

THE AMBIVALENCE OF GENTRIFIERS

by

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Grinnell College

B.A., Community Development, 2000

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning and the Center for Real Estate
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degrees of
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and
Master of Science in Real Estate Development
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Abstract

This thesis explores the paradox faced by 25-34 year-old, White, well-educated persons who choose to live in predominantly low-income neighborhoods. In particular, this thesis asks if gentrifiers are aware of gentrification and their role in it, and then how they navigate that paradox.

The thesis is grounded in interviews with residents of three Boston neighborhoods that are in various stages of gentrification: the South End, Jamaica Plain, and Dorchester. The interviews are framed within a synthesis of academic theory, a description of the introduction of the term “gentrification” to the United States, and common perceptions of gentrifiers as portrayed in academic and popular cultural. This framework is meant to expose the difficulty of using the term consistently, and its emotional power. Readers who are not familiar with the term or its complex background should find this framework helpful in forming a basic and thoughtful understanding. More advanced readers should use this thesis to critically explore their own position and build a more sophisticated understanding.

Though the core meaning of the term “gentrification” has not changed substantially from its original definition in 1964, a wide variety of qualifiers have been attached to the term resulting in highly positive and highly negative connotations. One explanation for these wildly varying perspectives is that gentrification is a topic that reflects larger human issues such as self and group identity, as well as socio-economic class. The result is twofold. One, these issues are so fundamental that discussions involving them have highly emotional stakes. Two, the topic brings together interdisciplinary academics and practitioners who often have conflicting paradigms and perspectives.

Many of the gentrifiers reported that they live in their neighborhood due to practical matters, such as affordable homeownership, as well as less easily defined concerns, such as the sense of belonging to a diverse community. Nearly all of the gentrifiers expressed inner conflict over being a potentially negative force in the neighborhood, and a large number described ways they attempted to mitigate or explain away that force.

Using the reflections of this group of gentrifiers to better understand their motivations and concerns, should enable community planners and real estate developers to work more successfully in gentrifying neighborhoods by tapping into the human, social, and economic capital brought by gentrifiers. Planners and developers are encouraged to take a mutual gains approach, emphasizing opportunities for connection rather than polarization.

Thesis supervisor: Terry S. Szold

Thesis reader: Lynn Fisher

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There are many people I would like to thank for making this experience so wonderful, but I fear momentary forgetfulness will leave someone crucial out. Instead of taking that risk, I offer a warm, if more general, embrace to DUSP and CRE classmates, faculty, and staff.

Finally, thank you to my interviewees, who spoke honestly about a tough subject.

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To live without a story is to live without a sense of coherence and momentum. And there's another risk. Not to have a narrative of your own is to become susceptible to those imposed upon you by forces around you.

– Ethan Watters, *Urban Tribes*

In line with the general argument that gentrification studies tend to leave unanalyzed what they need to problematize, it may be suggested that, in taking for granted the importance of the phenomenon they report on, gentrification researchers have overlooked the possibility that the most significant thing about gentrification is its significance itself.

- P. A. Redfern, "What makes gentrification 'gentrification'?"

My life, like anyone's is only a sample of one, hardly statistically generalizable. But on my nonteaching days at Yale I run mathematical models on my computer in pursuit of that statistical certainty—trying to understand in some scientific way the leitmotif of race and class that has dominated my life. I have based the majority of my work on one particular interview study. It is a survey given to more or less the same set of 5,000 families each year for the last three decades. In fact, this data set and I are almost exactly the same age. So when I develop a computer model to predict what conditions in 1969 led to educational success or economic security in the 1990s, I am perhaps driven by the comforting feeling that the answers to my own life and those of my neighbors are just one keystroke away. But of course, they never are.

What's gained in story is lost in numbers.

– Dalton Conley, *Honky*

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Foreword

Gentrification is a “hot button” issue for many people. For some, it is also difficult to rectify with notions of self. In my mind, gentrification and revitalization are tightly linked. In all but the most special cases, it seems impossible to have one without the other. As an urban planner seeking to improve the quality of life in troubled urban neighborhoods, as an American brought up with the ideal of equality, and as a young professional socialized in an aggressively multicultural milieu, it can be difficult to navigate the paradox of the gentrification I may create by my presence. Take for example, my personal tastes in neighborhoods. I prefer ethnic enclaves—with the dominant ethnicity different from my own. I prefer neighborhoods where old men sit outside on folding chairs and chat in the morning sun, where unfamiliar smells waft from kitchen windows, where I can feel simultaneously anonymous, special, and part of something bigger. I also have a need for affordable housing, safety, and a strong sense of community. These preferences and needs often lead me to neighborhoods on the fringe of gentrification. If I rent or purchase a home in this neighborhood, am I a gentrifier? Am I pushing out someone who lived here before? What if I buy a vacant or abandoned property? Does my mere presence on the street tell other visiting middle class Whites that this place is safe and attractive, encouraging them to follow me?

Reflecting on my personal and professional thoughts about gentrification led me to think about gentrifiers—particularly how they see themselves. I started out with a hypothesis about motivations and neighborhood choice, namely that where our parents may have fled to the safety of the homogenous suburbs, my generational peers and I are drawn toward the heterogeneity of the city. I decided to interview just young, well-educated Whites for several reasons. One, I stood a better chance of getting my own demographic group to speak openly. Two, it is the epitome of gentrifiers—upwardly mobile Whites. Three, I wanted to eliminate as many confounding factors to the study as I could easily do.

My interviews were revealing. Early on, I spoke with a young man who had just purchased his first condominium with his fiancée in Jamaica Plain, a block or so from Boston’s largest public housing project. In telling me about their decision-making process, he said that they had looked at South Boston, but decided it was gentrifying too quickly and would soon be all Whites—and that was undesirable. I asked him to draw his neighborhood, highlighting landmarks and things he thought both good and bad. In addition to marking his proximity to transit (good), the grocery store (good), and a pupusería he wanted to try (good), he also marked an affordable housing project which he considered to be good. Things were going well until I reached my first question using the term gentrification—I was suddenly shy. Despite the fact that he had already volunteered the term and demonstrated himself to be a thoughtful and open person, I was afraid the interview would quickly devolve once I asked him whether he considered himself to be a gentrifier. It did not. Instead, it blossomed into a bold conversation about ambivalence.

Now, it is easy to look back at my nervousness about asking a potential gentrifier about gentrification as an indication of the richness of the question. I have been struck by how quickly my interviewees use the term on their own, how they struggle with the definition but only in finding the right words and not the concepts, and how ambivalent they are about their place in it all.

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Introduction

Gentrification is not a new topic—the term has been with us for over forty years. Nor is it a neglected topic—a simple search of the *New York Times* (arguably the most influential US newspaper in the world) results in 1,316 articles between 1974 and 2003, a simple search of twenty-five databases supplied through ProQuest results in a similar number.¹ Yet, it is a topic with ever increasing relevancy.

Whereas it took merely two decades for middle class suburban flight to decimate the nation's cities, after five decades gentrification is still making headlines as new middle class residents take up homes in urban neighborhoods. From Los Angeles to Missoula, the elation and fear brought by gentrification continues to sound. (See Figure 1 for May and June 2006 news headlines.)

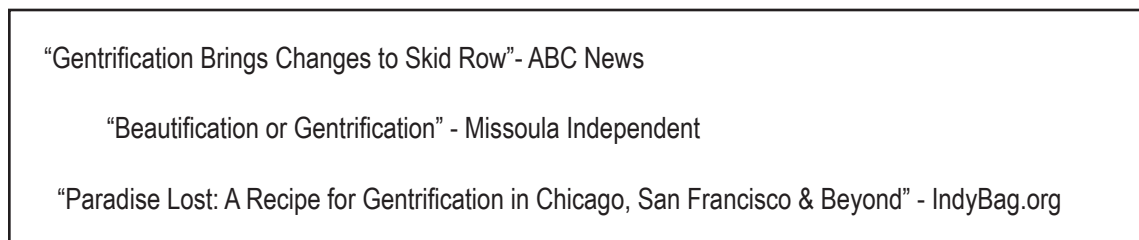


Figure 1

It is not only the seeming inevitability of gentrification, whether caused by the relative affordability of inner city housing, changes in working and lifestyle patterns of the population, globalization, or government policy, but also the ideological movements touting mixed-income housing and smart growth communities of dense and transit-oriented living, that prod us to continue to concern ourselves with gentrification.

But there is real difficulty in reviewing and working with the issue of gentrification. The term is highly polarizing and can be conflated as easily with displacement, a negative attribute, as with revitalization, a positive attribute. Its definition by academics and laymen alike can swing wildly between good, bad, and qualified. Rowland Atkinson describes the difficulty best:

Gentrification is also a politically loaded term, making dispassionate debate and analysis difficult. Whether indeed gentrification represents a problem at all has been hotly debated between those seeking to boost city fortunes and those aiming to sustain city neighborhoods. For those on the political left, the process has often been seen as an insidious vanguard, with fragments of the middle classes dislocating both social problems and ‘problem’ people. It is without doubt that these issues fuelled the initial and continuing interest in gentrification by a generation of urban analysts. Those more partial to market solutions have generally used semantically neutral terms like ‘neighborhood revitalization’ or ‘renaissance’ (Lees, 2003). For realtors, city ‘fathers’ and boosters, the choice was portrayed as one between growth in declining city contexts or continued social and physical decline. The connection,

¹ Search of ProQuest database for 1971 (earliest available through MIT) – 1/1/1980 results in three articles. For 1/2/1980 – 4/1/2006 there are 1,305 articles. A search in the *Wall Street Journal* from 1964 to 1989 (latest year available) resulted in 5 articles. A search in the *Washington Post* from 1964 to 1990 (latest year available) came up with 36 articles. Unfortunately, MIT’s access to the *Boston Globe* historical database ends in 1923.

therefore, between ideological affiliation and whether gentrification should be viewed as a problem appears clear (p. 2344).

Putting it in another way, mere mention of the term can arouse hyper-affiliation or bonding of the like-minded for a sense of safety. People passionately believe in their own interpretation, and may even use that interpretation to reinforce their own identity. For example, consider Gay Shame, a queer organization in San Francisco that considers itself a radical alternative to “the assimilationist agenda of mainstream pride celebrations” (<http://www.gayshamesf.org/diybiz/html>) which created and spraypainted a stencil throughout the San Francisco Mission District claiming that “DIY Businesses are Still Gentrification.” (See Figure



Figure 2

2.) When several of the “do it yourself” businesses complained at a Gay Shame meeting, the response revolved around whether the group was against individual businesses or merely felt it was their duty to constantly question the direction of the neighborhood, even if they liked individual businesses.

Given the common conception of gays (and artists) as the first harbingers of gentrification, the anti-gentrification stance of this group helps them to demonize an aspect of mainstream lore that connects gays with the “prettifying” of urban neighborhoods.

Understanding gentrification from the gentrifiers’ point of view, such as the DIY businesses, has value for all involved in the debate. Since gentrifiers are located at the center of the storm, they are logical targets for connecting gentrification back in with revitalization. Rather than the tense, either-or debates between ideologues, discussion of gentrification can

be brought back to a more human level where the framework is empathy. This is the level at which community planners should work on a daily basis. The value for planners of a more nuanced understanding of gentrifiers is the resulting ability to use that information to draw on the social, human, and economic capital brought by these individuals to the neighborhood, in order to benefit the pre-existing community and the neighborhood as a whole. Understanding what motivated people to choose a gentrifying neighborhood, and hearing their own reflections on their fit with the neighborhood can inform outreach processes and neighborhood strategies.

The target group of gentrifiers to be studied is particularly interesting because they are more multi-dimensional than frequently assumed. An initial review of literature on the subject shows the pervasive assumption that White, well-educated urbanites who choose to live in low-income neighborhoods are virtually uniformly interested in rapid gentrification of the neighborhood, unless they are artists. In other words, their primary motivation is getting into the neighborhood before it gets expensive, but not too long before it becomes a place perhaps stereotypically typified by upper income White people walking with designer dogs and baby carriages. This thesis indicates that many of these gentrifiers actually move to the neighborhood, in part, because they see themselves as contributors toward neighborhood

revitalization in a diverse community. In other words, they want to be part of an authentic community, and to them that means the presence of neighbors of ethnic or racial minority and/or a lower economic class. Furthermore, many are aware of the paradox created by wanting certain aspects of the neighborhood to change (e.g., less crime) while wanting to prevent change in other ways (e.g., homogenization).

Similarly, the results should be of use to real estate developers who are looking for opportunities to build projects in areas with depressed real estate prices. They may see this thesis as a non-quantitative market study—more like a psychological profile of a potential customer. Companies such as Pappas Enterprises, a real estate developer with residential projects targeting young, design-conscious professionals in South Boston, are likely to recognize their target demographic in this study. It may also better equip them to work sensitively in communities experiencing rapid gentrification.

While gentrification is not a new phenomenon, looking at it through the eyes of a particular group of gentrifiers will provide new insight which is particularly timely given the expanding interest by the private sector in urban neighborhood revitalization, today's lifestyle trends (i.e., marrying later in life and looking to the urban experience to provide community and entertainment) and city planning efforts to create mixed income neighborhoods (e.g., HOPE VI, inclusionary zoning). Questions about balancing needs, diversity, and authentic community, are all raised by these on-going changes, and deserve attention.

This thesis consists of an abbreviated look at gentrification's introduction as a term to the US, major academic theories and research, a typology of gentrifiers as they are seen in academic and popular culture, as well as my first-hand research into the hearts and minds of approximately 30 potential gentrifiers, and my thoughts on harnessing these reflections for practical use.

Chapter II - The Term “Gentrification” and Its Early Years in the US

Tracing the introduction of the term “gentrification” in its American use is an instructive exercise. The changes in frequency of use and application reflect changes in how the population has viewed the influx of the middle class to low-income urban neighborhoods.

1964 - A British Word is Born

Gentrification has been part of the urban student’s lexicon for over forty years, as well as a household term. The power of the word in American culture emerges from the vagary of its root, “gentry,” a class connotation that has a problematic translation from British English to American. This has less to do with language itself and more to do with an American disinclination to claim a class structure. The British gentry is essentially equivalent with the American middle class. Whatever the general perceptions of “the gentry” in Britain, the American middle class is more or less revered. The American middle class represents the ideals of a strong work ethic, independence, wholesomeness, self-empowerment and progress (i.e., the ability to pull oneself out of the working class into the more respectable and stable middle class). Post World War II, the middle class and those wanting to belong to it, fled cities for suburbs whenever possible. So, the idea of the middle class returning to the city was foreign in many senses to the average American in the late 1960s through the late 1970s; the return of “the gentry” was unimaginable.

Ruth Glass, a British sociologist coined the term “gentrification” in 1964 in reference to social and housing market changes in inner London:

One by one, many of the working class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes—upper and lower...Once this process of ‘gentrification’ starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed (p. xviii).

According to Chris Hamnett, another British sociologist, Glass’s creation of the term was “deliberately ironic” and “rooted in the intricacies of traditional English rural class structures...designed to point to the emergence of a new ‘urban gentry’, paralleling the 18th and 19th century rural gentry familiar to readers of Jane Austen” (Hamnett, p. 2401).

Glass’s definition for her new term still captures the baseline definition of today, though many a multitude of varying definitions have been set forth over the last forty years. Glass described it as “a complex process involving physical improvement of the housing stock, housing tenure changes from renting to owning, price rises and the displacement or replacement of the working-class population by the new middle class” (ibid).

1972 – Gentrification or Gazumping?

While gentrification is a word which most American households are familiar with today, it did not catch on in the US right away. The first use of the term in the *New York Times* is at the end of a 1972 article about the housing crisis in London, “‘Gentrification’ –the expulsion of the working class from their traditional territory—has spread much further afield” (7/2/72).² Ironically, the article’s title is “London Home Buyers Fear Gazumping,” and it starts off defining the new British term “gazumping,” not even mentioning “gentrification” until the tenth paragraph. (“Gazumping” is described as slang for “to swindle” and is

used only in a real estate context.)

1974 – The Brownstone Movement is like Gentrification

The next time the term comes up in the *NYT* is in 1974, a full decade after Glass coined the term, and it is referred to as the British name of the American “Brownstone” movement. This rough translation is important because it belies the starkness of class structure in Glass’s term, by putting the focus on the physical aspect of historic preservation. While it may be true that participants in the “Brownstone” movement were largely middle class, the fact that a less political and more physically evocative term supplants it reflects both popular thinking on the topic at the time and Americans’ selective blindness toward their own class system.

The 1974 article focuses on a nationwide conference on “the potential for revival of inner city neighborhoods” and its sponsors: the Brownstone Revival Committee, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Economic Development Council of New York, the Municipal Art Society, and the Brooklyn Union Gas Company. The conference is described as an opportunity to bring together preservationists to exchange ideas and experiences to strengthen the movement of restoring any house of historic or architectural value.

1977 – Displacement... Elsewhere

By 1977, the term and its meaning: displacement of lower income residents by incoming higher income residents, is well elucidated in a special column to the *NYT*, but again, the article is focused entirely around the London experience. Little reference to the US is made, except to acknowledge that in both cultures there was a pervasive sensibility that some mix of incomes in a single neighborhood was ideal, but possibly unattainable based on market forces alone.³

James Pitt...worries these days about the kind of people moving into Islington, the increasingly attractive north London borough in which he lives. But he’s not raising commonly heard objections to [B]lacks or to people too poor or to uncaring to maintain their properties. He and others in the community are complaining that the new people, almost all of them [W]hite, are prosperous, civic-minded and far too eager to buy and renovate rundown houses. These newcomers are ‘gentrifying’ working-class Islington and should be resisted, not welcomed, Mr. Pitt, a 31-year old community worker says. Their presence, he believes, heightens tensions between the haves and the have nots. ‘Gentrification can be socially destructive as the new middle-class immigrants take up an inordinate amount of housing and sometimes impose their planning priorities on the neighborhood...’
(*NYT*, 9/22/77).

The rejection of White neighbors by a White resident, and the idea that the middle class’s presence in a neighborhood is “socially destructive” were bold ideas for the time—but kept in a British context. In the same week, a weekly news quiz asks, “What is gentrification?” and

² *NYT* is used as a proxy for when “gentrification” was first used in the US, because of the *NYT*’s incredible influence, distribution, and reputation of being at the forefront of world news. Other sources may conceivably have had simultaneous or earlier usage.

³ Blomley notes that the ideal of mixed incomes goes at least as far back as the Garden City Movement of the late 1890s and early 1900s (p. 88).

the clue is, “Working-class people in London are resisting a process they refer to as ‘gentrification’” (*NYT*, 9/24/77). In February 1978, a New York radio station, WNYC-AM, hosts a program on Livable Cities called “What Can Be Done to Stop ‘Gentrification?’” No transcript is available, but perhaps the show considered gentrification in the US... But in June 1978, a conference of New York City and Parisian planners swap stories, and conclude that New York is still bleeding its middle class to the ideal of American suburbs, while Paris is just beginning to identify “that curious side effect, ‘gentrification’” (*NYT*, 6/6/78). In other words, New York is not considered to be experiencing gentrification. Another article from the same month describes a shift in the social make-up of Amsterdam’s social center, highlighting the political concerns of Municipal Councilors who were once backed by the more liberal working class but have been replaced by a more conservative and affluent populace. The next article mentioning gentrification, this time a special column from Paris, goes so far as to point out that ‘gentrification’ is “the reverse of the American pattern where the rich go to suburbia and the poor are trapped in the inner city” (*NYT*, 11/19/78). Why did it take so long for the notion of gentrification to catch on as applicable to American cities?

Urban Decay

During the 1960s and 1970s, the most obvious and significant trend was migration of the middle class, particularly Whites, to the suburbs. From 1976-77 alone, there was a net loss of two million whites from central cities to suburbs (*NYT*, 12/17/78). Federal programs such as Urban Renewal and the Comprehensive Training and Employment Act were designed to modernize and reinvigorate central cities, which were generally seen to be rapidly failing. Most major cities, from Cleveland to New York City, faced dire budget situations and relied on federal funding to close tremendous budget gaps. Between 1971 and 1978, federal aid to cities quadrupled. The discussion of the time was more focused on whether cities would survive at all, and little else.

1979 – Gentrification in Major US Cities

In 1979, seven years after the term is first published in the *NYT* and sixteen years after the term is born, a *NYT* article reports that gentrification is happening in the US. The article focuses on the return of a well-educated, professional class to New York City, but lists Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Washington as also experiencing gentrification. The article attributes the failure to recognize the gradual revitalization of these cities with an underestimation of the “enormous influence of these trend-setting gentrifiers” (*NYT*, 1/14/79). The article also points out that gentrifiers draw other gentrifiers, and considers gentrification as the creation of a neighborhood where one did not before exist:

Consider, for instance, the magnetic pull of SoHo. Not long ago, SoHo was a dilapidated industrial area, but as the numbers of young professionals settling into renovated lofts have multiplied, rents have risen so steeply that people are spreading out and creating new neighborhoods like ‘NoHo’ and ‘Tribeca’ where neighborhoods never existed before (*NYT*, 1/14/79).

The article goes on to again equate the Brownstone movement with gentrification, but this time with property sales prices demonstrating the enormous profit to be had by “urban homesteaders.” The article’s take on gentrification (“The rate of conversion from rental apartments to co-ops has more than doubled in the last three years... indicates that New

York is attracting a more stable, committed population” and “the most positive proof that the gentry is revitalizing large tracts of New York City”) is clearly that it is vastly improving a city that was not long before in dire straits. It is not until the last section of the article, the least important section in journalistic pyramid writing, that the downside of gentrification is considered. Fears of homogenization through the loss of the ethnic character that made the city a draw for the gentry are expressed through a young lawyer who says, “everybody is beginning to look the same.” The racial and class tension caused in Europe by rapid gentrification in cities is named as a concern, and it is reported that the Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded more than 200 grants totaling \$3M to study the issue.

But the tenor of the article is still far from the sensitive treatment of low-income residents one might expect in the *NYT* today, for the article ends on a faintly patronizing and disempowering notion, “Urban experts and politicians are beginning to understand that only the middle and upper classes—not the poor—can rebuild cities.” To further compound this statement, the article describes how few minorities have made it to the middle-class, and those that have, tend to leave the city for the suburbs. In the end, this first look at gentrification in US cities by arguably the nation’s most important newspaper, has implicitly suggested that gentrification in the form of a highly educated White class will save US cities from the pathetic minority poor who have been left behind as a result of failing government policies.

The Letters to the Editor that follow this article are just as telling. Among those expressing disappointment with the article is Herbert Gans, of *The Urban Villagers* fame. Gans argues that it is not luxury housing and a downtown boom that will fix the city but a strong tax base and healthy labor market. Others chime in with their concerns that the article does not acknowledge that artists led the way to the renaissance or that once the young Brownstoners enter the childbearing stage of life, they will be off to the suburbs as well, though at least leaving behind rehabilitated property. The glaring omission in the article and these letters to the editor, is the voice from or for the working class, the low income, the poor—the people whose neighborhoods are invisible to those who can only see the new neighborhoods created through rehabilitated property and chic new businesses. Even Gans does not appear to ask about them, aside from his general call for more jobs. Where are they? How do they feel about it? What is happening to them?

By the summer of 1979, the discussion has rapidly evolved and a number of articles are published. Concerns about displacement have grown, but are focused either on the elderly or on fears of homogeneity. Articles on the gentrification of suburbs by Blacks, and the like, consider ever increasing angles on the story. Furthermore, discussion of displacement becomes more prevalent.

1980 – Gentrification, even in Peoria

In a 1980 *NYT* article, the “Brownstone” trend is shown popping up in Peoria, Illinois—implying that it must be a national trend if even Peoria is impacted. Everett Ortner, head of Back to the City, Inc. and leader of the Brownstone movement in New York City’s Park Slope, is quoted, “. . . the fact that we were invited [to Peoria] indicates an interest in old houses that didn’t exist 10 years ago.” The article also notes that Ortner dislikes the term gentrification, he says,

I think the growing hue and cry about gentrification is exaggerated. . . Some people read racism into the situation, but I think that’s misguided. It’s an economic issue,

an example of class differences. The city must attract new, young people who are educated and have the money and desire to preserve our old neighborhoods and stop the downward cycle...I call it good (*NYT*, 2/24/80).

Ortner is arguably a leader of the “urban pioneers,” so his rejection of gentrification and sense of heroism, may be reflective of the Brownstoners of the time.

The Next 26 Years

For the next 26 years, the topic of gentrification appears regularly in the *NYT*. The trends reported include: questioning public policy (for example, a five-part series that negatively viewed the City’s use of tax incentives to encourage conversion of apartments to condos—along with descriptions of abusive landlords), examinations of commercial gentrification, and a never-ending scouring of neighborhoods for the newest examples of gentrification. The trends in reporting include: concern for the elderly and low-income in opposition with abusive and greedy landlords, a burgeoning interest in real estate developers looking to capitalize on up-and-coming neighborhoods, and picturing the youth invading new neighborhoods. And today, a typical gentrification article takes a playful jab at the gentrifiers, while feeding them information they might want. Consider this 2006 spread from the *NYT Magazine*, entitled “Girls in the Hood: A Five-Borough Guide to Gentrification”:

Girls in the Hood
A FIVE-BOROUGH GUIDE TO GENTRIFICATION.

Why live in a shoe box on West 10th Street when you can get enough closet space to stow a few seasons' worth of Lanvin heels on 141st Street in the Bronx? No longer able to afford both style and shelter, rent refugees are colonizing the fringes of Manhattan and the outer boroughs, venturing way beyond the first few L stops in Williamsburg — and bringing their best accessories with them. Herewith, some of the telltale signs of gentrification in seven transitional neighborhoods — as told by some of the fashion pioneers. MAURA EGAN AND CHRISTINE MUHLKE

HARLEM
Melissa Ventosa, fashion stylist.
Clothing: Thekoon print dress.
Accessories: Chloe's Gladys zipper tote; Finn Gatsby gold bracelet.
Hangout: Mi Florida Restaurant, 3219 Broadway, (212) 662-0090.

MOTT HAVEN, THE BRONX
Laura Napier, artist.
Clothing: gold lamé top picked up at clothing swap.
Accessory: tolu from Western Beef.
Hangout: Haven Arts, 235 East 141st Street; (718) 565-6753.

