

# **A NEW BEGINNING?**

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## **MAKING SENSE OF THE GENTRIFICATION DEBATE**

*Thesis prepared by*

**Simon O'Byrne**

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Department of City Planning  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The term gentrification is applied to the process whereby more affluent and upwardly mobile individuals move into poorer and more marginalized areas in the inner-city, whether they are industrial or residential areas. This socio-economic shift within an inner-city district or neighbourhood often leads to a change in the character of the affected area and the displacement of many of the original pre-gentrification occupants. This thesis seeks to make sense of the gentrification debate by thoroughly analyzing and discussing the two theoretical orientations that attempt to explain the cause of gentrification.

The debate over the causes of gentrification has centred around two dominant camps, Marxism and post-industrialism. The Marxist camp, argues that gentrification is the inevitable result of the capitalist system, whereby investors use their capital to exploit financially lucrative situations. More specifically, when the value of a building and the value of the land on which it sits is sufficient high the property will begin to gentrify (i.e. the rent gap theory). Whereas, the post-industrialist camp argues that gentrification is a consequence of the rise of a new middle class, which has accompanied the onset of a post-modern society. The problem with these two theoretical camps is that they are unable to explain the absence of gentrification from inner-city areas where there is both a large middle class and a sufficient supply of gentrifiable property.

Unlike the two theoretical camps, this thesis argues that gentrifiers gentrify because they can, and not because they have to. Gentrifiers do not only gentrify because they are members of a new middle class or eagerly willing to exploit affordable properties located within the inner-city. Instead, they do so due as a result of a complex interplay between a number of variables, that occurs in the context of a set of particular preconditions. In other words, this thesis asserts that it is impossible to provide a single or linear universal theory that explains why the phenomenon of gentrification occurs. Instead, I argue that a multi-causal explanation of gentrification is needed, which would combine the two dominant theoretical camps. Moreover, this asserts that more analysis and study is needed on what motivates gentrifiers to gentrify. This thesis states that gentrification cannot be fully explained through class-based explanations. Alternatively, it is argued that there needs to be an understanding of both the individual gentrifier and how that individual relates to society.

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

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## 1.1 PREAMBLE

This work is inspired by both my volunteer experience and my own personal experience growing up and working within inner-city neighbourhoods of Edmonton, Alberta. The neighbourhood in which I grew up, Garneau, and the area in which I have completed the greatest amount of volunteer experience, Norwood, have both encountered varying degrees of gentrification within recent years. This phenomenon has led me to consider the different causes of gentrification. I have struggled to adequately explain the causes of this phenomenon, as it is not easily understood in universally explainable terms. More specifically, I asked myself how does one explain why gentrification occurs rapidly in one inner-city area, but not in another area? The search for an answer to this question led me to investigate the academic literature concerning the causes of gentrification. The following thesis is my response to and rebuttal of the theories that have been proposed concerning gentrification, examined within the context of my search for wider-reaching explanations for gentrification.

## 1.2 INTRODUCTION

During the past several decades, there has been a substantial amount of scholarly literature written about the phenomenon known as gentrification<sup>1</sup>. Explanations for the causes of gentrification have generally followed two theoretical orientations (see Table

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<sup>1</sup> *GENTRIFICATION* is most commonly understood as the process whereby more affluent and upwardly mobile people move into poorer and more marginalized areas in the inner-city, either residential areas, or old warehouses and industrial districts. This socio-economic shift within an inner-city district / neighbourhood usually leads to a change in the character of the affected area and the displacement of many of the original pre-gentrification occupants.



1.1 Production Versus Consumption in Explanations of Gentrification on the following page). The first explanation is that gentrification is the consequence of the rise of a new middle class heralding the onset of a post-industrial or post-modern<sup>2</sup> society. In juxtaposition, the Marxist view is that gentrification is just another example of the contradictions underpinning capitalist development and in this case, the contradiction between the value of a building and the value of the land on which it sits – i.e. the rent gap<sup>3</sup> hypothesis. The rent gap is based on theories first published by Neil Smith in 1979. It is essentially a measure of the difference in a property's actual value and its potential value at "best use." When the overall rent gap in an area is determined to be great, it is suggested that the area will undergo gentrification as developers identify this difference as an economic opportunity on which to capitalize (Smith 1987).

This thesis will assert that gentrification happens for the simple fact that gentrifiers gentrify because they *can*, in contrast to the long held presumption maintained in

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<sup>2</sup> *POST-MODERNISM* relates to, or can be "any of several movements (e.g. art, architecture, or literature) that are reactions against the philosophy and practices of modern movements and are typically marked by revival of traditional elements and techniques" ([www.m-w.com/home.htm](http://www.m-w.com/home.htm)). More generally, it means the "abandonment of enlightenment confidence in the achievement objectives of human knowledge through reliance upon reason in pursuit of foundationalism, essentialism, and realism. In philosophy, post-modernists typically express grave doubt about the possibility of universal objective truth, reject artificially sharp dichotomies, and delight in the inherent irony and particularity of language and life" ([www.philosophypages.com/dy/](http://www.philosophypages.com/dy/)).

<sup>3</sup> *RENT GAP* is the "disparity between the potential ground rent level and the actual ground rent capitalized under the present land use. The rent gap is produced primarily by capital devalorization (which diminishes the proportion of the ground rent able to be capitalized) and also by continued urban development and expansion (which has historically raised the potential ground rent level in the inner-city). Only when the rent gap emerges can reinvestment be expected since if the present use succeeded in capitalizing all or most of the ground rent, little economic benefit could be derived from redevelopment. As filtering and neighbourhood decline proceed, the rent gap widens. Gentrification occurs when the gap is sufficiently wide that developers can purchase structures cheaply, can pay the builder's costs and profit for rehabilitation, can pay interest on mortgage and construction loans, and can then rent or sell the end product for a sale or rental price that leaves a satisfactory return to the developer. The entire ground rent, or a large portion of it, is now capitalized; the neighbourhood is thereby "recycled" and begins a new cycle of use" (N. Smith 1996a, p.67-68).

**Table 1.1 Production Versus Consumption in Explanations of Gentrification**

	<b>Neighbourhood Lifecycle or Production Based Camp</b>	<b>Postindustrialism or Consumption Based Camp</b>
<b>Main Academic Contributors</b>	Neil Smith, Eric Clark, Raymond Williams and Peter Williams	David Ley, Robert Beauregard, Chris Hamnett, Liz Bondi, Damaris Rose, Tim Butler, Loretta Lees and Jon Caulfield
<b>Theoretical Explanation of Gentrification</b>	Rent Gap	Human Agency
<b>Theoretical Influences</b>	Marxism; Geographies of Class Relations and Class Struggles; and Radical Social Theory	Weberian Liberal Humanism; Human Geography's Cultural Analysis; Role of Human Agency over Economic Structure; and Post-Industrial Urbanization
<b>Agents of Gentrification</b>	Capitalists	New Middle Class
<b>Key Concepts, Ideas, Issues and Labels</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Relationships between Flows of Capital and the Production of Urban Space</li> <li>2. Economic Imperative</li> <li>3. Revanchist City</li> <li>4. Primarily American Researchers</li> <li>5. Role of Capital</li> <li>6. Supply of Gentrifiable Property</li> <li>7. Relationship between Housing and Land Markets</li> <li>8. Spatial Flows of Capital</li> <li>9. Role of Public and Private Finance</li> <li>10. Relationships between Globalization (i.e. Global Political Economy), Local Community and Public Policy</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Patterns of Consumption</li> <li>2. Social Dynamics</li> <li>3. Emancipatory City</li> <li>4. Primarily Canadian and/or European Researchers</li> <li>5. Characteristics of Gentrifiers</li> <li>6. Nature of Postindustrial Society</li> <li>7. Cultural Postmodernism</li> <li>8. New Middle Class Ideology</li> <li>9. Consumer Demand and Consumption Practices</li> <li>10. Cultural Politics</li> <li>11. Role of Race, Gender and Sexuality</li> <li>12. Demographic Changes and Shifts</li> <li>13. Rejection of Suburban Values</li> </ol>

gentrification literature that gentrifiers gentrify because they *have to*. Debates about the causes of gentrification revolve around the assumption that gentrification represents a form of class constitution, and that gentrifiers engage in gentrifying behaviour as a result of the imperatives of class constitution and/or class membership. Furthermore, it has been argued that gentrification can only be explained once gentrifier's behaviour are related to these imperatives of class, regardless of the processes and issues at stake in class constitution.

In this thesis, I will challenge previously held assumptions found in gentrification literature. In their haste to situate the explanation of gentrification in class composition, many of the participants in the debate have neglected to examine what conditions were in existence immediately prior to the onset of gentrification, and which therefore gave gentrifiers a newfound ability to gentrify.

In other words, the purpose of this thesis is to seek a reversal of the assumption that gentrification can be used as a metaphor by which a part of society is used to represent the whole of modern society. Not only is it inaccurate to claim prior knowledge of the character of the society in which gentrification occurs, but it also immediately directs critical attention away from the specifics of gentrifier actions, which then are seen merely "as ciphers for the wider issues" of class and social change (R. Williams 1977, p.80).

I will argue that the basic causes of gentrification have little to do with class, and little to do with gender. Consequently, the study of gentrification should not be used as a proxy in debates pitting Marxist against Weberian explanations of social change.

Class issues, it will be argued, only arise in gentrification through the operation of hegemony, with "hegemony" defined from a cultural materialist perspective as an active process of presenting capitalist exploitation as the natural and therefore inevitable condition of modern life (R. Williams 1977 and Jackson 1989). An analysis of the problematical issues surrounding modernity is therefore a recurring theme in this thesis. Some sociologists such as Giddens (1981, 1985 and 1990) and Mann (1986 and 1988) have argued for a "neo-Weberian" analysis of modernity<sup>4</sup> as a phenomenon in its own right, incorporating other sources of social power, most notably the state, industrialism and capitalism. While their arguments and insights are used in the course of this study, this thesis will strive to employ an economic explanation of gentrification as a phenomenon of modernity. By maintaining this orientation it will provide a hitherto absent component to cultural materialist descriptions of contemporary life.

Cultural materialism<sup>5</sup> attempts to develop the concerns of Marxism in a more consistent manner than does traditional materialism. It is based on a critique of "base-

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<sup>4</sup> Weber thought that modernity was replacing traditional views with a rational way of thinking. In preindustrial societies traditional views obstructed change. Things were the way they were, because that is what everyone believed and no one questioned it. In modern societies things were questioned and answers were calculated. There were no more unquestioned truths. Science was taking the forefront over religion ([www.philosophypages.com/dy/](http://www.philosophypages.com/dy/)).

<sup>5</sup> CULTURAL MATERIALISM is a theoretical paradigm that stresses material, behaviour and etic processes in the explanation of the evolution of human socio-cultural systems. Dr. Murphy defined cultural materialism as the following:

an expansion of the Marxist model of three levels of culture (infrastructure, structure, and superstructure). Unlike Marxist theory, however, cultural materialism privileges both productive (economic) and reproductive (demographic) forces in societies. As such, demographic, environmental, and technological changes are invoked to explain cultural variation (Barfield 1997: 232). A technical, but important difference between Marxism and cultural materialism is that cultural materialism explains the structural features of a society in terms of production within the infrastructure only (Harris 1996: 277). Marxists, however, argue that production is a material condition located in the base (See American Material Page) that acts upon (and is acted upon by) the infrastructure (Harris 1996: 277-178). Thus, cultural materialists see the infrastructure-structure relationship as being mostly in one direction, while Marxists see the relationship as reciprocal. Cultural materialism also differs from Marxism in its lack of class theory. (Dr. Murphy. Department

superstructure”<sup>6</sup> metaphors in traditional Marxist historical materialism<sup>7</sup>. These metaphors employ an imagery of determinant base and reflected superstructure in which the base is the economy. The superstructure contains an indeterminate number of levels, but it is usually understood to be the arena of politics, civil society, ideology, psychology, aesthetics and culture. As Chapter two will demonstrate, these metaphors are widespread, long lasting, persistent and they consistently dominate the language of the gentrification debate.

The theoretical approach of cultural materialism may also be described as a radical attempt to place the question of agency<sup>8</sup> at centre stage. The problem with the base-structure metaphor is that it separates the act of production from the culture in which that production is undertaken. It divides it from what is assumed to be the determining active economic base, and from what is held to be the determinate passive social ‘superstructure’. Furthermore, it attempts to demonstrate how culture reflects economic organization. Use of the base-superstructure metaphor, with its unwarranted sundering of the integrated totality of social life into separate idealistic categories, further inhibits discussion of the role of agency within social phenomena.

Cultural materialism is also very pertinent to many of the traditional concerns of human social geography. Raymond Williams often described it as the basis for a truly human

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of Anthropology, College of Arts and Sciences, The University of Alabama.  
[www.as.ua.edu/ant/Faculty/murphy/cultmat.htm](http://www.as.ua.edu/ant/Faculty/murphy/cultmat.htm)

<sup>6</sup> *BASE-SUPERSTRUCTURE* is defined as the economic base within Marxist theory upon which cultural and social institutions (as the law, politics or religion) are erected ([www.m-w.com/home.htm](http://www.m-w.com/home.htm)).

<sup>7</sup> *HISTORICAL MATERIALISM* is the Marxist theory of history and society that holds that ideas and social institutions develop only as the superstructure of a material economic base ([www.m-w.com/home.htm](http://www.m-w.com/home.htm)).

ecology (R. Williams 1977 and 1990). By making the material production of culture central to an analysis of social life, cultural materialism enables one to satisfactorily unite structure and agency, form and content, material and symbolic production and to arrive at an understanding of gentrification in terms of changes in the material production of culture (Cosgrove and Jackson 1987, p.97). This makes the preceding dualisms fall under one heading.

From the cultural materialist theoretical perspective, culture is not a simple passive response to, reflection on, or typification of events occurring autonomously in the base (R. Williams 1977). Rather, it is the very medium in which those events occur as shown by Cosgrove and Jackson when they paraphrase Stuart Hall:

Culture is the medium through which people transform the mundane phenomena of the material world into a world of significant symbols to which they give meaning and attach value (Cosgrove and Jackson 1987, p.101).

This thesis will argue that gentrification is one such transformative cultural process that can in certain cases be effectively analyzed using cultural materialist principles.

By rejecting the concept of the base-superstructure, historical cultural materialism has concentrated on restoring agency to the elements formerly confined within the superstructure; the prime examples being fine arts, literature, fashion, leisure pursuits and lifestyles. In particular, it has focused on the lifestyles of the minority, counter or sub- cultures (Hall 1988, Jackson 1989, Dickens 1990). The identification of agency in the elements of the base has been sorely neglected. While literacy and cultural theory have been reconstituted and incorporated into the cultural materialist perspective,

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<sup>8</sup> AGENCY is the capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power: i.e. the operation through which power is exerted or an end is achieved ([www.m-w.com/home.htm](http://www.m-w.com/home.htm)).

economic theory has remained excluded. This is not only ironic, given the integrative potential of cultural materialism; it also undermines the materialist aspect of cultural materialism. Hence, for this reason this thesis will maintain an economic orientation while also embracing a cultural materialist perspective.

This thesis will argue that agency is demonstrated through consumer choice, and that this can be incorporated into Marxist economic theory by recasting Marx's definition of subsistence to the social, rather than to the individual level. This shift in focus renders redundant the belief that class position determines class-consciousness in a linear unmediated fashion. These results have immediate consequences for theorizing gentrification, since this renders irrelevant the debate over the relative merits of Marx and Weber's accounts of class constitution in which accounts of gentrification have played such a prominent role in the last decade.

The introduction of a consumer demand perspective into Marx's economic theories allows for a view of capital as the medium of both structure and agency in capitalist society, since capital is only required in an economy which has to face the problem of effective demand (Keynes 1937). Individuals are forced to work for money, to reduce themselves and relations with one another to abstract labour, but at the same time possession of money allows them to make choices, and therefore to display agency (Redfern 1991 and 1992).

In Chapter two I will explain how the participants have poorly served agency in the gentrification debate, despite appearances and/or protestations to the contrary. Essentially, gentrification appears to have been treated more or less in the same way as in the traditional behavioural studies of economic location, i.e., as random noise

obscuring the precise motivation, but not as fundamentally altering the way in which the construction of that motivation is achieved.

In one instance, gentrification is regarded as a phenomenon of post-industrial society and as evidence of a new middle class. The rise of a new middle class, it is held, directly contradicts Marx's prediction of the progressive reduction of all classes in society to just two: the Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. Similarly, most Marxists would argue that gentrification is regarded as a manifestation of 'switches and flows' in circuits of capital, which are governed by trends in neighbourhoods' lifecycles.

However, a substantial body of Marxist literature has accepted in principle the post-industrialist's criticisms of the capital logic and theoretical eclecticism of the neighbourhood lifecycle model. Consequently, a leftist version of the post-industrial argument has grown up, known as the "production of gentrifiers" approach. It concentrates on the social class origins of gentrifiers, rather than their consumption behaviour in the process of gentrification. Moreover a consensus has emerged in the literature that once the left and right versions of the post-industrialist approach can be merged together an explanation of gentrification can be found. In other words, some participants in the gentrification debate now realize that a linear left or right wing approach is too limiting and prevents new causal theories from emerging. It is this consensus that this thesis actively challenges.

Making this challenge also requires confronting the proposition that gentrification can be employed to stand for the nature of society as a whole. More specifically, the post-industrialist position within the gentrification makes the argument that gentrification is a form of class constitution. Confronting this insistence in turn means addressing some of



the most deeply held beliefs in the sociological literature, in particular the fundamental explanatory model in sociology, characterized by Pahl (1989) as SCA, structure – consciousness – action. Chapter three reviews this model and argues that there is no such thing as the middle class any more. What is called the middle class is not a class but a status group. However, this argument is made from a Marxist rather than a Weberian perspective, based on the arguments concerning the redefinition of subsistence along the lines described above.

Issues in the gentrification debate are characteristically framed in realist terminology, although much of this terminology is misapplied by the gentrification debate, as Chapter two also shows (see Warde 1991). These problems are compounded by the debate's commitment to the synecdochical qualities of gentrification and to SCA. Having argued that gentrification cannot be used as a synecdoche for modern society, and that it cannot be interpreted in terms of realism or class, it is necessary to provide an alternative context in which the behaviour of gentrifiers might be interpreted. Chapters four and five will provide this alternative context.

