4.

³⁴Ibid., 6.

³⁵Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 3-6.

³⁶See Craig Kaplowitz, *LULAC: Mexican Americans, and National Policy* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005); Benjamin Marquez, *Constructing Identities in Mexican-American Political Organization: Choosing Issues, Taking Sides* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003) and Guadalupe San Miguel, *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001).

The prejudice encountered by Puerto Ricans tainted the way they viewed so-called white within Chicagoans. The theme of discrimination, for example, runs throughout the oral history of Higinio Lazano, a Puerto Rican born in 1922 who moved to Chicago. Lazano, because of his early life experiences frames his story through the lens of discrimination and racism.³⁷

Lazano came to the U.S. in the late 1940s searching for work. He remembers his youth in Puerto Rico and the poverty suffered by the people on the island. Unlike many others interviewees, however, he does not look back upon the island with a sense of nostalgia. Though he does mention the intense economic degradation on the island, indicating that residents were so poor they had no shoes to wear, his main concern is the problem of racism by whites towards Puerto Ricans in the United States. Lazano worked at a foundry, but does not delve deeply about the conditions under which he labored. Academics devote major attention to the problematic circumstances facing Puerto Rican laborers. Nevertheless, instead of giving innate details about horrible working conditions or terrible pay, Lazano returns repeatedly to his experiences with discrimination. The main focus of his narrative is the racism he faced while at work. Lazano states that because of his inability to speak English, fellow white workers tricked him into doing their jobs and then they would take credit for his work.³⁸

Lazano continues to speak on other issues of discrimination, including that of police brutality. He claims that the police in Chicago “*Era abusadoras*” or in other words that the

³⁷Through the use of subjectivity, one can discern what the subject of an interview finds meaningful by the way in which they frame their narrative. See Anderson and Jack, “Learning to Listen,” 157-158 and 164-169; Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 66-72.

³⁸Lazano, interview.

Chicago police abused Puerto Ricans for no legitimate reason.³⁹ He remembers being arrested for loitering by an ethnic white police officer. If one did not want physical injury inflicted by the officer, one could not say anything. He further contends the police force engaged in illegal activity towards Puerto Ricans such as planting drugs on them to extort bribe money. Lazano's experiences with racism point to the major challenges the Puerto Rican community faced in Chicago against institutions like the police.⁴⁰

Puerto Ricans faced discrimination in a wide range of areas as many did not fit into the city's established racial hierarchy. Puerto Ricans found themselves as citizens of a country, but treated as "the other," as European ethnics prevented their entrance into businesses such as bars and protested their presence in houses of worship.⁴¹ Puerto Ricans also encountered physical violence from European ethnic gangs.⁴² Antonio Jimenez Rodriguez, former leader of the "Hachas Viejas," stated that "... [we] were treated like dogs" (by the police).⁴³ During his

³⁹This translates to "they were abusers."

⁴⁰Lazano, interview.

⁴¹Juan Jimenez, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, June 25, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI.

⁴²Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 46-53; Tuttle, *Race Riot*, 32-34.

⁴³The "Hachas Viejas" or the "Old Hachets" consisted of a group of Puerto Rican males who came together after arriving to Chicago to protect themselves against racial animosity from other groups. They are older than the youth gangs that will be discussed in chapter two. Some members are the generation before those within the YLO. According to Professor Mervin Mendez, "We experienced a lot of ethnic conflict among Eastern European, Irish people, and Italian people throughout our experience and our lives in the south side of Chicago. One of the earliest manifestations of what you would call a gang is the group called La Hacha Vieja, the Old Hatchet. La Hacha Vieja was the first turf gang that to my knowledge can be attributed to Puerto Ricans living in Chicago... It was adult men that formed La Hacha Vieja. You have to remember that the migration, the early migration tended to be very male, tended to be males between the ages of 15 and 34 years of age. So these were adult men, and many of them had families, and La Hacha Vieja was basically a turf gang that was formed as an expression of solidarity to confront the ethnocentric discrimination that we were receiving from our white ethnic neighbors..." See Mervin Mendez, interviewed by Erika Rodriguez, January 27, 2002, The Young Lord and Early Chicago Puerto Rican Gangs, Chicago Gang History Project at <http://gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/latinkings/lkhistory.html>

interview he tells of how he encountered prejudiced Italian police officers, who he knew were previously members of gangs. As described by John Hagedorn in *World of Gangs*, social networks provided a conduit to legitimate work.⁴⁴ Some members of European ethnic gangs, or clubs as they were called, often attained jobs in city government, including that of law enforcement.⁴⁵ In altercations, police would protect their ethnic counterparts going so far as to plant guns on Puerto Ricans in order to create an unfavorable legal outcome.⁴⁶ Therefore, Puerto Ricans faced police brutality, as police officers with connections to European ethnic gangs would support members of their former clubs.

As Puerto Ricans decided to combat discrimination and its inherent problems, two distinct options began to emerge in early Puerto Rican empowerment organizations. Some sought the destruction of “the other” projected upon them, while others saw a more immediate need to defend themselves against the violence inflicted upon their persons. Chicago’s Roman Catholic Church assisted early Puerto Rican migrants to the city. The Catholic Church offered a socially accepted route within city structures, through the creation of a group called *Los Caballeros de San Juan* or The Knights of Saint John the Baptist, whose overall goal became assimilation within the U.S. mainstream.⁴⁷ Simultaneously, another option emerged with a long-

⁴⁴See John Hagedorn, *World of Gangs*, 72-73 and 133. In *World of Gangs*, Hagedorn shows the benefit of the connection between membership in the “athletic club” and the perks that come from belonging to its social network when he writes, “A retired police commander whom I spoke with recalled his ‘club’ days in Bridgeport as a youth. When I asked him what happened to all his wild friends, he thought for a moment, then answered, ‘I guess they all became police officers.’” 73. Also see Cohen and Taylor, *American Pharaoh*, 35-37.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Antonio Jimenez Rodriguez, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, June 25, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI.

⁴⁷Cruz, *City of Dreams*, 80; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 1626-1645; Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 21.

standing tradition in Chicago's urban landscape that advocated violence in the name of defense, the gang. The gang will be further discussed in Chapters Two and Three. This chapter will now focus on *Los Caballeros de San Juan*, the Catholic Church, and the struggle of Puerto Ricans to gain representation in Chicago by legal means.

Historically, the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States believed Puerto Ricans lacked knowledge of American Catholicism, as the island during Spanish rule, did not have enough clergy to administer to parishioners.⁴⁸ This resulted in a lax attitude towards the importance of fulfilling the sacraments. Already lacking in pastoral care during Spanish colonization, the United States' accession to Puerto Rico in 1898 diminished opportunities to follow the proper Catholic practices, as clergy fled back to Spain. According to David Badillo in *Latinos and the New Immigrant Church*, Catholicism in Latin America developed differently than in Europe since the Council of Trent. As a result, the island developed a unique practice of Catholicism that did not emphasize the importance of the sacraments or the clergy.⁴⁹

The Catholic Church attempted to ease the problems of Puerto Ricans migrating to Chicago. But their methods proved insufficient for many Puerto Ricans entering new communities, as the church did not provide the same tools for the newcomers as they had to ethnic Europeans. Catholic religious hierarchy in the states, believed the best way to assist immigrant Puerto Ricans would be to assimilate them into existing churches using the territorial model. In the territorial model, the congregation belonged to the neighborhood where the physical church was located. In neighborhoods with established white ethnic populations, this

⁴⁸David Badillo, *Latinos and the New Immigrant Church* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 45-88.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, xii-xiv.

proved to be unpopular, as they needed to share the church with the newcomers. The territorial model it was thought, allowed for Puerto Ricans to integrate within and throughout the city while acclimating them to American style Catholicism.⁵⁰ This is in contrast to the national model, where a church was established based on the congregation's nationality or ethnicity. Church officials believed that if the national model was implemented it would actually hinder Puerto Rican advancement.⁵¹ The territorial model sometimes became implemented as white ethnics left the neighborhood to save the church as the congregation left. But many times, territorial churches were de-facto national parishes, which caused hostility towards seemingly foreign parties.⁵² Though the church hierarchy believed the territorial model was the most beneficial to Puerto Ricans, they often faced prejudice and rejection from white ethnic parishioners unwilling to embrace the newcomers at their established parishes. This blatant rejection did little to ease assimilation of Puerto Ricans into Catholicism or American Culture.

Puerto Ricans facing racism within the city often interpreted the behavior of church authorities, white parishioners, and pastors as discriminatory in nature. Neighborhood churches where Puerto Ricans attended, at times did not give them access to the main church for services. Instead, they made Spanish speakers have mass at a secondary location such as the church basement. Guillermo Martinez, a Puerto Rican who arrived to the United States in 1953 and later moved to Chicago, saw this as a method of discrimination, since they were forced to celebrate

⁵⁰Jaime Vidal, "Citizens Yet Strangers: The Puerto Rican Experience" in *Puerto Rican and Cuban Catholics in U.S. 1900-1950*, edited by Jay Dolan and Jaime Vidal (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 129-132; "Stritch Tells of Plan to Aid Puerto Ricans: Acts to Integrate Them into City Life," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 11, 1956.

⁵¹Vidal, "Citizens Yet Strangers," 129-132.

⁵²Ricardo Rebollar interviewed by Jose Jimenez, July 11, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI.

Spanish mass in the basement of St. Michaels' church instead of the church.⁵³ Puerto Ricans were not accepted at various white parishes in several neighborhoods including Westtown and Humboldt Park. In several other churches they were relocated to basements of the parishes.⁵⁴

Similarly, Father Donald Headley, an advocate for Puerto Ricans who worked closely with the *Caballeros* and leader of the Cardinal's Committee, implied that some Puerto Ricans believed the celebrating of mass in the basement of St. Michaels was discriminatory. Headley acknowledged discrimination and was known to have preached against its practice, much to the detriment of his own career.⁵⁵ Yet during the interview he answered in a way that showed unease, saying he did not know much about what happened with the mass, and that it could have been to make the Puerto Rican population more comfortable or because people were racist. His response illuminates the importance of the use of oral history within the historical narrative, as his discomfort could not be analyzed using traditional methods of data gathering. Despite working to assist Latinos throughout his career we can see how Father Headley is uncomfortable with what occurred within the Church against Puerto Ricans.⁵⁶

⁵³Guillermo Martinez, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, March 2, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI; Also see Mary Merryfield's editorial, "They Need What is in Our Hearts," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 15, 1961. An emblematic example of the discrimination Puerto Ricans felt. This article shows the author's negative feelings towards Puerto Ricans saying that they do not want to assimilate into the larger culture or learn English. Her connotation and word choice also indicates the racial atmosphere in Chicago.

⁵⁴See Ricardo Rebollar who in a conversation with Jose Jimenez, discusses how the priests like Donald Headley advocated for the inclusion of the Puerto Rican population within the parish, despite such discussions unpopularity with some more established parishioners. Also see Flores, interview by Jose Jimenez. Carlos Flores remembers mass being in a basement but does not remember if it was in the church building or another building. And Jose Lopez, interview by Marisol Rivera, 2017.

⁵⁵Rebollar, interview.

⁵⁶See Monsignor Leo Mahon's, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, August 21, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI. Monsignor Leo Mahon's interview also demonstrates that the Church did not always welcome Puerto Ricans

While advocating integrationist methods, the church hierarchy saw the need to address the real problems of discrimination facing the newcomers as well as the need to create an organization that would alleviate the trauma of the migration by providing much needed assistance to people unaccustomed to Chicago's power structure. Father Headley's interview elaborates on the formation of the *Caballeros de San Juan* and it correlates with literature on the *Caballeros*, which indicates that a group of Puerto Ricans approached Father Leo Mahon for assistance establishing an organization that could ease the challenges faced by Puerto Ricans.⁵⁷ In 1954, the church decided to help establish *Los Caballeros de San Juan*, in the hopes that they could train the future leaders of the Puerto Rican community. With assistance of community leaders, the organization was built to help Puerto Ricans provide assistance to members of their community.⁵⁸ The *Cabelleros* assisted struggling families and functioned as a method of recruiting males back into the church by providing access to social networks and activities.⁵⁹ The church intended to utilize the *Caballeros* to bring Puerto Rican males back into church life and integrate them as quickly as possible into city life. The *Caballeros* provided a social space for Puerto Ricans to enjoy dances and sports while encouraging participants to come to mass.⁶⁰

because of racial prejudice. The Caballeros though having as he remembers, founded 12 different councils throughout Chicago sometimes had to establish themselves in a member's house since they encountered discrimination in parishes.

⁵⁷Father Donald Headley, July 11, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI.

⁵⁸Headley interview with Jose Jimenez.

⁵⁹Badillo, *Latinos and the New Immigrant Church*, 87-88; Gilbert Carroll, "The Latin American Catholic Immigrant," in *Roman Catholicism and the American Way of Life*, ed. Thomas McAvoy (Notre Dame: University of Norte Dame Press, 1960), 164-170 and Vidal, "Citizens Yet Strangers," 129-130.

⁶⁰Recruitment was aimed at all males regardless of their standing within the church. Members of the *Caballeros de San Juan* at times had family members active in gang activity or were active in gangs. See Juan Jimenez interview. Also see Wilfredo Cruz, *Puerto Rican Chicago* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), loc. 295

The *Caballeros* succeeded in recruiting members and fulfilling social needs. Guillermo Martinez, for example, mentioned that he thought the dances were held in the basement of the church and he thus became a member, and, as a result, more Catholic.⁶¹ The *Caballeros* also provided support to fellow Puerto Ricans adjusting to urban life in the city who required housing. As stated before, Puerto Ricans like other minorities faced deplorable housing conditions. The *Caballeros* helped illuminate the problems of substandard and overpriced housing, including the illegal subdivisions that landlords rented at high prices to Puerto Ricans.⁶² According to *Chicago Tribune* article “These Puerto Ricans Like it Here,” members helped find housing and work situations for people arriving to Chicago from the island, as well as acclimating them to city life by “...[giving] the newcomers an intensive education in our language and customs.”⁶³ They established access to legal aid. Newspaper articles indicate that some Puerto Ricans became victims of predatory lending by signing contracts they did not fully understand, becoming responsible for debt they did not really owe, or being charged outrageous amounts for merchandise.⁶⁴ In one case, a young Puerto Rican father named William Rodriguez committed

who points out that the *Caballeros* utilized sports as a method to keep young Puerto Ricans away from criminal behavior.

⁶¹Guillermo Martinez, interview.

⁶²“Claims City Landlords Exploit Puerto Ricans,” *Daily Defender*, June 18, 1956.

⁶³Dorothy Washburn, “These Puerto Ricans Like it Here,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 9, 1959.

⁶⁴“35 to Testify Before Council on Consumer Credit Practices,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, January 25, 1965; George Daniels, “Credit Rate Leads to Wage Plan: Old Debts Pressed Illegally,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, January 30, 1957; “Installment Buying,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, January 26, 1961; Donald Janson, “Chicago Good to Puerto Ricans: Many Find Work and Living Better than New York,” *New York Times*, June 4, 1961; “Puerto Ricans Set Parley on Credit Abuses,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 5, 1962 and “Fast Talkers Sell Dotted Line and Little Else: Promise Them Anything—So They Sign on the Line,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 11, 1975.

suicide because his paycheck was garnished due to the amount of debt he owed.⁶⁵ *Los Caballeros*, like a mutual aid society, created a credit union for members to provide small loans to those who otherwise could not gain access to fair credit.⁶⁶ This improved their lives so they could buy anything from furniture to a car without the fear of unscrupulous lenders. As a group, they also advocated for better treatment of the community. With help from the church in the form of the Cardinal's committee, *Caballero* leadership provided an acceptable means of integration into the city power structures.

Like Chicago political organizations preceding them, the Daley machine in Chicago functioned on a system of patronage where favors, gifts, and or support could be exchanged. This was considered business as usual, though not seen favorably by opponents to the Daley administration. For example, Monsignor Leo Mahon noted that a gift to the Mayor ensured that Puerto Ricans could have a parade in the 1960s. The mention of this exchange illuminates the functioning of Chicago politics during the Richard J. Daley's tenure as mayor.⁶⁷

The *Caballeros* collaborated with the Daley administration and participated in machine style politics to assimilate and gain power within the city. To integrate themselves within the city's political structure they participated in the city's long-standing tradition of *quid pro quo* by volunteering to do work for Daley. For example, in the 1956 article, "Catholics Aid in Integrating Puerto Ricans: Knights of St. John Carry Out Work," published in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, the *Caballeros* are described as, "...cooperating with Mayor Daley's cleanup

⁶⁵"Suicide Spotlights Easy Credit Dangers," *Daily Defender*, February 18, 1960; "Installment Buying," *Chicago Daily Defender*, January 26, 1961 and Janson, "Chicago Good to Puerto Ricans."

⁶⁶Donald Headley interview with Marisol Rivera and Jose Lopez interview with Marisol Rivera.

⁶⁷Mahon interview; also see "Bar Puerto Rican Gift Lamb from Mayor's Office," *Daily Defender*, June 19, 1956.

campaign...They do charitable work and help in registration and vote drives.”⁶⁸ They fulfilled expectations of proper behavior by holding banquets in honor of leaders in the city and volunteering to campaign for democratic machine candidates.⁶⁹ The leadership coordinated with the mayor in order to instate an official Puerto Rican day to celebrate the day of St. John in the form of a public party, procession and mass, building the groundwork for the Puerto Rican day parade.⁷⁰

Los Caballeros de San Juan functioned to address the concerns of Puerto Ricans within traditional city structures. Their members or those on the Cardinal’s committee represented the Puerto Rican community in official meetings sponsored by the government or other organizations.⁷¹ They championed fairer treatment of Puerto Ricans in government agencies and in business. They advocated against unfair business practices that encouraged Puerto Ricans to buy on credit without the signee understanding the full details of the arrangement.⁷² They pushed for driver’s license tests to be administered in Spanish, so that law abiding Puerto Ricans would not be forced to bribe officials.⁷³ They helped Puerto Ricans with the police entrance

⁶⁸Robert Unger, “Catholics Aid in integrating Puerto Ricans: Knights of St. John Carry Out Work” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 14, 1956.

⁶⁹“Puerto Rican Group to Fete Stritch, Ferre,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 23, 1957 and “Latin Americans Back Parsons,” *Daily Defender*, November 1, 1960.

⁷⁰See Ethel Payne, “Cardinal Stritch Assails Trumbell Park Violence,” *Chicago Defender*, June 23, 1956. This article shows how the leadership in the Catholic Church attempted to help integrate newcomers, despite resistance. It also mentions that Mayor Daley declared a special day for San Juan.

⁷¹“Set Discussion on Minorities” *Daily Defender*, January 15, 1957.

⁷²“Installment Buying,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, January 26, 1961; “Suicide Spotlights Easy Credit Dangers” *Daily Defender*, February 18, 1960.

⁷³“Suggest Auto Driver Test be in Spanish” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 23, 1957.

exam and celebrated when they graduated from the police academy.⁷⁴ They however, also recognized and addressed police actions against the Puerto Rican community, but did so in a way that would not offend the political hierarchy.

The language utilized by the Cardinal's committee and the *Caballeros* to describe issues of police brutality was rarely charged, they instead used delicate and conscientious language to illustrate what many Puerto Ricans saw as hostility by a "white" police force. Police action interpreted as brutality by many in the Puerto Rican community, was seen by the mainstream as stemming from misunderstandings between the Spanish-speaking newcomers with cultural practices still unknown to the American police.⁷⁵ These misunderstandings presumably would fade as Puerto Ricans learned the differences between the cultures and acceptable American behavior. Spanish speaking police, either native speakers or those who learned the language, could also alleviate various "misunderstandings."⁷⁶ Though they campaigned for fair treatment of Puerto Ricans by working against discrimination in the most civil manner available, the

⁷⁴ Cruz, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 290. According to Cruz, "Juan Abedo Gomez is believed to be the first Puerto Rican to become a police officer with the Chicago Police Department. Gomez joined the department in 1960." See Cruz, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 539. Puerto Ricans did not reach the rank of sergeant until 1967. Juan Gomez was one of two Puerto Ricans who gained that status. See "Police Unit to Fight Youth Gangs," *Chicago Tribune*, March 22, 1967. Despite minorities entering the police department, their small numbers did not adequately reflect the need required by their communities. The community continued to confront difficulties with the institution. See "Chi P.R. United Charges Police Brutality," *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 4, 1965 and "Unfit Cops to Ghetto," *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 15, 1972. Also see Melita Garza, "Hispanics Still Underrepresented on Nation's Police Forces," *Chicago Tribune*, June 28, 1992. Garza's article indicates in 1992, "Hispanics on the Chicago police force are clustered in patrolman ranks, accounting for 645 out of 9011..." Garza using information from the Latin American Police Association quotes that Hispanics accounted for 6.19 percent of the total number in the Chicago police force. More recent research indicates that though Latinos are now 23 percent of the police force, opportunities for promotion are difficult to acquire when compared to their white counterparts. See Tim Novak and Sam Charles, "The Watchdogs: White Men Get Biggest Share of Police Promotions," *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 19, 2016.

