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Gentrification and Nonprofit Activities for Neighborhood Development in Baltimore, Maryland and Houston, Texas

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This study examines the role of community-based nonprofit organizations in neighborhood revitalization/community development and their impact on the level of housing services. The neighborhoods in the study represent certain universalities of gentrification in older communities, and therefore selected for the study. By going beyond the profitability of gentrification, this study examines the social costs associated with gentrification through the lens of nonprofit organizations using quantitative data from Baltimore, Maryland and Houston, Texas. Taking into account nonprofit organizations as important actors in the gentrification field, this study contributes to the understanding of the social cost of gentrification and how community-based nonprofit organizations can be key to mitigating displacement of neighborhood residents and the erosion of social capital.

Keywords: Gentrification, Nonprofit organizations, neighborhood revitalization, community development

With a growing number of new economic and housing developments in inner-cities, we are experiencing a reversal of white-flight (Boustan and Margo, 2013; Crowder and South, 2008). Prior to the development of the automobile, the United States experienced an increasing number of upper and middle-class people relocating from the urban core of cities to segregate themselves from their poor, Black/Hispanic counterparts, crowded cities, and rising crime rates (Grubb, 1982; Cullen and Levitt, 1999). Those individuals and families who were able to afford a private vehicle to commute from the suburbs to work took

advantage of “better living”. As more and more cities lost their manufacturing base, the fortunes of the inner-cities declined, African Americans who had moved by the thousands into the cities for economic reasons were the hardest hit (Haines, 2010).

Furthermore, policies by the government such as redlining marginalized minority groups has contributed to discriminatory housing practices and disinvestment in inner-cities (Rugh and Massey, 2010). Fast-forward to the present, more people are raising concerns about congestion increasing their daily commute time to work, lack of public transportation and walkability, expensive gas prices, and the increase in the cost of living. Many are pointing to gentrification as the solution to the many challenges that communities face (Lees et al., 2008).

One question that has motivated gentrification scholars is what strategies would better address social equity and social policy issues that confront minority and low-income groups during community revitalization. Since nonprofit organizations tend to focus on human development at the expense of profit motives, it has been suggested that gentrification championed by the values they espouse would contribute to a more equitable distribution of the benefits that accrue to residents due to neighborhood gentrification (Mayer, 1991; Feiock and Jang, 2009; Balassiano and Chandler, 2010; Towey, 2017). Our research question asks: what are the financial, economic, and social benefits of gentrification championed by community-based nonprofits? In order to address the question, we employ a dependent t-test comparison of means model to analyze the data from Baltimore, Maryland and Houston, Texas.

Our results show that financial indicators such as housing values and occupancy rates improved while the neighborhoods also experienced improvements in household incomes and college educational attainment. Moreover, the socio-demographic indicators show significant increases for Hispanic minority groups in Baltimore following gentrification. However, there were no demographic changes in all races following gentrification in Houston. While this does not suggest the absence of displacement following gentrification, it indicates the possibility of community-based nonprofits considering social equity issues that maintain minority presence in the gentrified communities.

For the remainder of the research, we address the underlying causes of gentrification. We then examine the literature that assesses the impact that gentrification has on neighborhoods, such as the generation of revenue, equitable allocation of resources and efficient delivery of public services through collaborative arrangements. From a theoretical context, we examine the role of nonprofit organizations and why their strategies to invest in people contribute to financial, economic and socio-demographic wellbeing for neighborhoods. Following that, we describe our data, test our expectations, present the results, and discuss the findings. Finally, we summarize the contribution of the article, identify implications, and offer policy recommendations that would help resolve the issues of displacement of low-income minority groups in Baltimore and Houston.

Overall, our study is important to municipalities and communities considering the introduction of gentrification to distressed areas. We show that investing in people as implemented by community-based nonprofits likely contribute to gentrified communities that

recognize the need to preserve demographic structures of communities and, therefore, address social equity issues. We acknowledge the limitations of the before and after (pre-post) method of evaluating the impact of the gentrification program and using only two cities in such a study. However, the study offers important lessons for coordinated efforts at gentrifying communities that leverage the influence of community based nonprofit organizations.

Wicked Problems: The Gentrification Solution

Gentrification, a form of geographical reshuffling of existing lower-income residents to make room for middle-class residents and economic activities, can be considered a wicked problem (Weber and Khademian, 2008). Gentrification falls into the category of wicked problems because its definition is murky, and it does not have a set of causes. The term wicked problem is certainly a buzzword in the field of public administration and public policy. These complex problems require collaboration between two or more entities to provide resources to resolve the issue that affects multiple policies and jurisdictions. One contentious topic that meets the criteria to be a wicked problem is the provision of affordable housing stock. However, the more contentious solution is gentrification. Gentrification has been defined as the changes of inner-cities caused by the displacement of low-to-moderate income households by affluent households to stimulate the economy (Florida, 2002; Sullivan, 2005). The following paragraphs discuss how gentrification is used as a solution to the affordable housing stock crisis.

First, wicked problems are unstructured (Weber and Khademian, 2008). In other words, there is no clear consensus on the cause and effect of the problem. Second, wicked problems are overlapping, interconnected problems that cross into multiple policy domains and levels of government. These types of problems are often difficult because they create as many problems as solutions—public health, transportation, and education. Third, wicked problems are relentless. There is never a clear solution to resolve wicked problems. These problems require engagement from multiple entities; however, attempts to resolve wicked problems will have consequences across other policy domains.

For decades, distressed areas have been viewed as a wicked problem because one entity cannot resolve the issues within a neighborhood alone. Although many solutions to this problem have been proposed—predominantly consisting of large financial commitment from local governments, gentrification is the most commonly used technique across the country (Slater, 2006; Smith, 2002).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of residential vacancies, excluding seasonal vacant properties, increased by 51% from 2000 to 2010 (GAO, 2011). The problems associated with vacant and abandoned homes, which may result in the decline of neighborhoods, are the responsibility of local governments. Given the growing number of foreclosures, vacant homes have been vandalized and burglarized, which increases the costs for local governments and reduces the revenue. Areas with significant number of abandoned, deteriorated and vacant properties correlate with crime, declining population, unemployment, and poverty. Using secondary data collected from the Census Bureau and local government websites, this paper seeks to examine the role of nonprofit organizations in neighborhood revitalization/community development and their impact on the level of services.

