Gentrification In Brooklyn

By

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Abstract

Gentrification has had a huge impact on the neighborhoods in Brooklyn that I call home. Millions of people have been displaced from their homes from a surge of upper class newcomers. Yet, little is known about how these poor lower class minorities are actually affected by the changed aesthetics of the Borough. Drawing on content analysis, I examine a question that sparked my interest: "How has the changed aesthetics created by gentrification impacted rural urban areas of Brooklyn?". The content analysis shows negative and positive reactions to the rapid changes of Boerum Hill. These findings shed light on what I've always wanted to accomplish, which is why and how these changes have affected the residents who have lived through "old Brooklyn" and now the new Brooklyn.

Introduction

This senior project examines the effect gentrification has had on people throughout the borough of Brooklyn. Gentrification in its essence is the affirmation

of dominant modes of spatial production at the expense of disempowered ones. In gentrifying contexts, on the one hand, gentrifiers and developers enact their ability to make space and, on the other, economically and socially weaker groups experience a restriction in their capacities of producing space.[1] The growing concern for gentrification has led to a great amount of sociological literature that I will dive deep into. Using this literature and my own findings, I will be taking a look at social conflict theory, pertaining specifically to Karl Marx. Marx's version of conflict theory focused on the conflict between two primary classes. Each class consists of a group of people bound by mutual interests and a certain degree of property ownership. Marx theorized about the bourgeoisie, a group of people that represented members of society who hold the majority of the wealth and means. The proletariat is the other group: it includes those considered working class or poor.

Marx focused on how inequalities contributed to social differences. Marx split the society into two classes, the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat. "Our Epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, the distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms: Society as a whole is more and more splitting up

[1] Valli, C. (2015). A Sense of Displacement: Long-time Residents' Feelings of Displacement in Gentrifying Bushwick, New York. *International Journal of Urban & Regional Research*, *39*(6), 1191–1208. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12340

into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat." (Lemert, Page 34). The bourgeoisie were the owners of capital, factories and for the most part the Proletariats. The Proletariats were the working class, who sold their efforts and contributed to the industries run by the bourgeoisie. Marx shows how conflict arises in the labour market, with the bourgeoisie abusing their power over the Proletariats. "Not only are the slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois State; they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the overlooker, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself." (Lemert, pg 37). The Proletariats finally realized that they were being exploited by the upper class, which then sparked the idea of class consciousness. Marx emphasized that the unfair treatment in the labour market showed the gaps of power throughout the classes in society.

Conflict theory pertains to the "haves" and "have-nots" in a society. This type of conflict manifests itself in the nation's cities, where there are a lot more opportunities for the two sides to clash. The "haves" are the rich people who live in luxurious houses and eat at the most expensive restaurants in town. The "have-nots" are the poor and the people of color who can barely afford to keep their homes and make ends meet. In one of the earliest statements of this position, sociologist Thorsten Sellin (1938), who was writing during an era of mass

immigration into American cities of people from other nations, said that crime is the result of "culture conflict." In particular, he wrote that crime by immigrants often results from the clash of their traditional ways of thinking and acting with the norms of American society.[2]

Taking a look at displacement, it appears to me that the economy has a huge impact on the poor in certain areas. Urban development often takes the form of displacing poor urban residents from their homes so that condominiums, high-rise banks and other corporate buildings, posh shopping malls, or other buildings favoring the rich can be built. More generally, these elites treat cities as settings for the growth of their wealth and power, rather than as settings where real people live, go to school, work their jobs, have friends and acquaintances. Sociologists use the term *growth machine ideology* to characterize the view of the city that guides these elites' policies and practices.[3]

Thirty years ago, New York City was a dying city, the majority of the city knew it was going downhill. From pollution having a large effect on people, to the high rates of crime looming around every corner. These factors forced the middle and working class to flee the city, not being able to tolerate the horrible

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[2] https://open.lib.umn.edu/socialproblems/chapter/14-2-sociological-perspectives-on-urbanization/

[3] Logan, J. R., & Molotch, H. L. (2007). *Urban fortunes: The political economy of place* (2nd ed.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

circumstances that were floating around them. New York was the perfect example of the process that sociologists and urban planners now describe as white flight, a massive exodus of predominantly white, middle-income individuals having a huge impact on the real estate market. The market was so low that, for many homeowners, it was more profitable to burn down their buildings and get the money from the insurance than to rent them out. This simple market observation led to disastrous outcomes.[4]

Gentrification is an issue for many residents of Brooklyn, NY. Over the past couple of decades, gentrification has had impacts on a lot of people's lives. Gentrification has had both positive and negative impacts on people throughout Brooklyn, and in this essay I will try to explain what these impacts are and how people tend to try and keep up with gentrification. Ever since gentrifiers have come along and started to take over these different neighborhoods, the rent has increased. The high rent displaces the current residents that cannot afford the prices that these new residents can, making way for them to take over these neighborhoods. My research question is: How has the changed aesthetics created by gentrification

[4] Yee, Vivian. "Gentrification in a Brooklyn Neighborhood Forces Residents to Move On." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 27 Nov. 2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/11/29/nyregion/gentrification-in-a-brooklyn-neighborhood-forces-residents-to-move-on.html.

impacted rural urban areas of Brooklyn? This is something I am very interested in, considering the fact that I am part of the gentrification.