Chapter four argues that since there are no class distinctions to speak of in the gentrification process, attempting to develop class categories to explain actors' behaviour in the gentrification process is unproductive. It is particularly unnecessary to attempt to develop such categories in respect of gender relations, in gentrification as elsewhere. If Marx's or indeed Weber's categories of class do not adequately shed light on all areas of experience of social life, the solution is to develop accounts of these other areas of experience, not to multiply class categories indefinitely.

Another topic, which has been examined in the gentrification debate, is the question of post-modernism. Chapter two examines how the gentrification debate has treated post-modernist ideas. I shall argue that post-modernism is essentially a revival of early modernism. Gentrification can be considered as a study in modernity, because we all live under conditions of modernity. Chapter four also examines the broader aspects of this proposition.

The fundamental condition of modernity, I argue, following Alexander (1989), is a search for meaning from our lives. The impulse to make sense of our lives, to give our lives meaning, dominates modern life in a historically unprecedented manner. This existential need to make sense of our lives, I will go on to show, not only dominates debates in social science over questions of structure and agency, but is in fact the fundamental rationale underlying social science. If the social structures of modernity were not impervious to meaning, questions about agency would not even arise.

Displays of agency are displays of an independent consciousness. Understanding the formation of that consciousness is therefore fundamental to defining the ways in which agency may be said to be exhibited. Cultural materialism however rejects psychological explanations of the formation of consciousness, arguing instead that they take for granted the separations of individual and society, subjectivity and sociality, and culture and material production in modern life. It is these separations that cultural materialism is particularly concerned to problematize and overcome (R. Williams 1977).

Williams makes a plea for the revival instead of sociology of consciousness, which he argues was a fundamental concern of the classical sociology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (1977). In response to that plea, in Chapter five, I rely heavily on

the work of Robert Park. I show that Park's writings may be interpreted as a summary of classical sociology, as it is principally concerned with developing just such sociology of consciousness as formed under conditions of modernity. Additionally, I demonstrate how Park's interests and concepts, in particular, his concept of the marginal man, may be reconciled with R. Williams's principles of cultural materialism.

The concept of the marginal man, Park's most original contribution to sociology, was developed in the context of immigration into the United States. Defined as a man living on the margins of two cultures, of the Old World and the New, and encapsulating all the problems of modernity, the marginal man nonetheless held out the promise of their resolution. I argue that the experience of standing on the margins of two cultures is the experience of us all in modern society. To be more precise, it is the experience of the proletariat in capitalist society, partially incorporated and partially excluded from capitalist society (Cleaver 1979). The formation of consciousness in socialization is at the same time the process of acquiring status as a person, an individual-in-society. Park eloquently demonstrates the paradox that where we feel most at home is where our status as persons, the recognition of our worth, our meaningfulness for others, is most taken for granted. This is where we feel freest from the pressures of the modern world, characterized by mobility in the present and an indeterminate future. The very attempt at creating a home in the modern world however can undermine the attempts of others to do the same. A sense of place is also a sense of status of "place" in society. The creation of a place for some can and does therefore undermine the status of others. Gentrification can therefore be interpreted as one such place-making strategy, in which the potential for conflict over the meaning invested in a place and the status this will

grant to different groups is particularly high. However, the condition of modernity described in Chapter four does not simply affect gentrifiers, but everyone living in the modern world. The specificity of the causes of gentrification must still be made clear; otherwise the argument would be thrown back on the production of gentrifiers argument. Where the production of gentrifiers approach held post-industrialism or post-modernism responsible for the mysterious creation of this strange new segment of the middle class, the thesis here is that modernity had created them instead.

Chapter six shows that the explanation of gentrification rests on something that all previous accounts of gentrification have taken for granted, namely the very possibility of being able to improve a property. Gentrification could not have occurred if older properties could not be brought up to the standards of new housing. Due to this circumstance, and given the mechanisms of capitalist housing finance (where the availability of investment funds for improvements depends not on returns to investment, but on the incomes of borrowers), the explanation of gentrification then reduces to a routine economic problem of maximization under constraint. Gentrification is a subset of displacement, itself a subset of housing improvements and finance.

Gentrification, it is widely accepted, involves a substantial gap in income between those displaced and those moving in. Filtering down would preclude that possibility occurring. The middle class housing which is to be gentrified must have been abandoned to the working class, as soon as its first occupants leaves, thus creating a discontinuity between the income of the present occupier and the age and/or structural quality of the dwelling. I argue, along with Neil Smith (1982 and 1996), that gentrification cannot occur without suburban development, which produced the residential social segregation

by status, another condition of modernity which is also essential to gentrification, and which has never been highlighted in the gentrification debate.

Chapter seven then looks at the processes of gentrification in modern times. It tries to place gentrification in the context of wider social trends in the economy and society, something that is rarely attempted in gentrification studies. This Chapter also discusses the impact of changing gender relations on the gentrification process. Somewhat controversially, it argues that changes in gender roles and relations has little bearing on the explanation of gentrification, for much the same reason as class has no bearing on the explanation of gentrification, namely that, like class, gender issues in gentrification are universally theorized in terms of the standard sociological SCA model.

Indeed, although the participation of high-status women actively involved in gentrification has increased dramatically over the several decades, their absolute numbers have been low, and it can be concluded that gentrification would have occurred whether or not women were financially involved in the process at all.

The real issue is not therefore the proportion of men to women in the process, but the extremely low numbers of properties actually or potentially affected by gentrification. Gentrification would have occurred whether or not men were financially involved in the process. This highlights the final paradox of gentrification studies. Why is so much time and attention devoted to this gentrification when quantitatively it is of such little significance? Chapter eight considers this question by way of a conclusion to the thesis.

Clearly, part of the answer is to be found in the insecurities of modernity, discussed in Chapters four and five, the need to achieve status, to give life meaning and purpose in

the modern world, goals that can be achieved through the creation of place. These aspirations, however, have the potential for conflict with others who have similar but exclusive ambitions for themselves. Gentrification has wider resonance as it touches on fears and anxieties within us all, which is why I argue in this thesis, that analysis of gentrification is in general hopelessly compromised, because no such analyst likes either the process or those undertaking it. Gentrification therefore tends to be analyzed in terms of metaphors for sin, aliens and disease. However, since the condition of modernity is also the subjective experience of capitalism, which means in effect, the experience of class, these fears and resonance are experienced in class-specific ways, that is in terms of dominating and incorporating hegemonies. Using Williams analysis of metaphors of the country and city, I argue that the resonance of the very term gentrification, as well as the activity itself, arise out of the 'country' way of seeing and not seeing social relations, and that it is a process of bringing 'country' relations back into the "city". Since "gentrification" is a metaphorical expression itself, gentrification is not simply a process of creating a place, but of a specifically country place; situated in the midst of the wicked city, yet one in which any suggestion of exploitative class relations is kept firmly out of the picture. It creates a haven of rest and security by the use of the language and concepts of a dominating hegemony, which it also helps sustain; an echo chamber through which the resonance of gentrification can be felt in contexts far wider than its quantitative impact would suggest.

As an instance of hegemony at work in the operation of a capitalist housing market, gentrification gives a particular class meaning to the displacement of working class people from existing property and their replacement as occupiers of this property by middle class people. Gentrification represents concern about identity translated through

the operation of hegemony into concerns about class. To explain why gentrification occurs then, it is necessary to engage this hegemonic representation of gentrification, not simply to reproduce it in our theoretical schema. Only then is it possible both to explain gentrification and to understand its significance in modern life. Gentrification is not about class constitution but about identity and status under conditions of modernity.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The current dominant explanations of gentrification argue that gentrifiers gentrify because they are subject to forces beyond their control: the rise of post-industrial society, or the reappearance of rapid accumulation of wealth in capitalist urban centres. These explanations are then left with the problem of explaining the absence of gentrification from the inner-city areas in which it does *not* occur, since they are couched in such general terms that they could apply to every member of the middle classes or to every inner-city area, not just those associated with gentrification. These arguments for the causes of gentrification, in fact, over-estimate its quantitative significance.

The fact that this over-generalization occurs provides an interesting point of inquiry and warrants greater study. Using arguments partially derived from the work of Robert Park and Raymond Williams, this thesis will suggest that the reason for this over-estimate is that gentrification resonates on a far wider scale than its quantitative significance would suggest. Insofar as gentrification represents a particular strategy for dealing with a universally-experienced condition, the study of gentrification illuminates the way we currently live.

The research problem for the thesis therefore concerns the academic discourse regarding the root causes of gentrification. In order to make sense of scholarly

gentrification research and discourse, throughout the course of this thesis I will attempt to answer and address the following questions, namely:

- Why are there so many varying opinions of the definition of gentrification?
- Why do some inner-city areas become gentrified and others do not?
- Is gentrification a phenomenon of modernity?
- Why should quantitative explanations of the causes of gentrification be considered inadequate?
- What are the problems associated with Marxist explanations of gentrification?
- What are the problems associated with post-industrialist explanations of gentrification?
- Are class distinctions needed or necessary to explain gentrifier's behaviour in the gentrification process?

Ultimately, this thesis is concerned with answering the question, why do gentrifiers gentrify? It is impossible, in this author's opinion, to provide a universal theory explaining why this phenomenon occurs. Nonetheless, this thesis will assert that explanations of gentrification must be based upon multi-causational exegeses. More specifically, while a sole antecedent of gentrification can not be determined, this thesis will conclude by arguing that gentrification is the result of a complex interplay between a number of variables that occurs when a set of particular preconditions is present.

#### **1.4 PURPOSE OF THE THESIS**

In contrast to the explanations currently dominating the gentrification debate, this thesis will argue that gentrifiers gentrify because they *can*, and not because they *must*. The



historical causes of gentrification will be explained and deconstructed in order to argue that gentrification is a transient, not a cyclical phenomenon, and that it would have occurred whether the process were carried out entirely by women or entirely by men.

The purpose of this thesis is to furthermore explain, analyze and deconstruct the two main theoretical positions, consumption and production based approaches, which constitute the bulk of gentrification discourse. The intent of this thesis is to disprove existing explanations of gentrification, which are unable to provide an adequate rationale as to why gentrification occurs in some neighbourhoods, but not in other neighbourhoods.

As part of this analysis of the existing gentrification debate, I will argue in Chapter seven that gentrification occurs due to a variety of reasons as opposed to one monolithic explanation or theory. Essentially, gentrification happens as a result of the complex multi-causal interplay between the following variables:

- Aesthetics (e.g. proximity and number of large trees, higher density of streetscape amenities, historical buildings, architecture, historical preservation);
- Demographics (e.g. larger number of empty nesters, more active and visible gay population, delay in childbearing, the increase in women choosing careers rather than childbearing, and the increase in affluent new immigrants);
- Economics (e.g. newly gentrifying areas offer bohemians and students greater affordable housing options, supply of gentrifiable properties);
- Post-industrialism (e.g. the rise of a new upwardly mobile middle class);
- Post-modern economy (e.g. growth and rapid expansion of globalization, rise of service/new economy employment, new sources of wealth creation – which in turn lead to new consumption and capital investment patterns);

- Location (e.g. proximity of gentrifying and gentrified areas to business/employment areas or to major transit corridors, synergies created by proximity to other gentrifying areas);
- Government (e.g. government housing grant programs often give developers the necessary incentive needed in order to initiate the gentrification of neighbourhoods, home improvement grants given to renters/purchasers and repaid through increased property taxes, creation or amendment of neighbourhood plan that encourages new development via a land use change, tax credits and grants which encourage infill and adaptive reuse housing, shift in capital spending towards public transportation infrastructure, creation of green belts/ urban growth boundaries, and allowing the intensification of land);
- Transportation (e.g. access and proximity to transit and major arterial roadways and freeways);
- Environmental (e.g. rise of anti-sprawl sentiments in society, change in lifestyle choices and patterns);
- Spiritual and philosophical (e.g. rejection of a consumption-oriented lifestyle often associated with suburban living);
- Historical (i.e. humans have generally congregated towards central areas and have consistently gravitated towards urban areas and lifestyles);
- Policing (e.g. "broken glass theory" type policing, which has led to the perception of safer streets and a reduction in crime); and
- Cultural Capital (e.g. investment in older housing within historical neighbourhoods).

The generalizations in the list above are not set in stone; the purpose of the list of variables is to highlight some of the gaps and issues emerging in gentrification discourse, which need to be addressed. Through a brief analysis of these variables, this thesis will conclude by suggesting new possible directions in which gentrification discourse should be directed. More specifically, it will recommend that researchers

avoid looking at or understanding the causes of gentrification in purely linear terms, but rather view it as a complex process that occurs as a result of a multitude of reasons.

### **1.5 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY**

This thesis will critically explore accepted conventional theories concerning the causes of gentrification, and it is hoped that it will benefit the work of academic researchers and those who wish to better explain and understand gentrification. Moreover, it is intended that this will facilitate the opening of new research directions on gentrification. The content of this thesis is not immediately applicable or relevant to practitioners (e.g. Social Workers, Urban Planners, etc.) who work in the field of inner-city rejuvenation or revitalization. Nonetheless, the content of this thesis has a role to play in the work of academics that train and educate practitioners. It is essential that academics and educators familiarize themselves with current and accepted theories and with the subject matter contained in journals in areas in which they teach, study and write.

By staying informed, academics are better positioned to educate the future practitioners that they teach. Thus, academics need to be the agents that bridge the gap that exists between theory and practice. The importance of theory to practitioners is that it challenges various positions taken, or the ethics and models employed in day-to-day practice. A professional practitioner must be cognizant of these theoretical constructs and should let theory inform practice.

Overall, it is hoped that this thesis will indirectly assist in the development of an effective interface between the practice of inner-city revitalization planning and gentrification research, in a way that recognizes the importance of theory and practice as mutually reinforcing in the achievement of change and practical outcomes. As discussed, with

reference to gentrification studies and theory perspectives, planning practice must not ignore theory, but rather use theory strategically. This prevents the planning practitioner from adopting naïve notions of empowerment, community coherence and a revitalized spatial environment and will provide an effective context for the interplay between research, policy and planning practices. Thus, this thesis takes the position that theoretical perspectives such as those offered herein are tools that indirectly strengthen practitioner approaches.

## **1.6 RESEARCH METHODS**

The exclusive research method employed in this thesis was a literary survey and analysis of scholarly gentrification research and discourse. The purpose of this literature review was to review arguments and problems associated with the Marxist and post-industrialist (Consumptionist) camps. In this review, there was a focus on Australian, European and North American journal articles and books that pertained to one of the two main theoretical camps. Thus, a systematic review of material within gentrification literature was carried out based on the separation of material into two clearly identifiable theoretical camps. In particular, this survey of gentrification literature concentrated on the main academic contributors to gentrification debate. More specifically, this thesis relied heavily upon the work of Marxist researchers such as Neil Smith, Eric Clark, Raymond Williams and Peter Williams, and on post-industrialist researchers such as David Ley, Robert Beauregard, Chris Hamnett, Liz Bondi, Damaris Rose, Tim Butler, Loretta Lees and Jon Caulfield. All of these authors have been recognized by their peers as having significantly contributed towards the gentrification debate.

The aim of the literature review was to survey the pertinent arguments within gentrification debate so that linear and universal explanations of gentrification could be found, analyzed and deconstructed. A cultural materialist and Marxist economic analysis was applied to the subject gentrification literature in order to properly synthesize the material. This exercise was necessary as the purpose of this thesis is to provide rationale as to why a multi-causal explanation of gentrification is needed in order to understand gentrification.

### **1.6.1 Limitations**

There are three primary limitations to this study. Firstly, the scope of the analysis and the origin of scholarly literature on gentrification used in this thesis are limited geographically, as all of the academic literature cited is Australian, British or North American and is written in English. The rationale behind not expanding the scope of this study to include other parts of the world is due to the fact that the differences in causes, processes and extents of gentrification between contemporary western cities and non-western cities are too varied to incorporate adequately within the scope of this thesis.

The second limitation of this thesis is that there will be no empirical evidence gathered in support of this study's potential challenge to accepted gentrification theories. It is not the intent of this thesis to gather empirical evidence, nor would it seem likely that it would further gentrification discourse as there are many problems associated with trying to quantify whether or not a uni-monolithic or a multi-causal approach is needed to explain the causes of gentrification. In other words, one could not readily ascertain that x percent of gentrification is due to a uni-monolithic cause as opposed to a multitude of causal variables. In this sense, it is hoped that this thesis will challenge

conventional theories of gentrification, and thereby open up new areas of study within the area of gentrification research.

Lastly, it is important to point out that there are always both hidden and obvious agendas, biases and subjectivity present in scholarly work. Avoiding such biases and agendas is not entirely possible due to the fact that researchers are often unaware of the multitude of layers hidden within our own subconsciousness. For example, while conducting the research for this thesis, I made both conscious and subconscious choices as to which articles or books I would include. As there are hundreds, if not thousands, of articles and books written on gentrification, I have had to make decisions based on what was most applicable and best suited for the particular scope of this thesis. Moreover, as this thesis is limited in scope, in a broader sense, limitations arose in regards to the level of analysis due to the lack of compatibility, i.e. authors may use the term gentrification rather differently, or approach its study from quite a different theoretical perspective. Therefore, I recognize that I have had an agenda (i.e. choosing authors and material relevant and pertinent to the scope of this thesis) while conducting research as part of this thesis.

## 2.0 THE GENTRIFICATION DEBATE: A FALSE CLOSURE?

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The course of the gentrification debate is charted, in particular with respect to the rise of the post-industrial consensus in gentrification studies that followed the appearance of Rose's seminal article that reconsidered gentrification from a Marxist perspective (Rose 1984).

Hamnett's periodic reviews (Hamnett and P. Williams 1980, Hamnett 1984 and 1991) document the change in the treatment of gentrification from a phenomenon within the history of urbanization, to an instance of the ongoing class struggle in theory. This transformation of the terms of the debate complicates exposition. There has been considerable evolution both in the internal characteristics of the debate itself and in the arguments taken from debates in social theory at large, which have been marshalled in support of the various positions assumed in gentrification discourse. I will heretofore refer to these as external arguments.

