Is this My Home?

How White Ethnic Organizations Shape Latinx Communities
Abstract

Historically, academic themes of urban settlement have focused on topics such as white flight. Yet there exists scarce literature that considers the interplay of the history of white ethnic abandonment of urban communities and its effects today given new patterns of spatial settlement. This research aims to revisit the history of mass urban demographic shifts in an effort to understand the long-term implications of the history of white flight for new waves of racialized immigrants. Because formal organizations are indicative of the existing social structures within a community, this research focuses on the role that white ethnic organizations play in ethnically transitioned neighborhoods. This study is based on semi-structured interviews with eight individuals within the working-class communities of Berwyn and Cicero, IL in suburban Chicago. These individuals are all affiliated with Czech organizations based in these now predominantly Latinx communities. This research shows that white ethnic organizations capitalize on collective memory to maintain involvement in the community and influence ongoing cultural exchange between current and previous populations. This points to the importance of the reevaluation of spatial patterns in accordance with the differing settlement practices of new immigrants.
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Preface

The Berwyn of my memory is one in which the streets, the restaurants, the schools and virtually every aspect of the community was full of Mexican culture. It always felt like the dominant culture and no one ever made any vocal doubts or assertions about this culture despite the clear existence of people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. I spent my childhood frequenting the extensive Latinx businesses in Cicero and Berwyn. Even though I lived in Berwyn, Cicero was only a couple of blocks away and they both felt like home to me. I found them both to be flourishing with the Mexican culture I was surrounded by in my home. Growing up, it never seemed like an anomaly to me that the community did not have any particularly Mexican traditions as part of citywide celebrations.

One of the largest celebrations I remember from my youth is the Houby Day festivities. For one weekend in October, community members actively partook in celebrations including the crowning of a Houby Day Queen, food stands, a parade, a special football game at my high school, and so much more for an entire weekend—and all of those only two blocks away from my home. Yet it was only when I grew older that I realized I didn’t even know what we were celebrating through these festivities. I quickly discovered that Houby is the Czech word for mushroom, and that the events were meant to celebrate the Fall Harvest. It never seemed strange that I had no understanding of what “Houby” itself actually represents or why the entire community participates in the event. It was only once I left the community and returned that I was able to question this and other vestiges of the predecessors of the current community. It was in this way that I discovered this history of Czech origin of the Houby Day parade and festivities that it became the entry point of discovery of the larger legacy of influence that Czech culture maintained in my community.
Once I moved away across the country for college, I was provided with the opportunity to take a step back and recognize the Czech influence within my community outside of this one civic celebration. The recognition of physical signs of a time and culture from the past became all the more salient every time I returned to Berwyn after extended time away. The businesses and streets that had once felt entrenched in Mexican culture, suddenly revealed signs of the once-dominant Czech culture. Names such as Cermak, Havlicek, and others that I had heard throughout my entire childhood no longer seemed to have a place in my community. This research project is not only a dive into a part of my own community that was completely unknown to me while growing up, but it is also an attempt to understand myself and the way my culture and heritage have been unknowingly shaped by other groups of immigrants and their own cultures. I was motivated by the desire to understand the complexities of identity and the multidimensionality in the local exchange of culture that is often ignored. The personal significance of understanding the intricate relationship between place and identity has shaped me profusely and ultimately underlies all aspects of this project.
Chapter I: Introduction and Literature Review

Introduction

The history of urbanization and suburbanization in the United States is one that is profoundly shaped by ethnoracial interactions. Based on existing prejudices and the consequences of these perceptions, entire groups of people have made decisions as to where and how to live their lives as a reaction to the existence of other groups of people (Hirsch 1983). This has in turn led to limited economic opportunities based on these same prejudices of other people, and as a result have led to social marginalization. One of the prominent urban examples is the creation of the black ghetto in the south side of Chicago. The influx of a significant black population from the south put undue pressures on housing within the city. Due to informal and formal rules and expectations, these black families were confined to certain neighborhoods that were very clearly demarcated from white communities. The economic forces were so high and overcrowding so rampant for black populations that a white family could pay less rent for better conditions in a white neighborhood than a black family would pay within the designated black area (Hirsch 1983). As such, the case is evident that anti-black prejudice was strong enough to shape the housing choices for black families, of which the impacts are still evident today based on continued patterns of spatial segregation.

However, it is important to recognize that reactionary racial sentiment in urban development continues to shape and influence spatial patterns among different groups. Although black-white relations have been the historic topic of urban settlement, it is increasingly important to analyze spatial settlement through an understanding of the complexities of various ethnoracial relationships. In an attempt to bring complexity and nuance to the topic, this research is based in the predominantly Latinx communities of Berwyn and Cicero in suburban Chicago. While these
communities are currently dominated in large part by the Mexican population that migrated to Chicago, they were built and expanded by the early waves of ethnic white immigrants comprised predominantly of Czechs as well as smaller numbers of Italians, Poles, and Irish.

While these groups of ethnic whites initially faced discrimination because their country of origin was seen as undesirable, they too were eventually offered the opportunity to participate in mainstream versions of whiteness. In fact, many of these white ethnics themselves took on the prejudices of the mainstream in ways that reproduced racial inequality at a time when they themselves were not yet fully incorporated to the dominant culture. For example, Cicero, one of the communities in which this research takes place, was the locus of anti-black race riots in 1951. As a reaction to the perception of breaking the black/white threshold, community members rioted outside an apartment building where a black family moved in. The police and local community members harassed them such that the Illinois National Guard was called in to calm the riots that lasted three days.

While this is an extreme example of the role of racial and ethnic prejudices in urban history, forces such as these have nonetheless functioned to maintain racial boundaries in the development of suburban communities. Even within this community of white ethnics, prejudices remained against other racial groups that enabled them to challenge the right of other to make a claim in their suburban community. As such, the contestation of space has always played a key role in spatial patterns of settlement. Is the existence of certain ethnic groups conditional? Why does a marginalized community of white ethnics contribute the marginalization of other racial groups and how does this affect the access to this space and community? This research aims to explore how these interethnic relations shape communities and in turn, the ways that marginal
groups make a claim to space, whether through incorporation of their own traditions or adoption
of local existing traditions.

The question of space is integrally related to power. The ability to dictate what happens
within a space is indicative of a great degree of power over the people who will use and inhabit
that space. Within the context of ethnicity, it becomes essential to understand the way that
different waves of immigration have shaped the development of space and people from different
national and socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, this understanding extends beyond
immigrant groups to the movement of ethnic groups within metropolitan regions. The people,
organizations, and institutions in the neighborhoods and communities that ethnic groups are
moving to, have the power to influence the way the community will react to these new
populations and as a result how the community will change. In accordance with this
understanding, the central question this paper aims to answer is: What are the long term
implications of the history of the influence of white ethnics on new waves of racialized
immigrants in the suburbs?

My research demonstrates how the lasting impact of racial relations and reactions within
urban settlement continues to be relevant even in seemingly homogenous communities. In order
to understand this process of urban and suburban social succession, this paper focuses on the
suburban communities of Berwyn and Cicero as a result of the demographic changes they have
undergone as a direct result of immigration and process of social integration. This research uses
ethnic organizations as an entry point to understand the internal white ethnic structures within the
community. Organizations are powerful as they are organized manifestations of the desires of a
group of people. While this does not necessarily indicate unanimous consensus, it holds a
significant weight in the opinions that are represented within the community context. This
research shows that white ethnic organizations capitalize on collective memory to maintain involvement in the community and influence ongoing cultural exchange between current and previous populations. Through a discussion of the history of these communities and the major concepts that arise in academic texts, this paper will set the foundations for an analysis of Czech organizations within the predominantly Mexican communities of Berwyn and Cicero.
Background: The Development of Berwyn and Cicero as Industrial Suburbs

The history of metropolitan Chicago was drastically shaped by the various waves of immigrants. From the 1880’s to the 1920’s, the United States experienced an immigration influx of 23 million European immigrants, many of which settled in Chicago. The simultaneous process of suburbanization of industrial work and immigration meant that these early newcomers faced many incentives to settle outside the city limits of Chicago. Additionally, after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, many immigrants were displaced to the suburbs where elites felt these immigrant groups may learn respectability and manners (Lewinnek 2014). As a result, immigrant settlement played a fundamental role in shaping the early development of many suburbs in Chicago. Historically, the Chicago neighborhoods of South Lawndale and the Lower West Side--also known today as Little Village and Pilsen--have been important neighborhoods for settlement by immigrants. For over a century, the neighborhoods have seen waves of immigrants settle in the community and create institutions and organizations to accommodate European-origin populations including but not limited to Italians, Poles, Czechs, and Irish. However, as generations pass for these immigrants, they have moved away from the original place of settlement in Chicago neighborhoods westward toward suburbs where they perceived they would have better opportunities for social and economic advancement.

Within this historical context, the working-class communities of Cicero and Berwyn are comfortably wedged in the immediate west suburbs of the city of Chicago and were the recipients of many of these later generation immigrants in search of more opportunities. Cicero developed primarily as an industrial suburb so that by 1922, it was home to 115 factories, while Berwyn developed almost exclusively as a residential suburb (Lewinnek 2014). Although these two communities developed for fundamentally different purposes, however, they hold many
similarities in that they have been home to the same immigrant populations. Throughout their early development and construction in the mid to late 19th century, these communities grew as a result of suburbanization of the assembly line and the propagation of homeownership as the “working man’s reward” (Garb 2005). The boom of industrialization and the subsequent dominance of the assembly line prompted many industrial companies to move outside the limits of Chicago, not only to reduce costs associated with rent, but also to entice workers to their company through local affordable homes. However, the origin of the development of the communities of Cicero and Berwyn are distinct and fundamentally tied to larger social processes within the context of the City of Chicago.

Within Cicero, development was catalyzed by the relocation of large industries to the community; in particular a limestone quarry and Western Electric Company, which together employed thousands of workers (Lewinnek 2014). The mass migration of European immigrants created a strong and expansive base of workers for many large companies and acted as a catalyst for community growth. The creation of affordable homes and secure access to industrial jobs was enough of an incentive for large numbers of migrants to move to Cicero. As a result, Cicero developed primarily through an industrial means and later created residential spaces to accommodate the masses searching for homes in the area. However, the process of industrial suburbanization happened in conjunction with the creation of other types of suburbs such as educational suburbs, resort suburbs, and political-capital suburbs (Lewinnek 2014).

