

A reappraisal of gentrification: towards a 'geography of gentrification'

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Abstract: The gentrification literature since the mid-1990s is reappraised in light of the emergence of processes of post-recession gentrification and in the face of recent British and American urban policy statements that tout gentrification as the cure-all for inner-city ills. Some tentative suggestions are offered on how we might re-energize the gentrification debate. Although real analytical progress has been made there are still 'wrinkles' which research into the 'geography' of gentrification could address: 1) financiers – super-gentrification; 2) third-world immigration – the global city; 3) black/ethnic minority gentrification – race and gentrification; and 4) liveability/urban policy – discourse on gentrification. In addition, context, temporality and methodology are argued to be important issues in an updated and rigorous deconstruction of not only the process of gentrification itself but also discourses on gentrification.

Key words: context, discourse, gentrification, post-recession gentrification, temporality.

I Looking at gentrification again?

Maybe the loss of momentum around gentrification reflects its inability to open up new insights, and maybe it is time to allow it to disintegrate under the weight of these burdens (Bondi, 1999b: 255).

Back in the early 1990s there was some speculation, both in the media (Lueck, 1991; Wright, 1992) and in the academic literature (Bourne, 1993), that the process of gentrification had run out of steam. Britain, and in particular the London area, was saddled with massive negative equity as the value of real estate plummeted leaving borrowers stuck with mortgage liabilities far in excess of the market value of their holdings. Investment in North American cities, especially in the north east and southern California, was also hard hit by recession. Waves of corporate downsizing cut a wide swath through the professional and new middle classes whose residential preferences and investment decisions had facilitated gentrification. At the same time, however, other authors were more sceptical about the emergence of a 'post-gentrification era'

(Badcock, 1993, 1995; Lees and Bondi, 1995). As Neil Smith (1996: 46) correctly insisted 'it would be a mistake to assume, as the language of de-gentrification seems to do, that the economic crisis of the early 1990s spelt the secular end of gentrification'.

Recent evidence from a variety of cities worldwide points to the continuance of the gentrification process, to a process geographers are calling 'post-recession gentrification' and the media 'the yin and yang of gentrification':

In the 27 years that he has lived in Prospect Heights, Mr. Bullock, 72, said he has watched his neighborhood rise and fall and now rise again, each trend dictated by the prosperity of the city and the ebb and flow of crime. Today, Prospect Heights is one of the many neighborhoods in New York that real estate agents often describe as 'up and coming', attracting middle-class professionals from Manhattan or nearby Park Slope who are in search of affordable homes and apartments in a . . . convenient area (Yardley, 1999).

With the stock market booming and record bonuses on Wall Street, *The New York Times* (Yardley, 1998) has also reported that brownstones in the Park Slope neighbourhood of Brooklyn, New York City, are fetching prices not seen since the late 1980s, when the real estate market was last at these dizzying heights. Similarly, in London the economic upturn in the late 1990s has helped to fuel the gentrification of locations such as Clerkenwell and the East End (see Hamnett, 1999, on the late 1990s property boom in Britain). The metaphors of the 1970s and 1980s that geographers had associated with the gentrification process – 'urban rebirth', 'urban pioneers' (*The Observer*, 27 June 1999: 17) – are being headlined by the (London) media once again, as are more negative images – such as 'urban guerillas', 'scene of gentrification battles', 'class war' (*The Sunday Times*, 11 April 1999: 2). The continuance of gentrification has led to more conflict (over social exclusion) between the working-class population and the 'Starbucks Coffee Crowd' in cities such as London and New York. But it is not only in these so-called global cities that gentrification has been proceeding apace. Further down the urban hierarchy in cities such as Vancouver, Canada, Manchester, England, and Auckland, New Zealand, inner-city neighbourhoods are being redeveloped and revalorized. With the fall of the iron curtain and the economic liberalization that followed, gentrification has now also become a feature of eastern European cities such as Prague (Sykora, 1996).

If the process of gentrification itself is alive and well, academic writing on gentrification is a little less buoyant. Interest in the subject has declined somewhat since the early 1990s when the gentrification debate dominated urban geography discussions.¹ I would argue, like Redfern (1997a), that this decline is linked to the search for a synthesis between demand and supply-side explanations in the gentrification literature (for example, Hamnett, 1991; Lees, 1994a; Boyle, 1995). It is also linked to the publication of a number of books on gentrification which seem to culminate years of gentrification research by their respective authors (for example, Caufield, 1994; Ley, 1996; Smith, 1996; Butler, 1997). It is notable how all these books have tried to meet at some middle ground between demand and supply-side explanations. Given the well recognized *impasse* reached between the two explanations and the underdevelopment of the productive tensions between the two, it is time to step outside this consensus and its tensions. Like Redfern (1997a), I want to unlock this 'theoretical logjam' because important issues have been sidelined by it, issues I will now turn my attention to. In so doing I hope to convince gentrification researchers, such as Bondi (1999b) and others, that now is not the time to let gentrification research disintegrate under the burden of its consensus.

A focus on supply versus demand, mapped on top of economics versus culture and/or production versus consumption, has been one of the mainstays of the gentrification literature. Redfern (1997a: 1277–78) provides a superb examination of the ‘adversarial patrolling’ of these gentrification territories. As such the gentrification literature in the 1990s only touched upon issues of urban policy and urban politics. These issues are important ones that need to be dealt with in more detail. If we take a look at the British government’s Urban Task Force (DETR, 1999) report *Towards an urban renaissance* we find a discursive construction of urban renaissance that interweaves urban regeneration policy with gentrification practices and environmentalism. Richard Rogers, the influential architect on the task force, has painted a ‘green face’ on the gentrification process – liveability and environmental sustainability are two of the buzzwords. These are issues that as yet have not been looked at by gentrification researchers; they are issues to be found in other, non-British, cities around the world – for example, see Lees and Demeritt (1998) on the discourse of gentrification and the liveable city in Vancouver, Canada. The Urban Task Force, the first audit of towns and cities in Britain for 20 years, is promoting a move ‘back to the city’. As their mission statement says: ‘The Urban Task Force will . . . recommend practical solutions to bring people back into our cities, towns and urban neighbourhoods. It will establish a new vision for urban regeneration . . .’ (DETR, 1999). This ‘new’ vision is remarkably similar to visions of gentrification. For example, the task force tout the gentrified neighbourhood of Islington in London as a success story in terms of urban regeneration, a story from which they can learn lessons. Gentrification is in effect being promoted by the Urban Task Force as the blueprint for a civilized city life. Urban renaissance is being prescribed as the medicine for decaying inner cities. Interestingly, at the same time urban geographers are attempting to reverse the negative image that gentrification has been given by some academics and are now promoting urban renaissance and ‘partial gentrification’ (Hamnett, in progress).