These external debates, which include production versus consumption as alternative bases for class formation, the relative state of structure versus agency in social explanation, Marxism versus Weberianism, and the very nature of society itself are substantial, and they must be addressed in any serious account of gentrification. It is necessary to organize the material into these two camps to ensure that a discussion of the material does not become unmanageable. I will focus the internal and then the external gentrification debates.

One of the reasons gentrification is held to be of interest is for the light it casts upon these external debates. In fact, the opposite is the case. Gentrification can be understood only after the issues raised by these wider debates have been addressed. The strategy, followed by many who engage in the gentrification debate, of arguing *from* gentrification *to* modern society (whose characteristics, it is implied, we already and otherwise know and agree on – R. Williams 1977, p. 80, see below), is likely to fail.

The belief that gentrification does provide a message for our times has polarized the debate into a left / right political dichotomy, or into production and consumption camps. On the radical production side, there are the Marxist theories of gentrification led by Neil Smith<sup>9</sup> (1979, 1987 and 1996a). Leading the liberals are the humanist, often explicitly anti-Marxist theories promoted by Ley (1980, 1986, 1987). However, Hamnett appears to speak for a general consensus (Clarke 1987, 1995 and Mills 1988) when he argues that each of these theories only offer partial explanations that can and should be fitted together to provide *the* explanation of gentrification. Feminist criticisms of the neglect of gender issues in the gentrification debate do not challenge this aspect of the consensus: "gentrification entails the differentiation of a new urban middle-class from other elements of the middle-class engaged in suburban or exurban strategies" (Bondi 1991, p. 193). Bundy's central complaint is that the gentrification debate has not sufficiently considered the role of women in these class differentiation strategies.

It is the purpose of this chapter to initiate a challenge to this consensus. The gentrification debate claims to highlight questions of structure and agency in social life

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<sup>9</sup> Neil Smith (1996) defined *GENTRIFICATION* as the process... "by which poor and working-class neighbourhoods in the inner-city are refurbished by an influx of private capital and middle-class homebuyers and renters.... a dramatic yet unpredicted reversal of what most twentieth-century urban theories had been predicting as the fate of the central and inner-city."



(N. Smith and P. Williams 1986), but it rules out agency in the way it conceptualizes gentrification. The problem with this direction in gentrification discourse, is that it does not facilitate the adequate answering of fundamental questions pertaining to why, when and where (Hamnett 1991).

Jackson notes "explanations of... gentrification are often divided into the demographic-ecological and the political-economic" (1989, p.56). The position of this thesis is to use a slightly different classification: neighbourhood lifecycle versus post-industrialism.

Neighbourhood lifecycle is the hypothesis that physical change in the urban fabric at large promotes social change in the neighbourhood. In contrast, another definition of post industrialism is the hypothesis that social change at large promotes physical change in the neighbourhood. The reason for preferring this classification is that it more effectively explains the influence of past ideas on urbanization and urban growth in the gentrification debate. It is not just a rewording however: neighbourhood lifecycle and post industrialism both contain aspects of demographic-ecological and political economic explanations.

Prior to 1984, neighbourhood lifecycle explanations were historically more popular in North American literature, whereas post-industrialism was given greater consideration in the work of British scholars and literary discussions in the United Kingdom. However, since 1984, post-industrialism has dominated the debate, the most notable exception being Neil Smith's rent gap argument. A detailed discussion of Smith's arguments in favour of a rent gap explanation of the causes of gentrification will be made in Chapter six. This chapter will demonstrate that the issues in the gentrification debate are not really the claims of structure versus agency, but rather those of base versus

superstructure. Chapter three will discuss the context in which the models of agency employed in the gentrification debate are derived, and Chapter four, their relation to structure. In Chapter five I plan to present an alternative account of agency and consciousness, which is also a description of the conditions of modern life. To argue that gentrifiers gentrify because they can (i.e. because they really do display agency) requires confronting some very deeply-held beliefs.

It may be true that the categorization of behaviour into two parts such as structure versus agency may be regarded as unnecessary and unhelpful in social analysis (Shields 1990, p. 270. and Redfern 1997b. p. 1335-1355). As inadequate as the structure-agency dualism may be, it is hardly improved by linking it to base and superstructure. In fact, there is no role for agency at all in the base-superstructure metaphor of social organization and development because activities which take place in the superstructure (for example the arts or local cultures) and which therefore appear to have the character of agency, are theorized in terms of subsidiary metaphors. They are seen in some way reflections, typifications or mediations of relations in the base. All developments in the superstructure must therefore be determined, in the last instance, by developments in the base (Williams 1977, p. 81).

The problem of agency has been recognized in the past and attempts have been made to deal with it. Uri's (1981) categories of "economy, civil society and the state" represent one such attempt to give agency a role within the base-superstructure framework. Further, it is also true that there have been numerous attempts to rectify the imbalance of power between the base and the superstructure, in order to permit the superstructure

some reciprocal influence over the base: for example, Althusser (1970) borrowed the concept of "over-determination" from psychoanalysis to this end.

However, as Williams insists (1977, p. 80-81), the problem does not lie in inadequate theorizing of relations between base and superstructure, but in the *a priori* and unnecessary separation of a whole way of life into idealistically conceptualized categories, which are only tenuously linked to each other. For example, many academic researchers argue that production and consumption as such (e.g. the economy) can be separated from the particular forms (culture and the arts) in which that production and consumption are undertaken (e.g. civil society). A further consequence is the multiplication of categories in the superstructure (e.g. the state). Seen in this light, Uri's strategy for overcoming the problems of base superstructure appears to be inadequate (Frankel 1983).

Use of the base-superstructure metaphor negates inquiry and replaces it with the demonstration of already and otherwise known truths or "what is already and otherwise known as the basic reality of the material social process is reflected, of course in its own ways, [in the superstructure]" (R. Williams 1997, p. 97). In other words, "There is a persistent presupposition of a knowable (often wholly knowable) reality" (op. cit., p. 103). Superstructure elements are thus of interest only to the extent that they can be fitted into (and so illustrate the nature of) this reality, and not because they have any intrinsic interest in themselves. Not surprisingly, they become very difficult to operationalize. Goodwin notes Uri's lack of success "at transferring the concept [of civil society] from abstract to empirical research" (1989, p. 154). As I will discuss at length, post-industrialism, in particular, suffers from these problems.

In contrast, the thesis here is that the very way in which thinking about gentrification is conducted is of interest in exploring the conditions of contemporary society, whether we are able to gentrify or not. As a phenomenon of modern culture, gentrification (or gentrifiers) cannot be explained or understood in isolation from that culture; nor can it be defined in opposition to it, as the post-modern 'other' of contemporary society (see Shields 1990, p. 276). This partly explains why it is difficult to establish a universal definition of gentrification (see Section 2.3.3 below).

In this thesis I shall argue that the approaches and perspectives by which gentrification research is conducted, should be of interest to many social science researchers as it sheds light on the way we live today, whether we are able to gentrify or not. The fact that gentrification is difficult even to define (see Section 2.3.3 below) proves the point that: it is not that "gentrification is a chaotic concept", but rather it is the rationale of those who make this argument that is confused (Warde 1991), because their approach presumes that gentrification has to be isolated from the whole way of life to which it is intrinsically connected before it can be defined.

Despite the apparent sophistication of the arguments employed in the gentrification debate, I believe that they all rely on a rather simplistic base-superstructure mode of theorizing in which neighbourhood lifecycle and post-industrialism exhibit the characters of base and superstructure respectively. Therefore, none give an adequate account of agency and, instead, they tend to over-explain.

That is if these devices could provide adequate explanation of a handle on the gentrification process, the problem for gentrification studies would not lie in explaining the existence of gentrification in the areas where it had already occurred. Rather, it

would lie in explaining why it had not occurred everywhere in which there were (potentially) gentrifiable properties. One immediate reason for this tendency to over-explain is that both explanatory devices rely on concentric zone notions of urban growth and differentiation. The roots of the neighbourhood lifecycle model are clearly found in the Burgess model of concentric zones (Burgess 1967). However post-industrialism displays equally close links to the Alonso model of urban differentiation (this model will be discussed in forthcoming portions of this thesis).

On the other hand while there is a tendency to over-explain in the intra-urban case, there is similar tendency to under-explanation in the inter-urban case. Neither post-industrialism or neighbourhood lifecycle provides any obvious reasons to account for why gentrification occurs in some cities and not in others; when presumably all cities in the advanced capitalist countries would experience rent gaps (N. Smith 1979 and 1996a, Schaffer and N. Smith 1986), and/or the onset phenomenon associated with post-industrial society. Hamnett (1991, p. 176) makes this point, though he does not identify the causes of the problem in the reliance on the concentric zone models of the two approaches. Rather, consistent with the consensus already outlined, he sees the solution as lying in some sort of synthesis of the two approaches. Given their basic assumptions, however, it is unlikely that such a synthesis would have any greater success in specifying the occurrence of gentrification than the two approaches do separately.

The present consensus can therefore be challenged in three fundamental ways. The first is that researchers are always trying implicitly to accommodate an explanation of gentrification within one of those concentric zone models (of an already and otherwise

known society). The explanation of gentrification is held to be complete once the gentrifier has been situated in his or her gentrified home. Consequently, questions of agency, of the choice of human life (Giddens 1987, p. 220) are ruled out of the picture, since, it is insisted that gentrifiers gentrify out of necessity. Herein lies the real problem of the argument, that necessity is itself reduced to an issue of class constitution.

## **2.2 LINGERING TRACES IN THE EXPLANATION OF GENTRIFICATION: NEIGHBOURHOOD LIFECYCLE AND POST-INDUSTRIALISM**

In this section, the ideas underlying neighbourhood lifecycle and post-industrialism will be further identified and discussed. Both types of explanation emphasize structure at the expense of agency (see Hamnett 1984, p. 296-297 on life cycle models and p. 304 and p. 313 on post-industrialism; see also Rose 1984). This section begins with an explanation of the neighbourhood lifecycle, as it existed until around 1984, the year of Hamnett's first solo review of the literature, and Rose's expose of mix'n'match methods in Marxist explanations of gentrification.

### **2.2.1 The Debate to 1984: Lifecycle Models of Gentrification**

According to Neil Smith and Peter Williams (1986), early research on gentrification tended to take causes for granted and concentrate on effects. This was because the effects "were taken by many to be a timely answer to inner-city decay" (op. cit. p.4). Gentrification was thus to be welcomed for its ability to combat the apparently inevitable drift into decay and abandonment over the course of the neighbourhood lifecycle. While post-industrialism sees gentrification as a process which overcomes the operation of neighbourhood lifecycles, the neighbourhood lifecycle approach itself sees gentrification as one more stage in the lifecycle itself. Decay and abandonment are no longer the

final stages of the lifecycle, but merely transitional states. Examples of this are found in the work of Neil Smith (1979a, 1982, 1987a, 1987b, 1996a), and Peter Smith and Lawrence (Larry) McCann (1981).

Two ideas dominate in the concept of neighbourhood lifecycle. First the lifecycle is inevitable in the history of a neighbourhood. Following the use of the term lifecycle, this inevitability is due to an implicit conception of the unit of analysis, be it a complete city or solely a city block, in terms of its being an organism. Thus, Lang (1982) presents a stage cycle beginning with 1) "healthy viable neighbourhoods", proceeding via 2) "incipient decline" 3), "clearly declining", 4) "accelerated decline" and ending with 5) "abandonment". The medical analogy employed by calling neighbourhoods "healthy" or "viable", clearly betrays the organicism implicit in such thinking. Lang goes so far as to use the term "triage" in discussing housing policy options for residential neighbourhoods. He uses this term to therefore describe policies of selective abandonment of neighbourhoods deemed "hopeless cases."

The second idea dominant in neighbourhood lifecycle discourse is that the cycle conducts itself out in economic terms. Competition between groups leads to residential differentiation of communities, or "natural areas". This competition takes place at the economic level (Ley 1986). Thus, the natural expression of the natural life of the neighbourhood is in terms of housing prices.

Lang (1982) argued that urban lifecycle is a primary paradigm in urban theory. Using the aforementioned classification, he explained the onset of incipient decline as occurring "when a neighbourhood starts to lose its competitive edge". The loss of competitive edge demonstrates that the neighbourhood is beginning to lose the vigour of

youth and starting to weaken. However, the evidence for this weakening lies in the house prices which the properties can command, indicating the extent to which the residents inhabiting the neighbourhood are able to compete with other communities.

Peter Smith and Larry McCann summarize these themes:

As houses age,... they tend to become less competitive within the city's expanding housing market; and as their competitiveness declines they are filtered down through groups of lower and lower status (population succession), initially for owner-occupation, but later for rental occupancy. This is explained in two ways: lower-status groups cannot afford to own their own homes, and, as maintenance costs rise for an ageing housing stock, the absentee owners are forced to crowd more tenants into their buildings in order to secure an economic return. Dwelling conversions (land use succession) are thus associated with a firmly entrenched pattern of economic and social decline which in turn is hastened by the conversion process. Eventually, structural deterioration becomes pronounced and, in its "abandoned" state, the neighbourhood is reduced to a place of last resort; its buildings have little value and their sites are no longer considered to be in economic use (P. Smith and McCann 1981, p. 540).

In this process, structure dominates over agency. Smith and McCann observe that:

Although cautionary notes are introduced, to the effect that decline can be arrested in its early stages, and neighbourhoods improved, the planning orientation of the models causes attention to be concentrated on the phenomenon of progressive deterioration as a fate that cannot be avoided *unless* preventative measures are taken...

Either the market must then take steps to "recapture" their value, by redeveloping them for productive use, or if it fails to do so (because of lack of demand), public intervention must be appealed to. The two processes of residential land use change are therefore accorded distinctive phases in the succession sequence, conversion as the symptom of decline and redevelopment as its cure (ibid. – emphasis in original).

Thus the role of agency is essentially reactive. The operations of the structural effects are toward decline and abandonment.

In Neil Smith's rent gap model, the description of the visible effects of the process at work echoes the sequence described by Peter Smith and Larry McCann. These are:

new construction and first phase of use, landlordism, blockbusting and blowout, redlining, abandonment. [In Neil Smith 1979a] the sequence was incorrectly described as a depreciation cycle rather than a devalorization cycle. Depreciation refers strictly to changes in price whereas devalorization is a deeper economic process implying the loss



or negation of value as a necessary part of the valorization process (N. Smith 1982, p.146).

This "deep economic process" is as inexorable as the processes of organic decay depicted in conventional accounts, although the former is viewed from a Marxist frame of reference.

### **2.2.2 Post-industrialism**

While "the loss of a neighbourhood's competitive edge" (Lang, 1982) implies the existence of other neighbourhoods, the tendency of neighbourhood lifecycle analysis is to concentrate upon changes within the neighbourhood itself. The focus of post-industrialism, by contrast, is on changes in society at large, which have imposed gentrification upon certain neighbourhoods. The coming of post-industrial society, it is held, has created a new middle class, whose novelty lies in the fact of its residing in the inner-city, rather than with the old middle class in the suburbs (Ley 1980, 1987a).

All sides in the debate invoke post-industrialism. The principal difference between left and right interpretations is whether it represents a new stage in capitalism development or the beginning of its end. The difference is essentially one of scale. The liberal right argues that the change in social organization, which has brought about gentrification, is a fundamental one. Social analysis should not therefore continue to be in thrall to nineteenth century concerns (see Neil Smith and Peter Williams 1986, p.5). The form in which consumption is undertaken is held now to be of greater importance than that in which production is undertaken. The left interpretation of these changes is in terms of class composition and recomposition in a changing, but still fundamentally capitalist

society (Dickens 1990, Friedman 1983, Meiksins 1986, and Walker and Greenberg 1982).

### **2.2.3 Post-industrialism and Neighbourhood Lifecycle as Fundamental Alternative Hypotheses in the Explanation of Gentrification**

Participants in the gentrification debate do not describe their positions on gentrification in terms of the definitions offered here. Nonetheless, it may be seen that ultimately they all fall into one of these two camps. Hamnett (1984), for example, identified five types of explanations for gentrification then extant in the literature. These were:

- 1) the impact of city size, and changes in the trade-off between preference for space and accessibility;
- 2) changes in the demographic and household structure of the population;
- 3) lifestyle and preference shifts;
- 4) changes in relative house price inflation and investment; and
- 5) changes in the employment base and occupational structure of certain large cities.

(Hamnett 1984, p.298)

Hamnett's five categories can be reclassified under the headings of the two definitions presented above: explanations one and four would come under "neighbourhood lifecycle" and three and five, under "post-industrialism". Explanation two could come under either heading, depending on whether the changes in demography or household structure are regarded as autonomous or as deriving from post-industrialism.

Neil Smith, operating from a Marxist perspective, also offered five reasons for the occurrence of gentrification:

- a) suburbanization and the emergence of the rent gap;

- b) the deindustrialization of advanced capitalist economies and the growth of white collar employment;
  - c) the spatial centralization and simultaneous decentralization of capital;
  - d) the falling rate of profit and the cyclical movement of capital; and
  - e) demographic changes and changes in consumption patterns.
- (N. Smith 1986, p.22)

Smith's reasons (a) and (d) are examples of "neighbourhood lifecycle", whereas (b) and (e) are responses to the question of the existence of post-industrial society. Again (c) could fall under either heading depending on the causes attributed to the phenomenon in question.

To see how these models act as alternatives under both conventional and Marxist analyses of gentrification, it is useful to compare those factors discussed by Neil Smith (1986, p.22) and Hamnett (1984, p.298) which it can be argued lie within the post-industrial hypothesis (categories 2, 3, and 5 for Hamnett; b, e and c for Smith):

Hamnett	Smith
Changes in Employment Base	De-Industrialization
Changes in Occupational Structure	Growth of White-Collar Employment
Changes in Demographic and Household Structure	Demographic Changes
Lifestyle and Preference Shifts	Changes in Consumption Patterns
	Centralization and Decentralization of Capital

Where Hamnett refers merely to "changes" and 'shifts", typical of the postulates of post-industrialism, Neil Smith's categorization can be re-arranged into a definite sequence, which it is possible to subsume under the general heading of "centralization and

decentralization of capital". However that sequence is one, which would not be opposed by the proponents of a post-industrial societal explanation and view (N. Smith and P. Williams 1986, p.56).

