Research Proposal

A. Abstract

This paper sets out to examine the influence of gentrification on educational quality in Harlem. The educational quality could be evaluated by the measure of graduation rate, teacher’s quality and students’ subjective learning atmosphere. Under the gentrification, that the displacement of the middle-class, schools also experience large change no matter from physical environment to the learning atmosphere and school culture. With the change of the neighborhood, student body component also has a great shift. Therefore, the purpose of our research is to study the impact of the gentrification on the educational quality. In order to complete the target, we draw on the data of the graduation rate in recent years to demonstrate the general tendency of the change of
the educational quality during the process of gentrification. We would also combine the data of the percentage of qualified teacher to get a better sense about the teaching quality change. What’s more, we want to comprehend residents’ true opinion about the educational quality by delivering surveys. It will enhance the validity of our researching result by utilizing both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Due to the limitation of time and expense, we would mainly focus on Success Academy School Harlem.

B. Background and significance

Educational quality is the evaluation of educational level and its effect. The measure of it will often be reflected on learners, mostly students, who are meanwhile an important component of the neighborhood. Nowadays, more and more parents start concerning their kid’s learning environment and always making a school choice before meticulous meditation. It is widely recognized that the significance of the education cannot be exaggerated. The school time lays the moral and academic foundation for a person’s development in the future. A good or bad education would not only affect a person’s life but also the neighborhood’s environment and development.
Gentrification is the process whereby higher-income households move into low-income neighborhoods (Levy, Comey, and Padilla 2006). With the displacement of low-income group in Harlem by gentrification, the student body composition would correspondingly change noticeably, which reflects on the ethnicity of both students and teachers. Because of the interdependent relationship among student body composition, disciplinary climate, academic organization and organizational climate, the educational quality in local schools has also been changed more or less (https://orgtheory.wordpress.com/2009/10/02/does-gentrification-affect-neighborhood-schools/). Since the residents become wealthier, we wonder how this phenomenon influences educational quality. Some people argue that the population fluidity will decrease the educational quality. Others suggest that the influx of expanse on education would exactly increase the educational quality. For example, the most direct effect would be the increase in the proportion of students from higher-income family. These students would be more likely to get a higher test score than those in low-income family, accordingly enhances the average achievement level of school. (Kahlenberg 2001). However, the gentrification would not always necessarily connect to the improvement
of the neighborhood school. One of the reasons is that most gentrifiers would initiate in
some childless neighborhoods, whereby they have little impetus to enhance the quality
of school. (Billingham and Kimelberg 2013) In addition, gentrifiers who have children
would use their political, economical and social power to send their children into some
private or charter schools. Although we want to focus our study on some representative
schools in Harlem, it’s never been easy to study the positive or negative relationship
between gentrification and education. The first thing we want to clarify is that there are
several categories among schools: public school, charter schools, magnet school and
private school. In this paper, we would mainly focus on the public and charter school in
Harlem. Although charter school also belongs to public school and gets public funding, it
has right to ignore some government regulations and enroll students from other
districts.


Actually, different types of schools would get different impact from the gentrification.

For instance, the change of neighborhood may create a negative effect on public school
since wealthy people tend to send their kids to charter and private school, so the public schools would be left behind by the development of the neighborhood.


Therefore, we would analysis separately when considering the impact of the gentrification.

Sources:


C. Design

To examine our ideas, we utilize primary two ways to find out the result: obtaining data through Internet archives and delivering surveys in Harlem. By looking the data of graduation rate and teacher’s qualification information, we could have a general idea
about the tendency of the change in the educational quality. In addition, we would make some short conversations with the local citizens and ask their opinion about the education situation and environment about the schools in Harlem. This first-hand information is really precious for us because it provides us a personal view about the true feeling of the residents toward the schools quality and educational quality. By taking advantage of both quantitative and qualitative methods, we’d like to conclude a comprehensive summary about the influence of gentrification on educational quality.

We would basically study the public schools and charter schools in Harlem. Due to the limit of the expense and time, we would mainly focus on several schools near Columbia University.

By checking the map, the schools that we are going to study would be:

- **Public school:**
  - Tag Young Scholars School
  - Wadleigh Secondary School For The Performing Visual Arts
  - Central Part East II
Charter school:

Success Academy Harlem 1

Harlem Children’s Zone Promise School

Harlem Village Academy Charter School

Records

We are going to use the data from NYSED data site (https://data.nysed.gov/) to understand the impact of gentrification on ethnicity of the students and the graduation rate change in each school. The change in the ethnicity of the student body reveals the evidence of the gentrification in school. Meanwhile, teacher’s qualification percentage and student’s graduation rate reveals the educational quality and academic progress of the school.