The issues of urban policy and urban politics are not just relevant to a British context, they are important in the USA too. Wyly and Hammel (1999) argue that the post-recession resurgence of gentrification in the USA has become intertwined with shifts in housing finance and low-income housing assistance, increasing the role of public policy in the phenomenon, and indeed the phenomenon in policy. As I have argued in relation to the Urban Task Force, similarly Wyly and Hammel (1999) have found that gentrification has exerted a significant influence on urban and public policy in the USA. On looking at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) recent *The state of the cities* report (June 1999), the issues and solutions discussed are very similar to those of the British Urban Task Force – the redevelopment of brownfield sites, environmental sustainability, liveability and the decline in a sense of community. To counter the loss of middle-class families in the inner city HUD argues for increased support for the revitalization initiatives of community-based organizations (read pro-gentrification groups). Gentrification discourse and practices have permeated recent urban policy and urban politics.

The problem with the British *Towards an urban renaissance* and the American *The state of the cities* reports is that the policies advocated by them are ‘one size fits all’. The policies take no account of geographical scale and contextual differences, of the ‘geography of gentrification’. Both the Urban Task Force and HUD set out to plug the gap between successful cities and lagging cities – mostly small or mid-sized cities – yet

the plugs they promote are taken from examples in successful larger cities such as London. These plugs may not be appropriate for smaller cities such as Manchester or Sheffield in England, or Portland, Maine, in the USA.

As well as urban policy and urban politics, the theoretical logjam has sidelined other important issues too – in particular the complex issues of race and a relatively new process I have called 'financification'. These two issues will be discussed in detail later, but it is relevant here to consider how they relate to my previous discussion of scale and the 'geography of gentrification'. The issue of race is especially relevant in so-called global cities where third-world immigration juxtaposes gentrifiers with people from radically different cultural backgrounds. Likewise, the process of 'financification' is only found in global cities such as London and New York, where the highly paid employees in the financial services industry are lubricating the revalorization of the inner city, and regentrifying neighbourhoods which were gentrified in the 1970s. These two factors – race and financial services – point to important spatial variations differentiating the process of gentrification in global cities from smaller ones further down the urban hierarchy.

This article reviews the recent literature on gentrification (specifically writings since the mid-1990s) in light of recent changes in the nature of the process, and it offers some tentative suggestions on how we might re-energize the gentrification debate.

II A thematic review of recent literature on gentrification

Rather than offering a relatively straightforward chronological review of the literature, I have selected for consideration four different, but overlapping, themes that continue to organize the gentrification literature. I begin my review by arguing that gentrification researchers have represented the gentrifying inner city in the terms of the *emancipatory city* thesis. I turn then to look at writings on the *New middle class* as the agents in this emancipation. Following on from this, I consider the *revanchist city*. In large measure the emancipatory city and the revanchist city themes reflect the dichotomy in the literature between demand versus supply-side explanations, but they are not simply a mirror image of this. Finally, I consider the attempt that has been made to step outside the confines of these earlier debates. Redfern (1997a; 1997b) offers a *new look at gentrification*, and his diagnosis of consensus is a good one, but his solution is retrospective: it looks backwards too much and so has nothing to say about the important changes I have identified – contemporary urban policy and politics, the emergence of financiers, the intricacies of race, and the ideology of liveability and sustainability.

1 The emancipatory city

From Marx's thesis that city life fosters the rise of new class consciousness by bringing different people together and enabling them to reflect on their common class positions, to Walter Benjamin's modernist vision of the free-wheeling *flâneur*, to Liz Wilson's (1991) postmodernist vision of *The Sphinx in the city*, the city has long been portrayed as an emancipatory or liberating space.² This spatial metaphor has also been operationalized in parts of the gentrification literature not as a deeply political agenda (like in

Marxist and feminist geographies) but as a form of liberal agency. The emancipatory city thesis is implicit in much of the gentrification literature that focuses on the gentrifiers themselves and their forms of agency, for example, Ley (1996) and Butler (1997), but it is in Caulfield's (1994) work that the thesis is seen to be more explicit. Caulfield's (1994: xiii) complex analysis of gentrification in Toronto, Canada, focuses on the inner city as an emancipatory space and gentrification as an emancipatory social practice, which he defines as 'efforts by human beings to resist institutionalized patterns of dominance and suppressed possibility'. Caulfield's gentrifiers 'desire' (see also Caulfield, 1989) a city space where, following Barthes (1986: 96), 'subversive forces, forces of rupture, ludic forces act and meet'. Caulfield's analysis is in some ways Lefebvrian in that space is produced and reproduced as a site of social, political and economic struggle. Gentrification promises the emancipatory urbanism of May 1968 (see also Ley, 1996, and this article's subsection on the new middle class). By resettling old inner-city neighbourhoods, Caulfield argues that gentrifiers subvert the dominance of hegemonic culture and create new conditions for social activities leading the way for the developers that follow. He shows how the contradictions of capitalist space contain the seeds (possibilities arising from the specific use-values city dwellers find in old inner-city neighbourhoods) for a new kind of space. Gentrification creates tolerance. For Caulfield, old city places offer 'difference' as seen in the diversity of gentrifiers: 'gays may be lawyers or paperhangers, professors may live in shabby bungalows or upmarket townhomes, feminists may or may not have children' (1989: 618).