Governance

Compared to state and local governments, the federal government provides the largest share of funds for affordable housing programs to local governments within the United States. For example, the United States federal government continues to play a vital role in providing loans and grants to local governments through acts such as the National Housing Act of 1934, 1945, 1947, and 2008 to resolve structural issues of homes and provide affordable housing to low-income families. Oates (1999) indicated that the federal government has given states certain authority with regards to distributing specific goods and services such as Medicaid, welfare, legal services, housing, and job training in hopes that the states and local government are closer and more in tuned to the preferences of their constituents.

Gentrification is one strategy commonly used to solve issues because of its potential to increase revenue, reduce congestion, and decrease crime rates in dilapidated neighborhoods. Prior to gentrification, decaying neighborhoods suffer from school closures, abandoned or vacant homes, and poor public services such as public safety, trash collection and wastewater treatment. The conditions also have negative externalities effects — decisions by one jurisdiction could affect other jurisdictions without their engagement in the decision— public safety, pollution, and congestion (Ostrom and Ostrom 1971). Park (2021) presents evidence based on census data from four neighborhoods in Houston, Texas, which argued that displacement does take place, specifically in black neighborhoods. The study shows an increase in educated Hispanics increasing, while the number of African American/Black residents decreasing. The study also shows an increase in renter-occupancy.

Gentrification Stage Models

To understand the dynamics of the causes and consequences of gentrification, various models have been put forth to explain and predict the complexities of gentrification (Clay, 1979; Gale, 1979; Hackworth and Smith 2001; Lees et al., 2008). These models help explain the changes neighborhoods undergo in order to understand and frame the chaotic process of this phenomenon. These spatial changes have led to divided opinions among scholars and policymakers. Policymakers see a windfall to the public coffers through the revitalization of the built environment. Scholars, on the other hand, often emphasize the social cost associated with gentrification. Extant literature is replete with examples of urban redevelopment negatively impacting poorer residents and ultimately displacing them. However, the same can be said of gentrification happening in tandem with grassroots activities that benefit and uplift the pioneer residents of an area (Hyra, 2015). Lees (2008) postulated that the positive benefits and uplifting of residents relied on meaningful community participation linking residents to economic development that drives gentrification. The work of nonprofit organizations and community-based organizations take on more significance roles as they see the hope in communities while being aware of the persistent pressure of looming displacement for some residents (Hyra, 2015).

Coined in the 1960s by urban geographer Ruth Glass (Glass, 1964), gentrification has garnered protracted debate since making an appearance in urban and spatial development. When Glass used the term in the 1960s, she used it to explain both the physical and social changes in housing as well as housing ownership (Hamnett, 2003). Gale and Clay (1979) both focused on class and social status between original residents and those gentrifying the neighborhood. They both placed emphasis on displacement especially displacement experienced by the original residents.

Clay's (1979) model was produced using data on neighborhood change from several large cities in the United States including Boston, Washington D.C, and Philadelphia. His

model was based on stages of gentrification. The first stage was the “pioneer stage” where a small group of risk oblivious people move into a neighborhood. In the second stage, an expansion occurs where more of the same people move in and developers begin to note the potential of the location. During the third stage, an important change occurs when new middle-class residents view their homes as potential investments and signal others such as young professionals to move in. The fourth and final stage is when more residents from other classes (business and management) move in and compete with the existing professional working class (Lees et al., 2008). The displacement of residents in this model increases gradually as we move from one stage to the next and housing becomes limited.

Hackworth and Smith’s (2001) model continues to be one of the pivotal models describing the progression and spread of gentrification. According to Hackworth and Smith (2001), gentrification today is quite different to gentrification in the early 1970s, late 1980s, even the early 1990s” (pp. 234). They argued that states have taken a coherent strategy that aims to remake urban space to benefit investors, wealthy residents, and tourists as a result of the changing social, economic and cultural climate of urban centers. They based their research on the history of gentrification in three neighborhoods in New York and were able to identify three stages of gentrification. They noted that each stage of the process of gentrification was led by a recession. For example, the first wave of gentrification in the 1950s was small and ended with the global recession of the 1970s. According to the authors, the second stage witnessed the birth of gentrification in many cities and also brought to light the change in gentrification because of the struggle over displacements, homelessness, racial discrimination, and income inequality. They noted that the recession in the 1990s slowed gentrification as there was less speculation in the housing market. This was also the signal for the third stage of gentrification, as this stage was seen as the accumulation of capital by investors (Hackworth and Smith, 2001).

Hackworth and Smith (2001) noted distinct characteristics that made their third stage of gentrification different from the other phases. The first was that gentrification was primarily led by the efforts of developers, rather than residents. The second distinct characteristic was the significant role the government played in facilitating the process. The third was the limited role the anti-gentrification movement had as they became marginalized. Finally, gentrification was diffusing into more neighborhoods outside of the urban core. This diffusion led to the encouragement of social impact investments into cities’ affordable housing market. An example was The Turner Multifamily Impact Fund in Prince George’s County, Maryland. The Fund purchased existing multifamily housing stock and improved it using impact investment funds. The improved units were dedicated affordable units and the controlled rents worked to provide investors with a small return while maintaining affordable units.

Explaining Gentrification

Several theories have been posited to explain gentrification; however, the complexity of the phenomenon also means that these theories have come under criticism as the urban landscape is in a continuous process of being remade. One theory that has been put forth was the rent gap theory by Smith (1979). This theory posited that the process of gentrification tends to occur because urban developers sense the financial gains in acquiring cheap properties, inflating their value and then induce wealthier tenants to pay for them. Smith (1986) noted that gentrification was an issue defined by the uneven development in urban areas based on

the rent seeking capitalistic nature of developers. However, the theory was a causal one and not a significant measure of gentrification.