Survey

We intend to get local households’ subjective opinion by delivering a survey. We think that getting a first-hand experience about the gentrification. Due to the limit of time and money, we use convenience sampling to find residents to complete the survey. We went to 125st.
Lenox Avenue, where a shopping center located, to find residents (samples) for interviewing.

The questionnaire we designed aims to know experience about the education and schools in Harlem. We want to know residents’ who from different age group,

The influence of gentrification on educational quality Survey

This brief survey is designed to understand your experience with the educational quality in Central Harlem, thank you!

1. What is your age?
   A. below 18   B. 18~30   C. 30~60   D. above 60

2. How long have you lived in this area?
   A. more than 20 years   B. 10~20 years   C. less than 10 years

3. Do you have any children who attend the schools in Central Harlem?
   A. Yes   B. No

If the answer is YES, name the school
4. Are you satisfied with the education in this area?

A. Yes    B. No

5. Have you been aware of any improvement in school quality?

A. school physical environment (e.g. building condition)

B. school learning environment (e.g. study atmosphere)

C. teacher’s quality

D. other, please list

6. Have you been aware of any decrease in school quality?

A. school physical environment (e.g. building condition)

B. school learning environment (e.g. study atmosphere)

C. teacher’s quality

D. other, please list

7. Do you think gentrification (changes in neighborhoods) has influenced educational quality? (positively or negatively)
Field Experiment

In order to justify our hypothesis, we designed a social experiment that is aimed at the residents who live in the neighborhood nearby the school. The purpose of our experiment is to examine whether people are more or less likely to behave quietly on purpose when they pass the school because it’s hard to imagine the loud noise would not affect the educational environment in local school. We’d like to observe people’s reaction when we put a sign of school on a common street and people’s reaction on the same road but without this sign. The sample of our experiment that we’d like to analyze is citizens who pass a common street in central Harlem. Furthermore, we also consider the naturalism in this experiment to ensure the reality in this experiment. So we place this experiment at a random picked street in the central Harlem instead of an artificial lab.

Discussion and Conclusion

In order to find out the fixed relationship between gentrification and educational quality in local Harlem schools, we set up a hypothesis that is the gentrification
increases the educational quality in charter school and decrease the educational quality in public school in recent years. We used different methods such as survey and data analysis to justify our hypothesis. During our survey, we met two teachers who teach in a public school, they said the educational quality in central Harlem is not very good at present, and it caused low graduation rate. The biggest problem is that students don’t pay attention on studying and the entire learning atmosphere is not beneficial to students. According to what they said, students in public schools are more likely to commit a crime than students in charter school. At the same time, we could notice that the general graduation rate in public school is always below xxx. Although all the participants in the survey agreed that the gentrification made a positive influence on the educational quality, the records from NYSED show the weakness on the graduation rate of the public school. A school has to be mentioned is Wadleigh School for visual art, which is a public school that emphasizes on student’s talent and skills instead of academic progress. However, the graduation rate of this school always is below 60% and keeps decreasing recently. According to the result of our survey that aimed at randomly picked residents in central Harlem and the objective analysis of our data, our hypothesis
has been successfully justified. Furthermore, we noticed some teenagers at age of high school were damaging the car that was parked near one of the streets in central Harlem.

This phenomenon has also supplied our hypothesis. The decrease of the educational quality in public school made mid-class households choose charter school for their offspring. It's simple to understand that schools with high educational quality will attract optimal student. At the same time, the renaissance of charter schools during the gentrification attracts more and more student with high quality. Therefore, most middle-class family would choose send their kids to charter school and help develop charter school at the same time.

However, although we consider the factors that potentially affect the reality and validity of our research as many as we can, our design still has some drawbacks. First of all, during the summer vocation, we cannot find many students for our investigation. We could just find some residents on the street, who is not very pertinent for our research. If we do it in the school time, we may find some students, who are the best targets that have the strongest voice to talk about the learning atmosphere in each school. Simultaneously, due to the limitations of time, we don’t have the ability to study all the
schools in Harlem. The schools that we pick as representative may not stand for all the schools in Harlem. During our survey, we make 8 people answer our questions, which also may not stand for all citizens in Harlem. In addition, there is some problems of the design about the survey. We didn’t choose an appropriate location to complete our survey. Before the survey, we thought an area with a huge amount of people is the optimal place to initiate our survey. Then, we went to a shopping area with many chain stores in the central Harlem. However, most of people in this area were busy with their personal business. We experience lots of failure on making others help us do the survey as well as waste a lot of time. There are also a lot of transportation facilities in this area, so it’s hard to found the citizens who really live in Harlem. What’s more, our survey questions include some jargons to improve its accuracy. However, the people who answer these questions rarely understand these jargons, such as “gentrification”. We should better make explain it well in the paper.

Reference


