5-2015

There Goes the Neighborhood: Exposing the Relationship Between Gentrification and Incarceration

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This paper seeks to demonstrate that there is a deliberate and intentional link between residential housing patterns and crime and mass incarceration, and that government plays a strong role in allowing and formalizing this link. Using historical examples, this paper attempts to document the role of government and policy in furthering residential segregation through the processes of gentrification and disinvestment. By contributing to the destruction of low-income communities and the invasion of gentry through covert partnerships with the private sector to develop land and design cities, government has prioritized commercial interests over the needs of the community at all income levels. Finally, this paper examines the role of gentrification in defining criminal behaviors among communities, the effects of increased police surveillance, and the impact on perceived crime rates.

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This paper seeks to demonstrate that there is a deliberate and intentional link between residential housing patterns and crime and mass incarceration, and that government plays a strong role in allowing and formalizing this link. Using historical examples, this paper attempts to document the role of government and policy in furthering residential segregation through the processes of gentrification and disinvestment. By contributing to the destruction of low-income communities and the invasion of gentry through covert partnerships with the private sector to develop land and design cities, government has prioritized commercial interests over the needs of the community at all income levels. Finally, this paper examines the role of gentrification in defining criminal behaviors among communities, the effects of increased police surveillance, and the impact on perceived crime rates.

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Introduction

Gentrification has been a hot button issue over many decades and at the forefront of media coverage. The recent inversion in popular preference – leaving suburbia to create the ideal home in the city – has been well documented. From *There Goes the 'Hood*, the Encyclopedia of Housing defines gentrification as "the process by which central urban neighborhoods that have undergone disinvestment and economic decline experience a reversal, reinvestment, and the in-migration of a relatively well-off, middle- and upper middle-class population," often referred to as gentry (Freeman, 2006, p. 29). Media stories do not often cover the displaced residents represented in their stories about the gentry. Where they go, and what happens to them after being displaced, is not a question often asked. What may seem unrelated at first glance is the dramatic increase in the prison population from around 300,000 in the 1980s to 1,500,000 today (Glaze & Herberman, 2011). These figures are particularly astounding in light of the falling and, most recently, level crime rates (Reiman & Leighton, 2013). Some attribute this increase to the War on Drugs and the wide net it cast in minority communities and the subsequent policing policies beginning in the 1980s (Alexander, 2012). More alarming than the sharp uptick in prison population is the demographic of US prisoners: while African Americans make up only 13% of the population nationwide, they make up 29% of the prison population, making their proportion in the prison population far greater than in the general public (Reiman & Leighton, 2013). Wider societal issues such as trends in the housing market should be considered in the examination of the US penal system. Displacement of individuals from their homes

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can be an important factor in the rise of the incarceration rates and warrants a closer consideration.

The role of government has been considered in the context of crime and mass incarceration, but it is rarely considered in the discourse on residential housing patterns like gentrification (Alexander, 2012; Reiman & Leighton, 2013). There are several factors that are usually present when gentrification takes place, with government playing a key role at each stage. The role that real estate plays in transforming a city's urban landscape is undeniable. The market that governs these transformations, however, is virtually unregulated by city or state legislature and seems to operate in a vacuum. The real estate industry and lax legislative regulations are disparate but interrelated forces that contribute to both gentrification and mass incarceration. This paper seeks to demonstrate that there is a deliberate and intentional link between residential housing patterns and crime and mass incarceration, and that government plays a strong role in allowing and formalizing this link.

Disinvestment and Migration Patterns

Gentrification across communities in the United States and other countries has followed the same general cycle: government and market disinvestment in either an urban or suburban area contributing to desertion by the middle-class, an inversion of popular definition of the ideal home environment, government and market reinvestment (usually precipitated by the inflow of artists and young adults), and finally, an influx or invasion of returning gentry or middle- and upper-middle-class residents (Drew, 2011; Ehrenhalt, 2012; Freeman, 2006; Godsil, 2012). In the United States, these three conditions have been precipitated by historical and market factors that together shape both residential segregation and crime patterns. Desertion by the

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White middle-class, otherwise known as White Flight, has contributed to the concentration of poverty in specific areas because low-income residents are limited in mobility (Morenoff & Sampson, 1997). As White middle-class residents leave, a trickle-down effect takes place where lower-income minorities inherit older housing. For instance, public housing in San Francisco's Hunter's Point neighborhood, notoriously known for its crime and violence, was originally intended to be temporary military shelter following World War II (Rose, 1972).

