



Race Colors New Residents' Views of Local Businesses

Gentrifying residents in two Brooklyn neighborhoods view their new surroundings differently, depending on the race of those who traditionally live there. Erika Beras reports

By [Erika Beras](#) | December 2, 2015 |

A lot of formerly low-income neighborhoods are becoming gentrified. The people moving in bring money—and racial biases. Which contribute to them viewing their new surroundings differently depending on the race of those who traditionally live there.

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That's according to a study that examined more than 7,000 reviews of two Brooklyn neighborhoods on Yelp, the online, anyone-can-rate-any-business review site. It's in the *Journal of Consumer Culture*. [Sharon Zukin, Scarlett Lindeman, and Laurie Hurson: [The omnivore's neighborhood? Online restaurant reviews, race, and gentrification](#)]

Researchers looked at reviews of two areas that have in recent years undergone massive demographic changes—Greenpoint and Bedford-Stuyvesant.

Greenpoint is a historically Polish neighborhood that has long been majority white. BedStuy is a historically black neighborhood that in the last decade saw a 700 percent increase in its white population. Blacks are still the majority, but their population is shrinking.

Both sets of reviews viewed the neighborhoods as “up and coming.” But established Greenpoint restaurants were seen as cozy and authentic. While time-honored BedStuy restaurants were described as “gritty and sketchy”.

Reviewers in white Greenpoint expressed concerns about preserving the neighborhood's culture as it underwent change. Such concerns were noticeably absent in the BedStuy reviews, which were more likely to talk about the neighborhood using words such as “hood” or “ghetto.”

Researchers call such attitudes “discursive redlining,” a reference to the overt practice of pricing some people out of areas or services. The racial biases inherent in the reviews can influence popular perception—as well as prospective economic investment.

— Erika Beras

[The above text is a transcript of this podcast.]

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