There are a lot of neighborhoods in Brooklyn that have been affected by gentrification. I want to take a look at the neighborhood that I live in, because I feel like many things have changed since I was a little kid. This neighborhood is called Boerum Hill, located between Park Slope and Brooklyn Heights, where a handful of people are unhappy about the ways gentrification has changed the neighborhood. New ownerships have kicked old businesses out that residents have enjoyed for years now, and people aren't very happy about that. There's a new establishment on every corner.

Residents of Brooklyn for the past decade have been scrambling for a place to live, after being evicted by landlords who are making room for higher-income renters. In prewar apartments, glossy new kitchens are replacing tired old ones. Limestone fixer-uppers are asking seven-figure prices. Cocktail bars are opening where fried chicken used to be sold from behind bulletproof glass. And the New Yorkers who lived there are drifting away, their former homes renovated to make way for white college graduates and young families.[5]

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[5] Yee, Vivian. "Gentrification in a Brooklyn Neighborhood Forces Residents to Move On." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 27 Nov. 2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/11/29/nyregion/gentrification-in-a-brooklyn-neighborhood-forces-residents-to-move-on.html.

My own background may have influenced my observations and analysis because based on where I live in Brooklyn, I have had a first hand view of how gentrification has been spreading . Some people could even say I am a part of this, even though I have been living in Brooklyn all my life. I personally don't see myself as part of this gentrification because I was born and raised in the same neighborhood in Brooklyn where I currently reside, and so was my mom.

My grandmother, Binni Ipcar, has been living in Brooklyn since the 60s, when downtown wasn't too safe. She still lives in the same house as the one she bought in 1965, right on State Street and Third Avenue. I decided to go over to visit her and ask her some questions about the house she bought and how the neighborhood has drastically changed since she has been here. Binni told me that when she was on the market for a house, she didn't really mind the chaos the neighborhood was in at the time. Binni and her husband at the time found this brownstone on what they thought was a quiet block in Boerum Hill. The initial price of the house was only around twenty thousand dollars. At this time, it was pretty cheap considering the space of the house, having 4 floors. But the house was banged up, and needed to be renovated as soon as possible. Binni was in for the long haul, even though she had no idea that Brooklyn would wind up being the place to be for many people. She described the neighborhood as being very

dangerous. She was scared to walk down the block to go to the deli. You could hear gunshots from the backyard at least once a day, she was slowly starting to think that she had made a bad decision.

In order to take a look at gentrification from residents' point of views, I decided to see what people had to say in a neighborhood forum. This is important for my research because it shows me what people actually think about the process of gentrification going on in Brooklyn. In the pages that follow, I will provide a literature review, an outline of the methodology used in my research and the in depth analysis that I have done.

Literature Review

This literature review will provide descriptions, summaries, and critical evaluation of relevant works to offer an overview of significant literature published on gentrification. What is Gentrification? Steinmetz-Wood, et. al (2017) define

gentrification as real estate or urban developments that result in increasing land values, and an influx of affluent residents. Gentrification has affected many areas in the world, but it has been pretty rough for the residents who have been living in Brooklyn, New York. Displacement has occurred because of the factors of gentrification. *Valli (2015)* studied how gentrification and displacement are the product of community-based and institutionalized racism, and how long term residents face negative emotional and psychological reactions to an influx of incoming residents. "due to the fact that displaced residents may no longer have access to the same social groups, lose their community, and suffer disruptions in regular or daily routines, stress and psychological distress may worsen" (*Lim, et. al 2017).* The main argument of this article is pretty clear. This article goes into depth about how gentrification is the result of one group that has power over another group. This article seeks verification that the displacement of communities, specifically in Bushwick, Brooklyn, New York City, is somehow linked to inequality. This research was done through collecting interview data from other sources, and content analysis. Some findings include that displacement usually begins with friends moving away and changes in public facilities. Other findings include emotional reactions to these changes.

In Winifred Currans article about gentrification and industrial displacement, she takes a look at how small businesses are being displaced which then causes the diversity of the economy to be severely endangered, as well as the employment outcomes of immigrant workers. Manufacturing is still an active sector in the economy of a global city like New York. Yet, as loft living has become a hallmark of high-end urban living, manufacturers are being displaced by the conversion of industrial space to residential use. As a result, businesses face multiple displacements, downsizing or closure. Those businesses that are most successful lack the room needed to grow. This competition over industrial space affects not only the ability of current businesses to move and expand, but the ability of potential entrepreneurs to locate to New York City. The changes wrought by gentrification-induced industrial displacement affect not just one neighbourhood, but the entire economic and social structure of the city (Sassen, 1991; Smith, 1996, 2002; Zukin, 1989).[6] Curran is arguing that the real estate pressure within the area has a direct impact on the displacement in the area. Curran did her data on a neighborhood in Brooklyn called Williamsburg. This area is very popular for newcomers because it is an area with so much to do. Some reasons on why people

[6] Curran, W. (2007). 'From the Frying Pan to the Oven': Gentrification and the Experience of Industrial Displacement in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. *Urban Studies (Routledge)*, *44*(8), 1427-1440. doi:10.1080/00420980701373438

would want to move to Williamsburg would be because of the atmosphere. It's very close to Manhattan, it's located right on the water, and the architecture is very industrial. Curran used a database in which she located many of the displaced businesses. She then found these businesses and decided to interview the owners who had been displaced, and those who were currently facing displacement. Many of the business owners had said that one of the main reasons for displacement was real estate. The prices of real estate had gone through the roof the past couple of years. Curran understands that the process of gentrification not only affects just one neighborhood, it affects the whole city. This article relates to my data because it shows how gentrification has had such an impact on Brooklyn and the surrounding boroughs.