In recent decades, there has been a shift from a desire by the middle-class to live in the suburbs to live in the downtown zones of cities where there is close proximity to amenities, white-collar jobs, and entertainment. Ehrenhalt (2012) explains that today's expectations, or shift of expectations, are based on an early 20th century concept of city development. Starting in the 1900s, cities across the country were designed with four zones in mind. In the middle of a city would be the downtown district, where commercial business was conducted (Ehrenhalt, 2012). Surrounding the downtown district were factory zones, followed by a ring of working-class housing, and on the outermost edges of a city were the suburban dwellings. Traditionally, the poorest in a community would live in the center, with the wealthy inhabiting the outer edges. In more modern times, as deindustrialization displaced factory work and associated industries to other countries, there has been a natural shift toward the creation of additional housing in the abandoned central districts. What would have once been an unpleasant place to live with all of the associated factory pollution is now quite pleasant and close to the amenities offered downtown (Freeman, 2006). As the gentry have returned to downtown zones, there has been debate about the degree to which gentrification poses a

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threat to the displacement of existing lower-income residents. In response to increasing home and rental prices, community based organizations have worked together with government (and sometimes with developers) to create affordable housing, but generally there has been strong opposition from "gentrifyers," who view these housing projects as eye sores and breeding grounds for crime (Barreto, 2002; Betancur, Domeyko & Wright, 2001). The effect of this opposition has pushed lower-income residents farther away from downtown centers, creating concentrated ghettos where there are few amenities and public services (Sampson & Wilson, 1995).

It is important to note that researchers have found stark differences in migration patterns between minorities, most notably between recently immigrated ethnic groups and long-standing African American residents (Massey & Denton, 1987). Aguirre, Schwirian, and La Greca (1980) studied Latin American immigrants in Miami, Florida. What they found supports past research on ethnic immigration, which suggests that there is some degree of self-selected residential segregation and a somewhat beneficial effect for the social fabric (Betancur, 2010). Newly emigrated ethnic groups move to areas where they know family or friends, and as their status and income increase, they find permanent housing. This creates a clustering effect where an area can become saturated with a particular ethnic group. Betancur (2010) points to the benefits of this pattern, including the formation of supportive social networks, informal marketplaces, and cultural institutions. What tends to happen more frequently with ethnic migration, however, is that as immigrants become assimilated and acculturated across generations they move into the middle-class and out of segregated clusters. This has largely not been the case for

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African American clusters, which have been pushed into ghettos as entire multi-generational groups. Even as some African Americans have achieved middle-class incomes, they have tended to stay within segregated residential boundaries (Rose, 1972).

Rose (1972) aptly notes that the housing market of an area reflects the values system of the society. Given the prevalence of the cycle of gentrification and the effects its critical elements have on residential segregation and crime, one should feel concern for the state of society and its values. The role of government and policy in furthering these residential structures only adds to the growing concern over our society's values.

Crime

Current research suggests that crime tends to be concentrated in urban areas where a large proportion of poor African American men reside. According to Reiman and Leighton (2013), cities with populations over 250,000 had nearly double the arrest rate for violent crimes compared to smaller cities. African Americans make up 38% of arrests for violent crime even though they represent only 13% of the national population, and almost half of the inmates made less than $7,200 annually prior to incarceration in 2010. There are several theoretical explanations for the association between urban poverty and crime. Social disorganization theory would suggest that crime flourishes in urban areas where there is inadequate social control (Wilcox, Quesenberry, Cabrera & Jones, 2004), potentially as a result of disinvestment by government and private industry. There is also discourse suggesting that centralized crime is the result of gentrification that brings increased surveillance and a lack of understanding around

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existing cultural behaviors and norms to formerly urban areas (Cahill, 2006; Rinaldo, 2002).