⁷⁵Hilda Frontany, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, March 30, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI.

⁷⁶"Puerto Rican Aid to Teach Cops Spanish," *Chicago Tribune*, January, 26, 1961 and Robert Weidrich, "Latin Police Unit Aids Law Enforcement: Cops Overcome Language Barrier" *Chicago Tribune*, 1963.

Caballeros' accommodating nature did not render many of the immediate results desired, since many within the community continued to suffer incidents of discrimination.⁷⁷



Figure 3. Caballeros de San Juan Photo, Thomas G., 2016.

Note. One of the major methods of addressing the real concerns of Puerto Rican access to everyday material goods was the creation of the credit union by the Caballeros, which relieved major problems for those within the community unable to secure fair loans at other institutions. While its genesis as a religiously associated civic/social organization provided a means of representation and assistance to Latinos in the city, the organization ultimately morphed into a credit union, leaving behind the religious aspect.⁷⁸ Eventually, the credit union became part of Credit Union 1 when in 2000, the institution became in danger of failing.⁷⁹

As the *Caballeros* formed, Puerto Ricans with divergent ideals and experiences entered into the organization. The *Caballeros* accepted all members, regardless of their religious status,

⁷⁷Police brutality conducted against the Puerto Rican community caused the Division Street Riots in 1966.

⁷⁸Headley interview with Marisol Rivera.

⁷⁹Hector Carrasquillo correspondence with author, May 12, 2017.

as it was first perceived as a means to bring male Puerto Ricans back into the church. It provided a means by which those who wanted to assimilate into the city structure could find success. The *Caballeros*' grew into the leading organization representing Puerto Ricans in the city. While some may have benefited from the tactics advocated by the Church and the *Caballeros*, other members of the emerging Puerto Rican community believed in more immediate, protest-type action as an alternative form of coping with the problems they faced in the urban environment. *Los Caballeros de San Juan* did not endorse these methods, as they were unacceptable to an assimilationist organization.

Puerto Ricans formed another type of organization that utilized forms of physical aggression, as a means to secure their masculinity, gain space and protect themselves against violence within the city. Unlike the *Caballeros*, this organization was extralegal in nature, but one in which many other ethnics in the city participated- the ethnic gang. This represented an alternative model to gain empowerment within Chicago.

CHAPTER TWO

THE YOUNG LORDS: FROM STREET GANG TO POLITICAL ACTIVISM

“There were a lot of people who used to ask for help. We didn’t turn a lot of people down, I don’t know why.”

Fermin Perez¹

Young Puerto Ricans in Chicago found an alternative approach to gain representation than that established by more acceptable mainstream organizations like *Los Caballeros de San Juan*. This chapter posits that although the Young Lords became a political radical organization, their origins fit the regular mold for the formation of a typical social club. Along with outlining the Young Lords’ early influences and transformation, this chapter will focus on the importance of oral history in building the narrative and exposing competing discourses on the Young Lords.

The memory of the Young Lords, mostly focused on the actions of the New York branch or the political actions of the YLO as a political entity gleaning over or not going into great detail on its origins as what is now known as a gang.² New York’s Young Lord’s Party may be more popularly recognized, but without the creation of the Chicago’s Young Lords the YLO and the YLP could not exist. The origins of the Young Lords might be considered violent to modern sensibilities, but is in fact in line with the traditional emergence of other ethnic clubs that preceded them.

¹Angel “Sal” De Rivero, Jose Jimenez, Fermin Perez, and unknown female, 1995/1996, Lincoln Park Project: An Oral History of the Young Lords Organization, DePaul University Library Special Collections and Archives, Chicago, IL.

²See The Young Lords Party, *Palante: Young Lords Party* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1971); Darrel Enck-Wanzer, Iris Morales, and Denise Oliver-Velez, eds., *The Young Lords: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

Andrew Diamond elucidates in his monograph *Mean Streets: Chicago Youths and the Everyday Struggle for empowerment in the Multiracial City, 1908-1969*, that European ethnics were the first to form athletic/social clubs, which participated in what today is called gang activity.³ They formed for the purpose of protection, in addition to prove and maintain their masculinity and under the sponsorship of a political patron.⁴ Diamond writes that the only difference between these so-called athletic/social clubs and gangs is the presence of a political benefactor.⁵ The members of the Young Lords continued in this tradition, but without the political patronage.

Furthermore, scholarship on youth athletic/social clubs and gangs indicate that the youth engaged in violent activity to prove and or maintain their manhood, in addition to other reasons such as lack of employment which led to the inability to provide for the family as the undisputed head of household, as well as proving “whiteness” for Europeans not yet accepted as “white,” and for protection against aggression from other groups.⁶ Many white youth and those attempting to gain whiteness and masculinity believed that winning of physical fights could accomplish these goals. Many scholars argue physical activity and the sporting culture continued to be

³Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 1-35.

⁴Ibid; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 1705-1723; John Hagedorn, *A World of Gangs*, 194-208 and Tuttle, *Race Riot*, 32-34.

⁵Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 20.

⁶Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, takes Joan Scott’s argument on gender and applies it to race and the changing concept of manhood depending on the time. During the beginning of the 20th century, Jack Johnson an African American boxer won the championship. She argues that white men saw this as a threat to their masculinity and punished Johnson by persecuting him with the Mann Act. Diamond, *Mean Streets*, pages 35-67. See also Judson Jefferies, “From Gangbangers to Urban Revolutionaries,” 289. Groups, which faced violence from other ethnics, needed to form in order to protect themselves.

important in establishing masculinity.⁷ Andrew Diamond in *Mean Streets*, argues that eugenics influenced society with many ethnics who had yet to be considered “white” jockeying for their position in the “whiteness” hierarchy through participation in street fights. In the communities in which they lived, those who won in physical altercations gained more recognition as masculine. Additionally, conflicts and violence perpetrated on persons of color assisted in helping establish “whiteness” when compared to minority groups. Diamond and Schneider both argue that diminishing work opportunities for youth led them to see the streets as a way to achieve the manhood otherwise denied to them, since they could not gain it through traditional work.⁸ The oral history indicates that the youth of the Young Lords influenced by their elders, continued the tradition of forming a group for the purposes of maintaining and proving masculinity, as well as to a lesser extent to protect themselves from rival ethnic violence.⁹ The evolution of the Young Lords from a gang to a political organization can be understood more clearly through the use of oral history.

Interviews that are allowed or censored in a database may determine the path of various competing discourses. Jose “Cha Cha” Jimenez’s collection of oral histories is instrumental in the formation of a narrative for the Chicago Young Lords. Jimenez participated in the creation of an oral history project with Grand Valley University, which attempts to focus on the Young Lords and their presence in Lincoln Park. This project came after another collection of Young Lord materials had been compiled at DePaul University. His work contributes to the formation of

⁷Ibid.

⁸Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 176-177 and Eric Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons and Egyptian Kings*, xvii.

⁹See Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 35-67 and 176-177; Schneider, xvii and Judson Jefferies, “From Gangbangers to Urban Revolutionaries,” 289 who argue masculinity was achieved by protecting one’s self, property and neighborhood as well as winning physical fights.

the long-term legacy of the Young Lords. The interviews show that though he has a narrative in mind, sometimes his interviewees do not concur with his viewpoint. Instead of suppressing those voices that differ from his own, however, Jimenez decided to include them in the database, which allows scholars to examine the construction of a dominant narrative and the discourses that arise in opposition to it. This database of oral histories allows scholars to investigate how narratives are created and change, as well as how discourses surface and challenge one another.

In *Family Life Histories: A Collaborative Venture*, Akemi Kikumura discusses the advantages and disadvantages of insider versus outsider status.¹⁰ Though one of the disadvantages is that an insider cannot be objective with his or her subject, she points out that the information she obtained on her family's background could be obtained only by a family member, thus illustrating an advantage of insider status when interviewing someone within the interviewer's social group.¹¹ Similar to Kikumura, Jose Jimenez possesses insider status with many of those he interviews, which is invaluable for the insight the conversations produce among those with whom he has long-standing relationships. Jimenez is in a unique position, as an insider to many within the interviews he conducts. This positioning allows him "insider status" by which, interviewees feel more comfortable with his lines of inquiry and are more willing to speak to him about sensitive subjects than others.

While concern over Jimenez's objectivity may come into question, the information he gathers might otherwise not be salvaged which can be used to discover subjectivity and

¹⁰Akemi Kikumura, "Family Life Histories: A Collaborative Venture," in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson, 2003 edition (New York: Routledge, 1998), 140-144.

¹¹Ibid., 141.

meaning.¹² For example, Passerini's oral history work on fascism in Italy during the interwar period discovered through the use of subjectivity that the traditional historiography illustrating a working class against the fascists is not completely accurate. She shows, the years of interwar silence on fascism demonstrate that the working class in Italy engaged in actions that secured their material well-being but did not adhere to the traditional historiography. She does not vilify the workers for not engaging in more forceful protest against the fascists, but demonstrates instead that workers material well-being increased during the time in question and that they wanted to live their lives to the best of their ability at the time¹³ As stated previously, in the introduction, Passerini writes,

“[Subjectivity is] that area of symbolic activity which includes cognitive, cultural, and psychological aspects...Subjectivity has the advantage of being a term sufficiently elastic to include both the aspects of spontaneous subjective being contained and represented by attitude, behavior and language, as well as other forms of awareness such as the sense of identity, consciousness of one self and more considered forms of intellectual activity.¹⁴

Romanization of gang activity is not the point of subjectivity. Members of gangs participated and continued to participate in violent actions that are not conducive to the improvement of their communities. The study of subjectivity lets the historian see how those who participated in violent actions shape their story to reflect current cultural mores or to show how a person can change over time. Fermin Perez makes clear in a group interview with the founders that though the Young Lords gang gained respect in terms of gaining a reputation for fighting others that came at the loss of their reputation within the community at large before they turned their

¹²See Paul Thompson, “The Voice of the Past: Oral History,” 21-28 and Portelli, *What Makes Oral History Different*, 67-73.

¹³Passerini, “Work Ideology and Consensus,” 60.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 54.

attention to politicization. The actions in which members of clubs/gangs participated did not always have an altruistic side, but their participation in something negative is not a reason to discredit their experience. The study of subjectivity is as important and legitimate for those involved in clubs as it is for Italian workers under fascism.

Oral historians like Passerini demonstrate that interviews and the study of subjectivity is a method by which the historian can understand phenomena that is not otherwise notable through other means.¹⁵ A person through the way in which they tell and order their narrative can show how an event in their life impacted them in reflection of the culture from which they lived and through the matter in which they live now. The environment in which they lived their life events and also the social mores that are prominent in the present shapes them as well as their memory. The way in which they tell their life stories, the themes in which they dwell upon, and how they interpret their experiences of what is most important to them creates meaning.

For example, Michael Frisch also explores the importance of subjectivity and the creation of meaning through the use of interviews. In his study of Studs Terkel's *Hard Times*, Frisch discovered that instead of blaming the capitalistic structure responsible for the depression, many subjects believed themselves to be failures and to blame for their situation. Frisch proves that it is important to understand that the way in which a story is remembered and how the narrator forms it, as it shows how they are impacted by the culture in which they lived and the way in which they retell it creates meaning.¹⁶ The individuals who remembered the depression and blamed themselves are not recalling the real reason for the depression. But they show through

¹⁵See Dana and Jack, "Learning to Listen"; Frisch, "Oral History and Hard Times"; Thompson, "The Voice of the Past"; Passerini, "Work Ideology and Consensus"; and Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different."

¹⁶Frisch, "Oral History and Hard Times," 33-36.

the study of subjectivity, that the real reason did not impact their conceptions of themselves. Instead, they believe themselves to be failures and that is their perception of the truth.

The Popular Memory Group shows that multiple discourses may be at play, many of which can be undermined by the dominant one at the time.¹⁷ In fact, Popular Memory Group argues that the dominant discourse may even be the one responsible for perpetrating myths.¹⁸ This does not mean that the various interpretations of stories and their meanings are incorrect, but instead these discourses illuminate different points of view many times demonstrating subjectivity and creation of meaning of a group or members within a group.

Alessandro Portelli argues that even if the story remembered is not completely factual, it is still true to the person who is telling their narrative and that demonstrates the creation of meaning.¹⁹ Portelli is known for illustrating that interviewees involved in worker's strikes in Italy, misremembering the date Luigi Trastulli died gave meaning to his death. According to Portelli, the scholar is responsible for appreciating the subjectivity and meaning within the story that may otherwise not be known.²⁰

Alessandro Portelli also writes, "Oral sources are not objective. This of course applies to every source, though the holiness of writing often leads us to forget it."²¹ As many oral historians state, the stories of the powerful are usually the ones that are recorded while lesser known

¹⁷Popular Memory Group, 76-77.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," 68-72.

²⁰Ibid., 67-73.

²¹Ibid., 70.

discourses are lost if they are not covered.²² Oral history democratizes who can tell the story.²³ It is important to note the creation of meaning within oral histories, where participants can form and shape the frame of the story.²⁴ Jimenez and some within the Young Lords as a gang participated in violent activity, but still their experience contributes to understanding a segment of youth culture and the environment in which they lived.²⁵ By studying oral history we can see how subjectivity functions through what the members believe they did, the reasons for their actions and how they created meaning in their lives through their narratives by the way in which they construct their stories and what themes and subjects they decide to dwell upon. At times, the narrative adheres to the traditional historiographical story, while at others it diverges. But in any case, the study of subjectivity demonstrates that the interviewees' form meaning and show what they believe to be their truth within the history.

Puerto Ricans arriving in Chicago often found themselves confronted with obstacles impeding their integration and settlement within the city.²⁶ Politicians in Chicago established a racial structure within the city, which newly transplanted migrants attempted to navigate. Latinos, because of their variations of phenotype could not easily enter into the established, color-based, racial structure. The search for safe housing impacted migrants moving into areas

²²Thompson, "The Voice of the Past: Oral History," 67-73. See also Popular Memory Group, "Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method," in *The Oral History Reader*.

²³Ibid.

²⁴See Passerini, "Work Ideology and Consensus," 53-54; 60 and Frisch, "Oral History and Hard Times," 32-33.

²⁵Jose Jimenez went to jail for stabbing a man over a girl. Though this incidence of violence is not focused on he does not deny it but neither does he indicate pride for the action. See De Rivero interview #2.

²⁶See Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 177-254; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 1285-3418; Jefferies, *Race not Space*, 298-301.

with established white ethnic populations. As Andrew Diamond argues, gangs in Chicago formed as members searched for a means of protection and a way to establish masculinity.²⁷ They attempted to create and expand safe spaces for their community.²⁸ As discussed in chapter one, in a similar fashion, the “*Hacha Viejas*” or the “Old Hatchets” a gang created by Puerto Rican adults functioned as a model for younger generations to engage in defense of themselves and establish their manhood.²⁹

The discourse on the origins of Latino gangs in Chicago is still in formation. Oral history allows exploration in the creation of discourses. Interviewees referenced in this study had the opportunity to shape the story of the creation and purpose of the gang. While the overall story and interviews adhere to the current literature, nuances arise when multiple individuals recount the early days of the gang.³⁰ The discourse may be similar but is based on the lived experience and perspective of the individual interviewed, which can illuminate alternative subjectivity. Interviews can unearth the mode and the differences in the creation of what may become various discourses by analyzing what part of the story the interviewee chooses to focus on as well as the tone in which the story is told.

For example, in an interview with Jose Jimenez’s uncle, Juan Jimenez, because of experiences in Juan’s life, he interprets the shaping of the “Old Hatchets,” as a group whose

²⁷Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 33; See for similar youth behavior in New York, Eric Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings*, 16-25.

²⁸Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 3446-4077; José Jiménez, “The Young Lords, Puerto Rican Liberation and the Black Freedom Struggle,” by Angel Flores-Rodriguez in *OAH Magazine of History* 26, no. 1 (2012); Jakobi Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 204-400.

²⁹See Footnote 43 in the first chapter for details of the Old Hatchets.

³⁰See Diamond’s *Mean Streets*; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*; Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*.

primary function protected the Puerto Rican community against the antagonism of others, instead of one that engaged in senseless violence. Juan states emphatically that he never maintained membership to any gang. Nevertheless, he admits knowledge of the gang and its members as his brother was said to be the leader of the “Hacha Viejas.” He describes the forming of the “Old Hachets” as a group of friends who came together because they came from the same social group as in Puerto Rico. As the interview proceeds, he seems to be more comfortable and shares knowledge that could only be known to an “insider” or in his case a person close to the group. Juan goes back to the subject of gangs during the interview. As time progresses, Juan speaks more openly about the “Old Hachets.” So, while he states that he did not belong to the gang, his knowledge of the members seems to be intimate. In the beginning of the interview he wants to make it known that he was not a member of any gang. As his younger relative Jose Jimenez, is interviewing him, he is able to share that inside knowledge more readily despite his denials. Juan states that when they came to the United States they faced discrimination in various aspects of life. He tells of establishments that would not allow Puerto Ricans access and how they encountered violence with other ethnic groups. He is more inclined to believe the reason for the creation of the “Hacha Viejas,” however, was to protect the group and community from unwarranted ethnic aggression. Juan’s life also took an ordinary path as a person who found work in the city. He met the alderman of his neighborhood and in exchange for a job, he would help him get re-elected. Juan became part of the city’s political machinery. Unlike his brother, the oral history of the former leader of the “Hacha Viejas,” Antonio “Maloco” Jimenez Rodriguez, Juan’s story supports Diamond’s argument.³¹ When Rodriguez’s interview is

³¹Antonio Jimenez Rodriguez interview.

analyzed in conjunction with that of his brother, however, the study of oral history shows how the people who experienced the events, participate in the formation and shaping of the “Old Hachet’s” story illuminating the creation of meaning and divergent discourses.³²

When one listens to the moral language used in Juan’s interview, one can see that he is conscious of what potential viewers may insinuate from the actions of friends and family that belonged to the gang. As a result, Juan’s telling of the events of the “Hacha’s Viejas” conforms more with established historiography, which argues that groups came together to bring about protection against other ethnics and establish masculinity.³³ In this interview, Juan tries to ensure that the audience does not attach him to the violence attributed to gangs. He attempts to broaden his separation from the actions that may be seen as morally ambiguous by viewers. Simultaneously he makes excuses for the members’ behavior by stating that they formed in retaliation against violence towards their community, in the absence of any protection.³⁴

Juan’s statements exemplifies the issue of the use of moral language indicating that he is judging the actions of youth against the moral norms of a culture, which he believes does not agree with gang activity. However, he is excusing the behavior because of its positive impact in his view, for the community. Here we see the importance of Juan’s framing and the conflict that is created based on influence of the dominant culture. He wishes to convey the positive aspects

³²Juan Jimenez interview.

³³Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 33-37; Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons and Egyptian Kings*, 24-25.

³⁴See Anderson and Jack who speak of “Moral Language” in “Learning to Listen,” 157-166.

of the group while at the same time, distancing himself from what he believes is potential moral judgment of society at large illuminating the values by which he moderates himself.³⁵

Rodriguez's testimony however, and the way he frames it, differs in that he readily admits his groups' participation in violence and makes no excuses for their behavior. The content of his interview coheres with the narrative that they protected the community from the violence inflicted by other ethnics. But at the same time, while the pervasive discourse focuses on the need of gangs for the protection of the community, he also admits that his group would pick fights with other ethnics including Mexicans as well as European ethnics. While these actions do adhere to the argument that groups came together to establish masculinity, as discussed earlier. This type of admission does not meld well with the discourse of creating the gang as a means of protection, which dominates both the literature and the oral histories. He states his group would go to places known to refuse service to Puerto Ricans and fight with those who did so. While the *Hacha's Viejas* would participate in violence, they attempted to create space for the community to enter in order to gain service. Violence dovetailed with the ability to create space, establish masculinity and protect their people, but those close to the ones that actively participated in violence like Rodriguez's brother, Juan, did not want to be associated with it, as it could possibly damage their reputation.³⁶

Similar to the brother's interpretations of events, Puerto Ricans at times found themselves at the intersection of two different paths for gaining representation within the city. *Los Caballeros de San Juan*, provided a means by which members of the Puerto Rican community

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Juan Jimenez, interview.

could gain representation within the city through what was deemed appropriate channels. Through the mayor's office they could gain legitimacy. Interviewees demonstrate that people within the same family explored one or both paths to representation.³⁷ The members of the *Hacha's Viejas* engaged in violent activity, something that *Los Caballeros* as an organization did not do, creating a different example that impacted the youth around them. *Los Caballeros* became an organization that worked within the established infrastructure of Chicago, and as such, gained a foothold within the Chicago establishment as the legitimate organization representing Latinos until the latter half of the 1960s. The actions of the *Hacha's Viejas*, however, also represented a long established tradition of establishing space within a hostile environment. Tactics used by the *Hacha's Viejas* influenced the youth in the community who later established their own gangs.