LONG ISLAND CITY, QUEENS
Mari Spirito, director, 303 Gallery.
Clothing: vintage Prada sandals.
Accessory: "Squatters" from P.S. 1 bookstore.
Hangout: Lounge 47, 4710 Vernon Boulevard; (718) 937-2044.

EAST CHINATOWN
Julia Leach, Kate Spade creative director.
Clothing: Foley & Corina top, A Détacher jacket.
Accessory: bag of pistachios from the Sweet Life, 63 Hester Street; (212) 598-0092.
Hangout: Brown Cafe, 61 Hester Street; (212) 477-2427.

BUSHWICK, BROOKLYN
Eva Prins, Rizzoli editor.
Clothing: Rachel Dorm dress.
Accessory: Isacup dachshund.
Hangout: Moto restaurant, 394 Broadway; (718) 599-6895.

ST. GEORGE, STATEN ISLAND
Friani Mack, speech-language pathologist.
Clothing: Shamask tunic.
Accessory: Whole Foods Market shopping bag (imported from Manhattan).
Hangout: Muddy Cup coffee shop, 388 Van Duzer Street; (718) 818-8100.

RED HOOK, BROOKLYN
Cecilia Dean, Visionaire founding editor.
Clothing: Comme des Garçons tartan outfit.
Accessory: 1979 Toyota Land Cruiser.
Hangout: 360 restaurant, 360 Van Brunt Street; (718) 246-0360.

Figure 3

Chapter III - Major Theories and Issues of Gentrification in the US

The following chapter examines literature on theories in gentrification research. First, the explanations for the origins of gentrification are considered: demand-driven, supply-driven, and globalization's impacts. Second, the theory of stages is examined—particularly whether it is merely typical or wholly inevitable, as well as the importance of neighborhood context. Third, the impacts of gentrification are considered, with special attention to revitalization versus displacement and the role played by the middle class. The next chapter continues the discussion with a typology of gentrifiers drawn up to collect the many stereotypes of gentrifiers in academic literature and popular culture. Following this chapter is a closely related look at the importance of narrative in constructing identity and perceptions of the built environment.

Explanations of Gentrification

Demand-driven or Supply-driven?

Theories that are used to explain the origins of gentrification can be divided into two broad categories: demand-driven, and supply-driven. Demand-driven theory supposes that structural changes in the US economy along with cultural changes have created gentrification. The transition from an industrial to a post-industrial economy has increased the number of white-collar professionals as well as the locating of those types of jobs (e.g., finance, creative, technical) in urban centers (Hamnett, 2003, p. 2401). These economic changes have also altered class composition which in turn has affected cultural preferences of the “new” middle class which desires, among other lifestyle choices, to live close to work (Ley, 1980). Hamnett and others, have described the changing cultural preferences within the context of evolving gender relations and the increase of dual income households (Hamnett, 2003; Karsten, 2003).

In contrast, Neil Smith, one of the leading theorists on the supply-side, does not acknowledge the creation of a new middle class and argues that studying the preferences and activities of the newly arrived is little more than a distraction from the real issues at hand—the source of the problem and, to a lesser extent, the effect of gentrification on the pre-existing residents. Smith attributes the origin of gentrification with a disconnect between the value of land and its existing use value. As the suburbs boomed and inner city property was left behind, this disconnect or “rent-gap” grew until it was so great that developers could profitably redevelop the property. In Smith's view, the property market and financing of redevelopment are the causes of gentrification, not demand. He has gone so far as to say that gentrification is “a back to the city movement by capital, not people” (Smith, 1979, p.538).

While both theories acknowledge a variety of factors coalescing to create gentrification, more work has gone into examining the particulars of each theory separately than to considering how they are complementary (Atkinson, 2003, p. 2344). Added to this is literature that looks at the role of the public sector on gentrification. In particular, ways in which city governments draw the middle class into urban areas via job creation and zoning, as well as by improving the profitability of redevelopment via financial incentives (Hackworth, 2002). Blomley suggests that it is globalization and the competition for world-class status that influences cities to “engage in more aggressive programs of place marketing, positioning themselves as platforms in an emergent economy of flows” (p. 29). Smith and Graves

concur, suggesting that the state became more involved in gentrification in the post-recessionary 1990s (2005).

As noted by Atkinson (2003), one of the remarkable aspects of the debates on gentrification is that it covers a wide intersection of disciplines and ideologies. The ensuing collaborations and disagreements are partly responsible for energizing the field of study for so long.

Stages?

Gentrification is commonly considered to occur in stages, starting with the people who are risk-takers, then risk-tolerant residents, and finally the risk-averse. Artists are often considered to be risk-takers; they typically have some combination of limited financial resources and a conscious interest in urban living. Artists often lay claim to neighborhoods that reinforce a “marker of alternative identity” (Smith and Graves, p. 403). Or, as Ley puts it, “An old area, socially diverse, including poverty groups’ can be valorized as authentic, symbolically rich and free from the commodification that depreciates the meaning of place” (p. 2535). Artists are able to make “a cultural virtue of an economic necessity” (Ley, p. 2534).

Similarly, gay households have been reputedly drawn to gentrify urban neighborhoods because of the affordability of land and the lack of a highly organized resistance to their lifestyle which has allowed them to create enclaves (which then reinforce their “alternative identity”). These neighborhoods, such as the Castro in San Francisco and the South End in Boston, were open to everyone but sought by those who found that living in an “edgy” neighborhood, allowed them to express their “edgy” identities.⁴ Another group consists largely of single parents and young couples who also have limited financial resources.

Altogether, these early stage gentrifiers choose the neighborhood for its affordability, accessibility, as an expression of their own identities, and sometimes the opportunity to profit. As Smith and Graves note, “improvements made through sweat equity bring about rising property values, rents, and increased interest in the neighborhood on the part of more affluent classes, real estate and corporate developers” (p. 403). As a result, they are at risk of displacement along with the original residents. Subsequent waves of gentrifiers transition the neighborhood “from alternative and affordable to prestigious and profitable” (Smith and Graves, p. 403). Property values rise, along with the new population that has higher income and higher educational attainment, while crime and other social problems decrease—in the immediate area, at least.

The stage model for gentrification stands in sharp contrast to theories of neighborhood evolution developed by the ecological school—a group of sociology professors at the University of Chicago in the 1920s and early 1930s. Robert Park and Ernest Burgess authored the concentric ring theory, which suggested that cities evolve toward five concentric rings with the most deteriorated and devalued land at the center and the most prosperous in the outer ring (1925). Instead of this decay process from inside out, Bostic points out that gentrification is “a sort of reversal of fortunes for a neighborhood” (p. 2428).

Perhaps after comparing the concentric and gentrification typologies of city growth,

⁴ An October 2005 article in *The New Republic* explores the mainstreaming of homosexuality in, “The end of gay culture.” The article suggests that there was once a single distinctive gay culture which is rapidly fading. Implicit in this discussion is that many gays no longer feel they need to live in a gay enclave and the existence of such is threatened.

Hamnett and Lees point out that “there are no universally and temporally stable residential patterns (Hamnett, 1984, p. 314; Lees, 2003, p. 2491). The idea that gentrification is just part of an ever-changing urban landscape is often brought up in the context of particular neighborhoods that are changing. For example, the Mission District in San Francisco was predominantly populated by Italian and Irish families in the early 20th century. By the 1970s, the neighborhood was predominantly Mexican, and by the 1990s, Latinos from Central America dominated the residential and commercial scene. (In the late 1990s and early in the 21st century, the dotcom boom led to a tremendously swift upswing in the rents and property values because the neighborhood was exceedingly popular with dotcom workers who were making hugely inflated salaries.) The transition from Italian and Irish to Mexican to Salvadoran and Nicaraguan was a transition that saw a significant change in the cultural base, but not in class—the Mission was and is a working-class neighborhood. Nevertheless, it showcases the tremendous changes a single neighborhood can be expected to go through over time.

Additionally, some researchers in the last decade have been calling attention to the importance of the geographical and social context in shaping the gentrification process for a given neighborhood. Lees suggests that differences in the gentrification of neighborhoods of various sizes, city contexts, and with different players may be sufficient enough to question the prevailing theoretical models. Smith and Graves illustrate such a case when describing the gentrification of a downtown neighborhood in Charlotte, North Carolina, by Bank of America. As a corporate strategy, the bank created a development corporation to redevelop and gentrify a neighborhood. The goal was place-making to attract highly desirable financial workers to a city not known as a financial world center. No where in academia, yet, are corporations integrated into the typical stage model of gentrification.

In spite of these counter-theories, the stage model is generally accepted today by academics, planning practitioners, and laypersons as the typical, though not necessarily inevitable, process by which a neighborhood becomes gentrified. For example, a quick Google search of the term “how gentrification works” results in dozens of explanations that utilize the stage model.⁵

Impacts of Gentrification: Revitalization and Displacement

There are two fundamental components of gentrification that give it the squishy, spinning meaning that opposing ideologues use to bend its definition toward their own arguments on revitalization and displacement. During the late 1970s, after two decades of suburbanization and in the age of cities in financial crisis, Jimmy Carter’s Administration sought ways to turn the tide against the collapse of urbanity in the US. The Urban Renewal programs of the 1960s were out of favor, and instead the government paid keen attention to the market forces that seemed to be enticing the middle class back to city centers. Policymakers gave more weight to getting people back into cities than to issues of displacement. In a 1979 special supplement to the *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Howard Sumka of the Department of Housing and Urban Development acknowledged displacement but pointedly noted that whereas the government had deeply subsidized the development that created displacement through Urban Renewal, in the case of gentrification, it was the market economy that caused it (Sumka, 1979). Furthermore, he argued, HUD needed to understand

⁵ Search done on 4/10/06.

more about the magnitude, causes, and effects of displacement before embarking on a preventive or corrective treatment. In answer to critics, he noted that difference between them was largely ideological—Sumka felt it prudent to understand the magnitude of displacement better, and accept some bad with good, whereas his critics would likely argue that any displacement is unacceptable.

These contentions: balancing revitalization and displacement, versus battling any displacement, continue today, not much changed. The federal government is still involved inasmuch that HOPE VI pursues mixed income communities.⁶ Community development corporations and other advocates for indigenous low-income residents still search for ways to combat displacement by ownership programs, building affordable housing, and protesting zoning changes that create minimum lot sizes or in some way give precedence to developments that may lead to gentrification.

Understanding what is meant by “revitalization” and “displacement” is critical to a better understanding of gentrification.

Revitalization

Definition

According to the *Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary*, the definition of revitalize is “to impart new life or vigor to, to restore to a vigorous active state” (<http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com>). The definition of revitalization is “an act or instance of revitalizing.”

What does revitalization look like?

In a literal sense, to revitalize a neighborhood is to give it new life or vigor. Commonly, the attachment of the adjective “revitalized” to the noun “neighborhood” is accompanied by a description of the neighborhood before and after. The before picture typically includes deteriorated building stock, vacant lots, evidence of vandalism, littering and/or other crime, limited retail businesses (pictures of such will often show overcrowded shelves stocked with low-quality goods and windows shielded with metal gates or bars), and little evidence of community.⁷ In contrast, the after picture typically showcases freshly painted buildings, flow-erboxes in windows, sidewalks busy with passers-by, and gleaming store windows.

For Example: Logan Circle in Washington, D.C.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Logan Circle suffered the same fate as other urban neighborhoods across the country: White Flight. The beautiful Victorians that had been constructed after the Civil War fell into serious disrepair and vacancy, while crime grew substantially in the area. Earlier in the 20th century, it was known as the “heart of Black Washington,” but by the early 1970s it was known mostly as a neighborhood of prostitution and drug dealing. In the mid-1970s, the District created a program in which houses that had been landbanked were put up for sale to civilian bidders. The D.C. Housing Department priced 14 houses

⁶ A commonly held worry amongst large-scale affordable housing developers is the future of the HOPE VI program. Currently much of the funding has been spent or assigned to specific projects, and no additional funding has been set aside. Some of these developers (such as Bridge Housing) are looking at ways to continue to redevelop in the same vein as HOPE VI, but without that particular program.

⁷ The revitalization description is typical of those described in case studies, newspaper articles, etc. It is not meant to suggest that revitalization always takes this form, and no other, but rather to be illustrative.

from \$10,000 to \$39,650, at a time when “dilapidated shells” were selling on the private market for \$40,000-60,000 (*Post*, 12/24/76). Bidders for the properties were required to detail how they would rehabilitate the historic homes, whether they would occupy or rent the spaces, etc. Most homeowners were required to set aside the basement unit for affordable renters. Still, the move was controversial, especially because middle class Whites were the typical receivers of the properties. As more and more young, White, professionals moved



Figure 4



Figure 5

into the neighborhood to rehabilitate residential buildings, property values skyrocketed, city services improved, and programs were put into place to deter criminal activity (e.g., at one point in the 1970s, residents organized to slap bumper stickers on cars that appeared in the neighborhood to solicit prostitutes (*Post*, 8/25/90). (See Figure 4: an example of the deterioration from a 1976 photograph.)

By 1990, the neighborhood was at a point in the revitalization that residents could afford to be picky about new businesses; a paint store built a 1-story, contemporary building to serve its many customers doing rehab work, only to find the neighborhood in uproar about the “suburban ugliness” of the store (*Post*, 07/12/90). (See Figure 5: an example of the rehabilitation and historic preservation from the 1980s.) And in 1996, the residents rallied together to bring an organic, mid-to-high end grocery store to their neighborhood—Fresh Fields (part of Whole Foods) (www.washingtonsbestaddress.com/logan.htm).

To summarize, the infrastructure and built environment was deteriorated. The District caught on quickly to an interest by young professionals in buying homes for cheap and rehabilitating them, and helped the process along. The new residents fought for City services, a decrease in crime and increase in convenient, high quality consumer goods. This is not an atypical story.

The Incidental Power of the Middle Class

The presence of a substantial number of middle class residents in any given neighborhood typically results in the presence of the following amenities due to the social and economic capital of those residents: convenient access to quality goods and services, decently-funded schools, well maintained public infrastructure, growing or stabilized property values, and a population that has the resources (human, social, and economic capital) to either get what they need for the neighborhood or get out.⁸ It is not uncommon to hear that in a gentrifying neighborhood, the city is finally repairing streetlamps, a grocery chain is finally opening up a store, or that property values are going up as deteriorated buildings are rehabilitated. All of these effects are essentially good for the neighborhood and its inhabitants. Minus displacement, this scenario may sound ideal, even like a fairy tale.

Fears of Displacement & Invisibility

Leaders of the early Brownstoner movement as well as political leaders expressed this sensibility—that the middle class was the hero of the cities, riding in on white horses to save the damsels in distress.⁹ Deborah Auger noted in 1979 that,

In recent years, policymakers have expressed growing enchantment with the efforts of young middle-class professionals to resettle and revitalize poorer urban neighborhoods. Both federal and local policy officials have eagerly supported this

⁸ In the case of Chicago’s Wicker Park in the 1980s, incoming White, middle class residents worked with the public schools in the low-income neighborhood to set up a special accelerated program within the public system but separate from the existing curriculum—essentially, fighting for their own solution to the ostensibly poor education provided by the schools at the time. Unfortunately, the program was not of as much benefit to the predominantly low-income, Puerto Rican children in the community who mostly remained in the existing curriculum.

⁹ Political leaders today are much more hesitant to embrace gentrification—at least with the use of that term. For example, in 1999, a San Francisco mayoral candidate promised to declare “war on any and all gentrification” (Vigdor, 2002, p.133).

new immigration as a solution to the nation's foremost urban ills (p.515). Auger's own concern was with displacement and she feared the wholesale adoption of gentrification as the means to restore America's cities. Given the desperation of leaders at the time, it may have seemed a bit like the gentrifiers did arrive on a white horse. This sentiment is captured not only in the policy decisions, but also in the terms used to describe the gentrifiers as they became identifiable players in revitalization: urban pioneer and urban homesteader.

Neil Smith, among others, reacted sharply to such terminology. He wrote, "The idea of 'urban pioneers' is as insulting applied to contemporary cities as the original idea of 'pioneers' in the US West. Now, as then, it implies that no one lives in the area being pioneered—no one worthy of notice at least" (Smith, 1996, p.33). Smith neatly unpacks the term's negative connotation by connecting it directly to its historical narrative with a critical eye toward history. Much of American lore about the greatness of the country, and Americans' rugged individuality is tied to stories of the pioneers who settled the western half of the US. In fact, probably much of America's world power today should be attributed to its relatively rapid control and populating of a vast and varied land. Still, the counter-narrative documenting the destruction and near-destruction of Native American tribes during westward expansion, shadows more celebratory accounts. It is not only the direct link to pioneers conquering the West that creates ambivalence; American history is rife with stories of one power dynamic leading the charge in the name of the country only to realize later that another group has been trampled in the quest—slavery, the epiphanies of the Civil Rights era, the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. Those in the business of neighborhood revitalization "from the inside" might call some of these examples to mind when discussing their own mission.

Revitalization Does Not Require the Middle Class

Revitalization "from the inside" ("incumbent upgrading" according to Anthony Downs) recognizes that revitalization does not necessarily require middle class (or other) newcomers in order to improve a troubled neighborhood. The middle class is not the only catalyst. Neighborhoods seeking revitalization from within have agendas largely shaped by the basic assumption that the power to change is within reach of the low-income, indigenous residents, but that economic, social and human capital must be gathered and empowered for the residents to foster change.¹⁰

The oft-cited example is the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative. Throughout the 1970s and much of the 1980s, the Dudley Street area of the Roxbury/North Dorchester neighborhood in Boston, was neglected by local government and redlined by banks. Pervasive arson left the neighborhood with over 1,000 vacant lots, and a reputation for crime. For years it was better known for its deficits than its assets—its committed, ethnically-diverse community. Not until 1984, when a well-meaning grant-making foundation made plans to revitalize the neighborhood were the people of the community mobilized. Having not been consulted on the plans for their own neighborhood, the outrage of the residents coalesced into a community planning process. The group counted among its early successes a campaign against illegal garbage dumping and receiving eminent domain powers from the City

¹⁰ One method in launching the process is to take an inventory of assets. This approach is in contrast to a deficit perspective in which leaders look at what does not exist (e.g., jobs, middle class residents, transit, etc.) and work toward filling those gaps first.

to use in the assembling of parcels for affordable housing and other community needs. To date, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative is the only community group in the nation to have the power of eminent domain delegated to it.

The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative has transformed over 300 of the vacant lots, started a farmers' market, and created a strong community-building institution with real political power. The organization has over 2,700 members, including residents, businesses and other non-profits. Currently, it is building a greenhouse which will be used for an income-producing crop to be distributed to local businesses, as well as regionally (www.dsni.org).

Still, the neighborhood is one of the poorest in Boston. Approximately 32% of residents fall below the poverty line and unemployment is 16% (www.dsni.org). Housing built in the area is largely affordable with the notable Orchard Gardens HOPE VI project drawing some middle income residents. The commercial center, Dudley Square, has Boston's busiest bus hub but very little diversity in retail offerings and many vacant, historic properties. In the last few years, two local community development corporations have rehabilitated and re-tenanted several properties, furthering the revitalization of Dudley Street.

Dudley Street is an example of revitalization without gentrification, but it is also an example of a very slow change rate.¹¹ In 2003, the Housing Research Foundation reported that the pervasive sense (and hope) in the neighborhood was that Dudley Street would be a "hot" neighborhood in the next five to ten years. Does this mean that gentrification is expected? When it arrives, will DSNI and the indigenous residents still be celebrated for turning the neighborhood around, or will the credit be passed onto the newcomers?

Or, Is the Middle Class Necessary in Revitalization?

Even as "revitalization from within" becomes a more prevalent approach and publicity over displacement increases, the idea remains that the middle class is needed to turn around troubled neighborhoods. In some ways, the narrative has changed. Instead of the middle class swooping in to "save the city," seen as a concrete jungle or abandoned landscape, there is the sense that the middle and (now also the) upper class are needed to "save the community." In this sensibility, "the community" is an existing neighborhood that has the will of the people behind it but not quite enough resources to reach all revitalization goals.

The assumption that mixed income neighborhoods prevent the kind of economic segregation that results in extremely troubled neighborhoods can be seen in this example of Dudley Street—a neighborhood group with powers beyond that of any nonprofit in the country that has done a tremendous job in rallying support, attention and solution to local problems, but is still looking forward to when the neighborhood is "hot" in order to achieve the "urban village" they plan and work toward. It can also be seen in the tenets of HOPE VI which include: "to provide housing that will avoid or decrease the concentration of very low-income families." (Popkin, p. 2). Many cities today have their own inclusionary zoning. For instance, 80/20 rules that require developers to set aside 20% of dwelling units as affordable. Such zoning requirements are not merely to get developers to pay for affordable

¹¹ A *Boston Globe* article from 4/21/06 reported on (new) signs hanging in Dudley Square businesses' windows reading, "Warning! Revitalization equals gentrification" in response to the introduction of a Walgreens Pharmacy to the neighborhood.

housing (which could be done with in-lieu fees or opportunities to build units off-site), but also to build it within market-rate and luxury real estate projects that target middle and upper class residents.

There is considerable debate as to the ways in which a mixed income community affects low-income residents. Disagreement is mostly centered around the psychological and cultural effects. For example, does it make a difference on low income children's education and career trajectories to grow up next door to college-educated professionals? What is the impact of seeing potential role models, and to what extent must there be interaction for influences to take hold?

Less controversial is whether low-income residents are affected by improvements in the public realm, safety, and access to retail goods. Generally, these improvements are considered to be accessible to and positive for all residents. The controversy over such improvements stems instead from a comparison between before and after, and the resulting psychological and cultural effects of knowing that the presence of the newcomers has changed outsiders' treatment of the neighborhood.

These questions are compounded by building-by-building and block-by-block analyses of resident income levels. Researchers are divided on whether there is more or less segregation. Typically, in gentrifying neighborhoods, rather than a completely heterogeneous dispersal of mixed incomes, there are blocks or similarly small areas containing middle or upper classes, with lower-income projects or areas tucked in between. Hamnett noted in his research of inner city London over 30 years: "The social class composition...is now far more mixed...But, at the local level, it is likely that segregation has risen between wealthy home-owners in one street and low-income council tenants a few streets away" (p.2417). As a dominant trend, it may mean that the social spillovers are small—indigenous and newcomers are not necessarily learning how to live well together, but are merely monitoring the edges between them—though other quality of life spillovers may be moderate to strong.

Displacement

Definition

"Displace" is defined by *Merriam-Webster* as, "to remove from the usual or proper place, to expel or to flee from home or homeland" and also as "to crowd out" (<http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/displace>). Displacement is the act of displacing. The definition does not specify a relationship to gentrification.

What Displacement Looks Like

Displacement in the context of gentrification means that new residents force out the previous residents by virtue of taking over space, and/or bidding up property values/rents above what the previous residents could afford. Most frequently, those who are displaced are from low-income groups and are often communities of color since they are disproportionately low-income. The elderly, artists, and others on fixed or limited incomes are also threatened. Some neighborhoods have residents and organizations that are more quick to recognize potential displacement and organize to fight it, than others. In more and more communities, city planners and affordable housing non-profits work to mitigate displacement before gentrification has taken a tremendous toll. Displacement can be actively pursued, such as when landlords harass tenants verbally or by shutting off heat. It can also be a

by-product of seemingly innocent behavior by individual households, such as the purchase of a home at such a high price that the values of surrounding houses are affected.

For Example: Woodlawn, Chicago

Woodlawn is a neighborhood bordering the University of Chicago, in Chicago's South Side. Like Logan Circle, it was home primarily to the White, middle class (mostly professors) until suburbanization when White Flight left the neighborhood predominantly African-American. (Today, 98% of the population is Black.) Despite efforts of some residents, the area deteriorated economically and structurally throughout the 1960s. The University made plans to (bulldoze and) expand into the neighborhood, which it perceived as blighted. With the help of Saul Alinsky, the neighborhood fought the University and won an agreement that the University would not expand (past 61st Street). Still, displacement pressures have crept in from other sources. In the 1990s and since 2000, many landlords have been terminating leases and converting apartments into condominiums. In response, tenants



Figure 6



Figure 7

have organized a series of protests (see Figures 6-7), and put political pressure on the City Council to pass affordable housing legislation. Arenda Troutman, Alderman for the neighborhood, said at a housing committee hearing in January 2005, "In Woodlawn, gentrification is happening so quickly, even I can't control it" (Medill, 1/27/05). The example of Woodlawn is striking for a couple of reasons: 1) fighting against displacement is a struggle that has lasted already over forty years and 2) the fight is being led by strong institutions and political individuals. Though the displacement is coming largely from individuals in the private sector who own multifamily properties, the University is clearly seen as a threat. This story is not atypical.

Types of Displacement

Displacement can take multiple forms. Renters can be displaced by the early termination of leases or by not having leases renewed. Property owners may do so in order to rent the units at a higher rate, or prepare to sell the building for a profit, or to rehabilitate the property—possibly condensing units. Owner-occupants can be displaced by rising property taxes and other financial pressures created by surrounding changes in the neighborhood.

While these property owners might receive a market rate for their property, the market rate of that neighborhood may not translate into a sufficient amount for similar or better housing stock in that or a preferred neighborhood. Displacees may be forced to leave a neighborhood where they have social and economic connections, and are likely to end up in a neighborhood just as troubled, or worse. As Atkinson notes, “The problem of gentrification here is often not simply the social cost of local household dislocation but also the difficulty of re-entering the inner city” (p.2345).

Who Gets Displaced First

The first to be displaced are likely to be renters. In the context of a gentrifying neighborhood, it is often easier for property owners to sell a vacant property than one that is occupied. This is because the new owner is expected to want to either rehabilitate the property in some fashion and/or to raise rents substantially in order to cull a higher cash flow from the property; either case is much simpler without having existing tenants to satisfy during construction, to confront with condominium conversion plans, or to ask for rapidly inflated rents. Additionally, rents might be so low that it is more cost efficient to have an empty building than to pay operating expenses for an occupied property. Often artists and others from the first wave of gentrifiers who selected the neighborhood in large part due to its affordability, are among the first to be forced out. Other renters, especially those who have continuous employment challenges, such as new immigrants or single parents with children, are also very much at risk.

After the renters, owner occupants experience the impact of increasing property values in the surrounding area. Those who cannot afford the rising tax base may be forced to sell their property. This can be particularly difficult for the elderly who have little but the equity of their own house. Finding living quarters to fit their physical and economic limitations, not to mention the psychological trauma of leaving the neighborhood can be difficult.