Wacquant (2001) argues that there is a deadly symbiosis between ghettos and prison. He describes the ghetto as the third successor in a line of social mechanisms aimed to control the poor African American caste, preceded by chattel slavery and the Jim Crow laws and followed by mass incarceration. Lending weight to the idea of social disorganization, Wacquant (2001) points to the crumbling social fabric in ghettos where churches and other social institutions are failing to shape group values and behavior. This has been allowed to happen, Wacquant (2001) says, as a result of "market withdrawal and state retrenchment" (p. 106). He also argues that public housing and urban schools have become militarized and function more similarly to prisons than do social institutions in wealthier communities. Wacquant's (2001) arguments are important in the context of the cycle of gentrification. As migration patterns lead to more homogenous communities, it becomes easier to label the behavior of racial and class groups as criminal.

Disinvestment in urban city centers has been especially devastating because of deindustrialization in the wake of globalization. Industry that has remained in the United States has largely moved to suburbs, which has effectively trapped many low-skilled and uneducated urban African Americans in the ghettos. At the height of this transition in 1987, only 28% of men living in urban areas had access to a car (Alexander, 2012). The combination of poverty, limited mobility within slums, and alienation from social institutions as a result of disinvestment in urban areas has both contributed to increased crime as well as reduced the rewards of adopting traditional middle- and upper-class behavior (Reiman and Leighton, 2013). Reiman and

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Leighton (2013) also argue that the cycle of poverty, crime, and incarceration has a counterproductive effect of increasing crime because the prevalence of mass incarceration weakens the stigma of prison as well as informal social controls within the community when fathers are taken away from their families and fail to act as role models and financial providers.

To further complicate matters, there is a paradoxical argument around welfare and criminal justice. Becket and Western (2001) argue that the philosophy of welfare dictates that we owe it to all in society to maintain a minimum standard of living, while detractors argue that it is these very handouts that allow a lazy and less deserving faction of the community a crutch to stand on (Ohanian, 2014). What is undeniable is the link between welfare, poverty, and crime. In a study of state welfare spending compared to state incarceration rates, a distinct relationship was found between states that spend more on welfare and have lower incarceration rates and vice versa (Becket & Western, 2001). Using this data, they argue that mass incarceration has been used recently as a means of incapacitating what would otherwise be a marginalized (literally and figuratively) group of poor minorities. As Wacquant (2009) demonstrates, both welfare and mass incarceration act together to equate poverty with crime and to penalize marginalized and disenfranchised populations. Society also seems to have decided that poverty is equivalent to crime, and that where one lives should dictate the services and amenities available.

As the cycle of gentrification nears completion, primarily White middle- and upper-class families return to formerly depressed areas under the guise of urban renewal, architectural restoration, and favorable housing prices. In the years of transition, it is common to experience cultural friction,

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where the behavioral and cultural norms of the existing residents are criminalized by the incoming gentry. When the gentry invade, they often bring with them demands for better schools, increased access to services like public transportation and police, but they can also dramatically shift behavioral norms. In a notorious example in Chicago, the Red Squad, a special and secret police unit, undercut community based organizations trying to calm neighborhood transition and protect existing residents from displacement by targeting and harassing leaders and citizens (Peoplesworld.org, 2013). Efforts like the Red Squad contributed to an increased sense of fear and a perception that crime was on the rise. In addition, the advent of hot-spot type policing represented a hyper-vigilance and reinvestment on the part of the gentry and government that discriminates against existing residents.

Case Studies

Philadelphia and Baltimore are strong examples of cities that suffered greatly because of deindustrialization. In 1980 Philadelphia had high crime rates and struggling schools. A classic pattern of disinvestment and desertion by the White middle-class was followed by in-migration of minorities. By the early 1980s, manufacturing jobs had dropped from 350,000 to 135,000, with only 31,000 remaining by 2005 (Simon & Alnutt, 2007). In 1999, partnerships were established by a commercial developer and the Housing and Urban Development department to designate renewal districts to bring innovation and technology downtown, boost tourism, and improve schools. Despite these efforts, Philadelphia fell victim to the common trend of residential segregation, with crime being concentrated in the urban core (Simon & Alnutt, 2007).