The Young Lords was established in the same vein as the *Hacha's Viejas*, as well as the social clubs created by the Irish, Italian, and Polish groups before them. Adhering to the established historiography, the members of this group engaged in violent actions such as street fighting, to establish their masculinity.³⁸ Although protection against ethnic aggression does arise in the narrative, it is second to the idea of machismo in the oral histories of Angel "Sal" De Rivero, a cofounder of the gang. The reasons for the creation of the Young Lords may differ according to the person who tells the story of the origins, but through oral history one can

³⁷Antonio Jimenez Rodriguez interview; Juan Jimenez interview.

³⁸Angel "Sal" De Rivero, Jose Jimenez, Fermin Perez, and unknown female, group interview. At times the youth would fight individually against another individuals or they would fight as a group against other groups. They also engaged in participation in fights against other groups, when called upon to ally against other ethnic groups. At times fighting to prove the strongest and at other times for protection or against discrimination.

visualize the creation of the dominate narrative and the way in which other discourses rise to challenge it.³⁹

The discussion surrounding the founding of the Young Lords is one area of contention among members.⁴⁰ Jose Jimenez is the member most associated with the organization. Without further research one could conclude that he was the original founder of the Young Lords.⁴¹ But to the contrary, interviews of the founding members of the Young Lords indicates there were several members who started the gang, among them Fermin Perez, Angel “Sal” de Rivero, Orlando Davila and Jose “Cha Cha” Jimenez. In a different interview with Marvin Mendez, Jose Jimenez claimed that Davila founded the Young Lord gang, but did not assume the presidency instead taking on the role of protector.⁴² In yet another interview, De Rivero claims that without himself and Davila, there would be no Young Lords. Implying therefore, that they were the founders. One of the interviews with De Rivero suggests that Jose Jimenez did not have as large a part in the establishment of the original gang as others since Jimenez went to St. Teresa of Avila and the others went to a different school.⁴³

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Angel “Sal” De Rivero, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, July 12, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives interview #2, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI and De Rivero, Jose Jimenez, Perez, and unknown female, group interview.

⁴¹Newspaper articles often reference him as the leader or as in more recent articles mention him as the founder without mentioning the others. See Ronald Koziol and Joseph Boyce, “Top Red Linked to Protest at Police Station: Investigators Say He Talked with Leaders,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 15, 1969 and “Young Patriots Group Offers History Lesson for Political Activists,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 9, 2016.

⁴²Jose Jimenez interviewed by Mervin Mendez, December 6, 1993, Lincoln Park Project: An Oral History of the Young Lords Organization #1, transcript pg. 3, DePaul University Library Special Collections and Archives, Chicago, IL.

⁴³De Rivero, Jose Jimenez, Perez, and unknown female, group interview.

Some members who later helped found the Young Lords gang attempted to join the Egyptian Cobras, establishing themselves as Egyptian Lords. They did not, however, maintain their affiliation for long, since the Cobras and Vice Lords participated in a large-scale war.⁴⁴ Consequently, the youngsters lost their affiliation with the Cobras, when told by an older member that the Cobras no longer existed.⁴⁵

They attempted to gain membership in other organizations but because of their youth were denied admission to existing gangs.⁴⁶ As a result, while at school the group of boys established the Young Lords gang around the early 1960s in Lincoln Park. Most of the youth, were in their pre- to early teens. According to Jakobi Williams, in *From the Bullet to the Ballot*, “Jose Jimenez was only eleven years old when he helped establish the Young Lords.”⁴⁷ Former member Angie Navedo, recalled in an interview that the gang in their early years engaged in social activities such as dances and parties. Navedo stated, “...we had swim parties at the YMCA. We had socials every Wednesday night at the YMCA... We used to go to dances at Immaculate Conception.”⁴⁸ The founders group interview, also reference dances and

⁴⁴David Dawley, *A Nation of Lords: The Autobiography of the Vice Lords* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 1992), 20-23; Lincoln Keiser, *The Vice Lords: Warriors of the Streets* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), 1-5.

⁴⁵The Cobras still exist as a street gang today but at the time in question, they suffered a great loss against the Vice Lords. See Angel “Sal” De Rivero, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, July 11, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives interview #1, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI and De Rivero, Jimenez, Perez, and unknown female, group interview.

⁴⁶De Rivero interview #1.

⁴⁷Jakobi Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*, 143.

⁴⁸ Angie Adorno Navedo, interviewed by Mary Martinez, January 27, 1995, transcript pgs. 6-7, Lincoln Park Project: An Oral History of the Young Lords Organization #1, DePaul University Library Special Collections and Archives, Chicago, IL.

participation in a baseball team that occurred in their youth.⁴⁹ Additionally, Angel De Rivero in one of his interviews with Jose Jimenez tells of basketball games played with the encouragement of social workers at the YMCA. De Rivero claims that instead of facilitating camaraderie between the youth clubs, the sports actually made rivalries worse between groups.⁵⁰ Though the group had social elements, some male members nevertheless felt the need to establish their masculinity because of their young age, in comparison with other groups.⁵¹ The members mentioned among themselves how they as the youngest group, imitated older groups mentioning the Paragons, the Black Eagles, and the Flaming Arrows as models they followed from their style of dress to their social activities such as dance parties.⁵² They wished to be at the same level as the older youth groups. According to De Rivero, the youth of the Young Lords engaged in violent and destructive behavior to create their reputation and show the older gangs they too must be considered a true gang—thus proving their machismo.⁵³

As stated before, scholars argue ethnic youths found methods to establish masculinity through violence.⁵⁴ In early scholarly literature, renditions of “machismo” or “the macho” are negative, creating stereotypes formed to place the Latino male as characteristically violent or

⁴⁹De Rivero, Jimenez, Perez, and unknown female, group interview.

⁵⁰De Rivero interview #1.

⁵¹De Rivero, Jimenez, Perez, and unknown female, group interview.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³De Rivero interview #1. They engaged in fighting against other groups and individuals to prove they could do they same as other groups older than them. In the group interview, it was stated that they engaged in fights whenever given the opportunity in order to establish a reputation. See De Rivero, Jose Jimenez, Perez, and unknown female, group interview.

⁵⁴See Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*; Diamond, *Mean Streets*; and Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons and Egyptian Kings*.

aggressive.⁵⁵ As the study of machismo continued, the definition and application of the term machismo became more complicated. “Machismo” is defined by academics in various ways, including characteristics both desirable and undesirable. Matthew Gutmann argues in *The Meaning of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City*, that there is no universal definition to the term macho, but there are various interpretations of the word defined both negatively and positively.⁵⁶ Though there is still the broad notion that machismo embodies only pejorative stereotypes such as participation in violence for its own sake, drunkenness, and womanizing, it can also embody more positive attributes such as providing for one’s loved ones or taking on the role of protector.⁵⁷ While individuals do engage in negative behavior, it is not exclusive to the Latino culture of Latino men. Alfredo Mirande in *Hombres y Machos: Masculinity and Latino Culture* writes, “perhaps the most significant conclusion that can be drawn from recent research and writing is that Latino men do not constitute a homogeneous, monolithic, unvarying mass, as was depicted in the traditional model.”⁵⁸ Aggressive acts of machismo may occur within Latino communities, but they are by no means the exclusive purveyors of what could be interpreted as negative aggressive masculinity. European ethnics, as scholars explain also wanted to establish their manliness through acts typically categorized as macho behavior, such as engaging in street

⁵⁵Jose Torres, “Masculinity and Gender Roles Among Puerto Rican Men: Machismo on the U.S. Mainland,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 68, no.1 (January 1998): 18-21. Also see Alfredo Mirande, *Hombres y Machos: Masculinity and Latino Culture* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 4-6.

⁵⁶Matthew Gutmann, *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996), 222 and 241-242.

⁵⁷Ibid., 240-242 and Alfredo Mirande, *Hombres y Machos*, 141-147.

⁵⁸Mirande, 17.

fighters to prove their worthiness as men, to protect their communities, and to create space.⁵⁹ Being macho or the wish to display elements of machismo should not be seen as a culturally dependent or exclusive only to those from Latino communities. As previously discussed, Diamond and Schneider indicate through their works that negative aggressive masculinity is a common action taken by youth of different cultures and ethnicities.⁶⁰ Del Rivero's point of view shows that the meaning of masculinity to which he espoused is rooted in similar notions to which other ethnics that came before them followed. Considering the common environment youths shared, their shared gravitation to violence while not praiseworthy in retrospect, is not out of the ordinary.

Members of the Young Lords did not begin as social justice advocates and they participated in a variety of criminal activities during their gang period. Some of the youth engaged in crime, such as stealing cars for joyrides, breaking off antennas from cars to use as weapons against enemies, and engaging in physical attacks that threatened both their lives and the lives of their enemies.⁶¹ One example of delinquent behavior remembered by De Rivero during the interview concerned the act of stealing automobiles. De Rivero revealed while Jimenez took off car panels, Davila or De Rivero himself, turned on the cars. When caught by police in Georgia, De Rivero stated he stood accused of grand theft for 300 vehicles.⁶² While never admitting the charges to the police, in the discussion with Jimenez, De Rivero claims that they did not lack intelligence and the high number occurred because they did not want to get

⁵⁹Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*; Diamond, *Mean Streets*; and Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons and Egyptian Kings*.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹De Rivero, interview #1 and De Rivero, Jose Jimenez, Perez, and unknown female, group interview.

⁶²De Rivero, interview #1.

caught with a stolen auto.⁶³ Though De Rivero and Jimenez, when speaking to each other acknowledged these activities, Jimenez attempted to shift the interview with De Rivero to how the Young Lords provided protection against ethnic hostility. Yet, De Rivero pointed out to Jimenez that they would engage in conflict with other gangs only to establish a reputation as equals with older groups such as the Black Eagles and the Paragons.⁶⁴ While in a previous 1993 interview, Jimenez spoke of joining the group for social and protective purposes, Jimenez concedes building the group's reputation as one of the major reasons for the use of violence in their youth in the interview with De Rivero.⁶⁵

The Young Lords are now known as a group created to protect their territory from racial discrimination, but the oral histories, especially those with Angel "Sal" de Rivero, illuminate that they consisted of youths who wished to establish their manhood. De Rivero states they wanted to establish they were "good enough" or just as tough as other gangs.⁶⁶ De Rivero's narrative shows that the most important aspect in the creation of the Young Lords, according to his perspective, was to show the other gangs they were not afraid of other groups or ethnicities. They wanted to demonstrate their worth despite their young age. To do this, they engaged in violence that at times did not have any type of social justice goal. In a group interview, Fermin Perez states that they were attempting to solidify their reputation by instigating a fight at a pizzeria where many

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴De Rivero, interview #2.

⁶⁵Ibid and Jose Jimenez, interview with Mervin Mendez.

⁶⁶De Rivero, interview #1.

Roman members congregated.⁶⁷ The exchange among members illuminates how their reputation rose after the confrontation,

De Rivero: They had started the fight. Somebody said they said something to one of the females. But we were really looking for a fight and to establish ourselves. We went right inside...and we picked a fight. We started the fight in there and we jumped a couple of the guys on the doorway when the fistfight started... The point is that when we came back to the hot dog stand, they immediately followed us, maybe one or two minutes from the time we got to the hot dog stand. We had a full-blown gang fight right on the corner. That's when we started carrying weapons. We learned very quickly that was a mistake.⁶⁸ We beat the shit out of them. We has 20 guys that came to fight us...we had the fight. We kicked ass. We left a couple of guys lying down. It wasn't like we stabbed them or anything but we knocked them out... A couple of guys got hit pretty good with thee black jacks that we had made. We started carrying black jacks. There were 3 guys that were left in the ground. We walked away from there...

Perez: No one was really serious...there were a couple of guys that were out but nobody got shot or killed. They were just beaten up...

De Rivero: They didn't complain. They didn't snitch on us. They kept their mouth shut. All were already in high school. We were younger than they were and they were in high school...

Jimenez: Did they try to retaliate after that?

De Rivero: In the fight, we knew were were going to have a fight.

Jimenez: Did they start another fight later?

Perez: What happened after that was, since we kind of defended ourselves that one day, then all the rest of the guys has a little more respect. A lot of the guys said, you guys are okay.⁶⁹

De Rivero in the conversation revealed no major retaliation occurred after the major clash. To him, though the other group may have started the fight verbally, it is important to show they

⁶⁷De Rivero, Jose Jimenez, Perez, and unknown female, group interview.

⁶⁸They believe it to be a mistake, since school officials discovered the weapons. The police later confiscated the weapons.

⁶⁹De Rivero, Jose Jimenez, Perez, and unknown female, group interview.

“picked” the fight to build their reputation. Though the youngest group, they demonstrated their physical power thus displaying their masculinity to the older groups. Fermin Perez later expressed that since the group exhibited their fighting skills, they earned the respect of others.⁷⁰

The youth in the gang would also help out other groups who asked for their assistance to gain and maintain their street reputations with ignorance to the cost of their reputation within the community at large. For example, in their early years, if another group needed help in a street brawl, members of the Young Lords engaged in the act of fighting. Perez and De Rivero speak about how despite their young age, their group became known for their participation in street violence.

Perez: We were young guys but everybody... they had a lot of respect for us.... We're not going to from run from anybody... A lot of the guys were 18, 19 years old and we were 14 and 15 and not too many people messed with us... That's when [Maggie? Inaudible] was speaking one day and she says, "You guys are turning into dirt, everywhere you go your name is shit because you had fights with different people"... We were getting calls from people to go help them and we didn't know who the hell they were.

De Rivero: We had built that reputation up from the fights.⁷¹ While there were large fights in which they engaged that did not have an element of ethnic animosity, they also participated in fights to defend Latinos moving into areas who encountered discrimination.⁷² The Young Lords would participate in fights when called on by other gangs to confront white ethnic aggression. In the group discussion, they recall a large fight where they worked together with the Paragons and Division Street (Latin Kings) against the Gaylords, a white gang. They remembered that the police as friends of the Gaylords, did not just arrest the

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

non-white groups but physically thrashed them.⁷³ They just wanted to show they could be as manly as the rest of the older gangs however, while they “...built that reputation up from the fights,” within the some elements of the community, their reputation became tainted due to their participation in violence.⁷⁴

De Rivero wishes for the audience to know that they indeed were and continue to be masculine. Even today, De Rivero states they did not create the gang out of fear.⁷⁵ The creation of youth gangs for the purposes of protection against ethnic aggression is commonly accepted within the scholarship, but De Rivero’s framing of the story focuses on themes of manhood. This element is as important to De Rivero today as it was in the past, given his emphasis on the subject of masculinity and toughness.

As stated earlier, the reputation the Young Lords gained as a street gang did more than demonstrate their masculinity to their peers. It also gave them a negative reputation within the community as they became known for their violence.⁷⁶ As a result, as the members grew older, some wanted to improve their reputation.⁷⁷ As time progressed, the gang moved towards political organization such as organizing against police brutality in the 1960s, as well as the struggle against gentrification, though all members did not agree with the change. It is mentioned in a conversation between De Rivero and Jimenez that the turn towards political organization did not

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵De Rivero, interview, #2.

⁷⁶De Rivero, Jose Jimenez, Perez, and unknown female, group interview.

⁷⁷Ibid.

come without resistance. Jimenez says that he faced violent opposition from others within the group for initiating the change in direction. The interviews show that tension from decisions made at the time of the gang's youth continue in some form today as the official story of the Young Lords in Chicago is developed and refined in popular memory.

The interviews with De Rivero and Jimenez illuminate the Popular Memory's Group theory on how various discourses cause one to be more prominent than another in the establishment of popular memory. These two major founders frame the story of the Young Lords in a way that causes their two narratives to at times meet, while at other times diverge. The history interviews taken with Jimenez and De Rivero in 1995/1996 and other interviews taken later in 2012, show the creation of history made for public consumption. Discourse opens and is discussed when it comes to the purpose of the creation of the organization. Additionally, there is tension, communication and dialogue between the interviewee (De Rivero) and interviewer (Jimenez) over the origins of the Young Lords. Jimenez insists he was there during the group's early beginning, while De Rivero questions this narrative.⁷⁸

Another area of contention is the way in which the Young Lords are now represented. De Rivero explicitly tells Jimenez that the Young Lords was not established as a Puerto Rican organization, but, in fact, founded in conjunction with Mexicans. De Rivero tells him that members came from other communities in addition to the Puerto Rican community. De Rivero, himself, is in fact of Mexican, not Puerto Rican, descent. He suggests that their support for Puerto Rican independence did not make them a Puerto Rican organization.⁷⁹ This is an

⁷⁸De Rivero, interview #1.

⁷⁹De Rivero, interview #2.

important area of contention for De Rivero as he is outspoken about his displeasure of the narrative of the Young Lords as a Puerto Rican organization.

The Young Lords did not have lofty goals of community empowerment at their inception. They desired like many others their age to attain respect and establish their masculinity like other ethnic youth groups, which came before them.⁸⁰ Reputation was their first concern, followed by protecting their people from ethnic white hostility. The *Hacha's Viejas*, provided an example of adult males in their community who established their reputations and protected themselves from ethnic violence. Their approach ran contrary to the more mainstream approach for power supported by *Los Caballeros*.

The youth in the Young Lords immersed in the environment took cues from the world in which they lived. Their youth and desire for recognition pushed their actions of violence, but as they grew older some saw that their attention should be turned towards a political direction. Like the white ethnic gangs before them, the Young Lords also attempted to enter into the political sphere but without the sponsorship or support of a strong political patron. They may have started as a regular street gang, but as members encountered mentors that helped direct their energies towards political endeavors, and they became more politically aware, they turned their attention to the issues of gentrification and racial oppression. By 1968, the street gang with Jose Jimenez at the helm officially transformed themselves into a political organization called the Young Lords Organization.

⁸⁰Most of the founding members of the Young Lords gang were in their preteens or early teens as most were born in 1948.

CHAPTER THREE

ORGANIZATION UNDER STATE SURVEILLANCE

“We didn’t know till later that he was an officer, a police officer. And he eventually fired into the doorway of the house where the party was. And he had me by the arm, by that point. I was close to him, so he grabbed me by the arm. He said he saw a gun at the doorway. He shot into the house. That’s when he shot Manuel in the eye. He shot Ralph in the jaw. Eventually the police came ... The police pulled him [Manuel] out. I was still outside. I don’t know what happened inside. I didn’t know Ralph was shot till later at the hospital. All I remember is that the police showed up. It was very chaotic. They ... They ... I remember them four, carrying Manuel out of the house like a sack of feed and throwing him into the paddy wagon. And I jumped with him ... I jumped into the back of the paddy wagon with Manuel. He was bleeding. He was choking on his blood. And I remember there was a towel on the back of his head. So I was holding the back of his head with a towel. I had my fingers in his mouth, so he wouldn’t, [to] try to keep his throat clear. So he wouldn’t choke on his blood. And that’s the way we went to the hospital. When we went to the emergency room, they took him inside ... Manuel died about a half hour later. I don’t remember much about the rest of the night, except that we got home somehow.”

John Boelter¹

Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley, with the assistance of the gang intelligence division of the Chicago Red Squad covert police department, infiltrated, spied on, followed, and suppressed groups and individuals deemed a threat to the security of the United States or enemies of the

¹John Boelter, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, August 20, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections & University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI. John Boelter attended a party with his friend and one-time roommate Young Lord Ralph “Spaghetti” Rivera. A man in plain street clothes came and shot into the house during the party. Partygoers said that they did not know he was a police officer, as he was dressed in regular clothes. The off-duty officer, John Lamb, claimed he had seen a weapon that resulted in his actions. Young Lord Manuel Ramos died as a result of the shots that police officer fired. Police action is a method by which the state controls the actions of populations within society. Oral histories allow the researcher to study aspects of the story from different viewpoints, not only bringing Manuel Ramos’s last moments into light but also illustrating nuances that have yet to be explored. This is relevant given the issues with police brutality that continue to plague society today. The language Boelter used demonstrates the indignity and lack of compassion the individuals carrying the wounded Ramos displayed.

political administration. To maintain order, the Red Squad, in collaboration with the FBI, monitored any individual or group who could potentially threaten the status quo.

