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Gentrification

Amie Thurber
Portland State University, athurber@pdx.edu

Amy Krings
Loyola University Chicago

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Gentrification

Amie Thurber, Amy Krings

Abstract

Gentrification can be understood as the process through which geographic areas become increasingly exclusive, which disproportionately harms people who are poor and people of color, as well as elders, families, and youth. As such, gentrification is a key concern for social work macro practitioners. With a focus on gentrification in the United States, this article proceeds in four parts. Part one defines gentrification, distinguishes gentrification from revitalization, and describes methods used to measure gentrification. Part two examines gentrification's varied causes, with particular attention to its relationship to systemic racism. Part three explores gentrification's consequences to individual and community wellbeing, including the ways it can influence the macro practice environment. Finally, part four describes how macro practitioners can strategically prevent gentrification, mitigate its harms, and work proactively to advance community wellbeing in areas vulnerable to gentrification.

Keywords: Gentrification, revitalization, equitable development, community organizing, policy practice, community development, community building

Introduction

Gentrification can be understood as the process through which geographic areas become increasingly exclusive (Choi, 2016). This process disproportionately harms people who are poor and people of color, most notably elders, families, and youth. Gentrification's many negative consequences include residential displacement and increased economic precarity, reduced social ties among neighbors, the marginalization of long-term residents' preferences relating to their community, and worsened mental and physical health of long-term residents. Importantly, gentrification is not inevitable, nor is it uncontested. Under some conditions, residents and civic groups can resist gentrification and shape development in ways that improve the quality of life for all. It is critical for all social work practitioners to have a foundational understanding of what constitutes gentrification, what causes this form of neighborhood change, and its varied effects on social needs, inequalities, and human wellbeing. There is a particular need for macro social workers to help community groups identify, implement and evaluate strategies to intervene in gentrifying neighborhoods.

This article first defines gentrification, distinguishes gentrification from revitalization, and describes methods used to measure gentrification. Part two examines gentrification's varied causes, with particular attention to the relationship between systemic racism and gentrification. Part three explores gentrification's consequences to individual and community wellbeing. Finally, part four describes macro strategies for preventing gentrification, mitigating its harms, and working proactively to advance community wellbeing in areas vulnerable to gentrification. Although gentrification is a global phenomenon, its form, function, and possible transformation are heavily shaped by national, state, and local socioeconomic and political contexts. This paper is focused on understanding and addressing gentrification in the United States.

Defining Gentrification

Ruth Glass first coined the term *gentrification* to describe the transformation of modest London homes into high-end residences for 'the gentry,' a historical term for European landowners (Glass, 1964). Since then, the study of gentrification has proliferated through various fields—including geography, urban studies, economics, sociology, and beginning in the 21st century, public health and social work. Though definitions of gentrification have also shifted (see Bhavsar, Kumar, & Richman, 2020), most scholars agree that gentrification is a process characterized by two central features: an influx of capital into an area, often manifest in the development of homes and businesses marketed to high income-demographics; and the simultaneous increase in high-income demographics and displacement of poor and low-income residents (Davidson and Lees, 2005; Hackworth, 2002). Although social scientists often underscore residential displacement in definitions of gentrification, gentrification is associated with a myriad of economic, social, cultural, and civic harms that residents may experience without being displaced (see section on Consequences of Gentrification). Gentrification is most frequently studied in urban contexts, at the neighborhood level, though rural areas have also observed similar patterns of change (Ghose, 2013; Travis, 2007),

Gentrification is a Distinct Form of Neighborhood Change

Gentrification often unfolds at the scale of the neighborhood. That is, some neighborhoods undergo periods of rapid social and economic change, while others remain relatively stable (Maciag, 2015). While a degree of resident mobility is inevitable, neighborhood demographics (such as the relative proportion of residents of various incomes or races) are

generally steady over time (Wei and Knox, 2014). In this context, gentrification constitutes a disruption to the status quo.

Importantly, gentrification is distinct from revitalization. Neighborhood revitalization can be defined as privately and/or publicly funded efforts to improve the livability of a particular area. In many cities, historic and ongoing disinvestment has left some areas in dire need of enhanced housing quality, increased transit access, and new commercial and recreational areas. Current or future residents may benefit from living in areas that are revitalized to become more healthy, safe, and accessible. However, improvements made to the exclusive or primary benefit of middle- and upper-income residents constitute gentrification. Gentrification can thus be understood as a negative, though not inevitable, consequence of revitalization. *Equitable development* is a form of revitalization designed to improve the quality of life for residents of all incomes (Curren, Liu, Marsh, & Rose, 2016). Equitable development is rooted in the values of equity and diversity, anticipates the positive and negative effects of revitalization, explicitly attends to disparate effects of policy on different racial groups, and is enacted through strong community partnerships (Thurber, Gupta, Fraser & Perkins, 2014).