The next article I looked into was by T, Chronopoulos. This article looks into gentrification of a neighborhood in Brooklyn, NY, known as Fort Greene. The author looked into research collected between 1960 and 2014. The method the author uses is called ethnography. The author uses interviews, conversations, and observations that she had recorded along the way, and she also would take photographs of the neighborhood. What Chronopoulos found was that the area of

Fort Greene increased with the white population 113.8 percent from 2000-2014[7]. The population of blacks had actually decreased by 35 percent during that time. Doing research of the neighborhood in the past and comparing it to the present is very helpful when looking at the bigger picture of gentrification. This book relates to my own research on helping me figure out the most gentrified area in Brooklyn.

The next article I read was about the gentrification of South Williamsburg by Melanie Barnes. The main argument of this article is about how South Williamsburg has changed over time. Williamsburg, or part of it, anyway, is undergoing yet another wave of change. While it's still a good ten years behind the north side, the south's nascent development is raising some of the same issues that the north's gentrification did--questions about who "belongs," culture clashes between new and old residents, and, of course, rent hikes.[8] This article seems to explain that gentrification is indeed happening in South Williamsburg by explaining all the restaurants and establishments that have popped up in the area. To me, the method of research is unclear, but by reading the article thoroughly, I

[7] Chronopoulos, T. (2016). African Americans, Gentrification, and Neoliberal Urbanization: the Case of Fort Greene, Brooklyn. *Journal of African American Studies*, *20*(3/4), 294–322. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-016-9332-6

[8] Barnes, m (2012).The south is rising: Williamsburg, or part of it, anyway, is undergoing yet another wave of change. (2012, Sep 17). *New York,* Retrieved from http://ezproxy.purchase.edu:2048/login?url=https://ezproxy.purchase.edu:4131/docview/1038828583?accountid=14171

can tell that the method of research was done through ethnography. The way the author describes every little corner in Williamsburg and describes the establishments in detail, points toward an ethnography. The author makes it seem like they went for a walk, poking their head into different establishments while taking detailed notes. The article seems to come from the perspective of the gentrifier, or a person who belongs to a group who has power in this situation. The author goes into detail about all the fun new things that have popped up in South Williamsburg, trying to spark some interest from the reader. This will help with the perspective of the gentrifier, which some people don't understand.

In an article by N, Bagheri, Brooklyn is analyzed in many different ways. This article goes into depth about whether Brooklyn accepts diversity, or if it doesn't. Brooklyn has always been legendary and has more recently regained its stature as a much sought after place to live, work and have fun. Popular folklore has it that most U.S. residents can trace their family origins to Brooklyn. It is presently referred to as one of the "hippest" places in New York[9]. The area that

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[9]Bagheri, N. (2013). The World in Brooklyn: Gentrification, Immigration, and Ethnic Politics in a Global City - Edited by Judith N. Desena and Timothy Shortell. *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie (Journal of Economic & Social Geography)*, *104*(2), 250–251. https://doi.org/10.1111/tesg.12020

Bagheri focuses on is in Greenpoint. The author goes into depth about how urban development can have some issues with gentrification. The main findings in this article is that immigration and ethnic politics have a great impact on gentrification and displacement. I think this article is well written, but I believe that the authors of this article could've gone into more depth and conducted interviews with some of the people living in the area. This article relates to my topic because it gives me more information on certain neighborhoods around Brooklyn that have been gentrified.

I found an article written by Loretta Lees that focused mainly on the Brooklyn Heights area. Lees explains how the Brooklyn Heights area has been "super-gentrified". She argues how previous generations of change have led up to this idea of super gentrification, by having super rich "financiers" consume these places which have already been gentrified. One of the methods Loretta uses are interviews. She focuses on one four-story brownstone located in Brooklyn Heights. She interviews the owner of the brownstone, who had already renovated the house, and the next door neighbor. She also used qualitative research, which was her sending out questionnaire surveys. She hand delivered almost one thousand surveys all around Brooklyn Heights. Lees found from the surveys and interviews that one of the main reasons Brooklyn Heights was being gentrified so rapidly was

because of how popular Wall Street was becoming. I have examined the case of super-gentrification in a particular location. To date, most gentrification scholarship has focused on the cultural and economic changes resulting from the influx of new money and people into relatively disinvested and often depopulated areas. By contrast, super-gentrification takes place in already mature, gentrified neighborhoods. Thus the phenomenon of super-gentrification presents something of a challenge both to stage model explanations of gentrification, which presume a final end-point to the processes of gentrification, and to those neo-Marxist rent gap-type explanations, which in their focus on the dialectic of disinvestment and reinvestment in the city tend to ignore changes in "neighborhoods [that] have already been fully gentrified" (Hackworth and Smith, 2001, p. 469).[10] This relates to my hypotheses because I do believe Brooklyn is one of the most gentrified places in the world. This is a very important article to see how and why Brooklyn has changed dramatically since the baby boomer decade.

One article about gentrification by F. Stabrowski focuses on examining the lives of Polish immigrants living in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. The main focus of this article is displacement in this area of Brooklyn, and how small businesses are

[10] Lees, L. (2003). Super-gentrification: the case of Brooklyn Heights, New York City. *Urban Studies (Routledge)*, *40*(12), 2487-2509.

relocated. Stabrowski focuses on the impact of new-build gentrification on the everyday place-making abilities of Polish immigrant tenants in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Based on nearly four years of work as a tenant organizer, this article looks at the forms of "everyday displacement"—the ongoing loss of the agency, freedom, and security to "make place"—experienced by immigrant tenants who struggle to remain in the neighborhood. Most of these immigrants have been forced to move because of high rent, terrible conditions, and even landlord harassment[11]. The author used the method of interviews, as he talked to hundreds of Polish immigrants that were living in Greenpoint. Besides having daily conversations with these immigrants, the author conducted around 50 interviews with tenants. What the author found out was that displacement had been occurring to low income working class immigrants that were living in this area. I like what the author did during this study, interviewing the tenants and the landlords, because it gives you a view from each side. The popularity of the neighborhood was a big factor into what the landlords were saying, which was why the rent was increasing.