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Amid shifting political parties, the city used a few different tactics (with mixed results) to navigate both crime and gentrification. First, the mayor's office created the Philadelphia Council for Community Advancement, which was an economic and housing development organization serving African Americans. The goal was to ensure the voices of minority and lower-income residents were heard over the long term. Second, the city enacted programs like "Safe Streets" which used hot-spot type policing and the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative, which was an anti-blight campaign. Common to the experience of many gentrifying cities, the "Safe Streets" program was perceived by those living in depressed areas to put a spotlight on residents, increasing crime rates simply by virtue of increased surveillance. Finally, one successful strategy in Philadelphia was the public transportation system, linking the suburbs to the downtown districts, making it possible for lower-skilled workers to reach manufacturing jobs in the suburbs. Philadelphia is somewhat unique in that there were completely abandoned downtown manufacturing areas where the restoration and transition to loft housing had only a positive effect on the city. This renewal brought both financial gains through a stronger tax base and community gains by attracting businesses and tourists. However, gentrification ultimately spread to older residential neighborhoods, displacing low-income and minority residents.

The combination of gentrification and the deinstitutionalization of mental health facilities pushed many people to the streets, creating a large homeless population and increasing crime rates. In response to this issue, the city demolished old dilapidated public housing units and built new affordable housing. However, many residents were too poor to

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qualify for the new units and as of 2006, 46,000 residents remained on waiting lists (Simon & Alnutt, 2007). Unfortunately, despite programs designed to fight crime, Philadelphia continues to have a high violent crime rate, with 406 murders in 2006. Like other cities with very concentrated crime and segregated neighborhoods, a 2000 report revealed that African Americans were far more likely to be stopped by police and, in fact, five police officers were convicted in a scandal that involved planting drugs, pocketing cash proceeds, and other illegal activities that were racially motivated. Simon and Alnutt (2007) lament that despite a shimmering new skyline with modern businesses the city's choice not to invest sufficiently in its citizens and schools has left it not much better off than it was prior to deindustrialization in the 1970s.

Baltimore was similar to Philadelphia in its history and outcome in that it faced deindustrialization in the 1960s and 70s, cutting factory jobs from 97,600 to 52,000 (Merrifield, 1993). Inner Harbor and Canton waterfront area were identified for redevelopment and faced strong opposition from residents who feared displacement. Ultimately, lucrative partnerships between the local government and developers won out and today Baltimore still experiences residential segregation with crime concentrated at its urban core (Merrifield, 1993). Not all cities facing gentrification and its effects follow the same trajectory but these two cities are representative of much of the urban landscape in the United States.

The city of New York also experienced the traditional pattern of deindustrialization, White Flight, and minority inner-city concentration. However, these conditions were magnified by financial conditions in the 1970s. The city's bonds were downgraded in rating which made investments in the area

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extremely risky and unlikely. The change in bond ratings nearly bankrupted the city and drastically reduced the funding of public services (Mitchell & Beckett, 2008). The budget crisis eliminated a previous policy affording free state college tuition to residents, reduced subsidized housing and rent control, reduced the availability of public transportation, effectively eliminated welfare programs, and greatly impacted unionized municipal jobs. According to Mitchel and Beckett (2008), these changes disproportionately affected African Americans and Puerto Ricans, who held a high percentage of union jobs and more frequently accessed these services and programs. With prices low and housing stock high, the city began to gentrify in the 80s and 90s. This had an ostracizing effect on the lower class and minorities who were pushed into the urban core. During this time, Mayor Rudy Giuliani instituted zero tolerance policies which used tactics like stop-and-frisk and broken windows policing. The theory was that any degree of crime, even minor infractions like vagrancy, would breed more crime and, as a result, no violations would be tolerated. These new policies increased misdemeanor arrests by 80% and doubled arrests for drug charges (Mitchel and Beckett, 2008).

The Lower East Side neighborhood of New York City experienced a great degree of disinvestment in the 70s and 80s and consequently was one of the first areas to gentrify. As is usual with gentrification, this created a dramatic divide within the existing community (many of whom lived in public housing projects) and the incoming gentry who were renovating and moving into dilapidated properties. White middle-class residents moved in, rent increased, police presence increased, and surveillance cameras were installed outside businesses and on street corners, which ultimately resulted in the displacement of

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long-term residents from lower classes. Another effect common to gentrification was the criminalization of cultural behaviors. In a study by Cahill (2006), the largely Puerto Rican residents commented that they felt judged and misunderstood by the incoming gentry. They felt that their schools were becoming militarized and young men were being stopped frequently and unfairly by the police.