Berwyn on the other hand, largely resisted the development associated with the industries in the neighboring Cicero and was able to maintain a predominantly residential character that remains to this day. As a result, Berwyn was perceived to be a better community than Cicero because it maintained a more pronounced separation between residential life and industrial jobs.
While these two communities developed with distinct purposes, they ultimately attracted similar populations. However, because of the residential separation from industrial jobs, Berwyn was able to attract residents with a higher average income than Cicero. This is a discrepancy that is still evident in comparing modern day Berwyn and Cicero. An examination of the indicators of social well-being within these two communities indicate that Berwyn has better economic outcomes than Cicero. The town of Berwyn has higher rates of homeownership, higher property values, and a higher median income. A portion of these differences are the result of the built structure of these communities, however their shared origin as one municipality with similar populations in the early 20th century, make these communities more similar to each other especially within the context of the surrounding suburbs. Despite these differences, these communities have been closely linked given that many workers for these large companies settled in both the communities of Cicero and Berwyn. Regardless of the origin of development of different suburbs, within the context of Berwyn and Cicero, the foundation was laid early on for these communities to develop as working class suburbs.

Today, Berwyn and Cicero are thriving working-class communities. The emergence of a thriving business sector has brought many opportunities and stability to the community within recent decades. Today, the population is overwhelmingly made up of Latinxs1 followed by a white population, African Americans, and Asians.2 Given the current racial and ethnic categorization used in typical demographic information collection, it is difficult to estimate what percent of the white minority is of Czech heritage; therefore there are not accurate estimates of the Czech heritage population that is currently living in Berwyn (Cheng 2013). Table 1 breaks

1 In order to obtain demographic data on the Latinx population, the information for the category of Hispanic is used.
2 Unless otherwise stated, all demographic information is based on the 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau.
down the major elements of community information for Berwyn and Cicero. The demographics of the nearby suburb of Oak Park are provided as indicators of relative similarity between Berwyn and Cicero.

**Table 1: Selected Community Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Berwyn, IL</th>
<th>Cicero, IL</th>
<th>Oak Park, IL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latinx Population</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-born</td>
<td>25.96%</td>
<td>40.29%</td>
<td>10.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-Occupied Housing Units</td>
<td>59.9%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>$57,355</td>
<td>$41,866</td>
<td>$80,196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median House Price</td>
<td>$169,700</td>
<td>$126,800</td>
<td>$353,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*

Additionally, it is important to note the relatively high rates of homeownership within these communities. Berwyn and Cicero have rates of owner-occupied units of 59.9% and 49.0%, respectively. Within previous academic research these figures have been used as proxies for community investment (McCabe 2013). Although this is not a perfect measure, homeowners have more of a long-term stake in the community, and as a result have an automatic investment in the overall success of the community. Additionally, homeownership has often been cited as a central pathway for social mobility and opportunities for investment within immigrant communities (Myers and Seong Woo Lee 1998). While the demographic composition of the population in Berwyn and Cicero has changed dramatically over time, the physical space and appearance remains largely unchanged. In fact, this area is known for having the highest
concentration of Chicago bungalow style homes and has received a designation for these from the National Register’s List of Historic Places.

*Figure 3: Aerial view of historic Chicago-style Bungalows in Berwyn*

![Aerial view of historic Chicago-style Bungalows in Berwyn](Image)

*Source: The Chicago Tribune*

As westward migrations from Chicago occurred in the first two decades of the 20th century, these European immigrants deeply influenced their neighborhoods and cities through the creation of ethnic organizations and businesses. At the time, the dominant ethnic groups within the community were Czechs,\(^3\) Italians, and Poles. However, the Czech cultural influence was the strongest of the three. The primary business corridor connecting Pilsen, the Lower West Side, Cicero, and Berwyn—known as 22\(^{nd}\) Street or Cermak Road—acted as the epicenter of

\(^3\) The group of people who are referred to as Czech in this paper have historically had various names as a result of political changes. Throughout history these people have identified primarily from their region of immigration such as Moravia and Bohemia, as Czechoslovakian, or as Czech. While the primary ethnic identification for members of this group has not been constant, the traditions and cultural origins remain the same.
westward movement. Throughout this time, Eastern European businesses sprang up to cater to the community needs and an abundance of saving and loans, bakeries, butchers, and other businesses were opened by the ethnic whites.

Starting in the 1990’s the greater Chicago area began to see an increase in the population of Latinxs, of which the majority were Mexican. Nationally, Mexican migration totaled about 5 million people in the decade before 2000 so that Mexican working class population doubled in percentage to 4.1 percent (Card and Ethan G. Lewis 2007). As a result of the deep connection between Chicago and the suburbs, Berwyn and Cicero also began to see significant changes in the primary ethnic composition of their communities. Many of these immigrants initially settled in the Lower West Side and North Lawndale neighborhoods of Chicago. They then followed the trend of westward migration along the Cermak corridor that many European immigrants had also used to suburbanize. As a result, the dominance of Mexicans in these communities eventually lead to the establishment of Berwyn and Cicero as the primarily Mexican communities they are today. This form of neighborhood succession was the result of an outward migration of ethnic whites toward outer ring suburbs as these population experienced opportunities for social mobility. The movement of ethnic whites out of Berwyn and Cicero was replaced by the growth of the Mexican population in these two cities. In essence, Cicero and Berwyn have remained ethnic enclaves, however the dominant ethnic makeup of the communities transitioned from predominantly Czech to predominantly Mexican.

Today a drive down Cermak Road will showcase a great diversity in Latinx businesses. While many of the names of the shops are in English, just as many signs and restaurant names are in Spanish. In fact, in some local grocery stores, some people may find themselves hard-pressed to find someone who speaks fluent English. Despite the social and economic turnover
within the Berwyn and Cicero communities, there remain spatial and social remnants of the Czech influence in the community. This is evidenced through the remaining Czech organizations, celebrations such as the citywide celebration of Houby Day, and streets and buildings named after Czech-Americans such as Havlicek and Cermak. Given the historical development of these communities, this research focuses on the spatial and social interaction of two distinct ethnic groups across time. Because the settlement of a new ethnic group does not necessarily erase the history of development of another group, the exchange of culture between these groups is particularly relevant in understanding the contemporary communities of Berwyn and Cicero. As a result, this research centers on understanding the way that this exchange of culture impacts the conceptualizations of the physical community and space.
Literature Review

Contemporary conversations surrounding urban neighborhoods and their transformations are dominated by issues of gentrification and displacement. Much work has been carried out to determine how the reinvestment in urban centers is affecting long standing low income communities, which are found almost exclusively in communities of color (Boyd 2008; Hwang and Sampson 2014; Pattillo 2007). Although there remains uncertainty in defining gentrification and its impact, particularly on its role in displacement of residents (Freeman 2005; Hwang and Sampson 2014; Zuk and Chapple 2016), this research points to the continued changes in spatial distribution within cities, suburbs, and larger metropolitan areas. This movement of people signals shifts of capital and therefore, has repercussions for the quality of life within communities experiencing change. In fact, the place of residence for individuals has a significant impact on long-term economic mobility and income (Chetty et al. 2014; Chetty, Hendren, and Katz 2016). As a result, understanding the nuances of residential distribution amid changing spatial patterns for different ethnic groups takes on a growing importance.

Particularly relevant in understanding urban development and urban dispersion is the context of reception for new immigrant groups, as they have heavily shaped urban development. Traditional models of spatial dispersion of immigrants have varied in their explanatory power of dispersion, assimilation, and social mobility. The most prominent of these, Spatial Assimilation Theory draws from traditional theories of immigrant assimilation to explain the spatial patterns of residence that emerge for immigrants over time. More specifically, this theory stipulates that as immigrant populations experience economic mobility, they are likely to move to other communities they perceive to be better resourced, and as a result, these ethnic communities experience a decentralization (Massey 1985). Conversely, the model of Invasion-Succession
posits two potential pathways of neighborhood change within the context of racial relations; the first is that a new population will move into a community abandoned by other groups and therefore obtain access to the community through succession, and the second explains that the initial settlement by an outside population will push the existing community to move elsewhere (Park 1952). Other scholars have identified various stages of the state of a neighborhood based on the social systems and internal organizations. However these various frameworks based on traditional notions of social ecology often assume that the non-white populations drive out the white populations.

Implicit in many of these traditional explanations of spatial distribution is the assumption of a high degree of intolerance so that different ethnic groups must necessarily compete for access to space as a result of the impossibility of coexistence. Research has focused so diligently on these racial relations that much effort has been devoted to finding an objective “tipping point” that essentially serves to describe the degree of tolerance whites have in neighborhoods toward black families (Hirschman 1970). While the demographic data such as the ethnic and racial composition of a neighborhood is a powerful indicator of a community, it fails to take into account the social ties that may continue to bind people to these communities. This research provides an opportunity to reevaluate these theories through the consideration of the transient ways that previous populations may continue to play a role in places where they no longer reside. Even when white populations make the decision to move out of a neighborhood, their maintenance of social ties through relationships to institutions can still play an important role in community development.

The emerging academic focus on the growth of minority-dominated suburbs can be seen as the contemporary extension of early research on immigrant spatial distribution. Dubbed
“ethnoburbs”, national trends indicate that suburbs can no longer be characterized as exclusively white middle class communities as they have been generalized in the past. In fact, the traditional view of white suburbs with black and brown city centers has experienced a fundamental breakdown as non-white spatial patterns have shifted in the last few decades. For example, in 1990, 47% of Latinx residents of large metropolitan areas lived in suburbs, a percent that increased to 59% by 2010 (Frey 2014). Additionally, within the largest 100 metropolitan areas, Latinx have contributed to suburban growth at a rate more than twice the level of the minority groups including both blacks and Asians (Frey 2014). Yet despite this overall growth, evidence shows that many of these Latinxs live in suburbs that are majority Latinx. In fact, the average Latinx in 2000 lived in a suburban neighborhood that was 49% Latinx (Logan, Stults, and Farley 2004). Deindustrialization, national decreases in crime, and the high price of gas to fuel cars are among the many factors that Alan Ehrenhalt attribute to the what he terms as the Great Inversion, in which cities such as Chicago have been losing populations and Latinx populations are increasingly settling in suburbs (2012). However as a whole, Latinx population growth has been most evident in cities with previously small numbers of Latinxs, particularly within the Sunbelt cities of the US (Frey 2014). Despite this, traditional immigrant gateway cities such as Chicago, New York, and San Francisco continue to play a central role in the lives of many Latinxs.

Yet a major factor in determining the spatial distribution of Latinxs is based on the context of reception--both for new Latinx immigrants as well those moving to suburban contexts through processes of migration. A central determinant of this context of reception relies on the response of existing populations within this space. Within the context of suburbanization, new Latinx immigrants often find themselves entering communities with previously white populations. Previously, scholarship has focused primarily on the context of reception for blacks
entering white neighborhoods (Anderson 1990; South and Crowder 1998). However, only recently has there been a growth in academic literature to understand the way that non-black groups, specifically Latinx and Asians are received within predominantly white communities.