This chapter argues that although progressive Latino organizations in 1960s-1970s Chicago had internal weaknesses, the external influence of government repression heavily contributed to their decline. Puerto Rican and Mexican youths faced oppressive forces, including police brutality, scarce educational and work opportunities, poverty, and gentrification. Through various methods, these organizations implemented programs to solve real problems their communities faced and acted to bring attention to the plight of their people, but they all encountered retaliation in the form of state sanctioned repression. The state's treatment of these organizations effectively established the boundaries within which future groups could operate and acceptable tactics they could utilize. These vanguard organizations opened avenues of protest that could be utilized by those who came subsequently, but their fates also served as a warning to all. Additionally, oral histories demonstrate the ways in which the participants lived experiences shaped their interpretations of events and how the repression several suffered in their youth caused them long term detrimental effects.

These groups suffered government oppression, but none immediately fell. The Latin American Defense Organization (LADO) and Young Lords Organization (YLO) never reached their full potential due in part to government interference.² Though the disruptions instigated by the state obstructed their efforts, they nevertheless continued to function suitably—at least for a

²Obed Lopez and seven others according to his daughter Carla Lopez created LADO in 1966. The organization worked primarily in Wicker Park and the Northwest side providing services for people within the community to access welfare benefits with dignity. They wanted the Puerto Rican community to have equal rights like other citizens in the United States. Additionally, they also conducted English classes, provided medical access through a health care clinic, and members helped establish the Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center. See Clara Lopez, "LADO: The Latin American Defense Organization," *Dialogo* 2 (1997): 23-24.

time—during moments of adversity. At times, the organizations worked together for a common goal, but each group’s tactics varied. The Young Lords acted with the most militancy, while the others engaged in tactics more palatable to the mainstream. Regardless of tactics, however, all became victims of red squad surveillance and government repression.

Police suppression was only one form of government repression experienced by Latino organizations in Chicago. Many of the individuals interviewed by Jose Jimenez considered their removal from areas that became gentrified to be a means of oppression. Many who became displaced in West Town and Lincoln Park believed the city administration forced them to move. Minorities and the poor forced out see removal as example of state repression. Mayor Richard J. Daley worked to continue the segregation of so-called black and so-called white communities using Latinos to create a cushion in between the two communities. Lilia Fernandez writes,

As some scholars have suggested and as real estate brokers openly admitted in the 1960s and 1970s, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans often served as a ‘buffer’ between blacks and whites, a liminal group that constituted the transitional zone between rigid racial borders... In similar fashion, Latinos/as in Chicago’s neighborhoods tested the limits of residential integration. Because their ‘race’ could be negotiated, contested and reevaluated in a variety of contexts, this sometimes gave them access that was denied to African Americans, though not always.³

Most scholars on Latinos in Chicago agree that the issue of Latino racial identity depends on where they were placed in the already constructed racial black-white binary.⁴ Migrants who could pass for so-called white were afforded better living conditions than their darker-skinned

³Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 403-413.

⁴Arredondo, *Mean Streets*, 1-9; Nicholas DeGenova and Ana Ramos-Zayas, *Latino Crossing: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and the Politics of Race and Citizenship* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 3-17; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 267-655 and Rua, xiv-xv. Also see Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), and Cohen and Taylor, *American Pharaoh*, for a discussion on how the Richard J. Daley administration used infrastructure like buildings and highways to physically separate communities according to color. Other methods like redlining were also used to enforce segregation and limit opportunity.

counterparts, who were more likely to be confined to inferior housing conditions and to face harsher forms of discrimination.⁵ In addition to fostering segregation, he did nothing to stop the displacement of communities.

The issue of gentrification did not affect all Latinos equally. Guillermo Martinez believes the gentrification that took place produced a positive effect for him despite the inability of most of his neighbors to remain due to soaring house and rental prices in addition to high taxes.⁶ This interview goes against the more traditional narrative, as most of the previous residents unable to keep their homes or to stay in the neighborhood were pushed out because of economic factors. While oral histories allow alternative discourses like Guillermo's to rise, they can also show trends. Many others interviewed by Jimenez do not recall the process of gentrification fondly.⁷

People pushed out of areas such as the west side due to economic reasons blame city officials for the inability of most Latinos to afford the high apartment and housing prices in current day Lincoln Park, West Town, and Old Town areas. Unlike Mr. Martinez, many interviews indicate that gentrification and urban renewal resulted in negative consequences in their lives.⁸ Maria Romero, who worked for the Young Lords organization in the 1970s, stated in her interview with Jose Jimenez that she learned the signs of gentrification and that if necessary,

⁵Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 362-387; 1503-1709 and Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*, 78-79.

⁶Guillermo Martinez, interview.

⁷Medina, interview; Ted Pearson, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, July 12, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections & University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI; Gamaliel Ramirez, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, May 11, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections & University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI and Maria Romero, interview.

⁸Ibid. Also see Hirsch, *Making of the Second Ghetto*; Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*; Beryl Satter, *Family Properties* and Sugrue, *The Origin of the Urban Crisis*.

she “can move a house in an evening.”⁹ Accusations against the city point to the utilization of foul play to encourage those who did not want to move to vacate their property or rentals. Interviewees indicated that unscrupulous landlords of apartment buildings engaged in “arson for hire” schemes where they would pay someone to incinerate their real estate holdings to collect money from insurance companies. In addition, city officials sometimes prevented the issuance of permits to bring buildings up to code.¹⁰ Though these accusations are apocryphal, that the city administration is blamed for their displacement in many of the narratives is not without an internal logic given their lived experiences analyzed through the use of subjectivity in oral history interviews. The experience with state sponsored abuse suffered by individuals and those within their circles or the very awareness of its existence, contributed to the notion in their minds that the city acted dishonestly, directly contributing to the constant dislocation caused by gentrification.¹¹

In *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago*, Lilia Fernandez argues that the city hierarchy displaced communities to develop the land into more

⁹Maria Romero, interview.

¹⁰Ibid.; Billy Che Brooks, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, March 28, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections & University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries; David Mojica, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, January 22, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections & University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI; Helen Shiller, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, July 10, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections & University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI and Paul Siegel, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, February 2, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI.

¹¹Individuals suffered repression in different ways, be it at the hands of police members loyal to their former clubs, and for many the persistent surveillance and interference by the red squad, relentless threats, the open assassination of Fred Hampton as well as the knowledge of COINTELPRO and of what occurred to groups not loyal to the Daley administration made these types of allegations towards the political power structure not only possible but probable in their minds.

profitable properties.¹² Displacement on behalf of city projects occurred on multiple occasions, including the expansion of the expressway, the building of the University of Illinois in Chicago, and to protect the interests of institutions, such as the University of Chicago.¹³ The environment of constant removal and limited opportunities in retrospect, made unrest in the community inevitable.

An event that many scholars contend represents the disaffection of the Puerto Rican community was the Division Street riots, which erupted during the Puerto Rican Day parade in 1966. The riot began when police shot Arcelis Cruz, a 20-year-old Puerto Rican youth, and ignited an uprising which grew up to 4,000 participants and ultimately lasted three days.¹⁴ Young Latinos faced adverse conditions throughout their youth, and the riot was a turning point in the response of the community toward police brutality, gentrification, and lack of employment opportunities.¹⁵ The Puerto Rican community had a long history with deteriorated housing conditions along with police brutality, but violence toward a young Puerto Rican during a time of celebration constituted an affront that many youths within the community could no longer abide.¹⁶ The prevailing narrative suggests that the local government did not anticipate riots

¹²Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 2266-2373.

¹³Cohen and Taylor. *American Pharaoh*, 209-211 and 217-232; Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 2266-2373 and Hirsch, *Marking of the Second Ghetto*, 2651-3386.

¹⁴Donald Janson, "7 Shot in New Chicago Riot as Settlement Efforts Fail," *New York Times*, June 14, 1966; "Burn Cops' Cars: 35 Held Puerto Rican Shot; Sets of Disorder," *Chicago Tribune*, June 13, 1966; Judson Jefferies, "From Gangbangers to Urban Revolutionaries," 289 and Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 21 and 155-157. The top number ranges between writers. Janson, states the numbers of participants in the riots reached four thousand, while Felix Padilla states the number reached three thousand.

¹⁵Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 2720-2725.

¹⁶For examples of minorities' living conditions in Chicago, see "The Harsh New World of Our Puerto Ricans," *Chicago Tribune*, November 24, 1963 and "Puerto Rican Grievances Heard by City," *Chicago Tribune*, July 16, 1966.

within the Puerto Rican community, as the dominant stereotype indicated Puerto Ricans were docile people.¹⁷ As a *Los Angeles Times* reporter wrote:

Most city leaders said the riot took officialdom entirely by surprise. Two weeks ago [police chief Orlando] Wilson had ordered a study of the city to determine possible areas of violence this summer. The Mayor's Commission on Human Relations made a similar study. Neither report hinted of the possibility of violence among the Puerto Ricans.¹⁸

That perception changed, however, because of the destruction caused during the riots.¹⁹

Government-sponsored instigators encouraged the continuation of the riot and fanned the flame of discontent.²⁰ Father Headley a former member of the Cardinal's Committee, said that he recognized some of the more vocal rioters as members of the police force, acting as agent provocateurs.²¹ During the 1966 Division Street Riots cars were burning in the chaos on the street, as Father Headley yelled at the participants not to further the riot while others continued to instigate and encourage the mayhem.²² Headley, tried to stop the people rioting because he knew something of which they were unaware,

¹⁷D.J.R. Bruckner, "Chicago Starts Crash Program in Riot Area: Community Relations Stressed in Puerto Rican Section Where Mobs Battle Police," *Los Angeles Times*, June 14, 1966; Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 155-157.

¹⁸Padilla, 149 and D.J.R. Bruckner, *Los Angeles Times*.

¹⁹Gina Perez, *The Near Northwest Side Story: Migration, Displacement, and Puerto Rican Families* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 71.

²⁰Bud Schultz and Ruth Schultz. *The Price of Dissent: Testimonies to Political Repression in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 426-427.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.; Headley, interview by Jose Jimenez and "Burn Cops' Cars: 35 Held Puerto Rican Shot; Sets of Disorder," *Chicago Tribune*, June 13, 1966 and Jeffery Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton*. See Jeffery Haas for examples of how government asset William O' Neal would encourage unlawful behavior.

They were telling the young people: ‘Burn the car. Down with the city.’... Then I realized I knew them. They were policemen, the two who were telling the kids they should burn the car.²³

In an interview with the author, Headley states that he knew the agitators as officers from his time serving at Saint Patrick’s parish.²⁴

Regardless of the presence of government-sponsored agitators, the fact remains that a large number of individuals within the Puerto Rican community found themselves at a tipping point with the commonplace brutality of the police as well as the effects of gentrification.²⁵ That government agitators could take advantage of the discontent only proves that the community was already on the brink of demanding changes with more militant means.²⁶ This conflagration would have occurred regardless of the interventions by agent provocateurs due to the strained relationship between the police and the community.

Indeed, at the time there had been a long history of the state using repression against black and brown communities in the name of national security through government programs like COINTELPRO. In addition to harassing leaders like Martin Luther King Jr., the FBI sabotaged organizations including The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Black Panther Party (BPP). The FBI constantly stalked Martin Luther King Jr. and the

²³Schultz and Schultz, *The Price of Dissent*, 426-427.

²⁴Donald Headley, interview by Marisol Rivera, 2017.

²⁵Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 2722-2730.

²⁶The history of agent provocateurs instigating behavior to obtain evidence against a group or individual is well documented, with the well-known infiltration of groups such as the Black Panther Party. Despite Puerto Ricans being seen as docile before this event, the presence of agent provocateurs at the 1966 riots to encourage individuals to break the law would not be unheard of at this time as their presence was endemic.

Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).²⁷ They watched him wherever he went and instigated a campaign to discredit his reputation.²⁸ They engaged in actions ranging from attempts to stop him from receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, to trying to prevent him from seeing the Pope, to hiring infiltrators within the SCLC to relay information back to the FBI.²⁹ They pried into his private life and attempted to manipulate him into taking his own life by sending him a tape with compromising content.³⁰ According to James Davis, however, they never found any credible connection to communism or the potential compromising of state security.³¹ SNCC, another victim of FBI manipulation also suffered loss of funding due to government exploits. Government moles became a problem within many organizations. SNCC and the BPP's relationship broke due in part to government infiltrators exacerbating conflicts.

There are many instances of state-sponsored violence, but one of the most well-known is that of the death of Black Panther Illinois Chairman Fred Hampton. An informant paid by the FBI infiltrated the organization, provided information to his superiors, and possibly drugged Mr. Hampton before the police raided the house where he and the future mother of his child slept, effectively murdering Hampton in his sleep.³² COINTELPRO documents discovered by attorney Jeffery Haas, revealed that the FBI believed the informant William O'Neal deserved a bonus for

²⁷Athan Theoharis, *The FBI and American Democracy: A Brief Critical History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 117.

²⁸David Garrow, *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.: From "Sole" to Memphis* (New York: W.W Norton and Company, 1981), 104-116 and 165-174.

²⁹James Davis, *Spying on America: The FBI's Domestic Counterintelligence Program* (Westport: Praeger, 1992), 42-43.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*, 174-190.

his exceptional work.³³ Though the government claimed that the Panthers shot first, the assault on Fred Hampton was deliberately executed in order to silence a leader who proved to effectively unite different people that wished to improve their conditions but pushed against the status quo.

The police routinely monitored organizations for potential threats, credible or imagined. Though the presence of these government actors cannot be explained concretely, it is well-known that infiltrators were already present within the community. Scholars Frank Donner and Edward Escobar establish in their work that the creation of the police force as an institutional organization was for the purpose of protecting capital.³⁴ As their power grew and the need for their services expanded, so did their funding. The organization did not want their funding to get cut. To maintain the money flow and the need for the continuous presence of the institution, they had to prove their services were required. Therefore, many within the organization ensured continued funding by creating a need for their services. Even if that meant creating or overstating a problematic situation, agents would concoct stories about individuals to sustain and justify the funding of their organization.

In an interview with Lynn Emmerman, for example, a Red Squad agent admits to the fabrication of evidence. Emmerman writes of a man given the name Pete Keer who tells the author of his time as a Red Squad agent.³⁵ In Emmerman's article, Keer states,

³³Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton*, 251-253.

³⁴Frank Donner, *Protectors of Privilege: Red Squad & Police Repression in Urban America* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1992), 1-51 and Edward Escobar, *Race, Police and the Making of Political Identity*, 5-12.

³⁵Lynn Emmerman, "Confessions of a Red Squad Spy: A Former Police Department Intelligence Agent Recalls the Dirty Tricks of '68," *The Chicago Reader*, August 25, 1978.

Usually we were detailed to attend big radical meetings, tail an out-of-towner, or back up another surveillance team ... Actually, most of what we did was bullshit ... Say you were assigned to a guy who supposedly advocated communism, some mope who worked in a factory 40 hours a week. Once you got his routine down, there was no way you'd be outside that factory every day. Me and my partner would take off, do whatever and pick him up later. We had to give headquarters something to show we were on the job, so we fabricated things. I might report that my target had lunch with the governor's fourth district manager at such and such a restaurant. Now maybe both men were there but didn't talk or even sit near each other. I just twisted the facts a little to make it seem as if there was a meeting.³⁶

Though the local government may not have anticipated the riots, individuals working undercover on the street could have seized the opportunity to continue the chaos to build up their reputation or to prove to their handlers their worth. According to Antonio Lopez in his dissertation, "Images and representations of black and brown rage, as in... the Division Street Riots of 1966, were the very basis upon which the state could legitimize its sovereignty."³⁷ The reason for the appearance of government agitators could be as Lopez suggests, a way to ensure actors within the Daley apparatus could explain why the community required policing, thus guaranteeing the continued employment of those who worked within the established police structure.

The Daley administration executed superficial changes in response to the riots. The institution of the police department made overtures to the Puerto Rican community including transferring the officer who shot Cruz, Thomas Munyon, and his partner, Raymond Howard,

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Antonio Lopez, "In the Spirit of Liberation: Race, Governmentality, and The De-Colonial Politics of the Original Rainbow Coalition of Chicago" (PhD dissertation, The University of Texas at El Paso, 2012), 103.

elsewhere.³⁸ Additionally, the police department lowered height restrictions to get more Spanish speakers on the force.³⁹

Unsatisfied with these gestures, Juan Diaz, former Caballero de San Juan, created The Spanish Action Committee of Chicago (SACC) to serve Puerto Ricans in the West Town/Humboldt Park area in order to gain resources from the city, as well as to identify and address the problems of the Puerto Rican community. On June 27, 1966 SACC marched to city hall to demand more concessions from the mayor.⁴⁰ Diaz attempted to represent the concerns of the Puerto Rican community to the city hierarchy through means more confrontational than those of the more traditionally inclined *Caballeros*. According to Padilla, “SACC organized boycotts, picket lines, and demonstrations to attack discrimination in access to a wide range of services.”⁴¹ Since the organization did not support the Daley administration, SACC was beset by government repression almost upon its inception.⁴²

Though scholarship has explored state oppression of African American organizations, Latino organizations not loyal to the hegemony also confronted oppression by government

³⁸“Seven Indicated for Melees on W. Division Street,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 23, 1966; D.J.R. Bruckner, “Chicago Starts Crash Program in Riot Area: Community Relations Stressed in Puerto Rican Section Where Mobs Battle Police,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 14, 1966.

³⁹See Janson, “7 Shot in New Chicago Riot as Settlement Efforts Fail,” *New York Times*, June 14, 1966; “Mayor Daley Reveals Plans to Help City Puerto Ricans,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 6, 1966. The height restriction prevented many Latinos from entering the police force. A lower height restriction was thought to open up the opportunity for more minorities to enter the police force.

⁴⁰“Two Millions to be Asked by Puerto Ricans: March at City Hall with Daley,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 7, 1966 and “1st Puerto Rican Protest March, Rally Set Today: SACC Will Make Demands of Mayor at City Hall,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 28, 1966. SACC, established in 1966 serves the West Town and Humboldt park areas.

⁴¹Bill Alstine, “Puerto Ricans March, Present Demands: Mayor Urged to Appoint Police Board, Out Epston,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 29, 1966; Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 166 and “Two Millions to Be Asked By Puerto Ricans,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 7, 1966.

⁴²Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 167-177 and Schultz and Schultz, *The Price of Dissent*, 422-428.

entities, which demonstrates a web of suppression perpetrated across racial boundaries.⁴³ In *Puerto Rican Chicago*, Padilla demonstrates that organizations and institutions colluded to discredit Diaz.⁴⁴ A reporter at the *Chicago Tribune*, Robert Wiedrich, contributed to Diaz's defamation, by working in conjunction with an agent provocateur to publish the members' denunciations of Diaz. A government agitator led members within the organization to believe that Diaz was a communist. The agent encouraged them to write the accusations, defect from SACC and create their own rival organization.⁴⁵ Labeling him a communist was an attempt to discredit his character and ruined his reputation.

Like SACC, LADO originated out of the desire for more meaningful representation after the division street riots of 1966. Obed Lopez is said to have established LADO because he, as a Mexican, did not feel welcomed within SACC. Omar Lopez, Obed's brother, said in a 1995 interview,

... these two organizations popped up as a result of the riots. And that was the Latin American Defense Organization that used to organize welfare recipients, tenant union, a free health clinic was organized. ... The Spanish Action Committee is still around, but they also became a supervised organization. Both organizations, by the way, were infiltrated by the FBI. And when everything blew out, everybody knew that the FBI had infiltrated the organizations, not just SAC[C] and LA[D]O, but the other civil rights organizations; there was a big suit against the city police. And it was won, so SACC became a recipient of the award after the suit against the city, because it was a gang intelligence unit that was also infiltrating all kinds of groups at the time.⁴⁶

⁴³See Davis, *Spying on America: The FBI's Domestic Counterintelligence Program*; Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton*; Garrow, *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.*; Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago* and Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*.

⁴⁴Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago*, 174-179; Robert Wiedrich, "Quit Spanish Group, Says Reds Move In: Five Founders Tell of Virtual Take-Over," *Chicago Tribune*, September 3, 1966.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Omar Lopez, interview by Miguel Morales, February 10, 1995, interview #1 transcript pp. 5-6, Lincoln Park Project: An Oral History of the Young Lords Organization, DePaul University Library Special Collections and Archives, Chicago, IL.

LADO also suffered government repression. Members knew the police scrutinized them, and they dealt with harassment intended to disrupt the organization. LADO worked within the Latino community and with other organizations on issues ranging from welfare access and boycotting grapes to providing direct-action programs such as health care. Their clinics shut down due to city code violations, and break-ins occurred in their offices. The city used code violations as a means to manipulate organizations and people not friendly to the Daley apparatus into compliance or to run them out of business. Break-ins occurred as a means of repression by the state in order to disrupt activities within the organization.⁴⁷ The stealing of member lists as well as the destruction of equipment made it difficult to continue operations. Despite the continuous disruptions caused by overt and covert government operatives, LADO and SACC continued to attempt to serve their communities for as long as possible.