Chicago was not unlike Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New York City in its urban and residential transformation. Faced with deindustrialization, the city lost 100,000 blue-collar jobs in the 1970s (Giloth & Betancur, 1988, p. 280). However, Chicago does stand out from the others in terms of documented political involvement in shaping the course of gentrification and the particular areas where it occurred. Starting in the 1970s, the city began to build relationships within the private sector that gave priority to White homeowners and commercial development, displacing low-income residents and devaluing the importance of affordable housing (Betancur & Gills, 2004). Along with the shift in financial priority, community control also shifted. The sitting mayor, Richard Daley, in a now infamous case, employed a secret police unit, The Red Squad, designed to dismantle community based organizations from advocating for the low-income minority residents (Betancur & Gills, 2004; Martin, 1988). Though the pendulum swung slightly in the direction of a "people-based, reform-minded approach" (Martin, 1998, p. 98) in the 1980s, the 1990s ushered in a local government more inclined toward privatization. While local government incentivized the largely White middle-class residents to move to downtown zones with homebuyer credits, improved schools, and introduced zero tolerance police policies, it ravaged the low-income community. The government failed to focus on

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employment or affordable housing in these areas. The city demolished most of its public housing stock, replacing it with low-rise mixed-income housing, where only 30% of units were made available to displaced residents (Betancur & Gills, 2004). Zero tolerance police policies disproportionately affected poor minorities, targeting the homeless as well as criminalizing cultural behaviors (Betancur & Gills, 2008; Rinaldo, 2002). In a study of the Humboldt Park neighborhood of Chicago, Puerto Rican residents were asked about their experiences with gentrification. They acutely experienced displacement and increased police presence, with an increase in crime due to the criminalization of what were cultural behaviors like letting their children play in front yards. . With new neighbors came calls to the police over things like public disturbances and violations of noise ordinances. With increased police surveillance, a wider net was cast, picking up minor infractions (Rinaldo, 2002).

Another area in Chicago that experienced gentrification was the West Town neighborhood. The cycle began in the 1960s when pockets of the neighborhood were cleared of slum and blight. In 1966 a formal plan was put in place by the Department of Urban Renewal, which designated housing conservation areas, but failed to focus on other support for existing residents like employment programs. Effectively, these newly renewed areas were made available only for middle- and upper-class housing (Betancur, 2002). With gentrification in full swing in the early 1980s, 120 homes, inhabited by low-income residents, were condemned by the city under the guise of cleaning up slum-like conditions and blight. Once cleared, the area was used to build a new shopping mall. The same developer acquired 17 other properties within proximity at dramatically low rates. During this time, long-term residents reported experiencing unfair and often

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illegal behaviors in an effort to push them out of the area. Residents reported frequent flipping of homes, arson (a common tactic used by property owners to collect insurance claims and walk away from their properties), intimidation by real estate professionals and developers to sell their properties, unlawful eviction from rentals, schemes to deplete their property values, and fraudulent transactions including realtors skimming profit off false sale prices (Betancur, 2002). Alarmingly, none of these actions would have been possible without the compliance and partnership of local government.

The Secret Role of Politics

The cycle of gentrification plays a significant role in racial segregation, and one can see from examples of specific cities where these trends have occurred that there is a link between poverty and crime. The question that remains is how it has become possible for these circumstances to take place decade after decade when the outcome of the convergence of these factors is known. What has yet to be heavily studied by academia is the political contribution to this phenomenon. Partnerships between local and federal government and real estate and development professionals representing commercial interests play a critical and alarming role in this process by maintaining residential segregation despite a deliberate and intentional understanding of the effects of these policies by policy makers.

One major tenet of gentrification is disinvestment in an area by government and market resulting in White Flight and in-migration of lower-classes. The sociospatial approach argues that there is interdependence between the built environment and the people who live in it. As the physical environment is created and people populate it, a culture evolves that has an impact on social

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policies. Through this lens, Gotham (2002) argues that residential development policies are designed by decision makers within race and class groups, who take conscious actions. One of the most severe and deliberate examples of disinvestment is redlining: drawing discriminatory boundaries around favorable and undesirable residential zones for the sake of financial gain. Following World War II, the United States saw a dramatic increase in home ownership in large part due to new programs funded by the Federal Housing Administration and the Veterans Administration, which allowed families to put down 10% on a home compared to a previous standard of 33-50% (Godsil, 2012). Coupled with the federal subsidization of highways, the ability of citizens to choose their preferred living situation increased. However, with the widening of highways came the destruction of many established neighborhoods, especially in more urban areas (Godsil, 2012; Sampson & Wilson, 1995).