Outside of these assumptions, it is worthwhile to note that historical explanations of the lack of racial integration result not only from traditional understandings of white flight, but also white aversion to non-white neighborhoods (Ellen 2000). Classic research on white preferences is focused on finding the ‘tipping point,’ which is the point at which whites will no longer tolerate nonwhites in their community and is usually expressed in terms of percentage of the population (Wolf 1963). However, this research has centered almost exclusively on the reaction of white populations to black populations and as a result, there have been very few attempts to understand the experiences among other non-white communities in moving into white communities (Krysan et al. 2009). Despite characterizations of competitive relationships, my work aims to understand a more voluntary process in which economic mobility and integration has given the previous populations more geographic mobility to move to other communities without severing relationships to the previous community in which they lived. This research aims to understand the renegotiation of place based on the exchanges between two distinct ethnic communities who have shared the same space, albeit at different point in history.

Yet given these demographic changes, the question arises as to the processes that assist these groups in settling in new communities. As classic urban sociologist Robert Park notes, it is the internal structure of a community that can respond to external pressures to either resist change or act to facilitate them (1952). These institutions are manifestations of community identity and even when they are not, they often have the existing structures to react to external pressures in a much more impactful way than any individual or unofficial group of people. Given
that formal organizations play such a significant role in determining community reactions to external changes, this research hopes to understand their role within changing neighborhoods.

Of the total number of immigrants in the country, more than half who live in metropolitan areas reside in suburbs (Frey 2014). However, the majority of the research on immigrant organizations and their community impact has been conducted in dense urban settings. With the trend of population movement back into cities, the displacement of existing immigrants from the once vital “gateway city” will become increasingly elusive for immigrants in metropolitan areas. In general, Latinxs who live in suburbs have a higher socioeconomic status and therefore, are understood to have greater levels of integration in their communities (Clark 2006). The renewed desirability of large cities and the rise in prominence of ethnoburbs, might be cause to reevaluate the findings that focus almost exclusively on urban centers as they experience an increase in white population.

Given the attention that neighborhood change has been given within academic discourse, since the neighborhood focus of analysis introduced by the Chicago School of Sociologists, it is a topic that has been central to sociological literature. However, the literature has for many decades flattened the multidimensionality of the processes of neighborhood change. The literature has assumed a unidirectional linear progression of change under the assumption that racial and ethnic change is discrete and measurable. However, my research counters these simplified accounts of urban and suburban change to demonstrate that traditional operationalization used to measure neighborhood change fall short as descriptors of the state of the community. The historical focus on discrete, measurable data--especially in relation to census data--fails to account for informal inter-ethnic processes that shape demographic changes. These ideas of racial turnover as a one-way movement fail to consider the way highly mobile
populations in today’s driving economy have high physical mobility. As a result, even in communities that have experienced dramatic racial turnover, there exist the opportunity for previous populations of inhabitants to continue to exercise power and claim space, despite not living in the physical community.

As such, previous research fails to properly account for the differences between the physical community and the social community of a neighborhood. The physical community is primarily composed of the populations that live within a community and can be measured in formal ways such as through the permanent addresses and voting rights within a jurisdiction. On the other hand, the social space of a community is a constantly evolving measure of the community, which focuses on the people who play a role in shaping the community and are active throughout regardless of their status as official residents within other communities. This research aims to demonstrate the importance of withholding from making generalizations and the existence of complicated processes of temporal existence of populations within space. As I will show, despite racial transitions, previous inhabitants of a community can continue to frequent the community as a transient population that commutes and then returns to their home elsewhere. Despite this transient role, they continue to exercise power in their attempt to make claim to their ethnicity within space. As I will show, sentiments of nostalgia are a primary driver of the existence of this population.
Methodology

This study is based on semi-structured hour-long interviews with affiliates of Czech-American organizations and establishments in the communities of Berwyn and Cicero. The organizations included in this study were found by establishing a list of the Czech-origin organizations that have a physical presence in the community; in this case this means they continue to operate out of a building within the geographic boundaries of the cities of interest. The criterion for inclusion in interviews was based on two requirements: that they are an organization or institution that has a Czech origin and that they continue to physically operate in Berwyn or Cicero. While most of the organizations and institutions that fit these criteria were non-profit organizations, there was one business in the community that also fit these criteria and as such was included in the interview process. Although for-profits businesses are not traditionally understood to be organizations, understanding the internal social structure of Berwyn and Cicero necessitates a holistic understanding of the institutions in the community, including for-profit businesses. As such, the business was included in the interview process and subsequent analysis for this project.

Of the organizations that fit these criteria, those with contact information on their websites or Facebook pages were contacted through emails, direct messages, and phone calls. The study was described as stemming from a desire to understand the role of Czech organizations in the community. The individuals and organizations that were responsive to the communication attempts out make up the analysis of this paper. A total of eight interviews, ranging from forty minutes to an hour-and-a-half, make up the scope of this analysis. Most interviewees were identified through referrals after making an initial connection with organizational representatives. Because I was able to reach out independently to individuals from
different organizations, the interviews themselves represent different social circles within the Czech community.

Through these semi-structured interviews, I explored the relationship that respondents have with their own histories, their organizations, and the physical space in Berwyn. As a whole, the interviews touched on four major themes to try to deconstruct their relationship to the space, which included: indicators of trans-nationalism, relationship to the physical space of the community, organizational changes based on their affiliations, and perceptions of community change. These categories were established deductively based on previous research on generational change. The work of Philip Kasinitz was particularly foundational in the development of topics for interview questions (2008). However, many of these topics arose organically throughout the interviews as participants began to discuss their affiliation to Czech organizations and their experience within the communities of Berwyn and Cicero. Interviewees were given the freedom to talk in as much detail about each topic. Additionally, because each individual had a different relationship to the community, some topics were less relevant within their experiences. By nature of how I recruited participants, I have very little information about the individuals who were at one point involved in the Czech origin organizations and then decided they no longer wanted to participate or those who never joined formal organizations.

Ethnic whites who choose to take part in ethnic organization often have shared characteristics that include ethnic experiences, ethnically-based friendships and social connections, and a primary identification in ethnic terms (Alba 1990). Given the context of this demographic and their likelihood of affiliating with an ethnic organization, it becomes evident that many of the subjects in this research study represent a group of ethnic whites that have had a particular closeness with their ethnic heritage. This proximity to their own ethnic roots may be
the reason for the attachment of identity to place that is evident within the active group of Czechs in ethnic organizations in Berwyn and Cicero. Despite the changing demographics of the community, it becomes apparent that later generations of Czech immigrants who have maintained their Czech ethnic identity, continue to push these organizations forward as a result of emotional attachment to the space. In essence, this paper is an analysis of the Czechs who have chosen to opt into more formalized relationships with their ethnic identity through participation in formal ethnic organizations.

Of the organizations I connected with, each had a different unique mission and history. I interviewed representatives from four different organizations, all within the physical boundaries of Berwyn and Cicero. They are the following:

- Sokol Tabor, which stands for falcon, is a gymnastics organization for all ages founded in Prague in 1862. The Berwyn Chapter recently celebrated its centennial and continues to enroll students of all ages from the surrounding community. The organization is completely run by volunteers.
- T.G. Masaryk is a Czech language learning school in Cicero established in its current location in 1921. They teach classes on weekends for children and adults who want to learn Czech, although most students are heritage speakers. This means they usually have at least some background in Czech, usually through informal means such as family relations. Up until five years ago, they were run completely by volunteers, but they now have one full time employee who is paid by the Czech Foreign Ministry.
- The Chicagoland Czech-American Community Center is a center focused on bringing various Czech community groups together. Founded 5 years ago, the center is based in Berwyn. It was spearheaded by a second generation Czech immigrant who continues to live in the Berwyn community. It is completely run through volunteers.
- Vesecky’s Bakery is a Czech bakery based in Berwyn. It is a family-run business that has been in the community for over one hundred years and four generations. It is a for-profit business.
As a whole, these organizations represent a historic presence within the Berwyn and Cicero community. Their long-standing presence stands as an indicator of longevity among a changing community. Outside of the bakery, which is classified as a business, all of these organizations have minimal or no full-time support. It has been familial relationships and nostalgia associated with the previously mentioned organizations that have driven volunteers to continue their involvement. Additionally, an important key factor in determining physical presence for the long-standing organizations has been ownership of property. For example, T.G. Masaryk School claims to be the only Czech language school in the country that owns its own building. While at times causing challenges associated with costs, this long-term stability has provided a solid foundation for the persistence of these organizations.

This research is confined to the physical limits of the suburban communities of Berwyn and Cicero, which combined cover a total land area of 9.77 square miles and have populations totaling 138,740 people. The focus on these communities as one unit is important because they bear a large resemblance in terms of population, but are themselves very different from the other immediately surrounding communities. Berwyn and Cicero both historically had a significant population of ethnic white immigration, especially Czechs and Italians. Today however, these communities are predominantly Latinx with respective percentage of the total population at 61.6% and 88.5% of which the overwhelming majority are Mexicans. This differs significantly in the ethnic composition of neighboring suburbs such as Oak Park (7.4%), Forest Park (10.1%), Riverside (14.2%), and North Riverside (32.9%), which all have significantly lower percentages of Latinxs in their communities.
Indeed, during the early development and economic growth of these communities, Berwyn was part of the larger city of Cicero, however it became an independent town in the early 1910’s. The shared histories of immigration and economic development make these communities strikingly similar and necessitate a combined analysis for the purposes of this paper. This paper focuses specifically on Berwyn and Cicero, which ultimately leaves out the larger context of Czech organizations outside of these communities. Given the unique histories of Berwyn and Cicero as stepping-stones of mobility for immigration, the specific context takes on great significance in the understanding of how various waves of immigration overlap to shape a community. Again, the focus on these communities makes the most sense given the sense of community between them despite the political boundaries of different municipalities.
The analysis of the data obtained was primarily driven by grounded theory framework. The interview protocol focused on understanding the relationship between individuals and the places and experiences in Berwyn and Cicero with Czech organizations. As a result, major themes that emerged were developed inductively based on the salient themes throughout the interviews. More concretely, this was carried out through personally transcribing all interviews and developing corresponding in-depth memos to indicate the emergent themes from each interview. These memos then served as secondary sources for analysis, which provided a framework of common these across interviews. These themes were used to create general categories and topics in Dedoose. Subsequently, open coding of the data enabled the emergence of additional themes and more specificity, which include topics such as white ethnicity, suburbanization, and memory. Through reading the interviews, emergent themes were also added to categories of code. As a result, coding was an iterative process in which themes were deductively ascribed based on several readings of the interview. However, other themes not directly addressed in this paper that appeared across interviews include globalization, transnational ties, and reclamation of identity. These were excluded from the analysis of this paper given that they provided no evidence in support or against the research question of this paper.
Chapter II: Space and Memory

Within the context of residential patterns of spatial distributions, it is essential to understand the relationship between place and identity. When a population lives within a community, the physical space takes on the symbols associated with that group. More specifically, when the Czech population was the majority in Berwyn and Cicero, Czech culture was manifested through the architecture, buildings and streets of the community. These symbols are so thoroughly etched in the physical space that they have endured beyond the populations that celebrated and established them. The voluntary movement of Czechs away from this community has resulted in these symbols taking on a unique role in establishing and solidifying the relationship between place and identity. Within this context, Czech heritage families who move beyond the limits of these communities, continue to associate the space with their ethnic identity and are motivated to return to experience their ethnicity. The movement of Czechs to outer ring suburbs was part of a larger trend of movement away from cities, however this physical distance became the central component in cultivating nostalgic associations with place.