Scope, Measurement, and Prevalence of Gentrification

Evolving definitions and the multidimensional nature of the concept complicate measurement of gentrification (Bhavsar, Kumar, & Richman 2020). Given that gentrification involves shifts in private and public investments as well as changing residential demographics, there is no single indicator used to determine prevalence. A number of scholars analyze changes to a constellation of existing indicators—such as percent of homeowners, median home value, and median income (Bates, 2013; Mallach, 2008). Other methods of measuring the prevalence of gentrification include google street view observations (Ohmer et al., 2018) and surveys of

resident perceptions of change (DeVydler et al, 2019). Scholars use a wide range of methods to understand resident experiences of gentrification, including participatory photo mapping and interviews (Teixeira, Hwang, Spielvogel, Cole, & Coley, 2020) and action research (Hodkinson & Essen, 2014; Sinha, 2013; Thurber, Collins, Greer, McKnight, & Thompson, 2018). For more detailed discussion of instruments used to measure gentrification, see Ohmer et al., 2018.

Causes of Gentrification

Given that gentrification constitutes a complex transformation of a given area's land values, built environment, and demographics, gentrification does not have a singular cause. A 'supply side' analysis of gentrification focuses on the political and economic factors that incentivize unequitable development, and a 'demand side' analysis considers social and cultural factors that motivate homebuyers or renters to invest in gentrifying communities. Some social work scholars suggest that a thorough understanding of getrification's causes, impacts, and pathways of resistance requires a racial equity analysis (see Thurber, Krings, Sprague, & Ohmer, 2019). After describing the relationship of racism to gentrification, this section introduces the intersecting political, economic, social and cultural factors that can lead neighborhoods to gentrify (Lees, Slater, and Wyly; 2013).

Racism and Gentrification

Not all gentrifying neighborhoods are home to communities of color, and not all incomers are white. That said, people of color are more likely to live in neighborhoods vulnerable to gentrification, which has led scholars to conclude that people of color are disproportionately harmed by gentrification (Brookings Institution, 2001). As such, it is critical to investigate the relationship between racism and gentrification over time.

In the United States, racism is woven into political, economic, cultural and social beliefs, and systems. Racist ideologies about who can live where can be traced from colonization and attempts to exterminate and/or remove indigenous people (Harris, 1993). Given this, some activists and scholars situate gentrification within ongoing struggles for land rights, particularly among Indigenous groups, including claims for political rights and cultural preservation (Schusler, Krings, & Hernandez, 2018). Discriminatory policies and practices, such as homesteading, housing segregation, and racist lending—all of which functioned to benefit white households and limit opportunities for people of color—continued into the 20th century (Alfieri, 2019; Massey & Denton, 1993). Beginning in the 1940s, the federal government invested in homes, schools, and infrastructure in suburbs that were targeted to (and, in many cases, exclusively available to) white middle-class homebuyers.

Over time, central cities became home to a higher percentage of people of color and people in poverty. Rather than increasing investments based upon need, neoliberal austerity-driven policies reduced public investment within urban centers (Sugrue, 2014). Across the country, the placement of unwanted land uses—such as water treatment plants, garbage dumps, and toxic industries—proximate to neighborhoods that were predominantly inhabited by people of color contributed to environmental injustices and health inequities (Pellow, 2004; Pulido, 1996). This constellation of policies and practices which simultaneously invest resources to improve housing and amenities in some areas while divesting from or disrupting other areas is referred to as *uneven development* (Brenner & Theodore, 2002).

Importantly, despite state disinvestment, robust ethnic enclaves have formed and formed again, often supporting and supported by vibrant business and cultural districts that created spaces for survival and community uplift (Lipsitz, 2011). Many of these neighborhoods

experienced massive disruptions, most notably by Urban Renewal projects of the 1950s, which demolished over 1600 Black neighborhoods in the US, clearing the way for freeways and other infrastructure projects (Fullilove, 2004). Today, continued institutional racism, such as the disproportionate targeting of Black and Latino families with sub-prime loans (Ernst, Borcian, & Li, 2008), and racial biases, including the preference of most white residents to live in white neighborhoods (Krysan, 2002), reproduces geographies deeply segregated by race and class.

As a consequence of uneven development in U.S. cities, land values were suppressed in the neighborhoods where people of color predominantly lived, making these areas vulnerable to gentrification in the current era (for examples, see Gibson, 2007; Li, Vitiello, & Acoca, 2013). Racial disparities in income and wealth (Pendall & Hedman, 2015) make people of color particularly vulnerable to dramatic shifts in the housing market; at the same time, people of color are more likely to live in gentrifying neighborhoods (Brookings Institution, 2001). Ideologies, policies, planning practices, and lending decisions laced with racism create conditions in which gentrification disproportionately harms communities of color.