Neil Smith and Peter Williams (1986, p.4) identified five major themes in the gentrification debate:

- a) production-side versus consumption-side explanations;
- b) the question of the emergence of a "post-industrial" city;
- c) the relative importance of social structure vis-à-vis agency in the gentrification process;
- d) is there a new middle class and what is its role?
- e) what are the costs of gentrification now and in the future?

The first four of these themes also ultimately reduce either to questions of neighbourhood lifecycle or to the transition to post-industrial society. Concerning the first theme, Neil Smith and Peter Williams argue that there has been a transition from lifecycle empiricist explanations of gentrification to ones involving a "wider framework" including changes in family structure, the role of women in the work force, and the expansion of the educated middle class. If their point is taken, however, then themes (b), (c) and (d) may be seen simply as elaborations of theme (a); that is, they reduce ultimately to either neighbourhood lifecycle processes or the transition to post-industrial society.

The fifth theme, the costs of gentrification, does not address itself to accounts of the origins of gentrification, but the answer given will depend on the explanatory framework adopted. If neighbourhood lifecycle explanations are preferred, then the question will

tend to be posed in terms of property values. If a post-industrialist perspective is preferred, the question will tend to be posed in terms of personal or social costs, including the costs placed upon those displaced. The assessment of costs is thus more likely to be optimistic in neighbourhood lifecycle, compared to post-industrial explanations.

As noted, choice of the explanatory device on which to rely has not been simply a matter of theoretical or political preference. The same explanatory frameworks occur in both Marxist and non-Marxist accounts of gentrification. Rather, the significant difference in whether neighbourhood lifecycle or post-industrialism was adopted as the basic explanatory framework appears to have depended more on geography than on political persuasion.

In North America, planning issues are framed in terms of how social change may best be accommodated within physical structures, and planning decisions are implemented via land-use controls, namely zoning regulations. Urban planners assign socio-economic activities to different parts of the city, and as long as the building erected conforms to the use specified in the zoning bylaw, construction cannot be prevented (Grant 1982). If an area is zoned for single-family dwellings, then single families must occupy buildings erected there only. In other words, only single families are permitted to live in a single-family area, unless the municipality passes a variation in the zoning bylaws (Hodge 1998). Zoning variations however apply to a specified area, not to a specified building. They always therefore affect a whole neighbourhood, and are nearly always politically contested.

This planning environment, in which subdividing a single-family dwelling and allowing it to change into multifamily occupancy is much more difficult than in the United Kingdom, is therefore very conducive to neighbourhood lifecycle interpretations of social change in neighbourhoods (see P. Smith and McCann 1981). If housing is no longer considered suitable for the middle classes, it cannot simply be subdivided and let out for working class occupancy (albeit there are exceptions within North America). Consequently, it becomes run down and eventually abandoned. It is not therefore the organic underpinnings of the neighbourhood lifecycle concept which explains neighbourhood decline, but the planning context in which it is situated. Gentrification studies in Canada and the United States continually discuss struggles over zoning bylaws/ordinances, and thus the involvement of the municipal authorities in the gentrification process (N. Smith 1979a and 1996a, Ley 1986 and Mills 1988).

In contrast to North America, planning issues in the United Kingdom are framed in terms of how existing physical structures may best be modified to respond to changing circumstances, with planning decisions implemented via physical development controls that are placed separately on each building (Grant 1982). In the United Kingdom physical planning regulations also determine the type of building, which may be erected in any area, but they are much less specific about its use. For example, three building sites side-by-side may be required to look identical, but one may be a single-family dwelling, the next subdivided into apartments, and the third used as office accommodation. Since the planning philosophy in the United Kingdom is one of overseeing the adaptation of physical structures to accommodate social change, post-industrialism, where physical change also appears to follow social change, would appear

to be a much more obvious interpretation of neighbourhood change than in Canada or in the United States.

Since every building requires a development permit, changes in use of an existing building affect only its immediate neighbourhoods and are rarely politically contested at local authority level. Political struggle over gentrification tends to be conducted in terms of plans for improving the residential environment, traffic schemes and the like, rather than with changes in land use policy (P. Williams 1986). The only major exception to this gentrification is the case of the gentrification of London's docklands (A. Smith 1989). There however, gentrification is occurring on land specifically zoned for the purpose, the London Docklands Enterprise Zone. The emphasis in studies in the United Kingdom is on changes in financing of tenures as explanations of gentrification (Hamnett and Randolph, 1986, P. Williams 1986). Again, this tends to be taken for granted, and ascribed to differences in political or theoretical awareness. Nonetheless, this is because the immediate problems of attempting to secure a change in the use of a building are nowhere near as insurmountable as they are in Canada or the United States. The planning context in the United Kingdom is equally important in setting the agenda for gentrification studies in the United Kingdom as it is in North America. This is why United Kingdom gentrification studies tend to examine predominantly gentrification properties, whereas North American gentrification studies look at gentrified neighbourhoods (Redfern 1997b).

The gentrification debate still operates within the original context set by the Chicago school of urban sociology, even though explicit reliance on its principles has faded away. The Chicago school's notion of social organization as human ecology always

contained the metaphor of base and superstructure. The theoretical basis of neighbourhood lifecycle has been traced to the Burgess model of urban growth and residential differentiation (Section 2.3.1 above). However post-industrialism also has its origins in a model of urban growth and residential differentiation. The debate on gentrification can then be interpreted as one concerning the best places to locate gentrification, with post-industrialism placing it in the superstructure and neighbourhood lifecycle placing it in the base (Redfern 1997a).

Inner-city gentrification challenges the conclusion that such a pattern of residential segregation by income with the poor in the centre and the rich in the outskirts is the inevitable result of competition for urban land. However, as Rose points out:

The problem with this line of critique is that to point out that the phenomenon of gentrification has confounded the predictions of land-market theorists about land values and land uses in the inner-city as Smith (1982, p.141) does, does not amount to a critique of the theoretical underpinnings of land-market models (Rose 1984, p.49).

Neoclassical land-market models are underpinned by the comparative static approach to modeling economic change. Two equilibrium situations are considered, which differ in one single characteristic, for example the presence of a tax on land. One equilibrium is called "before" and the other "after". The presence in the one of the characteristic under investigation (the tax) and its absence in the other is then held to account for the differences between the two equilibria, and hence to account for change over time (imposing or removing the tax leads to a change from the one equilibrium to the other). Gentrification would then be explained by a change in the characteristics of the good to be maximized:



It is quite possible to model or predict that the inner-city will be inhabited by wealthy people within a neoclassical framework. All that is needed is to replace a 'space maximizing' criterion with a "free-time maximizing" criterion. To do this it is not necessary to alter the underlying assumptions of consumer sovereignty and purely exogenous changes affecting "tastes and preferences" (Rose 1984, p.49).

Post-industrialism tries to account for precisely such changes in maximization criteria.

Like neo-classical economics, it too is divided into before and after states: before – industrialism, and after – post-industrialism. There is the same exogenous change in "tastes and preferences". "Before", everyone wants to live in the suburbs, "after" they all want to live downtown.

The consensus in the gentrification debate is that an explanation of gentrification depends on unifying neighbourhood lifecycle and post-industrialist approaches. In fact they already share a common perspective, that of neoclassical economics, and a common, positivist, epistemology (Rose 1984, p. 47). Post-industrial explanations have dominated the gentrification debate subsequent to 1984. However, as might be imagined, the explanatory potential of both models is extremely limited: so limited in fact that it is surprising to see that they have continued to dominate the literature.

### **2.3 THE DEBATE SINCE 1984: THE RISE OF THE POST-INDUSTRIALIST CONSENSUS**

As noted, the focus of gentrification is upon changes in society at large, which have imposed gentrification upon certain neighbourhoods. The focus upon wider social changes as an explanation of gentrification is one to which both Marxist and conventional explanations of gentrification subscribe. However, post-industrialism is often quite explicitly anti-Marxist in its intentions. The explanations of gentrification then

become little more than a peg on which to hang a critique of Marxist theory in general and are typically couched in terms of the importance of agency over structure.

The anti-Marxist proponents of the post-industrialist hypothesis of gentrification are led by David Ley, who is subsequently credited with establishing a school of "humanistic geography" during the 1970 (Duncan and Ley 1982, Ley 1983, 1987b). "Humanistic geography" is ultimately concerned with the status of agency in social explanation and that human beings should be treated humane. Ley has argued on a number of occasions (notably Duncan and Ley 1982, Ley 1982) that Marxism is in principle incapable of so treating its agents because of the ontological status of class in Marxism and the holistic claims this requires (Duncan and Ley 1982, p.38) – what would now be described as its totalizing meta-narrative (Connor 1989).

The post-industrialist interpretation of gentrification forms a very important part of this critique. Gentrification demonstrates most clearly the rise of a new middle class, both in the very public manner in which they consume their housing (Jager 1986, Hamnett and P. Williams 1979 – see N. Smith and P. Williams 1986, p.6), and also in the fact that, in espousing inner-city locations for their pursuit of the public display of housing consumption, they buck the trend of up to 200 years of capitalist urbanization which has always associated new forms of housing consumption with new developments on the outskirts of a city (Hamnett 1984). This, they argue, has the gravest implications for Marxist social theory for the following three reasons. First, the continued existence of a middle class is fundamentally compromising for the status of Marxist explanation as a whole (Duncan and Ley 1982, p.48). Further, the fact that there has been a rise of a

new middle class contradicts the Marxist claim that capitalist society is in a process of evolution toward just two classes: capitalists and workers (Ley 1982).

Second, this class is defined, not in production, as Marxists would have it, but in consumption: as society makes the transition from industrial to post-industrial society, this moves away from a concern with questions of production to those of consumption. Gentrifiers are, in this view, the shock troops in the coming of post-industrial society (Mills 1988).

Third and finally, post-industrialists argue that their account of gentrification is one which, because of its emphasis on consumption issues, supplies a much needed emphasis on the role of agency in questions of social life, a role which Marxist explanations must inevitably disregard (Duncan and Ley 1982, Ley 1980, 1982, Hamnett 1984, 1991).

Neil Smith has consistently challenged this interpretation of gentrification and its implications for the status of Marxist theory in urban analysis. For Smith, capitalism is above all a process of uneven development (N. Smith 1982, 1984). First World and Third World, metropolis and region, town and country, suburb and slum all stand in functionally connected but unevenly developed relations to one another. These relations are not static, but are continually evolving. Uneven development creates suburbs, which depreciate in value as new suburbs are created (N. Smith 1979a, N. Smith and LeFaivre 1984). The creation of these new suburbs is itself predicated on the continued growth of wealth in the city, which translates into higher ground rents generally. Eventually a rent gap develops whereby the returns from the capitalized

ground rent exceed the cost of redeveloping the buildings in the old suburbs (N. Smith 1979a). Developers take advantage of this rent gap and the middle class respond to the opportunities thus provided for them. In this account, gentrification is a child of capitalism where Marxist reasoning is still relevant and Marxist categories may still apply (N. Smith 1988).

Smith's arguments in favour of his position have evolved considerably since the first publication of the rent gap hypothesis (N. Smith 1979a, b, 1982, 1984, 1987, 1996a, 1996b). Fundamentally, however, they still depend on the non-Marxist notion of neighbourhood lifecycle, but seek to provide it with a Marxist motor. Consequently, the right's principal criticism continues to question Smith's arguments most precisely at the point which he is most anxious to defend, namely that gentrification depends on changes in production relations and not on consumer taste. Hamnett (1984, 1991, 2000) accurately identifies the weakness at the core of Smith's arguments. If gentrification is to be explained in terms of the creation of a rent gap, and developers' exploitation of this, how is it that gentrification is only to be found in a few areas of a certain number of large cities? If uneven development is the characteristic feature of a globally encompassing capitalism, as Smith would argue, why is gentrification not occurring in more places than the few in which it actually is found? Smith has never provided an answer to this question to satisfy his critics on this point.

Criticisms of Smith's arguments were so cogent that the non-Smithian left felt compelled to recognize their force and so developed a left version of post-industrialism. Ironically, this meant accepting the post-industrialist hypothesis and providing that with a Marxist motor.

The non-Smithian left began by arguing that Smith's problems lay in his eclecticism rather than in Marxism in general (Rose 1984). They argued following Andrew Sayer (1982) that Smith's eclecticism betrayed the fact that gentrification is a chaotic concept.

Sayer defined the notion of a chaotic concept to refer to the outcome of generalizations about social practice. Generalization groups together phenomena with merely generic similarities, as in the example of small firms. Theoretically informed abstraction, it is argued, would reveal a number of distinct types of small firm, which may have little or nothing in common with each other. This habit, argues the non-Smithian left, characterizes Smith's thinking about gentrification. Gentrification is a complex of processes and phenomena, which cannot usefully be discussed if they are all linked together under a unitary heading such as gentrification. Attention, they argue, should be concentrated on the production of gentrifiers rather than the production (or consumption) of gentrified housing (Beauregard 1986).

The production of gentrifiers approach has stimulated a tremendous amount of debate between left and right (Hamnett 1991, Mills 1988). Since the focus is on gentrifiers, the right can focus on the consumption behaviour of these people, while the left can concentrate on their means of production; so that "means of production of gentrifiers" can be used in the sense both of "means whereby gentrifiers are produced" and "means at the disposal of gentrifiers". This claim of convergence permits the opportunity for the right both to isolate Smith within the Marxist camp, and to counter his criticisms of their position. Both Ley and Mills (1988) are quite skilful at employing Marxist arguments in support, of their own positions. Mills (1988) for example relies considerably on Raymond Williams arguments while at the same time managing to avoid all reference to

the fact that these arguments are addressed toward the development of Marxist reasoning (Sayer 1991, p.5).

Smith's criticisms of the post industrialist's arguments have accordingly been largely defensive (N. Smith 1987a, 1987b). Ley (1987b, p.468) characterizes Smith's position as an "adversarial patrolling of one's own territory". The post-industrial debate as it developed post-1984 has therefore come to form a consensus on three issues: that gentrification is post-modern; that the concept of gentrification is chaotic; and that attention should be concentrated on the production of gentrifiers. These elements are closely intertwined. Presentation of an effective criticism of them; however, requires disentangling them. If these issues are discredited then able to confront the fundamental presumption of the gentrification consensus, namely that gentrification represents a form of class constitution.

### **2.3.1 Is Gentrification Post-modern?**

The idea that the post-industrialist explanation of gentrification is supported by arguments for post-modernism is particularly associated with the humanistic school of geography, with Vancouver, British Columbia, their favoured case study (Ley 1980, 1986, 1987a, Mills 1988). In answering the question "is gentrification post-modern?", this thesis section shows how the humanistic school's version of the original post-industrial thesis runs into difficulties over the status of consciousness and agency, from which they thought that post-modernism could rescue them. This section then describes what post-modernism means to the right in the gentrification debate. Their argument, as presently constituted, does not support the claim that gentrification is post-modern. Nor is there any evidence from the wider debates to support this claim.

Neither, therefore, can it be claimed that gentrification signifies the existence of a new middle class. This thesis is not concerned in this instance about debating the basic issue of whether gentrification does represent a form of class constitution, still less the issue of whether or not a new middle class can be said to exist. Since the gentrification literature references these debates, they will of course have to be discussed, but not in greater detail until chapters three, four and five.

In his earliest account of social change in Vancouver, Ley argued that the development of the Vancouver economy had created a post-industrialist city (Ley 1980). The transition had called forth a "new middle class", which had found political expression in the liberal TEAM civic party. The main plank in the TEAM platform was a commitment to clean up (gentrify) the South side of False Creek. TEAM won power in 1976 and put these plans into action, thereby confirming the emergence of a new middle class in Vancouver, associated with the transition of the Vancouver economy to post-industrialism. TEAM in fact lost control of the Vancouver City Council in 1980, and subsequently dismantled. Most TEAM members joined the conservative NPA. The NPA held power for two years, before losing control to the socialist COPE. The so-called new middle class therefore held power in Vancouver for only four years.

Ley's empirical evidence for the existence of a new middle class can be considered weak (see also 2.3.4 below). According to Ley (1987a, p.45) the "new class" is composed of "young professionals", although there seems to be nothing particularly new about them as such, "architects, teachers, university professors and lawyers", the very occupational categories that were so prominent in the "gentrification of the bourgeoisie" in the nineteenth century (Ley 1986, 1987a). However, as young professionals, the new

middle class of 1970s and 1980s Vancouver were also baby boomers. Their concentration in the ranks of TEAM seems to have been simply a matter of demographics rather than economics, i.e., the NPA represented the politics of an earlier generation, not the politics of a different class situation (Ley 1987a). This is suggested in Ley's account of TEAM's success, "its momentum owed not a little to the spirit of the times in North America, an era of protest and liberal social movements" (Ley 1987a, p.45). What was new about the Vancouver new middle class was that TEAM appeared, briefly, to speak for them.

Despite the question over the historical evidence, Ley held, and continues to hold, the view that TEAM were the representatives of a new middle class who left their mark on the post-industrial (later, post-modern) urban landscape exhibited in the gentrification of False Creek (Ley 1986, 1987a).

Walker and Greenberg (1982a) invited Ley to reconsider his interpretation of this history, pointing *inter alia* to Gershuny's (1978) argument that the post-industrialist thesis confused levels of output with levels of employment, and that social prosperity still continued to depend on productivity in the manufacturing sector. Ley (1982) responded so vigorously to this invitation that he succeeded in transforming the debate from one over his post-industrial thesis into one over Walker and Greenberg's Marxism. Walker and Greenberg's response in reply (Walker and Greenberg 1982b) consequently failed to notice the fact that Ley has only one substantive defence to their original criticisms. This was his argument that post-industrialism does not make the all-inclusive claims which Marxists like Walker and Greenberg inevitably and erroneously imagine it to make, since the stock-in-trade of Marxist theorizing is the making of such all-inclusive



claims. However, if post-industrialism is not to be understood as making the sorts of claims to universality as are made by Marxism, the question that is immediately begged is "where did the consciousness come from?", a question that so inspired TEAM and its new middle class constituency.