Any attempt to understand the way Berwyn and Cicero are shaped by the Czech population must be preceded by a comprehensive understanding of the existing physical presence of Czechs in these communities. The Czech population in this community existed as a stronghold for many decades so that even today there remain many symbols of Czech heritage embedded in the physical community. One of the primary business corridors that runs through Berwyn and Cicero is named after the first Czech-American mayor of Chicago, Anton Cermak. Additionally the annual Houby Day Parade is a Czech celebration of the mushroom harvest that is still celebrated in the community. This annual event is so embedded in the community that it is hosted by the local governments of Berwyn and Cicero and celebrated throughout the local
schools. Yet the vestiges of Czech culture are evident beyond the limits of these communities and are present even within the city of Chicago. The now predominantly Mexican community of Pilsen is named after a city called Plzen, in what is today the Czech Republic. In this way, despite the disappearance of a majority of the businesses, there remain civic traditions and symbols that continue to play a role in shaping the lives and experiences of the Mexican community in these places.

The movement of Czech businesses Berwyn and Cicero from the community arose from the movement of the Czech population to outer ring suburbs. Even from the earliest settlement of the communities in the early 20th century, there have been various waves of immigrant groups dominating the communities. As one of the respondents who grew up in Berwyn notes, there is a progression of movement of immigrant groups throughout time. In his own words:

“The Czechs seem to keep moving farther west and the Italians moved in, with a fairly vibrant community and worked fairly closely with the remaining Czech and now it’s the Mexicans. The Czechs are going farther west. I live in Downers Grove and I remember when I first moved there people were saying, “What are you nuts?” and now these people are living in Naperville and Lamont. They’re farther than I am.”

This speaks to the various mentalities within the Czech community with regards to the movement away from Berwyn and Cicero. While moving out was initially rare, within the past few decades the movement toward outer ring suburbs became normalized so that more and more people found themselves moving. This trend escalated so quickly that today the norm for Czech Americans is to live in the far west suburbs outside of the original communities early where Czech immigrants settled.

**Motivations for Westward Movement**

Based on respondents from interviews, the impetus to move to new communities stemmed from a variety of internal and external pressures exerted on individuals. When Czech
individuals and families were presented with the opportunity to move to a different place, most often the choice was made to move to a new suburb, most often farther from the Chicago than either Berwyn or Cicero are located. This movement of second and third generation Czechs from the communities of Berwyn and Cicero is indicative of larger trends toward suburbanization that happened within many American cities in the 20th century. As a whole, interview participants rationalized the decision of Czech-American families to move out of the neighborhood in one of two ways, either as a result of individual changes in preferences or as a reaction to changes in the community. In essence, motivations for moving out of the community are based on either internal or external factors, which I will describe in more detail.

Attributions toward internal factors focused on the way individuals changed their preferences and made different decisions according to these changes. A common example of these internal motivations centered on ideas of social and economic mobility. For example, when asked why they made the decision to move to another suburb, many people cited a desire to move to a community with less density, more land, and higher socioeconomic class. As one respondent indicated, people moved due to “upward mobility, they [were] looking for bigger backyards, having more space.”

However, it is important to note the role that generational differences play in individual preferences with regards to housing. Individuals who were first generation Czechs-American in this community were overwhelmingly from poor regions in what is now the Czech Republic. As a result, this generation was generally satisfied with the availability of opportunity found within the communities of Berwyn and Cicero. The opportunities for work in the neighboring industries in Cicero provided these families with a working class life through factory and other industrial jobs. However, the rapid ethnic transformation of these communities was at least partially
motivated by the desire of second and third generation Czech-Americans to move to communities they perceived to have more social and economic status. Antonin,\(^4\) who grew up in Berwyn moved to a different suburb once he got married as a result of generational mobility such that,

"...All the grandchildren, well even the children all went to college and the grandchildren--one is a lawyer, one is high in the computing industry. Every one of them is educated and their grandparents came from small rural Moravian\(^5\) societies."

Hence, the difference in the generational preferences of Czech-Americans appears to be at least in part accessible as a result of economic mobility. In accordance with existing literature on assimilation patterns of white ethnics, Czech-Americans of later generations tended to surpass the economic standing of their parents. This means that through generations, their connectedness to their ethnic identity decreased as they experienced economic opportunity (Lieberson 1963). This different in immigration is noted by a research participant:

"Those descendants are a little different than the major metropolitan centers because there was continuous immigrations where they had those initial people and their descendants were in the Chicago area. There was always an influx of new immigrants. They bring new ideas and music and stuff that’s different than the people who came before them."

As such, it is clear that these differences in the various generations of Czech immigrants are a difference that is evident within the community.

In the early days of suburban growth, when many early Czechs were moving into the communities of Berwyn and Cicero, there was limited settlement in the further west suburbs of the city. As one respondent indicated, "If you would go a short time out of Berwyn, it was all farmland." Several people felt that the development and density of Berwyn, resulting from its

\(^4\) All names have been changed to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

\(^5\) Moravia is one of the regions with what is now the Czech Republic. For many immigrants, their primary identification was through regional as opposed to national identity.
close proximity to Chicago was a disincentive to continue to live in the community. “I don’t know that you [were] going to find a place in Berwyn to build...the thing is we started from scratch.” For this specific person, the desire to build a new life from the ground pushed him and his family to move to a place where they could buy a farm to build a new home with a large backyard. As a result of these desires, many individuals felt a motivation to look to other suburbs. For these reasons, the internal individual motivations found within immigrants to achieve their notion of the “American Dream” is widely referenced as an important factor in the outmigration of the Czech community. This local trend is validated by previous research which finds that within ethnic white populations, second generation immigrants tend to economically outperform their parents (Chiswick 1977).

Despite all these individual motivations, it is important to recognize that these individual decisions to move to different suburbs were often made within the context of larger changes within the community. Although there remains ambiguity in the exact processes of out-migration of Czechs and the in-migration of Mexicans, it is evident that the population turnover happened in a way that created rapidly transformed the demographics of the community. Some individuals were prompted to move to other suburbs as a reaction to the change of population, mainly the growth of the Mexican population. In particular Karolina, an affiliate of Sokol Tabor, remembers that her parent’s decision to move out of the neighborhood in the late ‘90’s was motivated by a need to move to a smaller home, but ultimately cemented by the demographic changes they saw in the community. She remember the considerations that went into the decision:

“The neighborhood was starting to change...My parents always said if they could pick up their house in Cicero and move it, they would have. They had a really big Georgian, now it looks run down and shabby whenever we drive past it. It was just the neighborhood
was changing and they wanted to move west where a lot of families were moving to at the time.”

For this young woman and her family, the decision to move to a different suburb resulted from a perception of ongoing change that they felt was unfavorable to them and their lifestyle. Given that she feels that the house looks shabby in its current state, this speaks to her understanding that the community changed in a way that reduced its overall favorability.

However, outside of the perceptions of new population moving into the community, people also felt pressure to move as a result of their friends and family also moving to different suburbs. If individuals felt that everyone around them was moving to a different suburb, they would often more seriously consider the prospect of moving themselves. In fact, an interviewee recognized that his desire to live close to his family in Brookfield prompted him to move to that suburb. As a result, the external social pressure resulting from the initial movement of Czechs to other suburbs provided the impetus for her to move as well.

In contrast to the perception of many other Czechs who attributed their decision to individual factors, there are others who recognized the influence of community changes that prompted them to move to a different suburb. In this way, the changes in the community are not attributed to individual preferences, but rather result from a reaction to perceived changes.

Despite the various justifications for the decision to move from Berwyn and Cicero, the motivations that caused the drastic population turnover cannot be simplified to only factor. For second and third generation Czechs there were various motivations that caused the decentralization of the Czech community, although dominant narratives around this movement focus on desires for social mobility and reactions to a changing community.

However, it is important to note that there remains an older population of Czech-Americans within these communities. Individuals who chose to stay in the community felt it was
an important continuation of living within the community that their parents established for them. Because there remained many organizations and people with whom they had social ties, these people felt no need to move to other communities.

The Development of Place-Based Nostalgia

Berwyn and Cicero are not unique in experiencing this dramatic demographic shift. Given constantly evolving immigration and migration patterns, there is hardly a state of stasis within any community. What makes this particular case study unique is the rate at which the community changed and the persistence of ethnic symbols throughout that time. The question then arises, what is the significance of the Czech influence within the context of the existing Mexican community? The answer to this question lies in understanding the sentiments of nostalgia and longing Czechs continue to associate with Berwyn and Cicero and the way it impacts their actions.

A central component of answering the questions above lies in understanding the concept of collective memory within the context of the history of these communities. As established, within the past few decades there has been a significant decrease in the Czech population within Berwyn and Cicero. It has been this movement to other suburbs that has had a central role in contributing to shared memories that are intrinsically tied to place, more specifically Berwyn and Cicero. The case of Czechs in Berwyn and Cicero provides an opportunity to understand the way that the history of a place and the people that shaped its early development maintain influence even when they no longer make up the significant portions of the population. This research provides a window to learn about the exchange of cultures that happens when two distinct communities inhabit the same space at different points of time. Particularly salient in
understanding the Czech influence in these communities is the role of organizations. While the 
Czech population in Berwyn and Cicero has dwindled, the Czech organizations that continue to 
exist in the community rely on a nostalgia and collective memory to entice constituents to 
maintain involvement in these organizations.

To understand the pull of collective memory, it is first essential to develop a foundation 
of the ideals of collective memory. By definition, collective memory is fundamentally tied to 
social processes. At the simplest level, the memory of an individual exists only within their 
mind. However, when several people have a memory based on a similar event or similar time in 
history, the sharing of these memories within a group creates a new dimension based on the 
social sharing these memories. Essentially, the memories of an individual are reinforced through 
the process of retelling a story and the addition of details from other people (Halbwachs 1992).

Additionally, through the act of sharing, people are reminded of other aspects of the 
experience they had once forgotten. Others yet will incorporate the memories of others into what 
they perceive to be their own experience and memory. As a result, there is a renegotiation of 
memories of the past based on the sharing of memories in the present. These become stories that 
are told to others not merely by one individual, but by many members of a group. As a result, 
these ideas and memories ultimately form the basis of shared experiences, which in this case are 
reflected as the collective memory of the Czech community. In summary, the act of remembering 
the past with a group of others results in the development of a shared narrative within a group. 
While this understanding of the past is insightful, what is most meaningful is the ways these 
memories are interpreted through a modern lens (Halbwachs 1992). What is more important is 
the way places are remembered as opposed to the reality of what they were like. In fact, often 
times it is the memory of what happened rather than the actual truth of the event that has more
significant repercussions (Trouillot 1995). For this reason, the Czech narrative of collective memory around Berwyn and Cicero provides an important insight in understanding how the perception of the community influences the involvement of Czechs.