Authors Cameron and Coaffee discuss how individual artists act as agents in the initiation of gentrification processes in working-class and urban

[11] Stabrowski, F. (2014). New-Build Gentrification and the Everyday Displacement of Polish Immigrant Tenants in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. *Antipode*, *46*(3), 794–815. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12074

neighbourhoods in their article “ Art, Gentrification and Regeneration – From Artist as Pioneer to Public Arts. European Journal of Housing Policy” . While previous literature has focused on the capital following artists upon relocation, the authors aim to focus on the concept of public policy, and its manipulation of art as a form of ‘positive gentrification’ as a form of urban revitalization/regeneration. Using art as a marker in urban areas, the authors look to examine whether strategies involving art as regenerative can be positive for urban areas. This article focuses on how a program in Gateshead, England, called ‘Art in Public Places Programme’ has taken on a strategy moving toward regeneration through art and aestheticization on a locally-based level, in order to to encourage private-sector regenerators to work in partnership with the local state. The program aimed to improve the architecture of the area to provide benefits for individuals of all socio-economic standpoints, some examples being art-based educational programs and artist residencies being offered. As time progressed, the intentions of the program slightly shifted, as to where they began to focus more on funding specific art projects as opposed to focusing on larger social issues within Gateshead. While the funding of the project, The Angel of the North, approximately cost Gateshead $1.1 million dollars, it ended up being a catalyst for overall development through private-partnership. Following these small-scaled aesthetic improvements, such as

The Angel, came larger aims towards restructuring projects, including ‘improved’ housing throughout the area. While the construction of homes were intended to be affordable for local people and of good quality, data has shown that these areas are predominantly monopolized by young people and professionals from outside of the area. This article focuses specifically on theory and literature review in order to come to a conclusion; Cameron and Coaffee concluded through their research that arts and cultured based forms of revitalization are extremely impactful forces of gentrification. Despite the intentions of an art-based program to benefit an area, eventually these programs will lead to gentrification and displacement of long-term minority individuals. With the increased money put into an area, more money is expected in return; it is nearly impossible to improve the structural and architectural foundation of an area without changing the social foundation or community of an area. This article is useful in relation to my own research, as it provides me with a better understanding of regeneration programs, and their effects on urban areas.

A useful article that helped me take a look at healthcare among the neighborhoods being impacted by gentrification was called: “Impact of residential displacement on healthcare access and mental health among original residents of gentrifying neighborhoods in New York City”. Main author Lim’s research

question revolves around How has residential displacement affected healthcare displacement in gentrifying NYC communities? The main argument is to prove that there is an association between the displacement of residents and the displacement of healthcare access. The main method of research was data analysis. Researchers used two data sources being "1) 2005–2014 American Community Surveys to identify gentrifying neighborhoods in New York City, and 2) 2006–2014 Statewide Planning and Research Cooperative System" (Lim 1). The data sources included the data collection of 12,882 residents of gentrifying neighborhoods in 2006 who had records of emergency department visits or hospitalization at least once every 2 years in 2006–2014. Rates of emergency department visits were compared between displaced individuals and remaining residents. The main results proved that during 2006–2014, 23% of individuals were displaced. This article was incredibly straightforward which is an immense positive to research articles as the collected data is easily understood.

"Artists and Gentrification in Specific Urban Contexts. A Case Study from Williamsburg, New York" is an academic article by Oddrun Saeter that pertains to the artist's role in gentrification, specifically focusing on the area in Brooklyn called Williamsburg. The research question at hand is what is the artist's role in urban gentrification? The main argument is that artists are viewed as the pioneers

of gentrification; however, at times they can be the “brake for gentrification”. The main methods used are participant observation and in-depth interviews. This article presents a case study of artists’ role in urban development processes. The focus is upon an evacuation process from a factory building where about 250 artists lived and worked. The main findings are that “Williamsburg as a whole does not undergo all the traditional stages of gentrification processes that we have seen in many cities internationally. There is an element of a liminal stage in the processes, limited by groups of inhabitants who function as brakes on cleaning processes, like these mobile ones, the hipsters, who at the same time “put the neighbourhood on the map”’ (Saeter 79). This article is written from what appears to be a more subjective perspective which weakens the credibility of the article.

“As a child of enlightenment, Marx came of age in a Germany largely hostile to change. There was no viable middle-class movement motivated to challenge the social status quo. Discontent among peasants and laborers was unorganized in the first decades of the nineteenth century.” (Page 23, “Contested Knowledge”). Seidman, the author of “Contested Knowledge”, begins to explain to us how Marx viewed the society as vulnerable. This vulnerability led to many changes within the society, which relates to gentrification in how a society can change overnight. Seidman tells us that Marx had believed that social knowledge

had a very key role in creating a new age within the society. There were liberal reformers and idealist philosophers that were falling into the grasp of capitalism. “Marx wished to realize yet also transform the social dreams of liberalism; this required the overthrow of capitalism. Marx championed the working class as carriers of this revolutionary moral hope.”(Page 33, “Contested Knowledge”).