As the neighborhood continues to gentrify and housing costs escalate, not only might long-timers be pushed out, but also people who recently entered the neighborhood as gentrifiers themselves. Typically, gentrification is the result of individual actors making individual decisions—as higher income households enter the neighborhood, they are not necessarily aware of who they are pushing out and are unlikely to have targeted displacees. In this way, gentrification is about capital, not people.

How Serious is Displacement

Displacement is undeniably a worrisome concept and occurrence. The idea that one’s home might become too expensive due to the influx of newcomers with higher incomes is troubling. For people who pursue living in a particular neighborhood because of its socioeconomic mix, their own presence may work against their intended pursuit. There are numerous examples of displacement caused by gentrification. In most cases, the record is one of concern and dismay, such as in Woodlawn. In some cases, displacement is considered a boon. For example, in the documentary, *Northeast Passage: The Inner City and the American Dream*, a woman who has just received her first home through Habitat for Humanity, does everything in her power to drive away the occupants of a “crackhouse.” She looks forward to gentrification that will displace such residents and secure her property’s value. There are also less palatable appreciation of displacement voiced by gentrifiers who want to not only

secure but improve their property value and level of comfort in the neighborhood by seeing more people like them move in, and less desirable low-income neighbors, sometimes of different races or ethnic backgrounds, move out. For example, in the documentary, *Flag Wars*, a woman who has recently moved into the neighborhood expresses her desire for homeowners to give up and sell their homes.

The Brookings Institute published a report in 2001 that suggested mitigation measures to deal with displacement, including homebuyer education programs, and tax-increment-financing with housing set-asides. The creation and preservation of affordable housing units in gentrifying neighborhoods can make a tremendous difference in limiting or slowing displacement. This too, can be controversial. In New York City and Boston, zoning has been enacted to protect artist live/work studios, and/or to provide the opportunity for live/work space to be created. For example, the Boston Zoning Code, allows artists in live/work units to live in industrially zoned areas of the city--no other occupational groups are permitted residence in these areas. The City of Boston has also created an artist certification program, to ensure that persons occupying artist housing meet a basic threshold.

However, some researchers argue that large-scale fears of displacement are unfounded. In 2004, Lance Freeman and Frank Braconi released the results of a study that quantified the likelihood that a resident of a gentrifying neighborhood of New York City in the 1990s was likely to move, versus a resident of a non-gentrifying neighborhood in NYC during the same period. The results indicated that residents of non-gentrifying neighborhoods were more likely to move. According to Freeman, “About 1 in 5 renters moves every year regardless...Neighborhoods are changing more as a result of replacement, where people who are leaving are being replaced by more affluent neighbors” (Hsu, p.69).

As a check on this study, Freeman followed up with a national look at displacement. In results released in 2005, Freeman found that there was not a statistically significant difference between mobility rates of residents in gentrifying versus non-gentrifying neighborhoods. In this study, Freeman had information on the reasons for moves from a neighborhood, which allowed him to look at displacement due to rising costs against other reasons, such as a job change. He found that, “there actually was a relationship between people saying they had to move and living in a gentrifying neighborhood”—in other words, the likelihood of someone saying they were displaced was higher in the gentrifying neighborhoods (Freeman on “Talk of the Nation”). The magnitude of the difference, however, was only about a half of a percentage point. Freeman, as well as some of his critics, are quick to point out that relatively minor displacement might be credited to local and federal affordable housing interventions, rather than to the nature of gentrification itself. Freeman also suggests there are other mechanisms at play, such as strong relationships between landlords and tenants, and the ability of tenants to find better jobs because of the gentrification, and thus pay the higher rents.

A Fannie Mae study following up on Freeman’s results corroborated that the low-income residents were hanging on due to affordable housing interventions, relationships, more people per unit, finding jobs created through gentrification, and paying a larger proportion of income toward rent. The study emphasized the fear of displacement with which these renters live and the pro-active measures needed to prevent it (Newman).

Jacob Vigdor completed a quantitative analysis of displacement in Boston over a 25-year period, similar to Freeman’s work. The empirical evidence did not lead to an obvi-

ous conclusion, though Vigdor found “striking patterns” (p.135), including that there was no evidence that gentrification increased the probability that low-income residents would leave their dwelling unit. Instead, poor households were “more likely to exit poverty themselves than to be replaced by a nonpoor household,” and that socioeconomic integration had increased in the study area (ibid). However, Vigdor also found that increases in housing costs for low-income residents were not commensurate with income, nor self-assessed changes in housing, public service or neighborhood quality.

Displacement as succession, created by the transition of the working class into the middle class fits into the demand-driven gentrification model; structural economic changes are creating more white collar jobs. Hamnett argues that the process is more one of replacement than displacement. In contrast, Atkinson investigated the correlation between gentrification and displacement in London and found one a fairly high predictor for the other (R^2 value of 0.74). Atkinson’s study from the year 2000 looked at London between 1981 and 1991. He used job type changes as a proxy for gentrification, and a variety of measures as a proxy for displacement, including declines in the population of working class, ethnic minorities, elderly and single parents.

Ultimately, all of the researchers pursuing the question of displacement have noted that it is incredibly difficult to study. The wide-range of definitions result in each researcher fitting a definition to his or her own needs. Finding reliable data covering a sufficient period of time is also tricky. Then there is the decision whether to use proxy measures for what it means to be displaced, or to rely on responses to surveys or interviews. Freeman, Braconi, and Vigdor used the American Housing Survey in which respondents claimed a specific reason for moving. Atkinson chose proxy measures. Looking at gentrification-induced displacement is not simple, and there is no clear sense of the magnitude or trends. This is one of the most studied aspects of gentrification in the recent resurgence of interest in the topic, circa 2000.

Keeping the Home, Losing the Neighborhood

Aside from residential displacement, there are concerns about the impacts of residential gentrification on retail businesses. The impact on owners of businesses will not be dealt with explicitly here; it is a complex and fascinating study of its own. Suffice it to note that the mechanisms are similar to residential displacement. Consider, however, the effects on the indigenous residents.

As with other aspects of gentrification, there are positive and negative outcomes. There is the possibility that the prices of basic goods will rise in response to higher demand and a clientele with a higher willingness to pay. Low-income residents might find they cannot afford the same groceries as before. There is also the possibility that higher price point stores will push out the stores residents frequent, resulting in not only higher prices but also different goods. The impact of the change in available consumer items can have a cultural blow. For example, a store specializing in dresses for quinceñera that is replaced by The Gap, may make it difficult for Latino families to find appropriate attire for the fifteenth birthday celebration of their daughters. In East Harlem and Harlem, some locals consider the introduction of corporate chains including Starbucks and Disney to have erased the cultural and historical authenticity of the neighborhood (Alleyne and Anderson).

On the positive side, old and new retailers have been shown to co-exist, resulting in

a greater variety of products and price points for the residents of the neighborhood. For instance, in his unpublished Master's thesis, Manuel Martinez-Hernandez found that only one out of more than six bodegas closed in a neighborhood of Boston when the chain Stop 'N' Shop opened up a large store. Through interviews, among the reasons cited for the continued success of the bodegas were the availability of different products than at the mainstream store, as well as convenience for short shopping trips. One of the stores, a medium-sized locally-owned Latino grocer was able to provide enough of a differentiated product to actually increase sales following the chain's introduction to the neighborhood.

One question for those who contend that the middle class is the best catalyst for better retail amenities in predominantly low-income neighborhoods is whether it is the buying power of the neighborhood or ignorance about the buying power of low-income inner city neighborhoods that keep retailers away. The Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (1998) demonstrated by looking at the propensity to spend on retail goods and density of households that the buying power of the inner city is much higher than commonly assumed. So, once again, the question of the importance of the middle class to neighborhood revitalization is raised alongside discussions of the positive impact of the middle class.

What We Talk About When We Talk About Displacement

Raymond Carver's short story, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love", displays a world in which the American Dream's implicit failure leaves suburban couples in a seemingly banal and placidly world. Yet, as tensions rise and subside, emotional conflict imbued with despair and love become apparent. The characters sit together drinking gin and speaking without connecting. Then, at the end, comes a moment of unsaid unity in the human condition: "I could hear my heart beating. I could hear everyone's heart. I could hear the human noise we sat there making, not one of us moving, not even when the room went dark" (p.134).

This story, though placed in another location with different actors, has strong parallels to "what we talk about when we talk about displacement." We are talking about a seemingly banal and ordinary occurrence: the moving in and out of people from houses and apartments. Yet we are also talking about issues of equity and race. But most of all we are talking about confusion about the American Dream, in which individuality and a sense of community identity simultaneously thrive.

The true controversy underlying gentrification is witnessed in the specter of race, class and allegiance; one dominant group pushing out another group. Business owners merchandizing toward higher income patrons. Property owners seeking higher cash flow. Neighbors watching neighbors move out, without objection. The perpetuation of inequity.

Bostic and Martin argue that low-income indigenous and higher income newcomers "often differ in their views of the optimal levels and mix of social services that the neighborhood requires" (p.2429). Furthermore, changes in the neighborhood can even "change the character of the streetscape, ultimately leaving long-time residents alienated from their own now-transformed community" (p.2429). The reactions of ethnic minorities in a gentrifying area are said to be skeptical and hostile to mixed income approaches that tout "social balance." Some see it as a euphemism for bringing Whites back to the city. In Detroit, community activists have said gentrification is a sign that "[W]hites are trying to take back the city." (Bostic and Martin, p.2429).

But gentrification is not always caused by White middle class families. Indeed, Glass did not incorporate race into her definition of gentrification. Middle class households from ethnic minority groups can also cause gentrification. Examples include Asians in Bayview/Hunters Point, San Francisco and African-Americans in Atlanta (Kennedy and Leonard). Bostic and Martin further this point by establishing through empirical research that Black home-owners were a gentrifying influence in US cities from 1970 to 1990.

The fact that the gentrification of neighborhoods is most typically assumed to be driven by White middle class families may come partially from causal observation and the prevalence of Whites in America's middle class for the breadth of its history. However, it also goes to show that racial tensions in the US become the thing we talk about when we talk about displacement.

Residential segregation, particularly into neighborhoods with fairly homogeneous income and racial populations has been called the 'linchpin' of American race relations. "Achieving full access to housing markets," Massey of the *New American City*, writes, is critical to a group's welfare because, ultimately, housing markets don't only distribute homes—they distribute amenities. Moving to a 'better' neighborhood can mean safer surroundings, lower insurance rates, better fire and police protection, more frequent trash pick-ups, greater access to emergency services, and the prospect of rising real estate values. Housing markets affect safety, security, health, wealth, jobs, peer groups, and perhaps most critically, public education (http://www.americancity.org/article.php?id_article=131).

Thus, Americans' often-silent preoccupation with race becomes the spark for heated debates about gentrification. The either/or mentality applied to race—black or white—is mimicked in the roles cast for developers, new residents, old residents, business owners, and political leaders.

In a book about tensions in middle America between a growing Latino and shrinking White community, Dale Maharidge looks at the controversy engendered by the revitalization of a small Iowa town's commercial business district by Mexican immigrants. After decades of difficulty, most of the town's White residents seem to have given up on the area until they saw people—of a different race, culture, and language—inhabiting a downtown that "belonged" historically to the White culture. Maharidge simultaneously traces ethnic clashes throughout the history of the town between Germans, and other (White) Western European descendents. Ultimately, Maharidge suggests that displacement happens everywhere in every era, and reactions seem to ignite most quickly when strongly identifying ethnic or racial groups are involved. While he writes about revitalization, but not gentrification, it still highlights the dominant issues of race and identity, as well as the tendency to create opposing sides in narration. In his characterization of the people in Denison, Maharidge finds Whites who welcome their Latino neighbors and those who are less than tolerant, but he does not seem to find any Latinos who are less than tolerant of White neighbors. So even while his story ends with the cooperation between a hesitant White leader with a Latino entrepreneur, Maharidge leaves us with the sense that few opportunities to bridge the communities exist. It is this either/or narrative that reinforces the casting of opposing roles in neighborhoods facing gentrification.

Blomley does it as well, even while recognizing the casting of roles. In his examination of gentrification in Downtown Eastside, Vancouver:

The political and ethical battlelines have become sharply drawn on Vancouver's gentrification frontier. Developers, merchants, and residential 'pioneers' call increasingly for the need to 'clean up' the area, responding to and helping to constitute relentless media images of 'skid row's' welfare dependency, transience, and crime. For those contesting displacement, developers are cast as predatory, and those taking up residence in the new lofts are frequently labeled yuppie outsiders. Conversely, proponents of gentrification cast area activists who oppose new condo developments, as exclusionary and willing to see 'the Downtown Eastside' continue its descent [rather] than become a market area for newcomers.

These ethical contests are not unexpected, but reoccur in other urban settings. For one constituency, gentrification must be seen for what it is: class warfare, the extermination and erasure of the marginalized. Concealed by the optimistic language of 'revitalization,' gentrification in fact constitutes an unjustified 'invasion' of viable, working-class neighborhoods. 'Pioneers,' such as artist, attracted to life on the cultural margins, for example, are criticized as failing to recognize their pivotal role as agents of change...There are many examples of low-income areas that have contested gentrification, arguing for the rights of community members to remain within their neighborhood" (78).

The problem with creating these roles is the distance it causes between the obvious and implicit issues, and the issues and the humans involved. We are still talking about displacement, but we are missing the unsaid unity of hearing each other's hearts beating. Instead of neighbors, there are gentrifiers and indigenous, in opposition.

Chapter IV - Typology of Gentrifier Identities

Gentrifiers: Predatory/Laudatory/Opportunistic/Just Regular People

Gentrification is a synecdoche—a metaphor in which the part stands for the whole. One reason there is so much discussion and emotional response to the concept is that it resonates with everyone as a tension between the identity of the self and the group, and one's own group versus other groups. Gentrifiers are utilizing the city, either consciously or as part of other identity-forming decisions to declare their own identity. The indigenous population is casting specific roles for gentrifiers as a way to separate and distill the newcomers into opposing groups.

Redfern argues that issues of class are infused into gentrification, and those are the issues to which people are actually responding:

The subjective experience of class is that of a struggle over the creation and preservation of identity...Whereas gentrification enables the resolution of one group's identity, vis-à-vis another's (the suburban alternative), this resolution takes place at the expense of a third's (the displacees). It is because gentrification highlights this struggle in a particularly striking, novel and poignant way that it acquires its synecdochal quality" (p. 2360).

Reflecting on the responses to gentrification by the indigenous residents is the best way to expose both concerns with class and with identity (which ties to ownership, culture, and self-preservation). The specific roles assigned to people who gentrify, or adopted by gentrifiers, are inextricably linked to identity.

Why Classify Gentrifiers?

The classification of gentrifiers is useful to academics studying demand-driven theory (e.g., what are the motivations of this type of gentrifier versus that type), dividing gentrification into stages based on the people participating in each, and/or describing the phenomenon. It is also useful to community groups and neighborhoods who fear gentrification: to prevent a better equipped enemy from pushing out a victim, one must know how to recognize the enemy. Or, to put it another way, to take advantage of someone else's power, you have to know how to recognize him and his power. A classification of gentrifiers is also useful to gentrifiers themselves, as Rofe points out, "the drawing of such a distinction is an important mechanism for group solidarity" (p.2522).

Despite the usefulness of a classification, it is important to stress that while many treatments—especially by laypeople, assume that gentrifiers seek to take over an area, the neighborhood process is typically separate from the household level. To conflate the two suggests that gentrifiers are making household decisions for "strategic neighborhood dominance," and the evidence does not bear this out (Atkinson, p. 2346).

The classification that follows is varied and draws from a wide body of literature in which the same typologies appear. Some of the descriptions are more complimentary than others, but all are capable of positive and negative connotations. Some classifications suggest predatory behavior, others laudatory. Some promote the idea of gentrifiers as opportunistic and others as "just regular folks." It is possible to be a member simultaneously of more than one category. They are necessarily stereotypical, because that is how classification works and because that is how gentrifiers are most commonly viewed and treated.

Whites

Nearly all discussions of gentrification presuppose that gentrifiers are White. As previously discussed, this assumption might arise in part from the prevalence of Whites in the middle class and gentrification being considered a largely middle class phenomenon. It may also emerge from the sense of a power struggle between Haves and Have-Nots, the Haves typically being Whites throughout US history.

Early *NYT* articles cite descriptions of gentrifiers as typically White (10/14/79 (USA), 9/22/77 (London)), as do researchers. For example, Daphne Spain used ‘the number of whites replacing blacks in central-city housing’ as a measure of ‘inner-city revitalization’ (Spain, Bostic, p. 2427). Bostic purposefully examines whether Black home-owners were gentrifiers from 1970 to 1990—it is not documented prior to this work, nor assumed.

While Whites have been considered the best kinds of neighbors by other Whites, and have even gone so far as to put restrictive covenants on residential subdivisions to exclude “Negros and Asiatics” in the early 1920s (Fogelson, p.136), today’s politically correct world does not allow for an expression of this preference. However, expressing the preference to not have White neighbors is permissible in diverse social settings. (Legal exclusion by race is not tolerated any longer in any recognizable form.)

The “Whiteness” of gentrifiers is sometimes considered by communities of color or other Whites to indicate conservatism, group think, and lack of awareness or appreciation for anything urbane or cultured. Take for instance, this author’s thoughts on the rebuilding of New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina:

If any of those folks that have been evacuated and not just the homeowners but the tenants as well lose their right to return to where they lived before Hurricane Katrina because of some nefarious claim that the market must be allowed to shake out the unproductive population in the reconstruction process then you can be sure the music will truly die. Assassinated by [W]hite gentrification
(Hart, <http://chapelhill.indymedia.org/news/2005/09/16160.php>).

The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina has brought race relations and inequities into sharp focus, and this author is no doubt reacting to concerns that those most victimized by Katrina (low-income Blacks) are those who will benefit least from reconstruction. Aside from the legitimacy of this concern, the statement contains a reference to White gentrifiers that suggests they cannot possibly be creators or proponents of the music (read: jazz, culture) of New Orleans. (It is also interesting that the author uses the adjective “white.” This may be to emphasize his point about race, or to acknowledge that not all gentrifiers are White.)

Another common sentiment expressed about White gentrifiers, is the idea that their presence weakens the sense of Black community and so is undesirable, yet the Golden Rule prevails. A Black resident of Columbus, Ohio, says in the documentary *Flag Wars*, “I don’t want to wake up in my Black community and see White people when I open my door. There’s no way you can keep them out. There’s no fair way. Because we don’t want to be excluded [either].”

Artists

As previously noted, artists are typically considered to be the signifiers of coming gentrification to a low-income neighborhood. Art is not a lucrative profession for the majority of artists, thus affordable housing and studio space is sought. An area rich in texture,

people and experience is also often desired as a source of inspiration. In Ley's study on artists, he interviewed a sculptor who said it thus:

'Artists need authentic locations. You know artists hate the suburbs. They're too confining. Every artist is an anthropologist, unveiling culture. It helps to get some distance on that culture in an environment that does not share all of its presuppositions, an old area, socially diverse, including poverty groups' (p.2534).

In other words, a low-income area with older infrastructure is often construed by artists as more authentic and free from the commodification of place, like strip malls and suburban tract housing. Artists attract artists because of the potential to share inspiration, studio space, and a common culture.

But as we know from artwork by Grant Wood, Vincent Van Gogh, and Andrew Wyeth, to name a few, not all artists choose to work in urban locations—it is not a necessity for all. And so, artists can also be criticized for making the choice. Solnit argues that in San Francisco's Mission District, the focus on "the displacement of artists eclipses the displacement of the less privileged in general." Her opinion is that artists also have played roles in promoting gentrification (which is bad) while the rest of her soapbox rant pivots around the loss of artists, revolutionaries, and to a lesser extent, the low-income residents of color. She writes,

...because artists and their ilk are conceived of as middle-class people slumming and playing poor. After all, modern bohemians are often people who were born among the middle class but who chose to live among the poor; while some artists socialize with and service the rich (p. 19-20).

Solnit thus draws an imprecise distinction between artists that are good neighbors and those that are bad. Artists who experience professional or commercial successes, might easily cross her threshold in spite of their self-defined allegiance to the neighborhood.



Figure 8

See Figure 8 for Chris Ware's take on artists who gentrify—this scene follows a group of artists having a reunion dinner at a Mexican restaurant where one of them says as she views the new décor, “You remember when we were like, the only [W]hite people who came in here?”

Gays

Along with artists, gays are often considered to be in the first wave of gentrification, but whereas artists merely signify the growing popularity of a neighborhood, launching the increase in property values is attributed to gays. The notion is pervasive that gays gentrify because they seek urban locations near to other gays, often are childless so do not care about the state of inner city schools, and love to renovate. The “outside of the box” sexual orientation translates into a cultural asset to researchers like Richard Florida and Gary Gates. In a piece entitled, *Technology and Tolerance: the Importance of Diversity to High-Technology Growth* they assert that gay residents,

signal a diverse and progressive environment that fosters the creativity and innovation necessary for success in high-tech industry. Gays are frequently cited as the harbingers of redevelopment and gentrification in distressed urban neighborhoods (p.3).

Florida, who is well known for his work on the “rise of the creative class” is a particularly strong proponent of the idea that gays are good for economic development.

In a cover piece for lifestyle magazine of the *Salt Lake City Observer*, “A Beautiful Day in the Gayborhood,” the idea that gays prefer to cluster together is expounded by a local resident who says, “The Salt Lake City Gay ghetto in the 1970s to late 1980s was from the lower Avenues to about 500 South, 200 East to about 700 East.” Within these boundaries, [Ben] Williams [cofounder of the Utah Stonewall Historical Society] said, “bookstores, health clinics, food stores, newspapers were geared for the Queer community and no one gave a rat's ass what hets [heterosexuals] might think” (slmetro.com/2004/7/feature.shtml).

Other gays interviewed for the article corroborate, saying they moved to the neighborhood because it is “the gay mecca” and other places do not really allow you to “express yourself with your home.” In these words, the position of the gay as victim of homophobia and social stigma, as well as cultural and economic asset is made clear.

But the neat story told above about gay gentrifiers is complicated by stories of 1) gays making victims out of the indigenous in the neighborhood; 2) gays being more than just a stereotyped group of gentrifiers; and 3) the disintegration of gay clusters as “gay” becomes more mainstream...

1) In *Flag Wars*, a documentary about gay gentrification of a low-income, black neighborhood in Columbus, Ohio, gay newcomers actively try to purchase homes in the neighborhood at the expense of their black neighbors. A white lesbian realtor complains that there are residents who “still haven't given up their hold of the neighborhood.” The documentary ends with a tour through a dead woman's home—she had spent the last years of her life trying to hold onto her house in the face of property code violations the gay gentrifiers have brought to the attention of a judge.

2) In a Letter to the Editor of the National Housing Institute's *Shelterforce OnLine*, a lesbian chided the author of an article for casting all gays and lesbians into a singular niche. She pointed out that the two most available stereotypes are “pathetic and lonely perverts” or

“wealthy intellectuals with great taste and wit”(www.nhi.org/online/issues/120/letters.html). The article, she argued, suggested that gays and lesbians are not from poor communities but are outsiders who seek to exploit communities, when actually they can also be regular people struggling to make enough money to cover their basic necessities.

3) And, in *The New Republic* article, “The End of Gay Culture,” Andrew Sullivan makes a case for the disappearance of gay enclaves as homosexuality attains a greater degree of acceptance in mainstream culture and a greater diversity of acceptable gay identities.

For the better part of two decades, I have spent much of every summer in the small resort of Provincetown, at the tip of Cape Cod. It has long attracted artists, writers, the offbeat, and the bohemian; and, for many years now, it has been to gay America what Oak Bluffs in Martha’s Vineyard is to black America: a place where a separate identity essentially defines a separate place... It’s a place, in that respect, that is sui generis. Except that it isn’t anymore. As gay America has changed, so, too, has Provincetown. In a microcosm of what is happening across this country, its culture is changing...Where, once, gayness trumped class, now the reverse is true (p16).

The suggestion that a distinctive gay culture is disappearing along with the preference for gay neighbors, is a bold statement. If it came to be true, it would have a strong impact on one of the most commonly classified type of gentrifier.

Yuppies

Yuppies are the most reviled of the gentrifiers today. Yuppies stands for Young Urban Professional, and has been used mostly pejoratively. They are considered to be relatively wealthy (so they could go anywhere), relatively privileged (not stigmatized like gays), and completely self-serving (want to drive out anyone unlike them). According to *Wikipedia*, the free and collaborative web-based encyclopedia, the first known citation of the term can be found in a 1981 article of the *Chicago Tribune*, “Chicago, City on the Brink.” Yuppies’ motivation for urban living is said to be related to a need to live near to work, especially in the information technology, cultural and media sectors (Karsten, Castells).

Within the Yuppie typology, there are a number of stylized derivatives, such as the Hipsters and the Buppies. Hipsters are essentially Yuppies with a hunger for exhibiting urban “cool,” while maintaining a veneer of irony. (See Figure 8.) Christian Lorentzen describes them thus,

Surely there must be a trust fund, or at least a platinum card, in sight...Money is a funny thing with hipsters. They exist in a state of perpetual luxuriant slumming. They drink blue-collar beers but hold white-collar jobs. Or vice versa. Whether he comes from above or below, the hipster takes care never to appear to be striving. Class anxiety isn’t hip. There’s something utopian about the trucker hat. But of course the hipster couldn’t afford to dress down if there weren’t a taut social safety net in place. Debt relief from mom or dad might be just a phone call away. Then there’s that steady freelancing gig that’s always there when you need it, no matter how distasteful it might be to proofread ad copy or put on that catering uniform (www.nplusonemag.com/neato.html).

Hipsters see themselves as street smart members of urban communities. Ever conscious of absurdities and ironies, they are often the first to point out their negative gentrifying impact. *The Hipster Handbook*, a satirical look at hipsters by Robert Lanham includes in his list

of “Popular Hipster Pickup Lines”: “I was hanging out in this neighborhood before it got gentrified” (p.139).

In contrast, Buppies are among the gentrifiers who point out their positive gentrifying impact. Buppies are Black Yuppies. They tend to also be relatively wealthy and privileged, but see their return to the neighborhood as a responsibility or contribution. Sometimes,



Figure 9

The housing crisis is not over:

VOTING CHANGES NOTHING!