Yet the modern conceptualizations of the community have a significant role not only in the collective memory of Czechs, but also in the modern-day interpretations of the community. For many Czechs, the salient memories of the way the community changed pertain not specifically to the new businesses and people that were brought to the organization, but rather the departure of businesses and organizations central to Czech identity. When asked how the communities have changed, answers most prominently focus on what is no longer in the community rather than what has moved into the community. This means that there remains an emphasis on the components of Czech identity that are no longer present in the community rather than focusing on the new types of businesses, organizations, and traditions that the new Mexican population has brought into the community. When asked how the community has changed over time, a prominent theme across the interviews is that of the change in the business along one of the main corridors of the community, known as Cermak Road. As one participant describes,

“I think Cermak Road used to have a lot of Czech storefronts, whether it be a bakery, or a clothing store or just an organization. We used to have our national office [for Sokol], used to be right on Cermak Road in Berwyn and even Klas restaurant. I think it used to be more heavily Czech because that’s who lived in that area when I was growing up. And now with society changing, the storefront changing. There’s still some really core stores like Sokol Tabor that are still there and Klas when it opens its door and closes its doors. There’s just been a change and shift as the Czechs have moved west and other nationalities have moved in.”

As this interviewee implies, the dominance of Czech businesses in the community diminished significantly over time. This loss in businesses happened alongside the changes in population as Czechs found themselves moving away from the community. Many people prominently
remember the butcher shops, the bakeries, funeral homes, and banks that all dominated one of the main community thoroughfares known as the Cermak Road. These businesses were all Czech-owned and dominated the street with signs in Czech that reflected the ethnic origins of these businesses. It is in this type of ethnic loss through which Czechs interpret the community.

Despite the significant outflow of Czechs, there remain a number of older Czechs who continue to play an active role in shaping the community. These are most often the individuals who have maintained involvement in the Czech organizations that have remained in Berwyn and Cicero. Most of them have remained with these organizations out of a sense of loyalty based on long-standing involvement. However, it is important to note that these Czechs are of a specific demographic, mainly the people who chose to stay in the community despite the changes that pushed others to move to different communities. As one lifelong Czech resident explained, “You still have lots of Czechs, especially older not young... You will only see old people who are Czech here. Like I said everything that was once Czech is slowly disappearing.” Accordingly, the Czechs on the community who continue to have an influence represent individuals of the early waves of immigration and more rarely second generation Czechs who have moved elsewhere.

Of particular relevance to Berwyn and Cicero are the ways it was shaped by a lack of Czech immigrant replenishment. This group essentially saw their opportunity for immigration to the United States reduced significantly as a result of changes in the political climate in Czechoslovakia as well as changes to the immigration system in the United States. The end of mass migration and settlement of Czech immigrants opened the opportunity for other ethnic groups to move to the community once they decided to move to other suburbs. What is interesting to note is that in the early days of Czech arrival, many people perceived the suburban
communities of Berwyn and Cicero to be indicative of success for a family. That is, for the families who originally settled in the Chicago neighborhoods of Lawndale and Pilsen, the purchase of a home in suburban Berwyn or Cicero was a sign of mobility and an elevation of status. Given this lack of Czech population replenishment, the collective memory of Czech identity in these communities is based on the evolution of the Czech culture that was transposed in these communities in the first half of the 20th century.

Despite this focus on the Czech parts of Berwyn, the involvement in organizations has given these individuals a perspective of the community that counters dominant narratives from outsiders of these communities. For people who live in other suburbs, there appears to be the idea that Berwyn and Cicero are places that are generally unsafe and undesirable. In fact, these Czech individuals describe situations where other people spoke negatively of the community as a result of perceived increases in crime and the decline of the physical appearance. As the narrative of the community began to change, with respect to the types of people who lived there and the opportunities within the community, this understanding of opportunity was no longer maintained as a dominant narrative for people in the Czech community. An active member of several of the organizations in the community describes the sense of fear that people began to develop concerning the community:

“There were people ... that just said we have to get out of Cicero, I heard that somebody got robbed by the L tracks or something like that. Okay before I was even involved in that, there was a meeting there and these two older women had their car broken into, but they had their purse on the seat. The police came and they see this all the time. Their point is, these guys just saw an invitation…”

The perception of crime pushed the leaders of many Czech organizations to try to relocate. These comments reveal the underlying sentiment some Czechs in the community felt concerning a
perceived decrease in neighborhood safety. However, as this same individual goes on to describe:

“...You know you look at these buildings and you think back in the 40s when we’d come over here... And I said, you know I can’t see any difference in these neighborhoods. The houses are as clean as they were and the Czech used to brag about the cleanliness. I said I can’t see anything.”

For this individual, the perceived changes in the community resulted from increased sensibility to crime rather than a fundamental change in the community. In fact, many other interviewees agreed that the major change they saw pertained to changes in businesses or the primary languages spoken, but not a change in the quality of the neighborhood itself. However, it becomes apparent that this sentiment of the maintenance of neighborhood quality is not shared by all people involved in these organizations. Because this research focused on interviewing people who remain actively involved in Czech organizations, it is difficult to speculate why people who were once involved in these organizations ceased to be involved. As a result, the people interviewed are skewed toward having prolonged interactions within the community which may give them a different perspective of the community than if their perception were solely focused on that of others.

**White Ethnic Nostalgia**

What is especially important to understand in the relationship between place and identity is the way in which ethnicity plays a central role cementing the relationship between the two. As Richard Alba notes, the United States has undergone a profound change in racial categorizations as any European ethnicity fades in importance and subsequently emphasizes other racial groups (1990). For Czechs and other ethnic whites, suburban homeownership was indicative of “probationary whiteness” in which they were deemed more respectable with homeownership, but
were still not fully accepted into the category of white (Lewinnek 2014). However, while the first generation of ethnic whites maintained a close connection to their cultural values, beyond the second generation, the experience of individuals has largely resulted in an incorporation to mainstream whiteness (Alba 1990). European immigrants, particularly from certain national origins—especially eastern and southern Europe—experienced significant discrimination and were deemed immigrants that were less worthy. However, the subsequent generations experienced much larger opportunities for mobility and integration into the existing notion of whiteness. The opportunity of inclusion to white populations means that identification with their ethnic identity is necessarily optional.

As demonstrated through the work of Mary Waters, many ethnic whites see their ethnic identity as a part of themselves that does not have any overbearing restrictions or limitations on their daily lives such as where they live, the types of jobs they have, or other similar opportunities, but rather an identity they can voluntarily associate themselves with to celebrate their ethnic heritage in symbolic ways such as through holidays and other smaller celebrations in what she coins symbolic ethnicity (Waters 1990). It is this conditional ethnic affiliation that then impacts the decision of whether to maintain involvement in ethnic organizations through the process of elective affiliation (Alba 1990).

The expansion of whiteness is evidenced through the perceptions of individuals within the community who describe the changing levels of acceptance regarding their own ethnic identity. As one participant recalls,

“I’m very proud that I’m Czech American. I believe that holding on to your heritage in today’s day is different than it was when I was growing up... Like I said, there was only a few ethnicities that were allowed—not allowed but weren’t around and boasted...It was the Italians, Greeks...In my personal opinion I think it started changing with the influx of more Mexican-Americans that were coming in. When we were kids, we spoke a lot of Czech and a lot of Mexican Americans were speaking Spanish...It was more of a
movement. People started being proud of being able to say, “Hey I’m Mexican. Hey I’m Czech.” People knew I was Czech because I was so involved with the organizations, but it was never really open unless I knew someone that was speaking with an accent that was Slavic and I would say “hey what nationality are you?” That’s how you kind of broke the ice back then, but it was truly in my opinion the credit goes to the Mexican American community that helped push that acceptance that we are a melting pot.”

This participant describes the social taboo that existed of the Czech language within the community even as there were many businesses and individuals of Czech heritage. The participant attributes the normalization of Czech culture to the influx of the Mexican population. While the participant attributes the change to the establishment of a larger culture of acceptance, it is essential to understand the processes of assimilation that were happening concurrently for Czechs and Czech-Americans that facilitated these changes. That is to say that there was not necessarily a larger acceptance of all types of difference, but rather the process of incorporation of Czechs into whiteness was taking root and allowing a greater acceptance of Czech visibility. As a result, Czechs could be proud of their ethnic roots as indicated by the community member above.

What is especially important to note is the parallel processes of incorporation into whiteness and the opportunities for continued suburbanization this population experienced. As was made evident earlier, the inter-suburban mobility of this population was motivated by the differing prestige associated with different suburbs. For this generation of later Czech immigrants, economic success rested on the ability not to move to the suburbs, since they already resided there, but rather to move to the farther west suburbs with better resources and higher home values resulting from higher overall incomes. This process happened in direct relation to the incorporation into whiteness for Czechs. Their movement to other communities that are often constituted by majority white populations means that through proximity to the whiteness of others, they too were then able to more closely associated with this label.
However, this westward movement only became a possibility through the start of changing conceptions of Czechs in relation to categories of whiteness. The processes are not entirely independent of one another ---they are reinforcing of each other. Changing perceptions of this group of immigrants made it such that it was more acceptable to move to the suburbs, which in turn facilitated their integration to white culture. However, suburbanization westward also put these populations in more homogenous communities where they were able to continue to integrate to the lifestyle and social expectations of middle class white America. As a result these two processes of suburbanization and integration to whiteness happened concurrently and reinforced each other, thereby allowing Czechs a larger freedom of identification. Waters documents instances in which white ethnics who grew up in homogenous suburban communities visit ethnic neighborhoods for the opportunity of an experience that may provide a reward to which they did not have access to in the community in which the live (Waters 1990). This demonstrates at a quintessential level the opportunity ethnic whites have to opt into their ethnic identity or choose to remain a part of it only at times.

**The Role of Collective Memory in Berwyn and Cicero**

However these understandings of the community extend beyond the current perceptions of the community. For the individuals who have maintained involvement in Czech organizations, the power of the collective memory of the community carries significantly more weight than contemporary perceptions. In essence, it is the memories that are repeated within the Czech community and have a central role in the narrative around what it means to be Czech that carry the most weight for these Czechs. For example, the manifestation of the power of memory is seen in a local restaurant known as Klas. As other Czech businesses have struggled financially,
Klas remained an important point of convergence for the Czech community. “If people wanted
to come and hang out with other Czechs they would go to Cicero and Berwyn because of the pub
Klas which is an important institution. Otherwise people are pretty scattered.” In the absence of a
centralized population, Klas was one of the institutions that took on a new role in retaining the
Czech identity in the midst of a changing community.