Finding an article based on the neighborhood of Boerum Hill was actually quite hard to find. I finally came across an article by Philip Kasinitz that was taking a look at the changes and conflicts that have happened over time in the neighborhood of Boerum Hill. This article presents a case history of a gentrifying neighborhood, with a focus on the interplay between cultural artifacts and the forces of the political economy. The early stages of gentrification in this neighborhood had no confrontation at all. The long term residents invited newcomers with open arms. The welcoming of the newcomers was going well until about the late 1970s, where things changed. This is around the time where the influx of newcomers had escalated very quickly, therefore increasing the real estate around the area. This area started to become attractive to larger developers. In 1966, bank mortgages were almost impossible to obtain. By 1979, four of the boroughs largest banks were publicly acclaimed for backing the conversion of a vacant factory into luxury apartments. With such institutional backing,

owner-occupants and “shoe-string entrepreneurs” were replaced by middle-level speculators and investors.[12] The study examines the role of conflict in the neighborhood by being based primarily on in-depth interviews with some long term residents of the area, and members of the BHA, which is the Boerum Hill Association. There were different views among the BHA leadership based around the idea of changing the character of the neighborhood. One point of view from a former BHA president was this : “I’ve been here twenty years and it was always a nice place to live. I know it's changed, but I was no more happy with the neighborhood as it was then, nor am I less happy with it now.” On the other hand, some of the BHA members were less interested in what the neighborhood might become: “Nobody wanted to live in the kind of neighborhood this was in 1965, including, I might add, most of the people living here at the time. You had to get the sociopaths out. The neighborhood had to be changed.” As you can see, there were two different sides among the group, the side that didn't like how the neighborhood changed, and the side that thought the change was for the better of the community. This relates to the data I have found within the Boerum Hill Forum, there are people for the gentrifying of the neighborhood, and there are people against all the changes that have been made.

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[12] Kasinitz, P. The gentrification of “Boerum Hill”: Neighborhood change and conflicts over definitions. *Qual Sociol* 11, 163–182 (1988). https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00988953

Methodology

To conduct this study, I took particular interest in pulling data from an open forum. The forum is called :"Boerum Hill at Large". This forum has 3,161 members in it, who all live in the neighborhood of Boerum Hill/ Brooklyn Heights. This forum is home to many residents in the neighborhood who have lived there for decades. This forum is home to many business owners as well, so I hope to get a sense of how businesses feel about the topic of gentrification throughout this neighborhood.

Originally, I wanted to talk to residents and business owners face to face. This all got struck down by the Coronavirus pandemic. I had interviews lined up with residents around the neighborhood and was planning on just walking into businesses to discuss their thoughts on gentrification. I wanted to get opinions from a variety of different businesses, old and new, to get a grasp of how they were dealing with the idea of gentrification.

To conduct my research, I used the method of content analysis. Content analysis is studying documents and communication artifacts, which might be texts of various formats, pictures, audio or video. I chose to use this method because I wouldn't be able to conduct my research any other way during the current pandemic.. The themes that stood out to me most were class and race. These relate to conflict theory because of how the two come together. The poorer minorities have been driven out of this neighborhood by the upper class of white people whose mission is to rebuild the neighborhood. Thus begins two different storylines about the Cobble Hill-Carroll Gardens-Boerum Hill area, with two familiar variables: race and class. For the poorer residents — mainly minorities and immigrants — the changes in the area are akin to a reverse "White Flight" effect, with white middle-class residents taking back the urban neighborhoods after

previously fleeing to the suburbs. On the other hand, those who have been able to remain in the area are forging a new sense of community.[13]

On the forum, there is a search bar where you can search certain keywords. When I type in “Gentrification” or “Gentrify” a bunch of posts come up with people talking about the changes around the neighborhood. These posts from residents around the neighborhood will be implemented into my findings & analysis section as well as responses to a post I have uploaded to the forum:

Hi guys!

My name is Gavin Brien and I'm a sociology major at SUNY Purchase, and I was born and raised in Boerum HIll. I know it's been very intense these past days and this is very unfortunate timing, but i need some help. I'm finishing up my senior project that has to do with Gentrification in Brooklyn. I would appreciate it if anyone has time to give me some of their opinions on Gentrification in this neighborhood. Please DM me, or here's my email: gavin.brien@purchase.edu.

[13] Goldschein, E. (2020). Gentrification Has Made This Old Brooklyn Neighborhood Unrecognizable. Retrieved 1 June 2020, from https://www.businessinsider.com/gentrification-has-made-this-old-brooklyn-neighborhood-unrecognizable-2012-3

Thank you!!!!

After 10 minutes of posting, I got a bunch of likes and comments giving me resources to look at for my project. To me, looking at old posts about gentrification was a good strategy to find data for my project, but getting first hand responses to what I am studying made my research even better. The handful of responses that I have received will be included in my findings & analysis section along with the posts from the forum.

Using this forum, I have noticed there have been limitations of the method I am using, but also strengths about the ways I have conducted my research. A limitation I have is that I am unable to speak with these residents in person, which means I can only accept the information they have given me via email or via the forum. If I was face to face with an interviewee, I could dive deeper into the responses they would have given me in an interview. A strength that this method of data has is the amount of people in the forum. I easily have access to many residents around the neighborhood at the click of a button. I don't have to call them or schedule an interview, I can message them directly to get any information that I need, that is, if they are willing to share that information.