From the Marxist perspective, such a change in consciousness would have come from the changes in the forms of production associated with the transition to post-industrial society (should such a change be shown to have occurred). However, this option was not open to Ley, since post-industrialism stresses the importance of consumption over production. Ley could not argue that this change was due to post-industrialism itself, since this would make Ley's account of the changes in Vancouver's political scene as totalizing as any Marxist's explanation might be. Ley in any case had denied the relevance of economic evidence for assessing his non-totalizing account of social change during the transition to post-industrial society (Ley 1982).

Ley therefore was forced to rely on Maslow's (1976) concept of the existence of a hierarchy of needs, in which more refined consumption requirements only become apparent as wealth increases. It is not difficult to see that Maslow's argument has much in common with Marx's definition of subsistence, in its historical and moral component in particular. Accordingly, it suffers from the same deficiencies, namely that it confuses individual with social developments (see Chapter five). As societies develop, new possibilities for production and consumption indeed open up (Pasinetti 1981), but it is not possible to infer from this that the consumption preferences of individuals in any given society alter, as they get wealthier. Their consumption *patterns* may indeed change, but this is not the same thing as suggesting that their consumption *preferences*

have altered. The shape of consumer preferences will only alter as the economy and society develop, not simply as they grow. However, as noted, Ley could not rely on this argument and at the same time claim that his post-industrial thesis was not all-inclusive and in this respect therefore fundamentally different from Marxism.

The only recourse then left to Ley to explain the rise of liberal ideology in the post-industrial city was therefore to infer that the post-industrial consciousness was always present there and merely needed economic growth and a rise in incomes to help reveal its distinctive aspects. This strategy certainly helped him establish his claim that post-industrialism does not have an all-encompassing nature which, he maintained, Walker and Greenberg had read into his position, but only at the expense of creating another problem, not ever resolved by Ley.

If Ley's argument did hold, then he would then be in the same difficulties as those in which he regards Walker and Greenberg's as being, namely that history is sacrificed to theory. Ideology, Ley argued, reflects a 'set of interests and values', which will be realized only in "distinctive historical and geographical moments" (Ley 1982, p.36). This can only mean that those interests and values, and consequently the social circumstances to which they refer, are more or less constant throughout time. This itself could only be if there was no historical change. Ley's post-industrial account of gentrification is caught on the horns of this dilemma; either it is totalizing, or it denies the possibility of real historical change. This is of course to say nothing about the status of the argument that we really have moved beyond the age of industrial production into post-industrial consumption.

Ley's own criticisms of Walker and Greenberg may in fact be applied to his own position. He claims (1982, p.36) to be interested in "evolving historical circumstances" and not "non-changing theoretical categories", unlike Walker and Greenberg. However, Maslow's arguments, on which Ley has to rely, are self-avowedly functionalist; and if any form of argument is vulnerable to the change of commitment to unchanging theoretical categories and lack of interest in evolving historical circumstances, it is functionalism<sup>10</sup>. Functionalism severely inhibits the formation of categories, which can evolve with changing historical circumstances (Runciman 2001). All that is needed is one example of a society which did not follow Maslow's hierarchy of need, for Ley's argument to be faced with the classic dilemma: either having to define this society as somehow less than a society or not a society at all; or having to change our definition to fit this new example, in which case we would have no definition at all.

The problem is not that Ley and Maslow seek to argue that which "is in fact socially derived" is "natural or necessary" (Dickens, *ibid.*). The advent of post-modernism helped rescue Ley from his dilemma (Runciman 2001). For this was a condition about which there was agreement (and disagreement) on both left and right. For example, the "New Times" manifesto from *Marxism Today* (Hall and Jacques, 1989) explicitly linked the question of post-modernism to post-industrialism, *and* to a politics of identity realized through a politics of consumption (Hall and Jacques 1989, p.121-122).

Ley (Cybriwsky et al 1986, Ley 1987a, 1987b) therefore developed his original ideas to incorporate post-modernism into his thesis, but in a manner, which preserved his

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<sup>10</sup> FUNCTIONALISM is a theory that stresses the interdependence of the patterns and institutions of a society and their interaction in maintaining cultural and social unity ([www.m-w.com/home.htm](http://www.m-w.com/home.htm)).

original position, except that now the rise of the new middle class was described as part of a more general transformation, summed up as the change to post-modern society. This thesis of a *post-modern* new middle class could then be coupled to Ley's criticism of Walker and Greenberg's presumption that the post-industrialist argument involved the invocation of a total social change. Post-modernism's well-known aversion to "totalizing practices" (Thrift 1987) was particularly appealing to the right Harvey (1987). However, post-modernism was also attractive to those on the left, who wished to avoid the untoward associations of post-industrialism with the "end of ideology" and the alleged redundancy of Marxism (Soja 1989). Once the debate took on this character, it was easy to overlook the fact that none of these questions addressed the problems of explaining gentrification.

In Ley's later writings the capture of the organs of city government allowed the new middle class to create a post-modern landscape in Vancouver (Ley 1986). False Creek South Shore was now described as such a landscape (Ley 1987a); a landscape, which was, "the expressive landscape of liberal reform" (Ley 1987a, p.44), "where the new class ideology would be writ large" (Cybriwsky et al 1986, p.113).

However, Ley and his followers define modernism and post-modernism in very specific ways. Histories of modernism (Alofsin 2002, Howard 1991, Trachtenberg and Hyman 2002, R. Williams 1990), include a very wide range of movements under this heading, but Ley reduces this tradition to a simple opposition between "rational" modernism and "expressive" post-modernism (York, however argues that much of what was described as "rational" [in Modernist architecture] was in fact *expressive* of function – York 1980, p.76). "Rational" modernism, according to Ley, is "born of a universal logic and devoid

of historical and cultural references" (Ley 1987a, p.49). It displays "cultural agnosticism" and "an antipathy to historicism" (ibid., p.53). It is the architecture of a "mass society" (Ley 1987a). Modernist B.C. Place, on False Creek North Shore, the site of Expo '86, the Vancouver World's Fair (held in 1986), is expressive of a neo-conservative "populist" ideology of mass culture.

By contrast, "central to post-modernism" is the "maintenance of continuity, of historical and cultural symbols" (Ley 1987a, p.52). Post-modern developments in False Creek's south shore are marked by a concern for continuity with the past and a concern that historical allusions do not stray into "ersatz" and "parody" (Ley 1987a, p.47). Alofsin (2002), Trachtenberg and Hyman (2002), Raymond Williams (1990) would contest such views, as indeed do Ley and Olds (1988). The distinction between modernism and post-modernism in terms of an opposition between "mass civilization" and "minority culture" is a definition of a post-modernism that is inherently conservative, with both a large and a small "c" (Pinckney 1990, p.5).

In Ley and Olds definition of post-modernism, the "narrow line dividing statement from overstatement, authenticity from ersatz and even parody" (Ley 1987a, p.47) is now completely obliterated. B.C. Place is no longer the modernist brainchild of an insensitive bunch of car dealers turned politicians in the far away provincial capital of Victoria, B.C., but is now instead an example of post-modernist sophistication.

Such a flexible definition of post-modernism leaves Ley's "new middle class" in the lurch. Post-modernism in Ley's hands becomes the expression, in one and the same artefact, of the ideologies both of liberal reformers and of their conservative opponents. "Ersatz and parody", which would be excesses of post-modernism in what is dubbed a liberal

landscape on the South Shore, are characteristic of post-modernism in what is dubbed a "conservative" landscape on the North. False Creek's South Shore's 'sensuous landscape' is the "downtown skyline", thought of as "too good to be true" (Ley 1987a, p.49), yet on the other hand this skyline is composed of the very architectural symbols of Modernism, the "mega buildings of a corporate society" to which False Creek South Shore is allegedly so resolutely opposed (Ley 1987a, p.45). When Ley is discussing False Creek as an expression of a new class, post-industrial, post-modern urban landscape, his descriptions of False Creek South Shore do indeed celebrate the ideology he sees expressed there, just as Walker and Greenberg argued.

Ley's use of the terms modernism and post-modernism appear to be little more than convenient labels to be attached to any contrasted pair presently under discussion. The condition of post-modernity loses all specificity and therefore cannot be held to account for gentrification, except in the tautological sense that if we do live in post-modern society, then all social and cultural activities undertaken in this society must by definition be post-modern.

The question still remains, is society post-modern? Many would argue not (Bondi 1991 and 1999, Dickens 1990, Giddens 1990, Soja 1989). Indeed York (1980) regarded post-modernism to have been a definitive early 1970s phenomenon, which he argues was uncompromisingly modernist in style.

Many of the concerns which post-modernism claims and by which it defines itself in opposition to modernism are concerns that were of great interest to the modernists (Alofsin 2002, Howard 1991, Trachtenberg and Hyman 2002, R. Williams 1990). Cooke

(1990) quotes a use of "post-modern" dating back over thirty years (Mills 1959). Cooke argues that:

what is called "post-modernism" is in fact a critique of "modernism" in all its guises... Modernism and post-modernism are thus intertwined rather than irrevocably opposed (Cooke 1990, p.331-332)

Giddens however would argue that the concept is a contradiction in terms:

To speak of post-modernity as superseding modernity appears to invoke that very thing which is (now) declared to be impossible: giving some coherence to history and pinpointing our place in it (Giddens 1990, p.47).

As noted, post-modernism has nonetheless held a certain attraction for the left. The analysis of "New Times" is framed around a call for the construction of a left "politics of identity", explicitly to arrest the slippage of meanings cited as the characteristic feature of post-modern society (Hall, 1989, p.121). Yet as Howard (1991) suggests, these concerns over the links between capital, meaning and modern life are not new, but recurrent themes in twentieth century thought.

The claim that gentrification is post-modern can therefore be rejected for three main reasons. There is no theoretical or evidential support for Ley's arguments for a post-modern consciousness, which can be associated with a new, and gentrifying middle class. There is no evidence, from analysis of the history of Modernism and post-modernism, of a change in social conditions at large. Ley's championing of post-modernism as the key to understanding gentrification may in retrospect be seen as the high water mark of post-modernism in gentrification studies.

Weak as they may be, arguments for post-modernism as an explanation for gentrification have however maintained their currency in the gentrification debate because of their common philosophical basis with the "production of gentrifiers"

approach; namely a concern for the status of gentrifiers as active agents. This concern manifested itself in the realist critique of neighbourhood lifecycle with its conclusions that gentrification is a chaotic concept. Before turning to the production of gentrifiers approach in detail, the philosophical underpinnings must to be addressed and analyzed. Again, it is important to stress, this thesis is less concerned with whether the arguments for realism are sustainable in themselves, and is more concerned with the use made of these arguments in the gentrification debate.

### **2.3.2 Is Gentrification a Chaotic Concept?**

The argument that gentrification is a chaotic concept owes its origins to the power of Rose's critique of mix'n'match theorizing about gentrification (Rose 1984). Rose accepted Marxist emphases on the fundamental importance of "the production of commodities of gentrified dwellings" (Rose 1984, p.50). Equally fundamental and important however, she argued, was the question of the production of the people who gentrified. In analyses such as Neil Smith's (1979a, 1982), such questions were simply "added on afterwards" (Rose 1984, p.51). "Marxist approaches to gentrification, therefore, now need to expand and clarify their theoretical and empirical terrain" (ibid. p.57). To help them in this task, Rose drew on Andrew Sayers's (1982) account of chaotic conceptualization in economic geography. Citing this article, she argued, that "the terms "gentrification" and "gentrifiers", as commonly used in literature, are "chaotic conceptions" " (Rose 1984, p.62). What was worse, they were also chaotic conceptions in "extant Marxist literature" (ibid.), that is to say, in Smith's rent gap accounts of gentrification. Rose's article inaugurated the "production of gentrifiers" approach of the non-Smithian left.



In using Sayer (1982), the advocates of the "production of gentrifiers" approach felt that they could answer the criticisms of Marxist reasoning in urban analysis, as made by Ley (1980 and 1983). The notion of chaotic conceptualization upon to which Rose based her critique originates with Marx, as Sayer (1982) himself pointed out. The problems that Ley & al. were criticizing were therefore not those of Marxism as such, but of chaotic conceptualization. Sensitized to the danger of chaotic conceptualization, Marxist explanation could withstand such criticism. Having correctly identified the symptoms however, this thesis argues that Rose mistook their "diagnosis". Consequently, and by default, a theoretical closure (Pratt 1982) is in danger of becoming established on the basis of an unexamined development in the application of the term "chaotic concept"; unexamined since Sayers later work (A. Sayer 1989, 1991 and 1992) it is never referenced in the gentrification debate.

In fact, the 1982 article was the only one of Sayers writings, which featured the notion of chaotic conceptualization. The strength of this 1982 article lay in its critique of empiricist generalization rather than its promotion of realist principles. Positivism led to chaotic conceptualization through empiricist generalization. The rational abstraction made possible by realism did not in principle suffer from those problems, as Sayer (1992) would demonstrate.

Rose argued that chaotic conceptions arose because "they internally combine "necessary tendencies" with "contingent conditions" (for example the law of value combined with a particular housing stock at a particular time)" (Rose 1984, p.62). In addition however, she took this to mean that chaotic conceptualizations

obscure the fact that a multiplicity of processes, rather than a single causal process, produce changes in the occupation of inner-city neighbourhoods from lower to higher income residents (Rose 1984, p.62)

This illustration of the effects of chaotic conceptualization came to stand for the process itself, so that by the time Beauregard (1986) described gentrification as a chaotic concept, the principal criterion he used to justify such a claim was the complexity of gentrification, and not the circumstances under which its identification as an object of study took place. Furthermore, Rose went on to argue that, as chaotic conceptualizations, "the concepts "gentrification" and "gentrifiers" need to be disaggregated" (ibid.). This came to mean that a multiplicity of gentrification-like phenomena existed, which chaotic conceptualization incorrectly grouped together under the one heading:

"Gentrification" has, of course, been criticized as a "chaotic concept" (Rose 1982, Hamnett 1984, Beauregard 1986), which aggregates a variety of contingently related processes under one unitary category according to commonsense definitions of the real object (Mills 1988, p.178).

The clear implication then is that since the term "gentrification" is a chaotic concept then there is no such thing as gentrification in reality. However, as Warde correctly indicates,

The danger with nominating something as a chaotic conception is the tendency to imagine then that the phenomenon identified does not exist, whereas the real point is that our thinking about it is confused (Warde 1991, p.223).

It is the tendency to imagine that gentrification does not exist, which has inspired the rise of the production of gentrifiers approach. Use of the term "chaotic conception", in this context, is in danger of becoming little more than an epithet however, a means of ending discussion, not advancing analysis.

The confusion arises because the problem in gentrification studies is not a "chaotic conception" but "base-superstructure". Rose argued that previous Marxist work on

gentrification studies has tended to replicate non-Marxist work, rather than reconceptualizing the points at issue:

Fundamental economic processes are in this view to be theorized in traditional Marxist terms. Everything else, and especially 'social processes', either is theoretically derivable from the economic or is purely epiphenomenal (Rose 1984, p.51).

As Raymond Williams (1977) shows, these problems are characteristic of the use of the base-superstructure metaphor. Rose's critique of "chaotic conceptions" in gentrification studies should therefore be interpreted as an implicit critique of "base-superstructure" modes of thought in gentrification studies. This thesis will now turn to a discussion of this issue in Rose's article and Neil Smith's commentary on it.

Rose's complaint with Marxist analysis was its claim to universality, to be "*the fundamental* starting point for theoretical and empirical work on *all* aspects of gentrification..." (Rose 1984, p.50 emphasis in original). Rose goes on to argue in effect that, if Marxism is making such claims, it ought to recognize the wider changes in the reproduction of labour power, which have been responsible for the production of gentrifiers (Rose 1984, p.53). Lack of such recognition, she argued

Produces a type of analysis which... prevents us from asking questions about the significance of changes in reproduction that "gentrifiers" *themselves* are bringing about, although not necessarily under conditions of their own choosing (Rose 1984, p.54, emphasis added).

In essence Rose appeared to be arguing for a recognition of the fact that gentrifiers gentrify because they can. No sooner was this point made however, than social change at large (post-industrialism), was brought in to explain the appearance of this new social group:

Marx's own analysis appeared to equate the reproduction of labour power with the individual consumption by the working class. This seems legitimate enough for the period of early factory capitalism, about which Marx was writing when it was primarily unskilled

workers which had to be reproduced, capable of work and forced to sell their labour for a wage. However, in the present-day context of advanced capitalism, the *form* of consumption is no longer irrelevant to the reproduction of labour power. The forms consumption take become key parts of the contingencies of social reproduction. This means that the actual *work* involved in reproducing people and their labour power, outside the community form, does "make a difference" (Rose 1984, p.55).

In an ironic echo of the right's argument, there was no agency then, but there is now, and gentrification demonstrates this. Rose argues that, in Marxist theorizing about gentrification:

Gentrification appears as the only possible end state for... neighbourhoods, because of the immutable operation of the law of value in such built environments in the present phase of capitalism (Rose 1984, p.53).

Rose's argument, however, also falls into the same trap. By concentrating on the fraction of the middle class who gentrify, Rose's approach tends to define gentrifiers as people who gentrify because they *must*, not because they *can*: they have after all been produced as gentrifiers.

When Rose criticized the neglect of the 'significance of change in reproduction', she used as an example, "marginal gentrifiers", who

May be able to work together to develop housing alternatives that would provide them with the same "ontological security" (Saunders 1982) as homeownership [e.g., "non-profit rental housing co-operatives"] (Rose 1984, p.65).

Neil Smith (1987a) argued that to come up with this notion of a "marginal gentrifier", Rose was forcing on "chaos" and "chaotic conceptions" meanings, which they did not ordinarily possess. To take such a line however overlooks the fact that Rose was arguing for the importance of the home as an alternative base for the foundations of the superstructure. For Rose, "widening the terrain," meant simply that the concept of the base should include housing consumption as well as production. Her strategy for overcoming the problems associated with base-superstructure is therefore only

marginally different to that of post-industrialists, such as Ley, (and Saunders and P. Williams). Neither strategy however addresses the real issue, which is how to overcome the limitations of base-superstructure modes of thought.