Factors contributing to gentrification

Gentrification is overdetermined, informed by complex interactions between economic, political, social and cultural factors. Geographies of gentrification are also shaped by capitalism, particularly as manifest in the current era of neoliberalism (Lees, Slater & Wiley, 2013; Smith, 2002). As an economic process, gentrification is built on the capitalist logic of 'buy low, sell high.' This logic requires variability in land values, which often result from past state disinvestment (see section on 'Racism and Gentrification'). However, state-sponsored actions such as zoning changes and tax breaks designed to stimulate development also trigger gentrification (Moskowitz, 2017; Wilson, Hutson, & Mujahid, 2008). These are often highly

politicized processes that privilege private sector interests over public benefits, and function to create a 'supply' for residential and commercial developers that can lead to rapid increases in land values.

Accompanying the economic and political causes of gentrification are social and cultural factors that create a 'demand' for new housing and amenities within gentrifying areas (Brown-Saracino, 2009; Smith 1996). For instance, some residents actively seek housing within gentrifying markets, in part because they can afford more spacious or architecturally pleasing units due to the aforementioned suppressed prices. Studies suggest that those moving into gentrifying areas are likely to be younger, more highly educated, whiter, and wealthier than long-term residents, and are more likely to be single and/or childless (Couture and Handbury, 2017). However, the demographics of neighborhood in-migration vary by region. In some areas, new residents include middle and upper-class people of color, and have ties to the area (Anderson & Sternberg, 2013; Johnson, 2014). Within Latino communities in the United States, for example, this dynamic has been referred to as *gentefication*--a word that plays on la gente, or "the people" in Spanish to suggest Latino-led gentrification of the community (Delgado & Swanson, 2019).

Consequences of Gentrification

Early gentrification scholars recognized residential displacement as its primary negative effect. While displacement remains an important consequence for many people with whom social workers engage, gentrification can produce a constellation of harms that may occur whether or not residents are physically displaced (Davidson, 2008; Hodkinson & Essen, 2015; Thurber, 2018; Twigge-Molecey, 2014). This section explores potential consequences of gentrification on individual and community wellbeing, with attention to economic, social, cultural, civic and health effects. For conceptual clarity, these dimensions of wellbeing are

explored in turn, though in practice they are often intertwined and co-constituted. Particular attention is given to the negative impacts of gentrification on those who are most vulnerable (such as poor and low-income people, children and elders), and the disparate effects on immigrant communities and communities of color. Given the variations of gentrification across contexts, and that gentrification occurs over time, not all residents of gentrifying areas will experience all of these consequences, or experience them in the same ways. As such, these should be considered *potential* rather than *universal* effects of gentrification (Thurber, 2018).

Economic Consequences

The economic effects of gentrification on wellbeing broadly stem from changes in land values, which can lead to increases in property taxes, a reduction of affordable housing, and decreased affordable amenities and resources in a given geographic area.

Increased Property Taxes

For homeowners in most jurisdictions, rising neighborhood property values in turn increase property taxes (Brookings Institution, 2001; Zuk et al, 2015). Low-wage workers and people living on fixed incomes are particularly affected by tax increases; if they cannot afford the increased taxes they may be forced to sell their homes or lose them because of tax foreclosure (Dewar, Seymour, & Druță, 2015). The loss of homes affects not only current residents, but has repercussions for the economic wellbeing of future generations as well. The generational effects are particularly harmful to Black households and households of other ethnic groups that have been historically restricted in or prevented from owning homes. As of 2015, the average white household in the U.S. had $258,000 greater net worth than their Black

counterparts (Oliver & Shapiro, 2019), and the lack of homeownership is a significant cause of this glaring wealth gap (Shapiro, Meschede & Osoro, 2013).

Decreased Availability of Affordable Housing

There are a variety of mechanisms through which gentrification leads to a loss of affordable housing. As property values and property taxes increase, individual and corporate landlords may raise rents (Brookings Institution, 2001; Zuk et al, 2015) or stop traditional renting altogether in favor of short-term rentals targeting tourists (Lee, 2016). This can greatly diminish the availability of affordable housing. Another worrisome trend is the loss of subsidized housing in gentrifying markets, such as place-based Section 8 in the U.S, which is one of the few tools to maintain economic diversity in redeveloping neighborhoods (DeFilippis & Wyly, 2008). Other state-sponsored redevelopment efforts, billed as necessary to improve housing quality and deconcentrate poverty, have had the net effect of reducing affordable housing. For example, the federal Hope VI housing initiative in the 1990s replaced less than 60% of the nearly 100,000 units of permanently affordable public housing it demolished (The Urban Institute, 2004).

If renters remain in gentrifying neighborhoods as rents increase, they are more likely to be rent-burdened, leaving less money each month for food, medicine, and other essentials. Increasingly, renters must move away from the urban core to find affordable housing. Although displaced renters may find more affordable housing costs, the trade-off is often time and money commuting to and from work, stores and schools (Brookings Institution, 2010). However, many displaced residents cannot find any affordable housing; as such, gentrification and homelessness are inextricably linked (Crewe, 2017; Versey, H.S. et al., 2019.)