TENANTS AND WAGE-WORKERS WHO THINK THE NEW BOARD OF SUPERVISORS WILL HELP SOLVE THE CITY'S MARKET-DRIVEN HOUSING CRISIS ARE IN FOR A BIG SURPRISE. Did the November elections make your rent go down 50%? No one who has been driven out of the city by the market economy is coming back. No positive social change has ever taken place through voting, or by choosing one politician over another. Thirty years worth of electoral shenanigans by hapless San Francisco housing activists shows this!

Billionaire Donald Fisher, a major backer of the downtown lobby the Committee on Jobs, examines the threat to the power of the rich from SF's Board of Supervisors:



"Chris Daly! Are you fuckin' kidding me!
AH-HA-HA-HA-HA-HAI!"

Electoral politics is not a mechanism of political power for working and poor people. **WHEN YOU VOTE YOU HAVE NO POWER.** Market forces cannot be affected in the slightest way by voting. Whatever you think you are voting for can always be overturned in court, or eroded in a thousand other ways by people with a lot of money.

We live in a class society. The government belongs to the rich. You cannot vote your way around that fact. Changing a few functionaries makes no difference. Unlike leftists who advocate voting, the rich aren't stupid; they understand that might makes right. But when you go into a voting booth, you have given up; you have embraced your powerlessness, and scum like Gap CEO Donald Fisher and the Rockefellers, Duponts, and Bushes reward your servility by leaving their shoe-prints on your ass. Most eligible voters in the US don't bother to vote, anyway, and have obviously wised up to this scam.

The only real source of positive social change is working people getting together, where we work and where we live, and fighting directly for what we need against bosses, corporations and the rich -- against the market economy and the state, outside of and against the conventional decision-making institutions of this society. Effective action means doing direct damage to the economic interests of the rich. Voting is not an alternative! Anyone who runs for office or attempts to hustle working people into voting is helping to keep us divided and ripped off.

WE NEED TO CONFRONT LANDLORDS WHO EVICT TENANTS: LET'S GET THE PHOTOS, PHONE NUMBERS AND HOME ADDRESSES OF THESE PIGS AND PUT THEM UP ON POSTERS ALL OVER TOWN!

**INSTEAD OF STAGING FEEBLE LEFTIST DEMOS IN FRONT OF CITY HALL
WE SHOULD BLOCK TRAFFIC IN THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT
DURING RUSH-HOUR ON FRIDAY AFTERNOONS.**

**ONE CITY-WIDE GENERAL RENT STRIKE WILL HAVE MORE IMPACT THAN
50 ELECTIONS!
ELECTORAL POLITICS IS COMPLETE BULLSHIT!
NEVER VOTE!**

MISSION YUPPIE ERADICATION PROJECT

Check out the 'Love and Treason' documents on the Mid-Atlantic Anarchist Infoshop web-site! www.infoshop.org/myep.html

Figure 10

however, their return is still seen as change from the outside rather than from within. Bracconi, whose research focuses on displacement in New York, has noted that when Blacks enter the middle class, their housing decisions mirror that of Whites (Watson).

From *Yuppies Invade My House at Dinnertime: A Tale of Brunch, Bombs, and Gentrification in an American City* (a collection of Letters to the Editor from a Hoboken, New Jersey, newspaper) to movies like, *The Big Chill*, *The Yuppie Horror Film*, *Satanic Yuppies*, and *Pacific Heights*, the yuppie is a common stereotype. Yuppies are today's urban homesteaders/pioneers of the early era of gentrification—but back then they were seen as heroes of a sort. (See Figure 9 for a very negative take on yuppies.)

Conspicuous Consumers

Conspicuous Consumers are those who commodify city living and for whom city living is reflective of what they are able to purchase. Rofe differentiates between production and consumption gentrifiers by describing the latter as composed by people who purchase rehabilitated homes as opposed to doing the work themselves. Conspicuous consumers are risk-averse, and wait for others to set the groundwork for further gentrification (Atkinson). Once that groundwork is laid, this gentrifier arrives to take advantage of the neighborhood's recognition within their own aspirational circles. It is an identity signifier—a rejection of a suburban identity and yet a more cautious positioning within the city due to concerns with social standing and increasing personal wealth. Rofe's description of gentrifiers fits this typology:

Inner-city residency for the gentrifiers constitutes a strategy of socio-spatial distinction by rejecting the values of a more suburban-oriented identity.

Articulating this, one Glebe [resident of an Australian neighborhood in study] respondent proposed that, 'People sort of go where they fit socially I think. When you're a professional you... you can't move to the 'burbs it's just not done. It's not what you do.' Such rhetoric casts the inner city as a cultured and vibrant place, opposing the narrow-minded nature of suburban life. Beyond this localized expression of socio-spatial distinction, sampling revealed a widespread belief that gentrifying landscapes constituted globally oriented places. In the words of one questionnaire respondent, gentrifying areas offer the 'action/pulse/rhythm/opportunities' of the global at the scale of the local (p. 2520).

Conspicuous Consumers sees consumable value in the amenities of the city, as well as the opportunity to express one's position in a particular class of people. This is not unlike driving a luxury car.

Yupps

Yupps are Young Urban Professional Parents—yuppies who have had children. According to Karsten,

They combine the next step in their life cycle—having children—with continuing their career and their preference for an urban lifestyle... An analysis of their daily lives reveals the significance of the neighborhood as a crucial factor in the daily integration of such contrasting demands as building a career, caring for children and keeping up with cultural pursuits and social contacts (p. 2573).

While Yuppies continue to live in the city because of the proximity to work, culture, and

home, they often look for new neighborhoods—ones with parks, schools, and high personal safety. Some appear to be searching for an urban adaptation of a suburban lifestyle, while others are searching for a family adaptation to a childless urban lifestyle. Those in the latter group tend to be more satisfied by their experience—taking children to museums, walking to nearby parks instead of struggling to get strollers into cars.

Yupps are typically preoccupied by their needs and the needs of their family, and are more likely to abandon a neighborhood for safety reasons than their Yuppie counterparts. Yupps are more comfortable and supportive of income diversity and “grittiness” than Conspicuous Consumers. They are, after all, urbanites and not transplants from suburbia.

City living is preferable for those who have young children and are dependent on the urban labor market because the proximity helps them overcome time-space constraints, such



Figure 11

as picking children up from day care at a predictable time each day (Karsten). City living also provides a rich cultural climate (Fagnani).

Yupps have a local orientation, whereas Yuppies have a more mobile lifestyle and orient to the city hotspots, wherever they may be. The local orientation revolves around schools and providing support for one another (e.g., babysitting, computer problems, career networking, etc.). Often, this is strongest in neighborhoods with a large number of Yupps from fairly homogenous backgrounds. In Karsten’s study of Yupps in Amsterdam, she wrote that

'ordinary suburbs' were negatively valued, even though the urban neighborhoods were said to have lacked childcare, safe places to play, and social clubs for children.

In so much that children are rarely problematic additions to urban neighborhoods, especially children of higher socioeconomic classes than those already present, Yuppies are less threatening than other gentrifiers. Karsten goes so far as to say, "Gentrification may be potentially emancipatory in disconnecting family and suburbanization" (p.2583). (See Figure 11 for a caricature of Yuppies.)

Homesteaders/Pioneers

As previously discussed, Urban Homesteaders and Urban Pioneers were the first typology of gentrifier to emerge in the US. They are connected to the Brownstoners and the Back to the City Movement, and to a time in which cities were in such tremendous decay that vast areas seemed like "no-man's land." However, as Neil Smith reveals, that land was no less without people than the American West of the 19th Century. Blomley, interprets Smith:

...the inner city has become discursively constituted as an urban wilderness of savagery and chaos, awaiting the urban homesteaders who can forge a renaissance of hope and civility...The mythic frontier of gentrification is undergirded by an economic frontier, in other words (p. 79).

This terminology, which positions the White middle class as explorers of a "dark country" to be conquered is generally considered offensive today, though it emerges now and again.

Missionaries

Missionaries are akin to Urban Homesteaders/Pioneers in that they are also described as descending into chaos to set things right. Only in this case they are doing it in order to save the inner city inhabitants, and not the built form nor the city itself. As with all missionaries, the intention is lofty but subject to criticism.

Percy Strickland is the CEO of Church Hill Activities and Tutoring, a Christian community development organization in Richmond, Virginia. The following is a slightly abridged accounting of his entry into a predominantly Black neighborhood.

'I didn't come here for that!' These words danced around in my mind as I looked at the totally drunken man standing at my front door. We had only been living in the neighborhood for a few weeks...

People's skepticism about our intentions were not all together [sic] a surprise. Many of these people had seen the displacement and trouble caused for them by the [W]hite gentrification that hit the south side of Church Hill. They saw us as just another developer, just another set of money-grubbers trying to fix up a house, make a little profit and price them right out of their current living arrangements. Theories began to circulate about why we might have moved to the city. Some thought we were seeking to "save" the 'hood,' to be the great White hope. Others thought we were out for a quick buck (we would be gone soon enough)...So, to challenge the rumors with facts, my wife and I decided to introduce us [sic] when ever and wherever we could...We moved to Chimborazo Boulevard to learn how to be neighbors. At this point, we had become fairly aware of our inability to 'save' others or this community. Our only goal was to see what it would be like to not live in a world insulated from the difficult realities of the city that we call home.

Needless to say, when that inebriated neighbor started to spout all sorts of obscenities at me, all I could think was, “I didn’t come here for that.” But, I was wrong. It was for just a time as this that God had brought me to this community. I needed to see the reality of the pain and dysfunction that is an ever-prevalent part of the city. I needed to know. I needed to taste what it feels like to be the minority, to be the one who is hurt. The question that remained was, “If I did come here for this, then how will I respond?”

This is the question that the CHAT community seeks to answer. We have decided not to pretend the deep fractures of human society aren’t present. We will not avert our eyes from the deplorable conditions in which these children and their families subsist. Do we have solutions to these problems? Can we save everyone? No, but we know a God who can. The same God who took a community that was willing to follow and led them across a treacherous chasm to defeat an unstoppable foe. So, we seek to be faithful. We try to respond. Our goal: to learn to be a neighbor, to respond rightly (http://www.chatrichmond.org/i_didnt_come_here_for_that.php). In spite of Strickland’s disavowal of any intention to save the community, his ultimate message is that being part of the community will help him understand how to respond to the “deplorable conditions.”

Gentrifiers in the Missionary group need not be motivated by religious backgrounds, but by some sense of duty to help a neighborhood. Buppies moving back to childhood neighborhoods often display a missionary motive. For example, a recent graduate of Brown University explained her reasons for moving back to Brooklyn even though she had claimed she would never return,

As a middle-class Black person, I realized that I needed to return back to the old neighborhood...I realized that if I and other middle-class Blacks didn’t move back, Whites would come in and change the face of these historically Black neighborhoods, and I couldn’t watch that happen (Watson, www.sacobserver.com...part2.shtm).

The same woman goes on to say,

Look at our neighborhoods today...They’re cleaner and there are more business opportunities than when I was growing up. White gentrification didn’t do all of this. Black middle-class folks really came and helped to rescue some of these declining neighborhoods. We deserve some credit too (ibid).

But, not unlike Strickland’s suspicious neighbors, low-income neighbors of the same racial and cultural background still have reason to be concerned with the introduction of Buppies. A resident of Clinton Hill in Brooklyn contends, “It’s not only the Whites who sometimes thumb their noses up at us, but middle-class Black folks who move into this neighborhood do it, too, and that’s sometimes the hardest thing to take” (ibid).

Brownstoners/Preservationists

The value of historic preservation of buildings drives Brownstoners and Preservationists to gentrify an area. “Brownstoners” was the first term of the two coined because of the trend in New York (particularly Park Slope in the 1970s) to restore decrepit brownstones, a type of rowhouse built mostly in the 19th century out of reddish-brown stone. “Preservationist” is an umbrella term that includes Brownstoners.

Preservationists are both about localism and the broader concept of history. In an unpublished academic paper, MIT PhD candidate, Erin Graves, argues that residents who have painstakingly rehabilitated their homes often feel a deep connection with history and an enormous sense of pride. In her interviews with owner-occupants of restored Victorians in Harlem, a theme of redemption emerged—a sense that the owners had transformed something of value from neglect via their own sweat and dedication.

Another group which is logically included with the Preservationists are the Rehabilitators; they are less interested in complete historic accuracy but display the other characteristics of pride in a historic-appearing home and in their own part in the rehabilitation. Rofe reveals the pleasure one rehabilitator takes in his work, “I take pride in the fact that...I renovated my home. I didn’t buy it...I did it. I’m very proud of that” and his distaste for Conspicuous Consumers, “Individuals who purchase...are... ‘cheating’ as they are gaining a notion of prestige ‘they didn’t really earn’”(p.2522). Rofe goes on to say, “Within such a scheme, a renovated dwelling becomes a physical extension of the individual, an investment in self as much as the dwelling itself...an expression of personal identity” (ibid).

Globals

Globals are a transnational elite: highly educated, white-collar workers who enjoy high status. Their interest in gentrification is the need to belong to particular communities that are known internationally. Belonging to one community allows Globals to network with other Globals and gain access to similar neighborhoods world-wide. Rofe, a leader in understanding Globals, quotes from a respondent studied in Glebe,

‘Inner Sydney, particularly Glebe, is a vibrant happening place which is going global. The people, the lifestyle, the attitudes mark Glebe as a global suburb. The same types of lifestyles can be found in NY, London, or LA. People from Glebe could go to these places and feel at home, that is what being a global member is all about, being comfortable in other places due to similar lifestyles—a frame of reference’ (p. 2521).

Being a Global is differentiated from being a Yuppie in that Globals interact at a global level and this fact is continuously reinforced as part of a distinctive lifestyle. The result is that “the local comes to be equated with the ordinary and the familiar, the global with the extraordinary and the exotic” (p.2524). And, as places that are extraordinary and exotic are celebrated, so come to be diversity of culture and experience. There is a “genuine cosmopolitanism...a willingness to engage” (Rofe, p.2521).

The downside of these gentrifiers is mainly that their preoccupation is away from local issues. Their concern for the day-to-day trials and tribulations of the neighborhood extends only to its impact on the neighborhood’s international reputation. They are of little help otherwise. Furthermore, they tend to be found in fairly well gentrified areas or in highly segregated wealthy/low-income communities from which they can maintain their high status reputations.

Multiculturalists and Integrators

Multiculturalists and Integrators are a variant of Yuppie, Yupp and Missionary. They are people who believe so strongly in the value of multiculturalism and exposure to diversity that they have a personal inclination to put themselves and their families in places where they

can have it part of their daily lives. From the perspective of the indigenous neighbors, their drive to integrate may be seen as Missionary—as if social integration is the answer more to the low-income population’s problems than necessary to the newcomers’ life experience.

There is a tendency in the current 20-30 year old age bracket to assume that they invented multiculturalism. This tendency comes from growing up knowing little else, and having that ethos juxtaposed with “before” images from the Civil Rights era, fight for Equal Rights for women, and beginning of the Gay Pride movement. As children, many of them watched programs like *Sesame Street*, taking for granted that giant yellow birds, Latinos, Asians, Blacks, and Whites hang out on the stoop together learning that *agua* is another word for water. This is normal, whereas the concepts of segregated drinking fountains and lunch counters are an absurdity from their parents’ generation.

They, the children born in the late 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, have adopted a new term to describe how they see themselves: post-racial. “Post-racial” has two uses thus far in American culture. One is to describe a society that is beyond racial identification—one in which skin color is ignored or unseen. Literature about post-racism typically defines it this way. The second use is more common by Multiculturalists and Integrators: a sensibility that one understands issues of race so well that one’s own race can be transcended and others can be mocked. As Lorentzen says:

This all seems resonant with a theory I have heard (but not read) by and about young people today—that growing up in ‘diverse communities’ with friends of every color and creed, they are ‘post-racial.’ It follows that they make racist jokes without malice, as a way of rebelling against the tyranny of political correctness. Perhaps this is true, and maybe it’s not even such a bad thing: racism isn’t racism anymore it’s just breaking of taboo. We can poke a little fun at Filipinos and Sikhs and Arabs and Germans and people from Kentucky, and then all listen together to the ebony-skinned Brazilian man on the deck of the Belafonte singing “Ziggy Stardust” in Portuguese [in the film *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*]...
(www.nplusone.mag.com/neato.html)

Whether or not the sense—that one can joke about race in a manner that may well be offensive if not for one’s membership in a culture that presupposes deep knowledge and sensitivity about race—is new, the openness with which this generation displays it is riveting.

In fact, academics and contemporary literature indicate that this mode of thought was also prevalent in the gentrifiers of the 1960s and 1970s, though then they were known mostly as hippies because their personal poverty was more aligned with the neighborhoods they entered than not. Dalton Conley’s memoir about growing up as the only White family in a New York public housing project in the 1970s describes his parents’ attachment to the neighborhood. Both artists, public housing was all they could afford unless they chose to move in with retired parents in the suburbs. Though Conley’s mother had to “lie up” to get food stamps, their Whiteness and education level gave them greater mobility than their neighbors. Still, they preferred the dangerous (read: drugs, gangs, robbery, murders) projects to other housing opportunities, largely because they valued the atmosphere. In describing an offer from the City government for newly built public housing for artists on Roosevelt Island—which would be a mostly White enclave, Conley recalls,

My father was the most resistant to the change of scenery agreeing to move only if we sublet the other apartment under the table, just in case we wanted to move back

at some point in the future. When he walked through the prospective new neighborhood, he sneered at the boutique shops and the foofy little dogs (p. 211).

Similarly but for more political than artistic motivations, the mother in Jonathan Lethem's fictional, *Fortress of Solitude*, moves into a low-income neighborhood in Brooklyn and enrolls her son in public school. She fiercely defends the public school choice as a necessary contribution to the system,

Dylan had gone to first grade at Public School 38 on the next block, real school, according to Rachel, public school. 'He's one of three white children in the whole school,' he'd overheard her boasting on the phone. 'Not his class, not his grade—the whole school.' She'd made it sound important (p. 23).

Later, Rachel teaches her son about gentrification,

On the walk to Pintchik Rachel had taught him the word gentrification. This was a Nixon word, uncool. 'If someone asks you say you live in Gowanus,' she said. 'Don't be ashamed. Boerum Hill is pretentious bulls**t.' Today Rachel was talking and Dylan was listening, listening. She sprayed language as the hydrant opened by the Puerto Rican kids around the corner on Nevins on the hottest days that year sprayed water, unstoppable, gushing...His mother's flow he wouldn't dare try to direct. 'Never let me hear you say the word n****r,' she said, whispering it heavily, lusciously. 'That's the only word you can't ever say, not even to yourself. In Brooklyn Heights they call them animals, they call the projects a zoo. Those uptight reactionaries deserve the break-ins...We're here to live. Gowanus Canal, Gowanus Houses, Gowanus people' (p. 51).

Rachel takes tremendous pride in locating her family in an urban neighborhood, dominated by people of color. To her, this is an expression of her belief in social justice. This typology is all the more striking in comparison to the first suburbanites and suburban developers who made all efforts to prevent or deter people of lower income classes and certain religious or racial groups from moving into the neighborhood. In Robert Fogelson's *Bourgeois Nightmares*, he argues,

At the heart of this [restriction's] objective was the assumption that heterogeneity was incompatible with permanence, that a mix of races and classes was incompatible with permanence, that a mix of races and classes was incompatible with a 'bourgeois utopia.' And underlying this assumption was a deep-seated fear of others (p. 136).

The time period for Fogelson's book is 1870-1930, which is not to say that no one is similarly prejudiced today. Still to have the dominant assumption for urban living be that mixing is something to be valued, sought, and coveted, stands in sharp contrast.

Not to put a too laudatory lens on Multiculturalists/Integrators, the advantage they take of their chosen neighborhood should be distilled. Like other gentrifiers, Multiculturalists/Integrators are seeking an environment that displays and reinforces a chosen identity, just as much as they are pursuing a lifestyle that meshes with personal preferences and ideologies. Rofe cites respondents' who list a variety of ethnic cuisines available in their neighborhood as an example of how these gentrifiers use the notion of a taste for authentic cultural experiences as articulation of a distinctive identity (2003). Furthermore, the desire for diversity is often qualified in some other way—like everyone else, there are influences and experiences they want and those that they do not. For example, in Karsten's study of Yuppies, he found that parents wanted an ethnically diverse school, but not one in which their

children would be a minority or that would have high numbers of students from low income families,

None of them chose the 'Black' school, and the Catholic school also was not particularly popular. Parents argued that this school was too 'White': 'We think children need experience with other cultures. Amsterdam is a very coloured city. The Montessori school has a sort of a mixed population which we think is OK.' The interviews reveal that these 'White' parents positively value a school with different ethnic categories as long as the majority of the pupils remain middle class (p. 2580).

Being part of a multicultural environment is desirable, but only to some personally defined extent. To Dalton Conley's father, being the only White in the neighborhood was desirable. To the parents described above, that would not be satisfactory.

In addition to the question of "how diverse" is the question of how frequently the desire to be a resident of a diverse neighborhood results in the gentrifier engaging in diverse relationships. For example, Rofe's respondents never mentioned the opportunity to learn how to cook the authentic cuisines offered by their neighbors—only consumption of them as a business exchange. In Caroline Golab's book about immigrants in early 20th century Philadelphia she noted the way neighborhoods were built up by the layering of new ethnic groups on top of the old. Each group would move in and add their own social structure to fit their needs—building churches, temples, bakeries, etc. Golab argues, "Neighborhood and community were never synonymous. Diverse peoples shared the same city-space, but proximity did not lead them...to interact...at the social or emotional level...(p.112-3). Furthermore, Golab's interpretation of these intangible boundaries was that it allowed a diversity of people—Poles, Italians, Jews, Blacks, to live together peaceably. Are Multiculturalists and Integrators taking advantage of proximity without direct connection? Is that making the neighborhood better or worse?

More Types

There may be other new typologies emerging or that have disappeared over the years. The empty-nester is one that seems to be growing in concept—retired couples who trade in the family home in the suburbs for a condo in the city. Certainly, these typologies are based on stereotypes. Stereotypes that are used in households, the media, and academic journals. These stereotypes have considerable evocative and political power. Some are practically synonymous with gentrification, and others only become associated through the mention of urban neighborhoods. Some of them are greeted more warmly than others; some are claimed more readily than others. All are identities constructed in a social setting.

A few words on Identity

Identity is precisely about recognition, honor and respect. We live in a world full of strangers, who do not recognize us, to whom therefore we seek to proclaim simultaneously two things: that we are individuals; but at the same time that we are trustworthy. We seek to show that we are different, but not too different; we seek to fit in, but as individuals. A tattoo on the shoulder—individual: a tattoo across the forehead—danger. Negotiating the tension between difference and conformity is the particular concern of fashion (Redfern, p.2359).

This quote from Redfern is apropos to discussion of residents in gentrifying neighborhoods.

As covered above, gentrifiers choose neighborhoods as expressions of self and as a commitment to a certain identity, as well as for financial and other reasons. Just as people have used fashion to denote rank and personality, so are neighborhoods used. This phenomenon is not limited to gentrifying neighborhoods—Boston’s own Beacon Hill is proof. But the effect in gentrifying neighborhoods is of considerably greater tension for it is not only the gentrifier who seeks self-expression through the neighborhood, it is also the indigenious. Redfern describes it thus,

Gentrification undermines the ontological security of the inhabitants of a place by permitting gentrifiers to turn it into a new place, of their own. It is here that the resistance to gentrification begins. Since what distinguishes the gentrifier from the displacee is nothing more nor less than ‘style of life,’ the home that is made for the gentrifier is one that ipso facto excludes the potential displacee, who thereby loses not simply his or her shelter but the very world in which the displacee was at home, to which, like the marginal man, they will never be able to return (p. 2361).

Redfern goes on to argue that the threat of gentrification for everyone involved highlights modern anxieties. It may seem melodramatic to talk about identity vis-à-vis losing shelter—to suggest that something as seemingly superficial as fashion should be a bigger issue than a warm and safe space to live. But gentrification is not about the loss of shelter, it is about the loss of a specific shelter or a specific neighborhood character—the articles on gentrification do not speak of a growing problem of homelessness but rather of a displacement from a neighborhood that ostensibly belongs to the displacee. What is it to belong if not to identify?

Chapter V - Narrative in Gentrification

Identities are created through self-narratives, which are reinforced through dress, behavior, and location. Identities in the urban context are rooted in neighborhoods and social groups. The following chapter looks at the importance of personal narrative and how it relates to gentrifiers in an urban context.

The Importance of Narrative

Narrative is an essential component of daily life. Throughout the history of humankind, stories have been told and retold. Along with how to locate food and build shelters, stories were passed down through generations. *The Bible, Torah, Buddhist Sutras* and many other religious and spiritual texts are essentially collections of narratives. Stories teach us how to live our lives by the rules of our culture. They also help us organize and make sense of the world around us. Ethan Watters, who wrote a popular book about the culture of today's 20- and 30-something urbanites, explained he was motivated by the absence of a cultural narrative to describe himself and his friends,

A life – even one's own – is too complicated a thing to hold in the mind, and this is why we need to identify with stories of others living in our time. It is only through the sharing of these cultural narratives that we can give coherence and meaning to our existence. This may sound like esoteric stuff, but the point is that important things in our own lives can go unseen or misunderstood if we lack the story template in our cultural vocabulary to describe them. 'We tell ourselves stories in order to live,' wrote Joan Didion a generation ago. 'We live entirely by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images, the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience.' This quote is out of context, for she was speaking here of a time following the sixties when she lost the ability to use stories to find meaning. Nevertheless, she continued to tell stories – ones that were dark and disjointed and lacked clear moral lessons. And in doing so she proved something remarkable about stories: Their value is not in their morals or in their ability to reduce life's complexity to simple sets of causation. Even if it reveals a world that is phantasmagoric in its complexity, the story still, almost magically, provides solace and meaning. To live without a story is to live without a sense of coherence and momentum. And there's another risk. Not to have a narrative of your own is to become susceptible to those imposed upon you by forces around you. I'm thinking about Generation X, *Less than Zero*, and all the other dismal portrayals of the post-baby-boom generation (p. 10).