Findings & Analysis

As previously mentioned in my methodology section, I have recorded many responses sent to me via Facebook messenger and email. All of these responses are from Brooklyn residents who have been residing in the for decades now, they have a wonderful understanding of the topic. These responses helped me tremendously in taking a look at my research question. Many of the concerns were that

gentrification had kicked out the people who were basically the heart of Brooklyn. This helps me get a better understanding of displacement by hearing some of these personal stories regarding this matter.

My first response was from Jessica Furst, a resident who has lived in Boerum Hill for over 20 years. This is what she emailed me:

"After 20 years in Boerum Hill, I had to move. I had wonderful landlords but they had decided to give my apartment to their daughter. There are so many different things I could say about how our neighborhood changed. But, I was a good tenant in the garden apartment so after 18 years, my rent was well below market value. Since they weren't kicking me out to increase the rent, I didn't feel bad. However, I could barely afford a studio in BH after an entire floor in a brownstone.

Ultimately,I ended up in Sunset Park about 3.5 years ago.

The neighborhood is split Chinese & Hispanic. One of the things I like is that I found all the dollar stores. An 88¢ store just opened! But some of the stores that are the same as Fulton Mall are struggling even down here, most are gone from downtown. People still sell random wares on the street and I can buy empanadas and corn on the corner on Thursdays. I don't know how long it will stay this way. Since I moved in, most of the laundromats have gotten face lifts, the bodega on my

corner upgraded to try and become a deli -still a bodega, just with fancier menu sign, paint job and no plexiglass. But I've started to notice things like Fairlife milk in with the Jarritos. There were no bars, now there are 3. A fancy coffee shop came and went and came back as a bar at night. Most of the restaurants got new awnings and there are a bunch of new places opening. The Dos Pollos which was so good is gone, and a bunch of other businesses have closed. For Passover the first year I lived here, I couldn't find Matzoh anywhere, I went to every grocery store I could find. This year, a month in advance there was an entire rack of Passover foods and multiple brands, right by the front door.

So I'm hoping Sunset Park can retain a lot of what downtown has lost. Losing the dollar stores, the view of the clock tower to large buildings, the influx of people, the changing of restaurants (Bedouin Tent is still there! Yay!), the insane crowds of the Barclays Center, obviously the loss of Hanks, and a lot more families and celebrities. A big thing to notice is that during the pandemic, downtown there are less people because they all left for their second homes. That wouldn't have happened 10 years ago."- Jessica Furst

Jessica explains displacement of the businesses in the society, and even her own displacement due to rent influx. Given this information, you can tell that the

middle and upper class have a grasp on the neighborhood, coming in and flooding everybody out. She notes that Sunset Park is somewhat still the same, meaning gentrification hasn't hit too hard there. Even though the small businesses in Sunset Park have closed slowly but surely, she still has hope that Sunset Park will retain what downtown Brooklyn has lost.

A response by C. Claiborne Ray indicated that she moved into Boerum Hill from a nearby neighborhood called Cobble Hill.

“

For demographic purposes, I am a gentrifier. I am 73, white, female and comparatively prosperous. I bought a foreclosed apartment in a gut rehab tenement coop across from the Gowanus Houses for $40,000. The last one that sold in the same building brought $900,000.

When I first moved over the line into Boerum Hill from prosperous Cobble Hill in January 1996, it was dangerous enough that my friends all insisted that I take a cab to go the three blocks from Cousins' Bar at Court and Bergen (which had jazz at the time) to my new home at Bergen and Bond. A few years later, the trip was safe -- but the bar had become an expensive clothing store called Rag and Bone, with no jazz, and nothing I could afford to buy.

And as the gentrification I apparently brought with me proceeded, a bunch of nice restaurants opened in previously empty or underused storefronts on Smith Street. That boom lasted for a few years -- and then the rents got so high that half my favorite places could no longer afford to operate. I'm thinking of Sur, Robin des Bois, Paninoteca and the one that started the trend in the first place, Patois. I recall that its rent tripled from $900 to $2700 in two or three years. Who knows what it would be now?

In the bad old days, Met Foods was one of the few places to buy food and certainly the only supermarket, but there were two hardware stores, Javier's and Tony's. Now there are none. In the bad old days, old Spanish guys played dominos on the corner. Now the yuppies complain about them. In the bad old days, you could buy children's clothing or shoes at cheap stores on Smith Street. Now all the clothing stores have expensive designer stuff in tiny sizes." -C. Claiborne Ray

Ms. Ray's statement was very similar to the one that my grandma gave me. Given that they are around the same age, it was interesting to see another point of view of Boerum Hills transformation. Rent tripled, and people were forced to shut down businesses and move out of their houses to try and find housing that they could afford. We can specifically look at race in this response. To be specific, the

spanish people Ray is talking about are mostly Puerto Ricans, who have been living in the neighborhood since 1962. The early renovators tried to change the area's image from a "slum" to an historic neighborhood. The Puerto Rican activists sought to legitimize their claims in terms of an ethnic community. Their claims have, of course, met with objections:

"I've been here 20 years ; why am I still a newcomer? Not all of my black and Puerto Rican neighbors were here to greet Henry Hudson.

This was a white middle class neighborhood until World War II. Things changed. It was not Puerto Rican...from time immemorial. It changed, and it will change again."[14]

I can relate this to social conflict theory regarding Karl Marx. The conflict regarding the society can be soon as something to help understand the dynamics within the society. Boerum Hill shows us that neighborhoods are socially constructed, but can be dominated by a minority of the residents.

Shari Denis was another woman who expressed her concerns to me about gentrification in the neighborhood.