Another theory and explanation focused on consumer demands noting that the rising service class moved to urban neighborhoods to cut down on commute and be closer to culture. This theory was supported by David Ley (1987) who was also a fierce opponent of Smith (1986). Ley argued that the characteristics of what the people (gentrifiers) want- their demands should be taken into account. Proponents of this theory postulated that the occupational and economic changes of gentrifiers were factors that affected the choices of gentrifiers- choice of places to work and live. According to Hamnett (1991), "explanation for gentrification must begin with the processes responsible for the production and concentration of key factions of the service class" (p.186).

Rose (1984) supported this theory and suggested that gentrification indicators need to reassess its chaotic nature in order to better explain the activities and aspirations that aligns with the diverse labor market. Further, other social and cultural activities such as the movement of women into the workforce meant that many of them postponed marriage and children thereby changing the demographic makeup of gentrifiers (Bondi, 1991). As noted by Bondi (1991), gender and class play important roles in the gentrification process and should be key factors to consider in gentrifiers demands. The consumption side of gentrification was not without criticisms. Smith (1986) agreed that gentrification was an expression of changes in the urban scene, at the same time, he holds firm to his theory that uneven spatial development was the direct results of the actions of urban developers. Gentrification was a reflection of social changes and processes driven by capitalism which contributes to social, class and cultural differentiation in urban centers.

Recent theories on gentrification go beyond simply looking at the supply and demand debate as well as looking beyond the recession of the late 1990s when many homeowners lost their homes. The current discussion focuses on gentrification as a tool in urban planning and growth (Smith, 2002). The expansion of the application of gentrification was not a new phenomenon, however, Slater et al. (2004) focused on expanding gentrification from the largest cities to the smallest cities. They also expanded the idea to include rural areas, new housing developments – which they labelled as gentrification. They argued that typically, this type of development may not be seen as having the underlying theme of classism and displacement. Thus, they postulated that researchers should decouple displacement from gentrification. By using gentrification as a policy tool for growth and revitalization, little regard was given to the working-class being directly impacted (Slater et al., 2004). They seemed to take the stance that not considering displacement as key to understanding gentrification as irresponsible. Slater (2006) centered his argument on urban policy and social mixing as a tool to be used for investing in areas of urban decay and abandonment. What this social mixing typically means is that middle class residents moved into working class neighborhoods. However, there was no movement of the working class up into the middle class neighborhood, making this an unbalanced policy tool (Smith, 2002).

Causes of Gentrification

The causes of gentrification are based on several assumptions. First, gentrifying deteriorating neighborhoods could contribute to the tax base in a city by increasing revenue (Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Lang, 1986; Smith, 1979). With growing fiscal constraints, municipalities must identify alternatives to produce sustainable revenue sources to continue providing quality public services. While property taxes vary across cities and states, given different tax rates across the country, property taxes account for approximately 40 % of state and local tax

receipts (NAHB Housing and Economic Policy Group, 2018). Property taxes are used to secure bonds, fund public services such as education, parks and police. Neighborhoods that are deteriorated or decayed experience lower property values. These types of neighborhoods hinder the amount of revenue a city receives to provide adequate public services such as policing, education, parks, sanitation, and public education.

Second, there may be more economic opportunities in the city compared to the suburbs. In the 1970s and 1980s, capital began to relocate to the outskirts of the city. As a result, stable, diverse employment (i.e., manufacturing) vacating the city resulted in less economic opportunities for residents, expanding economic disparity among lower-income residents in inner city neighborhoods. Research showed that gentrification diversified population with regards to education, income, and culture, which changed the employment sector from low-wage jobs (i.e., service industry) to more moderate-wage jobs (Lester and Hartley, 2014; Meltzer and Ghorbani, 2017). Additionally, businesses such as retail followed affluent consumers, generated greater revenue through sales tax, and additional employment opportunities for residents.

The third explanation for gentrification is political equity. Poor to low-income residents have little voice in how resources are allocated in their community. If there is any, then their voices are stifled by the limited funding. Gentrification made these areas more attractive to potential middle-and upper income residents who were capable and willing to pay for better public services. The assumption was that old residents and new residents better engage in the democratic process.

Lastly, the number of community organizations may cause gentrification. Fragmentation exists when a large number of community organizations have similar missions and objectives, but do not collaborate with each other to achieve the desired outcome—provision of affordable, quality housing to existing and new residents. Fragmentation can enhance gentrification through organizations competing for limited resources and loss of autonomy in the decision-making process (Martin, 2004).

From the literature, members of the community, government officials and non-government organizations are not rejecting change to improve the neighborhood. What is being argued is that the positive change should incorporate existing community residents as opposed to pushing them out for new, affluent residents.

The Role of Community Based Nonprofits in Neighborhood Gentrification

The gentrification and neighborhood revitalization scholarship lack analysis of the impact of nonprofit organizations on neighborhood gentrification and neighborhood level services. The scant literature that discusses the role of nonprofit organizations in the gentrification process emphasize their roles in encouraging community advocacy and engagement to mitigate the adverse effects of gentrification (Balassiano and Chandler, 2010; Towey, 2017). Over the years, residents have increasingly lowered their expectation of local governments to adequately provide public goods and services to communities. The Center of Budget and Policy Priorities, for example, reported that the federal government spent \$150 billion to help Americans buy or rent homes, but many low-income Americans that were struggling to rent affordable housing were excluded from the expenditures¹. Local governments are more likely

¹ Fischer, W. & Sard. B. (November 4, 2016). Chart Book: Federal Housing Spending is Poorly Matched to Need. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (<http://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/chart-book-federal-housing-spending-is-poorly-matched-to-need>)

to resolve many social issues by collaborating with nonprofit organizations. While nonprofit organizations have various roles, one of their traditional roles is to assist in the provision of goods and services to underserved persons or communities in response to social needs (Feiock and Jang, 2009). Unlike contracting services out to the private sector, nonprofits have a lower risk of contract failure (Lamothe et al., 2006). This is the case because nonprofit organizations do not seek profits and are less likely to pursue opportunistic behaviors. Also, nonprofits are known to have community relationships and are believed to provide higher quality of services compared to for-profit organizations.