Harassment conducted by the state on members of ethnic political organizations was the norm. Omar Lopez, also the Young Lord minister of information, spoke of his experiences:

Mayor Daley had organized a special unit called the Red Squad ... The police always used that to try to get supporters away from us ... The way they did it was by infiltrating the organizations by placing squad cars or unmarked cars right outside the church, watching, twenty-four hours a day. They'd harass us; every time you walked out to the church, you were sure they were probably going to stop you. Not to arrest you or not to do anything, but probably they had two objectives. One was to see if they could get information out of you to see if you were up to something, and another was to intimidate you. The harassment for example in wintertime, none of us wore gloves away from the Church and ask us to get out. Then they told us to put our hands on the hood of the car in sub-zero weather ... That's the kind of harassment that was going on all the time. They tried to break you one way or another. For example, people who had children would be stopped when walking and asked, "Hey Miguel, how's your son Joe?" To let you know

⁴⁷LADO only received recompense for the break-ins in the 1980s, when former city officers were investigated for the break-ins that occurred against organizations. See Jay Branegan, "A 2d Answers, Freed: Ex-Red Squad Member Stays Mum, Goes to Jail," *Chicago Tribune*, Feb 8, 1979; "Ex-Red Squad Member Talks, Released From Jail," *Chicago Tribune*, Feb 17, 1979 and Cheryl Devall, "\$306,250 Settlement in Red Squad Suit," *Chicago Tribune*, November 15, 1985.

they knew things about you that you had not told them. They would try to break you that way, try to put a kind of fear in you. So that was the Red Squad, they would go to every demonstration and take pictures of everybody.⁴⁸

The Red Squad regularly employed methods of surveillance meant to intimidate members and prevent those who could be sympathetic to their cause from joining their organizations. Violence perpetrated by the state did not end at harassment and intimidation. Police brutality, a long-enduring problem the minority community faced, not only caused physical injury to members of organizations but also cost some members their lives.⁴⁹

The Young Lords encountered police brutality that took the life of member Manuel Ramos. In an interview conducted by Jose Jimenez with John Boelter, friend and former roommate to Young Lord Ralph Rivera, the story that unfolds is as familiar to those in the past as it is today. Boelter attended a party with his friend Rivera.⁵⁰ Though Jimenez was not present, he is familiar with the event and the people involved. Neither Jimenez nor Mr. Boelter remembers who threw the party, but they believed it was for a child's birthday during the interview. Other sources indicate it was Young Lord Orlando Davila's birthday celebration. The details of this piece of the story may not be accurate, but Mr. Boelter recounts the tragedy as though the memory of it is solid in his mind. The interviewee's as well as the interviewer's focus is on the murder of Ramos. This event creates meaning within the narrative at this point of the interview, and it is illustrative of the way that Boelter shapes his story. Alessandro Portelli argues in "What Makes Oral History Different," that even if facts are misremembered or not

⁴⁸Omar Lopez, interview by Miguel Morales, February 17, 1995, interview #2 transcript p. 7, Lincoln Park Project: An Oral History of the Young Lords Organization, DePaul University Library Special Collections and Archives, Chicago, IL.

⁴⁹See Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*.

⁵⁰Boelter, interview.

remembered, the interviewee's oral history is still important because it allows for the exploration of the creation of meaning.⁵¹ For example, the lapse of remembering the host or the subject of the party is not important. Instead, the event of the death and the personal witness of police brutality by Boelter is what is recalled in both the interviewees' and interviewer's minds.⁵²

The city's unwillingness to prosecute an off-duty police officer that killed Ramos is indicative of its dubious relationship with the Latino community. According to Boelter, a man holding a gun appeared in front of the house during the party. He further states he was wearing a shirt and jeans. This man began to shoot into the house, striking Mr. Ramos in the eye and wounding other partygoers. The man who shot into the house was an off-duty police officer wearing plain clothes. He allegedly lived close to the location of the party. He is said to have been painting when he heard the noise. The off-duty officer claimed to have seen a gun, thus legitimizing his actions to the institution for which he worked.

Interviews conducted by Jose Jimenez indicate that the death of Manuel Ramos is considered a major event within the story of the Young Lords.⁵³ Though the death is not as well-known as other major killings by police, the oral history interviews indicate that it is important to Mr. Jimenez, as he consistently asks about it or its ramifications in numerous interviews.⁵⁴ This perhaps signifies that it is more important to him than to the interviewees, many of whom do not

⁵¹Grele, "Movement without Aim," 44.

⁵²Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," 67-72.

⁵³This event allegedly caused some Young Lords to more fully embrace the political aspect of their organization.

⁵⁴At the time, the newspaper the Young Lords published also indicated the importance of the tragedy through its coverage. See *Young Lords Organization* 1, no. 2 (May 1969), photos and coverage on pages 1, 3, 8 and 10-11.

have a major focus on Ramos. Oral history scholar Robert Grele states, “The interview can only be described as a conversational narrative: conversational because of the relationship of interviewer and interviewee, and narrative because of the form of exposition—the telling of a tale.”⁵⁵ Grele demonstrates that the creation of an oral history is a collaboration between the interviewer and interviewee.⁵⁶ As such, people can see the creation of the narrative through Mr. Jimenez’s emphasis on Ramos’ death. While the subjects within oral history narratives can weave the story into what is most important to their lives through their words and where they concentrate on certain points or gloss over others, people can also see the importance of the interviewer in shaping the narrative with the questions he or she asks.

The theme of government repression again arises during a protest against the police due to Ramos death. This protest included BPP support, but a rumor went through the crowd alleging the BPP and the YLO’s future participation in a “confrontation” between the two groups.⁵⁷ An article in the *Chicago Daily Defender* quotes a panther stating, “Those pigs (police) set this thing up between the Lords and the Panthers. We are in sympathy of the dead brother, [Manuel] Ramos, and we have nothing against the Lords because they are brothers too.”⁵⁸ It is clear that the two groups held no ill will against each other during the protest, but do share a common suspicion of the institution of the police.⁵⁹

⁵⁵Grele, “Movement without Aim,” 44.

⁵⁶Ibid., 43-44.

⁵⁷“Confrontation on North Side Fails: Looting Follows,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, May 14, 1969.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Interestingly, an article in the *Chicago Tribune* engages in red baiting of the groups present during the protest alleging that the leaders of the BPP, Young Patriots (YP), and the YLO spoke with a leader of a communist party. The linkage of communist to the organizations most likely occurred to destroy the groups’ legitimacy as such

The death of Ramos helped change the direction of the Young Lords, solidly transforming the group from a gang to a political organization. The actions the Young Lords perpetrated during their youth and the experiences of their young adult lives reflected and facilitated their influence on the world around them. The modification of focus within the organization caused the group to sustain a more positive struggle for their community's representation in the area, but they found it difficult to shed their gang image.⁶⁰

The YLO moved their attention to direct action programs. The information gained from archives created by YLO deem the takeover of McCormick Seminary in Lincoln Park, as one of their major events. The impact of Ramos death upon the youth continued. Newspaper accounts indicate a banner on the building renamed it after him during the occupation.⁶¹ Together with the help of other organizations including the LADO, the Young Patriots, the Concerned Citizens of the Survival Front, and the Welfare and Working Mothers of Wicker Park, as well as according to Lilia Fernandez, Black Active and Determined (BAD), the Young Lords took over the seminary to bring more attention to the plight of the poor in the neighborhood.⁶² Together they

associations within the mainstream could negatively affect their reputation. See Ronald Koziol and Joseph Boyce, "Top Red Linked to Protest at Police Station: Investigators Say He Talked with Leaders," *Chicago Tribune*, May 15, 1969.

⁶⁰While mainly active in the Lincoln Park area, they also maintained a presence within current-day West Town and Old Town.

⁶¹"20 begin sit-in at McCormick Seminary Unit," *Chicago Tribune*, May 15, 1969 and Ronald Koziol, "Parley Fails: Gang Holds Seminary Unit: Housing and Gifts of Cash Demanded," *Chicago Tribune*, May 16, 1969.

⁶²"Leave today, Invaders Told at Seminary," *Chicago Tribune*, May 17, 1969. Interestingly newspaper accounts at the time do not mention by name Black Active and Determined. However, see Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 3790 and "McCormick Takeover," *Young Lords* 1, no. 2 (May 1969) for references to this group. Instead newspapers focus mostly on the presence of the "gangs" including the Young Lords and Young Patriots. See also "20 begin sit-in at McCormick Seminary Unit," *Chicago Tribune*, May 15, 1969 for specific references to the YLO and YP as "gangs." LADO is also specifically mentioned. Welfare and Working Mothers of Wicker Park is only referred specifically by name outside the Young Lords Newspaper at the end of the takeover. See "Five-Days Sit-In at McCormick Seminary Ends: Dissidents Go as Court Threat is Lifted," *Chicago Tribune*, May 19, 1969.

comprised the Poor People's Coalition. Patricia Devine and Jimenez speak of how the takeover of the seminary represented a struggle against gentrification within the neighborhood.⁶³ They found the other institutions within Lincoln Park, such as DePaul University, Grant Hospital, and Children's Memorial Hospital, too difficult to penetrate.⁶⁴ The seminary, however, posed a more pragmatic obstacle. It was seen as less powerful than the other institutions and could be challenged on moral grounds. The YLO along with the other organizations demanded that institutions, which they believed instigated and perpetuated gentrification be held accountable by insisting on concessions in exchange for relinquishing the building.

The concessions the organizations wanted included demands that the seminary provide \$601,000 for low income housing in the Lincoln Park area.⁶⁵ Additionally, the Young Lords demanded \$25,000 for leadership and community programs, as did LADO.⁶⁶ They also wanted funding for a day care center, a Puerto Rican cultural center, money for a legal aid clinic, and priority access for the poor in rentals owned by the seminary.⁶⁷ The president of the school threatened to stop the takeover through an injunction only later to pull back on the threat and concede to provide funding.⁶⁸ Lilia Fernandez makes her readers aware that while the YLO

⁶³Patricia Devine-Reed, interviewed by Jose Jimenez, February 10, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries. Grand Valley, MI.

⁶⁴Devine-Reed, interview.

⁶⁵Koziol, "Parley Fails," *Chicago Tribune*, May 16, 1969 and "Leave Today, Invaders told at Seminary," *Chicago Tribune*, May 17, 1969.

⁶⁶Ibid and "McCormick Takeover," *Young Lords* 1, no. 2 (May 1969).

⁶⁷Ibid and Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 3794.

⁶⁸"Seminary to Ask Court to End Sit-In: Action Comes as Deadline Passes," *Chicago Tribune*, May 18, 1969 and "Five-Day Sit-In At McCormick Seminary Ends," *Chicago Tribune*, May 19, 1969.

leadership gave orders to not inflict property damage during the initial takeover, the coalition did pressure the seminary by declaring they would take over the library building.⁶⁹ According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Dr. McKay the president of the seminary, "...termed the demands as genuine and said the seminary shares the concern of the sit-in leaders with the plight of the poor."⁷⁰ The national Young Lords website claims that the seminary met the demands with the exception of providing funds for the Puerto Rican cultural center.⁷¹

The Poor People's Coalition attempted to secure low-income housing in Lincoln Park. Attempting to work within the system, they made a bid for \$47,170 to develop land to house the poor in the area.⁷² Instead, of accepting the bid, the city council and department of urban renewal recommended the Harford Construction Company to develop the land at the same price offered by Poor People's Coalition.⁷³ A quote attributed to the president of the Lincoln Park Conservation Association, in an article by the *Chicago Tribune*, demonstrates the attitude of property owners in Lincoln Park toward the poor, "Experiments in new construction are fine, but not at the expense of civility of community. Townhouses which are in the Hartford bid are in harmony with Lincoln Park."⁷⁴ Property owners in Lincoln Park did not support low-income

⁶⁹Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 3799-3804 and Omar Lopez, interviewed by Miguel Morales, February 24, 1995, interview 3, transcript p. 3, Lincoln Park Project: An Oral History of the Young Lords Organization, DePaul University Library Special Collections and Archives, Chicago, IL.

⁷⁰"Five-Day Sit-in at McCormick Seminary Ends," *Chicago Tribune*, May 19, 1969.

⁷¹Nationalyounglords.com/?page_id=13 accessed 2017.

⁷²Thomas Buck, "7 Hit Lincoln Park Renewal Plan," *Chicago Tribune*, February 10, 1970 and "O.K. Hartford Housing Bid: 'Reconsider Our Plan,' Poor Coalition Pleads," *Chicago Tribune*, June 14, 1970.

⁷³Ibid and also see Omar Lopez, "Housing Denied to Poor People," in *Young Lords Organization* 2, no. 6 (February/March 1970).

⁷⁴"O.K. Hartford Housing Bid," *Chicago Tribune*, June 14, 1970.

housing in Lincoln Park. Another quote in the same article by the *Chicago Tribune*, further illustrates the aversion to building housing for the poor in the area, “‘As a property owner,’ one resident said, ‘I ask you not to turn this area into another low income slum.’”⁷⁵ One of the major reasons for the failure of the Poor People’s Coalition’s plan is implied by the article to be the problematic character some its members.⁷⁶ Despite attempting to work within the system, the bid failed and one of the major reasons can be attributed to the negative reputation of some of its members. While perhaps not the real reason for denying the Poor People’s Coalition’s bid, the fact that newspapers continued to refer to the Young Lords as a gang and the violence in which they engaged previous to their move to political actions did not lend itself to bolster their cause.⁷⁷ They carried with them their reputation for violence and opponents could utilize this to debunk their actions no matter the changes they made. This decision by city structures further indicated to members in the Young Lords the power of capital, but they continued to engage in actions to help their community.

The Black Panther Party greatly influenced the Young Lords. The BPP’s ideology supported armed struggle for the purposes of self-defense and socialistic ideals for advancement denied to them by capital and racist societal structure. They established a 10-point program as a result of experiences with police brutality, unequal access to education and housing, lack of gainful employment prospects, and the difficulty of fulfilling basic needs because of the unequal

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid.

distribution of wealth that comes capitalist society.⁷⁸ The points considered not only the racial discrimination endured by their community, but also its inherent economic consequences. Members and supporters of the BPP wanted full employment, more equal education that included teaching about the role of their people in history, and access to decent housing for African Americans in the United States.⁷⁹ The 10-point program also addresses racism in institutional structures by pointing to how the African American community did not benefit from participation in the military and the unequal hand of the justice system.⁸⁰ Though known as a nationalist party, the BPP supported other racial groups that suffered from structural economic problems. They assisted the YLO and also worked with the Young Patriots.

The Young Patriots (YP), contemporaries to the BPP and YLO, consisted of poor white people, many of which migrated from the Appalachian region to Chicago.⁸¹ The YP, as a group found commonality with the BPP and the YLO because of their experience with poverty and police brutality. The YP like many in the BPP and YLO suffered from lack of economic sources and found themselves displaced from the Appalachian region as their families moved to Chicago for other opportunities. Fred Hampton led a coalition that consisted of the BPP, the YP, and the YLO that later became known as “the Rainbow Coalition” to assist their communities with

⁷⁸Black Panther Party, “What we Want What we Believe: October 1966 Black Panther Party Platform and Program,” in *Young Lords Organization* 1, no. 2 (May 1969).

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹See Jacobi Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*.

survival programs needed because of their shared class status and problems with the state.⁸² In a *New York Times* article, the author writes, “The major significance of the coalition was that it showed that capitalism and not racism was the major problem.” Later a black panther speaking of the coalition is quoted,

We believe that racism comes of class struggle, it just part of the divide and conquer tactics of the establishment and a production of capitalism. When we provide free breakfasts for poor kids, we provide them for the poor whites and poor blacks.⁸³

The consciousness of shared problems among these groups with the leadership of Fred Hampton and Black Panther member Bobby Lee provided a catalyst for these seemingly different groups to work together towards the common goal of gaining better opportunities for their prospective communities.⁸⁴

The Young Lords modeled themselves on the BPP, creating a food assistance program and the Dr. Emerterio Betances health clinic to serve the poor in the area.⁸⁵ The YLO took much of their ideology directly from the BPP, printing information on the BPP platform as well as referring to Panther rallies with joint black and white attendance and with Jimenez present.⁸⁶ The BPP provided technical assistance to the Young Lords for their breakfast program. The leaders of the Young Lords Organization worked with Fred Hampton, the chairman of the Illinois BPP.

⁸²See “Young Patriots Group Offers History Lesson for Political Activists,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 9, 2016; Colette Gaiter, “Chicago 1969: When Black Panthers Allied With Flag-Wielding, Working-Class Whites,” *The Conversation*, January 8, 2017.

⁸³Michael Kaufman, “Black Panthers Join Coalition with Puerto Rican and Appalachian Groups,” *New York Times*, November 9, 1969.

⁸⁴Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*, 126-158.

⁸⁵“We Serve the People,” in *Young Lords Organization* 2, no. 6 (February/March 1970).

⁸⁶See Black Panther Party, “What we Want What we Believe” and “Panther Rally” in *Young Lords Organization* 1, no. 2 (May 1969).

Together they organized with the YP, providing services geared toward their respective communities. Eldermina Cruz received breakfast from the YLO breakfast program.⁸⁷ She appreciated it since she would not go hungry even if the family did not have enough to eat. She remembers that her mother did not want her to go since those that socialized there engaged in behavior typical of teenagers/young adults, many times using the place to engage in make-out sessions.⁸⁸ She recalls she hung out and helped clean.

Beyond engaging with the community, the Young Lords actively organized with the BPP and Young Patriots. They combined their efforts in the attempt to provide more equal opportunities for their communities and to fight against the injustice they felt came from the capitalist system. Together they rallied against gentrification and rallied against police brutality.⁸⁹ Though these groups ethnically differed, they found common ground in their oppression from the state and because of their economic position.

Government oppression is a significant factor in the deterioration of the Young Lords, but in addition to the problems brought by state repression, the group also had internal issues.⁹⁰ As an organization, they gained some of the concessions they demanded from the seminary, such as attaining funds for social programs and low-income housing. While this should symbolize a solid victory in the historiography and indicates a level of success with their activism, one can still see

⁸⁷Eldermina Cruz, interview.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Jakobi Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*, 128-133.

⁹⁰The YLO suffered under police repression and brutality like other radical organizations at the time. They also suffered as victims of harassment, disinformation and constant surveillance. See Cointelpro Puerto Rican Groups Part 08 of 11, March 20, 1970, 23-24, which indicates surveillance and or infiltration of the Young Lords at a parade in Chicago by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

that the takeover resulted in long-standing animosities among members, which may have yet to be resolved. For example, several of Jimenez's contemporaries in the Young Lords question his leadership of the Young Lords. They contend that Jimenez, under the influence of drugs could not effectively manage the Young Lords, because his mind essentially was elsewhere. During a group interview with some of the founding members of the Young Lords, De Rivero points to internal problems within the organization.

Again I'm not trying to get on your case, but I do want to point this out. Whether you were high or not, you were at that point, to some degree ... accepting that kind of responsibly... You were there as a chairman, and in that role regardless of what happened, it happened in your reign. With that money, and a lot of the people you surrounded yourself with, that were doing that kind of stuff that was going on. But you allowed it to happen.⁹¹

According to the discussion, a portion of the money received as part of the concession with the seminary cannot be accounted for, causing discord among those who know of the loss to this day. The amount missing is not clearly stated. Though members do not blame Jimenez directly, they do indicate that his physical state allowed him to be vulnerable to unsavory characters. Jimenez admits to a drug problem during the time of the takeover. Though it is understood that Jimenez did not take the money, it is accepted that he should have been more responsible for its use. De Rivero blames him for the misappropriation of the funds, though he does not accuse Jimenez of embezzlement. Government oppression toward the Young Lords contributed heavily to the organization's problems, but these internal issues also proved to be problematic and contributed to the problems created by state suppression.

⁹¹De Rivero, Jose Jimenez, Perez and unknown female, group interview. See Anderson and Jack, "Learning to Listen," on meta-statement. The language of De Rivero indicates a meta-statement, where he indeed holds Jimenez accountable despite him indicating that he "does not want to get on his case." Though the organization may suffered heavy oppression from the state, this oral history opens another discourse providing evidence that YLO may have contributed to its decline because of the state of leadership under the influence of drugs.