[14] Kasinitz, P. The gentrification of "Boerum Hill": Neighborhood change and conflicts over definitions. *Qual Sociol* 11, 163–182 (1988). https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00988953

"I was born and raised in Brooklyn. I've lived in Park Slope from it's pre-gentrified 80's up until now. I've seen this neighborhood and city both clean up and make some real progress. But I've also seen it push out the people who were the very heart of Brooklyn. I'm very fortunate to own a house that's been passed down through generations in my family, otherwise I know I could not afford to live here. Everyone that I grew up with had to move out because rents were raised to fit the new wealthier people who flooded the area. I knew a brooklyn that was gritty, raw and yes dangerous at times. But it was also a family and neighborhood centered community. You knew the names of everybody on your block. Mothers sat outside to talk nightly and watched their children play. Older men played cards or Dominoes on corners. And kids played outside. That community and family feel went out the window when Brooklyn sold out to the highest bidders. There are still very nice people here, but no one invests in their neighbors the way we used to. So there are pros and cons to the gentrification of Brooklyn. The pros being it's better aesthetically. The cons being it's a hollow shell of the loving Brooklyn I once knew.

If you ask most people who were born and raised in Brooklyn, they'd tell you that they'd take old Brooklyn over this any day." - Shari Denis

Shari's response goes hand in hand with C. Ray's response. The idea of the neighborhood being dangerous at times, the old men playing dominos, and the old restaurants that have now been closed due to high rent (replaced with newer, richer businesses). It is interesting to see that she would like the old Brooklyn back, given the fact that it was dangerous, but I get where she's coming from. These long time residents don't care about the shiny new businesses and apartments, they want to go back to when it was "true" Brooklyn, and no one had any issues with paying rent money, or staying open as a business.

Another long time resident, by the name of Jonathan Glazer, has seen the neighborhood change right before his eyes. He is a long time family friend of my parents, and lives on the same street as me. This is what he told me:

"Historically, my neighborhood has lived through several cycles of investment and disinvestment since it first took shape in the mid-1800s. Originally, the neighborhood was almost exclusively white and the residents were middle to upper middle class. In the 20th century, the neighborhood became far more ethnically diverse and many private family homes were converted into SROs or multiple family dwellings. Additionally, within a one block radius of my house, several buildings were constructed to provide supportive housing for working class men and women. To this day, those buildings are still used for similar purposes and

have slowed the radical transformation of the neighborhood. However, the majority of buildings on my block are once again single family homes owned by white families. Although the increase in home prices and rents has made the neighborhood more exclusive, the nearby investment in retail stores has made the area a shopping destination for an extremely diverse group of Brooklyn residents. In 1999, the national chain stores in the area were almost non-existent except for pharmacies. In 2020, there are now corporate chain stores of almost ever sales category imaginable. This has squeezed out many local retailers, but it has attracted far more non-resident customers to the area to buy price competitive goods that are unavailable in their own neighborhoods."- Jonathan Glazer

Mr. Glazer talks about how the white middle to upper class people were residents in the neighborhood before the low income people started to flood in. It is interesting to find out that the neighborhood only started to become diverse in the 20th century. As Mr. Glazer noted, the white families who are still living on their block and who have stayed there so long is because they own the house. They have no problem with rent increases because at the time they bought the house, it was less than half the amount it's going for on the market today. All of the improvements around the neighborhood have driven the poor out. The high rent,

the new chain businesses on every corner...it's become a conflict within the society. Marx talks about this in his book “Das Kapital”. Marx emphasizes the increase of wealth, and how that affects the lower class by driving them away. “ ‘Improvements’ of towns, accompanying the increase of wealth, by the demolition of badly built quarters, the erection of palaces for banks, warehouses, etc., the widening of streets for business traffic, for the carriages of luxury, and for the introduction of tramways, etc., drive away the poor into even worse and more crowded hiding places.”[15]

Another response, from Elizabeth Stemmer, focuses on the character of the neighborhood, and how it has diminished.

I'll say this: I have had the privilege of living in this neighborhood for 28 of my 35 years. The neighborhood I grew up in during the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s is hardly recognizable. I don't think I'm capable of expressing my frustration with the development of luxury buildings and the influx of folks who are spending more money on their rent than I make each month in a clear or succinct manner. I don't long for days past of junkyard dogs, drug addicts, and empty storefronts. But I am filled with a deep sense of disappointment that borders on rage when I watch

[15] **Marx**, Karl, 1818-1883. **Das Kapital**, a Critique of Political Economy. Chicago :H. Regnery, 1959.

businesses that helped make this neighborhood desirable get pushed out of their spaces because landlords want more money. I hate that it has become a neighborhood full of Sephoras, 7-11s, and Lululemons. I hate that the smaller, affordable buildings so many of us grew up in are being overtaken by luxury condos that sit empty, or are sold to the highest bidder. This place used to have character; now that character seems largely hidden, buried among the chain stores. There has to be a better way to revitalize communities without pushing out everyone who isn't making at least 100k a year. There is a gray area between the empty lots, and the suburban chain stores and overpriced glass towers. I long for the gray area. At one point in the late 1990s and early 2000s, I think I lived in the gray area. I don't know where it's gone.