The position taken in this thesis is that Rose's criticisms of Smith's arguments are valid; however, the conclusions that she draws are incorrect. The development of theory is not the same as the development of history. The "form of consumption" has always been relevant to the reproduction of labour power. As Mills (1988) stated, for a commodity to sell "it must have use-value; and that use-value must be "imaginable" – it must have cultural meaning". For Rose to attempt to set up this opposition between consumption as such and the *form* of that consumption would indicate that she still has not integrated the "economic" and the 'social", despite her intentions to the contrary. Rose begins her article by criticizing the way in which Marxist accounts have simply taken over organic or neoclassical arguments of neighbourhood lifecycle (Rose 1984, p.47). However, having begun by criticizing the conceptualization of the gentrification "base", neighbourhood lifecycle, Rose only switches the argument into the 'superstructure" of post-industrialism. Lack of attention to the problems of base-superstructure fatally compromises the production of gentrifiers approach.

### **2.3.3 The Production of Gentrifiers: A New Way Forward for the Non-Smithian Left or a Dead End?**

Rose (1984) described Smith's eclecticism as a mix'n'match approach to gentrification, since she argued his strategy was to accept non-Marxist categorization of the gentrification process, and then seek to match them to Marxist accounts of economic development process. This thesis shall argue however that the non-Smithian left's production of gentrifiers approach is just as eclectic as Smith's. It accepts the right's

assessment of the issues at stake in the gentrification debate, but seeks to give a "Marxist" account of these.

Rose's criticism of neighbourhood lifecycle concepts in gentrification studies ended by asking

whether Marxist theorizing about gentrification should be limited to the specification of preconditions for the production of gentrified dwellings, without considering the production of the "gentrifiers", the occupants of these dwellings (Rose 1984, p.51).

Rose had initially began her considerations by noting that

The social and the spatial restructuring of labour processes are shaping and reshaping the ways that people and labour power are reproduced in cities (Rose 1984, p.55).

She interpreted this general process as implying the creation of gentrifiers, derived from the nature of downtown office work, in short, post-industrialism. Relating residential locational requirements to changes in the nature of office work processes, she argued is a useful form of analysis. However, it does not go far enough, since questions of the reproduction of labour power cannot be restricted to the workplace. Nor however are they reducible to consumption practices, as the post-industrialists would suggest. "The crucial point here is that *"gentrifiers" are not the mere bearers of a process determined independently of them.*" (ibid., p.56 – emphasis in original), that is, gentrifiers gentrify because they can, not because they have to. However, having made these useful points, Rose then relied on realist principles to find a way forward:

Their constitution, as *certain types of workers and as people*, is as crucial an element in the production of gentrification as is the production of the dwellings they occupy. *They may or may not make the process happen in particular contingent situations* (Rose 1984, p.56 emphasis added).

In other words, the production of gentrifiers involves the production of certain types of people with certain causal powers, which may or may not combine with particular

contingently related situations to produce gentrified housing. However we never get to know what the character of these contingencies might be. Consequently, the problems facing gentrifiers appear to be the same as for any immigrant to the city (Rose 1984, p.63). However, to understand this means looking at gentrification in the context of modern life, not examining the characteristics of gentrifiers as though they were some kind of other, by which modern life can be defined. Because it concentrates on the internal characteristics of gentrifiers as a group, who are already *and otherwise* known (see Section 2.1 above), the “production of gentrifiers” approach begins from the wrong point. Gentrifiers as a social group are specified only through the fact that they gentrify and who have, if not specific but unexplained causal powers, then certainly specific and equally unexplained demands – consumer preferences which are “revealed” through gentrification. Despite the self-proclaimed concern with agency, gentrifiers must inevitably be portrayed in this approach as gentrifying because they have to, rather than because they can.

This point can be borne out by comparing two versions of the “production of gentrifiers” approach, Beauregard (1986) on the left, and Mills (1988) on the right. Beauregard argues that three questions need to be answered to explain gentrification. First, how did potential gentrifiers come about? Second, what created potentially gentrifiable housing? Third, what caused the prior displacement of the gentrified?

Although gentrification is supposedly a chaotic process, the “characteristics of gentrifiers” remain “remarkably similar across specific instances of gentrification” (Beauregard 1986, p.44). Among these characteristics are situation “within the urban, professional managerial fraction of labour”, delayed marriage and childbearing, and the

adoption of styles of conspicuous consumption (ibid., p.44). Postponement of marriage and childbearing decisions owing to career responsibilities “facilitates this consumption, but also makes it necessary if people are to meet others and develop friendships” in “a lifetime of fluid personal relationships” (ibid., p.44). If, however, relationships were indeed fluid over a lifetime, why would only certain areas of the city have drawing power? Beauregard recognizes that none of the desires and needs which he attributes to potential gentrifiers necessarily imply the selection “of an urban location over a suburban one (ibid., p.46), and he never provides a satisfactory answer to the questions he himself raises of:

why a fraction of this group elects to remain in the city rather than follow the trend of suburban out-migration... [and]...

why only certain inner-city areas with inexpensive housing opportunities occupied by the powerless become gentrified (ibid., p.46 and p.50).

The considerations, which Beauregard lists as motivating gentrifiers, would appeal to almost anyone looking for accommodation: “near central business districts... with amenities... architecturally interesting... inexpensive” (ibid., p.46-47). Not that it is likely that such accommodation could ever be found – the list of site characteristics of places suitable for gentrification are so appealing, “access to a waterfront... hilltop location... spectacular view”, that it would be a wonder such prime sites were ever overlooked in the first place (ibid.).

It is worth comparing Beauregard’s description, of the characteristics of sites and housing stock suitable for gentrification, with the following quotation from Raban on the history of gentrification in Islington:

Enervated Georgian architecture suddenly becomes beautiful, after every architectural writer since their erection has glossed over them with a yawn. (Pevsner, writing about Islington in the *London* volume of the Penguin *Buildings of England* sounds positively



antediluvian today; he is *bored* by the most lovely and desirable squares in the whole city...)

(Raban 1974, p.86)

There is no explanation offered in the Beauregard article regarding what causes such switches in architectural fashion, so that previously disregarded housing suddenly becomes "interesting" to particular fractions of the labour force. Ironically, therefore, Beauregard's theorizing is exactly that kind of "mix-n-match" analysis that Rose complained of. Consequently, Beauregard then needs to reply on a threadbare psychologism<sup>11</sup> in order to explain gentrifiers' behaviour. The behaviour of potential gentrifiers is explained, not by reference to agency, as claimed, but to needs, desires and inclinations, simply thrown into the account with no explanation of their theoretical and empirical status. As Warde comments, "It is hard to be satisfied with such eclecticism" (1991, p.225). Furthermore, in Beauregard's account, psychological explanations become functionally necessary, for example, they are functional in the desire for that public display of wealth, characteristic of gentrifiers.

The central problem in the production of gentrifiers approach is the relation of gentrifiers (as a distinct group) whose production can be theorized, to gentrification (as a chaotic concept) whose production cannot. Beauregard's strategy for dealing with this problem is to define each component of the gentrification scenario separately, and then bring them together in the final act. In fact, for the production of gentrifiers he cannot do this, having to define them in the context of a sequence of *gentrification*, not of production of *gentrifiers*. His scenario has "yuppies", as it were, hanging around street corners and then local bars, and because of this behaviour precipitating a property market explosion, in which, because of the rising prices, they finally settle down and buy houses and

condominiums in the neighbourhood and become gentrifiers proper. Beauregard begins his account with an expressed concern for agency, but because he begins from the existence of gentrification as an accomplished fact, his account immediately denies agency any role to play in the process.

Beauregard argues that gentrifiers have "peculiar housing needs", including the need for status and conspicuous consumption, which result in "the demand for a specific type of housing in a specific type of area" (Beauregard 1986, p.46-47). Rose (1984) made similar arguments. The concern for agency is little more than a cover for the fact that the reasons advanced explaining why gentrifiers must gentrify are so vague. They could cover almost any housing situation, or any consumption decision generally. This results from what appears to be the misconceived attempt to define agents outside of the process, the attempt to separate the essence of consumption from the specific form of that consumption; misconceived because of the error in imagining that because gentrification is a chaotic concept (which this thesis disputes), which cannot therefore be defined, and which does not therefore exist. Trying to define "gentrifiers" without defining "gentrification" however, is rather like trying to define a hockey player without defining the game of hockey: outside of its context, the definition loses its point.

Rose starts with a "loose" definition of gentrifiers, never subsequently "tightened up" (ibid.). Nonetheless, although she allows a wider range of incomes and places in the labour market into her definition than others would allow (N. Smith 1987a), she does define what a gentrifier is for her purposes. Beauregard's initial definition of gentrifier appears to be quite a lot tighter, referring to an apparently coherent group of people

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<sup>11</sup> *PSYCHOLOGISM* is a theory that applies psychological conceptions to the interpretation of

(Beauregard 1986, p.44). On the basis of his definition however, this group cannot in fact be differentiated from non-gentrifiers; there is in fact no definition, other than the evidence that these people have gentrified, or occupied previously gentrified housing. For Beauregard, this group of people are only "potential gentry" *until* they gentrify. According to this line of thought gentrifiers can be thought of as social atoms with a couple of electrons missing from their "housing" ring, which makes them highly reactive with gentrifiable housing. The "production of gentrifiers" approach is dependent on giving its agents mysterious causal powers, which react with no less mysteriously contingent events to cause gentrification. However, it would be wrong to conclude that the problem lies with the idiosyncratic version of realism espoused by Beauregard et al. Rather it lies in the unwanted separation of all the elements in the gentrification scenario, in the liberal, rather than cultural materialist, approach.

For Mills (1988), as for the liberal camp generally (see Ley 1986), there is subtle but significant change of emphasis. Post-modernism is here explicitly linked to post-industrialism, and the rise of a "new class" (Mills 1988, p.183). Mills makes it clear that this New Class is a new middle class (*ibid.*), and that gentrification is its identifying mark (*ibid.*, p.186). In this perspective, the "production of gentrifiers" approach is argued to have "developed out of a *reaction against* the Marxist work represented by Smith's rent-gap analysis" (*ibid.*, p.178 *emphasis added*). Whereas Rose saw the production of gentrifiers approach as a supplement to Marxist analysis, they suggest that it is an alternative, necessary because Marxist theory cannot reconcile with the existence of a middle class, and the transition to post-industrial society. Consequently, in Smith's revised account (N. Smith 1987a), gentrification as an example of product

differentiation, still requires an active subject, a sociology and an anthropology of gentrification" (Mills 1988, p.179). An approach "which focuses on the "production of gentrifiers" is an initial step in that direction" (ibid.).

Rose argued that to look at changes in consumption practices in this manner was just as deficient a procedure as to concentrate on changes in production relations "the mere bearers of a process determined independently of them" (Rose 1984, p.56). By arguing that the production of gentrifiers approach is a reaction to Smith's Marxist approach, the humanistic version of "the production of gentrifiers" approach is situated firmly in the superstructure. Thus, Mills argues, "as post-modern architecture is *typified* by its social ambiguity, so too are its New Class champions" (1988, p.185 emphasis added). Mills also urges that "the consumption style of gentrifiers be treated seriously as a reflection of cultural practice" (ibid., p.182 emphasis added). These uses of these subsidiary metaphors of typification and reflection (see Section 2.1 above) are not just verbal slips. In Mills article, Raymond William's discussions of hegemony is always to be understood as a process of class domination (R. Williams 1977). It invests class relations in cultural forms. It is William's most powerful integrating concept, which enables the transcendence of base-superstructure metaphors altogether. Instead, in Mills' hands, it is always referred to as "cultural" hegemony, as if style were all that mattered in questions of hegemony.

By failing to acknowledge the class connotations in Williams' use of hegemony however, Mill's humanistic "production of gentrifiers" approach fails to escape the base-superstructure metaphor. In her account, economic change leads to social change and a new middle class, which gentrifies. Housing production (for Rose), the necessary but

not sufficient component of the "base", only features as a subject of architectural design and advertising copy and is analyzed only as "post-modernist" symbol. The failure in Mills article consider economic issues, in particular the question of housing production, probably accounts for the tone of surprise in observations such as:

In the present economic climate the motive of profitable investment becomes increasingly apparent in discourse on urban change. Investment potential is clearly a consideration both for "producers" and some "consumers"... Explains one architect:

"They're marketing the units as a *commodity*... these days" (Rose 1984, p.56— emphasis in original).

It is otherwise hard to believe that the proposition that housing is produced as a commodity in capitalist societies would appear as worthy of comment in an article published in 1988.

Post-industrialism, although it refers to a "post-industrial" economic base, is not really interested in economic questions *per se*. In post-industrialism, as Mills' article shows, gentrification is a reflection or a typification of changes in the base. This "base" is never very clearly specified however. As noted above (see Section 2.3.1), Ley (1987b, p.286) calls post-industrialism a "widely used concept" and criticizes Smith (1987b) for raising a "red herring" for even for asking from Ley a description of what post-industrial society looks like. This is not simply an evasion on Ley's part. The question of the base really does not matter too much in the hall of mirrors that constitutes the superstructure. It is the idea of gentrification as evidence of change, of "new (and post-Marxist) time" that interests post-industrialism (1987b, p.286).

Neil Smith (1987a), in a wide-ranging and important response to his critics, both left and right, argued that there was no statistical evidence for the rise of a new class. Smith implied that such evidence could never be found, but this was of only secondary

importance. According to Smith, there is no necessity for demand-oriented explanations of gentrification at all. Even if "demand structures have changed" it does not explain why these changed demands have led to a *spatial* reemphasis on the central and inner-city (ibid., p.164). Smith's answer was to couple his rent gap analysis to the regulationist approach of Aglietta and others (Hamnett 1991) to provide an account of gentrification as a capitalist strategy of product differentiation. This strategy provides him with the anthropology Mills argues his account lacked. However, as Hamnett argues, it also allowed Smith to avoid confronting his "heart of darkness: locational preferences, lifestyles and consumption" (ibid., p.185).

Smith's criticisms of the right's treatment of demand issues are valid, but he is incorrect to attempt to avoid the question of where middle class demand comes from. The problem is not, as Smith suspects, that concern for demand issues means conceding that a neoclassical theory of consumer sovereignty has any role to play in the explanation of gentrification, which from Smith's point of view would mean conceding that neoclassical explanations have a role to play in Marxist analysis. In fact, a concern for demand issues does not mean necessarily conceding anything to neoclassical economics at all. Neoclassical economics has in fact very little to say on how demands are formed and how demand is translated into purchases (Hollis 1981). The inadequacies of the right's consumer sovereignty oriented treatment of demand issues in gentrification studies mean that they too deny any role to agency in their explanations of gentrification. Instead of framing demand issues in terms of demand for accommodation in general, but only for gentrified properties in particular (and therefore in terms of the characteristics of those who would consume it – Chapter three will look at this in greater detail). Accounts of demand in gentrification studies become circular:

they succumb to a sort of commodity fetishism (Redfern 1997b), in which the property itself appears mysteriously endowed with causal powers. Gentrifiers have “peculiar housing needs”, including the need for status and conspicuous consumption, which result in “the demand for a specific type of housing in a specific type of area” (Beauregard 1986, p.46-47).

In this respect, the definitions arising out of the “production of gentrifiers” approach are very similar to those of Rex and Moore’s<sup>12</sup> “housing classes” (Rex and Moore 1967). Saunders, building on Rex and Moore’s “housing classes” concept, argued that notions of class derived from Marxist analysis were at best relevant only in the sphere of production (N. Smith 1996a, p. 107). Since consumption patterns, and especially patterns of housing consumption, are more important sources of social differentiation than is generally acknowledged, it was necessary, Saunders argued (ibid.), to set up a parallel set of class distinctions based on the means of consumption (Saunders 1984, p.202). In later developments of his argument, Saunders suggested that “divisions in the sphere of consumption do not restructure class relations but do crosscut them” (Saunders 1990, p.68-69). Further, “consumption-based material interests are no less “basic” or fundamental” than production-based (class) ones” (ibid.). The concept of “housing class” was criticized because it regarded current housing situation as though it were an achieved final housing situation, i.e. these housing classes were taxonomic groupings rather than substantive collectives (Barlow and Duncan 1994). In the “production of gentrifiers” approach, “gentrifying” is specified as a particular form of

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<sup>12</sup> Rex and Moore argued that the working class could be further broken down by market relations, including housing – revealing fundamental conflicts over the allocation of housing between tenants and landlords.

consumption; in other words, as a state of existence rather than as a process (N. Smith 1987, p.160, 1996a, p.107).

The “can do otherwise-ness” of agency is lost in this approach, since the research goal, by definition, then becomes the discovery of why gentrifiers have to gentrify, not how they can. Consequently, they also appear in the analysis endowed *a priori* with powers not given to others. The “production of gentrifiers” approach relies on structure, despite its apparent concern with agents because its argument mistakes Sayer’s definition of causality as necessity. Gentrifiers have causal powers, and so, the “production of gentrifiers” approach implies, they must gentrify. Rose complained that in mix’n’match theorizing, gentrification appeared as “the only possible end state” for neighbourhoods. Ironically, the solution she proposes, begins with that end state. Everything after that becomes a rationalization of why the gentrifiers are where they are.

There is in the production of gentrifiers approach a basic functionalism, one which is common to the entire gentrification debate, in that what is being argued is that the evidence of gentrification signifies the needs of gentrifiers to gentrify. The “production of gentrifiers” consequently fails to come to terms with the question of agency. It has failed to breach the confines of the base-superstructure metaphor. The gentrified property is treated in this perspective as a simple “expression” of the gentrification process, gentrification as an example of the rise to importance of the form of consumption over consumption itself (Redfern 1997a). This “consumptionist” approach fails to overcome the limitations placed on analysis by the “base-superstructure” metaphor, since it does not recognize its self-imposed limits on the discussion of agency.



This is not to say that there have not been attempts to address the question of agency in gentrification analysis. This is the whole point of the "production of gentrifiers" approach. However, none of those using this approach appear to have fully considered what introducing the question of agency might mean for their conceptual frameworks. What we get from them seems to be a restating of the old behavioural "imperfect optimizing" or satisfying models of economic behaviour in which otherwise determinate outcomes were given fuzzy edges. However, the "black boxes" of statistical indeterminacy outcomes were inadequate explanations of motivated behaviour, but simply attempted to replicate outcomes rather than model processes. In addition, they were also very precisely located, so that all they did was try to act as a cover for the inadequacies of the assumptions of the original, optimizing procedures. The attempts to justify the current conceptions of agency in the functionalist working back from outcomes to explanations, using similar "psychological" or "cultural" black boxes as covers for lack of a better theoretical framework, is a precise parallel of the behavioural economics approach.