Nonprofit organizations are often recognized as contributors to the affordable housing sector because of their mission to serve disadvantaged populations (Alexander, 1998; Salamon, 1995, 2000). Over the years, nonprofits such as Habitat for Humanity have earned legitimacy from efficiently and effectively increasing the affordable housing stock in communities across the country. Mayer (1991) shows that an estimated 2,000 community-based development nonprofit organizations supply and maintain houses at costs affordable to low-income people.

However, nonprofits and local government initiatives are not helping long-standing residents (particularly minorities) in the previously distressed neighborhoods (Maurrasse, 2006). Bonds et al. (2015) argued that organizational structure of nonprofit organizations affected their role in service provision and community development. The authors gave an example of Habitat for Humanity not collaborating with churches and community organizations by recruiting volunteers working on housing issues, but instead recruiting outside volunteers to complete tasks. This shows a disconnection from the community in which Habitat for Humanity guaranteed to serve. It is important for nonprofits to be flexible and adapt to their environment. The issue with Habitat for Humanity is that their organizational model worked primarily with volunteers, however they were not willing to hire contractors or members from the community they served. This created a rift between community leaders and the organization because there were no activities such as job training or an increase in employment in the community.

The role of nonprofit organizations in local government vary. The aim of this research is to identify the factors that influence changes in gentrified communities in two cosmopolitan areas, namely Baltimore, Maryland and Houston, Texas. This research is essential to inform local government officials of policies to help address the growing needs of the residents, especially the low-income, in their communities. Therefore, to support our argument we hypothesize that an increase in community based nonprofit organizations would be associated with positive outcomes from gentrification in terms of financial, and economic, and socio-demographic characteristics for the neighborhoods. Specifically, we suggest that housing values and occupancy rates that contribute to the financial condition of the neighborhoods would increase with gentrification. We also suggest that since community based nonprofit organizations invest in people, economic conditions namely income and employment numbers would improve as a result of the nonprofit activities in gentrifying neighborhoods. Furthermore, we assert that socio-demographic benefits to communities would manifest when gentrification championed by community-based nonprofits result in minimal displacement of low-income minority groups.

Data and Methods

Sources of Data

This study investigates the impact of gentrification activities undertaken by community-based nonprofits in two U.S. cities using quantitative data that complement a narrative on how social

policy contributes to financial, economic and socio-demographic changes after gentrification. We collected quantitative data on Baltimore, Maryland, and Houston, Texas at the neighborhood level for two time periods—before and after the neighborhoods were gentrified. For Baltimore, we collected data for years 2000 and 2010 for 12 neighborhoods of the city. The data are from the Maryland State Data Center is available at www.mdp.state.md.us/msdc. We also collected data from 11 neighborhoods in Houston over two periods, years 2000 and 2015. In selecting two time periods for paired comparison, it is important for sufficient time lag. The 10-year period for Baltimore and 15-year period for Houston provide sufficient duration to examine if gentrification had an impact on the communities investigated. The timeline used for the two cities differ because these are the periods for which data are available. Nonetheless, the data provide the opportunity to analyze if differences occurred as a result of the gentrification projects.

The data are from the Planning & Development Department in the City of Houston is available at www.Houston.gov. The data included various financial, economic and socio-demographic variables that have been hypothesized to change due to gentrification. Table 1 lists the neighborhoods used in the study. While downtown and the Museum Districts of Houston are currently thriving economically, this was not the case in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Downtown and the Museum District like other areas of the city have experienced changes in physical, cultural, and demographic characteristics. Since 2000, through public and private investments to recruit more investors, residents, and retailers, downtown and the museum district have shown an influx of people relocating to downtown to reduce their commute times and experience more of the amenities Downtown has to offer.

Table 1: Selected Neighborhoods in Baltimore and Houston Used in our Study

SN	Baltimore, MD	Houston, TX
1	Greenmount West	Fourth Ward-Freedmen's Town
2	Remington	Greater Heights
3	Reservoir Hill	Greater Third Ward
4	Federal Hill	Second Ward-East End
5	Hampden	Acres Home
6	Barclay	Braeswood
7	Pigtown	Greater Fifth Ward
8	Riverside	East Houston
9	Locust point	Downtown
10	Mount Vernon	Midtown
11	Hollins (Market)	Museum District
12	Woodberry	

For context, Table 2 compares the financial, economic, and socio-demographic indicators in the cities of Houston and Baltimore with the means in the United States. These two cities are located in large cosmopolitan areas that attract more minority and diverse groups seeking employment and other economic and social opportunities than the average United States city. Consequently, the cities of Houston and Baltimore have a larger minority population compared with the average city in the United States. Although the United States is majority white (76.3%), the majority of the residents in Houston identify as Hispanic (45%) with an additional 22% being Black, making Houston’s population predominantly that of minority races. More than 62% of Baltimore’s residents identify as Black.

Although college and high school graduation rates in the two cities compare well with the mean for the United States, poverty levels are about double the national average. Also, median household incomes are more than \$10,000 lower. The median housing values and owner-occupied homes are much more favorable in the average United States city than in the two cities examined. The challenges confronting these cities make them an excellent case study to understand how efforts at gentrification improve financial, economic and socio-demographic characteristics of the cities.