Watters (and Didion) write eloquently about the importance of narrative in daily life. Two of Watters's points bear repeating: stories provide solace and meaning, and to not have a narrative of your own is to be vulnerable. Stories help people make sense out of conflicting feelings and events. People without stories or for whom their story is threatened, fight back. Gentrifiers make sense of their actions in a neighborhood by creating stories; the indigenous create their own stories about gentrifiers to protect their stories about their neighborhood. Stories engender counter-stories. Blomley notes,

One critical way in which property is enacted is through narratives. To make sense of our world, we tell stories...The very coherence of narrative, the emplotting of

people and processes, can render dominant stories persuasive and preordained, making alternative stories hard to tell... In these senses, narrative can suture hegemonic understandings of the world; in so doing, the contingent politics of social relations disappear. This is not to say, however, that narratives are simply used in the service of domination (p. 50-51).

Blomley's contention that "narrative can suture hegemonic understandings" is the key to the use of stories by those who seek a personal goal but recognize a negative externality. In motivational theory, which comes up frequently in psychology and sociology, cognitive dissonance explains the same phenomenon. Dissonance is the uncomfortable mental and emotional feeling people experience when they believe their actions are contrary to how they wish to be perceived. Dissonance is a component of social identity theory. Social identity theory supposes that people usually act in a way that confirms the desired self-perceptions and perceptions of others. It also supposes that identity is constructed from culture and experience. Social identities are the stories used to describe oneself and one's position in the world.

Using the Urban Context in a Narrative of Self

Gentrifiers can be divided into roughly three groups when it comes to narrative: those who are unaware of gentrification, those who resolutely believe they are benefiting the neighborhood (more than costing it), and those who are ambivalent. The division is created by the way they talk about themselves in the context of the gentrification of their resident neighborhood.

But before breaking down these narratives more succinctly, it is useful to consider how property and place became linked with the narrative of self.

In US culture, which is heavily influenced by *The Bible* and Christianity's views on the beginning of the world, there is the command from God to go forth and inherit the earth. This directive was used frequently in the settling of the American West. Also heavily influencing American concepts of property is the philosophy of John Locke. As Blomley points out, Locke's impact is twofold: the content of what he tells, and his "narrative momentum." Locke set up a story in which the commons are privatized in an "almost alchemical mixing" of labor with soil (p.85): 'As much Land as a man Tills, Plants, Improves, Cultivates, and can use the Product of, so much is his Property. He by his Labour does, as it were, enclose it from the Common.'¹² Blomley goes on to conclude:

In narrativizing property, a conditional, exclusionary, and often contradictory treatment is rendered inevitable and natural; a powerful narrative like Locke's can make the contingent seem determined and the artificial seem natural (p. 86).

The narrative creates a reasoned explanation and system for claiming property, and makes it sound so natural that it appears inevitable. Furthermore, the narrative and subsequent use of it has linked democracy with property, a civil society with home ownership. Blomley recalls how Hegel put it, "'To attain freedom, it is necessary that I have property, for in my property I become an 'object to myself'" (p. 89).

¹² Today, this is the metric for all property rights in the US—scientists who manipulate human cells own them, whereas cells merely stored by scientists are still owned by the people from whose bodies they came.

“Natural” Gentrification

The notion of progress is a core part of American ideology. From the pilgrims to the pioneers to suburbanization to...urban renewal? Gentrification? According to Blomley, Smith, and others, gentrification has been encouraged because it is seen as a natural progression. It is easy enough to see where the “natural progression” came from: every major city and nowadays many of medium and small size have a similar story to tell. First, there was a vibrant urban core—a main street with shops and homes within walking distance. Second, there was suburbanization and many people left the main street. Third, there was poverty and infrastructure decay. Fourth, there were a few people from the suburbs who came back. Fifth, there were more who came back and they bought homes and fixed them up. Sixth, the neighborhood seems vibrant again, and, by the way, many of the renters and others have gone someplace else.

When the same story resonates with so many places it begins to sound inevitable. When it is paired with the dire straits of the area before the gentrifiers come, it begins to sound aspirational. The first narrative used to describe the change included words like, “improvement,” “restoration,” “revitalization,” and “return.” The counter-story, which emerged secondarily, had words like, “displacement,” “push,” and “indigenous.” The gentrification story is now muddled because the two stories have similar dominance in common use.

The Clash: Gentrifiers as Good, Gentrifiers as Bad

The dissonance by the good and bad narratives is an imperative for gentrifiers to resolve. Carol Lloyd, an artist living in San Francisco who took a job with a dot com describes her realization that she has become a gentrifier, “I’m the enemy! At the meeting of San Franciscans trying to stop gentrification, I realize that I’m the Internet yuppie scum that’s ruining my neighborhood!” (<http://www.salon.com...yuppies/>). She goes on to say,

As a dyed-in-the-wool progressive, community-volunteering, social-working artist, I was once a member of the endangered species that these activists are so diligently trying to save from extinction. What happened? I got a job—in the scurrilously libertarian Internet sector—that allowed me to buy a home. That alone has transported me across the battle lines. The problem is that in San Francisco downward mobility had become a lifestyle choice every bit as self-indulgent as upward mobility. I know because I was one of the voluntarily low-income: lionizing the working class, despising my ‘[W]hite-skinned’ privilege, camouflaging the capriciousness of my aesthetic tastes, nursing a love-hate relationship with the middle-class identity my parents imbued in me. There is a real pleasure and even, I think, a virtue in that kind of voluntary poverty, but it really doesn’t have much in common with the poverty in my neighborhood (ibid).

Lloyd’s description is so vivid because she captures the dissonance that began with being middle-class, and the surprise engendered when a new layer of dissonance was piled on top. She had created one identity—voluntarily low-income, progressive artist, and then been told that it did not apply because she was a gentrifier. While she recognizes that being voluntarily poor is not anything like involuntary poverty, Lloyd also criticizes the social judgment that creates sharp distinctions between who is an insider and outsider. The questions for Lloyd were, If I’m not who I thought I was, then who am I? And what is this community I’ve been trying to save if not my own? These questions led her to write her piece for *Salon*.

Neutral

There is hardly anything or anyone neutral when it comes to gentrification. The vast majority of people are familiar with the term and express some level of discomfort when discussing it. Even the academic literature which tells summaries of both the positive and negative stories rarely ends on a neutral note. Those who are neutral are those who are unaware—for whom gentrification is not a well-known word.

Negative

The negative narrative is one in which the gentrifier is the enemy. Whether the gentrifier is merely present or is actively pushing out the indigenous, the gentrifier is causing serious problems in the neighborhood. Housing displacement, business displacement, cultural displacement all play a role in this narrative. The indigenous are cast as victims—of suburbanization, of generations of poverty, of capitalism, and of the gentrifiers. There are many real, first-hand accounts that corroborate this story.

There are also many spin-off narratives that take their starting place in a concern for the displaced and quickly ratchet up to a hateful state of near-panic. Instead of gentrifiers being ignorant or selfish, they become heartless, bland, and domineering. Looking at the characterizations can be informative as well as fascinating. For example, Solnit describes San Francisco as a vibrant and creative city, in which gentrification was threatening everything that made it so. In the role of victim, she acknowledges low-income residents and communities of color, but she is particularly concerned with artists-as-a-way-of-life (see above discussion on artists). In the role of enemy, she puts the employees of dot com companies, emphasizing White employees. She essentially equates White dotcomers moving in from the suburbs with the destruction of everything that makes the city interesting. True, her poor artist friends are finding it difficult to find affordable housing, but is it fair to claim that everyone from the suburbs is dull and could never replace her “basic half-Indonesian gay San Francisco artist” friend? What are these adjectives meant to tell us about her friend? That he is unique, of color, creative—that he could not possibly be a gentrifier. What about the vast number of people of color involved in high tech companies? Do they pass Solnit’s test? What if they spend their day working on graphics—an arguably artistic task?

The validity of Solnit’s concern with displacement is not in question; the point of narrative examination is to consider what story she tells and, to the extent that we can guess or know, why she tells it that way. Perhaps it is because she feels her chosen way of life is threatened. Perhaps it is because she sees herself as a progressive, and cannot reconcile that with the changing character of the neighborhood—rather than be associated with what she fears, she draws a line in the sand and puts herself on one side.

Positive

The positive narrative is one in which the gentrifier is a respectable and contributing member of society. The gentrifier rehabilitates buildings, increases property values, and improves city services and other aspects of public life in the neighborhood. The indigenous are cast as people afraid of inevitable change, troublemakers, people down on their luck, and, in the best of the roles, folks who are doing their best to get by.

The gentrifier is a sympathetic character—an individual also doing his or her best

to get by. Perhaps persecuted by society, the gentrifier is looking for a safe place to reside. Perhaps devoted to preserving history and beautiful objects from the past, the gentrifier is looking for a home to preserve. Perhaps a true urban dweller who wants to walk to work, restaurants, and raise a family in the city, the gentrifier is merely part of the urban milieu. Perhaps an environmentalist, the gentrifier requires dense living. Perhaps a person concerned with “social justice” and the opportunities provided by living in multicultural communities, the gentrifier believes living in the neighborhood because of the neighbors is of great value to the gentrifier, and possibly to the indigenous. Almost always, the gentrifier is employed full-time, is college-educated, votes more frequently than not, and is playing by the rules of the market economy in which we all live.

A Narrative of Ambivalence

The narrative of ambivalence, as discussed above, emerges from the dissonance created by conflicting negative and positive narratives of gentrifiers. It is a narrative that is growing in public discussions—it is being told on discussion boards like Phillyblog.com (<http://www.phillyblog.com/philly/archive/index.php/t-654.html>), in comic strips like Building Stories, and at public events like IDSA’s Fight Club in Chicago where two opponents faced off in a boxing ring over the topic: “Gentrification: Neighborhood destruction or creation?”

People expressing a narrative of ambivalence, are more than fluctuating between a narrative that is positive or negative; they have actually created a narrative that marries the two. For example, a gentrifier might note that while her purchase and renovation of a home in the neighborhood likely has increased property values, she is an active member of the neighborhood association and patronizes locally owned businesses whenever possible. In talking about her impact as a gentrifier, she would stress her understanding of the negative impacts she may be having on the area.

There are two underlying themes of the narrative, which vary in use from person to person. One is that of guilt. Guilt implies a sense of blame, but in this case as in “white liberal guilt” a direct link to blameful situation is not required. It is enough to be part of a privileged group of society who has done something morally or otherwise wrong. People exhibiting this sense of guilt speak almost as though they owe to the low-income in their neighborhood to be good neighbors as reparation for having participated in a society that created the low-income ghettos of Cabrini-Green and Pruitt-Igoe. A second theme is one of being extremely self-aware of privilege, but striving to separate oneself from blame through being hyper-aware. The hipsters, described above, exhibit this theme as Lorentzen describes them,

But come on, Anderson and hipsters are too self-conscious, too postmodern, to be racist. Hipsters, though, they may be mostly [W]hite (and rich) welcome minorities to their ranks. In fact they get worried if there aren’t enough colors on the social palette; you could hear something genuinely troubling when the Moldy Peaches used to sing, ‘I’m running out of ethnic friends.’...Hipsters, at the end of the day, are still people. Hearts do beat under our faded t-shirts
(www.nplusone.mag.com/neato.html).

Overall, this narrative has a protagonist who is aware of the negative externalities of gentrification and strives to mitigate them by specific behavior. It is in this story of “I am a gentri-

fier, but..." that such gentrifiers find their urban identity.

In the following section, a series of interviews with gentrifiers from three different Boston neighborhoods are compared and the narrative of ambivalence is more intimately detailed. Additionally, initial and cursory connections between espousers of the narrative and demographic characteristics are noted.

Chapter VI - Methodology

As discussed in the Foreword, this thesis explores the narratives and reflections of 25-34 year old, well-educated, White gentrifiers on the subject of gentrification, through interviews. Boston was selected for its accessibility during the period of study. Within Boston, three neighborhoods were selected as a means to look at places in various stages of gentrification: the South End, Jamaica Plain—particularly Hyde/Jackson Square, and Dorchester—particularly Ashmont Hill. The three neighborhoods were selected based on conversations with local experts, review of media, and site visits. Gentrification of the South End began in the 1960s and was a recognized socio-economic force by the late 1970s. Gentrification of Jamaica Plain began in earnest during the late 1980s. Gentrification of the Ashmont Hill/Peabody Square area of Dorchester has been mounting considerably in the last decade. (In a following section, each neighborhood is described in greater depth.)

Selection of Specific Study Areas

For each area of study, a group of four Census tracts were identified. Census tracts were chosen rather than blocks because more data is provided at this slightly larger level. Using contiguous Census tracts also made it simpler to find interviewees who were part of the same immediate area, as opposed to looking at an entire City neighborhood which may have considerably different areas within it. Within each area, a pedestrian-oriented commercial strip was identified. Additionally, each study area has a Metropolitan Boston Transit Authority (MBTA) subway station within a half-mile of the farthest boundary. These characteristics were important to demonstrate relative urbanity and accessibility. The population density within each study area was also considered. As might be expected of an urban study, the neighborhoods are different in almost as many ways as they are similar. Possibly, trends that transcend the various study areas could be said to be more universal than idiosyncratic.

Outreach

Using the identified boundaries, multiple outreach methods were conducted to broadly advertise the study. Notices with the study's research email address (nbd-study@mit.edu) were posted in neighborhood coffee shops, libraries, and convenience stores. Neighborhood associations were contacted and asked to send out an announcement via the neighborhood email list-serve, newsletter, meeting announcements, or by word of mouth. Websites dedicated to neighborhood connections, such as i-neighborhood.com were consulted and mass postings made. Postings were also placed on craigslist.com, an incredibly popular variation of on-line classifieds among the targeted demographic. This author also attended select community events such as neighborhood mixers and yard sales. (In one case, over 200 flyers were distributed door-to-door. Unfortunately, this only resulted in two contacts. Given the need to distribute over 1,500 flyers to be consistent, this method was discarded.) Finally, each interviewee was asked for additional contacts. Pains were taken to not use the word "gentrification" or "gentrifier" when advertising the study. See Figure 12 for an example of a posting. Refraining from the use of the term was a conscious decision because people are known to have such strong reactions to it, and might be disinclined to participate. Instead, the more innocuous descriptions of "neighborhood choice" and "how you feel about it" were used. These descriptions were accurate.



Figure 12

It is worth noting that this study is not and was not intended to be a highly rigorous statistical examination. To do so would have required far more funding and time than this thesis allowed. Instead, the goal of the study was to explore the issue of how gentrifiers choose and value their neighborhood, and how they feel about being “gentrifiers.” The intended outcome is to be thought-provoking and provide ideas for further study.

Interview Questions

The interviews were based on the same list of questions. The first seven interviews took place in person and lasted from one hour to one and a half hours. These interviews were audiotaped. All of the following questions were asked:

The Intro Basics aka Tell me about yourself

- How old are you?
- When did you move to this neighborhood (meaning: South End, JP, or Dorchester)?
- Where did you live before?
- For how long?
- Why did you move?

Picking a Neighborhood aka Tell me about the process of picking this nbd...

- Where did you grow up? [Scale, density, diversity, income]
- What was your last neighborhood like? [Scale, density, diversity, income]
- Which characteristics (both positive and/or negative) were important to you about your last neighborhood? What was missing?
- Did you know anyone before you moved into the nbd? In what capacity? Did they have a positive, negative, or no influence on your decision to move here?
- What are the 3 or 4 most important characteristics that influenced your decision to move to your present neighborhood?
- When you were visiting the neighborhood, before you moved in or when you first arrived, what “clues” did you see in the neighborhood that made you think either,

“I’ll like it here” or “I won’t like it here.”

Describing this Neighborhood aka How do you see your current/ideal nbd?

- How would you describe your neighborhood? [Draw a “treasure map” of key landmarks and things you think are especially distinctive, good, or especially bad.]
- How do you feel about being here? (Are you still pleased with your decision to move here?)
- What kinds of things do you do around here? What kinds of businesses do you go to? Social activities?
- Do you engage in community activities—which? More or less than you expected?
- Do you know your neighbors? More or less than you expected?
- How has the neighborhood changed since you moved here—if at all?
- What do you expect to change in the near future and how do you feel about it?
- How long do you think you’ll live here?
- Has anyone you know moved to the neighborhood since you moved here? Were you involved in his/her/their decision to move here? Has anyone you know looked at homes here?

Identity aka Does your neighborhood reflect your identity?

- You’ve described your nbd...What, if anything, do you think living in _____ says about you? (It might help you to think about it this way: imagine you are telling a stranger who knows Boston about which neighborhood you live in, what snap judgments do you think they might make about you?)
- Do you consider yourself to be in a cultural, racial or ethnic majority or minority in this neighborhood?
- Is this uncommon for you, in terms of other places you have lived?
- Do you feel like you are a part of the other group?
- How important to you is it to be in a nbd with a large community of color?
- What does diversity mean to you? How important is it 1-10?
- How would you define “gentrification?”
- Have you ever considered yourself a “gentrifier?” (Do think you are or know that someone else has?)
- Have you ever done anything because of it?

Back to Basics aka More about you...

- Have you been to college? What did you study?
- What is your work or profession?
- Did you study abroad in college? (Where?) Do you travel much now? (Where?) Have you ever lived abroad?
- Do you speak any other languages?
- Salary level? Circle one
\$0-\$19,999 \$20,000-\$39,999 \$40,000-\$59,999
\$60,000-\$79,999 \$80,000-99,999 \$120,000+
- Your race? _____

After analyzing the responses to the questions and refining the research goals, a subset of these questions were selected for the remaining interviews. The majority of the remaining interviews were conducted by phone and lasted from twenty to forty minutes, depending on the interviewee's responses. The final question list was the following:

The Intro Basics aka Tell me about yourself

- How old are you?
- When did you move to this neighborhood (meaning: South End, JP, or Dorchester)?
- Where did you live before?
- For how long?
- Why did you move?

Picking a Neighborhood aka Tell me about the process of picking this nbd...

- Where did you grow up? [Scale, density, diversity, income]
- What are the 3 or 4 most important characteristics that influenced your decision to move to your present neighborhood?
- When you were visiting the neighborhood, before you moved in or when you first arrived, what "clues" did you see in the neighborhood that made you think either, "I'll like it here" or "I won't like it here."

Describing this Neighborhood aka How do you see your current/ideal nbd?

- How would you describe your neighborhood?
- What kinds of things do you do around here? What kinds of businesses do you go to? Social activities?
- Do you engage in community activities—which?
- Do you know your neighbors? More or less than you expected?
- How has the neighborhood changed since you moved here—if at all?
- What do you expect to change in the near future and how do you feel about it?
- How long do you think you'll live here?
- Do you consider yourself to be in a cultural, racial or ethnic majority or minority in this neighborhood?

Gentrification aka What do you think about it in the context of you?

- How would you define "gentrification?"
- Have you ever considered yourself a "gentrifier?" (Do think you are or know that someone else has?)
- Have you ever done anything because of it?

Back to Basics aka More about you...

- Have you been to college? What did you study?
- What is your work or profession?
- Did you study abroad in college? (Where?) Do you travel much now? (Where?) Have you ever lived abroad?
- Do you speak any other languages?
- Salary level? Circle one

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| \$0-\$19,999 | \$20,000-\$39,999 | \$40,000-\$59,999 |
| \$60,000-\$79,999 | \$80,000-99,999 | \$120,000+ |
- Your race? _____

The questions were carefully selected with the following goals in mind.

1. Get basic demographic data, to use in looking at diversity of sample and to look for interesting correlations. For example, did the interviewees all hold non-profit jobs? Did most of the interviewees who valued diversity grow up in a homogenous suburb?
2. Find out what the interviewees value in a neighborhood.
3. Make the interviewees think about the ways they interact with the neighborhood (e.g, shopping, social events).
4. Build trust and rapport with the interviewees before delving into discussion of gentrification.
5. Find out how the interviewee views gentrification and his/her familiarity with the term.
6. Offer space in which the interviewees can speak about how they view themselves in the context of gentrification, and what they do about it, if anything.

The interviews went smoothly and the ordering of the questions seemed to work as intended. Thirty-four interviews were completed in total. Of these interviews, seven did not ultimately fit the demographic group criteria and were discarded from analysis, though considered generally.

Written notes from the interviews were supplemented with additional thoughts and questions when the notes were converted into electronic format. Recurring themes and explanations were noted. The interpretation of the conversations was done qualitatively, with careful comparisons and restraint.

Chapter VII - Neighborhoods Studied

The following chapter describes each of the neighborhoods and study areas in greater detail. The term “neighborhood” is used both to denote the larger City of Boston neighborhood planning district (e.g., South End, Jamaica Plain, Dorchester) and in the general sense of clusters of streets. The term “study area” is used to denote the specific Census tract bounded streets from which the interviewees were culled.

The South End

The South End is a neighborhood within the city of Boston, Massachusetts. It lies to the south of Boston’s city center. It borders the neighborhoods of the more affluent Back Bay and Beacon Hill, as well as less affluent Roxbury and South Boston. (See Figure 13 for a context map.) It is 1.03 square miles and has a population of approximately 28,160 (BRA, SE, p.2). The median household income is \$41,590 (compared with Boston’s \$39,629). The South End is known as a diverse community. According to the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), it is 23% Hispanic, and 17% Non-Hispanic White. Median gross rent is \$707, ninety-five dollars less than that of Boston as a whole. The South End is known for its architecture—it is the largest remaining Victorian row-house neighborhood in the nation—and for its mix of market and affordable residences.



Figure 13

The South End is a neighborhood of rich architectural history. It also has a rich social history—it is considered to be the first Boston neighborhood to undergo gentrification and has been contending with affordable housing issues ever since. According to *Wikipedia*, the South End is known for

being Boston's upper middle class Gay/Bohemian/Cultural neighborhood. Housing in the South End is very expensive by US and Greater Boston standards — it is difficult to find a one bedroom apartment for less than \$400,000. This still makes it relatively inexpensive compared to other central Boston neighborhoods like the Back Bay and Beacon Hill. Large numbers of gays, blacks, and young urban professionals, especially those with bohemian leanings, live in the South End, though many have left the neighborhood due to the increasing expense (a process often called gentrification). Interestingly, the neighborhood has maintained its socio-economic diversity due to a large number of subsidized, publicly owned or otherwise low-income housing units. Affordable housing developments such as Methunion, Cathedral Housing, Villa Victoria and Tent City vary considerably and represent evolving attitudes in public housing design and governance” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_End, 5/23/06).

This description is common in newspapers, websites, and other contemporary descriptions of the neighborhood.

History in Brief

Until the mid-1800s, the area known today as the South End was a combination of marshland and sea, with a small strip of land connecting Boston to the mainland. Like the Back Bay, the South End was created out of landfill and homes were developed to attract the wealthy. The initial layout of streets was drafted by Charles Bulfinch who set residential streets around squares of open space in a form reminiscent of London. This form contrasts with the development of Columbus Avenue in the style of a French Boulevard. Much of the neighborhood still consists of the 5-story, red brick buildings built during the initial mid-nineteenth century.

After the Panic of 1873, the middle class residences were transformed into working class boarding homes. In 1891, the first settlement house in Boston was opened to serve as a community center for surrounding residents. By the 1900s, the population of the South End is predominantly working class and culturally diverse, with a population that includes Jews, Chinese, Puerto Ricans, African-Americans, Greeks, and more.

For the next seventy years, the neighborhood was dominated by residents who fiercely identified with belonging to the South End, where differences between neighbors were secondary. Neighborhood associations formed to combat crime and prostitution, and to create opportunities for Victory gardens and other social activities.

In the early 1960s, the New York Streets area of the South End was selected for the first of Boston's Federal Urban Renewal projects. Several blocks were bulldozed and replaced with new housing. The destruction of Boston's West End was never far from people's minds, and the political willpower was accordingly cast in the direction of collaborative decision-making. Those in the position of making decisions were not, however, always in agreement, and a rift between newcomers and indigenous became increasingly pronounced.

In 1966, a group of concerned citizens formed the South End Historical Society in

response to the destruction wrought by arson and neglect. Through their work the South End was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972 and became a Boston City Landmark (500 acres!) in 1983. (<http://www.southendhistoricalsociety.org/history.htm>, 5/23/06).

In 1968, the Tent City occupation was led by Melvin King at the corner of Dartmouth and Columbus Avenue, on land owned by the Boston Redevelopment Authority. The BRA had demolished townhouses and planned to build a residential tower with parking, and only 10% affordable units. The occupation prevented development of that project and the land lay fallow for the next twenty years. The residential project was finally completed in 1991, this time with 75% of the units affordable. Also in 1968, a community coalition led by Puerto Rican residents gained control of a BRA-owned parcel. The result: Villa Victoria, a tenant-managed low income housing project. Today, the site is home to 3,000 low-income residents.

By the 1970s, an influx of young professionals moving to the neighborhood was the obvious trend, which resulted in one of the first of many battles over the direction of the neighborhood. Deborah Auger describes the struggle between Conservatives (i.e., middle class who advocated for less affordable housing), Progressives (i.e., lower and some middle class who advocated for more affordable housing), and Moderates (i.e., middle class who tried to bridge the gap between the extremes) who were each trying to control the South End's urban renewal committee. From 1967 to 1973, community members fought over every decision. By 1973, the Progressives took control of the committee, and the Conservatives responded with lawsuits to slow down or block projects they did not like.

By the 1980s, the South End's reputation as a transition ground for immigrants and home to marginalized communities was threatened by the increasing relocation of middle class professionals to the neighborhood. A number of single residence occupancy buildings were converted to single family homes. Artists who had moved into the neighborhood in the 1970s were beginning to be priced out, as gays entered and transformed the South End into what was known as Boston's gay neighborhood. (Note: the South End maintained a consistently large heterosexual population throughout its history.)

Today, a walk through the South End will include blocks of beautifully and pristinely preserved homes, homeless shelters tucked quietly between, and the occasional dilapidated and all but abandoned building. It is slowly losing its reputation as the gay neighborhood of Boston, and is home to an increasing number of yupps. Property values continue to increase.