Neither has there been any real examination of the relation between the processes presently relegated in gentrification studies to "psychological" and "cultural" explanations, and the processes conventionally regarded in liberal materialism as *the* important explanatory variables: the material production and reproduction of social life. In this respect therefore, the present state of gentrification analyses is not very far advanced along the road toward providing explanations of the phenomenon they seek to study. Only once these relations have properly been made can opportunities and constraints posed by the housing market in its present stage of historical development interact together to create gentrification.

## 2.4 CONCLUSION: INEVITABILITY, HISTORY AND AGENCY IN POST-INDUSTRIALISM AND NEIGHBOURHOOD LIFECYCLE

The confusion that has arisen in the production of gentrifiers has been to confuse questions of "base-superstructure" with those of "chaotic conception". The real problem, as Rose herself states, is not that the terms "gentrification" and "gentrifiers" are in *themselves* chaotic, but that these terms obscure "chaotic conceptions" of the underlying processes involved (see Warde 1991), conceptions such as neighbourhood lifecycle or post-industrialism. The debate on gentrification to date can then be interpreted as one over the best place to locate gentrification, with post-industrialism placing gentrification in the superstructure and neighbourhood lifecycle placing gentrification in the base.

It is for this reason that Hamnett's query continues to complicate the gentrification debate, namely, why do some areas in some inner cities become gentrified and others do not? If neighbourhood lifecycle is the dominant paradigm in urban theory, why are not all neighbourhoods which have been constructed at a similar time, and which must therefore be at a roughly similar distance from the city, at the same stage of the urban lifecycle? Similarly, if we do now live in post-industrial society with the all wider social changes it invokes, it has to be asked why are all inner-city properties not gentrified, instead of only some? Who has post-industrialism been for?

This tendency towards "over explanation" demonstrates the difficulties these explanatory devices have with the question of agency. The reasons posited for the existence of gentrification in one part of the city cannot reasonably be claimed not to exist in other similar parts. Agency once again is seen to be more than the "unexplained variance" in

the model. It is here that the post-structuralist argument for treating theory as the positing of a system of differences rather than universals is strongest.

The argument that gentrification should be seen in the context of wider social changes is of course undeniable, so also is the argument that it should be seen in the context of the previous history of the neighbourhoods in which it occurs. Consideration of how gentrification is theorized must inevitably be predicated on theories of wider social change, but change obviously takes place over time, and through people altering the conditions in which they find themselves. However, studies of the gentrification process have tended to rely on one of two explanatory devices; the one a model of an historical sequence, which loses its historical character by being presented in a cyclical, inevitable form, the other a hypothesis of social change which in fact contains no historical process at all. Consequently, therefore, there is no real sense of historical time in these explanations, thus no real sense of historical change.

The Burgess derived neighbourhood lifecycle employs a concept of "cyclical time": stage 1 is followed by stage 2 and so on, but eventually stage 1 returns once more. Post-industrialism employs "epochal" time, history divided into a simple "before" and an "after", with the split depending on an idealist definition of the significant "moment" and disregards questions of development before or after (Williams 1977). It shares this outlook with the neoclassical economic orientation of some. In both cases, the gentrified properties' previous history is not considered.

Given the lack of a truly historical perspective, it is hardly surprising that, in both lifecycle and post-industrial accounts, the role of agency is minimal compared to structure. Agency is the process by which both agents and structures are produced and

reproduced in historical time. The inevitability and predictability of gentrification in both types of account makes agency redundant as an explanatory variable in gentrification studies. Although the post-industrial thesis posits a new middle class whose emergence/existence is evidenced in the gentrification process, the emergence of this new class seems from examination of this literature to be a peculiarly painless process. The only suggestion that gentrifiers might face difficulties comes in Rose's discussion of "marginal gentrifiers" (Rose 1984). Even this could be subsumed under the general heading of difficulties faced by first time buyers. There are no struggles recorded in this academic literature over gentrifiable housing.

It is "base-superstructure" which is responsible for these failings. Although the humanist right claims to be giving an account of gentrification which privileges agency above structure, as does the non-Smithian left, their accounts are in fact as heavily structuralist as those they mean to criticize. Consequently the grounds for claiming a consensus in the approach to gentrification are spurious. There is no meshing of structure and agency in this consensus. Instead, all we have is a compendium of different structuralist explanations, which are all equally unacceptable. On all sides, there is the presumption that the question of agency has been addressed when, as this thesis will show in subsequent chapters, any possibility of the ability to do otherwise has in fact been completely ruled out of the picture.

Nonetheless, base-superstructure, along with functionalism and essentialism is only symptomatic of a deeper problem in gentrification studies. Why is it that the gentrification debate persists in this line of approach? As has already been stated, the reason is the fundamental insistence, on all sides, that gentrification represents a form

of class constitution. The only difference between left and right on this issue is the origins of this class, and its implications for the status of Marxist theory. On the right, it reflects changes in the economic base, and signals the end, or at least the irrelevance of this theory; on the left, the class is constituted via the process of gentrification itself. Caulfield (1989) questions both N. Smith and P. Williams, when he asks why does class constitution take the form of gentrification?

Why don't resettlers accomplish these purposes in architecturally modernist structures built where the old neighbourhoods are razed – why, instead, are these neighbourhoods gentrified? Or, why bother to settle in cities at all – why isn't class status constituted in some variant of the suburb?... how do an affection for "diversity", the past, and certain architectural styles come into the picture?

Caulfield (1989, p.621)

Caulfield's answer however takes for granted that the questions he asks of Neil Smith and Peter Williams can be answered once answers to the subsidiary questions he poses are found. In other words, he too subscribes to the idea that gentrification is a form of class constitution. It is however possible to interpret gentrification in another way, as constituting identity rather than class.

When one searches the literature for evidence of interest in this idea, one finds that, the issue is raised, but dismissed, or at best treated as a cursory afterthought, and treated badly. Beauregard for example writes that the fact that:

there is a status to be gained from "home" or "apartment" ownership and a potential for high capital gains and tax benefits, not to mention the opportunity to express one's affluence and "taste" in physical surroundings, also contributes to the probability of gentrification as a solution to these problems (Beauregard 1986, p.45).

None of the issues that might be raised when invoking concepts of 'status', "potential" and "opportunity" in the explanation of social processes in capitalist society are problematized in Beauregard's account of gentrification however. It is simply taken for

granted that these effects exist and may aid the gentrification process, but not that they might be in any way essential to it. They simply help guide the (produced) gentrifiers to the gentrification solution.

Smith's concession to demand side explanations of gentrification also touches on the question of identity and status:

It is this question of cultural differentiation in a mass market, which is most relevant to gentrification. Gentrification is a redifferentiation of the cultural, social and economic landscape, and to that extent, one can see in the very patterns of consumption clear attempts at social differentiation (N. Smith 1987a, p.168).

Gentrification, by this account, is used as a means of social differentiation. But, crucially, that social differentiation is immediately reduced to class constitution.

Gentrification then is more than simple a mode of consumption of housing: it "*engenders*" that mode of consumption (ibid. emphasis added).

This argument is not so different from the "production of gentrifiers" approach he is criticizing. In both cases, the gentrifier's demand is treated in terms of demand for gentrified property, a given reconciliation of the causes with the effects. For Smith, these properties are produced by the rent gap, so in effect, he does not have to worry about demand issued at all ("It is not where this demand comes from that the question of gentrification turns on, but where is it *expressed* that matters" N. Smith 1987a, p.169). For the production of gentrifiers approach, there is some non-observable object with real effects out there, directing the gentrifiers' footsteps in the direction of "architecturally interesting housing" (Beauregard 1986, p.53).

In both cases, what is being argued is that there is an unexplained, and (given the theoretical framework) probably unexplainable divergence of taste and preference

between the middle classes and the working classes. Smith indeed prefers to think of these classes as “fuzzy sets” (1987a, p.162). The treatment of demand issues in the gentrification debate can therefore be expressed in the following way: the purchase of commodities is the means whereby different groups distinguish themselves from each other, thus the demand for gentrified property.

This argument may seem to be exactly, like the one suggested in this thesis that is missing from gentrification debate literature, but there is this crucial difference: Smith’s reduction of this “demand to be different” to issues of class constitution implies that these people already know who they are on the basis of their class position, and that gentrification simply confirms their status, as members of a particular class (“the means employed by new middle class individuals to distinguish themselves from the stuffed-shirt bourgeoisie above and the working class below” – *ibid.*, p.168). In his “product differentiation” explanation of the origins of the demand for gentrification, Smith’s argument reduces demand issues to a reflex, and thus depends on psychologism, on the gentrifiers’ definitive need to exhibit their difference.

The “humanistic” variety of the “production of gentrifiers” approach fares little better.

Ironically, as blue jeans turned into a new conformity, so does the landscape distinctiveness of the gentrified neighbourhood.

The “discovery” of ever-new scarce commodities which can act as vehicles for status remains barely one step ahead of the mass market (Mills 1988, p.186).

In suburbia this is known as “keeping up with the Jones’s”, but in the “production of gentrifiers” approach, on this account of demand and agency, there seems to hang a whole theory of gentrification. In fact, the convergence between Smith and his critics is so close at this point that, as noted above, Mills (1988) takes over his product

differentiation argument, seeking to give it anthropology. As Bondi states, the "new urban middle class" involved in gentrification seeks to differentiate itself, not only from the elements of the middle class engaged in suburban or ex-urban strategies, but also

from the previous inhabitants of the urban environments that are colonized (Jager 1986; [P.] Williams 1986), as well as from contemporary working class or underclass residents (Bondi 1991, p.193).

In short, members of the new urban middle class seek to distinguish themselves from virtually everyone else with whom they come in contact. This, however, is one of the fundamental and distinctive problems of modern life, the problem of establishing identity on the face of mass society. It is this general problem, common to everyone living in modern society, which needs to be addressed first and gentrification analyzed as a particular instance only second. In identifying gentrifiers' needs with the demands for gentrified property, gentrification studies start from the wrong place. This failing explains why gentrification turns into one in which reasons must be sought why other properties in the concentric "zone of gentrification" are not, or have not yet, been similarly gentrified.

Thus, in this section it has been argued that the fundamental problem with gentrification studies is the insistence that gentrification be studied from the point of view that gentrifiers gentrify because they have to. In particular, they have to have gentrified properties. This is true in a definitional sense but in no other. It is like saying that jockeys need horses. By contrast, this thesis strives to make the argument that people gentrify because they can. In taking this approach, one can address the question of the peculiar needs of the gentrifier in a different and superior way. The deficiency in the gentrification debate, as it is presently constituted, is that it imagines this problem to be confined solely to gentrifiers.



It may seem odd that an ostensibly Marxist account of gentrification should diagnose the problems currently facing the gentrification debate as resulting from the reduction of the issues at stake to ones of class constitution. It is not that class issues are unimportant, and this thesis will later show in subsequent chapters how they do affect the process of gentrification, and its interpretation. Rather, it is simply that the way in which they are thought to be relevant to the gentrification debate at present hinders understanding of the issues at stake. The problem is that, in attempting to account for the origins of gentrification in class constitution, the "could do otherwise-ness" (Giddens 1987, p.220) of agency is thereby denied. The explanation of gentrification is always sought in either gentrifier's class-given need to give expression to their class-awareness by gentrifying, or even if not knowing themselves to be a class, in their class-specific housing needs which can only be solved by gentrifying. Thus researchers need to demonstrate why gentrifiers need to gentrify.

## 3.0 SOCIETAL CLEAVAGES: CLASS OR STATUS?

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter three will challenge the conceptual position within much urban study research, which states that gentrification is a form of class constitution. Confronting this position within gentrification discourse will necessitate addressing some of the most deeply held beliefs in sociological literature, in particular the fundamental explanatory model in sociology, characterized by Pahl (1989) as structure – consciousness – action (SCA). Chapter four reviews this model and will argue that there is no longer such thing as the middle class any more. What is referred to as the middle class is not a class but is actually a status group. However, this argument is made from a Marxist rather than a Weberian perspective, based on the arguments concerning the redefinition of subsistence along the lines described above.

Among the implications of the consensus that gentrification represents a form of class constitution are the assumptions that, just as we all agree on what society is, we all agree on what classes are, and what the impact on explanations of class constitution would be if, for example, a new middle class were indeed created through the process of gentrification. The question of class has as a consequence been de-problematized in the gentrification debate, despite the attention ostensibly given to questions of class in gentrification studies. The debate has been reduced to arguments over the appropriate interpretation of evidence gathered for the purpose of establishing whether this particular form of class constitution known as gentrification and the society it exemplifies

are best explicable in Marxist or non-Marxist terms. Chapter two has shown how the ostensible purpose of the exercise, to provide an explanation of gentrification, has suffered as a result.

However, an alternative explanation might be that the participants in the gentrification debates simply have inadequately theorized class constitution. With a better understanding of what class constitution entails, the insistence that gentrification is a form of class constitution might be justified. It is therefore necessary on both counts to address directly the debates on class constitution to which attempts at the explanation of gentrification have been staked as a prize.

### **3.2 CLASS THEORY**

According to Bell (1989), Kirk (1996), Levine (1998) and Pahl (1989), the work of Marshall, Newby, Rose and Volger (1988) provides the best evaluation of the contemporary debates on social class. Marshall et al (1988) undertook a large empirical research project on Social Class in Modern Britain as part of an international project initiated by Erik Olin Wright in order to obtain internationally comparable information on the class composition of different societies. They, however, took advantage of this opportunity to empirically evaluate the models of class formation provided on the one hand by Wright and on the other by Goldthorpe. They are able to do this by classifying and reclassifying the respondents in their survey of 1,770 people according to the criteria deemed as relevant by Wright, Goldthorpe and the Registrar-General, thus providing a unique opportunity to compare the apparently incommensurable (Bell 1989).

Marshall et al's (1988) work discovered deficiencies in the arguments of Wright and Goldthrope, Wright's in his coding of occupational categories, and Goldthrope's in his treatment of gender issues. Wright's classification, they stated, was simply out of date. Consequently, his coding procedures produce a picture of increasing proletarianization in the modern workforce, but this picture is not backed up by any evidence of changes in working conditions which might indicate proletarianization, such as increased work discipline, or less control over problem solving procedures. White collar work was not becoming deskilled with the expansion of the middle classes (Marshall et al, p.136). Nor did they find any evidence of class dealignment in voting patterns, a crucial test of the contrary embourgeoisement thesis. Working class voters had not adopted middle class attitudes and aspirations. Ergo, the British Labour Party did very poorly in the 1980s, not because it was a class party, but because it was not very good at being a class party (ibid., p.230).

Goldthrope, Marshall et al (1988) argued, seriously underplays the importance of gender issues in structuring life chances. As they put it, to follow Goldthrope in his dismissal of the importance of gender influences on life chances in the UK, would be like dismissing race issues when assessing life changes in Apartheid-era South Africa.

Marshall et al (1988) also commented on the Dunleavy – Saunders claim that sectoral consumption cleavages were of more importance than class, a claim of great importance in post-industrialist explanations of gentrification. Marshall et al, concluded that there was no evidence from their investigations to suggest that such cleavages exist (ibid., p.183-184).

In general, Marshall et al (1988) found a remarkable stability in the class structure of British society and in the importance of class to that society. By class, they meant occupational categories. They found, however, that nearly eighty percent of people could think of no other criterion for class identification. Furthermore, class was "by far the most salient frame of reference employed in the construction of social identities" (p.148). Bell (1989) finds this work greatly exciting, insofar as it is able to put many controversies in sociological debates to empirical test. He goes so far as to say that the "careful empirically-based paradigm" of Marshall et al (1988)

takes over the others and makes them henceforth essentially unnecessary. For me at least the dedication of SCMB (Social Class in Modern Britain) to John H. Goldthorpe and Erik Wright is deeply ironic for this book is writing them out of sociological history (Bell 1989, p.789).

As far as Bell is concerned, "SCMB is a real tour de force of class analysis. It represents the very best sociology produced in Britain and is of the highest international standard" (Bell 1989, p.792).

Nonetheless, problems remain, as Pahl's reaction to the same volume testifies. Bell regards the superiority of the work of Marshall et al to lie in their practice of class analysis, letting others argue about theoretical rationalities: Pahl's doubts surround the very practices of class analysis itself.

Pahl's doubts concern the basic sociological concept of 'structure-consciousness-action; [SCA], which, he notes, is to sociology what the concept of the labour market is to economics; it is used at all levels of aggregation, from analyses of squatters to international blocs; and in both Marxist and non-Marxist contexts. Pahl's doubts are all the more piquant since Bell credits him with having made a significant contribution to the

thinking of Marshall et al on just these matters. Pahl explains the SCA model in the following terms:

The basic idea is that there is something *inherent* in the social and economic circumstances of categories or classes of people that leads them, apparently with deterministic logic, to acquire radical consciousness of their oppressed, deprived or exploited situation (Pahl 1989, p.711).

This study takes the position that SCA fairly well summarizes the attitudes of the participants in the gentrification debate, whereby structure (new middle class or capital logic) leads to consciousness (aesthetical shift in popular tastes) leads to action (gentrification). Pahl's article has stimulated considerable debate within the pages of the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, (e.g., Crompton 1991, Marshall 1991, Mullins 1991). Nonetheless, Pahl's central reservations stand (Pahl 1991).

Ultimately, Pahl argues, this model derives from Marx, even its neo-Weberian variants. In fact, SCA is the heritage of denial of salience of demand issues in Marxian theory (see Chapter 2.3.4 – Neil Smith's avoidance of demand issues), due to Marx's definition of subsistence in terms of the reproduction of individuals rather than of society as a whole (Redfern 1992). With Marx's definition, workers have no more choice in their reproduction strategies than they do in productive labour. Different classes may receive different bundles of subsistence and therefore their lifestyles may be different, but these differences flow directly from their different relations to the structure. Therefore, their actions are determined directly by the structure. Pahl argues that the traditional misuse of SCA is to romanticize the underclass: their social and economic circumstances lead them to acquire radical consciousness of their ability to exploit their situation.