Because of their cosmopolitan nature, the Baltimore and Houston’s neighborhoods used in this study have also benefited from copious nonprofit activities with the objective of improving the wellbeing of residents and warrant scholarly attention, which justifies their selection. The neighborhoods selected for the present study are those that benefited from gentrification activities of community based nonprofit organizations. The periods between 2000 and 2015 saw gentrification activities by nonprofit organizations in Houston neighborhoods with the objective of improving the economic condition of the neighborhoods. Similarly, Baltimore received investments for gentrification between 2000 and 2010 making it possible to assess the impact of gentrification on the neighborhoods.

Table 2. Selected Indicators of the Cities of Houston and Baltimore in 2019

Characteristics	Houston, Texas	Baltimore, Maryland	United States
Population	2,323,268	593,490	328,239,523
Race (%white)	24.4	27.5	76.3
Race (%Black)	22.6	62.4	13.4
Race (%Hispanic)	45	5.3	18.5
College graduates (%)	32.9	31.9	32.1
High Sch. grad (%)	78.9	85.2	88.0
Median house value	171,800	160,100	217,500
Owner occupied (%)	42.3	47.5	64
Employed (16yrs +)	67.2	61.8	63.0
Median Household Income (\$)	52,333	50,379	62,843
Poverty rate (%)	20.1	21.2	10.5

Variables description

Gentrified neighborhoods are expected to report higher housing values and occupancy rates, which are key financial indicators in the housing industry. Economic indicators that gentrification affects include employment rates and household incomes. The third indicator is socio-demographic characteristics and includes educational attainment racial and population characteristics. The three major ethnicities in the communities are White, Black, and Hispanic. The percentage of the population that is of a particular race is calculated by the count of that race (Black, white, and Hispanic) divided by the total population of the neighborhood. The result is multiplied by 100 to produce the measure in percentages. The percent occupancy rate is calculated by dividing the number of occupied homes by the total

number of housing units multiplied by 100. The employment rate of the neighborhoods is calculated in percentages.

Similarly, the population of the neighborhood that is 25 years or older that has college degrees or higher was calculated. Housing values and household incomes were measured in dollars. All the dollar amounts were adjusted to 2017 dollars to correct for inflation. All variables were calculated for before (A) [year 2000] and after (B) the neighborhoods were gentrified [year 2010 for Baltimore and year 2015 for Houston]. Table 3 shows the variable description and sources while Table 4 and 5 show the descriptive statistics of the variables used in the present study for Baltimore and Houston.

Table 3. Variable Description and Sources

Variables	Description	Sources
Population	The total population of the neighborhood	City official city website
White (%)	The percentage of the population of the neighborhood that identifies with white race/ethnicity	City official city website
Black (%)	The percentage of the population of the neighborhood that identifies with Black race/ethnicity	City official city website
Hispanic (%)	The percentage of the population of the neighborhood that identifies with Hispanic race/ethnicity	City official city website
Occupied (%)	The percentage of the houses in the neighborhood that is occupied	City official city website
Housing value (\$)	The mean dollar value of a house in the neighborhood	City official city website
Household Income (\$)	The mean household income of the neighborhood	City official city website
Employed (%)	Percentage of the neighborhood that is employed	City official city website
College (%)	Percentage of the neighborhood aged 25 years or older than has completed college education	City official city website

Overall, Baltimore’s population declined by 4.6% over the period being considered (CensusView, n.d). However, the gentrified neighborhoods experienced only a 1.85% decrease—much lower compared to the entire city. It could be that the trend of out migration that was affecting the city impacted the neighborhoods as well despite the gentrification happening. Social vices such as property crime, vacant housing, high property taxes, low performing public schools, and unfriendly housing choices for new retirees have been cited as possible reasons for population decline in Baltimore (Knezevich, 2020). On the contrary, the neighborhoods in Houston experienced increased population consistent with the growth the entire city was experiencing.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of the Gentrified Area in Baltimore, Maryland

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Population A	3,621	2,225	1,111	7,462
Population B	3,555	2,029	1,339	6,963
White A (%)	55.0	36.0	3.0	97.3
White B (%)	56.1	32.3	8.5	98.6
Black A (%)	40.2	36.2	0.5	95.2
Black B (%)	37.1	32.5	1.3	88.1
Hispanic A (%)	1.6	0.7	0.6	3.1
Hispanic B (%)	3.1	1.1	1.1	4.8
Occupied A (%)	83.2	10.3	63.6	99.1
Occupied B (%)	80.4	8.9	64.1	90.5
Housing value A (\$)	149,733	174,369	11,014	689,868
Housing value B (\$)	211,263	60,385	128,012	329,148
Household Income A (\$)	26,676	13,666	5,052	51,507
Household Income B (\$)	43,746	20,867	15,340	83,157
Employed A (%)	92.2	4.7	85.1	98.9
Employed B (%)	92.1	4.6	84.4	99.6
College A (%)	40.4	20.1	13.9	80.5
College B (%)	47.6	21.0	18.5	86.6

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of the Gentrified Area in Houston, Texas

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Population A	16,288	11,178	1,740	41,486
Population B	16,819	10,583	4,085	41,362
White A (%)	25.7	21.7	2.2	67.5
White B (%)	31.9	25.0	3.8	63.3
Black A (%)	36.1	31.5	1.4	86.4
Black B (%)	31.7	26.3	1.0	71.2
Hispanic A (%)	34.4	25.4	10.0	86.1
Hispanic B (%)	28.6	19.1	12.2	76.4
Occupied A (%)	86.2	7.0	73.0	94.0
Occupied B (%)	85.2	6.1	74.0	94.8
Housing value A (\$)	67,307	56,307	20,356	211,639
Housing value B (\$)	218,206	128,587	62,431	425,533
Household Income A (\$)	23,133	9,631	10,181	40,650
Household Income B (\$)	60,999	26,146	29,524	98,337
Employed A (%)	48.9	16.8	13.2	70.5
Employed B (%)	90.9	6.0	82.2	98.0
College A (%)	11.8	15.4	0.7	51.6
College B (%)	39	28.2	8.2	78.7