Reflecting on Caulfield's thesis of the inner city as an emancipatory space, certain questions emerge: what is it about old buildings in inner-city neighbourhoods that makes people tolerant? Is there a necessary link between the new uses of these old inner-city buildings and social diversity? Caulfield argues that encounters between 'different' people in the city are enjoyable and inherently liberating. Young (1991), on the other hand, argues that the interaction of strangers is often quite disinterested, and Merry's (1981) empirical analysis of life in a neighbourhood of strangers in Philadelphia offers a much more pessimistic view of encounters with unknown and anonymous urban others. Far from being liberating, the anonymity of urban life, Merry suggests, is often viewed as threatening. Indeed, Zukin (1995) has argued that such anxieties about strangers have spurred the growth of private police forces and gated communities. The emancipatory inner city of Toronto thus appears as a rose-tinted vision as much as a description of contemporary urban experience.

The actual encounter with social difference and strangers, so often referred to as a source of emancipation in the city by many authors, needs to be evaluated in more depth. Caulfield's and others' (see Keith and Pile, 1993) celebration of social diversity and freedom of personal expression in the inner city inadvertently privileges particular subject positions, cultural practices and class fractions (see Pratt and Hanson, 1994, on the importance of a geography of placement). Although Caulfield is under no illusions about gentrifiers, his thesis obscures the fact that anti-gentrification groups, often largely composed of working-class and/or ethnic minorities, do not always share the same desires as gentrifiers. The dream of gentrifying tolerance and equality has struggled to accommodate people who do not accept the idea that all values deserve equal protection. Particularly in global cities like London and New York where gentrifiers are rubbing shoulders with people from radically different cultural backgrounds, these liberal values become problematic. Jane Jacobs (1996: 72), for

example, has outlined the competing visions for the rehabilitation of Spitalfields in the East End of London – 'the co-presence of Bengali settlers, home-making gentrifiers and megascale developers activated an often conflictual politics of race and nation'. This radical cultural difference may set gentrification in cosmopolitan cities such as London or New York (and Toronto) apart from gentrification in cities further down the urban hierarchy where immigration is less significant and/or visible. What struggles over gentrification everywhere do share in common, however, is the formal equality of the exchange relationship. If in debates over gentrification and neighbourhood change the particular desires of gentrifiers win out over others, it is because they are willing and able to pay more for the privilege (one's capital in such circumstances includes economic, cultural and social resources). By abstractly celebrating formal equality under the law, the rhetoric of the emancipatory city tends to conceal the brutal inequalities of fortune and economic circumstance that are produced through the process of gentrification.

Gender, sexuality and gentrification, like the new middle class, are research themes closely tied to the social construction of the emancipatory city. In the 1970s and 1980s the gentrification literature suggested that gentrification was a process associated with 'marginal groups' such as gays, lesbians and other women attracted to the liberating space of the inner city. Whatever the precise relationships between gender, sexuality and the process of gentrification, there can be no mistaking the fact they have featured high on the agenda of an important segment of the academic research community. This work, I would suggest, probably reveals as much about the discipline of geography as it does about the gentrification process itself. Feminist, gay and lesbian geographers, not surprisingly, tend to be concerned with gender and sexuality. Yet, despite the academic interest in marginality, there has been relatively little attention to the intersections of race and gentrification (in the Castro District of San Francisco in the 1970s, as gay gentrification took off, incoming black gentrifiers suffered marginalization and racial abuse from white gentrifiers – see KQED, Inc., 1997). Indeed, this peculiar omission points to one important way in which, within the academy at least, marginality and difference (or at least some differences) are now mainstream (Lees, 1996: 453–54).

Interest in gender and gentrification can be traced back to Markusen's (1981: 32) argument that 'gentrification is in large part a result of the breakdown of the patriarchal household' and to Damaris Rose's (1984) challenge to Neil Smith's uneven development thesis. In the early 1990s authors such as Bondi (1991) and Warde (1991) prioritized gender relative to class in their conceptual accounts of gentrification. Then in the mid-1990s researchers began to step back from the prioritization of gender. Butler and Hamnett (1994: 477) argued that gentrification was best understood in terms of the distinctive cultural practices of the new middle class, in which gender was an important part of its social and occupational formation. Smith (1996: 100) responded to the prioritization of gender arguing: '[i]t would be wrong to conclude that in women we find the premier agency behind gentrification'. More recently researchers on gentrification and gender (with many feminists amongst them) now generally accept the principal importance of class formation in understanding the relationship between gender and gentrification (see Butler, 1997; Bondi, 1999a).

Early work on gender and gentrification was conceptually based and empirically limited. This enabled researchers such as Lyons (1996), who undertook an empirical

analysis of gender and gentrification in London, to pick holes in earlier authors' arguments. Lyons (1996) refuted part of Bondi's (1991) argument, especially the idea that 'gentrification has been stimulated by the increased participation of women (especially married women) in the labour force' (1991: 191). In her empirical investigation Lyons found that women's opportunities for full-time and permanent employment had been eroded more rapidly than those of men, especially at the top of the socio-economic scale. She also found that most female gentrifiers were single and under the age of 30 and that relatively few high-status women took up owner occupation. As a result she concluded that little could be known about whether the evidence for female-led gentrification simply reflects a temporary life-cycle stage or whether it heralds a more permanent occupation of the inner city by women (see also Rose, 1996, on economic restructuring and gentrification).

Bondi's (1999a) reworking of the gentrification and gender argument through detailed empirical investigation in Edinburgh, Scotland, provides a timely analysis of the importance of the patterning of life courses in the articulation of class, gender and gentrification. Bondi's findings enrich the gentrification literature in a variety of ways. First, she finds that the association between gentrification and the professional middle class is not an exclusive one and that some gentrifiers do not pursue a class-based housing strategy. Secondly, Bondi 'lends weight' to the arguments that local specificity and indeed the temporality of gentrification are crucial to understanding how the process of gentrification is different in different places.