Displaced Amenities, Resources, and Jobs

In addition to residential displacement, rising rents and property taxes may displace local businesses and organizations, which can eliminate amenities targeted to lower income residents (Brookings Institution, 2001). New businesses may exclusively target middle- and upper-income residents, and lower-income residents who remain in the neighborhood will have to travel further to shop for affordable groceries and other basic needs (Anguelovski et al., 2020; Davidson, 2008; Shaw & Hagemans, 2015; Twigge-Molecey, 2014). For older adults with limited mobility, the lack of affordable amenities proximate to their housing may limit their ability to age in place (Torres, 2020).

Social Consequences

Positive social ties (also referred to as *bonding social capital*) are characterized by relationships of trust and reciprocity (Perkins, Hughey, & Speer, 2002), and are foundational to individual and community wellbeing. Gentrification can negatively affect social wellbeing by disrupting existing social networks and exacerbating social tensions.

Disrupted Social Networks

Residents of low-income neighborhoods often have strong place-based interpersonal networks on which they rely for friendship, social support, and resource sharing. As neighborhoods gentrify and residents are priced out, these relationships are disrupted (Clampet-Lundquist, 2010; Twigge-Molecey, 2014). Children whose families are displaced experience disruptions in peer networks, both in and out of schools (Anguelovski et al., 2020). Older adults are also particularly vulnerable to having their social networks disrupted, they are more likely to rely on neighborhood-based networks for social support (Torres, 2020). While in theory, new

relationships can be built between longer-term and newer residents, evidence suggests this is rarely the case (Lees, 2008; Thurber, Boehmann & Heflinger, 2017).

Exacerbated Social Tensions

Changing racial, ethnic, and class demographics within gentrifying neighborhoods often exacerbate existing intergroup tensions, and people of color report increased experiences of racism and other forms of prejudice, discrimination, exclusion and marginalization in their daily lives (Drew, 2012; Rostenstein, 2019; Schmool et al, 2015) as do children (Anguelovski et al., 2020) and unhoused residents (Huyser & Meerman, 2014). Though gentrifying neighborhoods may be spatially integrated, they often remain socially segregated (Thurber, Boehmann & Heflinger, 2017), which can erode social wellbeing.

Cultural Consequences

The cultural consequences of gentrification result from changes to the collective customs, traditions, arts, institutions and social practices of a given area. This section highlights impacts on place identity, place attachment, and sense of belonging, each of which correlate to wellbeing.

Transformed Place Identity

Gentrification is frequently accompanied by the re-branding of neighborhoods (Hodkinson & Esson, 2015) to appeal to a new, wealthier demographic. In some settings, neighborhood historical meanings are erased as city elites push through changes to the names of streets, parks and schools (Chidester & Gadsby, 2016), and long-term residents lose the ability to define the identity of their community (Davidson, 2008). This erasure has particular significance in historically Black communities and other ethnic enclaves that have struggled to maintain their history and culture in the face of marginalization (Robinson, Rhodes, & Van Sluytman, 2020).

In other settings, place identities are commodified and tokenized, rather than erased. Such has been the case in some majority-Latino or Black neighborhoods, where local cultural traditions are capitalized to attract wealthier Latino and/or Black residents (Anderson & Sternberg, 2013). Ironically, as neighborhoods gentrify, many areas that were once scorned and surveilled for the perceived prevalence of 'gangs and drugs' have been recast as entertainment districts and perpetual playgrounds for daytime drinking and other kinds of consumption (Anguelovski et al., 2020; Thompson, Milton, Egan & Lock, 2018).

Changes to place identity materialize in the built and commercial environment, and who is able to access these spaces. Conflicts in gentrifying neighborhoods frequently surface around long-term and newer residents' conflicting preferences, including who should have access to public spaces such as bike paths and dog parks (Lubitow, Zinschlag, & Rochester, 2016; Martin, 2008; Rotenstein, 2019; Twigge-Molecey, 2014). Transformations in place identities have implications for who is imagined to be 'in place' or 'out of place' in a given area. Gentrification deepens marginalization and systemic oppression when low-income residents, older adults, and people of color are imagined to be 'out of place' in their neighborhoods. Given that gentrification is correlated with increased landlord surveillance (Stabrowski, 2014) and neighborhood policing (Smith, 2002), changes in who is imagined to be 'in place' can have very real consequences for people who live and work in a neighborhood, particularly people of color. In the United States, unarmed Black men are more than three times more likely to be shot by law enforcement than unarmed white residents (Ross, 2015); thus, changing place identity can heighten the risk of police violence for Black residents.

Diminished Place Attachment and Sense of Belonging

Feeling a connection to place and a sense of belonging is a key aspect of individual and collective wellbeing (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Place attachment is also correlated with civic engagement: people are more likely to take action in their communities the stronger their ties to place, particularly when they perceive a threat to their community (Mihaylov and Perkins, 2014; Lewicka, 2011). Residents who are displaced may find their place attachment severed; residents who remain may have fewer places where they feel comfortable and welcome (Drew, 2012; Hodkinson & Essin, 2015; Huyser & Meerman, 2014; Rotenstein, 2019; Shaw & Hagemans, 2015; Stabrowski, 2014; Torres, 2020; Twigge-Molecey, 2014). A particular concern is the diminished number of affordable and accessible *third spaces*—locations other than home and work, such as parks, coffee shops and libraries—that provide a sense of belonging, especially for youth (Anguelovski et al., 2020; Cole et al, 2019) and elders (García & Rúa, 2017; Torres, 2020), who rely on these gathering places to meet social needs.