Data Analysis

As of 2000, there were 21 nonprofits actively involved with gentrification activities in the 11 Houston neighborhoods sampled in the present study. By 2015, the number had increased to 28—a 25% increase. Similarly, over a 10-year period, from 2000 to 2010, the 12 Baltimore neighborhoods reported increased nonprofit activities in their communities. The question of interest is, would an increase in community based nonprofit activities that aim at gentrifying the neighborhoods contribute to improvements in housing value, occupancy rates, employment opportunities, increased incomes, and college educational attainment that is often associated with gentrification? Also, we are interested in understanding the socio-demographic changes that occur as a result of the gentrified communities. We employ quantitative data analysis to argue that the changes in the neighborhood’s financial, economic, and socio-demographic characteristics are attributable to gentrification activities of nonprofits in the neighborhoods. The use of before and after (pre-post) analysis for program evaluation is the most popular even though it has limitations (Dye, 2017; Singleton & Straits, 2010; Nukpezah and Blankson, 2017).

Data collected on the same neighborhood or case at two different periods are said to be paired (Pollock and Edwards, 2020; Singleton and Straits, 2010). Because of this, we use the paired dependent t-test of comparison of means in analyzing the data (Pollock and Edwards, 2020; Singleton and Straits, 2010). This test compares the means of variables from the same neighborhood at two points in time—before a project is implemented and after. The project in question in this case is gentrification championed by community based nonprofit organizations. This analytical method allows us to statistically examine whether the mean differences of the cases are statistically equal to 0 or not at the 95% confidence level. The *t*-distribution with *n* – 2 degrees of freedom is computed using the formula:

$$t_{(n_1 + n_2 - 2)} = \frac{X_1 - X_2}{S \left\{ \left(\frac{n_1}{n_2} \right) \right\}^{\frac{1}{2}}}$$

Where $S = \left\{ \frac{(n_1 - 1) s_1^2 + (n_2 - 1) s_2^2}{(n_1 + n_2 - 2)} \right\}^{\frac{1}{2}}$. Where *n*₁ and *n*₂ are the sample size for before and after gentrification, respectively. *X*₁ and *X*₂ are the sample means before and after gentrification, respectively. Also, *s*₁ and *s*₂ are sample standard deviations before and after gentrification, respectively. *S* is the pooled standard deviation. This type of analysis is applicable for case control studies like the present inquiry. What we sought to find is whether the observations after the neighborhoods were gentrified through the activities of community-based nonprofits are statistically different from before they were. To enrich understanding of the t-test results and to show how nonprofits contribute to gentrification we examine the scholarship about the role of nonprofits in community revitalization, which is used to discuss the findings.

Results and Discussion

We present the results of the dependent t-tests of comparison of means for neighborhoods in Houston and Baltimore in Table 6 and Table 7. Our analyses examine the impact of gentrification on neighborhood indicators including financial, economic and socio-demographic factors. The literature suggests that gentrification is designed to improve communities by revitalizing them to improve their livability and other human conditions. Hence, we first focus on neighborhood financial conditions.

Financial Conditions

Given that gentrification improves neighborhood attractiveness, we are interested in the effects of gentrification promoted by community-based nonprofits on the two neighborhoods' housing financial factors— occupancy rate and housing values. The results show that the mean of housing values increased in Houston by more than \$150,000 ($p < 0.001$) after the neighborhoods were gentrified by nonprofit activities, although average occupancy rates did not show any statistical difference in the city. Although Baltimore reported no change in its mean housing values, there was a significant increase of more than 2.7% occupancy rate after the neighborhoods were gentrified by community-based nonprofits ($p < 0.1$). Gentrification invests in community revitalization, reduction of blights, social amenities, and improved community policing with attendant reduction in crime and other social vices (Mauldin, 2013). These investments increased the attractiveness and desirability of the communities that increase their home values and occupancy rates.

Increases in housing values not only benefit the owners of those properties through higher incomes and wealth, but benefit the local governments as well since it improves the revenue they could receive from property taxes. In the United States, property tax contributes an average of 35% to total state and local tax revenue, although this varies widely from 18% in Alaska to 64% in New Hampshire (Tax Foundation, 2018), its contribution is substantial to the general fund. Those local governments that have more high valued housing stand to receive more revenue from the housing stock in their communities. In addition, since independent school districts receive most of their revenue from property taxes, higher housing values likely improve the quality of the school districts, contributes to higher school enrollment rates, and educational services in the cities and ultimately the quality of life in the cities. In Houston, apart from the city, the county and the independent school district, special districts such as Harris County Flood Control District, Port of Houston Authority, Harris County Hospital District, Harris County Department of Education and Houston Community College System depend on property tax revenue to provide public goods and services to their residents. Similarly, Baltimore depends on property tax to provide public services to its residents. Higher occupancy rates suggest lower abandonment, less blights and more rental income for homeowners that improve their quality of life, and more rental tax revenues for the local governments.

Economic Conditions

Next, we examine two economic indicators in the cities in our study, namely median household income and neighborhood employment rates before and after gentrification championed by community-based nonprofits. It is expected that gentrified communities have an attractiveness that creates jobs and consequently improves income. After adjusting the values to correct for inflation, we find that over the 15-year period, the neighborhoods in Houston reported a \$37,866 increase in their household's median incomes while their counterparts in Baltimore reported more than a \$17,000 increase over a ten-year period. One explanation for high household incomes in gentrified neighborhoods is that employment levels increase with improved neighborhood revitalization. The dependent t-tests of means suggests that gentrification in the two cities have significant effects on median household incomes ($p < 0.01$). However, we find mixed results for changes in employment rates after gentrification in the two cities investigated. While the percentage of the population that is employed increased in Houston by more than 42% ($p < 0.001$), this variable is not significant in Baltimore, which reported a scant change in employment rates.