The memories of what Berwyn and Cicero used to be were funneled into the few
remaining signifiers of Czech identity. As a result, the physical distance to Berwyn has not been
an impediment to Czechs who conceptualize parts of their identity within the context of the
community. As a result of the deeply rooted memories found in the community, nostalgia acts as
a force to motivate Czechs to return to the community. This has an impact on the community
because Czechs continue to have a role in the functioning of the community, but are not
accounted for formal measurements of the community such as the census. Therefore there is a
sense of nostalgia and longing that pushes people to return to these businesses and organizations
in Berwyn and Cicero.

As a whole, it is evident that the collective memory based on Czech ethnic identity has
had a significant role in motivating the retention of constituents, despite a physical
decentralization. For Czechs who grew up in Berwyn and Cicero, their ethnic identity is
fundamentally tied to the physical space and the associated memories of place. This memory and
nostalgia are related to the experience of assimilation into dominant norms within the United
States. Social assimilation for these groups has often resulted in a decreased connection to their
ethnic identity in what Mary Waters coins symbolic ethnicity (1990). As a result, there arises a
sense of nostalgia and longing in relation to their ethnic identity that this group ties to the
physical spaces found in Berwyn and Cicero. For these individuals, participation in these
organizations becomes a matter of elective affiliation in which they can choose to be involved if they decide to embrace their ethnic heritage. This decision whether to embrace their ethnic heritage is primarily accessible to ethnic whites that no longer experience racialization (Waters 1990). This means that while Czechs in the community have a choice as to whether or not they continue to embrace their ethnic heritage, for the existing Mexican population, that is a choice that is not available. The racialization of Spanish speakers means that they are labeled as part of the Latinx category, despite how they may choose to identify. As a result of access to the choice of identity, Czechs have the power to choose to opt into their ethnic identity and make a claim to the space or separate themselves from the community, as they no longer live there. It is this option to choose to opt-into their ethnic identity as well as the physical space that characterizes the Czech role in Berwyn and Cicero.

Nostalgia is further created within this context as a result of decentralization and spatial assimilation. For the Czech population the movement to other suburbs created an additional level of social distance from what was the epicenter of Czech identity. As Halbwachs describes, there remains a “faraway world where we remember that we suffered nevertheless exercises an incomprehensible attraction on the person who has survived it and who seems to think he has left their the best part of himself, which he tries to recapture” (1992). As a result these sentiments of nostalgia that are evident within the Czech community arise of a more universal desire of people to look to the past through a lens of romanticization and longing.

Despite the decentralization of the Czech community after moving from Berwyn and Cicero, evidence suggests this separation from a place can strengthen an individual’s connection to that place, in what essentially becomes a nostalgic connection. Experiences that create a contrast are impactful in the way individuals define notions of what home is to them and
essentially demonstrates impact that leaving a place has in strengthening feelings of fondness for that place (Case 1996). In much this way, the appreciation of the social connections that historically fostered community value have become aggrandized within the collective Czech awareness after the demographic shift.
Chapter III: Physical Community Changes

Given the context of drastic population changes and the resulting nostalgia, the mechanics of the process of return to Berwyn and Cicero come to question. How is nostalgia cultivated and maintained to motivate Czechs to return to the community? For most people, the ties to formal systems associated with Czech identity are crucial in the creation of this nostalgia. The most important factor within this context is the role that formal ethnic organizations play in preserving Czech culture and creating an impetus for ethnic preservation within the community.

As a whole, institutional support is a factor that has a significant impact on the way demographic changes occur. While neighborhoods respond to outside pressures, the future of a neighborhood is defined more broadly by the way the community functions internally and how they respond to perceived changes. Within the case of Berwyn and Cicero, these external pressures result from international migration from Mexico as well as local migration of Mexican families from other neighborhoods within the city of Chicago. The reaction to these changes was broadly defined by the reaction of prominent organizations in the community.

For this reason, the internal structures and motivations within a community play a central role in shaping reactions to external pressures. More specifically, organizations impact the ability of a community to address change, whether that means the rejection of change or the absorption of it (Gamm 2009). The existence of a collective memory is foundational in understanding how nostalgia is developed based on the fondness of memories that exist within the Czech community. Within the communities of Berwyn and Cicero, formal organizations--more specifically ethnic origin organizations--continue to be crucial in cultivating nostalgia based on collective memory to bring Czech ethnics back to the physical community of Berwyn and Cicero.
The Creation of White Ethnic Organizations

The role of formal organizations for immigrant reception is one that cannot be understated. Past research has shown the importance of established ethnic communities with strong ties to social capital. These communities of reception provide important opportunities for mobility of second-generation immigrants (Kasinitz 2008). In this way, formal organizations are a fundamental aspect of the immigrant experience based on the ability to provide access to municipal resources and establish a more formalized form of representation that expands into local politics (Bloemraad and Gleeson 2012). Additionally, these organizations provide opportunities to forge connections with more established members of the same ethnic group, in essence providing access to social capital in addition to institutional resources. Scholars have shown that ethnic-based organization for Eastern European immigrants have a positive effect on their economic self-sufficiency in the long-term (Majka and Mullan 2002). In some instances, these institutional connections have been so strong that they incentivized ethnic groups to remain rooted in a community despite a push toward suburbanization (Gamm 2009).

However, ethnic organizations take on a significantly different role for ethnic white immigrants of later generations who are not in need the same resources for acclimation. For these groups of ethnic whites, rather than acting as a connector or facilitator for resources, ethnic organizations function as a connector to the heritage and ethnic identity of these groups of people. Through this lens, it is apparent that ethnic immigrant organizations serve different purposes for different generations. However, for the purpose of this research study, ethnic organizations are those that were founded with an explicit aim to maintain the preservation of language, culture, or other tradition centered on a common ethnic identity.
The decision to continue to maintain involvement with ethnic organizations is a conscious decision of elective affiliation in which these individuals make the deliberate decision to be maintain involvement in these organizations (Alba 1990). It is particularly relevant to examine organizational ties as an indicator of ethnic identity because that is a decision that is made oftentimes in adulthood that signifies a larger desire of involvement. As a whole, patterns indicate that white ethnics are not heavily involved in ethnic organizations, and when they are, they tend to be organizations that are not explicitly ethnic but rather the majority of members tend to have homogeneous ethnic backgrounds; even so, organizations are an important institution in the preservation of ethnic ties, especially among immigrants beyond the second generation (Alba 1990).

Within the context of Berwyn and Cicero there remain a number of Czech organizations that have had a significant impact in shaping these two suburbs. While some organizations once based in Berwyn and Cicero have moved their offices out of the community as a response to the changing demographics, many of these organizations remain and continue to operate out of these towns. Today, there remain at least 8 organizations that operate primarily out of Berwyn and Cicero, despite a tremendous out-migration of Czechs. It is this continued presence of Czech organizations within the context of a decreasing population that plays a significant role in the creation of a Czech collective memory.

Many Czech organizations that were originally located in Berwyn and Cicero, followed the same trends of suburbanization of their constituents to relocate to the far west suburbs such as Glendale Heights, Downers Grove, Brookfield, and Oak Brook. However, many of the organizations and formal institutions that helped create the strong sense of Czech identity within the Berwyn and Cicero community stayed in their original locations for a variety of reasons. For
many of these organizations, it made sense financially to remain in the community. For example, both T.G. Masaryk School and Sokol Tabor own the buildings in which their organizations operate. As a result, both the historical significance of remaining in the place and the financial stability resulting from ownership were dominant forces in maintaining these organizations in the community. A teacher at the T.G. Masaryk School described the plurality of benefits for the organization as such:

“It’s nice because our teachers don’t have to pack their stuff. They don’t have to bring bags and move everything around and then collect everything and leave. They can leave it here. We are trying to decorate everything. We started slowly but it’s been a huge difference. The location, we can do stuff for free. We can hang out in the garden and not care how long people are going to stay because they are just here.”

The stability and opportunity for long-term planning without the need to think about costs provides the opportunity for these organizations to focus on their social programs and functions.

The demographic shifts in the community also meant that the nature of the constituents of these organizations themselves changes quite dramatically. At the peak of the Czech population in these communities, the organizations in the community primarily served the people who lived there. However, respondents reveal that today, organizations in Berwyn and Cicero have to entice Czechs to physically go to their organizations or otherwise attract new constituents—primarily Mexicans in the community. These organizations choose different strategies based on their established goals and mission. For example, TG Masaryk School would have a difficult time incentivizing Mexicans to take classes to learn the Czech language as a result of the limited use within the context of the United States. Therefore, their strategy to obtain new members must rely on enticing people with Czech heritage to enroll in their classes. Other organizations, such as Sokol Tabor are better able to adapt their mission and goals to continue to recruit new members in the immediate communities of Berwyn and Cicero. The leadership skills and
physical well being pushed by this organization make it more accessible to individuals and families who may not necessarily be interested in Czech culture. One lifelong member of Sokol Tabor and previous instructor described the organization today as being comprised of up to 80% of Spanish-speaking students. Regardless of this demographic shift in classes, there remains a collective desire throughout the organizations to maintain a Czech presence in the community and avoid the dissolution that many other Czech organizations have undergone.

Within this research, it is essential to create a distinction in the understanding of community. More specifically, there is a divergence of the definition of community, which for the purposes of this research can be broken down into two main forms--physical community and social community. The physical community is made up of the buildings, neighborhoods, and are physical spaces that are ultimately associated with a place. Conversely, the social community is constituted by the social networks, relationships, and interactions of the people who use that space and make up that space. This distinction is key in understanding the transient nature of the Czech population in Berwyn and Cicero. This group is not counted in official measures within the community such as through voting or in the census; therefore, they maintain a limited role within the physical community. However, as a result of the pull created by long standing institutions in the community, the Czechs who have moved to the far west suburbs continue to be an important part of the social community of Berwyn. It is in understanding this social community, its functionality, and its relationship to formal organizations in the community that this chapter is focused on. While Czech organizations and their affiliates do not constitute the entirety of the social community within Berwyn and Cicero, their continued involvement despite the lack of representation in the physical community places them in a particular position to exercise power. While in many cases, power is exercised through voting and the obligation of
representation for politicians, in this case, Czechs continue to be a force that exerts power through the organizations that continue to exist in the community.

Yet the question arises as to the nature of motivation for Czechs to continue to be involved in the social community, despite being a minimal part of the physical community. The answer to this question lies in understanding the power of collective memory. As discussed in the previous chapter, this community cohesion is largely pushed by an understanding of the shared collective memory associated with place. In this particular instance, it is evident that this form of nostalgia and longing extends merely beyond place to function in a similar way with organizations that are tied to a physical place.

**Organizational Cultivation of Nostalgia**

Given the importance of the role of nostalgia, it is essential to understand the ways these sentiments are cultivated and maintained given the spatial dispersion of the Czech population. This sentiment is in large part facilitated by the existence of formal organizations within the community that serve as a focal point for the Czech community. As such, the following section will explore the way that these sentiments are maintained through processes facilitated by these ethnic organizations.

