

How Gentrification Displaces People In Low Income Neighborhoods



Kamil Kuzminski

Department of Sociology, Laguardia Community College

SSN 187

Professor Rodriguez

2/13/21

Abstract

This current study investigates how and who gentrification affects, with a heightened focus on the negative aspect. We see specific case examples of people in Brooklyn, and Denver who share insight on their own experiences of how gentrification impacts them. A thorough analysis of both possible economic and political opportunities to remedy this predicament are explored later in the conclusion. We can see how the neighborhoods are evolving and which parts are being elected for change. The seemingly easy accessibility that any potential rich applicant searching for a new residence is also explored with a keen focus. The sheer ease that is bestowed on the access of these new residents proves to be a major problem point in these communities. A deep rooted problem in race relation and how disadvantages stem from it create even more trouble. It was found that with the heavy amounts of money, rich residents can drive themselves and their suggestions into a neighborhood which will please them and reconstruct their new found living space to their liking. The economic gap cripples the community and it's organic state, to the point where gentrification reaches its height.

Keywords: gentrification, displacement, policy, neighborhood, businesses, access

Introduction

Imagine you live in a neighborhood that has been due for some changes, for example Bushwick, Brooklyn. One day, you wake up, the air flows differently one day, the irritating noise of construction booms as loud as ever, your old coffee shop is closing down for good. No more mocha iced lattes anymore over there. Or even your local thrift shop is relocating to another area. It's at this moment you realize that slowly but surely, your neighborhood is impacted by gentrification. The process won't be instantaneous, but over time gradually, the environment you have come to know will never truly be the same. This is what gentrification brings.

Gentrification displaces people with more adversity financially in low income communities for the reasons of maintaining the economic gap, improving the neighborhood components, and granting access to new areas to richer residents. In the following sections of this paper, I will discuss: The impact on the affected people of gentrification. Section 2 will elaborate on who benefits from gentrification and why the rich are ambitious to gain access in certain locations. Lastly, Section 3 will discuss how the influx of income and from rich residents and race relations is allowed to alter these neighborhoods.

Impact of Gentrification

Gentrification can certainly take its toll on the originality of any said particular neighborhood, including it's parts and people that create the neighborhood. In essence, it most certainly transforms a neighborhood while stepping off the roots of the neighborhood and the community it shares. Let's take a neighborhood for example, say Greenwich Village. Not a dominant talking point of a location when it comes to areas impacted by gentrification perhaps,

but hear me out. The sidewalks might be renovated, more lavish shops and restaurants are included, and the rent in places there hike up in a flash. These are some tweaks that again, transform the area, leaving what was there gone in the dust. Not always is that a good thing. I'll initiate my point by primarily focusing on businesses first, then going into the cultural impact that gentrification has on communities. Upon the visit to Colorado, (Langegger 2015), the author could see that restaurants were appeasing the new clientele by altering their own 'rhetoric'. That can only provide insight into how a business can be transformed to appease the personnel in the neighborhood. Chopping and changing to appease the new isn't always the best method. Even a cultural routine like a festival, modifying it is disappointing. Langegger's (2015) study discovered just that:

“Other newcomers used phrases such as ‘it’s like walking back in time’ and ‘it’s like walking down a street in Mexico’ and ‘all you hear around is Spanish being spoken, it’s definitely a different type of experience’. Here temporality and rhythm are important. For newcomers, cultural festivals and Sunday masses are things one visits on weekends, experiences one has occasionally. These instances are individually consumed and do not, as they do for Latino neighbourhood residents, sustain a sense of community. The rhythms of these festivals reassure newcomers that they moved to a cool, hip, and culturally diverse neighbourhood.” (p. 11).

One needs to stick to their roots, and not be pressured into any modification of a tradition for any newcomers. If new suitors of a neighborhood are willing to learn and accept the tradition for

what it is, then they can immerse themselves into the culture and environment of the neighborhood. I will now divulge into who benefits from Gentrification.

Who Benefits From Gentrification and The Ambition of the Rich

In the current political and economic climate, who benefit from gentrification, are the rich residents who aim to move in, the government, and the ownership of housing units. Their mantra is survival of the fittest, are money hungry and seek profit at the end of the day. If the housing unit ownership in these apartment complexes can get more money from a more financially feasible client, they would so in a heartbeat. Government has incorporated policy to help propel gentrification and kickstart it's rampage on low-income communities. In addition to a healthy tax payment that would be inflated as opposed to if the low-income residents were still there. And the newcomers to the neighborhood benefit, because they have essentially a new area to make their own and become accustomed to.

The flim Stepford Wives highlights an interesting point on how gentrification really benefits particularly the upper white class. In the supermarket scene, it can be seen a bunch of white women roaming a supermarket slowly and greeting each other, before attending a wedding at night in a fancy mansion (Oz, 2004 36:20). Here, it can be interpreted how fake and artificial and a so-called 'utopia' can be achieved for whites through gentrification. Everything is all fancy and pristine in the scene, very clear imposed on the viewer.

In addition, what's important to realize is the access appears to be so effortless and relatively simple for rich residents to, in a rather extreme term, invade, the low-income communities across the United States. Florida (2018), relays a point that that affluent desire to

take over these areas due to the inspiration of taking advantage of a “unique set of amenities”. The more invested in these amenities, (i.e. restaurants, movie theaters, etc) the better and more improved they become. Affluent people appreciate the state these places are in upon entry, and those same places improve with their resources directly. A win-win for the rich residents. This appears to be the main ambition, but with different people comes slightly different aspirations, tied with financial backing, rich persons flex their financial muscle and thus the access is born. Part of the problem is a lack of adversity in the affluent’s path. No real barrier, either person or policy has stopped them thus far. A free license to roam the neighborhoods of the considered lower-rated areas in the country. The rich after their self-imposed introduction play a role in society which can be projected to be the equivalent of a flat-track bully. With complete adamance, I can wholeheartedly say that no one has the ability to impose their will on anyone else, it’s a power over others mentality. Using the money in their bank account as a blanket for their own insecurities, thinking the dreaded green paper can be the lynchpin to everything. There is more to life than that.

