

Literature Review

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Research Question:

1. Is there a relation between the number of coffee shops and crime associated with gentrification in a city with high ethno-racial diversity (New York) from 2000 to 2017?
2. Whether the number of coffee shops of neighborhoods and other features of neighborhoods (race, income) are associated with violent and property crimes?

What is gentrification

The term “gentrification” is originally coined by British sociologist Ruth Glass to describe a phenomenon that contradicts the urban development-- the displacement of lower income family caused by an influx of higher income family in a neighborhood (Lee, 2010). Beginning in 1970s, scholars have conducted series studies on this topic. Although researchers have not reached a census on the definition of gentrification (Lees, Slater, and Wyly, 2008), it commonly believes that it involves an invasion by affluent groups of a lower-income groups in a neighborhood and a displacement of the originals residents (Hamnett, 1984: 284). Along with the change of social composition of neighborhoods, a change in the nature of housing block (tenure, price, condition, etc.) can also be observed (Barton and Gruner, 2014). Gentrification also shifts “the essential character and flavor of that neighborhood” (Kennedy and Leonard, 2001). In another word, gentrification is a social process that changes social composition, nature of housing blocks and culture of neighborhoods. As for the trend of contemporary gentrification, scholars have not referred to the change of definition of gentrification. But studies have predicted that gentrification would accelerate in the twenty-first century (Ley, 1996) due to the shifts in the land economics of inner-city investment and state supports (Hackworth, 2002).

Theories About Gentrification and Crime

The definition of gentrification already reveals the basic and obvious consequence of it: the rise of property prices, rent, the associated property taxes and shifts of culture of neighborhood. Deep and subtle impacts include effects on employment, crime, policy, space etc. The dramatic decline of crimes in the late twenties gives rise to a surge of interests in the association between gentrification and crime have been noticed since 1990s. Sociology theories had looked in the association and find the negative relations between them (Kennedy and Leonard, 2001:5; Lee, 2010). Barton and Gruner (2014) assessed the relation from a theoretic point of view. Social disorganization theory and the civic communities perspective theory suggest that gentrification results in short-term increases in crime because demographic shifts causes social disorder. But overtime, and a long-term decrease in crime as influent new residents deconcentrates poverty. Routine activities and defended community theories have the same conclusion with social disorganization theory and the civic communities perspective theory for different reasons. Routine activities suggest that higher-income new residents become easy targets for criminals, which results in the raise of crimes in short-term; whereas the defended community thesis argues that it is the resentment toward affluent gentrifies that encourages criminal activities (Barton and Gruner, 2014). Human ecology theory also supports that because gentrification would weaken the social ties and the neighborhood’s ability to against the crime (Lee, 2010; McDonald, 1986; Taylor & Covington, 1988; Van Wilsem, J., Wittebrood, K. & De Graaf, N.D, 2006). Broken windows thesis, however, argues there is a negative linear relation between crime rates and gentrification as gentrification causes investment of capital into disadvantaged neighborhoods, which associated with a reduction of disorder, makes residents

more willing to engage with their local community (Kennedy and Leonard 2001; Taylor 2001). Overall all theories reveal a negative association between gentrification and crimes, but they differ in whether the association is linear and causes of the decrease.

Quantitative Studies on Gentrification and Crime

Published quantitative studies of the association between crime and gentrification are contradictory. Some quantitative studies reported a positive association (Covington & Taylor, 1989; Taylor & Covington, 1988; C. M. Smith, 2014; Van, Wittebrood, & De Graaf, 2006), while some argue that there is a negative relation (McDonald, 1986; Papachristos et al; Barton, 2016), and others believe that the relation is not linear—crime rates increase and then decrease (Kreager, Lyons, & Hays, 2011; Lee, 2010). As for the causes of these differences, we can exclude huge difference in culture, national policy and geographical factors as all studies chose American cities as their objects. These differences are resulted from scholars' different methods to identify gentrification, different indicator, which period chosen to study (the influence of contemporary gentrification on crime may be different from gentrification in the late nineties).