Bondi's recent article sheds a lot more light on the gentrification process, but it is not exhaustive. There are at least three conceptual and analytical avenues down which further investigation could prove to be informative. First, Bondi's discussion of the place-specific dimensions of class formation neglects Bridge's (1995) argument that most class constitutive effects occur outside the gentrified neighbourhood. Secondly, Bondi's usage of the term 'middle class' is a wide one; thus her ability to include people who, she argues, 'appear to be unusual among those found in studies of gentrification' (1999a: 276). There is little said about the 'new' middle class, or class fractions or practices within the middle class in general. This lack of conceptual detail allows Bondi (1999a: 277) to go so far as to argue that 'diversity among those purchasing in particular areas should prompt caution in the use of the term "gentrifiers"'. And finally, I argue more generally that a more detailed investigation of the constitution of masculinity and space would add to the gentrification and gender literature significantly. Knopp has discussed this with reference to gay gentrifiers (see later), but compare a recent article by Sommers (1998) which looks at the social construction of (straight) masculinity and its relevance to the gentrification of the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood in Vancouver, Canada.

In the literature focusing on gay gentrification, Rothenberg (1995) (looking specifically at Park Slope in New York City) argues that lesbians, like gays (see Castells, 1983), concentrate residentially and are active participants in the making of urban social space through gentrification. There is no denying that lesbians have been very visible participants in the gentrification of some neighbourhoods like Park Slope and, in Vancouver, Canada, the Commercial Drive area. There are questions, though, about how much this residential choice, as well as the other behaviours constituting gentrification, are influenced by sexuality as opposed to other dimensions of personal identity. Indeed, as Rothenberg (1995: 179) concludes: 'Park Slope functions for lesbians as it does for many

of the other people who live in the neighbourhood'. The difficult challenge for researchers is to determine the complex relationship between the myriad aspects of personal identity and the constitution of a gentrified place (although as Bridge, 1995, suggests, this may not be a causal relationship). It could be fruitful to analyse the *tensions* between the constitution of, say, class and gender, class and sexuality, sexuality and gender, in the gentrification process. Equally interesting would be further research (following on from Rothenberg, 1995) on the differences between gay and lesbian gentrification. The best work on gentrification and sexuality both maintains the delicate balance between different aspects of personal identity such as class, gender and sexuality, and investigates the tensions between them. Lauria and Knopp (1985) and Knopp (1990a; 1990b) emphasized the interconnections between class, gender and sexuality in gay gentrification and pointed out some of the tensions between them. Knopp (1990b) managed to maintain a delicate balance between these different facets of personal identity in his explanation of gay gentrification, but as in the gender and gentrification literature he came back to class constitution as perhaps the most important agent. Yet, in a more recent contribution Knopp (1995: 161) footnotes his 1990b article with this comment: 'Unfortunately, I privileged class enormously in that particular piece'. This comment may be more indicative of how academics value membership in particular communities of researchers than it is of the gentrification process itself (see Lees, 1999b, on the sociology of academic knowledge production on gentrification).

2 The new middle class

In the literature on gentrification discussion of the 'new' middle class has become synonymous with discussion of the 'emancipated' gentrifier. One of the hallmarks of this new middle class has been its ability to exploit the emancipatory potential of the inner city, and indeed to create a new culturally sophisticated, urban class fraction, less conservative than the 'old' middle class. Gentrification is deemed to be a spatial manifestation of these new cultural values. This is the theme of David Ley's (1996) and Tim Butler's (1997) books on gentrification.

Ley (1996) identifies a distinctive new middle class whose culture and urbane values are rooted in the critical youth movements of the 1960s. Once, they were hippies but now they are yuppies: gentrifiers in a postindustrial society. Ley's account of the history of gentrification is specific to Canada. Like Caulfield, Ley identifies the 1968 election of Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau (who embraced many of the counter-cultural values of the 1960s) as an important vehicle for gentrification in Canada. It is refreshing to read detailed and specific accounts such as these. Unlike those authors who look at gentrification as a more generalizable phenomenon, Ley (1996) appears to be more interested in the specific contextualities of gentrification, what he refers to as 'a geography of gentrification'.

Ley, like Caulfield, argues that gentrifiers move/d into the inner city because of its particular sense of place, but Ley is much more critical of this desire, both in his research subjects and in himself. The most poignant parts of Ley's book are those that appear most personal, such as his 'desire', following Kierkegaard, for transcendence beyond desire and for the integration of the religious, ethical and aesthetic realms. Ley

(1996: 334–39) argues that gentrification has become increasingly unfulfilling due to a narrow focus on consumption and the aesthetic.

Butler (1997), like Caulfield and Ley, offers a personalized account embedded in his experiences of living in the inner London borough of Hackney in the early 1970s. In answering: ‘is there anything distinctively different about the middle class who live in Hackney which might explain their reasons for living there?’ (p. 1), Butler infuses class formation with gender and individual biographies, including the education, culture and lifestyles of his middle-class subjects. A sociologist, Butler nevertheless produces quite a geographical account of gentrification – ‘space does matter’ (p. 166) to his analysis. He concludes that Hackney’s gentrifiers *are* ‘different’: ‘... there appears to be an increasing tendency towards spatial segmentation within the middle class both occupationally and residentially’ (p. 161). The gentrification of Stoke Newington in Hackney, Butler suggests, is the outcome of community choice whereas the gentrification of the Docklands might be seen as the ‘logic of capital’ (p. 162). He elaborates:

it does suggest that we might expect to find rather different processes at work in different places. I would therefore expect to find a rather different kind of gentrification process taking place in Docklands for example, which is based less around trying to recreate some sense of communality achieved at university in the context of counter-cultural politics ... it is suggestive that place, or more accurately that people’s perception of place matters a lot ... (p. 162).

This is an insightful observation, if not entirely a novel one. Gentrification is not the same everywhere. Of course there are generalizable features, both internationally and within single cities, but there are also many important specificities that are equally important in any analysis of gentrification, and particularly in comparative research (Carpenter and Lees, 1995). In addition to these place-based differences there are also important temporal differences, as Ley’s generational thesis implies. Gentrification today is quite different from gentrification in the early 1970s, late 1980s and even the early 1990s. Temporality was the focus of the stage models of gentrification back in the 1970s but, as the literature became more theoretically sophisticated, temporality seemed to all but disappear from analyses (compare Bondi, 1999a: 278). Temporality is an issue which needs further attention.

