Research Final Paper

A. Abstract

The research is set out to study whether people’s attitudes toward new residents will be more friendly across different levels of gentrification in neighborhoods. We expect to observe the significant relationship between the gentrification process and the residents’ attitudes toward new residents. In order to test this idea, we conduct a field experiment on 18 residents in total who live in Harlem in three different blocks: a well gentrified neighborhood (137th St Frederick Douglass Blvd); a gentrified block surrounded by undeveloped blocks (W127th St Malcolm X Blvd); an undeveloped block surrounded by gentrified blocks (W139th Adam Clayton Powell Jr Blvd). We have the interview with 6 residents in each block. We randomly pretend that we are new local residents to 3 of them and strangers to other 3 people. We measure their response time, facial expression and other means to collect the data and compare the data

B. Background and significance
In the passage named *Neighborhood and Class: A Study of Three Neighborhoods in Hong Kong* (Adrienne La Grange 2008), the writer mentioned the neighborhood effect as “There is a well-developed Western literature exploring the existence of an independent neighborhood effect—i.e. whether living in a particular neighborhood affects residents’ behaviors, beliefs, activities and life opportunities independent of their socio-economic status, sex or race.” That indicates the importance of the neighborhood. And with the development of gentrification, the neighborhood has changed, some people move in and some residents are displaced. So the change in the neighborhood brings up many questions: Will people become more friendly with strangers or not when their neighborhood is mixed? Will they more likely to accept different kinds of people or not when their neighborhood is being gentrified? Whether they are willing to accept more people to move in this area or not and how they will treat their new neighbors?

According to these questions, we decided our research question: The relationship between gentrification and residents’ attitude toward new residents.

As we all know, gentrification is referring to the shifts in an urban community lifestyle and an increasing share of wealthier residents and/or businesses and increasing property values. So the neighborhood must be changed. People will be displaced or moved into this neighborhood, so they will not be familiar with their neighbors and their neighbors might have different races or skin color. Then their attitude towards their new neighbors will be really important because that might influence their social cohesion. If the relationship
among the neighbors is terrible, then the criminal rate might increase. Also, the social
distance will increase because of the bad relationship. Buckner’s (1988) seminal work has
been often cited and replicated in part or in whole in the literature related to social cohesion
(Wilkinson, 2007, citing various authors)

Socio-demographic variables are also important (Stafford et al., 2003). Residents linked their sense of safety to the cohesiveness of their neighborhood and their perceptions that other people in their local areas could be trusted to support a collective sense of safety (Baum et al., 2009).

In the experiment we will point out that how gentrification influence people in that area about their relationship among neighbors and whether gentrification can make people become more friendly to new residents.

For that question, we have two different hypotheses. The first one is that with the development of the gentrification people will be more friendly with their new neighbors. Because maybe more mixed their neighbors are, more tolerant they can be. So maybe be friendly with unfamiliar people is easier to them. And also there is an opposite hypothesis, during the gentrification, many people will be displaced, so they might think that kind of things will happen because some people want to move into this area. So they might not be so friendly to the new residents. And our experiment might give us the answer about those thinking.
C. Research Design

Our X (independent variable) is our introduction of ourselves as a new resident and Y (dependent variable) is residents’ attitudes so that their attitudes may have some slight changes according to our different identity. We draw the data from the quantitative method that we control the number of the experimental subject. We use a variety of data source. The first one is the survey, the second one is the field notes, the third one is the related information on the internet.

Experiment

We will observe 6 residents in each neighborhood and ask them some simple questions like the location of subway station then record the time of their answers. The questions of the survey can be variable. Sometimes only the local residents will know some particular restaurants or supermarkets etc.

The length of time is the indicator that shows the level of their friendliness because the longer answer indicated that they are more patient to answer the questions.

And we will separate those 6 residents into two different groups. In the conversation with 3 of them (control group), we mention that we are the new residents in this neighborhood and pretend to be curious about restaurants and markets around. In the conversation with the other 3(experimental group) we do not mention that we are new residents there and we
just pretend the travelers passing by. The reason that we choose three different areas is that we want to observe the differences in people’s attitudes in the different steps of the gentrification.

In our experiment, the theoretical question is: How does the process of gentrification affect social cohesion of the neighborhood?

The operational question is: How do residents in the gentrified neighborhood respond to new residents compared to non-residents? Does it depend on the process of gentrification which is reflected upon the level of gentrification surrounding the neighborhood?