While experiencing state repression and the ensuing internal issues, the Young Lords continued to engage in direct action, such as the “takeover” of Armitage Methodist Church. The Young Lords had attempted to gain access to the space through renting it, but the congregation at the time did not support them.⁹² The “takeover” occurred when a Young Lord member snuck into the church armed and let in other Young Lords into the church. Jimenez claims he did not order the takeover and was frightened about a potential bloodbath in their futures at the arrival of the police. When the police arrived the pastor, Bruce Johnson said he welcomed the Young Lords into the church. Though this event is referenced as a takeover, the pastor supported the YLO in their social program endeavors, attempting to help them overcome city code violations imposed when the group tried to open a daycare inside the church.⁹³ The church eventually became the headquarters of the Young Lords and the location where they engaged in some of their direct action programs such as the health clinic and the free breakfast program.⁹⁴

The interview with Patricia Devine-Reed, shows that the narrative of the takeover of the Armitage Methodist Church is unstable and still in the process of formation. Pat Devine points out that the so-called takeover of the church occurred because the Reverend Bruce Johnson allowed the Young Lords to use the church. She makes this known, not only through her expression in her body language and tone of voice but by directly stating it to Jimenez. Jimenez indicates within their conversation that she is correct, that it was more of a collaboration than a

⁹²“Gang Members Begin Sit-In at N. Side Church,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 12, 1969 and Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 3817-3812.

⁹³“Minister and Wife Are Slain in Chicago,” *New York Times*, September 30, 1969 and “Letters to the Editors: Young Lords Saddened,” *Chicago Defender*, October 8, 1969.

⁹⁴“Nonprofit Group Seeks to Simplify Health Care,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 17, 1970 and Sheila Wolfe, “City is Harassing Clinics, Group Says,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 17, 1970.

takeover.⁹⁵ In later interview with Jose Jimenez on July 14, 2012, he states they decided it was not a takeover since Reverend Johnson helped them, thus showing how oral histories shape and frame the structure of a narrative.⁹⁶ Though some Young Lords may have initially taken over the church, Bruce Johnson prevented the physical violence of the state by indicating to outsiders that he allowed the group use of the church.

However, tragedy would strike again as the Johnsons were brutally murdered in their home. In some of the interviews, Jimenez indicates the Young Lords came under suspicion for the deaths. The Young Lords' narrative, however, suggests something more sinister. The rumor that comes through is that state forces could have killed the Johnsons due to their support of the Young Lords. It further continues that perhaps the Cuban congregation supported by the United States could have participated in the murders or that it could have been the actions of the CIA, or combination thereof, since it was suspected that the Cubans participated in the Bay of Pigs and therefore could have had the connections needed to implement a hit on the couple. Though this is not the type of rumor that can be substantiated, its existence and plausibility within the minds of members is indicative of the amount of stress caused by constant government suppression of the organization and its members. The amount of interference, violence, and harassment by the state made this type of rumor seem possible to some members, considering the amount of calumnies

⁹⁵Devine-Reed, interview.

⁹⁶See Jose Jimenez interviewed by unknown, July 14, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries. Grand Valley, MI.

perpetrated by the United States' government on political organizations such as the BPP, LADO, SACC, and YLO and in Latin America in general.⁹⁷

The cause for the decline of the organizations discussed in this chapter can be heavily blamed on government interference and repression. Organizations focused on protecting minority civil rights from the more militant including the BPP and YLO to the more mainstream including SNCC and SACC fell victim to agent provocateurs regardless of economic or social background. Government sponsored repression not only inconvenienced most members of progressive organizations due to excessive overt harassment, but at its worst suppression cost the lives of participants, such as with Fred Hampton.⁹⁸ In the long term, individuals who survived government interference, found their lives fraught with the negative consequences caused by the traumatic events. Infiltrators wore the guise of friends and confidants. With the advantage of their position, they manipulated those around them in attempt to cause harm to the organizations broadly or individuals within the groups more specifically. These experiences made it difficult for individuals both directly and indirectly affected by these actions to be more wary of others, losing the ability to trust others easily, instigating fear and paranoia throughout their lives.⁹⁹

⁹⁷Jose Jimenez interviewed by unknown, July 14, 2012; Omar Lopez interviewed by Jose Jimenez, February 7, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections & University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI and Omar Lopez interviewed by Jose Jimenez, August 23, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections & University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI.

⁹⁸The state sanctioned murder of Fred Hampton is one example of how members of progressive organizations lost their lives. Though the state did not elaborately plan YLO member Manuel Ramos death as they did Fred Hampton's, he too died as a result of police violence.

⁹⁹Two different individuals spoke to the author, indicating they believed surveillance by the government continued in either their lives or towards newer iterations of previous organizations such as the YLO. This caused one individual fear of admitting their association publically with YLO, as the individual stated he believed the FBI and other government entities investigated the organization and its member from its creation to the present. Also see America Sorrentini interviewed by Jose Jimenez, May 11, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections & University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI. Sorrentini, who is aware of

Nevertheless, these organizations did not all fall in their entirety immediately upon targeting by the government. The individuals in these organizations wielded what agency they held in order to conduct actions that they believed to be in the best interest of the community, including protests, rallies, direct action programs, and takeovers. While many organizations in the long term fell, the immediate impact of these actions served to place a focus on the real problems members of the community at large suffered. Offering immediate solutions to individual problems assisted the members of the community directly improving their lives, providing relief at their moment of need.

The BPP served as both a model and as an ally to the YLO. The genesis of the allegiances created at this time built the foundations upon which political power was harnessed by multiethnic coalitions in future campaigns within the city. The social network between the BPP and the YLO proved useful as progressives made their way into the political sphere. Despite problems the YLO faced, it grew from Chicago, establishing itself in branches throughout the country such as in San Juan, Milwaukee, and New York. Leaving associates with knowledge that would prove useful to them as they moved to other aspects of their lives.¹⁰⁰ As the following

government repression of Puerto Rican independence supporters, believes that the work Jimenez is doing is still dangerous. Aware of government repression and the actual costs of lives and quality of life for individuals impacted, she tells Jimenez to ensure his will is intact, suggesting that he may still fall victim to the government sponsored violence that struck many of their colleagues. Through the utilization of subjectivity, one can understand how damaging the experiences of the interviewees with state repression continue to impact their lives negatively.

¹⁰⁰Branches of the YLO are created throughout the country including Milwaukee. The most well-known branch was located in New York. As their predecessors before them, they too engaged in protests and direct actions. In concern for the lack of health care in the community, to gain access to equipment for diagnoses, they took a medical X-ray truck that tested for tuberculosis. See Alfonso Narvaez, "The Young Lords Seize X-Ray Unit," *The New York Times*, June 18, 1970. They also tested for lead poisoning. The New York Young Lords also engaged in what is now remembered as "the garbage offensive." In protest of the lack of city services collecting refuse in East Harlem, they took the garbage moved it to Third Avenue and set it of fire to stop traffic. See Darrel Enck-Waner, "Trashing the System: Social Movement, Intersectional Rhetoric, and Collection Agency in the Young Lords Organization's Garbage Offensive," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92 (May 2006): 174-201.

chapter will show, heavily damaged by government repression, the YLO resurfaced as Jimenez made a bid for the aldermanic seat in the Uptown/Lakeview area in the Forty-Sixth ward.

Combined with efforts of the BPP, and other groups they challenged the established democratic structure through a more formal political means.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE JOURNEY FROM RADICALISM TO REPRESENTATION

I'll tell you that Cha Cha Jimenez was a leader. He had a lot of potential, but he fell out of grace.

—Carlos Flores

Jose “Cha-Cha” Jimenez’s ongoing oral history project ensures that the legacy of the Young Lords as both a gang and political organization will continue. These interviews salvage stories he believes relate to the Young Lords and capture meaning for the organization and himself. While Jimenez’s life often followed a trajectory of a person headed toward a life in governmental public service, he never gained a political position.¹ This chapter will show how Jimenez’s work on voter’s registration and his participation within the anti-machine coalition helped Harold Washington reach political office, while also illustrating how despite his contributions, Jimenez could not penetrate the political sphere. Further, it will illuminate that though Jimenez ostensibly interviewed former organization and community members about their perceptions of the Young Lords and Lincoln Park as a Latino community, these dialogues reveal his personal ambivalence about his inability to enter mainstream politics.²

¹Andrew Diamond argues that political patronage toward youth gangs gave representation to ethnic Europeans in the city. See *Mean Streets*, 10-12; Hagedorn, “Race Not Space,” 196.

²Most of Jimenez’s interviews are on video rather than transcribed. Transcribed histories lend themselves to different analyses than those on video. Hearing the interviewee and interviewer in Jimenez’s interviews and seeing the interviewee’s non-verbal modes of communication provide additional layers of information for study. Dan Sipe argues, “Oral history is the collaborative creation of evidence in narrative form between interviewer and narrator, between living human beings Oral history should thus document not only the interview’s explicit information, but the process itself.” He explains that the video images oral histories create show dialogues, tone of voice, and other cues that one is unable to see in a written transcript. See Dan Sipe, “The Future of Oral History and Moving Images,” in *The Oral History Reader*, 2003 edition, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson (New York:

The oral histories thus far reveal discourses around the process as well as the expectations of access into politics in Chicago. Carlos Flores – who participated in several interviews including one with Jimenez for his oral history project and as well as others with Mervin Mendez housed at DePaul – worked on the YLO breakfast program in the People’s Church, then held a position in the US Department of Health and Human Services, and later participated in Harold Washington’s Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs.³ In an interview with Mervin Mendez, he indicated that Jimenez could not enter political office because he “fell out of grace.”⁴ He does not go into detail on how that fall occurred but he repeatedly spoke of Latinos who worked for representation.⁵ He presented differences between those who fought for power in the 1960s who were part of “movements” and those who came into power in the 1990s, implying those who fought for power earlier did so to make the community better while those who came later worked for themselves more than for their original constituency.⁶ This interview indicates Flores believes that although Latinos accessed politics in Chicago that those elected in the 1990s did not do much for the Latino community; instead, they became part of the dominant democratic

Routledge, 1998), 382-385. Also see Grele, “Movement without Aim,” 43-47. Robert Grele argues that oral histories show undiscovered discourses and the creation of historical processes.

³Carlos Flores, interview by Mervin Mendez, September 11, 1995, transcript, p. 9, Lincoln Park Project: An Oral History of the Young Lords Organization, DePaul University Library Special Collections and Archives, Chicago IL; Carlos Flores, interview by Mervin Mendez, date unknown, interview 2, transcript, p. 4, Lincoln Park Project: An Oral History of the Young Lords Organization, DePaul University Library Special Collections and Archives, Chicago IL.

⁴Flores, Mendez interview 2, 7.

⁵Ibid., 4-8.

⁶Ibid.

structure.⁷ It is likely that his view is representative of others within the community, given his long history of activism and work in the area.

In a 2012 interview, Flores indicated that he, Jimenez, and others had the opportunity to advance themselves through a program at the Argonne National Laboratory, but Jimenez failed to do so therefore, limiting his ability to gain skills and education at this earlier phase of his life.⁸ Learning new abilities and skills could have proved useful to Jimenez had he gained them in his youth. The interview presented several instances that indicated alternate paths were available for advancement for individuals like Flores and Jimenez in the past, but they were not obvious or appreciated at the time. Later, the impact of the different decisions made by the two men became clear. In the interview, Flores told Jimenez,

Back in the days, in terms of providing opportunities to minorities, young minority students, they actually set up a program there. To help students not only finish their GED, but also to get them some kind of skills in terms of learning how to work.... For youth that were at risk ... so a lot of us, we were all at risk, as a matter of fact they use to call us hardcore students or hardcore people, you were there.... I actually took advantage of that program, and what I did is I actually signed up to be in the photo department. So at 17 years old in the photo department they took me under their wings, gave me a camera. I used to wash prints as a job and then in the afternoon I would take classes for GED. I know a lot of you guys did a lot of different things. I heard stories about you guys sleeping in closets and shit like that when you were supposed to be working. You guys were abusing your privilege... [but] I took advantage of it, because I actually had an opportunity to learn the skill of photography. And what they did is they gave me a camera, gave me all this film and there was like really, really nice folks who were there.⁹

⁷Ibid. This can also be understood as hegemony. In this case, the hegemon or the dominant ruling power, represents the Chicago democratic political party structure who still has major control over the political realm in the city.

⁸Carlos Flores, interview by Jose Jimenez; Also see Mike Lawson, interview by Jose Jimenez, March 29, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI.

⁹Flores, interview by Jose Jimenez.

Flores used his time in the program to gain knowledge and learn new skills. He claimed that Jimenez, however, did not take full advantage of the opportunity and misused his time. The tone when Flores said, “I heard stories about you guys sleeping in closets and shit like that when you were supposed to be working. You guys were abusing your privilege,” is not condescending, and he laughs as he speaks.¹⁰ While the laughter may be indicative of many different emotions—perhaps he is simply fondly recollecting the memories of troublemaking youth—it does not seem to be a joyful laugh.¹¹ After this program, Flores continued his education in a junior college YMCA and obtained his GED and later his Bachelor of Arts and master’s in criminal justice. Though the words were not charged, they still illustrate the importance of the program in Flores’s life and point to Jimenez’s lost opportunities.

The choices Jimenez made in his youth and in his early adult life made a real impact not only on himself but also on the lives of those within his social network. Whether it was the choices he made as a young man or the perception of him others created, his reputation and connections as a leader in the Puerto Rican community empowered other underrepresented minorities and women including Harold Washington and Helen Shiller, but did not elevate him to a political position. To acquire tangible benefits, one needed to work within the system, and those within the system needed to accept them.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹See Anderson and Jack, “Learning to Listen,” 169. Anderson and Jack write that one should listen to how an interviewee creates meaning within their narratives. They state, “Those aspects of live interviews unavailable in a written text—the pauses, the laughter—all invite us to explore their meaning for the narrator.” Laughter in this case can be used as a way to release tension or discomfort experienced in recalling the memory or to cushion the mistakes of youth.

In the late 1960s and the early to mid-1970s progressive ethnic organizations declined or generally became more mainstream in response to government repression.¹² Jimenez however, goes a different direction with the Young Lords, before becoming more conventional and turning to electoral politics. The YLO deteriorated as internal and external factors took a toll on their organization in Chicago. In addition to Jimenez's struggle with substance abuse, constant harassment by the government caused major damage to the YLO. The leadership's arrests led the organization to financial distress as resources were redirected for legal purposes.

According to Judson Jeffries, Jose Jimenez fled underground as multiple charges were levied against him including the charge that ultimately landed him in jail, the theft of twenty-three dollars' worth of lumber from an urban renewal site.¹³ Judson Jefferies writes in "From Gang-Bangers to Urban Revolutionaries: The Young Lords of Chicago," that the Young Lords faced police repression as those on the YLO leadership committee faced multiple charges. Jefferies claims that Jimenez seemed to be targeted by the Richard J. Daley Gang Surveillance Unit as he was arrested eighteen times. Jefferies recalls how the police stopped Jimenez and told him to stop his activism. Clearly, his past criminal actions made him an easy target for

¹²Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 3999-4029. SACC still exists, however is now a right leaning organization. It is said not to do much in the community when compared to its previous endeavors. See William Zayas interview by Marisol Rivera, 2014; Jose Lopez, interview and Margaret Power, correspondence to author, November 16, 2014.

¹³Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 4037. Jefferies, "From Gangbangers to Revolutionaries," 296-297. Also see "Jose 'Cha Cha' Jimenez," National Young Lords, accessed 2016, nationalyounglords.com/?page_id=15, which states that Jose Jimenez faced "...eighteen indictments in six weeks..." Jimenez also engaged in less than prudent actions by fleeing while on bail denying that he stole wood from an urban renewal site, though he later admitted to it. He was convicted of stealing lumber worth twenty-three dollars. According to newspaper accounts, he served a year in prison. See Clarence Page, "Young Lords Leader Surrenders to Police," *Chicago Tribune*, December 7, 1972; David Young, "Seeks Cohen's Post: Jimenez runs for Alderman," June 21, 1974. Also see Bonne J. Nesbitt, "Jail 2 Blacks, 3 Young Lords," *Chicago Daily Defender*, April 30, 1970 which states that a fight between the Young Lords and police resulted in the arrests of Young Lord members and two African Americans at the scene with Jimenez later arrested.

harassment. Jefferies illustrates that Jimenez could not go to all of the judicial proceedings. Since they ran concurrently, the judge in the court where he could not appear would issue a warrant for his arrest as Jimenez could not be in two places at the same time, - a ludicrous procedure which attests to his harassment by the state. Jefferies makes note that Jimenez was the only one indicted for a mob action charge during a demonstration. Jefferies also states however, “While it does appear Jimenez was subjected to police harassment, some of his troubles were clearly self-initiated.”¹⁴ Since Jimenez engaged in illegal activity such as marijuana possession.

While on bail from the lumber charge, Jimenez is said to have established a location before his incarceration, where according to the YLO’s website, “an underground training school is set up to train Young Lords leadership, to take over the organization.”¹⁵ YLO’s member Angie Navedo and her daughter Cathy Adorno-Centeno, are said by Jimenez, to have resided at a ranch in Wisconsin, the location of the school.¹⁶ During the interview, Jimenez asks Adorno-Centeno if she remembers the ranch. He says he understands that she may have been too young to remember when she replies that she does not recall her time there. While the school is said to have been a place to train future leadership of the YLO, William Zayas, formerly of the Latino Institute, stated that Jimenez was known to teach revolution there.¹⁷ Therefore, the school was one of the reasons Jimenez was considered to be a “loose cannon.”¹⁸ While this may be rumor,

¹⁴Jefferies, “From Gangbangers to Revolutionaries,” 297.

¹⁵“Jose ‘Cha Cha’ Jimenez,” National Young Lords, accessed June, 2017.

¹⁶Cathy Adorno-Centeno, interview by Jose Jimenez, August 4, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI. Angie Navedo’s husband Jose “Pancho” Lind also participated in the YLO, but died. Cathy Adorno-Centeno is their daughter.

¹⁷William Zayas, interview.

¹⁸Ibid.

speculation of this sort still harmed Jimenez's reputation. After fleeing in August of 1970, Jimenez eventually turned himself over to the police on December 6th 1972.¹⁹ Meanwhile, as the organization struggled for survival in Jimenez's absence, Angie Navedo led the organization after his incarceration, though the YLO never fully recovered.²⁰

During the late sixties, the YLO expanded with branches throughout the country. The best known was in New York, but the New York branch broke off in 1970 and renamed itself the Young Lords Party. Though Jimenez believes the split was amicable, the oral history narrative suggests otherwise and points to group disharmony. Lilia Fernandez writes that the split occurred because the New York's more educated members clashed with the more street oriented Chicago group.²¹ In an interview with a member of the New York branch, Carmen De Leon states that after a while, the two groups did not get along.²² New York wanted to focus more on their philosophical ideological stance and saw Chicago as undisciplined.²³ The oral history reveals that the split with New York caused tension with Angel De Rivero, who believed Jimenez

¹⁹Clarence Page, "Young Lords Leader Surrenders to Police," *Chicago Tribune*, December 7, 1972 and see "Young Lord Chief Vows Fast," *Chicago Tribune*, December 8, 1972. After fleeing underground, Jose Jimenez returned in 1972 to serve his sentence on the lumber charge.

²⁰See nationalyounglords.com/?page_id=15 accessed June 15, 2017. It is also interesting to note that Angie Navedo was not of Latino origin. She is another clear example of how despite not being a Puerto Rican, she gained a leadership role within the organization. Frank Browning, "From Rumble to Revolution: The Young Lords," *Ramparts* 9, no. 1 (October 1970): 25.

²¹Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 4028-4037 and Frank Browning, "From Rumble to Revolution: The Young Lords," *Ramparts* 9, no. 1 (October 1970): 25.

²²Carmen De Leon, interview by Jose Jimenez, May 5, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI.

²³Ibid and Browning, "From Rumble to Revolution."

allowed New York to keep the Young Lords' name when they did not earn the right for its use.²⁴

Internal conflicts contributed to the dysfunction of the Young Lords.

The YLO continued in another iteration when Jimenez returned from jail a year later and decided to run in the 1975 aldermanic race for the Forty-Sixth Ward in Uptown/Lakeview.²⁵

Chicago did not have elected Latino representation on the city council, even in predominately Latino areas. The YLO found camaraderie with other ethnicities, such as whites and African Americans in the area, who also suffered displacement and those who did not support the established Democratic Party structure in Chicago. According to the National Young Lords website, "In 1973, Jimenez became the first announced Latino aldermanic candidate to publicly oppose the much-feared Daley Machine."²⁶

The aldermanic campaign brought people of different ethnicities, backgrounds, and organizations together and built a substantial social network useful for future anti-establishment political campaigns. In his article, "'We Need to Unite with as Many People Possible': The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords Organization in Chicago," Jakobi Williams argues that Jimenez continued the mission of the Rainbow Coalition as the Black Panther Party (BPP), and other groups assisted in the campaign.²⁷ Additionally, Gordon Mantler argues that Jimenez's effort contributed to the later success of the Washington mayoral

²⁴De Rivero, interview #2.