In my final section, I will tackle how the influx of income from rich residents and other sources affects the low-income neighborhoods and what I mean when I mention facilities of a neighborhood specifically.

Influx of Income’s & Race’s Effect On Neighborhoods

We need to establish a recognition of an economic gap as it is a huge pillar for gentrification in it’s flawed state right now. Per Investopedia’s website who have retrieved it from the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, “Economic inequality refers to

disparities among individuals' incomes and wealth..." (Fontinelle, 2020). They also show a graph that demonstrates the wealth gap between whites and people of colour as shown below.

The Racial Wealth Gap in the United States

	Median wealth	Mean wealth
White families	\$171,000	\$933,700
Black families	\$17,600	\$138,200
Hispanic families	\$20,700	\$191,200

Source: Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System^[7]

Race also plays a huge role in the gentrification scene, unfortunately. Ideally no one should have an advantage or disadvantage in the housing scene based on the color of your skin. "Looking at the city of Philadelphia, Hwang and Ding found that financially disadvantaged residents who moved from neighborhoods that were not predominantly Black benefitted from gentrification by moving to more advantaged locations, but those moving from once predominantly Black areas did not... As neighborhoods gentrify, when poor people can no longer remain in their neighborhoods and move, there are fewer affordable neighborhoods," (Feder, 2020, pg.2).

All this does is promote division, where every neighborhood should be deep believers in immersion of all people and cultures. Limited choices for the people forced out of their communities is even more disgusting, borderline criminal at this point.

Now, discussing a neighborhood close to home for me at least in comparison to Denver, or Philadelphia as the other entries mentioned, Brooklyn is a hotspot for gentrification.

“Although BAN’s organizing paves the way for people in Brooklyn to get involved and become empowered through participating in activism, individual and collective acts of resistance to gentrification beyond the network are vast in number and scope. As has been suggested above, art is one of the most influential channels to achieve this because it makes the resistance visible” (Holopainen, n.d., p. 85). This is an interesting method to combat the rise of gentrification in Brooklyn, yet it has potential to be effective. The people of Brooklyn are tired of this bullying, to put it in light terms are rightfully so taking steps to combat gentrifications’ push to freeze them out of their homes. Personally in my area or even when I visited Greenpoint or Bushwick in the past the change I have seen gradually is noticeable. I see more parks and renovated storefronts, and hotels, to name a few things that could be improved anywhere. Those fixtures or key components in a given neighborhood can be changed regardless of location.

Conclusion

In summation, gentrification is not a flawless concept, when poorer people are snatched of their right to live and establish themselves in a familiar area that is both safe and affordable to them. Better known as displacement. In several areas across the United States, we can see areas and people being affected in different ways and to slightly varying degrees as mentioned from the journal entries and other resources I have mentioned. To uproot someone out of their lifestyle and routine is harsh and selfish. Who really benefits at the end of the day, or is gentrification applied to neighborhoods to just save face? My recommendation? Eliminate any political biases in policy that give permission for such transformation in these neighborhoods and communities to occur. Go as far as re-evaluating neighborhoods to see what really needs renovation. On an

economic level, perhaps find a way to reinvigorate the economy and utilize the taxes we all give to the government to back these impacted neighborhoods and the small businesses that thrive in their general vicinity. Then we may see the ideal gentrification, one that accepts the need for change and overhaul in a given neighborhood, but just the right amount so everyone can prosper and live comfortably. Don't let just money talk, which is hard to shift from I realize. Implement a harder screening process for any new suitor moving into an area which bags of money to splash. The proposition may seem strict or unrealistic, with that said ideas need to come into the equation. The diversity in neighborhoods brings an element of difference to a particular place that should be welcomed. Inclusion of everyone, regardless of race, religion, or any other mitigating factors is necessary for a high functioning society that is also accepting. Without originality, where would we be? A certain level must be kept, or else daily life would fluctuate too often.

References

Feder, S. (2020, December 1). *Gentrification disproportionately affects minorities* | *Stanford*

News. Stanford News . Retrieved February 22, 2021, from

<https://news.stanford.edu/2020/12/01/gentrification-disproportionately-affects-minorities/>

Florida, R. (2018, December 13). *Urban Amenities Lure the Rich. Income Inequality Follows ..*

Bloomberg City Lab. Retrieved February 23, 2021, from

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-12-13/urban-amenities-lure-the-rich-income-inequality-follows>

Fontinelle, A. (2020, August 28). Economic inequality. Retrieved February 16, 2021, from

<https://www.investopedia.com/economic-inequality-4845459>

Holopainen, N. (2020). *"Whose City? Our City!"*. 85-87 Retrieved February 2, 2021, from

https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/318989/Holopainen_Nette_Pro_gradu_2020.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y

Langegger, S., 2015. Right-of-way gentrification: Conflict, commodification and cosmopolitanism. *Urban Studies*, 53(9), pp.1803-1821.

Scott Rudin, Frank Oz, (June 11th, 2004) [*Stepford Wives*].

United States: Paramount Pictures.