Area of Study

Because of the limitations of this master's thesis time and financial support, the area studied was limited to relatively small portion of the South End. Four Census tracts encompassing the commercial district of Tremont Street and within ¼-mile of MBTA subway stations were chosen. While every attempt was made to only include interviewees in this study who live within these boundaries, some persons may live just outside of the boundaries (within a block or two, and certainly within the same neighborhood in a real sense, if not by Census definition). The following map and summary Census statistics describe the area included:

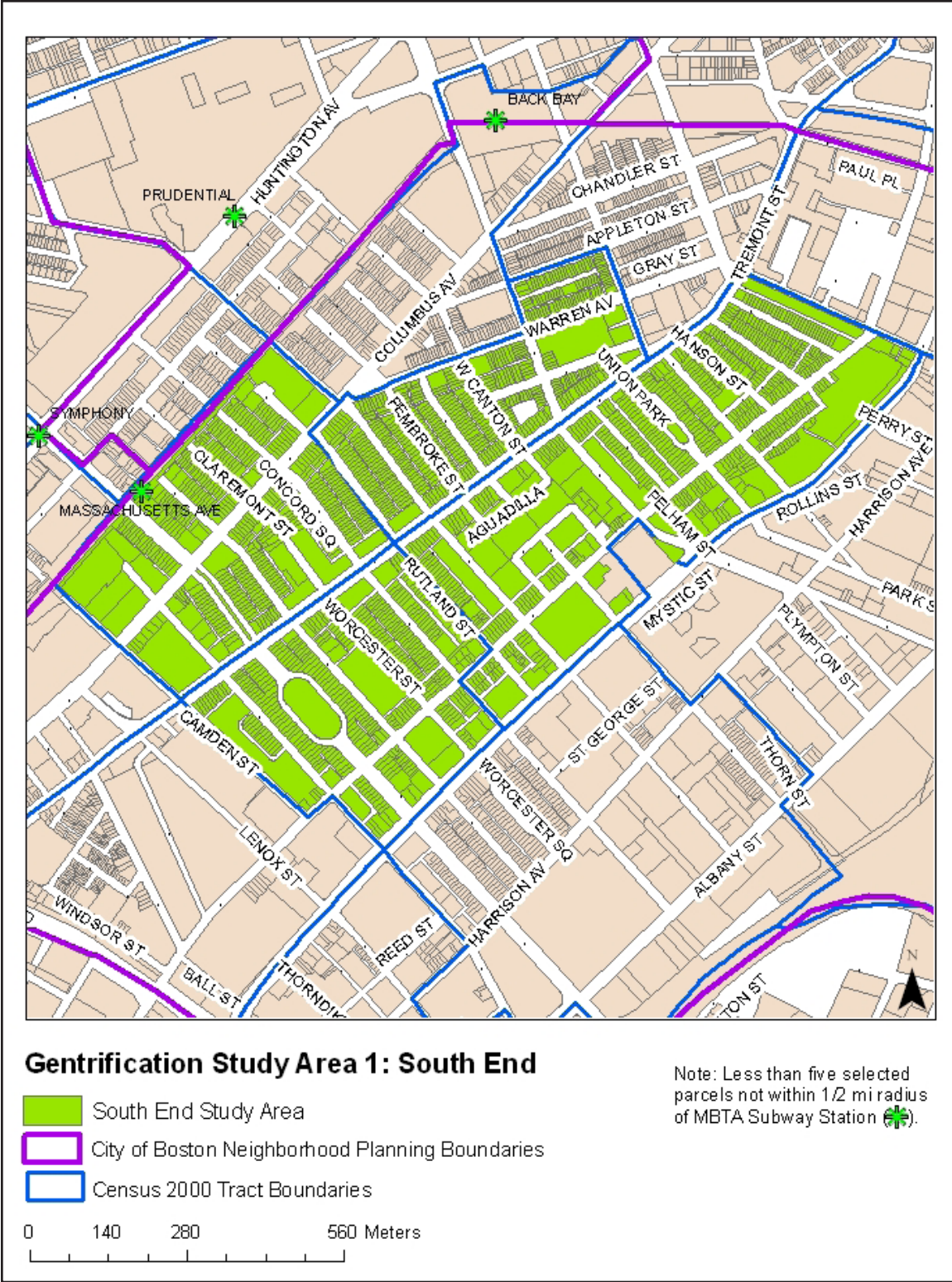


Figure 14

Study Area Demographics

Population in 2000:	14,076	100%
White	8,389	60%
Black	2,700	19%
Asian	1,218	9%
Hispanic	2,,371	17%
(rounding error)		

Total Housing Units in 2000:	8,037	100%
Owner occupied:	2,405	30%
Renter occupied:	5,211	65%
Vacant:	402	5%

Average Household Size in 2000: 1.8

Character

The commercial district of Tremont Street anchors the area of study. The South End portion of the street runs from Highway 93, south to Massachusetts Avenue. It is characterized by historic mixed use buildings, as well as several of the 1960s era public housing projects and more recent luxury and market-rate projects, such as Atelier 505 (see Figure 15).



Figure 15

The following images are meant to be descriptive of the neighborhood's physical character:



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19

Two of the most popular topics for conversation in South End coffee shops seem to be the conflicts concerning historic preservation, and whether there is increasing crime in the area. The former is a long-standing disagreement between advocates for preservation and private homeowners who feel the commitment is excessive. In 2005, the owner of a Victorian rowhouse was told the City might charge him a fee of up to \$1.46M for one vinyl windowpane and some altered brickwork. According to the owner, the work had been done prior to his purchase of the property fifteen years prior, but had only recently been brought to his attention in 1997. According to the South End Landmark District Committee, this same owner had applied for a permit to make the changes, was denied, and then made the changes anyway. In a *Boston Globe* article, the owner was quoted as saying, "It almost makes me want to go to the Registry of Deeds and see who owns the property" (11/17/05).

The latter discussion regarding neighborhood crime touches not only on the number of slashed tires or smashed windshields in a given week, but also on who is perpetrating the crimes and why. While crime in some neighborhoods at some times is used to draw a community together, in the South End it is bound to bring up questions about the homeless shelters and other social service agencies that dot the area—and which pre-date most of the current market-rate residents. For example, the Pine Street Inn, which provides housing and services for the homeless, was created in 1969. Long-time residents of the community tend to remember when the battle against daylight drug dealing was considerably more intense, and consider their commitment to the neighborhood a commitment to preserving residential opportunities for a broad spectrum of income levels. Newcomers tend to view minor escalations in crime as causes of concern for their investment, and possibly as a result of displacement—and vengefulness.

Both of these topics are reflective of changes introduced by gentrification. The South End, unlike many other gentrified neighborhoods in the nation, has made considerable effort to retain its diversity in the face of rising housing prices. But as long as prices continue to rise, and affordable housing is preserved, the pressures of gentrification will continue.

Jamaica Plain – Hyde/Jackson Square

Jamaica Plain is a neighborhood within the city of Boston, Massachusetts. It lies to the south of Boston's city center. It borders the neighborhood of Roxbury and the town of Brookline. (See Figure 20 for context map, next page.) It is 3.07 square miles and has a population of approximately 38,074 (BRA, JP, p.2). The median household income is \$41,524 (compared with Boston's \$39,629). Jamaica Plain is known as a diverse community. According to the BRA it is 23% Hispanic, and 51% Non-Hispanic White. Median gross rent is \$808, just six dollars over that of Boston as a whole. JP is known for Jamaica Pond, and pride in its diversity of residents.

Jamaica Plain is widely considered to be a neighborhood with pockets of stable, middle and upper class homes, as well as poverty and gentrification. The neighborhood consists of smaller subunits, such as Hyde/Jackson Square and Moss Hill (see Figures 21 and 22, respectively). The former is a neighborhood positioned around the east end of Centre Street. Jackson Square is anchored by an MBTA subway station and public housing project. Hyde Square is anchored by a small traffic rotary. The stretch of Centre Street between the two squares is populated largely by independently owned businesses catering toward Spanish-speaking residents, particularly Dominicans and Puerto Ricans. There are also a number of businesses catering toward young, middle and low-income English-speaking residents—considered “hipsters” or “yuppies.” The surrounding homes are mostly triple-deckers or other multifamily buildings, with some single family homes.



Figure 21



Figure 20

Moss Hill, in contrast, is an area of stately single family homes on quarter acre lots. Whereas Hyde/Jackson Square was experiencing disinvestment in the mid-20th century, Moss Hill fairly stable. Moss Hill resembles a fairly affluent suburb more so than an urban neighborhood.



Figure 22

History in Brief

First populated by the Native American tribe, the Kuchamakin, British colonialists settled the area in 1640. During the next century, taverns and inns set up shop along the Dedham Highway—the most direct route from Boston to Dedham; Revolutionary War soldiers were quartered in these establishments. In the early 1800s, Jamaica Plain grew from an agricultural neighborhood of Roxbury (which was its own village at the time) to its own town (1851). It then joined Boston in 1874. For a time, Jamaica Plain was considered a place primarily for pond-side summer homes. Jamaica Plain became an urban neighborhood in the decades that followed the development of public transit. First the omnibus and then trolleys: Jamaica Plain was amongst the “streetcar suburbs” described by Sam Bass Warner. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, Jamaica Plain was a vibrant and desirable neighborhood.

Like most urban neighborhoods in the 1950s, a large proportion of residents left the area for the suburbs. By the 1960s, plans to construct a highway resulted in the destruction of nearly 700 homes. Community opposition to the highway stopped further bulldozing, however, the damage was substantial. Other major projects, such as the removal of an elevated train line and the creation of an underground subway line, also reshaped the character of the neighborhood. The 1970s and 1980s were difficult years for residents of Jamaica Plain, who faced crime, arson, and neglect. Still, the population remained one of the most diverse in Boston. By the 1990s, there was a widespread resurgence in interest by the middle class in the area, as well as strengthening grassroots efforts to rebuild community. Residents initiated a major clean up of Jamaica Pond, and spearheaded efforts to bring retailers into defunct commercial districts. These activities along with a real estate boom in the metropolitan area, brought attention to Jamaica Plain. It is commonly believed that gentrification of Jamaica Plain began in the late 1980s and took hold in the 1990s.

Area of Study

Because of the wide-range of homes and demographics in Jamaica Plain, and because of other limitations, the area studied was limited to a relatively small portion of Jamaica Plain. Four Census tracts encompassing the Hyde/Jackson Square area and Stony-Brook MBTA subway station were used. While every attempt was made to only include interviewees in this study who live within these boundaries, some persons may live just outside of the boundaries (within a block or two, and certainly within the same neighborhood in a real sense, if not by Census definition). The map in Figure 23 details the area included, and the following Census summary describes the population in some basic statistics:

Study Area Demographics:

Population 2000:	9,909	100%
White	4,942	50%
Black	1,886	13%
Asian	331	2%
Hispanic	4,132	29%
(rounding error)		

Total Housing Units in 2000: 4,105 100%
 Owner occupied: 1,102 27%
 Renter occupied: 2,614 64%
 Vacant: 389 9%

Average Household Size in 2000: 2.7

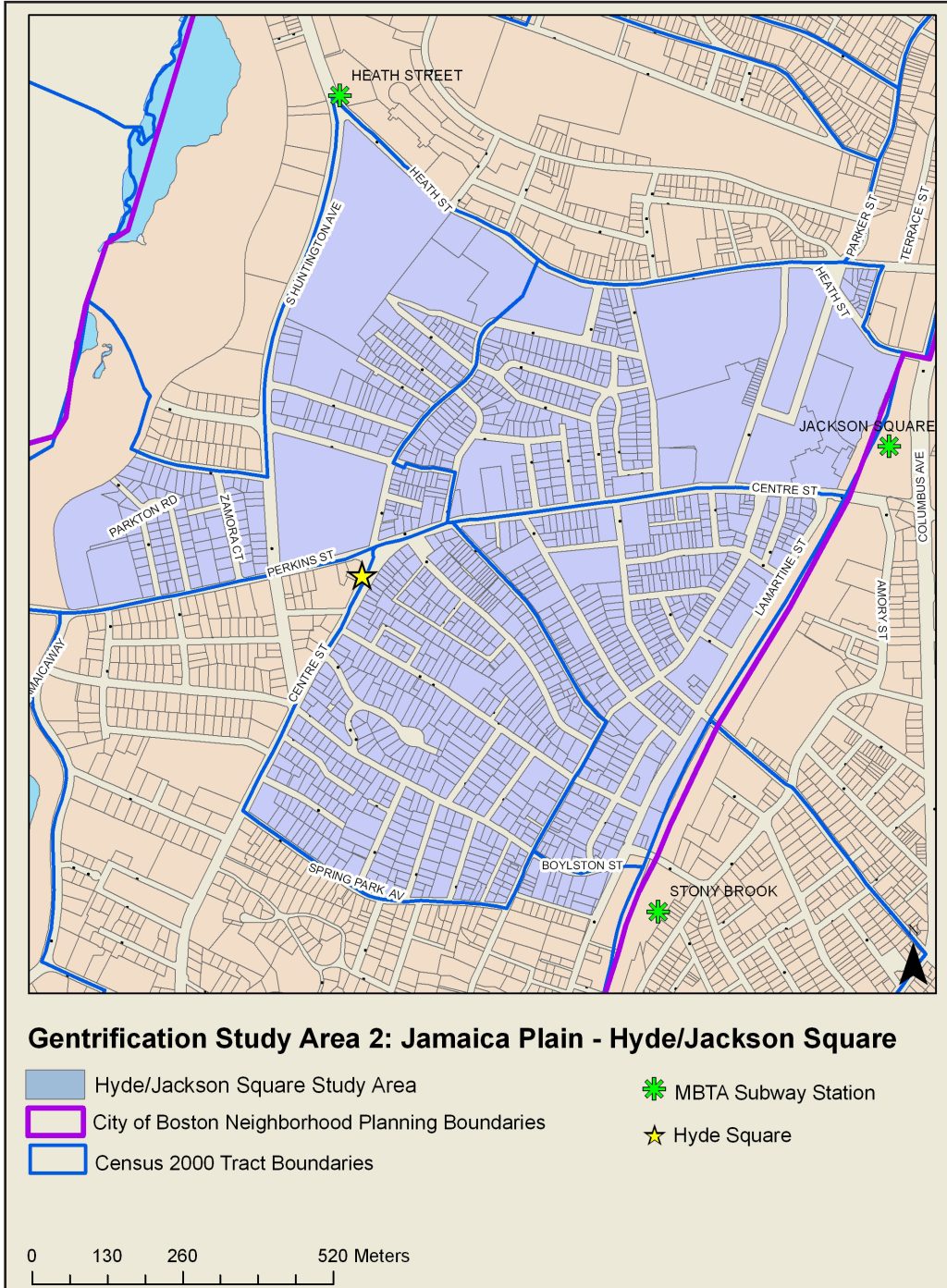


Figure 23

The Jackson Square end of the neighborhood is anchored by the Jackson Square MBTA subway station and Bromley-Heath public housing project. The station was built in the 1980s and is on the Orange Line. The housing project was built in the 1940s and is not only the largest in Boston, but also the first in the nation to be managed by tenants. Most of the businesses surrounding Jackson Square are independently owned and cater toward Spanish-speaking residents, such as Gentiliza Market and Estrella Bakery. There are also a few corporate retailers, such as Stop N Shop and Bank of America. An 1/8 of a mile from Jackson Square is Hyde Square. Hyde Square is a mix of Latino businesses and more trendy “hipster” businesses, such as a candle pin bowling alley, the Milky Way Lounge, and a small, health conscious coffee shop, June Bug. Both squares are part of the same Main Streets (merchants) association, but often function separately. Centre Street continues throughout Jamaica Plain, and as it travels south to the area commonly known as “Centre Street,” the businesses and clientele generally increase in income-level. (See Figures 24-29 for a visual description of the Hyde/Jackson Square neighborhood’s physical character.)

Character

According to the City of Boston’s website, “The rich diversity in JP has created a strong character of social awareness and tolerance among neighbors and residents” (www.cityofboston.gov/neighborhoods). This is certainly the most pervasive attitude of residents of the study area. A number of community groups, ranging from the Hyde Square Task Force (youth and family services and advocacy) to Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation and Urban Edge to the Hyde/Jackson Squares Main Street program to Neighbors For Neighbors, populate this area with tasks, events, and members. Throughout much of Boston, Jamaica Plain is known as an activist community.

Despite the oft-cited rumor that there are more non-profits per capita in Jamaica Plain than anywhere else in New England, not all of the activist groups share the same goals or agendas. Just as might be expected in any truly diverse community, there is disagreement. For example, last year the Blessed Sacrament Church was put up for sale by the Archdiocese of Boston. Heated community meetings revealed that some in the neighborhood felt more affordable housing was necessary, while other thought only market-rate condominiums should be incorporated into a new development on the site. The upside of these meetings is that they brought out a large number of people to participate. The downside is that racial and cultural stereotypes made their way into the discussion. The latter served as a reminder that even in Jamaica Plain, tolerance only goes so far.

Another topic, related to affordable housing, which stirs up controversy in Jamaica Plain is that of commercial businesses—independent and corporate. A recent *Boston Globe* article summed it up in the headline, “Anything but Plain: Diverse, colorful, and fiercely independent, Jamaica Plain has reached a critical crossroads. How long can it keep out Starbucks, the Gap and complete homogenization?” (1/8/06). In the article, journalist Doug Most, spends some time in the area, chatting with residents. Most of them note that there are items which cannot be purchased in the vicinity, but not all of them mind. His read of the situation is, “From dirt fields to historic churches to crusty bars to transportation wars and woes, Jamaica Plain, maybe more than any other Boston neighborhood, is a community at a crossroads. It has managed through the years to maintain its identity as one of Boston’s most diverse neighborhoods...a place where a night at Bella Luna, the friendly Italian eatery

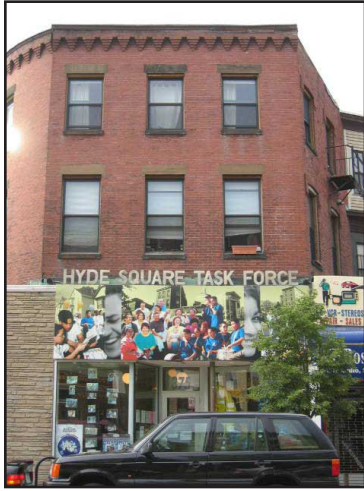


Figure 24



Figure 25



Figure 26



Figure 27



Figure 28



Figure 29

in Hyde Square, might find you surrounded by a young Hispanic family, an older black pair, and a lesbian couple with their baby.”

These two concerns, affordable housing and commercial character, say much about the character of Hyde/Jackson Square and Jamaica Plain. That it is a neighborhood of activists, where people are outspoken and generally err on the side of what maintains their community narrative of uniqueness and pride in diversity. These concerns also indicate the larger, umbrella concern facing the neighborhood: gentrification.

Dorchester – Ashmont Hill

Dorchester is a neighborhood within the city of Boston, Massachusetts. It lies to the south of the South End and to the east of Jamaica Plain. It borders the neighborhoods of South Boston and Roxbury. The City of Boston has divided the neighborhood into North and South Dorchester for planning purposes, though it is commonly referred to as the whole of Dorchester. Ashmont Hill (the area of study) is in South Dorchester. (See Figure 30 for context map.) South Dorchester is 4.01 square miles and has a population of approximately 63,647 (BRA, AH, p.2). The median household income is \$39,587 (compared with Boston’s \$39,629). South Dorchester is known for being populated mainly by non-Whites. According to the BRA it is 10% Hispanic, and 30% Non-Hispanic White. Median gross rent is \$787, fifteen dollars less than that of Boston as a whole. Dorchester is largely considered to be a low-income neighborhood.

Dorchester is Boston’s largest neighborhood, with a population second in size only to Allston-Brighton. The inhabitants include Cape Verdeans, African-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Whites, and more. Though it has a reputation as dangerous, there are a few areas that are known for their stately homes and middle to high income occupants, such as Savin, Ashmont, and Jones Hills. To be sure, the stereotypes of life in Dorchester are frequently unkind though not entirely without base.

In the summer of 2005, a Dorchester pastor, Reverend Bruce Wall, moved temporarily into an area called “Hell’s Zone” in an anti-crime crusade. He had been a part of the ‘Boston Miracle’ of the late 1990s and believed his presence on a street known for gun violence and drugs would help reignite the success of the latent program. The 1990s ‘Boston Miracle’ was a collaboration between police, community leaders, and clergy to combat crime. Information was collected and shared that enabled the police to go after entire gangs using a zero-tolerance message. The program was successful and crime plummeted for a time. As of June 2005, crime had risen dramatically; parents spoke about keeping their children indoors

all summer, even on hot days, in fear of street violence. In a National Public Radio report on Wall's efforts, Anthony Brooks interviewed residents and concluded that some openly welcomed his crusade, while others were afraid to be at all affiliated (Brooks). A number of explanations have been put forth about the increase in crime, ranging from a more violent youth, a boom in the adolescent population, the re-entry of individuals sent to jail during the 'Boston Miracle,' and a relaxed approach by the police to criminal activity. Whatever the cause, virtually everyone agrees that crime is a problem in Dorchester.

Still, people are proud to be from the neighborhood. One native, punk musician Mike McColgan, went so far as to write a song about it, "In Defense of Dorchester." With lyrics like,

Staring down Cedar Grove up on Indian Hills,
See a skyline littered with triple deckers and gin mills,
Years of tot lot pass my eyes,
Reflecting faces that have gone by,
Adams corner embedded in my soul,

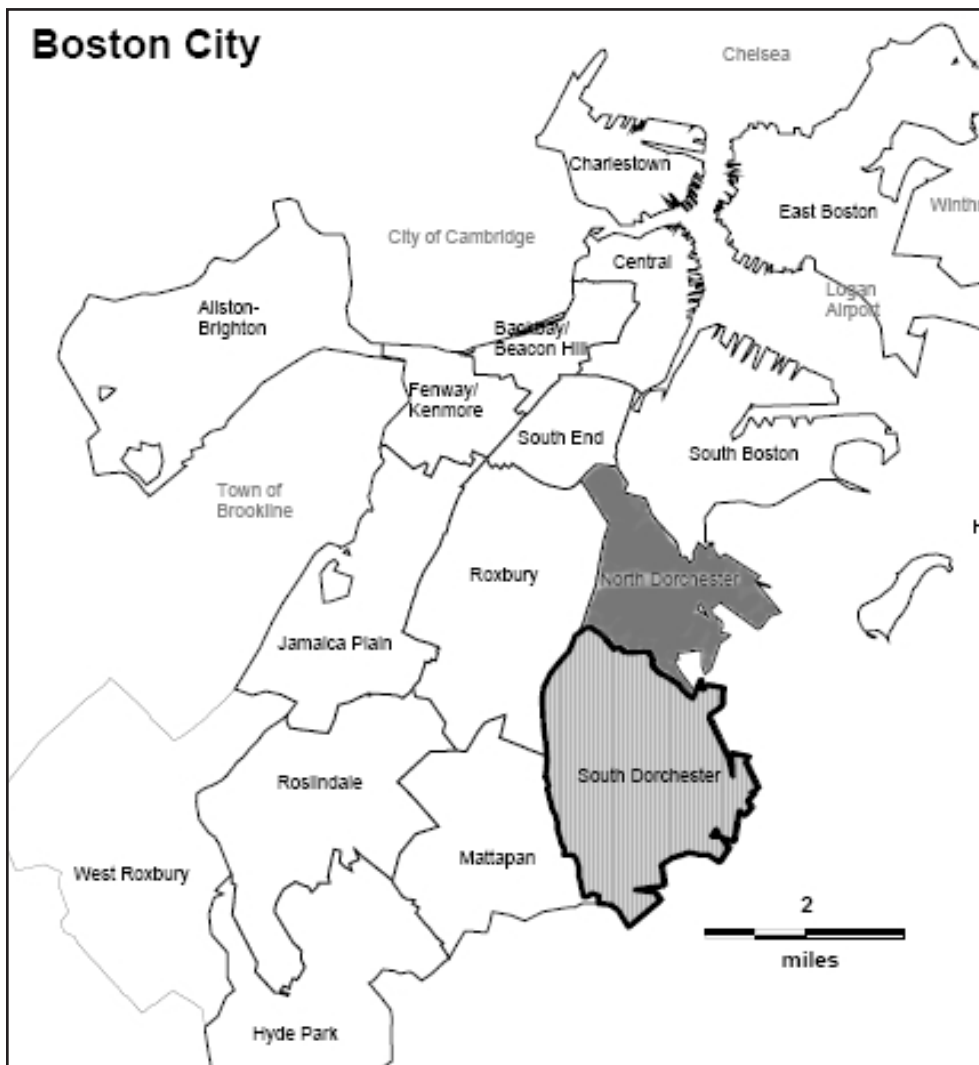


Figure 30

In defense of Dorchester

McColgan evokes images of the neighborhood, describing what it is that he is ready to defend Dorchester. And he is not the only one, in a 1993 edition of the *Boston Globe Magazine*, Maria Karagianis wrote her own article entitled, “In Defense of Dorchester: An Appreciation of Life in a Boston Neighborhood.”

History in Brief

Dorchester was first occupied by the Neponset Indians. Though incorporated as a village in 1630 (a few months before Boston), it was largely undeveloped until after the Revolutionary War. The first European settlers were farmers. Subsequently, coastline industries such as shipbuilding and gristmills sprang up. During the 1800s, wealthy Bostonians began to build summer homes along the coast. In 1870, the study area, Ashmont Hill, was first subdivided into lots and streets. That same year, Dorchester was annexed by Boston. At the time of annexation, the population was approximately 10,000. By 1920, it was 250,000 (Barcan, p. 13).

Also in 1870, the railroad came to Peabody Square from Boston which immediately increased interest in development of Ashmont Hill by affluent professionals and “something of a genteel artists’ community” (Boston Landmarks Commission, www.dorchesteratheneum.org). For the next sixty years, Ashmont Hill was a growing community of middle and upper income families. During the 1930s, perhaps influenced by the Great Depression, a number of the long-time families sold their homes, some of which were subdivided into apartments (ibid).

Meanwhile, in the early 20th century, all of Dorchester was growing rapidly with an increase in Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigration to Boston. Much of Dorchester was developed into triple-decker working class housing. In the 1960s, the trend switched with many of the Whites moving out, and an influx of African-Americans, as well as people from the Caribbean and Southeast Asia. Today, Dorchester is roughly divided into the following racial and ethnic groupings: west of Washington Street is mainly African-American, Cape Verdean and Caribbean; between Washington Street and Dorchester Avenue is a mix; and east of Dorchester Avenue is mostly White and Irish Catholic (Barcan, p. 14).

