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Progress Report: Gentrification in Chicago

Project Objective

I plan to map gentrification in Chicago as a way to assess its potential effects across the city between 2011 and 2015. Creating a map of gentrification in Chicago would better inform stakeholders and policymakers to effectively plan and allocate resources where needed to help some of the city's most vulnerable populations. Chicago, like many other cities in the country is experiencing a return of many young affluent residents to the urban core where land values are typically cheaper. However, many of these neighborhoods are home to lower income persons of color who may have very limited options in their community, or nearby communities to access housing affordable to them should rising home values lead to their eventual displacement.

Gentrification in Chicago By: Jake Kowalski



Work to Date

Selecting relevant variables

I have been gathering data from the American Community Survey for all the zip codes (56) that comprise the City of Chicago from 2011 and 2015, using the 5-year estimates. After review much of the research on mapping and diagnosing gentrification, I have chosen 5 different metrics which will serve as an indicator for neighborhood change. These include: 1) % change in the number of residents 25 years and older with a Bachelor's Degree or higher; 2) % change in the number of White, non-Hispanic residents; 3) % change in the median household income; 4) % change in the median home value; and 5) % change in median gross rent. A couple of other variables that I still may add to further flesh out my gentrification index include the cost burden (percent of income paid in rent), and the change in the percent of black and Latino residents.

Developing a Gentrification Index

There are a variety of methods for calculating a gentrification index in the literature which include benchmarking each zip code with the city for a particular metric and then chart the change between 2011 and 2015. Other studies weight various factors such as the "% change in median family income" higher than say "change in % White" because the former has a stronger relationship with gentrification. For the purposes of this project I will weight all of the metrics equally. A study by the University of Illinois at Chicago developed a relative association between the variables I've chosen and gentrification. Except for % change in Black/Latino and cost burden, a positive change in the other variables indicates gentrification.

Data Collection

I have been able to utilize Social Explorer to pull all of my ACS data by zip code for both 2011 and 2015. I still need to use Excel to calculate the change in each variable between 2011 and 2015.

Next Steps

GIS Application

In the preliminary stages, I plan to look at the percent change in statistic and create layouts of the city for given variables to display my findings. Next I plan to parse out the degree of gentrification that has occurred in each zip code using GIS. I am not sure if I can use geoprocessing to perform a complex calculation of a composite index score based on whether the change in various metrics is above or below a certain percent. If not, I will have to do this in Excel. If that is the case, then I will create layouts of the degree of gentrification for the zip codes of Chicago. I anticipate a desire to perform additional analysis on the information I collect to try and tell different stories about the change currently occurring in Chicago's neighborhoods.