After reading this response, I could tell Elizabeth was very upset with the way the neighborhood has changed, along with the rest of the people that sent in responses. The rapid change from when she was young has been tremendous. This has impacted her tremendously. For many researchers, gentrification is connected to an entirely new form of governance, which instead of battling local residents for large-scale public investment, is content with letting wealthy residents, real estate

interests, and local boosters determine the uses of formerly working-class districts. [16] She notes that the original brownstones have been torn down and replaced with big luxurious condos, most of which stay empty (waste of space). The residents, the ones who came to this dying neighborhood when they were cheap enough to get by on a low wage, become an obstacle for the capitalist gentrifiers. Them being displaced causes a precondition for the total transformation of the neighborhood.

The last response that I will incorporate in my paper was from a man named Adam Suerte. Adam is also a long time family friend. He is also a long time business owner in the Boerum Hill area, so it was interesting to see what he had to say on this topic.

"I was born in 1969 and have lived in Cobble hill since then. Some say we were part of the first wave of gentrification in our neighborhood. As a lifelong resident and business owner in this neighborhood, I would safely say there are good and bad aspects to gentrification. In that time I've seen the streets become safer to some degree, as well as more of a variety of businesses open up. My

[16]Freeman, L. (2013). The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York by Suleiman Osman. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, *35*(2), 251–253. https://doi.org/10.1111/juaf.12018

mother bought her brownstone in the late 60's, and like other people, renovated the one family to have apartments on the top floors so she could pay her mortgage with the rents. As gentrification has set in, now rich people are moving in (paying tons more for a brownstone), tossing everyone out, spending tons of money to renovate it back to a one family. Their kids go to school outside of the neighborhood (private schools in manhattan), and they are gone on weekends and summers (country homes), they spend little money in the community, and have no desire to know their neighbors. It's become more crowded, but with less soul. Prices have gone up, not only in regular stores, but in mom and pops as well, everyone wants to cash in on the transplants. Gentrification hasn't affected my business in a negative way really. More people, more clients in my business, but the pleasure of dealing with some of the transplants, their temperaments and tastes, is another story. "- Adam Suerte

Adam is one of the only business owners that contacted me for this project. Adam owns a local tattoo parlor located on Smith Street, one of the busiest shopping streets in Brooklyn. His first location was actually on the same block that I live on now, which is State Street. The shop was a small one to say the least. I can infer from his response that he wasn't getting a lot of business in this location. His

decision to move his tattoo parlor to Smith Street was a great move. Over the years, Smith Street has been the place to go to eat, shop and casually hang out with friends & family. The fact this street has gone under massive renovations, more and more people have come to check out what's going on. Adam's parlor has only been affected in positive ways due to gentrification because of its location. The luxurious condos have overtaken the spaces in which small businesses used to reside. Businesses face multiple displacements, downsizing or closure. Those businesses that are most successful lack room in which to grow. This competition over industrial space affects not only the ability of current businesses to move and expand, but the ability of potential entrepreneurs to locate in New York City.[17] Adam's store faced displacement but it ended up working out for the better, as he got an opportunity to open his business on the street that turned out to be one of the best places to run a business.

[17] Curran, W. (2007). "From the Frying Pan to the Oven": Gentrification and the Experience of Industrial Displacement in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. *Urban Studies (Routledge)*, *44*(8), 1427–1440. https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980701373438

Conclusion

Exploring the topic of gentrification, especially as it pertains to the parts of Brooklyn which I call home, has been a rewarding experience for me. Before doing research and analyzing all of the articles and data, I did not understand the impact of gentrification on my community. Going back to my research question which is "How has the changed aesthetics created by gentrification impacted rural urban areas of Brooklyn?", by taking a look at what I have found in my literature review and my findings, I can easily answer this question. Focusing in on the neighborhood of Boerum Hill has given me a good understanding of what it means to "gentrify".

I would safely say that there are good and bad aspects of gentrification in Brooklyn. One of the good aspects would be that a majority of the areas have become safer over time. People don't fear walking down the street by themselves anymore. The crime rates have decreased significantly due to the neighborhood's transformation. A variety of different businesses opening up could be looked at as a positive aspect, bringing new opportunities for people to grow. The importance of schooling in the Boerum Hill neighborhood has been very important to the growth of the society. Parents being more involved in their kids' lives and helping out at school functions is always a good thing. On the other hand, we can take a

look at the negative aspects of gentrification. The changed aesthetics of local businesses impacted Brooklyn's society tremendously. The existing small business owners sell the stores that the low-income residents relied on, only to be replaced by ones that sell more expensive products, which then they can't afford. The new businesses change their inventories to meet the demands of the new wave of wealthier residents, which has a big impact on the low income residents. As the gentrification process progresses, it becomes increasingly less affordable to live in the neighborhood, and members of the community become economically displaced.

The impact of people of color during gentrification is clear. According to the Department of Labor, "Black workers are more likely to be employed in the public sector," and "nearly 20 percent of employed Blacks worked for state, local or federal government." Thus, as the Economic Policy Institute writes, "because women and African Americans have historically been overrepresented in public-sector employment, they have been disproportionately affected by state and local government budget cuts."[18] Marx explains to us how the common spaces in England were privatized and the peasants were sent away from their land in order

[18] Flores, R. (2014). What drives gentrification?. Retrieved 3 June 2020, from https://socialistworker.org/2014/01/15/what-drives-gentrification

for the capitalist production to start. The peasants in this idea would be the people of color in the gentrifying neighborhoods today.

While the gentrification of the 1960s through the 1980s created a new urban middle class, the gentrification of the 1990s and 2000s has created a Brooklyn upper class that is overwhelmingly white and wealthy. Even among the newer residents, there is a fear that this new upper crust is overshadowing the middle class roots that have been in place since the 1960s. The changed aesthetics of Brooklyn have ultimately changed the way in which people live their lives.

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