We believe this in no way suggests there was no improvement in employment opportunities in Baltimore. We arrive at this conclusion because employment rates in Houston increased from a low of 49% to 91%. However, Baltimore's employment rate was already high at 92% before gentrification and remained the same after. We suggest that although there was no change in employment rates in Baltimore's neighborhoods, there may have been improvements in the quality of employment in the neighborhoods driven by higher educational attainment that contributed to higher household incomes that were reported for neighborhoods in both cities. While our data do not allow us to investigate this assertion empirically, it is reasonable to assume that as people increase their level of education, they likely seek higher paying jobs or make vertical progressions in their jobs thereby earning higher incomes. For neighborhoods that already have high employment rates investing in the human capital of its residents leads to qualitative changes rather than quantitative ones regarding employment. Extant studies suggest that higher employment rates and higher incomes are associated with lower crime rates and social vices in the communities.

Socio-demographic Conditions

Lastly, we examine changes in population, racial demographic, and college educational attainment rates as a result of gentrification promoted by community-based nonprofits. Over the period examined in the two cities, there were no significant changes in population due to gentrification of the neighborhoods. The results also reveal that there were no significant changes in the racial distribution of the neighborhoods with gentrification in Houston. This is the case for Baltimore for Whites and Blacks. Although there was a 3% increase in Black population in the communities, this is not statistically significant. The only minority group to report an increase in Baltimore is Hispanics, which saw a 1.47% increase in their population. A possible explanation for no changes in racial distribution in the neighborhoods is that low-income residents, usually minority races, were not displaced with Whites during gentrification. This could quite possibly be due to the work of the community-based nonprofits. In addition, the education and income level of the residents may have improved during the period (Byrne, 2002). This conclusion is also supported by the fact that the population of the neighborhoods remained statistically the same over the two periods in both cities.

The results also support the idea that gentrification improves the economic characteristics of neighborhoods. In both cities, the percentage of the population reporting college education increased significantly ($p < 0.001$). Baltimore's gentrified neighborhoods showed a 7.28% improvement in college graduation rate. Previous studies showed that college education increases human and social capital, improves quality of living standards of people, and commands higher income (add citations here). It is, therefore, not surprising that the neighborhoods also reported higher household incomes after the neighborhoods were gentrified ($p < 0.001$).

The findings suggest that gentrification has resulted in financial and economic changes in the neighborhoods. However, these do not necessarily suggest the displacement of existing low-income minority races. If a community's financial and economic profile changes, there could be a: (1) change in income because low-income households were displaced by high income ones; (2) change in income because low-income households experienced social and economic upward mobility. While this cannot be proven one way or the other in this study, it is possible that community-based nonprofits ensured that social equity concerns were addressed and that the gentrified neighborhoods maintained their racial composition even as

their income profiles changed. We surmise that this is likely what happened. We acknowledge that over a period of 10-15 years, a person could earn a college degree, increase their income, and experience social and economic upward mobility to report significant changes in their wellbeing. As to whether this actually happened, we can only speculate. Further studies are needed to understand why the demographics (minority race population) did not change over the period being investigated. A more plausible explanation is that minority groups displaced minority groups after the gentrification due to the activities of community-based nonprofits, or a combination of the two scenarios mentioned above.

Table 6. Results of Paired t-tests Comparing Before and After Gentrification for Baltimore, Maryland

Variables	Mean difference	pr(T > t)	P-value
Population	66	0.613	0.552
White (%)	1.12	0.498	0.629
Black (%)	3.06	1.325	0.212
Hispanic (%)	1.47	4.672	0.001
Occupied (%)	2.74	2.122	0.057
Housing value (\$)	61,529	1.183	0.262
Household Income (\$)	17,070	6.492	0.001
Employed (%)	0.06	0.082	0.936
College (%)	7.28	8.365	0.001

Table 7. Results of Paired t-tests Comparing Before and After Gentrification for Houston, Texas

Variables	Mean difference	pr(T > t)	P-value
Population	530	0.846	0.417
White (%)	6.22	1.143	0.280
Black (%)	4.41	0.731	0.481
Hispanic (%)	5.78	1.296	0.224
Occupied (%)	0.00	0.433	0.674
Housing value (\$)	150,899	5.508	0.001
Household Income (\$)	37,866	6.934	0.001
Employed (%)	42.03	9.216	0.001
College (%)	27.18	4.691	0.001

Community-based nonprofits undertake several activities, which are reported in Table 8 and Table 9 for the two cities examined. The Tables show that these nonprofits were involved with efforts to meet the needs of minority low-income groups. In Baltimore, the roles of

nonprofits include preserving homeownership through revitalization and rehabilitation and improving communities likely would reduce displacement. Other activities such as improving the quality of life and economic vitality contribute to upward social and economic mobility. These nonprofits are also involved with executing innovative strategies to increase the supply of sustainable, affordable housing within racially and economically integrated communities. Some nonprofits halt the displacement of low-income people from communities. It is reasonable to conclude that the role of these nonprofits may have contributed to the low displacement of minority groups. In Houston, the role of nonprofits in gentrification are several, as detailed in Table 9 and include providing life-stabilizing, affordable, permanent housing with support services for people who live on limited incomes. These organizations also support families and individuals with rent and mortgage assistance.