The Federal Home Loan Bank Act of 1932 created the Federal Home Loan Bank Board (FHLBB) that was supposed to oversee Federal banks that provided low-cost funding to financial institutions for various services including small business loans and mortgages. With hordes of Americans now able to purchase homes for the first time in the 1940s, the FHLBB created Residential Security Maps and Surveys, dividing regions into four categories ranked "A" through "D." Alarmingly, one of the most important criteria in determining a region's rank was the ethnicity and homogeneity of the existing population. Redlining had several devastating effects: it prevented minority residents in urban areas from obtaining loans to purchase or upgrade their homes; it prevented minorities from obtaining loans to purchase homes in "A" and "B" ranked communities; and it prevented developers from obtaining loans

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to build both commercial and residential buildings in "C" and "D" ranked communities. Redlining essentially drew a bright line between Whites and the rest of the population (Godsil, 2012; Sampson & Wilson, 1995).

Blockbusting was another discriminatory practice employed by the real estate network. With the wider availability of financing, neighborhoods were very slowly changing in composition. However, in an effort to pocket large profits, real estate agents began engaging in blockbusting, where they would manipulate middle-class White homeowners into believing that because a few homes might have been purchased by African American or other minority buyers their property values were dropping. They also propagated the idea that crime was increasing and schools were deteriorating, so that the homeowners would feel compelled to sell for fear of the neighborhood changing for the worse. Working in partnership with other agents, they would then facilitate the sale of these homes to other minorities (Gotham, 2002). In East Palo Alto in the 1950s and 60s, when it became widely known that African Americans could not buy homes in neighboring Menlo Park and Palo Alto because of redlining practices, real estate agents organized bus tours through the city designed both to show African Americans real estate available to them and to scare the mostly White and Portuguese homeowners into selling and moving across to the other side of the freeway (Romic, 1993). The disinvestment in this area was confounded by the fact that the city had recently been divided by the widening of a major highway, effectively eliminating the city's business district (and tax base) and cutting off the residents from neighboring cities and services (Levin, 1996).

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With redlining and blockbusting shaping communities throughout the first part of the 20th century, other types of disinvestment followed. These two discriminatory practices represented not just real estate agencies but financial institutions, local and federal government, and insurance companies. The coordinated and knowing compliance with these practices amounts to institutional racism (Gotham, 2002). In addition to these overt policies, local government has contributed to the destruction of low-income communities and invasion of gentry by covertly partnering with the private sector to develop land and design cities, and by prioritizing commercial interests over the needs of the community at all income levels.

Policy Recommendations

Looking at these issues through the social disorganization theory lens, one can understand why a broken windows approach would be taken by the police when renewed focus is brought to a particular area. These two concepts relate to the issues of residential segregation and crime in a few ways. When low-income residents are pushed out of their neighborhoods and further concentrated into old, poorly kept, and ignored areas, where few public services and amenities are available, the argument that weak social bonds exist is likely true. Citizens are forced to rely on informal social control and cultural networks in the absence of government and market support. The sociospatial approach would dictate that their dilapidated environment informs their behaviors. In addition, when many young minority men are finding themselves in prison and away from their families, the community suffers without their moral and financial support, further weakening bonds and propagating future crime (Gotham, 2002). The reality is that there is indeed crime occurring in these communities, just as

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there is in wealthier communities. However, as an area begins to gentrify (increasing police surveillance), broken windows style policing brings a hyper-vigilance to a community that casts an extremely wide net, entrapping all levels of criminal behavior and criminalizing what would otherwise be considered poverty. With this notion in mind, policies need to be implemented that both address and alleviate poverty, narrow the crime net, and correct the institutional racism present in the housing market and urban planning departments. Policies will need to be implemented at multiple levels. The tasks of alleviating poverty and correcting institutional racism are far grander than the scope of this paper but are, indeed, necessary if we are to achieve mixed-income desegregated communities and successfully implement the following policies. Policies are needed that will reduce the prison population, keep those citizens actively contributing in their communities, minimize residents from being displaced as gentrification occurs, and ease tensions between long-standing residents and new residents as the gentry invades (hopefully to a lesser degree).