Area of Study

The area studied was limited to a small area of South Dorchester known as Ashmont Hill. Four Census tracts encompassing the neighborhood as described by the Ashmont Hill Neighborhood Association, and some of the surrounding area were included. (Both are delineated on the map below.) The study area includes the commercial strip along Ashmont Street and Dorchester Street and is within a ¼-mile of the Ashmont Hill MBTA subway station. While every attempt was made to only include interviewees in this study who live within these boundaries, some persons may live just outside of the boundaries (within a block or two, and certainly within the same neighborhood in a real sense, if not by Census definition). The maps in Figure 31 and 32 detail the area included, and the following Census summary describes the population in some basic statistics:

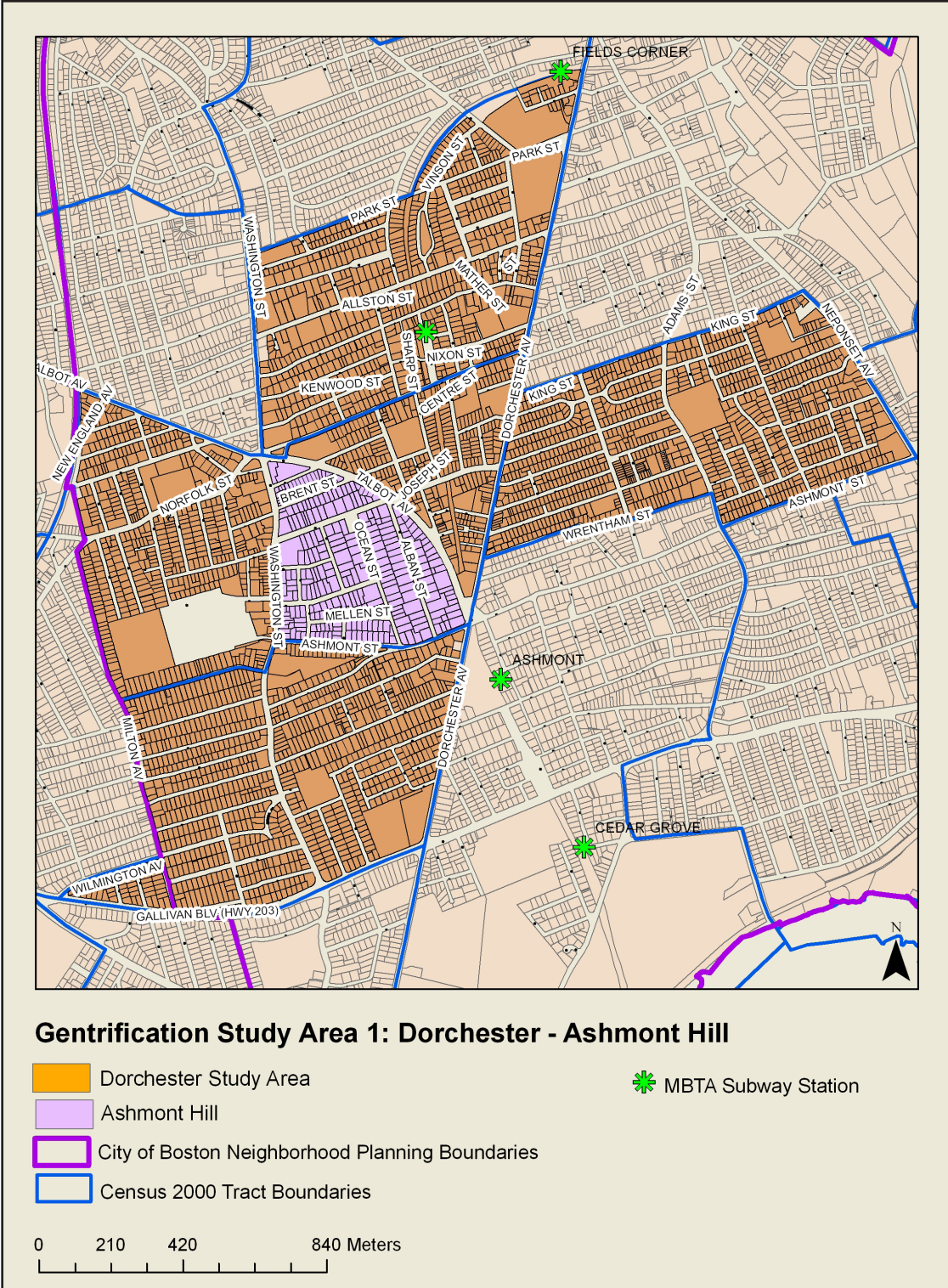


Figure 31

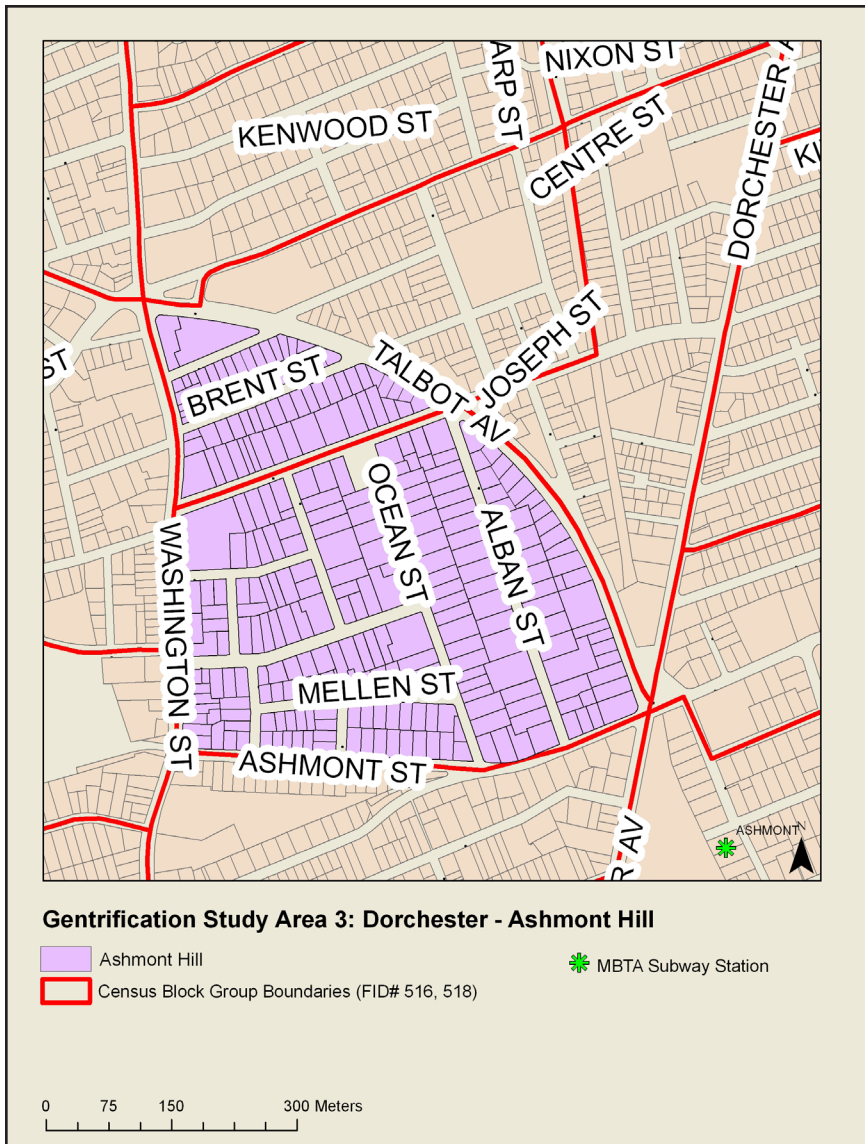


Figure 32

Study Area Demographics

Population 2000:	21,121	100%
White	5,700	27%
Black	10,842	77%
Asian	2,034	14%
Hispanic	1,702	12%
(rounding error)		

Total Housing Units in 2000:	7,524	100%
Owner occupied:	2,909	39%
Renter occupied:	4,285	57%
Vacant:	330	4%

Average Household Size in 2000: 2.9

Character

The character of Ashmont Hill is decidedly residential. Unlike the other two areas of study, it does not contain a consistent streetfront of commercial neighborhood businesses. It does, however, include several major commercial thoroughfares (e.g., Dorchester Avenue) and squares (e.g., Peabody Square) that historically were well populated. The businesses along Dorchester Avenue range from car repair to laundromats. Peabody Square includes apparent efforts at beautification, such as façade renovations, but remains sparse and quiet, even on a sunny Saturday afternoon. The most heralded addition of late is the Ashmont Grill, easily the highest end restaurant in all of Dorchester.

The Ashmont Grill was opened by Chris Douglass in 2005. Douglass is well-known in Boston for his other restaurant, Icarus, in the South End. Both Icarus and the Ashmont Grill are mid- to high-range establishments which have won rave reviews by critics. The opening of Ashmont Grill was supported through grants from the City of Boston, and was generally seen as a strong vote of confidence for the area. Douglass and others hoped its location would not only provide a unique dining option for Dorchester residents, but also bring a new clientele to the area.

The location of the restaurant, just a block from the Ashmont MBTA subway station was selected in part because of its convenience to public transit. The station is currently under renovation by the MBTA, as well as under construction with the addition of a transit-oriented mixed use project by Trinity Financial. The residential component of the project will introduce 111 mixed income units and the retail component will include 30,000-square feet (BRA, 5/24/06). Both the station renovation and new project were designed with substantial community input. One of the emerging issues is whether the station should be renamed the Ashmont/Peabody Square stop to highlight efforts to revitalize the Peabody Square commercial district.

Just above the Ashmont subway station, residential Ashmont Hill rises above its surroundings for approximately 40 acres of well-designed and preserved late 19th-century residences. According to the Boston Landmarks Commission,

Street after street in this residential quarter west of Peabody Square is bordered by wood frame, mostly single-family residences noteworthy for their originality and/or exuberance of design, quality, craftsmanship, surviving stables on still-ample lots, etc. Exceptional examples of the Italianate/Mansard, Stick, Shingle, Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles (as well as hybrids of these popular late-Victorian architectural modes) appear at every turn (www.dorchesteratheneum.org).

The beauty of these homes is striking, especially in comparison to the vacant lots and run-down residences that are inevitably viewed in traverse to Ashmont Hill. One of the bordering streets, Washington Street, stands in stark contrast and not only because of frequent shootings (four in May 2006, some of which happened during daylight) but also because of the tremendous discrepancy in owners' ability and/or willingness to maintain the same level of upkeep. (Figures 33-38 are meant to be descriptive of the neighborhood's built character.)

Ashmont Hill is a tight-knit neighborhood. The residents take tremendous pride in the building stock, as well as in the friendliness of the building occupants. A May 2006 yard sale put together by the neighborhood association boasted over 45 stops, including a few yards that were occupied by multiple non-profit groups. Some owners sold antiques, others sold their own handicrafts, while still others sold the more typical garage sale items like out-

grown toys and discarded books. The Ashmont Hill Association sold t-shirts. The Ashmont Nursery School sold hot dogs, hamburgers, and baked goods. Overall, the atmosphere was festive and friendly—and according to residents—typical.

Common topics of conversation that day included concerns over crime—there had been a recent spate of shootings, the number of homes for sale—at least ten, and the potential name change of the Ashmont subway station. Discussion on crime included some residents worrying about the safety of their investment, but more concerned with personal safety and what the long-term outlook for crime would be. Above all, there was a sense that Ashmont Hill is supposed to be an oasis against troubles that plague the rest of Dorchester.

Most of the talk centering around homes that were for sale included an exchange of “insider” information on the number of bathrooms, opportunities to build a garage for off-street parking, and battles with zoning authorities. In addition to Ashmont Hill, most residents appear to be aware of investments being made in Jones Hill, a similarly small pocket of palatial homes just a few blocks from Upham’s Corner in Dorchester. Little of the discussion covered concerns with affordable housing, the implicit assumption that the building stock of Ashmont Hill is not appropriate, especially with the so many better suited buildings in nearby streets.

Regarding the name change for the subway station, residents seemed to fall into two camps. One which held to the belief that revitalization of Peabody Square is possible and the name change would support that effort. The other which expressed less optimism with the revitalization efforts and felt the name change was superficial and supported by a limited demographic of relative newcomers—that a name change might herald a time in which current occupants of the neighborhood no longer belong.



Figure 33



Figure 34



Figure 35



Figure 36



Figure 37



Figure 38

These conversations, like those heard in the South End and Jamaica Plain, touch on many of the concerns brought by gentrification. Here, however, the overwhelming sense is that Ashmont Hill has not truly gentrified because it has historically been genteel, and that a little less poverty in the surroundings would not be altogether bad. Still, many young couples are moving into the neighborhood and renovation work is clearly underway. Furthermore, changes to the Ashmont Station and Peabody Square, along with the introduction of high end establishments like the Ashmont Grill mean that now is the time that occupants of Ashmont Hill and surrounding neighborhoods must be conscious of gentrification, and all that it can mean.

The three neighborhoods studied vary in urban form and character. Despite these differences, they are each attracting a higher income resident and homebuyer than the existing rental and ownership base. Of the three, the South End has been experiencing gentrification the longest. It is now going through “super-gentrification,” meaning that the original gentrifiers are being pushed out by the next wave. The Hyde/Jackson area of Jamaica Plain is actively questioning how gentrification might affect the neighborhood. The Ashmont Hill neighborhood, although experiencing condominium conversion and other indicators of gentrification, has experienced relative stability throughout its history. Because of the inter-

est in revitalizing the adjacent commercial district and the current development project at the subway station, the impact of Ashmont Hill's expanding influence is slowly becoming clearer and will become a greater matter of concern if it is successful. At this point, the influence is so slight and generally positive that the residents of Ashmont Hill are not being forced to consider the hard questions about gentrification.

Descriptive Statistics - Notables

Looking at the Census tract statistics for the three areas continues to inform on their similarities and differences. This information may also prove helpful to researchers who want to compare their efforts with this one. (Refer to Study Area Demographics for each.)

- The South End study area has almost twice the population density of either of the others. Yet, it has close to the same number of housing units as in Ashmont Hill. This suggests that there are more persons sharing living space in the South End.
- Each neighborhood has a greater proportion of renter occupied housing units than owner occupied, and in each it is well over 50%. This may reflect corporate owners, and probably indicates there are persons who own more than one housing unit. Ashmont Hill has the largest percentage of owner-occupied units (39%) which makes sense given the building typology—large, single family homes predominate. In the South End and Hyde/Jackson where gentrification is a constant concern, the statistics indicate a large number of renters who may be at risk for rent inflation, but also suggest that an individual need not be able to purchase a home to find a place to live in the neighborhood. (A market study of rents would be helpful in analyzing this issue.) Vacancies are greatest in Hyde/Jackson (9%), then the South End (5%), and Ashmont Hill (4%).
- The median age is between 29 and 32 for all study areas, compared with 31 in Boston as a whole.
- In Ashmont Hill and Hyde/Jackson there is a slightly larger percentage of females than males. In the South End there are more males. This may reflect the strong gay male population. Commonly, the South End is judged to have more gay males and Hyde/Jackson is judged to have more gay females.
- The racial percentages reflect the diversity spoken of by residents and the media. The South End has the greatest proportion of Whites at 60%, but is close to 20% for both Blacks and Hispanics. Hyde/Jackson has the largest percentage of Hispanics at nearly 30%. The study area for Ashmont Hill has the largest percentage of Blacks (77%) and the smallest percentage of Whites (27%). This reflects the population of a much larger area around Ashmont Hill, which is predominantly black. Ashmont Hill, though diverse, is noticeably different from its surrounding neighborhoods. For example, one of the tracts outside of Ashmont Hill proper has 3,624 Black residents and 800 White residents. In one of the tracts that covers much of Ashmont Hill, there are 2,911 White residents and 1,333 Black residents.

The gentrifiers interviewed have varied backgrounds. Some have lived in the area for less than a year, most for three years, and a few for nearly their entire lives. Some grew up in rural areas, like Alaska and Maine, while others were from Manhattan. The majority grew up in suburbs they described as middle to upper class. A number of them grew up in Newton, not far from Boston. They studied nearly anything from graphic design to law to anthropology to aerospace engineering. Current occupations were likewise diverse and included: community organizer, attorney, real estate agent, film-maker, housing developer, teacher, journalist, architect, and management consultant, among others. Salaries also ranged widely, from \$0 (students) to \$100,000+. Though each neighborhood had some very high and very low salaries, there was a slight trend of lower overall salaries in Hyde/Jackson and higher in the South End.

In examining the opinions and thoughts revealed by interviewees, a few conclusions can be drawn. One is that they had highly similar preferences for neighborhood traits. Second is that diversity, frequently defined in terms of race and culture, as well as age and socioeconomic backgrounds, was important to nearly everyone. Third is that the way they define gentrification and view themselves in the context of their neighborhood is tightly linked.

Similarities & Differences in Responses to Neighborhood-specific Questions

All of the gentrifiers were asked to describe their neighborhood as if to someone who had never been there, to detail what caused them to choose the neighborhood, and to list three or four of the most important characteristics desired in a neighborhood. In description of their neighborhoods, there were few differences between interviewees from the same neighborhoods but those differences highlighted very different attitudes. The most commonly desired traits for a neighborhood were a sense of community, diversity, stores and restaurants within walking distance, accessibility to the downtown or work, and affordable housing.

South End

South End residents talked about the architecture, diversity in socio-economic levels, proximity to the downtown, ever-increasing prices, and crime. They spoke of valuing the culture of the neighborhood—meaning the restaurants and art galleries. Several of them were attracted by the gay presence in the neighborhood, but thought that it was becoming less and less a gay neighborhood. One interviewee said,

It is becoming more and more gentrified. More and more of my straight friends are moving in, which is fine but is changing the character. There are more baby carriages and fewer people of color. Also there are fewer young people. I have the sense it is getting more homogenous now as real estate prices go up and the neighborhood's caché gets greater. There is low income housing but a greater discrepancy growing between the non-subsidized and the subsidized. A number of gay oriented businesses have closed down in the last year. A bookstore, sex shop, restaurants... a lot of it is due to rent pressures... Some of them were 20 or 30 years old and they didn't want to open a new store. One went from Tremont to Newbury, so a move up, I guess. I have a friend who opened a new shop. It isn't really a gay business but

he's gay, so it appeals to gays as well as to others. JP and Dorchester have become increasingly attractive to gays. My hairdresser moved there. If you want to buy a home you go to JP or Dorchester. Especially those who are raising kids. Another interviewee, who said he was straight and liked the South End in part because of the gay community's presence, described the South End as being, "on the edge of social convention. It's a great place to live because it is such a tight knit neighborhood, it's very village-like."

Nearly all of the interviewees brought up the impact that public housing and other social services have had on the neighborhood. Most of them viewed it positively—as a means to maintain economic diversity. One interviewee said he would feel safer if they were not so well integrated—he often finds himself walking along a nice, upscale street and suddenly passing a place that makes him uncomfortable.

Most also talked about the sense of history omnipresent through the built environment and street lay-out. They described the neighborhood as "quaint," "beautiful," and "thoughtfully planned."

Some of the interviewees spoke about Blacks who came to South End churches on Sundays. One man described it as a time of tension, saying, "On Sundays, all the Black residents who either chose to leave or were priced out come back for church...The Haves and Have-nots respectfully maintain a balance, like a distance." He went on to say, "Everyone who moved in to gentrify the neighborhood say, 'Ooh, this safari is a little more than we thought.' But I love it." Another resident described Sundays as one of the best and most typical of his South End experiences:

One of my favorite stories to tell is about Sunday mornings when the African Americans who now live in Roxbury and Dorchester come back in for church, wearing formal garb. Women in elaborate hats and they are all walking to the church. On the opposite corner there's the hot new brunch place and all kinds of young people and suburban people are waiting around in line to eat, sunning themselves and watching people walk to church. Then you have the gay boys doing the walk of shame, going home from the night before. It's great.

The contrast in these experiences was best described by another resident who talked about two different types of newcomers—those who came in expecting the neighborhood to conform to them and those who came in appreciating the existing community and wanting to become part of it.

The characteristics that came up consistently in their desired neighborhoods were those that they found in the South End: a nice streetscape, proximity to city amenities and work, diversity, and a place that feels like a neighborhood.

Jamaica Plain – Hyde/Jackson Square

Jamaica Plain – Hyde/Jackson Square residents spoke first and foremost about diversity and community. They wanted to live in a place where people were friendly, involved, and open. Affordable housing, both rental and ownership was also an important aspect of choosing and living in JP, as Jamaica Plain is affectionately known.

Descriptions of JP almost always began with the idea of diversity and were quickly followed by a sense of community. For example, one interviewee said, "JP has a lot of variety. Funky, little places. A lot of independent businesses as opposed to chain stores. The

people here feel like they care more. About a third will actually say hi to you on the street.”

Consistently, interviewees brought up the pressures of change and argued that there were far more people wanting to keep JP as it is. Such as,

It’s the place where all the people who give a shit live. Well, not all of them. But I think it’s a place that through activism has been able to survive intact. There’s a lot of affordable housing intertwined. There’s a lot of rich people moving in. But this neighborhood can’t really change completely because 50% of it is split between affordable housing, half-way houses, and other service-based housing.

And

I think some people who move in think it will turn out like a South End or Coolidge Corner, but it’s not. I mean, hardly anyone who actually lives here sees that happening. I think there’s a big battle between the people who want to see that, which is a small contingent, and the rest of the neighborhood who will fight it.

Not one of the interviewees suggested that the neighborhood needed to become more gentrified or high-end. The closest the discussion came was regarding safety and concerns that crime was increasing. For the most part, however, the interviewees expressed feeling safe while walking alone at night and identified that as part of the neighborhood character.

The following description of the neighborhood is from a male. It best typifies the responses to the question, “How would you describe your neighborhood?”

Black, Latino, White all walking around. The Latino immigrant businesses. Black-owned bookstore. The gentrified stores—[their presence makes you] feels safer, not like you are invading a neighborhood [where you don’t belong]. But gentrification is not a foregone conclusion. There are a lot of community groups fighting it. There is also a lot of color on the street: signs, murals, art projects. Some might call it a hippie aesthetic. There is vibrancy and color. A lot of the Victorians have been redone by gays. There are a lot of festivals like Wake Up the Earth, with a real sense of energy. A lot of youth are around. People are really using the park. I talked to a lot of people about Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, East Boston, and JP for both personal and professional reasons. JP is the most diverse, integrated neighborhood in Boston. There are green spaces, families, young people all jumbled together. It’s like a village. It has its own newspaper—the *JP Gazette*, that people actually read. Maybe there are more community groups per capita than any where else on the East Coast. Also there is some violence. There is tension between yuppies and “ethnic areas.” Some people don’t feel safe going to the Stop N Shop, there are reports of crime. It’s a city neighborhood after all.

The recurrent themes were the vibrancy and color of the buildings, the diversity in socio-economic levels, cultures and ages, the urban sensibility close to green spaces, and the feeling that there is just enough gentrification to make it comfortable—any more would be too much.

Ashmont Hill

Ashmont Hill residents were primarily motivated to move there for its affordable home ownership. They also desired to live in the city, near public transit, but have large yards and lower density streets. Like the other neighborhoods, a sense of community involvement

was very important. It differed here though in that the residents were rarely as involved as they would like to be but drew comfort from the idea that others were looking out for the neighborhood—making sure that things were under control. Diversity also came up repeatedly as an attribute.

In contrast to the South End interviews in which the residents made no distinction between different areas of the South End and the JP interviews in which the residents claimed the JP identity for Hyde/Jackson Square, the Ashmont Hill residents always placed Ashmont Hill in the context of Dorchester. Most people distinguished Ashmont Hill from the surrounding low-income areas. Such as,

[Ashmont Hill] is an oasis from the city. Surrounded by crime and dirt. I feel safe there, like it's an island. When you say, 'I live in Dorchester.' People go, 'whoa!' I describe it as populated by wealthy people, involved in the arts, and interested.

And

A section of Dorchester, up and coming, with beautiful old Victorian homes, and more yard space than otherwise in the city. It's convenient to the city by T. There is racial diversity and so forth. People have their own preconceptions. I'm battling them whenever I tell them about Dorchester. I try to emphasize the positive. Some of the interviewees spoke of their own mixed feelings, such as the woman who said, [It's] a beautiful area in the middle of a bad area. There was a triple shooting down the street from us last Friday, and another the week before that.

That's four shootings in the last two weeks. And one of them occurred at 5:30 in the afternoon. I live...just one street over from Washington. We knew Washington was known to be a bad area before we moved in, but we had high hopes.

All of the interviewees touched on "high hopes" connected with the Ashmont Grill. They expressed excitement about having a nice restaurant in the neighborhood to visit. (Compared with the other two neighborhoods, the Ashmont Hill residents patronized few businesses in the immediate area in large part because the commercial district has much fewer open businesses and even fewer that appeal to the residents.) More importantly, they saw its opening as a signal of future development. One interviewee noted that her realtor used Chris Douglass's residency in the neighborhood as a selling point. She said, "We liked knowing someone with such a good reputation was investing in the neighborhood. We'd been to Icarus in the South End, which is fairly high end, and had loved it."

There appears to be a curious dynamic at work in Ashmont Hill among the young, well-educated Whites who now live there. On the one hand, they are eager to have Peabody Square and the new subway station development become an extension of Ashmont Hill, rather than a means to integrate with the surrounding areas. On the other hand, they are discomfited by being segregated from the rest of Dorchester. It appeared that the racial diversity present on Ashmont Hill was emphasized to make up for the obvious economic segregation. For example, one woman said,

I live in Dorchester—but up on a hill near the red line. It feels weird to me to live up on the hill—knowing people with lower economic levels live below. But I say it is a really friendly neighborhood. I often emphasize the safety because of people's reactions. In Lynn, I work with kids from downtrodden neighborhoods and they are like, 'whoa, you live in Dorchester?' So the perceptions of Dorchester go pretty far. I would feel safe if I lived down the hill, but others might not feel as comfortable

visiting. I do feel more safe on the hill than down below—I go running and I run all over, and down below I know the paths and where I'm going. There is a real family atmosphere up there on the hill.

People say they are all White families, but they aren't. And these White families have been there for a long time and now have a big investment. There are a lot of activities—there's a big yard sale. We moved in on Halloween, and were walking around and saw a lot families and kids. We liked that. There is a lot of communication.

Another woman put it this way, when describing what she expected to see change in the near future,

Potentially more young professionals, young couples moving in. Also more gays, some are cashing out of the South End and moving here. I feel a little mixed about it. I am a [Kennedy School of Government] grad, and have interest in these things. I like the diversity but am concerned about our investment. But because of my beliefs, I am concerned with gentrification...But Dorchester is so big that it won't happen as widespread as in the South End. Dorchester has a lot of racial diversity within a pocket, though it can be very socio-economically segregated. But I think there will be more middle class like my husband and I.