A glance at the Park Slope neighbourhood of Brooklyn suggests that researchers have some new pieces of the gentrification jigsaw to consider with regards to temporality. First, gentrifiers in Park Slope today are significantly wealthier than gentrifiers in the past. Sweat equity is not a prominent feature of the process today. Indeed, contemporary gentrifiers have to be wealthier than ever before because average prices for single-family townhouses have *doubled* since 1997 and prices for two–four family homes have

Table 1 Townhouses and apartments in Park Slope: average sale price 1993–98 (US\$)

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	Mid-1998
Single family	200 865	288 932	260 542	266 200	266 435	538 333
2–4 family	257 030	254 904	270 857	264 270	277 043	319 717
Condo	156 773	163 321	149 536	199 250	158 596	149 000
Co-operative	119 000	155 499	178 605	165 500	209 105	266 318

Source: Concoran’s *Brooklyn Landmark*, 1998: 3.

increased by 15% (see Table 1). This rapid appreciation is linked to the dramatically increased value of the New York stock market and the financial services industry, whose profits have (re)lubricated gentrification in New York City. The relationship between gentrification and the financial services industry is an important factor distinguishing the process of gentrification in global cities like London and New York from elsewhere.

In neighbourhoods that gentrified early, such as Brooklyn Heights in New York City, many first-stage (sweat equity) gentrifiers have sold their property to new (very well-off gentrifiers), who are *regentrifying* property in the neighbourhood at this time. Here I lend support to Bondi's (1999a) argument that we need to be much more cautious in the use of the term 'gentrifier'. For can the new people moving into Brooklyn Heights, people I call financifiers or regentrifiers, be termed gentrifiers? After all, these newcomers are not displacing marginal groups, although they are renovating old housing, much of which has been little altered by first-wave gentrifiers. The so-called new middle classes, the types of people who got a foothold in neighbourhoods such as Brooklyn Heights in the 1960s and 1970s (the 1960s cohort that Ley defines), are being overtaken by financifiers (a 1990s cohort) opening up new tensions within the middle classes.

Gentrification, I would argue, is a cyclical process driven largely, but not completely, by investment flows. Indeed, the gap between old gentrified property and newly gentrified property is as dramatic today in certain neighbourhoods as the difference between ungentrified and gentrified property (the rent gap) was back in the 1970s. This price differential is driving a whole new wave of high-end *super-gentrification* in favoured spots such as Brooklyn Heights in New York City, where fortunes from the financial services industry provide a lucky few with the wherewithal to undertake high-standard renovations. As Smith has commented, it is the measure of the success of the gentrification process in Brooklyn Heights that there is hardly a working class left to mount a challenge (email discussion October 1998 in the gentrification discussion group – gentrification@mailbase.ac.uk; www.gentrification.org). This kind of high-end gentrification is also a recent feature in London, in locations such as Battersea and Putney on the south bank of the Thames.

Gary Bridge's (1995) research offers a new jigsaw piece for the theses on gentrification and the new middle class. In calling for a more sustained application of class analysis to the gentrification process, Bridge extended his analysis to look at the influence of residence on class constitution. Through a detailed structural mapping, Bridge (1995: 245) found that 'most class constitutive effects occur outside the gentrified neighbourhood . . . or before the process has taken place . . .' If class constitution occurs outside the gentrified neighbourhood, what does this say about the emancipatory social practice of gentrification and the emancipatory potential of the inner city? The relationship between the constitution of place and the practice of gentrification remains vague and under-analysed and is, I suspect, much more complicated than the literature allows for (for a fresh analysis of the located politics of difference, see Fincher and Jacobs, 1998). This is one avenue that could throw up fruitful discussion in both the gentrification literature and the cultural studies/geography literature on place and identity. This is also an issue that demands we study the 'geography of gentrification'.

3 The revanchist city

Neil Smith's (1996) book is the most graphic and vocal proponent of the idea of gentrification as a kind of spatialized revenge against the poor and minorities who 'stole' the inner city from the respectable classes. In contrast to the emancipatory city thesis, the revanchist city thesis considers the privileging of middle-class desires and the effects of the advancing gentrification 'frontier' on other class fractions. Reminiscent of the violent dispossessions of native peoples, the rhetoric of an urban or gentrification frontier operates, Smith argues, to conceal the underlying violence of the process. The inner city for Smith is not an emancipatory space but a combat zone in which capital, embodied by middle-class gentrifiers, battles it out, block by block, house by house, to retake the city.

Like Caulfield, Smith also dreams of equality, but beyond this the two rapidly part company. Smith's concern is not with the social practices of the middle classes *per se*, but with the effects of these practices on marginalized populations. Condemning Caulfield's notion of emancipatory social practice as 'Foucault run amok', Smith (1996: 43) exposes the inequalities associated with the gentrification process – displacement, injustice. Whilst holding on to a Marxian framework, Smith's recent book explores many issues he has been criticized for underplaying in the past. For example, he argues that both production and consumption are 'mutually implicated' in his rent gap theory. However, Smith could yet go further in considering the desires of middle-class gentrifiers (a point made some time ago by Rose, 1984: 56). By representing middle-class gentrifiers as inadvertent instruments of abstract economic forces, Smith unintentionally absolves them of any responsibility for their actions. This was something that Ley's humanism, with all its analytical weakness, always insisted upon.

Smith (1996: 101) expands on his earlier class-based analyses by considering gender constitution. However, the complex links between class and gender in the gentrification process have been developed further by Butler (1997) and Bondi (1999a). Butler (1997) offers a more nuanced class analysis, one in which fractions within the middle classes are explored, and Bondi (1999a) investigates the patterning of life courses in the articulation of class and gender practices. Yet, race/ethnicity remains strangely absent from these studies of class and gender. In contrast, in analysing the race/class/gender terror associated with the new urban frontier, Smith (1996) also investigates the relationship between class, race and space. In the cities of the USA, which make up much of the empirical material in Smith's book, race is a pervasive issue. Race and gentrification have been the subject of earlier contributions, for example, Schaffer and Smith (1986) on the gentrification of Harlem and Smith's writings on the impact of gentrification on the Latino population in the Lower East Side. Yet, in *The new urban frontier* (Smith, 1996) race receives a new measure of attention – a further investigation into gentrification in Society Hill in the 1970s (pp. 137–39) and an updated look at the gentrification of central Harlem (pp. 140–64). In particular Smith teaches us about the 'contradictory connectedness of race and class identity resulting from gentrification' (p. 159) but, in so doing, he ends up asking as many questions as he answers (see p. 161). The issue of race and gentrification is an avenue that calls for further investigation, for detailed empirical studies of the kind that Butler (1997) and Bondi (1999a) have undertaken vis-à-vis class and gender. There is reason to believe that the relationship between race/ethnicity and gentrification in the 1990s is somewhat different from that of the 1970s. In London in