A central component of this social community is based on the network of relationships among different organizations and even amongst different chapters of the same organizations. There remain several opportunities for individuals associated with Czech organizations to meet each other and strengthen their bonds. For example, a tradition of several larger Czech organizations is to hold annual picnics in the summer. These picnics are important because they are a celebration of the food and culture many people remember, but also provide an important
opportunity for all individuals across organizations to develop bonds and meet each other. Events such as these that contribute to the strengthening of the network of Czech organizations.

This sentiment of overarching community is also evident within the context of organizations with several chapters. As one respondent indicated:

“I'm not from this [organization]. That’s their board of instructors sitting over there. I know every single one of those people, even though we are from different [gyms]. And you wouldn’t find that in a YMCA or a health club where you would know someone from across the city. So we do have a bond that unites us.”

As this indicates, the bond that is felt between members of different organizations is strong enough to nourish relationships. This form of relationship is something that is essential in understanding the sentiments people retain with regards to these organizations. This dense network of relationships between individuals is ultimately facilitated by the organizations themselves. In this way, formal organizations in Berwyn and Cicero play a central component in preserving the community of Czech affiliates. For many individuals, this strength of this sentiment is so intense that they are willing to make many sacrifices to maintain what they perceive to be loyalty to these organizations. As a member of Sokol describes:

“My sister would check in twice a week from Lamont because her girls refused to go to a Sokol that was closer to them because they went to Sokol Tabor. That was their home and they didn’t want to betray their home unit. A lot of Sokol people are like that. If you talk to other Sokol people before you go back to school, everyone has this little part of them that has to stay at your home unit. I live literally like 2 minutes from Sokol Spirit here in Brookfield, because Sokol Spirit is right down the street. And I’m like no. I’m going to truck it to Berwyn twice a week because that’s my home, that’s my gym.”

Lamont is a far suburb of Chicago that is 32 miles away from the gym this family continued to attend. This means that it takes at least 30 minutes and many miles to travel between the two places in order to attend the classes. Even though it makes little sense for this family to continue to attend classes in Berwyn if examined through the lens of resources both in time and money,
the strength of loyalty is so strong that they are willing to make many sacrifices to maintain their organizational loyalty. Within this statement, it is apparent that Czech individuals who are affiliated with organizations almost feel a sense of ownership over these organizations. This sense of ownership results not only from these dense network of social relationships, but also from a longstanding history of affiliation with these organizations. It is apparent that it is the nostalgic sentiment that motivates individuals to make the sacrifice of driving so far to continue the affiliation with the organization. As such, this sentiment is built upon the foundations of the collective memory of Czech ethnics. As the member describes, there are several people who return to the community, which shows the social nature of this act in that the shared experience of commuting back to Berwyn is socially reinforced.

For many people, the stories and traditions they learned through these organizations were central components of their ethnic identity and civic formation. For example, Petr recalls a conversation with his mom regarding the role of Sokol in his development.

“I remember this conversation I had with my mom... she was like, ‘You kids you all go after your dad’s side of the family, you’re always doing stuff with your dad’s cousins and doing events and you never do anything for my side of the family.’ I literally had to turn to her and I said, ‘What do you think Sokol is, mom?’ I said ‘You gave us Sokol. Our lives are dedicated to this volunteer organization’...She never sent us to Czech school. We didn’t do dancing or anything. Sokol is our Czech culture that we experience. My mom’s sister was in it, my two cousins on my mom’s side were in it when they were younger as well. Anything I know about Czech, or the Czech culture or language is through my involvement at Sokol Tabor.”

In this way, organizational ties were important in establishing a connection to ethnic identity. As Petr recalls, Sokol played the role of inculcating the values and history of his Czech identity. The role of formal organization in reifying ethnic behavior and identity has been demonstrated in other instances. For example, ethnic organizations often function as a fundamental social structure in the maintenance of ethnic behavior (Alba 1990). Because Sokol was founded as part
of a nationalist movement in Czechoslovakia, despite the changes the organization has undergone, there remains an intrinsic relationship between Sokol and ethnic identity.

Additionally, the reinforcement of identity through organizations is not simply limited to Sokol. Similar sentiments are expressed by affiliates of other organizations as participants recall the important role these institutions played in allowing them to connect with their ethnic identity. In a sense, these organizations serve to reinforce ethnic affiliation for these individuals. This has been shown to be a common phenomenon within social contexts for different groups (Saylor and Aries 1999).

**Nostalgia and Collective Memory**

Yet, the question arises how does this reconnection relate to collective memory? The answer to this question lies in the foundational role of interaction among generations of Czech-Americans. The Great Depression and the emergence of legal limitations on immigration profoundly shaped the experience of Europeans in America through the lack of immigrant replenishment (Waters and Jiménez 2005). As a result, the evolution of Czech-American culture changed in a manner that was very different than that of the culture in the Czech Republic. Additionally, as most Czech immigrants in Chicago had origins in rural parts of the country, the culture that was transposed into the United States was most predominantly shaped by Czech folk culture from the early 20th century. Because subsequent immigration included very small numbers of Czech immigrants, cultural traditions had to be passed on through the generations. Therefore, the transmission of Czech culture is rooted in memories, stories, and traditions that are told through the generations. At one point, this culture was most prominent in Berwyn and Cicero given the sheer dominance of the number of Czechs in the community. In a sense, this culture became rooted in the physical space within Berwyn and Cicero in such a way that an
essential aspect of Czech identity remained in these towns even with the exodus of Czech immigrants.

As a whole, it is the memory of what used to exist in Berwyn that draws people to return to this space and motivates continued involvement-albeit in varying capacities. Within the Czech community there is a collective memory based on the experience of being Czech in the community at a time when this culture still dominated the community. While this history remains evident in the physical space, the essence of Czech culture is no longer evident in Berwyn and Cicero as they are replaced with new symbols of Mexican identity. Regardless of this transition, the desire to maintain involvement constitutes a form of reconstruction of the past in a present form. Given that Czech identity in this space is threatened by the continuously increasing dominance of Mexican symbols, this maintenance of Czech culture within is especially significant given the perception of the potential extinction in that space.

It is the memories of the first generations of immigrants that were taught to subsequent generations that shape the Czech ethnic identity in Berwyn and Cicero. Very few of the individuals involved in these organizations are first generation Czech-Americans and as a result, we must take into account two distinct social processes. The first is the collective memory developed by the first generation. In this form of memory, individuals had all experienced the culture of Czechoslovakia first hand and could recount memories based on their own experiences. Then, upon immigration to the United States, the social process of interaction with other Czech immigrants in Berwyn and Cicero served to reify their experiences and ultimately created a common conception of what constitutes Czech identity. In this way, the necessity to recount stories to subsequent generations caused them to tell these narratives continuously over
time, often with modifications that end up allotting a “prestige that reality did not possess” (Halbwachs 1992).

As mentioned, an important component of this ethnic reinforcement functions to connect Czechs across generations. Many people who remain involved in these organizations make reference to their lifelong involvement. Yet even if involvement is not lifelong, for many people it stems from a feeling of a desire to reconnect with parts of their identity they experienced with their parents. As one organizational official recalls:

“I did volunteer work for some of the running organizations until my knee gave out. Then I got involved with Czech organizations…. I’ve been occupying my time doing various volunteer activities. I’ve been taking Czech classes, maybe pushing 30 years. I’m going to keep doing it until I get it right. I’m getting impatient lately. For over 2 years, I’ve been tutoring via Skype with a lady in Prague twice a week. Maybe it's making some headway.”

In this instance, involvement in Czech organizations and as a result, Czech culture was a form of reconnection rather than a way to maintain a lifelong organizational relationship. However, even in this attempt to reconnect with the past, there is evidence of the role of collective memory. More specifically, despite not being involved in Czech culture for a large portion of her professional life, retirement afforded the opportunity to reconnect and recenter the memories of culture and place.

However, despite the power of collective memory in motivating people to return, there remain challenges for these organizations. The decentralization of Czech affiliates has had a significant impact on membership for Czech organizations. As many individuals are quick to point out, many of the challenges for Czech organizations result from the difficulties families experience as a result of the distance they live from the organizations. As the following
interaction details, the change in residential patterns has resulted in challenges for these Czech organizations.

“Person1: Before everyone lived in the neighborhood too. Now we are scattered all over. Maybe if you take your kid to class and you drive 45 min or a half hour in traffic. When it comes time for you to come to class that night, you are not going to want to turn around and drive back. Before people used to be able to walk to the gym.
Person 2: That’s what I did with my kids. Cause we lived in the neighborhood.
Person 1: That’s the big difference. The new immigrants have different—we don’t seem to get any luck. We get more Americans and other ethnic groups than we do with our own people.”

Specifically, with Sokol, the strength of membership appears to be related to with physical proximity of people to the organization itself.

At its founding, Sokol was part of a larger group of nationalist initiatives within Czechoslovakia. This was then brought to Berwyn and Cicero by Czech immigrants, but is not an organization that has continued to hold significant influence in the Czech Republic. As a result, new Czech immigrants hardly involve themselves in the organization. Despite having Czech origin, Sokol is an organization that is not universally appealing to all Czech immigrants. This inability to universally appeal to Czech immigrants is a direct result of the collective memory that new Czech immigrants do not share with the earlier waves of Czechs. The unifying experience of collective memory among this ethnic group is a primary motivator of continued involvement with these organizations.

As a result of the inability to appeal to new Czech immigrants, this organization has recruited new students through methods that heavily bias the physical community in Berwyn and Cicero as opposed to the social community. The result of this is that while the leadership of Sokol is made up of individuals with Czech heritage, there are very few students with Czech heritage who attend classes. Outreach strategies currently rely on recruiting from the existing
community by reaching out to schools. Given the demographics of the public schools in the community, the people primarily targeted are those that make up the Mexican population. In fact, the school districts serving the communities of Berwyn and Cicero have percentages of Latinx students at rates of 82.1%, 83.7%, 68.9%, and 89.5%. This is corroborated by members of the organizations who state that about 80% of their students are Spanish-speaking.

Among other organizations, outreach involving the physical community has taken a different form. At T.G. Masaryk there is an understanding that there are very few incentives for involvement of the Mexican community given the emphasis on learning the Czech language within the school. The Czech language is not a top language spoken in either the United States or globally and as a result, most people who enroll in the classes are heritage speakers. More specifically, this means that many of the young children who are enrolled in classes generally fall under two categories: the first is made up of recent immigrants who have lived in the Czech Republic and have high levels of fluency and the second are individuals who are using the language as a way to reconnect with their family history. For the latter who aim to reconnect with their family history, there is an aspect of memory associated with their desire to become involved that is not present for more recent Czech immigrants.