²⁵Edward Schreiber and Robert Davis, "Aldermanic Races Enter First Stage," *Chicago Tribune*, November 15, 1974 and David Young, "Seeks Cohen's Post: Jimenez Runs For Alderman," *Chicago Tribune*, June 21, 1974.

²⁶"Jose 'Cha Cha' Jimenez," National Young Lords, accessed 2016, Nationalyounglords.com/?page_id=15.

²⁷Williams, "'We Need to Unite with as Many People as Possible,'" 117-188 and Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*, 195-196.

campaign in 1983, by organizing a multiethnic coalition who registered voters.²⁸ Jimenez campaigned for the purpose of organizing, not with the intention to gain victory.²⁹ Mantler writes in his book *Power to the Poor: Black-Brown and the Fight for Economic Justice*, that Jimenez stated, “‘The campaign is not a reformist campaign.... It’s a campaign to organize the people.’”³⁰ Though Jimenez did not win the aldermanic race, his candidacy revealed a voting population not pleased with the established political structure and revealed how previous networks could be used to build coalitions for electoral purposes. Campaign workers, such as Helen Shiller, who later became a longtime alderwoman of the Uptown/Lakeview area, gained skills and knowledge that would help them in other political endeavors.³¹ In interviews many of those from the Jimenez campaign indicated that they later applied those skills in the Washington campaign.³²

²⁸Gordon Mantler, *Power to the Poor: Black-Brown and the Fight for Economic Justice, 1960-1974* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 5153-5176.

²⁹The Young Lords website also writes, “The Aldermanic Campaign was then viewed solely, as an organizing vehicle...” “Jose ‘Cha Cha’ Jimenez,” National Young Lords, accessed 2016, Nationalyounglords.com/?page_id=15.

³⁰Mantler, *Power to the Poor*, 5159-5162.

³¹Shiller, interview.

³²*Ibid*; Modesto Rivera, interview by Jose Jimenez, February 7, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI. Also see Jack Hart, interview by Jose Jimenez, March 2, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections & University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI. Jack Hart spoke about Walter Coleman, who, like Helen Shiller, worked on the Jimenez campaign and later the Harold Washington campaign. See Robert Davis, “Again, Activist Coleman Stirring Things Up,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 14, 1985, and Jake Malooney, “Helen Shiller Chicago Uptown Legacy,” *TimeOut Chicago*, February 16, 2011.

The Washington campaign also used multiethnic workers who addressed voters of different constituencies dissatisfied with the political structure.³³ William Grimshaw in *Bitter Fruit: Black Politics and the Chicago Machine* writes about the multiethnic coalition stating,

Full field operations were mounted in over half of the city's fifty wards, including all the black, Hispanic, and white liberal populations. In all, three-fourths of the city's wards were being worked by the formal Washington campaign organization. The campaign also contained an elaborate network of interest groups that worked largely outside the formal structure... The range of the groups was extraordinary; from Artists for Washington to Women for Washington, and just about everything else in between: labor, education, business, and of course, students, but there were dozens more as well... The groups preferred 'doing their own thing'... Several of the developed their own literature, and all of them, of course, fashioned campaign appeals geared to their particular constituencies.³⁴

To win an election marred by white racial bigotry and become the first African American mayor of Chicago, Harold Washington needed to appeal to Latino voters.³⁵ They could sway the mayoral race toward either candidate.³⁶ In what seems to be an internal/white paper from the Committee to Elect Harold Washington Mayor of the City of Chicago, titled "Harold Washington for Chicago: The Harold Washington Campaign," there is a breakdown on the numbers the campaign needed from different racial groups to secure victory. Further, Latino support rose as the campaign made overtures toward the community:

³³Paul Kleppner, *Chicago Divided: The Making of a Black Mayor* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University, 1985), 152; Mantler, *Power to the Poor*, 5164–5175. Mantler suggests Harold Washington won as a result of multiethnic coalitions.

³⁴Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit*, 172.

³⁵Harold Washington ran for mayor in a highly polarized racial environment. Jane Byrne and Bernard Epton's campaign used racial prejudice against Harold Washington in an attempt to secure white votes. See William Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit*, 176-180; Rivlin, *Fire on the Prairie*, 2010-2066; 2157-2162 and Kleppner, *Chicago Divided*, 186-214.

³⁶James Martinez, "Mayoral Contenders Aim at Winning Hispanic Voters," *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 7, 1983.

The Hispanic vote while representing only 50,000 votes in the win scenario has been a source of successful growth from the base of approximately 9,000 received during the primary. This growth has been substantiated by the Field Reports.³⁷

Hispanics represented the lowest number of the estimated groups but still denoted half of the expected numbers from the white population, which illustrates their importance. The Washington campaign formed a team to reach out to the Latino community, which included rising political star Rudy Lozano. To directly appeal to them in a public relations capacity, William Zayas, became the Hispanic Media and Advertising Campaign Coordinator.³⁸

The Washington campaign published multiple forms of political propaganda and ran media spots on Spanish radio.³⁹ They tapped into the shared suffering and oppression of African Americans and Latinos, pointing to the commonalities between the two groups as well as emphasizing overall shared history.⁴⁰ The pamphlets and brochures highlighted Washington's awareness of the problems and issues Chicago's Latino population faced; including a lack of equitable representation in politics and city positions, the need for bilingual education, and relief of overcrowded schools that served Latino communities; his support of affirmative action, and his work as a congressman to alleviate the conditions.⁴¹ In a piece written in both English and Spanish entitled "A Message from Congressman/Mensaje Del Congresista Harold Washington, I

³⁷"Harold Washington for Chicago: The Harold Washington Campaign" in Box 5, Folder 29 (Harold Washington Pre-mayoral Collection, Chicago, Illinois).

³⁸Ibid., see Box 16, Folder 12.

³⁹James Martinez, "Mayoral Contenders Aim at Winning Hispanic Voters"; Kleppner, *Chicago Divided*, 153.

⁴⁰Kleppner, 153; Washington Campaign, *Que Somos? Nuestros Lazos Historicos Nos Unen* in Box 25, Folder 5 (Chicago, IL: Harold Washington Pre-mayoral Collection).

⁴¹Washington Campaign, *Harold Washington Supports the Latino Community*.

Want to Know Your Problems and Ideas, A Message from the Congressman,” Washington states,

The day I am elected Mayor, the Latino community will have gained full access to City Hall... I pledge myself to sponsor an Affirmative Action ordinance that will assure Latinos their fair share of City jobs proportional to their population. This means 20% of all jobs, from cabinet level positions on down, through all levels of public employment.⁴²

Additionally, Washington pledged access to better education, housing, health services, and overall opportunities.⁴³

Washington’s campaign understood that the Reagan era economic policy of cutting taxes and federal spending did not benefit a vast swath of the population.⁴⁴ Instead the policies implemented hurt those most vulnerable by cutting federal spending on social welfare programs including food assistance and job programs.⁴⁵ Digby Solomon wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*, “Reagan...cut more than \$400 million from the island’s social programs.”⁴⁶ Solomon further argues that cuts of job training programs drove up unemployment in Puerto Rico.⁴⁷ The implementation of lower income thresholds to qualify for food assistance made access to food

⁴²Washington Campaign, *Harold Washington for Chicago: I Want You to Know My Commitments, I Want to Know Your Problems and Ideas, A Message from the Congressman* in Box 25, Folder 5 (Chicago, IL: Harold Washington Pre-mayoral Collection).

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Marable Manning, “Reaganism, Racism, and Reaction: Black Political Realignment in the 1980s,” *The Black Scholar* 13, no. 6 (Fall 1982): 2-4; Digby Solomon, “Politicians Lay Blame at Reagan’s Feet: Puerto Rico is Mired in Unemployment Rivaling That of ‘30s Depression in U.S.,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 27, 1982. Latinos throughout the country suffered from Reagan’s economic policies, including many unemployed in the Texas area who were told to have patience for recovery under Reaganomics. See Raymond Coffrey, “President Tells Jobless Hispanics to have Patience,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 3, 1984.

⁴⁵Solomon, “Politicians Lay Blame at Reagan’s Feet.”

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid. Also see Perez, *The Near Northwest Side Story* for detailed explanation on how the island and the mainland are linked through social networks and cyclical migration. Perez argues this migration is a reflection of the poverty many Puerto Ricans suffer.

stamps more difficult under the Regan administration. Political materials of Washington's campaign built on the fear of Republicans and Reganomics further destroying the economic prospects of the Latino community.⁴⁸

The size of the Latino voting bloc may have been small compared to other groups- estimated between 95,000 to 96,000 registered voters when compared to 857,000 whites and 673,000 African American – but the campaign sought to attract voters after a fierce primary with Democratic incumbent Jane Byrne.⁴⁹ In an effort to beat Republican Bernard Epton, the literature played to the sentiment that Latinos experienced neglect under previous political administrations and that a Republican administration could exacerbate the problems. Not the first choice of the powerful Chicago Democratic Party, Washington appealed to progressives since he carried an “anti-machine” mantle from his candidacy to his election and during his tenure as mayor.

Jimenez resurfaced and used his influence to help elect Washington. Since the Young Lords' name could be associated with its past as a gang, a name change occurred to further distance itself from potential political backlash. In the pre-mayoral campaign papers, housed at the Harold Washington Library, a list with names of Latino leaders shows Jose Jimenez as the “founder of the Puerto Rican Diaspora Coalition” (PRDC).⁵⁰ The organization publicized a rally with Harold Washington as speaker.⁵¹ Modesto Rivera, who worked with Jimenez on the

⁴⁸Harold Washington for Chicago: I Want You to Know My Commitments, I Want to Know Your Problems and Ideas, A Message from the Congressman.

⁴⁹See James Martinez, “Mayoral Contenders Aim at Winning Hispanic Voters,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 7, 1983 and Nathaniel Sheppard, “Hispanic Vote Seen as Key Factor by Both Chicago Mayoral Candidates,” *New York Times*, April 11, 1983.

⁵⁰Unnamed list, in Box 25, Folder 17, Harold Washington Pre-mayoral Collection.

⁵¹PRDC, *Harold Washington: Mayor for All People in Chicago* in Box 25, Folder 5 (Chicago, IL: Harold Washington Pre-mayoral Collection).

campaign, fondly recalled Washington donning a Puerto Rican hat, called the *pava*, and said that seven hundred people attended.⁵²

Presumably memories of the group as a violent gang still haunted the organization. No one tried to hide the connection, so many knew the PRDC as the YLO. The name was the only essential difference between the two. The political platform of the PRDC remained the same as that of the YLO in terms of its goals to stop urban renewal and fight the established political structure. Under the name PRDC, material published in both English and Spanish claimed that a vote for Harold Washington could stop the displacement of Puerto Rican neighborhoods.⁵³ The pamphlet states,

Now under the leadership of Jane Byrne they are trying to take our homes and neighborhoods again.... West Town, Humboldt Park, Palmer Square, Logan Square and Wicker Park are targets of Mayor Byrne.... One way we can fight back is to organize, unite and support Harold Washington for mayor. He is the only candidate that has not forgotten "La Clark" and "La Madison."⁵⁴

The PRDC portrayed Washington as an antiestablishment candidate who sought to enact changes for Latinos' benefit and implied his ability to stop the removal of communities due to urban renewal if elected. The PRDC claimed the YLO political history. The pamphlet made direct references to its implementation of service programs, the McCormick Theological Seminary takeover and payout, as well as its work against police brutality.⁵⁵

⁵²Rivera, interview.

⁵³PRDC, *Harold Washington: Mayor for All People in Chicago*.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

The leaders of the Washington campaign understood the importance of voter registration. Rivera remembered that he, Jimenez, and their group functioned as the vanguard in areas where other Washington campaign workers did not wish to go or were too frightened to enter. In an interview with Jimenez, Rivera stated:

We were troubleshooters. I remember now that there'd be a building [that] some people weren't comfortable going in. A couple of them across the street from Humboldt Park, one on the boulevard. And they would send us, Cha Cha, me, and the group, and we'd talk to these guys. And what it was, by the end of the day, we had every ... antisocial behavior [person] registered and ready to vote for Harold Washington. In other words, there was a lot of high-crime buildings or maybe narcotics going on. And these people were just terrified, and [I] remember Cha Cha—just, he'[d] go into these buildings ... that's what was our job. One of our jobs was troubleshooting troubled buildings.... Cha Cha would go up ahead and say these are the people you need to talk to, the disenfranchised, not the established Puerto Ricans. The ones that no one is talking to.⁵⁶

Jimenez and his group's ability to go into places others feared gave them an opportunity to obtain more votes for Washington. Jimenez, as Rivera explained, gave attention to a population otherwise unnoticed. Seen as someone too radical for complete integration by mainstream progressives, Jimenez still helped the Washington campaign gain supporters.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, even after working on the campaign, Jimenez did not receive a position in Washington's administration. While Jimenez interviewed well-known Chicago poet Gregorio Gomez, an interesting exchange occurred.⁵⁸ The interview shows that while Jimenez understands the reasons for his exclusion from the administration, his words have an inconsistency that indicates he perhaps wanted to be included:

⁵⁶Rivera, interview.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Gregorio Gomez, interview by Jose Jimenez, August 23, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI.

Gomez: In the end, Washington was elected. People were elected to city council; there were people who were left out. And yeah, I thought you were one of those who was left out. I thought that was one of the biggest shames. That's why I thought you were running for alderman.... I thought you would have been one of the people who should have been in that council at that time. When ... all the Latinos were coming in.... But I believed that you were iced out from that time on.... And when Harold Washington was in office, it just seemed that some people elbowed their way into being part of ... the inside click that really didn't belong. A lot of the warhorses like Cha Cha Jimenez [were] not there. Or if you were there, you were on the outskirts of it. Because you were not even invited to that ... the Latino Committee/Hispanic committee [he is referring to the Advisory Commission of Latino Affairs] or something like that?

Jimenez: No. We actually helped form that. But we were not in it because my record became an issue. So we kinda quieted down. It wasn't an issue during the campaign. When we got the votes, it wasn't an issue. But it was an issue later, because the media was after a few people. So I mean, we understood that. But we were being ... we were new. We were novices. Our passion was to get Harold elected.... We were able to introduce him at Humboldt Park.... That was his way of saying thank you. I was the only one on stage, and there was a crowd of a hundred thousand people.⁵⁹

If seen only in the transcript, Jimenez's words appear to show he is reconciled with the outcome of the campaign in regard to his personal life. However, by watching the interview and hearing the speakers' voices, the researcher can see that there is a hint of regret in not gaining more tangibly from the Washington campaign. His cadence and tone of voice seem to display his reflection on the past and that he willfully decided to be content that his contribution to elect Washington proved fruitful, and the Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs came to fruition. Mostly, there is the solace that at least he accomplished his goals. Jimenez demonstrates signs of internal inconsistency when he admits his political naiveté to Gomez. Additionally, his response that his record did not matter while getting the votes, while said jokingly, also suggests an internal inconsistency—that perhaps he indeed regrets not getting a position. But the interview also presents Jimenez as pragmatic when he says that he understands the reasons for his

⁵⁹Ibid.

exclusion. The buttons used at the rally at Humboldt Park recognized the YLO. While it seems that Washington's gesture to let Jimenez introduce him during the event is paltry, Jimenez emphasized his placement on stage. This shows he is proud of his participation and considers it an honor.

Despite Jimenez's contribution to the Washington campaign, he could not receive a position within the administration or its apparatus because of his actions in the past. As Flores stated, Jimenez held tremendous potential. That is undeniable. On many occasions he proved himself to be a capable leader. Jimenez led the YLO to political transformation, in addition to collaborating with Fred Hampton to be part of the Rainbow Coalition. He organized a large group that would be instrumental to the future success of Harold Washington during his own political campaign. He showed political prowess when he tapped into a voting demographic during the Washington campaign otherwise unheard and unseen. But he did not fit into the established political structure, even when that structure became less rigid and more welcoming of Latinos. Those in the more established political sphere still judged Jimenez by the radical behavior of his youth and young adult life. Flores and Gomez seemed to lament that Jimenez did not get a position of power that he deserved as a more mature individual.

The demands of politics, however, did not allow actors like Jimenez to remain as active participants once campaigning ended. Jimenez participated in violent acts in his youth during the Young Lords gang phase and went to jail several times. He engaged in fights with other gangs and physically assaulted individuals. As the gang transformed into the YLO, he engaged in imprudent actions during his tenure as the president. When the government was suppressing the organization, he used drugs that prevented him from acting in his full capacity as a leader.

Rumors of him preparing for revolution did not assist in repairing his image, nor did his alleged support of the Armed Forces of National Liberation.⁶⁰ In spite of running for political office and engaging the group in the political realm, the reputation he built, both negative and positive, followed him. The Young Lords as an organization may have assisted the community, but the violence and his questionable choices in Jimenez's past made him too much of a risk to bring into the administration.

Others, such as Carlos Flores and Luis Tony Baez however, though affiliated with the YLO, did find success, if not in Chicago, in other areas of the country.⁶¹ Carlos Flores, stated that he participated in a social club in his youth named The Continentals and worked as a YLO.⁶² Like Jimenez, he admitted to engaging in drug use, but claimed his pursuit of education prevented him from following that path in earnest.⁶³ Despite believing that his degrees did not prove useful for his overall career, earning them was still an accomplishment. Flores did not carry the same negative reputation as Jimenez. He gained a post in Harold Washington's administration and later worked in the city through multiple functions.⁶⁴

Another success from the YLO is former Minister of Education Luis Tony Baez. He joined the Young Lords after they established themselves a political organization following their activities in the seminary takeover. In an interview, he stated that Omar Lopez asked him to set

⁶⁰Also known as the FALN or the *Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nacional*.

⁶¹Association with the YLO did not exclude people from political success.

⁶²Flores, interview by Mervin Mendez, transcript, p. 7.

⁶³Flores, interview by Jose Jimenez.

⁶⁴Flores, interview by Mervin Mendez, interview 2, transcript, p. 4; Manuel Galvan, "Hispanics Get Visit by Mayor," *Chicago Tribune*, April 16, 1986.

up education classes for members within the organization. Baez said that he found the YLO members to be full of “passion” but stated that many did not appreciate his promotion of education. He further revealed that as the YLO fell with Jimenez going underground and infighting occurring, he moved to Michigan where he opened a YLO chapter. Baez later earned his degrees, got involved in the movement furthering bilingual education, and was recognized as a national leader for the cause.⁶⁵

Jimenez may not have benefited politically from his organization’s work or his work on political campaigns; he did, however, function as a conduit for others to gain power, access, and representation both within and outside Chicago. Others could and did take advantage of opportunities opened through radical movements. Washington’s election brought more Latinos into representative politics and city positions in Chicago. A coalition of progressive individuals of different ethnicities, many influenced by the radicalism of the BPP, accomplished the goal of a more inclusive Chicago government.

⁶⁵Luis Tony Baez, interview by Jose Jimenez, August 23, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI.

CONCLUSION

On July 27, 1919 Eugene Williams, an African-American teenager, was murdered for swimming into the “white” section beach of Lake Michigan. He drowned as a result of trauma brought upon by white youth throwing stones at him, setting off the 1919 race riots in Chicago.¹ From the late 1910s, the African American community in Chicago found itself besieged by white ethnics who would inflict physical violence on whichever black person they could encounter.² An Irish youth club, the Hamburg Athletic Association, participated as one of the major antagonists in the riots.³ Nevertheless, members of the Hamburg and other athletic clubs did not face major consequences for their actions despite participating in what today are considered violent hate crimes.

This dissertation shows that there was a long history of the utilization of gangs or “social clubs” within the city of Chicago by those in the political sphere. Gangs, contrary to popular belief that associates them with non-European minorities, originated with European ethnic “social clubs” or as “athletic clubs.” A political patron often supported members of an athletic club. Members engaged in activities associated with youth leisure such as participation in sports, but participants did more than adhere to nonviolent social activities. These clubs and their usually young members functioned as an auxiliary unit to city politicians. Should a politician

¹See Tuttle, *Race Riot*; 2-31; Mike Royko, *Boss: Richard Daley of Chicago* (New York: Penguin Group, 1988/Original 1971), 35-36.

²See Tuttle, *Race Riot*.