The sample is: the local residents in the three different blocks.

The intervention is: the introduction of ourselves as new residents versus not

The outcome of interest is: During the development of the gentrification (the gentrification is not completely finished), the local residents will hold more friendly attitudes toward the new residents.

*How was naturalism achieved?*

We pretend that we are passing by and we have looked for some places for long time. After they told us the directions, we will follow their instructions although it maybe the opposite way with what we expect. So that they will not doubt us so much.
We summarized the data from the three different blocks and recorded the time of their answer. We assume that when the answer exceeded 15 seconds, the local residents were relatively patient. So we draw a data chart to compare.

![Data Chart]

According to the diagram above, we can see that there is only one person giving an answer over 15 seconds when we mentioned we are new residents there in the 127th St, which is a gentrified area surrounded by undeveloped regions. And no one exceeds 15 seconds in this area when we did not mention that we are new residents. In the 139th St, an undeveloped region surrounded by well-gentrified areas, there are 3 people gave answers above 15 seconds when we mentioned that we are new residents and 2 people exceed 15
seconds when we pretend that we are just passing by. Among the 6 people in the 137th St who gave answers over 15 seconds, 2 people are the objects when we mentioned that we are new residents. When we show that we are strangers, there is only one person.

When we mentioned that we are new residents, there are most people who gave us the answers more than 15 seconds. Most of them all had patient facial expression and body language to direct the way. One man in the street told us 3 hair-cut shop and then we went to other streets because we had to ask other people. When we met him again, we had to tell him that we lost the way otherwise he would feel strange. When he found that we lost our way, he directed the way himself for us. The data shows that people have more friendly attitudes toward new residents when the gentrification is almost finished. People in the 139th St are more likely to be surrounded by rich people and they are used to the displacement of people. We assume that they are used to get along with new residents so they will be more friendly. They are mixed with many different people since the gentrification is not finished in that area. In the other 2 places, there are fewer people who gave us long answers. They just told us a very brief answer when we pretend that we are new there. None of them refused our questions or showed tired face.

Field Notes

*In the well-gentrified neighborhood (137th St Frederick Douglass Blvd)*
1. Economic conditions
   a. Many good cars
      eg: BMW, Benz, Lincoln extended, mini cooper, jeep
   b. Despite good cars, there will also be broken car
      eg: The rear window of one car is scraped by others but the owner did not repair it, the car is really bad and poor, it not only reflects the economic condition, but also infer the crime rate.
   c. Many houses there are for renting or sale
   d. Some housed have toxic chemical elements in the house so the owner moves to another place.
   e. The government help rebuilds some old houses.

2. Social cohesion and social distance
   a. When we sit on the steps in front of residents’ houses, they will still greet to us without suspicious eyesight.
   b. We asked an old lady that where is the nearest supermarket and she responded us friendly.
   c. Some housed installed the cameras in front of their doors and there is a signaling in their door: you are being watched by the cameras.
      It infers that there will be crimes in this areas and the households want to avoid the crimes as much as they could.

Despite the field notes in the 137th St, we also found that in the 139th St, neighbors always hang out together and they will greet to us on the road.


**D. Discussion and Conclusion**

Through our research, we have the conclusion:

During the development of gentrification, people are more willing to accept the new residents. But in the phase that most of the places in this block are been gentrified, there are still some places have not been gentrified, people are friendliest to people and new residents. Since their neighborhood is not stable and the residents around them are already mixed, they need to build a new relationship with neighbors. So the gentrification did not break the social cohesion but strengthen the cohesion in some intervals.

About our research design, we still have some inevitable defects.

1. We don’t have enough time to get more data from our experiment, 6 people in each different blocks maybe not so persuasive and representative.

2. Those three blocks we do the experiment all be gentrified in different extent, so there might be some new residents here. Maybe they can’t give us the answer because they also didn’t familiar with this block instead of they are not willing to be friendly with us.

3. We are the Asian people, so some people may have some prejudice to us because of the race. So that is possible that people do not treat us friendly

4. Our survey question is really simple so the answers will be slightly different and it is hard for us to identify the levels of friendliness.
Citation


Baum, F., Ziersch, A., Zhang, G. and Osborne, K. (2009) Do perceived neighborhood cohesion and safety contribute to neighborhood differences in health?