“Research has frequently referenced the influence of gentrification on crime, but only a few studies empirically assessed this relationship” (Barton, 2016: 1180). One important reason is that it is hard to identify how and when gentrification starts, developments and ends. Empirically, various methods have been utilized to solve this problem, looking into housing changes (Lee, 2014), shifts in sociodemographic based on census, survey and other statistical data of indicators of gentrification (Papachristos et al., 2011; C. M. Smith, 2014). Up to now, none studies rely solely on census. Attributes of census indicators are highly correlated with themselves across time, which makes the detectable change suspicious (Sampson, 2009).

The first quantitative study on this topic was done by McDonald (1986). He investigates 14 neighborhoods in five U.S. cities from 1970-1984 and concludes that gentrification leads to a decrease in ‘personal crimes’ (homicide, rape, assault and robbery). This initial study has some limitations-- his result was not well-supported as neither equation nor model were included in his paper and he did not take factor bias into consideration. Other studies try to omit variable bias in mainly two ways: introducing instrumental variable (Lee, 2010), and using fixed-effects regression (Kreager et. al, 2011; Papachristos et al, 2011). But they both have limitations. Lee (2010) uses LMI census tracts to test if there is a short-term increase of crime rates (assaults, robberies, automobile thefts, and thefts from automobiles) after gentrification assuming the 1994 Northridge Earthquake in Los Angeles. LMI census tracts allow her to focus only on lower-, medium-income groups, but neglecting higher income family would fail to provide a whole picture of gentrification and studying on one event makes her result not persuasive. The other approach: conventional fixed effects regression, requires that all of the independent variables vary over time which is quite difficult to acquire from census data. Other studies rely heavily on housing data. Taylor and Covington (1988) and Covington and Taylor (1989) study the association between crime and gentrification from 1970 to 1988 in Baltimore, focusing on violent crime and ‘rational crime’ (robbery and larceny) respectively. But the problem of using housing data is that a neighborhood with higher house value does not necessarily is gentrified, many factors might contribute to it. While identifying gentrification, most studies only take the first two features of the definition of gentrification, changes social composition and nature of housing blocks, but changes in cultures had been neglected. Recently, there are some researchers start to include some symbols, coffee shops (Papachristos et al., 2011; C. M. Smith, 2014) and mortgage lending information (Kreager et al., 2011) to represent the shifts in culture in neighborhoods. This innovative method is more applicable, affordable and it gives a more refined definition of gentrification. However, the new approach has only been utilized to study gentrification in Chicago, a racial-segregated city. None research has used culture indicator to analyze the association between crime and gentrification in a city with high ethno-racial diversity.

Coffee Shop as an Indicator

Scholars have been seeking the engine of gentrification for years, whether the engine is economic or cultural. They are also looking for “a proliferation of consumption amenities in a previously disinvested area that is a response to supply or demand (Brown-Saracino, 2010)”. Papachristos et al (2011) believe that coffee shops are the ideal indicator. Previous studies have shown that an increasing number of coffee shops in a neighborhood usually represents a subtle change of culture is happening there (Lloyd; 2005). And quantitative and descriptive studies have discussed about the association of Starbucks and gentrification (Kennedy and Leonard 2001; Thompson and Arsel 2004; Papachristos et al., 2011). Papachristos et al. (2011) summary the theoretical reason of using coffee shop as an indicator of gentrification. Coffee shop owners recreate high-culture ideas tied to art and philosophy for its customers (Roseberry 1996; Simon 2009; Thompson and Arsel 2004), which makes coffee shop becomes a “third place” for residents to communicate and socialize from home and work (Oldenburg, 1999). Coffee house is loved by higher-income gentrifies as it represents a leisure lifestyle because it meets the more affluent people’s demand to meet friends, colleagues and relax, which is not required or less required by the ungentrified neighborhoods. Thus, the increase of coffee shops of neighborhoods associates with the increase of affluent new residents. Another reason to choose coffee shops combined with census data as indicator is that the subtle cultural shift of neighborhood that can be reflected by the number of coffee shops cannot be captured by decennial census indicators alone.

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