Civic Consequences

Civic dimension of wellbeing has to do with the degree to which people are engaged in their community, such as by volunteering in a church or community center or building and exercising power through community organizing. Gentrification's civic consequences include reduced political influence of longtime residents and broader marginalization of longtime residents from engagement in civic life.

Eroded Political Influence

Neighborhood civic life is often anchored in organizations such as neighborhood associations, tenant and homeowner associations, faith-based organizations, and parent organizations. In gentrifying neighborhoods, new residents sometimes push long-term residents

from their roles in these groups and/or create new organizations and listservs to serve their interests, both of which are forms of political displacement (Davidson, 2008; Freidus, 2019; Hyra, 2013; Martin, 2008). Such political displacement erodes long-term residents' ability to influence decisions that directly affect their quality of life and ability to remain in their neighborhoods while simultaneously inflating newer residents' political influence.

The loss of power is particularly harmful in communities that have had to struggle for legitimacy and respect—working class, Black, Latino, and immigrant neighborhoods. Although in theory, the increased political and economic capital of newer residents could benefit long-term residents, in practice, this is rarely the case (for an exception, see Curran & Hamilton, 2012). Newer residents are less likely to know the history of the neighborhood; understand existing community resources, networks and needs; or prioritize the interests of the neighbors who predate them (Freidus, 2019; Martin, 2008).

Marginalized from Civic Life

The push-out of long-term residents from neighborhood-level politics, even when they remain in their neighborhood, can have broader political consequences. As urban studies scholar Derek Hyra cautions, "the loss of political power among longstanding residents can lead to increased mistrust and civic withdrawal by low-income people, further exacerbating pre-existing social inequalities and isolation" (2013, p,125). Displaced residents may experience a different form of political marginalization as they transition to new neighborhoods that may lack the infrastructure for civic engagement of their prior neighborhoods (Alfieri, 2019).

Health Consequences

Neighborhood revitalization generally correlates with improved health outcomes. However, in gentrifying neighborhoods, this relationship is complicated. Efforts to improve community health, such as reducing pollution or enhancing green amenities can catalyze gentrification (Checker, 2011; Lubitow, Zinschlag, & Rochester, 2016). In addition, the economic, social, cultural and political consequences of gentrification can manifest in adverse mental and physical health effects for long-term residents. These risks are greatest for children and older adults, immigrant communities and communities of color.

Strained Mental Health

Gentrification correlates with increased stress, depression and suicide risk among long-time residents (Anguelovski et al., 2020). The mental health effects of gentrification most acutely impact vulnerable populations. As neighborhoods gentrify, young people living in gentrifying neighborhoods report fear their families will be displaced, and stress in public spaces that no longer feel welcoming (Anguelovski et al., 2020). Educators find that children whose families are forced to move experience stress and anxiety in school and that children, parents and teachers all experience loss (Anguelovski et al., 2020). Older residents are more likely to experience increased anxiety and depression as their neighborhoods change (Smith, Lehning, & Kim, 2018) and social isolation when they or their friends have to move (Crewe, 2017). Facing increased racism and racial surveillance, long-time Black and Latino residents face increased stress, which has adverse health impacts on people of color (Paradies, 2006). And immigrant families, many of whom have already been displaced from their countries of origin, report compounded distress in gentrifying neighborhoods (Anguelovski et al., 2020). Those who move due to gentrification are more likely to experience acute mental distress. For example, Lim et al (2017) found that

residents displaced from gentrifying neighborhoods had higher rates of mental-health related hospitalizations than counterparts who were not displaced, up to five years after displacement.

Worsened Physical Health

Residents living in gentrifying neighborhoods experience a number of adverse health effects related to increased construction, including sleep loss and asthma (Anguelovski et al., 2020). Although gentrification may increase the *availability* of fresh fruits and vegetables in a neighborhood, in Boston, MA, healthcare workers note the lack of *affordability* has resulted in worsening cardiovascular health (Anguelovski et al., 2020). Concerningly, gentrification is also associated with preterm births for Black women, placing both mothers and their infants at greater risk (Huynh & Maroko, 2013). Worsened physical health is also a concern for residents displaced by gentrification, as they are more likely to have their primary care disrupted (Anguelovski et al., 2020).

Intervening in and Transforming Gentrifying Communities

Advancing social justice in the context of gentrification requires attention to procedural justice concerns (i.e., fair, democratic decision-making processes in which people who are impacted by policy have a role in shaping it) and distributional justice concerns (i.e., equitable access to material resources including land, jobs, and wealth) (Reisch & Garvin, 2016). This section draws upon interdisciplinary research to highlight four intervention approaches for responding to gentrification: community organizing, policy practice, community development, and community building. These four approaches are not mutually exclusive and can be strategically used to complement one another.