Many of these ethnic organizations implicitly rely on the memory and sense of place of Berwyn and Cicero as Czech enclaves to sustain their membership. All individuals objectively experience and understand places through social information they receive as well as from their own experiences. However, as geographer Yi-Fu Tuan explains, it is through a collective awareness of space that shared identities are formed, despite differences in individual experiences of a person and a place. The communal experiences of a group of people based on a shared identity, particularly ethnicity, form a strong foundation for the development of a
common narrative for that community. Experiences, albeit different for every individual, are largely centered on frequent visits and interactions with similar spaces such as businesses, schools, parks, traditions, etc. (Tuan 1975). As such, an understanding of the ways Czech individuals continue to conceptualize Czech organizations in Berwyn and Cicero is essential for understanding their continued involvement in these organizations. Additionally, this becomes important not only for the context of the organizations themselves, but also in understanding the way that identity and collective awareness of space within the Czech community continues to shape civic life for non-Czechs in Berwyn and Cicero.

An example of the manifestation of the added cultural value resulting of nostalgia can be seen through the businesses in the community—particularly those centered on cuisine. After the decentralization of the Czech community resulting from their exodus to suburbs further west, the few remaining organizations took on a new significance as centers of Czech identity and heritage. For example, a member of Sokol Tabor recalls working in a Czech bakery twenty years ago—when many Czechs had already moved out of the community—and consistently receiving orders from Czechs who had moved out of the state. In her words, she recalls:

“We were getting unbelievable orders from people who lived out of the state. I had to slice 22-pound bread, double wrap them, put them in the boxes. They left like over 200 dollars over 20 years ago.”

In this instance, the geographic scope of influence was increased as a result of the disappearance of many of the other Czech bakeries and the decentralization of Czechs. Vesecky’s Bakery, which remains in Berwyn today, continues to market the preservation of Czech culture through their baked goods. However, it is the preservation of the original Czech culture and food that remains the strength of the bakery. According to the current owner of Vesecky’s, people return to the bakery because it gives them the opportunity to remember their relatives and their
childhood through food. Despite the memory of Czech culture being a distant memory for the current owners of the bakery, they nonetheless understand the power of their Czech origins and continue to incorporate this into their offerings. As a whole, food is an important component of the memories and attachment to place that is held in the collective Czech memory of this community. The communal experiences of the past have made it so that this bakery, which is now the only Czech bakery in Berwyn, has become a focal point of Czech memory as it relates to food and cuisine.

Feelings of nostalgia then prove to be an integral part of attachment to space and collective memory in cases where there are significant generational differences in migration. These sentiments, although seemingly abstract, have a notable impact on the decisions and actions of individual actors, which in turn drastically shape the formation and development of spaces, particularly cities and neighborhoods. For Czechs who have moved outside of Berwyn and Cicero, this means that they continue to have an influence in the community despite making up a very small portion of the residential population. These feelings of nostalgia incentivize return to the community.

Additionally, emotional connections to place stem largely from the social associations with those places. Although nostalgia can also derive from the physical environment itself such as the homes and places the link appears to be weaker in relation to the social and emotional longing. It is the power of social and civic relationships that have the most influence in establishing involvement within the community (Scannell and Gifford 2010). We can again see the importance of cuisine in facilitating the connection to social connections and feelings that create longing within the community. For example, a previous resident of Berwyn and current
member of the T.G. Masaryk School describes the pull of Berwyn and Cicero even after moving away:

“There were a lot of restaurants that are gone. Like I said bakeries and shops. Even if they moved out, people used to—like I enjoy coming. I had a dentist in Berwyn and I would go and buy Czech food if they had a Czech restaurant.”

In actions such as this, it is evident that the Czech population maintains a role in the community, albeit in a transient manner.

As a whole, Czech ethnic identity is centered in Berwyn and Cicero because of the role Czech organizations have played in the maintenance and cultivation of collective memory that results in nostalgia. Although different organizations in the community target distinct demographics and have different missions, the centrality placed on Czech identity continues to motivate Czechs to return to these organizations and to the community. In breaking down the concept of community to make distinctions between physical community and social community, there emerge significant differences in the role that each plays within the larger social contexts of Berwyn and Cicero. This distinction is essential in understanding how communities change over time. Given that the existing perception of Berwyn and Cicero largely interpret the community as being predominantly Latinx and working class. However these conceptualizations do not adequately take into account the role that the white ethnic history of the community continues to play through a role in crafting the social space of the community. For this reason, understanding the complexities of the exchange of cultures and the negotiation of identity between these two distinct groups provides a more nuanced understanding of the community. Additionally, this provides insight into the way the mechanisms through which interpersonal relationships and loyalty play a role in changing neighborhoods.
Conclusion

It is clear that the migration of Czechs out of Berwyn and Cicero caused many changes within the established Czech institutions and the character of the community. As a whole, the demographic changes also resulted in significant physical changes, particularly in relation to the community businesses. At the height of Czech population in Berwyn and Cicero, several interview participants recall the abundance of Czech businesses such as saving and loans, banks, bakeries, funeral homes, and butchers. However, the reduction in the base of these businesses meant that many were no longer financially lucrative. In this case, it is evident that businesses that reproduced Czech society in Berwyn and Cicero, were not able to survive the loss of their consumer base. Yet the organizations that continue to exist in the community play a significant role in the maintenance of Czech ties to the community through the cultivation of nostalgia.

As is seen in both Berwyn and Cicero, suburbs are increasingly recognized for the ways they depart from the traditional view of racially and socioeconomically homogenous places. Although as a whole, most suburbs are not more diverse than cities in axis such as race, education, and income, as a whole suburbs, are not the homogenous communities they have been made out to be in previous narratives (Hall and Lee 2010). This research points to the importance of understanding both the present and history of a community given that different populations interact and exchange culture through the physical community.

When new residents settle in the community they begin to form a part of the already established social networks and kin relationships and assimilate into these networks (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974). In this way, the continuous cycle of settlement and integration can result in a blending of cultures. If a new group of people begin to integrate into the social fabric of a society, there is a bidirectional influence, however it is only through an extended period of time
that these networks are fundamentally changed to be more representative of the new population. For example, within the communities of Berwyn and Cicero it is important to note the instances the two cultures blend together. For instance, many people who make up the Mexican community participate annually in the Houby Day Parade so that this event represents an open community celebration rather than an ethnic celebration. While Czech culture set the foundation for the annual event, it is now celebrated with Mexican traditions such as mariachi and folkloric Mexican dancing.

Within the context of a changing community, it is the memory of these places that creates the association between ethnic identity and the physical space. As a space begins to change and take on a different character—as all spaces continually evolve—this ethnic group will observe the community changes but nonetheless continue to conceptualize the community based on the memory of what the community meant in the past as opposed to the contemporary community. However, the bidirectional influence within the overall culture of the community is an important consideration in understanding how the increasingly minority dominated suburbs are conceptualized. This research reveals that it is not sufficient to simply understand the modern demographics of a community, but also to understand the way the past continues to manifest itself through the physical structures and social relationships. As geographer Yi-Fu Tuan argues, the understanding of place is cultivated and maintained through a human awareness (1975). As a result, the human awareness of the past as well as that of the present both play a significant role in understanding a place or community. Given the increasing diversification of suburbs, this multidimensional understanding of communities, especially of suburbs, will become more important.
As a whole, it is the emotions of nostalgia that they perceive to be attached to place that has enabled many Czech organizations to continue to exist within the context of a predominantly Latinx community. In other instances, nostalgia has been shown to be a way to reserve power in efforts to resist larger changing narratives (Pan 2013). However, within the case of this community, nostalgia served to resist the larger narrative of Berwyn and Cicero as primarily Latinx communities, as for many Czechs, this erases the contributions of their own cultures in the development of these communities. Nostalgia then serves as a stake to power in an attempt to preserve the historic and cultural value of Czech identity in these communities. In this case, Czechs recognize the changes the community has undergone, but nonetheless continue to conceptualize the community through that of their own experiences and memories within the physical space. Such has been the case in Berwyn and Cicero that Czechs have continued to understand their stake in the communities within the context of their own history in the space.

The significance of this role of Czech-Americans within Berwyn and Cicero speaks to the underlying power that various ethnic groups are able to access. As such, the production of history and narratives that are reiterated are often the result if power. Thus the continued stake to space of Czechs in Berwyn and Cicero is indicative of a larger social power. A similar structure of power is described by Mary Waters as she poses the dangers of symbolic ethnicity. As she describes of ethnic whites, “they work and reside within the mainstream American middle-class life, yet they retain the interesting benefits--the ‘specialness’ of ethnic allegiance” (1990). She makes it clear that the culture that ethnic whites romanticize, is an aspect of identity they seek to benefit from without any of the associated experiences of marginalization. In much the same way Mary Waters conceptualizes the dangers of symbolic ethnicity, so too in this case do we see the costs of Czech elective affiliation with these ethnic organizations. Within the community, Czechs
have the potential to promote the community or can choose to selectively associate with the aspects of the community they choose. As a whole, they find themselves in a protected situation given that they can choose to opt out of the community at any point, whereas they do not feel the consequences of the negative stereotypes resulting from the racialization of the Latinx community. Given this position, Czechs are in a position in which they must advocate for the general health and advancement of the community and not just the aspects that may benefit them or the organizations with which they are affiliated.

Thus it comes as no surprise that the Czechs who remain involved in the community capitalize on nostalgia to mobilize others and continue to make a claim to the community amidst their diminishing population totals. As such, nostalgia reveals the underlying shifts in power based on ethnic differences. While these feelings of nostalgia are in many ways intangible, they should not be taken lightly given the very real consequences. With the further diversification of the American suburbs, these intricacies of interaction will continue to be of interest for time to come.


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Interview Protocol

These questions are meant to serve as guides for the types of questions that could be asked of participants. Not all questions were posed to every participant as the decision was made to delve deeper into the topics that arose organically. However, all participants were asked at least one question based on each of the general categories below.

Individual Background
- Tell me about your family heritage (where from, time in the states, speak non-English languages, work background, education)
- In what country were you born? What age came to the United States?

Assimilation and Transnationalism
- Where were parents born? (both in the states?)
- What is the relationship with the home country of your parents (family)? How often do you return?
- Do you speak other languages?

Relationship to Berwyn as physical space (neighborhood)
- Organizational ties
- How often frequented public spaces (library, school, etc) (also how often frequented other spaces and were they Czech affiliated)
- Relationship to different organizations already existing in Berwyn w/ Czech

Organizational Changes
- With which organizations are you currently active?
- What are your roles within these organizations?
- Do you know anything about the history of the organization you are involved with?
- How does the organization relate to the community?
- Have you partnered with any Latinx organizations for any events?

Perceptions of Existing Community
- In what other ways are you involved with Berwyn outside of these organizations?
- Do you interact with the Latinx in the community? In what ways?
- What are these interactions like?
- Do you see any shared interests/goals with the Latinx organizations/individuals?