the 1970s the small black population to be found in Barnsbury, in Islington, was displaced by gentrifiers with hardly a murmur. More recently, in Spitalfields, Jacobs (1996) discusses the politicization of the Bengali community and their construction of 'Banglatown' in part to curb their displacement by gentrification. In London's Docklands, the construction of an image of the authentic friendly East Ender, in an attempt to attract global investors, 'avoided a long history of racialized conflict where some white residents at least had intimidated Bangladeshi settlers in particular' (Eade and Mele, 1998: 61).

There have been many changes associated with race and gentrification. In Park Slope, Brooklyn, which attracted the black middle class as gentrifiers in the early 1990s (Lees, 1996: 464) there has been a significant 'whitening' of the population more recently. Very much against the trend in New York City public schools more generally, enrolment at local public schools reveals this 'whitening' of Park Slope's population. In the 1970s the school population was almost equally divided between white, black and Hispanic students; today 52% of the enrolment of public school 321 in the centre of Park Slope is white (Yardley, 1998: B4). The reasons for this have not been studied, but probably they would include issues such as social ecology and neighbourhood change (see Warf, 1990, on Brooklyn), black out-migration to the south, and black gentrification in neighbouring Fort Greene and in the infamous Harlem (see Downer, 1999), as well as more familiar factors like discrimination.

To date class and gender studies of gentrification have far outweighed studies of ethnicity and race. Gentrification researchers could explore in much more detail the relationship between race, ethnicity and gentrification (compare Taylor, 1992). Like the example of black gentrification in parts of Harlem and Washington, DC, by the black middle classes, the Monster Houses in Vancouver, Canada (Ley, 1995) might be thought of as Chinese gentrification. What these examples point to are the problems with the implicit race and class oppositions organizing the gentrification literature: middle-class gentrifiers/incomers (white) versus working-class residents/displaced (black). In the revanchist city thesis racial/ethnic minorities are more often than not represented as victims – Jacobs' (1996) study of the affirmation of Bengali identity and entrepreneurial spirit in the creation of 'Banglatown' in the Spitalfields area of London suggests otherwise. Table 2 summarizes some of the gaps to be found in the gentrification writings published since the mid-1990s.

Table 2 A diagrammatic summary of the gaps to be found in the gentrification literature since the mid-1990s

Organizing focus or thesis	Gaps: issues not addressed
The emancipatory city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • liveability • conflict • third-world immigration
The new middle class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • race • financiers
The revanchist city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • black gentrification • subversion/contestation by minorities

4 A new look at gentrification?

The companion articles by Redfern (1997a; 1997b) stand out from the rest of the recent gentrification literature in their profession to be 'a new look at gentrification'. Redfern (1997a) argues that gentrification studies are organized around two recognized traditions of explanation – the supply-side account of gentrification offered by Neil Smith and the demand-side explanation offered by David Ley. Starting with the question how gentrification occurs, rather than why, Redfern tries to break 'the theoretical logjam' of gentrification studies by examining the role of domestic technologies in the process of gentrification. Gentrification, Redfern (1997b) contends, was only possible once the price of domestic conveniences had fallen enough (since the 1950s in the UK) relative to house prices to make investment in older properties worth while.

While Redfern (1997a) provides a very insightful overview and critique of the literature, his thesis about the necessary relationship between domestic technology and gentrification is unpersuasive (Lyons, 1998). Redfern makes a variety of unsubstantiated claims about gentrification, many of which reflect the empirical limitations of his case study of Islington, London. Key to his explanation of gentrification and its association with the falling price of domestic technology is the process of abandonment (1997b: 1335–36, 1347). Yet, he does not define what he means by abandonment. Relying on early work by a variety of authors, including Hamnett and Williams (1980), Redfern neglects more recent work in the gentrification literature that asserts that abandonment did not occur in London because 'England did not experience a postwar, state funded suburbanization programme which increased inner city abandonment as did the US . . . Moreover a postwar housing shortage in England minimized abandonment' (Lees, 1994b: 207). Redfern also neglected to consider the importance of tenurial transformation (the transformation of property from rented to private ownership when their leaseholds expired) which made gentrification in the borough of Islington, and in London more generally, spatially and temporally uneven (see Hamnett and Randolph, 1986; Lees, 1994b). These empirical specificities are important because the transfer and transformation of urban household property were a significant factor in the gentrification process in London. Following Redfern's domestic technology-driven explanation of the process, one would expect the first cases of gentrification to have occurred in the USA, where the prices of domestic conveniences were cheaper. But they did not – they occurred in England (Glass, 1964), where tenurial transformation created a value gap into which gentrification leapt.

Redfern's thesis appears as a technological determinism that ignores the underlying social relations of the gentrification process. Focused on technology as a necessary precondition for gentrification, Redfern has little to say about the ongoing process now that cookers and washing machines have become widespread features of the domestic landscape. His technological determinism leads him to the strange conclusion that gentrification 'is a transient and historically unique phenomenon' (1997b: 1335). But what about the recent examples of post-recession gentrification in the UK and the USA? What about the impact of gentrification on British and American government urban policy? Like the syntheses he criticizes Redfern's thesis leaves a lot out. Moreover, the retrospective nature of his thesis does nothing to break the theoretical logjam or to explain the changes I have identified.

III Towards a progressive research programme on gentrification

That gentrification has proven to be a resilient term despite its elusive and sometimes contradictory qualities suggests that it remains important to 'unpack' its characteristics (Bondi, 1999a: 279).