[Insert Thurber & Krings -Fig 1 here]

Macro practitioners can help community groups to identify their primary target(s) (i.e., specific economic, social, cultural, civic, and/or health consequences of gentrification) and which approach(es) are best suited to address their most pressing concerns, consideringthe community's assets, resources and constraints. As illustrated in Figure 1, the literature reviewed in this section suggests that some intervention approaches may be better suited than others to address particular consequences of gentrification. Regardless of the approach(es) adopted by community members, practitioners can develop or support participatory processes that center the perspectives and desires of marginalized residents (García, 2018; Ng, 2017) and partner in community-based research to inform and evaluate interventions (Thurber, Krings, Martinez, & Ohmer, 2019).

Community Organizing

Community organizing has been a central strategy for addressing gentrification's civic and economic consequences. Common goals of community organizing are to build the power of long-term residents to effectively make claims regarding their communities' needs and desires, influence neighborhood change, and gain increased decision-making authority and representation (Brady & Netting; Krings, Spencer, Jimenez, 2013). Community organizing in gentrifying neighborhoods often targets institutional and systems change. However it may also involve educational campaigns to help longtime residents better understand how to effect change, cultural campaigns to contest or transform place narratives, or social campaigns addressing social stigma and strengthening community relations. Macro social work practitioners can assist community organizing efforts by supporting member-led neighborhood and tenant organizations (Curran, 2018; Krings & Schusler, 2020; Krings & Copic, in press) or partnering with community organizers in community-based research (García, 2018; Thurber et al, 2018).

Strengths of Community Organizing

Longtime residents of gentrifying neighborhoods have leveraged community organizing to resist displacement, protect critical resources, and advocate for affordable and equitable development (García, 2018; Norris & Hearne, 2016; Stoecker, 2010; Thu, Schuller, Huggins, & Redmond, 2017). Several studies have found that communities with a history of organizing and robust community-based organizations are more able to effectively resist gentrification or to enact their own visions of development than those with limited organizational and economic resources (García, 2018; Graham, Debucquoy, & Anguelovski, 2016; Norris & Hearne, 2016; Ley & Dobson, 2008). That said, emergent community organizing efforts can also be successful in resisting gentrification, particularly when they center long-term residents' interests (Martin, 2008).

Given gentrification's multidimensional effects, communities organizing campaigns may have a variety of goals, including, though not limited to, preserving affordable housing. For example, organizers within San Francisco's low-income Chinese immigrant community helped save the city's health care access program, which began in part to alleviate the economic consequences of gentrification on residents' ability to afford health care (Fang et al, 2018).

Challenges to Community Organizing

Although community organizing can be an effective strategy to resist gentrification, 'wins' are often negotiated and partial, and not all campaigns achieve their goals. Communities without existing organizing infrastructure (such as a history of successful campaigns, the presence of engaged community leaders, and the ability to mobilize others) may find it difficult to launch organizing campaigns (Graham, Debucquoy, & Anguelovski, 2016; Ley & Dobson, 2008; Martin, 2008). Additionally, even when campaigns successfully achieve short-term goals,

it can be difficult to sustain community organizing movements to address longer-term threats posed by gentrification (Thu, Schuller, Huggins, & Redmond, 2017; Thurber et al, 2018). As community demographics change, organizations may struggle to maintain a base of long-term resident organizers; the organization itself may become gentrified (Krings & Copic, in press; Syeed, 2018). These challenges underscore the importance of macro practices to build capacity for community organizing over time and partnering with member-led neighborhood and housing organizations that prioritize long-term residents' needs.

Policy Practice

Policy practice has been a critical tool for addressing economic and health consequences of gentrification, for example, by generating new mechanisms to fund, build, and preserve affordable housing or provide affordable health care. Policies can enact *social reform*s that leave the basic structure of a system intact (for example, protecting a few affordable units within otherwise market-rate apartments), be *transformative* by fundamentally altering the system (for example, changing the way that loans or credit are made available), or blend the two. To the degree that policies require meaningful engagement of local residents in neighborhood planning and decision-making, policy practice can also redress some of the civic consequences of gentrification.

Macro social workers can assist in policy efforts by assessing the local policy context governing urban development, neighborhood revitalization, and affordable housing; educating stakeholders on policy alternatives; collaborating with housing activists, housing providers, and/or city government to advance policies that provide investments to improve the quality of life for residents of all incomes; and evaluating policy implementation.