³Royko, *Boss*, 37; Cohen and Taylor, *American Pharaoh*, 27-35.

find the need to engage in extralegal activities, generally he turned to the youth group he sponsored.⁴ The members of the gang in exchange for sponsorship then complied with the wishes of the politician. Such wishes could range from benign actions such as bringing in the vote to more sinister dealings such as arson, assault, and battery to murder.⁵ Such undertakings often led to violent exchanges between groups of white ethnics. The African American community and Latinos did not have gangs at this time.⁶ Instead, white ethnic groups, which had yet to achieve full whiteness, participated in these so-called clubs as a means to achieve whiteness, assert masculinity and protect their status in the racial hierarchy in Chicago. Eventually, white ethnics later turned their violence towards minorities.⁷

Members of the Hamburg club entered into politics gaining influence within the local Democratic Party, reaching all the way into the mayor's office in Chicago.⁸ Richard J. Daley, a member and president of this club, remained mayor of the city for decades after gaining access to politics through his participation in the Hamburgs.⁹ Mike Royko writes in *Boss: Richard J. Daley of Chicago*,

Daley has never answered, or even acknowledged, the question. [About his possible participation in the 1919 riots] The 1919 riot itself is something he has never talked

⁴Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 20-28; Cohen and Taylor, 27-30; Hagedorn, *A World of Gangs*, 66-73 and Royko, 38-39.

⁵Ibid and Royko, 35-40.

⁶Useni Eugene Perkins, *Explosion of Chicago's Black Street Gangs 1900 to Present* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1987), 18. Useni Eugene Perkins argues Black gangs did not arise until the 1940s.

⁷Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 161-177.

⁸Royko, *Boss*, 38-39 and Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot*, 18-41.

⁹Ibid.

about. But if he wasn't part of it, if he sat out his neighborhood's bloody battle, it is certain that some of his friends participated...¹⁰

Believing they protected their neighborhood from the supposed threats of minorities, the Hamburg youth, engaged in violence to secure *de-facto* segregation that would seemingly protect property values.¹¹ The Hamburg Athletic Association is an example of an athletic club that functioned as a gang but provided opportunities for its European American members to graduate into occupations within the city because of the connections that membership provided.

White ethnic Europeans' usage of gang membership to find representation was not novel, but perhaps unsurprisingly, gang membership as a means to acquire representation and to secure social and economic mobility in legitimate enterprises including city positions did not work as well for Latinos and African Americans. As European ethnics solidified their standing as whites within the highly segregated city, the gang as means to obtain representation in Chicago waned. In the same matter as the 19th century, when Latino and African American gangs became political, the state acted to block their rise to the legitimate sphere. When communities found their ability to gain representation hindered, they pushed the limits of status quo, changing tactics and transforming them until they found suitable means to advance their position usually shifting into entities that made their way into the established political system to make tangible positive change.

¹⁰Royko, *Boss*, 37; See Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 4611-4825 and Hirsh, *Making of the Second Ghetto*, 3829-3951 for examples on how white ethnics imposed segregation for the sake of maintaining "property value." White ethnics feared the loss of property value if African Americans moved into the neighborhood. See also Eric Schneider's in *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings* who argues ethnic whites violence towards African Americans and Puerto Ricans in New York stemmed from fear of not benefiting from the "prosperity of the 1950s."

¹¹Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 46-49 and 166-167.

Gangs did not disappear from the political sphere. Their presence continued on the fringes of the political world. Groups continued to work as the grunts of political campaigns. Their members canvassed areas to help in the election of candidates.¹² Carlos Flores, for example, claims that gang members supporting Jane Byrne's campaign harassed workers who stayed late at a Washington campaign office.¹³

Latino and African American "gang" organizations made attempts to integrate themselves into the political spheres similar to European-American ethnics who organized previously. The Vice Lords, an African American gang mentioned earlier which fought with the Cobras, tried to enter into Chicago politics.¹⁴ As a group they engaged with civil programs, the normal prerequisite in order to gain the expected benefits of political access. David Dawley writes in *A Nation of Lords: The Autobiography of the Vice Lords* that, "The Vice Lords had converted grants into jobs and community service, but storefronts and programs were only the visible surface of deeper changes. In two years, the outlaws of the ghetto had moved into the business development for social change that propelled Chicago's Irish into power."¹⁵ Though it seemed they would gain political access, however, the Vice Lords found their access to politics blocked as the Chicago political structure turned against them.

¹²Sudhir Venkatesh, *Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 75-82.

¹³Flores, interview with Jimenez.

¹⁴Dawley, *A Nation of Lords*, 190-194.

¹⁵Ibid., 193.

Similarly, more recently in the 1990s, The Almighty Latin King Nation (ALKN) tried to engage in more political actions in New York.¹⁶ The gang seemingly split into two factions, one that wished to stay a street gang and another that desired to get more involved in a more positive manner through acting politically within the community.¹⁷ In addition to the problematic factions within the gang, as in the past with other groups like the BPP and YLO, the state did not encourage the ALKN to utilize their resources to mobilize politically.

The past experience of the YLO and the unsuccessful attempts of above mentioned groups, made the consequences clear to minorities who wished to utilize the long-established tradition of gangs to graduate into representational positions. Though European-American ethnic gangs of the early and mid-century participated in violent actions, white society did not continue to associate the stigma of gang violence on those groups. At present, to the contrary, gang violence is popularly associated with minority communities. Gangs who attempt to wield political agency without the protection of a patron, no longer gain access into legitimate means of representation through a political sponsor. Instead, they are ostracized and judged by their criminal actions, even when they attempt to reform themselves into a more legitimate enterprise is made.

The story of the YLO represents an era where the Democratic political party in the city, halted the politicization of minority militant organizations through repression by the state. Following the long tradition of youth gangs in Chicago, the members of the Young Lords gang formed for various reasons: from their desire to assert masculinity, to fit in, and later to protect

¹⁶David Brotherton and Luis Barrios, *The Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation: Street Politics and the Transformation of a New York City Gang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 211, 269-270, 328.

¹⁷Ibid., 123-124.

their communities from ethnic aggressions. Relying heavily on the BPP as a model, the Young Lords gang transformed into the Young Lords Organization. Using the literature from the BBP paper into their paper, they incorporated values that fought for the equality of unrepresented and abused populations.

Fred Hampton as the leader of the BPP, attempted to tap into an ignored population and make them more politically aware. He encouraged other organizations to turn their efforts from fighting against each other and instead to unite for the common cause of improving the plight of all those who suffered under the established political system. His work in uniting people of different ethnicities to empower their people cost him his life, but his legacy lives on through the work of people like Jimenez.

The goal of political empowerment within the city became paramount and the struggle for representation through direct action turned to an action of a different type, as militancy receded and energy was funneled to more acceptable roads to empowerment like the traditional political realm.¹⁸ Perhaps, the young men and women of progressive organizations like the BPP and the YLO did not know that they became a part of a story which would ultimately lead to the election of Harold Washington as the first Black mayor of Chicago. The militant progressive stance that turned into a force that challenged the political structure started when Fred Hampton established the rainbow coalition and carried on through Jimenez.

Jimenez utilized the older network created by radical organizations to help bring progressives into politics in Chicago. His aldermanic campaign while unsuccessful, laid the groundwork for future progressives like Helen Shiller to eventually gain the seat on the city

¹⁸For example, groups and individuals previously engaged in protest politics and militant actions moved into electoral politics.

council, which he could not accomplish. Jimenez, utilizing connections he made throughout the years, could bring in votes from otherwise overlooked people. With the election of Washington, Latinos sorely neglected for decades by the Democratic Party, gained more representation in city government and politics.

The election of Washington, while a victory, did not guarantee that Latinos won the struggle for representation. Washington faced opposition from Edward Vrdolyak, an opportunist and vestige of the old democratic political structure, who along with a coalition of 28 white ethnic aldermen blocked the mayor access to power within the city council until 1987. Latinos during the Washington administration gained access to more positions and power but the struggle to retain and gain more representation continued on in legal battles for adequate representation in the city council due to gerrymandering which created wards not reflective of the Latino population. The results of the special election in four city wards in 1986, meant that Washington eventually controlled the city council. But his death shortly thereafter prevented major changes.

Through the study of politics in Chicago, one can see elements of Antonio Gramsci's theories come to life. Gramsci posits that the elite in society establish a hegemony through domination of discourse. He suggests classes outside the ruling elite may develop leaders, but many times, these leaders are absorbed into the hegemonic state. The old Democratic structure arose again, but catered more to the minority populations. An organization called the Hispanic Democratic Organization (HDO) rose to support Richard M. Daley, the son of former Mayor Richard J. Daley, and the son supported those who aided him. Gramsci writes that the elite place leadership more palatable to the masses who become part of the hegemony. The established

structure may make concessions to the masses in the form of the removal or installation of a different leader or slight policy change. The masses, satisfied because seemingly, one of their own is elected, give tacit approval of the hegemony. In fact, though, the new leader is an agent of the hegemony and absorbed into the hegemon to work in conjunction with the established ruling structure.¹⁹

Gramsci further argues the elite group in power, in an attempt to continue its reign, at times co-opts potential leaders who may disrupt the hegemon.²⁰ Often, leadership who oppose the elite will conform in exchange for some sort of concessions. Helen Shiller, the progressive who became alderman of the same area Jimenez ran for in the 46th ward, stood against the mainstream Democratic structure for years. She wanted to help her constituents with better services, to make sure they could stay in the neighborhood, and to provide access to a better quality of life in the neighborhood. Shiller aware that improvements in neighborhoods usually meant that the residents under which such improvements would take place could be victims of gentrification, made efforts to ensure the original residents would reap the benefits of the improvements. She stated,

It was my practice to be dealing with survival issues, so people... they look at their alderman for services, so my next thing was and I started this actually when Harold was mayor. I've been doing since 83, these workshops in the community about all the different city departments, so I knew a lot about sewers and I knew the conditions of our sewers they were really bad shape. I got into sewers because I figured lets go where no one else is looking so I went underground. So I got really detailed, rebuilt. When Harold was here I was able to take advantage of it. And I really figured sewers were a big deal. I

¹⁹Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 5-14, 210-211, 285-286. Though Gramsci wrote during the early 20th century, his theory applies to Chicago politics. The Democratic Party controlled Chicago politics since the 1930s. By the 1950s, under the institution controlled by the Richard J. Daley administration and in conjunction with the federal government, the government apparatus could manipulate the electorate, incorporate possible contenders for power and snuff out those that did not comply.

²⁰Ibid.

had him set up for me to meet with the city's chief engineer. I had him teach me about sewers. And then I proceeded to go about the business of finding out what was the status of everything that we had and then getting that rebuilt. We had when I got elected two collapsed sewers. So it wasn't, I mean I had an opportunity, they had to fix them and they were big, so that was huge... But then over the course of the next 3 years, after Harold died, I had to deal with the fact that I was in the minority and I just did my work and I never dealt with the commissioner except at budget time.²¹

While as a whole the interview shows that to get anything done she needed to work within the established system an exchange between Shiller and Jimenez indicates that she does not want to be seen as complacent with the Richard M. Daley administration.

Shiller: So I took the budget, which I considered to be the most important thing that the city did, that alderman did, because that was the one thing we were elected to actually do, the one legislative responsibility we always had. And it was the one way you would know that the money was spent. And if you wanted to get stuff done, you had to know where the money was. I would study the budget every year, and I would study it by asking questions because you know they don't really tell you unless you ask. And Then I learned how to ask questions, but I'd get really frustrated and pretty irritated when people didn't give me answers and I was still an alderman so over the course of time, I mean it took me 20 years to get all my questions answered. But I did get them answered up until the last day I was there. And nobody wanted to not have their questions (answers) when I came there and they also didn't want to have any outstanding service requests. Because it became well known, I mean I would ask them that in front of everyone else. And you know there's ears on the city council during budget, everybody's hearing it and the one thing that Daley didn't like was ever getting bad stuff in the press and oh my god, everything I said always ended in the press. You know, if it was negative. And I was not gratuitous with that. You really had to be doing something wrong. I mean I didn't just go off, I mean... I think if you do that then you become a joke and no one pays attention to you, so was not, I didn't do that.

Jimenez: This means working with Daley, you had to work with him.

Shiller: No, I'm talking about the first 10 years.

Jimenez: I'm only saying that because we of course opposed (unintelligible) symbolically

Shiller: I am really critical of the administration but I need to get stuff done. I am studying the budget and I am asking questions and I'm developing relationships with all the secondary level, the people who actually do the work in the departments... I just

²¹Shiller, interview.

needed to get the work done... With the goal of on a day-to-day basis that we were going to have a material impact.²²

Shiller shows that she agitated the governmental structure, but did so only so far as to gain what she believed to be tangible material gains or in the best interest of the people of Chicago. When Jimenez asks if she had to work with Daley, she makes sure to indicate that she did not get along with the administration during the first 10 years of her tenure. She is adamant that it be known, that she did not ally herself with Daley, yet her actions demonstrate the need to conform to the ruling apparatus. She tells of her attitude of defiance and she pushed boundaries but ultimately worked within acceptable limits. Oral history allows the researcher to see issues of internal conflict, and realize that while she did not like the administration, she worked within in it to ensure tangible gains for her constituents.²³

Another story she tells in the interview further enforces the point that in order to accomplish goals, one had to work within the administration. She says that during the Washington administration the city implemented a policy that established cooling centers during heat waves. During the Daley administration, however, it took some time to execute the program.

In 1995, we have another heat wave, and the Daley administration, it was ironic because, its all very connected, on Friday it had been 90 degrees over 90 degrees for 2 days at that point or 3 days it was Friday afternoon, so I called at a quarter to 5 cause I wanted to leave a note on my door. Office door. I called the department of human services and said "where are your cooling centers," just assuming they'd have them, "Well we are not opening any cooling centers this weekend" and I went ballistic on them, I said, "people are going to die you have to." They said "well whatever." The next day at noon I was at an event called by the Jane Adams senior caucus where in a church on Belmont, there were 500 people, the place was packed and the mayor was there as well... And I saw him there and I said you know you really need cooling centers and as we left there the news

²²Ibid.

²³The utilization of oral history creates the opportunity to explore what the written word cannot convey. In this case, the inner conflict of Shiller with her relationship to the administration is clear. In her later years as alderwoman, she worked with the Mayor and gained Daley support, in order to gain benefits for her constituents.

reports started coming out about all the people that were dying. And on Monday I meet with Degnan and Huels and Victor Reyeswas with me. ... and I said, "It is not in my nature to take advantage of people deaths, I'm not going to do it, but you guys have a heat plan that you won't use because it was Harold Washington's. Shame on you." And these are the elements I gave them. I gave them 15 points of a heat plan and all 15 of these things need to be done by Friday or I will go to the press and I will talk about how you didn't open up any of the cooling centers and how you did absolutely nothing until people had already died and yet you had the plan and you could have used and blah blah blah blah blah but if you do that then that's it I won't make a big deal about it, because the issue is people are dying and we have to stop it and I will work with you on this and I will stay in the background but if you don't do it I will blast you. I saw Degnan on Friday morning he said we did every... I've never seen the man smile before and he said very solemnly we've done everything on your list, everything and then he gave me a smile. So I suppose you won't be going to the press and I said if you did everything we're cool.²⁴

Again, though she did not see herself as a direct ally to the Daley administration, Shiller took steps to work within the governmental structure to fulfill her goals. By letting the administration save face, she helped implement the plan that potentially saved lives. She used her agency to manipulate the system to work to her advantage but while she states that she "was critical of the administration," and claims to admonish them for hesitancy to use the plan of a previous administration, nevertheless, she still worked within the structure.

Continuing to hold the principles of progressive organizations like the BPP, the YLO, and the YP, Shiller worked pragmatically to gain tangible benefits for residents in Chicago. Shiller's actions attempted to benefit her constituents, ensuring their well-being by providing access to affordable housing and improving infrastructure as she discusses below:

I would always go to development workshops and I'd always ask the same question. Because there would always be presenters that would tell you their success stories...Okay, so you did that. Were the same people there, at the end of the development who were there at the beginning of the development? Did they get a chance to benefit from it? And usually the answer was complete and total silence... And I realized that...there were two things I could do that had value, one was raising the

²⁴Shiller, interview.

question and the other was doing my best to protect Uptown and my ward...[to protect] the existing affordable housing and grabbing every possible opportunity that I had to create additional housing.²⁵

The ideals of rainbow coalition politics influenced Shiller. She wanted to make sure the residents of Uptown would benefit from improvements.²⁶

Those leaders of competing discourses who push too far against established discourses and cannot be absorbed are usually eliminated. For example, Jesus “Chuy” Garcia who rose to prominence during the Washington era fell victim to the reestablished democratic structure. He lost his Illinois Senate seat in 1996 to the Daley and HDO candidate Antonio Munoz.

The fate of the progressive organizations and their leaders differed according to individuals and specific groups. Most that fell as a result of oppression did not directly reap bountiful rewards but neither did their legacies die. The surviving participants continued on with their lives.

For example Jimenez, who wanted to become a priest, was denied the opportunity through circumstance became a leader of the YLO.²⁷ Despite roadblocks preventing his exploration of the priesthood and the negative reputation he built as a result of his youthful indiscretions, he still lived his life serving others—albeit through a means considered less mainstream – and continues on his lifelong mission. Jimenez is still active in his work to preserve the story and impact of the organization for generations to come. He salvages the

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Jake Malooney, “Helen Shiller Chicago Uptown Legacy,” *TimeOut Chicago*, February 16, 2011.

²⁷See Rebollar, interview. Rebollar and Jimenez discuss how they wished to be part of the priesthood but Jimenez was denied the opportunity to follow that path since he did not have the support of the priest at his school. Rebollar believed it was because of a snowball that Jimenez threw, while Jimenez suggests it was due to something about his family not following traditional Catholic sensibilities.

history not only of the YLO, but also of the people who lived in the Lincoln Park, Uptown area, allowing others to see the massive changes that occurred from the 1950s to the present within the community. As in his youth, he is ensuring the representation of those who may have otherwise been forgotten. As these oral histories are open to the public, anyone from the academic to the regular individual can obtain access to them. His usage of oral history is a method by which he continues to take and maintain agency, to make certain that the story of which he is a participant, is not only remembered for generations to come but also so that the narrative is not usurped by any single individual or intellectual who could frame it as they will. In this way, the participants and those who lived around the events and locations spoken of shape and frame their own stories. At the same time, the historian gets the opportunity to see the way in which the narrative changes and how discourses arise, meld and or clash, to understand how the interviewees and sometimes the interviewer collaborate with one another to solidify a narrative, and to discover the methods in which they create meaning for themselves through subjectivity.

Jimenez continues his work assisting others in his later years and continues the work of YLO through other avenues. Moreover, Jimenez believes the work with YLO is not yet over. His description of a recent interviewee, Patrick Mateo, states that,

Mr. Mateo has also worked on several Young Lords projects including the Latino Support Group that became the first bilingual, bicultural support group in Grand Rapids. The Latino Support Group was a volunteer program that received referrals from the court and probation departments to assist Latinos with substance abuse issues.²⁸

²⁸See "Patrick Mateo Description and Biography," Grand Valley State University Digital Collections, accessed 2016, <https://gvsu.access.preservica.com/file/sdb%3AdigitalFile%7Ca0ebfb16-bb07-4df8-ac18-d18830c992af/>

Jimenez, a victim of substance abuse, participated in assisting those with the same issues he confronted. Jimenez's work with Patrick Mateo at Project Rehab in Michigan, who also struggled with substance abuse comes to light in an interview between the two.²⁹

Omar Lopez, YLO's minister of information and one of the founders of LADO also continues his journey within the Latino community. He ran for political offices since the 1980s with his latest bid as a Green Party candidate for a seat in Congress in 2008. Though unsuccessful in his bids, he continues his work with those in need as the director of *Comprensión y Apoyo a Latinos en Oposición al Retrovirus* (CALOR), an organization that serves Latinos with AIDS. As in his more youthful years with the YLO and LADO, he advocates to better the material conditions of an underserved population.

Major progressive leaders from the 1960s survived. Their story shows that representation can be sought through a variety of means, the impact of building coalitions, and that working to serve the community can bring positive changes in the short term and can be a useful model for organizing politically. Though Latinos did not always directly benefit from their endeavors, the representation of Latinos in the political realm did increase as a result of the election of Washington. Latinos as with other groups facing adversity sought methods to gain representation to find better opportunities for themselves. Though not as acceptable as other so-called mainstream means of representation, organizations such as the Young Lords pushed to gain agency in their lives within a city structure that did not welcome them. The struggle for access and retention of rights and representation continues to this day.

²⁹Patrick Jimenez interviewed by Jose Jimenez, July 22, 2012, Young Lords in Lincoln Park Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries, Grand Valley, MI.

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Marisol has taught as an adjunct at Harold Washington College, one of the city colleges of Chicago. From 2009 to 2013, she taught survey courses as the teacher of record in United States, World and Latin American history. She received the Diversifying Illinois Faculty in Illinois Fellowship in 2013. Marisol presently teaches as an adjunct at Dominican University and hopes to continue to teach at the collegiate level throughout her life.