Like this woman, most expected that more people like them would discover the neighborhood. They pointed out that in Boston's tight housing market, Ashmont Hill provides a stable and quiet existence, within the city. It is an excellent neighborhood for starter homes.

Summary

Despite the varied character of the areas studied, a number of similarities were exposed by the residents. Each is considered diverse and to have an active community. Each is well-connected to the city. These characteristics were consistently also on interviewees' lists of desired neighborhood traits. Some of these values, such as diversity, may be surprising to some readers who suspect that Whites, especially those who grew up in suburbs, would not particularly value diversity. Others may see this as a typical value for someone who chooses to live in an urban area. These opinions aside, it is clear that these are values held by this group of interviewees and may well extend to the larger population.

There were also some evident differences between the people who chose these varied neighborhoods. For example, in the South End the expected tenure in the neighborhood was "until priced out" or "until ready to sell investment," while in Ashmont Hill it was "until the violence gets to be too much" or "until the kids are school-age," and in Jamaica Plain it was simply "forever." These reflect the interviewees sense of their place in the neighborhood: South End—part of a dynamic process of gentrification, Ashmont Hill—temporary, fairly uninvolved, resident, and Jamaica Plain—permanent and active contributor to the community. These differences should serve to remind us that not all "gentrifiers" want the same things. Even within this fairly narrow demographic group, people who fit a gentrifier profile should not all be lumped together. We need to be sensitive to neighborhood context and use the overarching values as points of entry for community-building.

Chapter IX - Interview Analysis: Gentrifiers and Gentrification

If the interviewees were categorized based on the character categorizations presented in Chapter III, they would mostly be yupps (especially the South End), yuppies (especially Ashmont Hill) and multiculturalists/integrators (especially Jamaica Plain). But this categorization is not the best way to understand them as a force in neighborhood change, nor as people. Instead, this section builds on the idea of narratives and proposes a new categorization. This categorization does not separate by physical or demographic features but through how the gentrifiers see themselves in the neighborhood and as gentrifiers. This approach is more personal and contextual. It is identity-based. It is not meant to replace other ways of understanding the people who perpetuate gentrification, but to augment it.

Earlier, in Chapter IV, the possible narratives of gentrifiers were described as positive, negative, neutral, and ambivalent. These categories are expanded below, based on interviewees' definitions of the term "gentrification" and their answer to the question, "do you consider yourself to be a gentrifier?":

- Neutral
 - No Clue (i.e., cannot define the term)
 - Oblivious (i.e., have some vague understanding of the term, but no sense that some people view it negatively)
- Positive
 - Positive (i.e., considers their presence positive, but understands the negative perceptions of the term)
- Negative
 - Negative (i.e., "Yes, and I feel terrible about it.")
 - No and Defensive (i.e., considers gentrification to be negative and refuses to see any connection to themselves but blames others readily)
- Ambivalent
 - Unsure (i.e., confused, has not really considered it in depth)
 - Defensive (i.e., I am a part of this negative process, but what can I do about it?)
 - From the Outside (i.e., I don't want to be considered part of it, but other people think I am. They don't know I have good reasons, intentions and/or awareness.)
 - White (i.e., I am but only because I'm White, because I don't make enough money to qualify otherwise.)
 - Education (i.e., I am but only because of my privileged education.)
 - Proactive (i.e., I am and am not...and I do x and y to make up for it.)

There were interviewees that fell into each of the above categories, but by far the ambivalent group was the largest. They qualified it in many different ways based on their own constructed narratives. This is the group that planners may find the most responsive (though sensitivity to whichever typology present is of utmost importance). These are the people who are most likely to respond, whether out of curiosity, honest interest, guilt, or cognitive dissonance. It is worth noting that out of nearly 30 people, only two could not define the term,

which illustrates how imbedded the term is now in urban psyches.

Neutral

The No-Clues and the Oblivious are self-explanatory. There were only three interviewees who fit these categories.

Positive

There were six interviewees who said they were gentrifiers, and that was a good thing for the neighborhood. These gentrifiers recognized that gentrification has both positive and negative effects. One Ashmont Hill man explained it thus, “[Gentrification is] the process by which a neighborhood goes through fundamental changes in demographics from existing toward change, usually equated with positives. Though I fully understand that if you were an Italian in the North End, I can see the downside. But from the housing and safety perspective, it’s good.” This man also put the following at the top of his list for neighborhood traits: diversity, proximity to the city, access to culture/restaurants, safety, and feeling of neighborhood-community. He said that his homeownership was not about an investment but about having a home for his family. A Jamaica Plain man explained it differently,

Six years ago this area I live in wasn’t a place most people would want to live in. It was drug-infested and crime-infested. Today, there are Whites, Hispanics, Puerto Ricans, and African-Americans all living on the same street. A lot of people you talk to probably tell you it’s bad, but I think of it as a positive. I’m part of [gentrification]. As a real estate agent I’m not saying let’s get a lot more white people in here. But I’m part of it. Living three and a half years in a new construction townhouse makes me part of it. When I first moved here I talked to people who were angry. When I talk with them it’s a careful line I walk. I say, ‘I think you have a great neighborhood and I’m happy to be here. And want to be a part of it.’ Jackson Square [housing development] is a great example of bettering the neighborhood and making more people feel safe to be in that part of the neighborhood.

Both of these men, and the other Positives, see themselves making the neighborhood a more pleasant place to live. For the Ashmont Hill man, it may mean some displacement which is unpleasant but outweighed by the benefits. For the Jamaica Plain man, his gentrification leads to neighborhood tension but ultimately makes the area a better place for everyone.

Negative

There was no one who fit perfectly into this category. There was, however, some comment on identifying others as gentrifiers while rejecting the nomenclature for oneself. A Jamaica Plain man said (before deciding he was a gentrifier),

I don’t make much money so I have to get the cheapest rent I can, so I don’t really consider [myself a gentrifier]...I guess I’ve given some crusty looks to the real folks I consider to be gentrifiers. You know, or some opposition to people who complain about stuff. Like people who complain about loud music. I think that’s a real cultural thing...And, you know, it isn’t White people blasting U2 as they’re going down the street.”

Ambivalent

The majority of the interviewees were ambivalent when talking about their own status as gentrifiers. They had no difficulty defining the term, noting its positive aspects as well as the negative. But they paused and expressed discomfort about the idea of being a gentrifier. Virtually everyone said it was something they had thought a lot about, and that they did not want to be gentrifiers but thought they were. One South End woman explained that she felt really good about living in the neighborhood because it was one of the most multiracial in Boston. But added that while she was “only a follower” and rented from a long-time homeowner, she had “really mixed feelings about it—I feel ambivalent.”

Some people reacted defensively, saying, “What should I do about it? Move to Brookline or another White suburb?” One interviewee shared that he had friends with “back-breaking” mortgages in Dorchester and they “literally clap their hands when a crack-house shuts down” because their investment is so closely tied to their financial well-being.

Others tried to avoid admitting outright that they were gentrifiers, and instead said that other people saw them as gentrifiers. Most of these people described themselves as interested in participating in the neighborhood, and sensitive to gentrification. An Ashmont Hill woman described it in terms of those who know her well versus strangers,

Our family and friends think we are the opposite [of gentrifiers]. But the people in Dorchester, like if we go to a Stop N Shop in a different part of Dorchester, others may say, there’s two young professionals in our neighborhood.

[They are gentrifiers.]...To combat it I talk about the positives. I do it by being respectful...I know there is a difference between the way we are perceived and why we are really here.

These people did not say that they were committed to any actions to mitigate their negative effects on the neighborhood, and were grudging in their acceptance of the role of gentrifier. It did not fit their narrative of young, caring, sophisticated urbanites.

Some claimed they were only gentrifiers because they were White or because they had a college or graduate education. They stand out because of their conflation of gentrification and race and/or education. In both cases, they would then discount their status by saying, “but otherwise I wouldn’t be, because I don’t have enough money.” One South End man said, “Just the very fact of a college education puts you in a position to be a gentrifier. I count my blessings, I’m on this side of things. Basically, I’m lucky to be in the position to be a gentrifier.”

But the majority of respondents (67% based on my classification) explained away the dissonance by arguing, in some cases vehemently, that they pro-actively pursued means to repair the harm caused by their gentrification. For this majority, the value of neighborhood diversity was something to be protected, whether that be by shopping only at locally owned stores, developing affordable housing, or taking a pay-cut to work as a community organizer. (As mentioned earlier) a South End man described gentrifiers as falling generally into two groups.

[There are] people who moved here for the community aspect—act to get more social services, or pulling up a tree stump. They have appreciation and respect, want to observe and get to know the community that was there before you. At the other end of the spectrum: No sense of the traditions, the tensions, the good and bad things, the history—that there are gardens instead of a highway, housing projects

that ended up as blocky buildings instead of rowhouses. People who go to restaurants and things, but don't get involved otherwise.

For these gentrifiers, there is not just a sophisticated understanding of gentrification, nor merely the realization that they are gentrifiers, but a conscious decision to participate in the neighborhood in certain ways. They believe that they belong in the neighborhood. These gentrifiers think of gentrification in terms of homogenization caused through displacement. Some are more concerned with the fate of the displacees, but more are quicker to point out that the neighborhood would be a less pleasant place to live if everyone were the same. The homogenization they feared was envisioned as people who looked and acted the same, largely White, and corporate. An Ashmont Hill woman recalled her disappointment in her previous neighborhood along these lines,

I moved to South Boston because it had so much character—buildings, people. The people are so down to earth and have so much spunk. Now I go there and everyone is the same—investment bankers rushing to the financial district. Everyone wearing J.Crew. I think that is bad. It's hard because I feel like more young people would be good for Ashmont Hill, but...

Another woman from Ashmont Hill compared it to living in Beacon Hill which was “nice but not very diverse.”

The most cited commitment to action was to patronize only neighborhood businesses as much as possible. By so doing, gentrifiers hoped to support their neighbors' livelihoods, independent business in general, and to preserve the character of the neighborhood. Shopping at the mom-and-pop's also reinforced their narrative of belonging to the neighborhood's identity. As if eating at the pupusería bound them to the Latinos who sat next to them.

Another common mitigation was through the political process of voting. Several interviewees said they were careful to vote for social services, and the candidates that support affordable housing. A Jamaica Plain man said, “I vote Socialist. There's always a Socialist candidate in JP, and there is concern about housing issues for low-income people.” Voting, though, is not particularly time intensive, and is not enough to absolve all gentrifiers of their ambivalence.

There are some gentrifiers who have made significant commitments to mitigation. One Jamaica Plain man, who had taken a substantial pay-cut by giving up a job in high tech to work on behalf of the neighborhood, declared,

I think gentrification is going to kick some serious neighborhood butt, which I'm really concerned about. There's a lot of affordable housing that JPNDC [Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation] is doing, that's great. But a lot of people are getting choked. But my personal mission, I think there's a lot of underlying fear and there's a divide between rich and poor here. So we're coming up with a bunch of new projects for people to get to know one another. We're creating safe places to do that, to have people get to know their neighbors and celebrate everyone living in JP.

His commitment was a no holds barred, attack of the divisiveness engendered by gentrification. He recognized that he had driven up rent in the area, and that, coupled with his appearance as a White man, was enough to make some of the indigenous distrust him. To build relationships, he started shoveling the sidewalk for a different elderly person after every

snowstorm, and went door-to-door introducing himself to all of the businesses in the neighborhood, as well as the tenant manager for the Bromley-Heath housing project. He started a crime watch, which then became a non-profit neighborhood group.

Another Jamaica Plain man took a less aggressive tack to bridging gaps. He has decided to use his “resources and background to create opportunities for the neighborhood.” At the time of the interview, he was preparing for a small gathering of friends and acquaintances at which they were going to brainstorm over the subject. He said, “I’m from a wealthy suburb and I’m White. But I have a very different ethic [from typical gentrifiers]. There is something about being in a community and connected. I’m more interested in a block party than a crime watch.” He suggested that there was a myriad of ways that he and other gentrifiers could participate in the neighborhood to transfer some of their resources for the betterment of all.

Whatever their method or commitment-level, what is striking about this group is that they connect themselves to a negative effect on a neighborhood, and have identified ways to mitigate that effect. They consistently offered definitions of gentrification that included homogenization and displacement. They included themselves in the privileged group but they valued the underprivileged to the extent that they are making choices to protect the neighborhood. It is worth noting that their sacrifices are not extraordinary. But often the struggle in creating change is not to convince people to do something extraordinary, which offers the badge of heroism, but to convince them to make small changes in their every day actions. Changes that few others will notice.

These gentrifiers report having strong relationships in their neighborhood. No doubt it helps to make lifestyle decisions that your friends and neighbors (those in your shoes, anyway) are making. Neighborliness begets neighborliness. Still, the fact remains that these people value the neighborhoods and the indigenous as they are, enough so that it conflicts with their own sense of self. The result is the construction of a narrative that allows them to be the Good Gentrifier, or at least, the Not So Very Bad Gentrifier.

That the gentrifiers interviewed have varied personal backgrounds and come from different neighborhoods makes the dominating theme of ambivalence all the more striking. Is this ambivalence due to a greater level of awareness about the world—has globalization allowed us to understand more clearly that the haves and have-nots are divided by an incredible gulf? Is it the result of the tireless work of community organizers, affordable housing developers, and neighborhood leaders, who have called our attention to the issue year after year? Is it because this generation grew up with multiculturalism as the norm—though social justice is far from prevalent? Or, if we could go back in time and interview the gentrifiers of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, would we discover the same dominant theme? Answers to these questions are difficult, and beyond my scope.

Instead, we turn to what we can do with the information that we have. Specifically, how can planners and developers working at the neighborhood level, whether for merchant associations, affordable housing developers, or any number of endeavors, use the self-described ambivalence to build bridges between neighbors and to take advantage of the resources brought by the gentrifiers?

The answer to this question is complex, less in its final form than in relating it to an audience of advocacy planners and developers. (For the following, “planners” should be taken to mean both planners and developers.) There are those who will try to misunderstand, to cry out for revolution and social justice without stopping to listen, nor, worse, to think.

There are many ways to combat a problem: systemically, personally, at the top-most level, from the bottom-up, outside-in, and inside-out. The problem with the most common approaches to gentrification is that they are polarizing; glorifying or (more often) condemning gentrifiers.

This (non-random) study found that gentrifiers are looking for community and the vast majority are “enlightened” enough to perceive the paradox into which they put themselves. For planners to fail to recognize this opportunity for intervention is as shameful to the gentrifiers as to the indigenous population. For planners to fail to address the needs of the gentrifiers is to fail at community building.

The solution, or at least the path I propose toward better communities is a conscious adoption of mutual gains advocacy.

From Antipathy Advocacy toward Mutual Gains Advocacy

Planners must abandon the hypocritical position of antipathy toward gentrifiers at the same time they are supporting mixed income efforts such as HOPE IV and inclusionary zoning. To say that gentrifiers ruin a neighborhood without any contextual analysis or engagement of those gentrifiers, while at the same time criticizing the economic systems that keep low-income neighborhoods, poor, is unfair to the communities we hope to build.

Moving from antipathy advocacy to mutual gains advocacy means recognizing that gentrifiers are a legitimate constituent and deserve a seat at the bargaining/planning table. It does not mean abandoning advocacy of those with less power. It does not mean assuming Haves and Have-Nots have equal power in the world. It *does* mean community building. It means taking a small step back from fighting over a small pie, and taking a large step forward toward collaboratively baking and dividing a larger pie. Or, to put it in terms of the narrative,

to writing the neighborhood's story together.

Mutual Gains Advocacy

There are two components to this proposed mutual gains advocacy: 1) contextual understanding of gentrifiers, and 2) mutual gains interventions/community building.

A contextual understanding of gentrifiers would take the approach of this study: rather than relying on stereotypes and demographics to understand gentrifiers' place in a neighborhood, planner observation and gentrifier self-definition are used. Such an approach is far more sensitive to the needs of this constituent and more likely to result in a favorable outcome for the indigenous population. Neighborhoods are more likely to tip to extremes than to remain steadily mixed. The equilibrium that planners seek is not an equilibrium for equilibrium's sake, but a normative balance. To the extent that gentrifiers relieve the neighborhood of tipping excessively toward the negative end of the economic spectrum, even the most arrogant gentrifier contributes to the neighborhood.

When I set out to do this thesis, I wanted to write a primer on gentrification that took a fair though critical approach to the issue, before it set out its agenda. This is too rare in the typical approach to the subject. I also wanted to better understand how the term has come to be understood and manipulated as it is today. Through my research on the term's use in its early years, its use in academia and popular culture, I have shown how the polarizing stereotypes have developed into an easily defined classification scheme. Though these stereotypes have enabled certain kinds of demographic research, they have stifled planners in the field from engaging at full fledged community building. I have used my empirical research to suggest another framework for viewing this difficult issue—personal narrative. I found that overwhelmingly these gentrifiers want to feel like they live in a community. They want to have relationships and buy-in for neighborhood projects. They do not want to be entirely anonymous. And many of them are taking action, albeit in limited ways.

This research points toward opportunities for community-building, which skilled planners ought to be able to use. Consider the context of Katrina and Rita ravaged New Orleans, and the intense redevelopment expected to follow. We need to do better than replicate the segregation that was there before, and we need to meet the challenges of rapidly changing fortunes. A contextual understanding with a mutual gains outcome may be the best answer.

Mutual Gains Interventions/Community-Building

Mutual gains theory posits that when negotiating constituents collaborate to come up with new possible outcomes, the result can be beneficial to both. In the prominent text, *Getting to Yes*, authors Robert Fisher and William Ury outline the requisite theory and process to adopt this approach. This is a text that should be required reading for every planner. So much of a planners' daily work revolves around negotiating between costs and benefits, zoning codes and reality, and various constituents. Because negotiation is an intricate part of building and sustaining every relationship and planning decision, this text can aid planners in their theory and practice of community-building.

The subtitle to *Getting to Yes* is *Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. Far from being a directive on hard negotiating to get what you want, or a how-to manual on soft negotiating and staying friends with the other party, Fisher and Ury have laid out a deceptively simple

approach to the method of (successful) principled negotiation. Principled negotiation means looking for mutual gains wherever possible, and identifying a way to fairly and independently judge proposed outcomes when interests are in conflict. They argue that this approach can be employed universally, in any situation, and with any type of negotiator sitting across the table.

Principled negotiation starts with separating the people from the problem. This is where planners often take their first misstep—unsurprisingly since many chosen their occupation because of a passion for people. But as Fisher and Ury argue, “failing to deal with others sensitively as human beings prone to human reactions can be disastrous for a negotiation” (19). In the context of gentrification—an emotional topic—gentrifiers can easily respond defensively by ignoring or fighting against a perceived threat to their sense of self or investment.

Principled negotiation focuses on interests, not positions. In other words, rather than taking a stand on a particular issue and refusing to budge, negotiators should explore the details of an issue and identify concerns. For example, rather than arguing about the number of affordable units, discuss the concerns about not having enough units, the concerns about having some, and the concerns about having too many. Maybe the key issue is actually about noise or maintenance.

Principled negotiation is committed to inventing options for mutual gain. To do so, everyone involved must believe that there is the possibility of other options. One of the best ways to conduct this part of the discussion is to have an open brainstorming session—an activity that should be well known to even the most novice planner. The goal of the brainstorming is to come up with as many ideas as possible—and not to judge them. Later, the discussion will turn to considering the best combination of ideas to improve everyone’s situation.

In the cases where interests truly collide and brainstorming does not turn up any new options, care should be taken to establish objective criteria for fair standards and fair processes to make decisions. Planners might turn to precedence in other cities, what a court might decide, market value, efficiency, tradition, or any other number of sources to set these criteria.

The method of principled negotiation will help planners seek better means to work in the context of gentrification. It is a fairer and more productive way to deal with constituencies of considerably different means than antipathy advocacy, which consists mostly of hard negotiating against gentrifiers.

Principled negotiation is useful in two additional ways: it suggests how to proceed with difficult parties (e.g., more powerful, combative, unresponsive), and provides a framework for making use of what was learned through the contextual understanding of gentrifiers. As described in *Getting to Yes*, knowing the other constituent’s BATNA or Best Alternative to Negotiating Agreement is a critical component to the negotiation process. In the context of gentrification, knowing the gentrifier’s BATNA, which may start with asking them how they feel about being a gentrifier, may help the planner determine whether the situation should be viewed primarily as an opportunity for intervention or community-building, though both can occur.

For example, this study revealed that gentrifiers in the South End tend to think of their tenure in the neighborhood as temporary, whereas those in Jamaica Plain think in the

long term. In the case of the former, a mutually beneficial situation might be one that deals with a short-term or one-off problem, such as the incorporation of a neighborhood group as a 501c3. In the case of the latter, gentrifiers might be recruited to serve in the neighborhood association.

Another example of how knowing gentrifiers improves guessing their BATNA: determining their level of ambivalence. To what extent will a mutually beneficial arrangement be sought and satisfying to the gentrifiers with which you are dealing? Another way to look at this is to consider the exchanges that may be made: gentrifiers with high ambivalence might be more likely to help pass affordable housing preservation measures. Gentrifiers with lesser ambivalence and a more positive sense of self, might find the following exchange more satisfying: working together on a crime watch to improve street safety—gentrifiers benefit directly and immediately.

Truthfully, many neighborhoods may already be mired in contentious squabbles. Mutual gains theory is not a magic bullet for acrimony but it does provide ways to improve relationships. There are also, no doubt, planners who are struggling to get their “Have-Not” constituents to the table, and scoff at the notion that the Haves are not already seated there. I am not denying that the gentrifiers are the Haves, nor what comes with that. But I am suggesting that planners create more difficulty when they villainize the Haves rather than harnessing their power, and furthermore, perpetuate injustice when they do so without recognizing that the Haves also deserve a place in the community-building process.

We need to create opportunities for building joint history and neighborhood appreciation. This could be as simple as ensuring that a varied group of indigenous and gentrifiers plans the next street festival. Or it could be more inventive, like the Museum of Amazing Things, a project by MIT Master’s student Rajesh Kottamasu in which neighbors were invited to call a phone number and share something amazing they had experienced that day. The phone calls were then compiled and available by calling in or by streaming mp3 (<http://www.thatwasamazing.org>).

We need to identify ways that gentrifiers can contribute and share their resources, and ask them in a direct and personal manner, to do so. For example, most merchant associations have small, strained budgets. The next time the issue of window dressing or business marketing comes up, look around the neighborhood for interior decorators who might be willing to give a Saturday morning workshop, or set up pro bono appointments with businesses.

We need not abandon attempts to mitigate or slow the pace of gentrification, nor give up on revitalization. The creation of affordable housing, for example, continues to be a critical need. We need to continue to talk openly and frequently about the negative effects of gentrification, to keep the level of understanding high.

Suggestions for Future Research

This research and conclusion create a number of questions for future research, including the following:

--Are enlightened gentrifiers more reluctant to display higher income levels? Are there certain norms they follow, and can we identify differences between the enlightened and unenlightened? Can we track changes over time?

--What difference does the level of integration make in how well a neighborhood can continue a mix of incomes? For example, in the Hyde/Jackson Square area of JP the gentrifiers' homes are intermingled with the indigenous. JP also arguably is best known for its commitment to a mixed income community out of the three neighborhoods studied. Has that resulted by chance? By the self-selection of people who live there? How does it compare to a place like Ashmont Hill, where the boundary with the non-gentrified neighborhood is extremely sharp? Is there any relation to the length of time people are committed to staying?

--What narratives are found when the study is replicated with a randomly selected sample, or respondent-driven sampling?

--What are examples of communities that take a mutual gains approach, and what are the outcomes to some of their endeavors? What the challenges they faced?

--How do gentrifiers feel about their place in gentrification of other Boston neighborhoods, other cities, and in rapidly changing suburbs and towns?

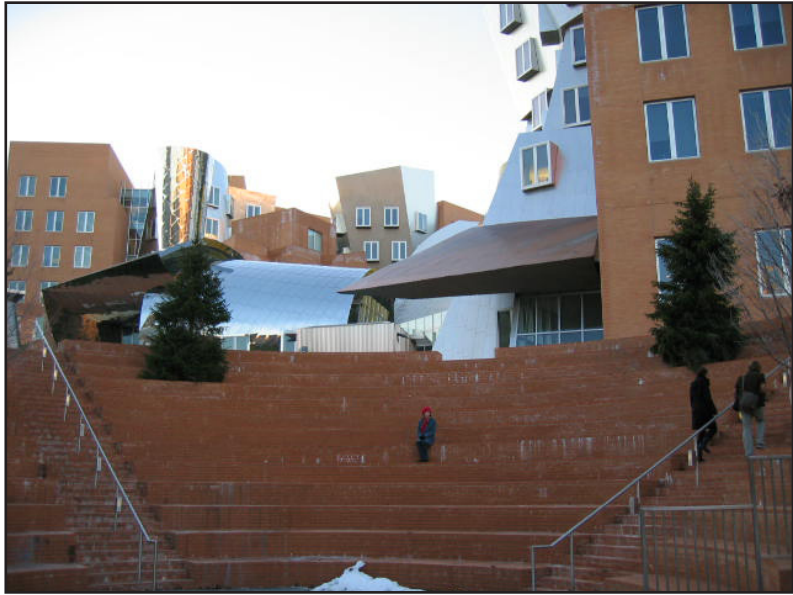
Finally -

Gentrification is a phenomenon we are unlikely to see end in our lifetime. Creating a balanced neighborhood is not an endeavor with an end; it is a continual process. The places in which we live are as dynamic as we are. We should expect to see change and look for ways to embrace it and use it to our ultimate end, which is community building. We may see ourselves as advocates for the less powerful people, the environment, or any other group that is special in our eyes, but our field is not about exclusion and preferred customers, it is about making better places for everyone—including indigenous and gentrifier.

When we, as planners, perpetuate or acquiesce to a divide, I do not think that is to the better of our communities. As a wise instructor asked a class of mine frequently, "What is the public interest? How do we know?" and as another wise instructor asked, in quite a different context to quite a different class, "Is that good? How do we know?"

We create systems with performance measures, checks and balances, and at the end of the proverbial day, we weigh what we have in our hands against the hope we have carried in our hearts.

We are imperfect scales but we think we sense the slightest injustice. If only we could spend less time calibrating and more time piling up the wealth, for all sides.



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**All photographs by author taken in 6/06.

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