Strengths of Policy Practice

Given the diversity of policy contexts across the country, there is no singular set of policy tools to combat gentrification. That said, increasing long-term residents' representation in local planning decisions can ensure accurate identification of the specific consequences of gentrification impacting a given community (Krings & Schusler, 2020). There is a constellation of policy tools specifically designed to fund, build, and preserve affordable housing in gentrifying neighborhoods. For example, in the context of diminished federal resources invested in affordable housing, some jurisdictions pass city or state *housing bonds* to fund affordable housing (Basolo & Scally, 2008). Jurisdictions also use *inclusionary housing ordinances* that incentivize or mandate a specific ratio of affordable, public or social housing units relative to the number of market-rate or luxury units of housing in a given development (Jacobus, 2015; Silver & Danielowski, 2019). To preserve existing affordable housing, some cities use *rent-control policies* to cap the amount by which landlords can increase rents, *just-cause eviction ordinances* to ensure landlords cannot displace residents in the absence of a lease violation, and/or laws requiring landlords to give tenants or tenant associations the first option to buy their building (for in-depth discussion of these and other policy options see National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2019; Jeon & Cash, 2019).

Recognizing the disparate impact gentrification has had in particular areas, some cities are experimenting with '*right to return*' policies that provide targeted affordable rental and homeownership opportunities to displaced residents (Iglesias, 2018; Goetz, 2019). The City of Portland's North/Northeast Preference Policy, forexample, is designed to address the damage caused to the city's Black neighborhood by government interventions that created conditions of racial segregation, neighborhood disinvestment, and current gentrification (Mandal, 2018).

Challenges to Policy Practice

There are numerous challenges to effective policy practice to prevent or mitigate gentrification. The socio-political context may privilege profit-driven policy decisions over those designed to benefit low-income communities. State and federal preemptions such as statewide bans on rent caps may hamper efforts to pass progressive city policies. Policy mandates requiring robust community engagement and decision-making, while admirable, can be difficult to scale effectively. In the US, private foundations are increasingly funding city planning efforts, resulting in less equitable and transparent planning (Markus & Krings, 2020). As with any policy, critical attention is needed to analyze who is helped, left behind, and harmed by a given initiative. In summary, effective policy practice includes careful analysis of the existing housing policy context; research to understand appropriate policy alternatives; and collaboration with local housing activists, housing providers, and/or government to advance equitable development policies.

Community Development

Broadly defined, community development refers to locally-driven efforts to identify and meet community needs, such as affordable and safe housing, accessible child care and early childhood development, and job training and placement (Sites, Chaskin & Parks, 2007). Historically, community development has been characterized by a holistic approach to community wellbeing, integrating economic, social, and environmental concerns; as such, community development can be effective at addressing a wide range of gentrification's consequences (Krings & Schusler, 2020; McKendry & Janos, 2015; Rigolon & Németh, 2018). For macro social workers, both the processes and outcomes of community development matter: at best, community development increases resident power and self-determination while also improving the quality of life in a given area. Macro social workers can help gentrifying

communities assess emerging community development needs; protect sites of significance from redevelopment or removal; evaluate strategies to improve community wellbeing; and develop programs to meet area economic, educational, health, and culturally-specific needs.

Strengths of Community Development

This section focusses on two promising community development approaches in gentrifying neighborhoods: the use of Community Benefits Agreements and various strategies to shift from private to collective land use, referred to here as commoning.

The use of Community Benefits Agreements (CBA) is an encouraging policy practice to meet community-identified needs in gentrifying neighborhoods (Krings & Thomas, 2018; Salkin & Lavine, 2007). A CBA is a contract between a developer and community group(s) guaranteeing specific negotiated 'benefits' to the community as part of a planned residential or commercial development project. They are most common in the context of large-scale developments, such as sports stadiums, hotels, and entertainment centers. The agreements aim to both reduce the negative effects of the development—for example, by requiring traffic mitigation—and increase the positive effects—for example, by prioritizing living wage jobs, providing job training, building affordable housing, and developing space for child care and health care facilities.

Commoning is another promising community development strategy used in gentrifying neighborhoods. Commoning refers to land and resources held 'in common' and for the collective's benefit, as opposed to land that is privately owned for the owner's benefit. A Community Land Trust (CLT) is one example of a commoning strategy. CLTs separate the ownership of land and housing: in this model, a local non-profit community-based organization permanently owns land and sells or rents housing to community members. For prospective

homeowners and renters, this helps reduce housing costs while also ensuring affordable housing for other households in the future. In neighborhoods at risk for gentrification, CLTs can be an important tool for long-term affordable housing preservation (Choi, Zandt, & Matarrita-Cascante, 2017; Gray & Galande, 2011).

In Chicago, resident organizers adopted a different commoning strategy following the city's announcement to close and sell a low-enrolled school in the historically-Latino yet gentrifying Humboldt Park neighborhood. A coalition of community groups bought the school from the city to create a mixed-use community education center (García, 2018). One aspect of their plan is a "Teacher's Village," which provides affordable housing so teachers can live within the community. By bringing students, parents and teachers into proximity, coalition members believe they will improve the educational experience for neighborhood children and more deeply connect the school to the community (García, 2018).