Social Welfare

Altering society's view of social welfare in the context of poverty and racism should not be a radical concept. As a capitalist society, long removed from an old Fordist view of a social contract dictating a minimum standard of living for all, major changes are needed to shift toward a society that values and encourages the contributions of all members and in return offers safe and respectable homes to live in, adequate healthcare, and education. Blank (2005) notes the difficulty in designing a one-size-fits-all solution at the federal level, as well as the challenges faced by states in identifying the particular needs of specific communities based on demographics, economic

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structure, and cultural norms. However, starting from a baseline where basic needs are met through universal healthcare and free, high-quality education is available to all residents is necessary.

Financial Stimulus

Existing residents of gentrifying areas will need a suite of financial protections in order to stay in their communities. With renters at the greatest risk of being displaced, rent control policies should be instituted, minimizing the ability of landlords to force old residents out in favor of higher-class and higher-paying new tenants. Likewise, property tax restrictions should be in place to the degree that they help long-term homeowners stay in their communities, without bankrupting the area and preventing it from providing additional public services. Programs like Tax Increment Financing (TIF) can be successful under these circumstances. TIF is an economic development strategy that designates areas expected to gentrify. The city assesses the value of property and then secures bonds in that amount to make improvements that are likely to lure new commercial and infrastructure business to the area. Once new businesses open and begin to generate tax revenue, the bonds can be repaid and the city profits from the additional increased revenue (Freeman, 2006). As long as existing residents are protected during this process, it can be successful in achieving an increased tax base for the area.

Another effective tool can be partnerships between local government and nonprofit community based organizations. In the West Town area of Chicago, the city instituted the Community Development Block Grants program, which allowed various neighborhoods to compete for grants that would improve areas based on the city plan (Betancur, 2002). While this type of program could have obvious drawbacks, in that low-income

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minority areas may lack the networks of the wealthier areas who can also compete for the grants, the partnerships between community based organizations and government are more likely to serve the interests of the entire community than that of private and commercial entities.

Strong Communities

In a study done in the Alberta neighborhood of Portland, Oregon, Drew (2011) attended years' worth of community meetings designed to educate new White residents gentrifying into the established African American neighborhood about the history and traditions of the area. Long-standing African American residents reported feeling misunderstood by new residents and resented that their traditional behaviors were drawing increased police attention. The community meetings were designed to mitigate conflict between old and new residents and were held monthly. The meetings were met with mixed results. There seemed to be significant benefit for the existing residents in just sharing their stories, but it remains to be seen from the incoming gentry whether or not the context will change their attitudes.

The final, and perhaps easiest to implement of the proposals here, recommendation is to legalize the use and sale of marijuana. While this paper has only briefly touched on the War on Drugs, and has more extensively commented on the increase in police surveillance, and thus perception of crime in gentrifying areas, it may be the single most important factor in narrowing the crime net. If the research arguing it was the War on Drugs that swept up millions of young minority men in the name of broken windows policing is correct, then redefining its use and sale as explicitly non-criminal could be the most acute way to reduce crime and return productive members of society to

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their communities (Alexander, 2012; Reiman & Leighton, 2013). In states like Colorado and Washington, where marijuana is recently legal, time will tell if their crime and imprisonment rates go down. Furthermore, comparing their economies and rates of spending on welfare to prison to other more punitive states in the years to come will provide critical data that can be used to evaluate the efficacy of marijuana legalization.

Conclusion

There is a link between residential housing policies that support the process of gentrification, crime, and mass imprisonment that merits additional research. Most importantly, the ways in which policy makers play overt and covert roles at the intersection of these phenomena should be more deeply investigated. Government should be investing in communities of all income levels and ethnicities and be taking special care to deliver on an old notion of a social contract. But this alone is not enough. Government should also be regulating private and commercial institutions with which it operates an interdependent economy (like the real estate and lending markets) to protect citizens at greater risk of poverty and exploitation. There is a dearth in research addressing the political role in gentrification, and conflicting empirical research linking gentrification to crime. The plethora of research that exists on each of these topics separately provides sufficient evidence that a problem exists but their relationships needs to be further explored. Social problems like mass incarceration will not be solved until these issues are explicitly addressed. Further studies and theoretical papers should elaborate on the discourse started here.

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