

Gentrification & Community Cohesion

By Levi Frazier

How does displacement as a result of gentrification impact community cohesion?

Introduction

Researched community cohesion in Trinidad, Washington, DC.

Cohesion

- Cohesion: ability to tackle common problems, provide mutual support, and work together for a positive future.
- Examples: support minority-owned firms, support each other, create culture of reliance.
- There is often little cohesion between long-term residents and newcomers.

Displacement

- Between 2000-2017, over 20,000 Black DC residents displaced (Bruce Mitchell).

- Interrupts established communities, disallowing cohesion between long-term residents and newcomers.

- City-planned development causes most displacement.

Methods

Observational Analysis

- Used field notes, reflexive memos, and neighborhood survey to determine state of gentrification in Trinidad.

Quantitative Comparison

- Compared DC to other gentrifying cities to identify the nature of DC's gentrification comparatively.

Expert Interview

- Interviewed Principal Researcher Bruce Mitchell at National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC).
- Discussed gentrification assessment models, methods, and impacts of displacement according to NCRC findings.

Qualitative Resident Interviews

- Focused on resident-led conversations, identified myself as a student studying community ties in ever-changing DC.

Displacement

Resident opinions on the displacement and pushing out of long-term residents.

Newcomers

"How do you feel about newcomers?
Do they interact with you?
Do you interact with them?"

Cohesion

"How would you describe your relationship
to your community?
Has it changed as DC has become more White?"

Findings

- Important to stress the diversity of perspectives relating to gentrification and displacement.
- Gentrification often displaces lifetime residents in favor of higher-income newcomers.
- Displacement can be an intended effect of city planning, as newcomers with more money lead to more city finance and better amenities (Mitchell).
- Gentrification allows for higher quality community amenities, but not for original residents. By the time communities are upgraded, the original culture and resident base has been eroded, including customer bases for minority-owned firms (Mitchell).
- Some suggest high-income newcomers bring wealth to low-income residents. Hyra (2017) finds inter-class interactions are rare and hardly lead to economic boosts for low-income residents.
- As seen in qualitative interviews, there is a clear racial divide between existing Black residents and newcomer White residents. Despite efforts to reach out, the self-proclaimed Cigarette Lady is often ignored by White bypassers.
- Greater cohesion between existing communities and building/planning entities can result in equitable results for everyone (Miller).

Resident Perspectives

White folks want to take away from DC, but we're out here to build it up. I built it up with my hands, I worked on that building, that building, that building. [He gestured to several buildings surrounding the plaza].

Retired Construction Worker

Soon I'ma be pushed out, they'll be pushin' me out and I don't wanna be pushed out of DC. If they keep upping the rent and upping the rent and upping the rent, nobody's gonna be able to stay in DC anymore.

"Cigarette Lady"

When I see people, I speak to them. And some of them don't speak to me, especially the White people and I'll be like 'Damn I'm not even good enough to speak?', like all I'm doing is trying to speak to you. I'm trying to make your day go a little better.

"Cigarette Lady"

I think, I feel that I am now responsible for taking care of my community. No one else is looking out for us, and the same way that man picked me up off the street, I gotta look out for these people.

Retired Construction Worker

Racial Distribution Over Time

	2010	2021
White	35%	37.3%
Black	50%	44%
Hispanic/Latine	9.2%	11.5%
Asian	3.5%	4.4%

Source: USAFacts.com District of Columbia 2010-2021

References



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Trinidad resident interviewees

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