Challenges to Community Development

Leveraging community development responses to gentrification requires the infrastructure of an existing and credible community organization. Many community development strategies such as Community Land Trusts are governed by state and federal regulations, and require technical expertise and the ability to finance significant development projects. Some communities need time and facilitated support to mobilize members, build collective understandings of community needs and resources, and take strategic steps to build power (King & Lowe, 2018).

In areas with existing community development organizations, residents may find that staff are operating in silos (Rigolon & Németh, 2018), and programs are not as nimble as residents wish when confronting emerging neighborhood needs. In the U.S., community

development is often associated with a Community Development Corporation (CDC), a particular form of non-governmental organization that is increasingly focused on affordable housing development (Sites, Chaskin & Parks, 2007). Although CDCs may be critical partners to address the housing needs within gentrifying communities, they may or may not to holistically advance community needs.

Commoning strategies, while promising, can be limited in scale. Although they may be successful at preserving individual sites, such as the Humbolt Park "Teacher's Village" (García, 2018), they generally do not slow overall development and gentrification of a neighborhood. Additionally, a perpetual challenge within community practice is determining what constitutes meaningful community participation, who speaks 'for' a given community, and how conflicts within communities are negotiated. Investments presumed to be for the collective benefit of a community—such as a bike path constructed in one gentrifying Chicago neighborhood despite resident resistance—can end up being undervalued and underused by long-term residents, and may accelerate gentrification (Lubitow, et al, 2016). When considering community development interventions, macro practitioners must balance the need to build capacity to execute initiatives while also remaining organizationally flexible and meaningfully grounded in the community.

Community Building

For the purposes of this paper, *community building* can be understood as neighborhood-based interventions that are designed to target the social and cultural consequences of gentrification. These include educational programs to assist both long-term and newer residents in deepening knowledge about the history of the neighborhood (Chidester & Gadsby, 2016; Drew, 2012), creative/artistic projects to transform how residents experience and feel about/within their neighborhood (McKenna, Greene & Burke, 2017; Somdahl-Sands, 2008), and

festivals to foster positive community engagement (McLean & Rahder, 2013). Macro social workers can assist in community building efforts by collaborating on participatory needs assessments, helping to design and facilitate community building programs, and evaluating the effectiveness of such interventions.

Strengths of Community Building

In gentrifying neighborhoods, community building interventions can raise neighbors' collective consciousness about historic and contemporary neighborhood change (Drew, 2012; McLean, 2014), strengthen relationships among residents (Chidester & Gadsby, 2009; Thurber et al, 2018; Thurber, 2019), and transform residents' relationships to place (Somdahl-Sands, 2008; Thurber, 2019). Community building interventions that engage long-term residents in knowledge production have secondary benefits of addressing the civic consequences of gentrification (Drew, 2008; McLean 2014).

One example is the Neighborhood Story Project, an intervention that engages 8-12 residents in action research in their neighborhood (Thurber, 2019). Meeting weekly over 12 weeks, members build their collective understanding of the neighborhood's past and present, develop a line of inquiry, collect and analyze data, and find creative ways to share what they have learned with their broader community. Piloting the Neighborhood Story Project in three gentrifying neighborhoods in Nashville, TN, Thurber (2019) found that participants built new and/or deepened existing social relations, enriched their place knowledge and attachment, and increased their sense of individual and collective efficacy.

Challenges to Community Building

Community-building interventions vary greatly in terms of their goals, design, scale, and duration; as such, the potential outcomes and risks also vary. Thurber & Christiano (2019) find

that singular events—such as workshops or community festivals—may be effective at consciousness-raising but are unlikely to build power among marginalized communities or facilitate sustained collective action. Furthermore, many community building events engage relatively small groups of self-selected residents and thus are limited in terms of impact. Some community building initiatives, such as street festivals and arts events, may function to accelerate gentrification by increasing awareness and appeal of transitioning neighborhoods, and privileging entertainment of middle-and upper-class residents over basic needs to their poor and working-class neighbors (McLean & Rahder, 2013). Given the distinct potential of community building interventions to address gentrification's social and cultural consequences, macro practitioners can help ensure that interventions are well designed and facilitated to maximize consciousness raising, critical self-reflection, meaningful relationship building, and skill development.

Conclusion

Gentrification exacerbates inequalities and threatenes the wellbeing of poor and low-income people, in particular people of color, elders, and children. As such, social workers must understand the varied causes of gentrification, the potential consequences of gentrification to wellbeing, and the strategies communities can use to resist gentrification and improve wellbeing. There is a continued need for interdisciplinary research into strategies for resisting and transforming gentrification. Social work scholars and practitioners have an opportunity to describe, analyze, and compare how gentrification impacts their practice and, importantly, how people respond to threats associated with it. In particular, community activists and practitioners benefit from applied case studies explicating the conditions in which various intervention

approaches are more, and less, effective. There is a critical role for macro social workers to join communities in responding to the threats and/or harm caused by gentrification, to serve as facilitators, collaborators, accomplices, and evaluators in ongoing efforts to advance justice in gentrifying neighborhoods.

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