Table 8. Selected Nonprofits in Baltimore, Maryland and their role in Community Gentrification

Nonprofits	Role in gentrification/ services to the community
Baltimore Neighborhoods, Inc.	Promote justice in the fields of fair housing and tenant-landlord relations.
The Opportunity Collaborative	Coordinate investments in housing, to reduce disparities
Rebuilding Together Baltimore, Inc.	Preserving home ownership through revitalization and rehabilitation and improving communities
Women’s Housing Coalition	Supports families and individuals with permanent and affordable, service enriched housing.
Kingdom Community Development Corp	Proving affordable housing for low and moderate income families
Associated Black Charities	Advocate and support the elimination of race-based structural barriers to housing and other social ills
Citizens Planning & Housing Association, Inc.	Promotes civic action, and assist communities in Baltimore
Baltimore Metropolitan Council	Improve the quality of life and economic vitality in the Baltimore region
Innovative Housing Institute	Executing innovative strategies to increase the supply of sustainable affordable housing within racially and economically integrated communities.
The Right to the City Alliance	Halt the displacement of low-income people, Black, Indigenous, and people of color, LGBTQ communities, and youth of color

Conclusion

Gentrification has been championed as the solution to the wicked problems of urban blight, home and neighborhood abandonment, and community deterioration that breed social and behavioral vices (Vigdor, Massey, & Rivlin, 2002). But gentrification has been criticized because often, the benefits accrue to more affluent and majority groups when minority communities are displaced because of higher rents and housing values beyond their abilities to afford (Florida, 2002; Sullivan, 2005). The present study examines the financial, economic, and socio-demographic changes that occur with gentrification championed by community-based nonprofits in two cosmopolitan cities—Baltimore, Maryland and Houston Texas.

Table 9. Selected Nonprofits in Houston, Texas and their role in Community Gentrification

Nonprofits	Role in gentrification/ services to the community
New Hope Housing Inc.	Provide life-stabilizing, affordable, permanent housing with support services for people who live on limited income
Non-Profit Housing Corporation of Greater Houston Harmony House Inc.	Provide affordable housing for seniors, veterans, homeless, and people with special needs To provide quality permanent and transitional housing, medical respite care and primary health care to homeless persons in Texas, through a supportive, drug and alcohol free community
Tejano Center for Community Concerns	Develop affordable housing
Northwest Assistance Ministries	Support families and individuals with rent and mortgage assistance
Habitat for Humanity International Inc.	Provide affordable housing for low and moderate income families
Education Based Housing	Provide safe and affordable housing to low-income families
Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America (NACA)	Advocate for communities and affordable homeownership organization
Texas Inter-Faith Housing Corporation	Deliver affordable housing, and increases residents cash flow by reducing expenses and stabilizing
Houston Area Community Development Corporation	Provide affordable workforce housing and rentals
Project Row Houses	Provide affordable housing and advocate for community preservation and engagement
Greater Houston Fair Housing Center	Dedicated to the elimination of housing discrimination and the expansion on housing opportunities to all persons

Overall, the study finds that gentrification contributes to financial, economic, and socio-demographic changes in the targeted neighborhoods. More specifically, housing values improve, occupancy rates increase, household incomes rise, and the neighborhoods report higher educational attainment rates. Non-significant changes in the racial distribution of the neighborhoods do not suggest the absence of displacement. While it may indicate that the neighborhoods may be experiencing upward social and economic mobility due to gentrification, a more plausible explanation is that community-based nonprofits ensured that the racial composition of the neighborhoods is maintained to address social equity concerns. It is also possible that some minorities in the neighborhoods maintained their homes due to improvements in their social and economic standing.

The results suggest important insights into the effects of gentrification. One is that the effects of gentrification on neighborhoods could be nuanced and that a general rule could not be made about the effects. For example, housing values increased in Houston but not in Baltimore. Also, occupancy rates improved in Baltimore; however, this was not the case in Houston. This suggests that the financial benefits of gentrification could vary according to the neighborhood and their socio-demographic and economic indicators.

Another effect of gentrification recognizes the possible role of community-based nonprofits in improving the socio-economic condition of neighborhood residents. The findings demonstrate that it is essential for gentrification managers to pay attention to social equity issues when gentrifying communities (Banks, 2015). For example, Gowdy (2021) identified one affordable housing unit in the Third Ward in Houston, Texas where low-income tenants were asked to relocate after a new owner purchased the property. When community-based nonprofits venture into gentrification, it might be helpful for them to consider the affordability of new and existing housing units. Without this, the low-income households are displaced in favor of higher-income people, thereby complicating the already existing challenges of homelessness and the development of slums (Banks, 2015). This creates a zero-sum game— one neighborhood is developed at the expense of another. Our data did not track individual households that move in or out of the neighborhoods. However, the findings suggest that no significant changes in race distribution occurred, as is usually the case for minority low-income groups being displaced in favor of high-income majority races.

Furthermore, the study implies a need for increased mechanisms for community stakeholders to impact development decisions to protect and improve the quality of living of residents if gentrification would benefit the minority low-income groups. The results suggest gentrification may be associated with improved economic opportunities such as higher employment and consequent increase in income. It is imperative for gentrification programs to be designed with vulnerable groups in mind and ensure that they are not displaced, and their socio-demographic conditions do not aggravate. Consequently, gentrification programs should incorporate opportunities for self-development that improve the human capital for the neighborhoods, which contributes to neighborhood sustainability.

Public leaders can be instrumental in policy changes that support positive social, political, and economic impacts on low-income residents in their communities. The findings in this research provide policy insight from the context of public management:

- Facilitate planning sessions with colleges and universities, nonprofit organizations, and municipal localities to identify the mission and vision of affordable housing and gentrification.
- Engage public and nonprofit leadership and staff to provide an inventory of services available to existing and new residents.
- Pool resources from local governments and nonprofit organizations to invest more in community land trusts and housing trust funds.
- Pursue continuing education and training for public and nonprofit leadership and staff on advocacy and policy action to support affordable housing.

Future studies might consider how government policies could gentrify communities while allowing low-income individuals to maintain their homes.

Although we attribute financial, economic and socio-demographic changes in the neighborhoods to the activities of community-based nonprofits active in the gentrification process, we acknowledge that other program activities by public, private and other nonprofit organizations may be occurring simultaneously that are not controlled by our analysis. That is a weakness of the pre-post analysis that needs to be recognized when interpreting the findings of this study (Dye, 2017; Singleton & Straits, 2010; Nukpezah and Blankson, 2017). What is clear though is that community based nonprofit organizations play important roles in

improving the neighborhoods where they serve and that when gentrification integrates important social policy values, it benefits low income groups.

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