Since the mid-1990s writing on gentrification has been much less energetic and much less adversarial, and some real analytical progress has been made. The analysis of class and gender has become much more sophisticated (see Butler, 1997; Bondi, 1999a) and the issue of race is becoming more prominent (Jacobs, 1996; Smith, 1996; Eade and Mele, 1998). More recently, gentrification researchers have begun to question how we have conceptualized gentrification to date (Butler, 1997; Redfern, 1997a, 1997b; Bondi, 1999a; Lees, 1996; 1998; 1999a; 1999b; Hamnett, in progress), as such the gentrification literature is moving forward. It is the aim of this article to try to increase the pace of this momentum by outlining a number of important research avenues for researchers to think about and perhaps travel down.

I believe that the way to re-energize the study of gentrification is to focus on what Ley (1996) has called the 'geography of gentrification'. It is the 'geography of gentrification' that emerges as the common denominator for both the recent changes in the gentrification process and the holes in the gentrification literature I have identified. There are four (inter-related) 'new wrinkles' which research into the 'geography of gentrification' needs to address: 1) financiers – super-gentrification; 2) third-world immigration – the global city; 3) black/ethnic minority gentrification – race and gentrification; and 4) liveability/urban policy – discourse on gentrification. I turn now to outline the significance of each of these in order to open up avenues for future research on gentrification.

In addressing the issue of *financiers* gentrification researchers must return, as Bondi (1999a) did albeit inadvertently, to a consideration of temporality. For instance, I would suggest that the notion of urban community has changed, making studies such as Caulfield's (1994) less useful for studying the contemporary gentrification process. Gentrifiers moving into Brooklyn Heights and Park Slope today, for example, are quite different from those who moved into these two neighbourhoods in the 1970s. As a result the neighbourhoods' identities are changing. Wyly and Hammel (1999) have also found that capital flows are being redirected and focused on a few highly desirable neighbourhoods. The outcome is that the gentrifiers who starred in Caulfield's and Ley's books, those who embraced tolerance and diversity, like the hippies in 1970s Park Slope, for the most part no longer star. Today Park Slope's gentrifiers are well to-do folk from Manhattan, lawyers and financial consultants, financiers who buy houses and apartments as city residences. They often also own property in suburban Long Island, Up-State New York or in 'the country' – Connecticut, etc. – where they spend their weekends. The whole concept of urban community is in transition, the financiers' ties to the community, to the neighbourhood, are much weaker than those of the gentrifiers of old. The financier has a much less deeply rooted relationship with his or her neighbourhood – as with the highly mobile capital they work with, these super-gentrifiers are more mobile too – their identity is arguably more fluid than rooted. As such, the term gentrifier may not even be appropriate for these new, well heeled renovators, these *super-gentrifiers* who have displaced sweat equity by employing their own architects, interior designers and builders. In fact there has been much debate over the last year about the definition of 'gentrification' (see the online gentrification discussion group –

www.gentrification.org). A variety of questions emerge: are financiers gentrifiers as such? Are they members of the new middle class? Are there conflicts between financiers and the new middle class? What are the similarities and differences between this type of gentrification and earlier gentrification? And so on. Wyly and Hammel's (1999) study of post-recession gentrification in the USA echoes some of these questions, for they too urge the importance of looking at temporality. Their essay reveals the important questions on the historical continuity between current processes and previous generations of neighbourhood change that the resurgence of the gentrification process poses.

Contextuality and therein scale are also significant – for super-gentrification will likely only occur in global cities, such as London and New York, where the financial and information industries are primarily located, or perhaps in capital cities such as Edinburgh, Scotland, which has a similar employment structure to London.

Contextuality and scale are also relevant to a consideration of *third-world immigrants and the gentrification process*. Global cities, racially/ethnically segregated cities and multicultural cities higher up the urban hierarchy will feature prominently in studies of gentrification that consider the juxtaposition of people from radically different cultural backgrounds – that is third-world immigrants with gentrifiers. Jacobs' (1996) study of Spitalfields in London outlines the conflictual politics of race and nation that often result. Her study underlines the fact that 1) gentrifiers are not always liberal and tolerant; 2) gentrification is not a benign process; and 3) gentrifiers do not hold a monopoly on proactivity.

As in the case of third-world immigrants, *black and ethnic minority gentrification* has scarcely been researched either (see Schaffer and Smith, 1986; Taylor, 1992; Smith, 1996, for research into black gentrification). Black gay gentrifiers in the Castro District of San Francisco in the 1970s came up against racism. This distorts the image of gentrification as liberal tolerance. It also points to the complex intricacies within social cleavages – black, gay and middle class and white gay racist gentrifier. Blacks (and other ethnic groups such as Latinos), as seen in Smith's (1996) 'revanchist city thesis', are often portrayed as the 'victims' of the gentrification process. But blacks can also be the 'agents' of gentrification (see Taylor, 1992; Lees, 1996; Downer, 1999). Black gentrification is not without its problems. As Taylor (1992) outlines black gentrifiers (in Harlem) are confronted with a 'dilemma of difference' as they alternate between their work in white downtown and their home in black uptown, and the class differences between themselves and less wealthy Harlem residents.

In 1986 Schaffer and Smith predicted that, because the number of wealthy households in Harlem were relatively small, continued gentrification would likely lead to white in-migration and the displacement of blacks. This prophecy seems to be coming true elsewhere – as I outlined earlier in this article – although Park Slope, Brooklyn, was a magnet for black gentrification in the early 1990s, by the end of the decade the neighbourhood had grown predominantly white. I would like to see more detailed studies of how race and ethnicity intersect with cleavages such as class, gender and sexuality in the gentrification process. The racial/ethnic issues associated with the gentrification process take on a different guise according to the communities involved. For example, Ley (1995) discusses the cultural conflicts between Hong Kong Chinese immigrants and the Anglo middle classes in gentrified Kerrisdale, inner Vancouver. Mitchell (1998) discusses the political repercussions of large-scale immigration from

Hong Kong on the pre-existing Chinese community in downtown Vancouver (also compare Anderson, 1998, who tries to move beyond a cultural politics of race polarity). The issues surrounding race/ethnicity and gentrification are much more complex than black/Latino (displacee) versus white (gentrifier). As gentrification spreads outwards from the inner city towards the suburbs (Smith and DeFilippis, 1999, have recently found evidence of the operation of Smith's rent gap in the suburbs) these issues will continue to be significant.

I would also like to see a more updated and rigorous deconstruction of not only the process of gentrification but also *discourses on gentrification*. A closer look at how gentrification is represented (see Smith, 1986; Lees, 1996; Bondi, 1998a) and how knowledge on gentrification is produced and constructed (for example, Lees, 1999a; 1999b) will shed further light on this subject. Research into the sociology of academic knowledge production on gentrification will tell us as much, if not more, about the literature on gentrification as a literature review that compares authors' theoretical frameworks, conceptual ideas and empirical research. As part of a consideration of discourse and the construction of knowledge the importance of methodology has rarely been stressed in analyses of gentrification, despite the considerable interest in the differing outcomes of different theoretical frameworks (for example, Redfern, 1997a; 1997b). Different methodological frameworks obviously produce quite different accounts of gentrification. If we compare Smith (1996) and Butler's (1997) methodologies we find one reason why their accounts are so different. I have written about this elsewhere:

Butler's is an intersubjective exploration of the question: 'is there anything distinctively different about the middle class who live in Hackney which might explain their reasons for living there?' (page 1). To answer this question he relies on interviews with nearly 250 people. From these biographies he sets out to describe the lives of these people and to analyse (new middle) class constitution through the correlation of 'social being' and 'social consciousness' (page 4). Given his interview data it is no surprise that matters of lifestyle and subjectivity are so much more prominent in Butler's text than in Smith's, whose real-estate-value maps and stark images of local resistance to gentrification paint a picture of class struggle as black and white as his photographs. The contrast between these alternative views of gentrification has usually been explained in terms of theory, but it is also one of methodology. Butler's qualitative sources open a different window on social reality than Smith's sources do. Gentrification researchers need to think more carefully about how their research methods – as well as their theory – inflect their understandings' (Lees, 1998: 2258).

I have argued that deconstructing discourse on gentrification is important – and I would add that it is nowhere more so than when we consider recent urban policy statements/initiatives by governments in both the UK and the USA. As I argued at the beginning of this article, the British Urban Task Force's report *Towards an urban renaissance* (DETR, 1999) and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's *The state of the cities* report (1999) both interweave urban regeneration policy with gentrification practices and environmentalism. They subtly and not so subtly promote gentrification as a blueprint for a civilized city life. Gentrification in the guise of urban liveability/sustainability is constructed as the medicine for the problems endured by British and American cities. Analysis of how far gentrification has become a state-driven process and in this a consideration of the context of wider political forces is certainly worth while. As Wyly and Hammel (1999) indicate in their title, in an obvious play on Berry's (1985) maxim 'islands of renewal in seas of decay', the new urban reality may well be 'islands of decay in seas of renewal'. But this vision of a new urban reality by both British and American urban policy-makers is premised on a 'one size fits all' remedy. In other words, the successes of gentrification strategies in global cities such as

London and New York are being offered as blueprints for cities further down the urban hierarchy. I would argue that, for the most part, these strategies are unlikely to work for the Liverpools of the UK and the Lowells of the USA. For example, urban policy-makers in the declining northeastern city of Portland, Maine, USA, have adopted the types of strategies promoted both explicitly and implicitly in the two reports. These strategies have included a plan for liveability and sustainability – *Downtown vision: a celebration of urban living and a plan for the future of Portland* (City of Portland, Maine, 1991); a plan for an Arts District; the upgrading of the Old Port; the gentrification of the city's older residential neighbourhoods; the construction of a \$5 million Portland Public Market; new downtown office blocks; and so on (see Knopp and Kujawa, 1993). This medicine has mostly failed to cure Portland's urban (economic) ills, but like the British Urban Task Force and American HUD, Portland's urban policy-makers still have the kind of faith that sees boarded-up buildings and empty piers and abandoned storefronts as opportunities.

Both context and temporality are sidelined in *Towards an urban renaissance* and *The state of the cities* report, as indeed they have been by urban policy-makers in Portland, Maine, too. Much remains to be learnt about the 'geography of gentrification'. Eade and Mele (1998) have begun 'to open up this Pandora's box' by comparing gentrification in the East Village of New York City with that in Spitalfields and Docklands in London. The 'geography of gentrification', I would argue, works on a number of different levels – international comparison, intranational, and citywide comparison. The differences between Caulfield's more Utopian perspective on gentrification and Smith's more dystopian perspective are partly rooted in their respective research sites – the relatively liberal and benign Canadian inner city and the 'combat zone' of the visceral and dangerous US inner city. Moreover, in the literature on gentrification we can see that even within a single city gentrification of a similar time period has a quite different geography depending on its site, such that Butler (1997) produces a much less conflictual account of gentrification in London, specifically Hackney, than does Jacobs (1996), who discusses Spitalfields. More detailed research into the 'geography of gentrification' would enable us to say whether the gentrification of Detroit is the late 1990s version of the gentrification of Harlem. For Harlem was, and Detroit is, a seemingly unlikely target for gentrification (see Wyly and Hammel, 1999, on Harlem and Detroit). It would also enable us to consider the merits or dangers of cities further down the urban hierarchy taking on board the gentrification practices of cities higher up the urban hierarchy, cities with a very different geography.

In conclusion, the gentrification literature has come a long way over the last 30 years but, as the above discussion suggests, there is still room for manoeuvre, for progressive research. I caution against explanatory closure, a closure that gentrification researchers, more often than not, seem compelled to search for. It will be more productive for us to keep 'issues open and tensions alive', to follow a 'Brechtian strategy' (Harvey, 1995: 95) of keeping conclusions on gentrification open. A more detailed examination of the 'geography of gentrification' would constitute a progressive research programme and lead us to rethink the 'true' value of gentrification as a practical solution to urban decline in cities around the world.

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Notes

1. The topic of gentrification is far from exhausted. The study of displacement has to date been inadequate, the implication of gentrification in the process of globalization and global city formation has not been investigated in any great detail, and studies of the transnational nature of housing production are still in their infancy (see Badcock, 1995; Olds, 1998).
2. Elizabeth Wilson (1991) argues that the city has long provided emancipatory opportunities for women – for a critique, see Ravetz (1996) and Bondi (1998b).

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