The concomitant to romanticizing the underclass is of course to disparage the pretensions of the over class (i.e. wealthy and powerful), which is where the analogies of gentrification as sin and disease arise. In fact, the logic of SCA applies equally as well in the base of the post-modern new middle class, their social and economic circumstances leading them to acquire radical consciousness of their ability to exploit *their* situation, and gentrify. The bias in favour of the underclass is due to tradition, not inherent in the model, as Pahl points out. What is inherent and problematic is the inherent assumption that the model itself is unproblematic:

Those who use this model rarely recognize that the links in the chain SCA have not been adequately theorized. The model is seen as unproblematical when... it is based on notions of a theory of action which, in practice, does not exist (Pahl 1989, p.712).

This, it can readily be seen, is the basic problem underlying the insistence that gentrification be discussed in terms of its impact on theories of class constitution. The SCA model within which those theories are couched is itself seen as unproblematic, and leads to a theory of action which is based on some unalterable attribute of the class position involved, and which consequently is inexorable in its nature. Pahl pleads for recognition by sociologists that:

what matters is not whether there are shifts in occupational prestige or in the distribution of earnings and wealth but how such putative shifts work out in terms of consciousness and action (Pahl 1989, p.713).

Participants in the gentrification debate have singularly failed to show how the shifts in the class constitution of society have manifested themselves in terms of consciousness and action. The models they have adopted have had the effect of ruling out the operation of consciousness altogether. They have reduced their accounts of gentrifier's behaviour to a sinful and diseased alien reflex. They share the same problems as those sociologists "who busy themselves with allocating individuals, households, occupations

or distinctive employment relations into categories," who are "...stuck at the stage of analysing structure, the S of the model, which may or may not have consequences for consciousness and action" (ibid.).

One might even suggest that sociology is the wrong discipline altogether for looking at this question, whereas psychology may possess a more sufficient underlying mechanism of analysis if the level of the individual is being ignored.

"Those who wish to make the concept of class do some work for them would presumably like to fit it into the SCA model by using it to define the S..." (Pahl 1989, p.713). However,

There is evident danger of circular reasoning so that socio-economic conditions produce "classes" which are then used as an explanation of the same socioeconomic conditions (ibid.).

Trying "to make the concept of class work" results also in circular arguments for the participants in the gentrification debate, generalizing from gentrification to society.

Gentrification is taken to herald the coming of a post-industrial society, because in post-industrial society, consumption that is gentrification is the defining characteristic. But, as Pahl argues,

Analytical distinctions related to a putative class structure are of interest only if they lead to greater understanding. The reason why sociologists concern themselves with embourgeoisement or proletarianization is not because they are simply interested in refining a classification scheme, but because these social processes, if they exist, are presumed to lead to significant social change through evolutionary or revolutionary processes (Pahl 1989, p.713).

Unfortunately, as Chapter two has shown, participants in the gentrification debate have often concerned themselves with gentrification, precisely because of its supposed significance in judging the adequacy of one classificatory scheme or another.



Consequently, the understanding of gentrification has not been particularly well advanced. To justify this lack of understanding, we are instead presented with reasons, such as chaotic conceptions, why we will never have a satisfactory explanation of gentrification.

Not only is there a problem with the stagnation inherent in the bias toward categorization for categorization's sake, but the shift to post-industrial modes of explanation has also created a problem with the process of categorization itself. Ley only became engaged in the gentrification debate following his criticisms of structural Marxism. Similarly, Rose's discussion of gentrification sought to use it as a means whereby the uneven development of Marxist theory might be overcome. The current state of the gentrification debate and its implicit characterization of the actors in the gentrification process bear out exactly Pahl's observations on the consequences of a commitment to explaining social phenomena in terms of class:

[Post-industrialism] shifts the argument away from the categorization of individuals, families and households by their *attributes* to a categorization according to their attitudes and values. It would obviously be convenient if there were congruence between the two, so that social *attitudes* could be read off from economic positions. Since that does not seem to work empirically, traditional class analyses is in more than a little trouble... (Pahl, *ibid.*).

SCA, in other words, represents the terms of the consensus in the gentrification debate.

The debate revolves around the question of which account of S is the most plausible. It has never got on to consciousness or action. Pahl concludes that:

class as a force for political and social change is problematic, since the links in the SCA chain are inadequately theorized and there is little empirical indication that the model has much relevance in practice. Secondly, as a classificatory device, class does little to help us understand the lifecycles of the privileged and adds nothing to the brute facts of poverty when considering the other end of the social structure. Finally, it is apparently well nigh impossible to operationalize the concept in order to make international comparisons (Pahl 1989, p.715).

Pahl refutes any suggestion that he might be thought to be "arguing out of sociological theory from urban and regional analysis" (p.719), or that capitalism can result in anything other than a class society. But, he insists, for all practical purposes, "it is difficult to see what, specifically, is added to the analysis" by the invocation of class and class-consciousness. Pahl concludes by calling for consumption to be taken seriously in sociological analysis, and hopes to provoke serious debate "instead of flaccid neologisms huddling under the umbrella of post-modernism" (p.719).

These criticisms of sociology by one of its major practitioners, in part in reaction to what Bell, another of its most distinguished figures, has called the very best of British sociology, should evidence a deep-rooted problem in the practice of sociology. Pahl's comments are particularly evidenced by the characteristics of the gentrification debate. This is both a challenge and a cause for optimism. The optimism is caused by the fact that the criticisms of the gentrification debate conducted in the first two chapters are borne out by Pahl's comments on sociological analyses generally. There is support in the literature for the lonely position denying the relevance of class to gentrification and vice versa. The challenge then is to devise a model of social change and organization into which an account of gentrification can be placed, since it is clear from Pahl's comments that sociological theory will be of little assistance. There is no space here to provide such a model (see Redfern 1992 for further information on this model).

### **3.3 THE NEW MIDDLE CLASS AS A STATUS GROUP**

I rely in this section on the work of Sarre (1989), whose textbook summary of the principal features of the sociological aspects of class analysis, may be taken as a model of the standard sociological discussion of the issues at stake in class analysis. This

model provides a useful illustration from sociology of those problems of SCA, which Pahl identified. It therefore demonstrates the necessity for radically re-addressing the question of the role of class and class analysis in gentrification studies. It should be noted that the remarks in this section are therefore addressed to this model itself, not at Sarre's treatment of it.

Gentrification involves the displacement of so-called working class people from residential areas by so-called middle-class people. In sociological literature, there seems to be little doubt as to what constitutes the working class (see below). The problems appear to arise when considering the middle class. Sarre for example begins his review of the middle classes in contemporary Britain with a discussion of the problems in defining the middle classes, but when he comes to review the working classes, he simply launches into a discussion of the arguments about whether and how they might be said to suffer from erosion from above and below. The question of the definition of the working class does not arise. The clear implication is that this question is quite unproblematic. As far as Sarre is concerned, they are manual workers, though we only find this out in his discussion of the problem of defining the lower middle class.

Since the middle class must, by definition, be distinguished from the ruling class above, and the working class below, definitions of all classes are in theory equally problematic. However, as Sarre illustrates, most attention has concentrated on the middle classes. This is because in sociological theory generally, not just in debates on gentrification, there is a continued belief in the existence of the middle classes and how they pose a major problem for Marxist theory:

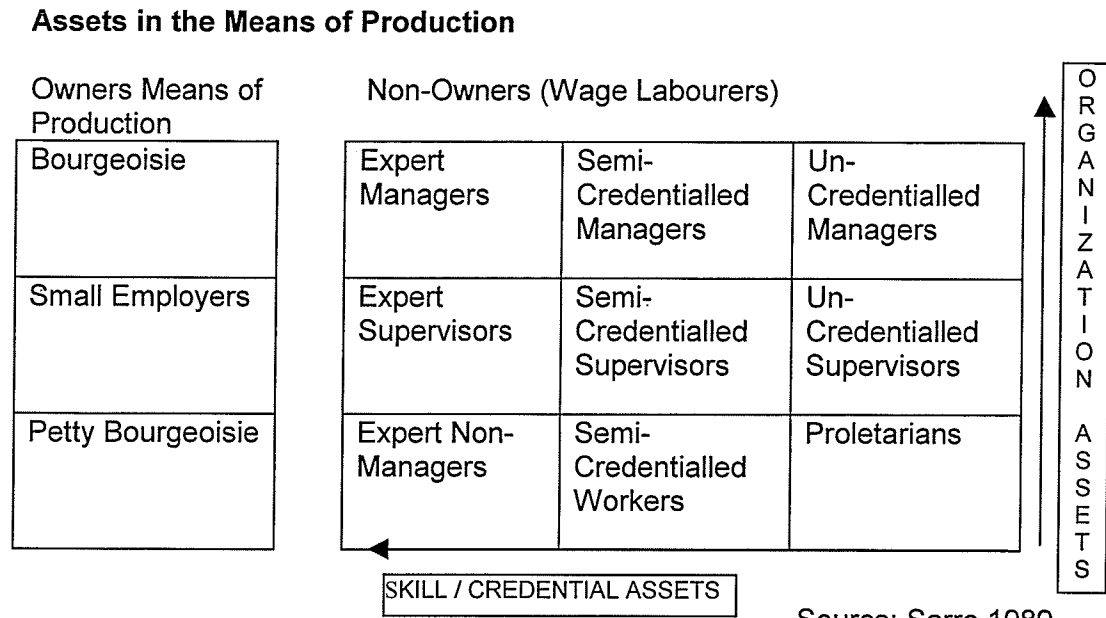
because of the influence of the notion that Marx has defined only two classes in capitalist societies, and that the intervening classes would gradually polarize into either the

bourgeoisie or, more likely, into the proletariat. A typical traditional Marxist response would be to conclude that even senior managers were employees, and hence workers, and that their failure to recognize the fact was the result of "false consciousness" (Sarre 1989, p. 103).

The problem of the middle classes however only arises because of the SCA. It operates in this particular context in reverse mode; instead of referring consciousness and action to the effects of structure, it refers structure from action and consciousness. Sarre, the traditional Marxist, responds to the existence of the middle class by arguing that even senior managers are employees and "hence workers" (p.103). The resultant false consciousness results precisely because according to the precepts of the SCA paradigm, the consciousness of senior managers ought to be determined by their structural location. Since senior managers, if they are part of the proletariat, are "hence" workers, so also, according to the traditional Marxist, they ought to identify with workers in general. The obvious implausibility of such a situation is clearly apparent and this is the foundation of the doubts about Marxist class analysis.

To return the question of exploitation to the centre of the definition of the middle class, Wright argued that the middle classes possessed assets, which they exploited on their own behalf. In particular, they were able to exploit their skill assets and the organization assets to their own enrichment, while the capitalists continued to exploit their labour power for profit (Wright 1986, p.119-121). The middle classes could therefore be divided into two types: those who while exploiters on some dimensions are themselves exploited on others; and those who neither exploit nor are exploited (p.126 – see Figure 3.1 below).

Figure 3.1 Wright's Map of Class Locations in Capitalist Society



Source: Sarre 1989

Wright hoped by this typology to meet what he considered to be the basic challenge in Marxist class analysis, namely the conceptual problem of nonpolarized class positions within a logic of polarized class relations (Wright 1986, p.115). The problem of course only arises if it is accepted that a theoretically distinct middle class does exist and that the task confronting theorists is therefore to theorize it. Meiksins (1986) argues that if Wright's position is accepted one is then confronted with the problem of explaining what the middle class does, the familiar problem of functionalist explanation.

The service class is composed of those working in the higher reaches of government bureaucracies, providing "key services on behalf of the owners of capital" (Savage et al, p.458). This argument regarding the bureaucratic service class was made by Lash, Urry and Goldthrope (Savage et al, p.458). Mills (1988), Butler (1997), Ley (1996), Redfern (1991 and 1992), and Bondi (1991 and 1999) have all invoked its existence in their

contributions to the gentrification debate. It is therefore necessary to examine this concept in some detail.

In terms of its provenance, the service class theory owes more to Weber than Marx (Savage et al, Sarre 1989, Sayer 1991). In common with most Weberian definitions of class, "the precise definition of the service class is rather vague" (Savage et al 1988, p.459). Regardless of its provenance, it still betrays the characteristic problems of SCA. Sarre for example writes that:

More recent discussions of the concept of a service class seem to continue to accept the contradictions between services for capital and state bureaucracies, without explicit discussion of how these two aspects are to be brought together (Sarre 1989, p.106).

Equally necessary however is explicit discussion of why these two aspects should be seen as contradictory in the first place. Why should jobs in these two different areas of employment be contradictory from the point of class formation? Sarre does not say. He goes on to argue that the case for the existence of a service class "is best left as "not proven"" (1989, p.107).

So, it may be asked, *does* the service class exist, in spite of its members' disparate actions (as exemplified by their record of disparate voting behaviour, indicating non-uniformity of consciousness)? If it does, the reply might be, so what? What does the labelling of this group of people as new service class add to the analysis? Abercrombie and Urry (1983) argued for example, that the new service class has distinctive casual powers, though they are not necessarily manifested.

These powers are to restructure capitalism to maximize the separation between conceptualization and execution, hence de-skilling the labour force and maximizing the educational and research requirements of the service class itself (Sarre 1989, p.106).

This is not a particularly strong argument. It is the new-class-as-aliens argument in a different guise. The new service class, on this account, is comprised of people with distinct casual powers waiting for the opportune moment (contingency) to exercise them, all the time insinuating themselves into particular, key, occupations, reminiscent of aliens in 1950s science fiction films from the Cold War era.

It is not of course the members of this class or any other, which have such powers. The powers they possess come to them by virtue of the jobs they hold. In the current state of capitalist development, there are a certain number of occupational categories, which we may call service class if we so wish, but the powers possessed by occupiers of these categories come to them by virtue of their position within a capitalist hierarchy, not by their power as a class. If I accept money, either from an employer, or from the state in welfare benefits, I too accept the authority of the institution paying me to control my actions, although the extent of the control is a matter of negotiation and compromise. I have to obey my employer's instructions, or the instructions of those my contract says I am to report to. If I am claiming welfare, I may not work, but must look for work, and must report periodically to an officer of the state that I am obeying those instructions. Nonetheless, in capitalist society, labour must at all times be free to switch occupations (Engel 1996) and this limits the ability of my employer to control my actions. The pursuit of profit by capitalist institutions is tempered by the requirements of producing, reproducing and also retaining a labour force capable of achieving that goal.

To repeat again Pahl's question: What does labelling of different occupations as working class or new service or middle class add to the analysis? It can only be that in so doing we can predict certain consequences from knowing what are the class positions of these

occupations. Yet as both Sarre and Pahl in their different ways have indicated, this is clearly impossible.

Neither can we argue the other way, and say that the action of a person who has accepted an occupational position, which could qualify them as a member of the new service class, has demonstrated the particular consciousness, which characterizes a member of the new service class (Barbelat 1986, Hess 2001, p.167 and Section 3.5 below). Such an argument would exemplify the circular reasoning Pahl warns of whereby socio-economic conditions produce classes; which are then used as an explanation of those same socio-economic conditions. The SCA model applied to the case of the middle class repeats in a wider context exactly the same problems of over-explanation to which theories of gentrification are so notoriously prone. It also tends towards essentialist explanations of human behaviour, as demonstrated by the tendency to treat the new service/middle class as aliens. The critique of essentialism therefore may be seen as paralleling Pahl's criticisms of SCA, a possibility I examine in the next section.

### **3.4 ESSENTIALISM IN CLASS ANALYSIS**

It is important to examine the relationship between Graham's (1988 and 1992) introduction to the critique of essentialism and Pahl's criticisms of SCA. Graham argues that in a nonessentialist Marxism, the notion of class should be seen simply as a point of entry into social analysis. "This means that class is central to a particular Marxist discourse but it *does not* mean that it is central to social life" (Graham 1988, p.61). This statement can be interpreted as an endorsement of Pahl's criticisms of SCA, since the implication of SCA is that class is central to social life, because consciousness and



actions are determined on the basis of class position. On the other hand, Graham goes on to argue that “myriad effects” of the “role of class in constituting society” is “neglected”, and that non-essentialist Marxists hope to draw attention to this role and “to affect the ways in which class processes are understood, opposed and transformed” (ibid., p.61). In other words, it would appear that they hope to place at the centre of social life, presumably with desired (revolutionary) effects on consciousness and action.

So what does Graham understand by class? He defines class as “the process of performing, appropriating and distributing surplus labour” (1989, p.61), but this, it appears, is not a social but a theoretical process: “The class process... is constructed as a theoretical concept and deployed in Marxist theoretical and empirical work” (ibid., p.61). Graham’s argument appears as ontologically cautious as Bhaskar’s is ontologically bold.

For a more fully elaborated position on non-essentialist notions of class, I refer to Resnick and Wolff (1987), on whose position Graham bases his arguments. They argue that Wright and others, trying to establish a multi-dimensional Marxist theory of class, merely exchange one essentialism, politics, for another, economics. Resnick and Wolff therefore set themselves up for this question:

Is it possible [that] Marx formulated a theory of class... that is not economic determinist, not otherwise essentialist, and not limited to a two class approach? (Resnick and Wolff 1987, p.115).

Their answer is yes. Resnick and Wolff accept the basic two-classes division of producers and appropriators of surplus labour. This “fundamental” (ibid., p.118) division consist of the various forms Marx describes, primitive communist, slave, feudal, or capitalist. Apart from this fundamental division however, they also employ another

concept, namely 'subsumed' class divisions (ibid., p.118). Subsumed class processes "refer to the distribution of already appropriated surplus labour or its products" (ibid., p.118). Resnick and Wolff quote from Marx to give examples of such subsumed class positions and in this manner, Resnick and Wolff attempt to substantiate their claim that Marxist theory does support a complex notion of class.

The problem with their demonstration of a complex Marxian model of class and income distribution is that it is difficult to appreciate its value. As they outline the typology of contemporary social classes based on their arguments, Resnick and Wolff tell us for example that the job of managers is to "manage the enterprise's appropriation of surplus value" and that without the efforts of managers in this regard, "industrial capitalists would not realize surplus value" (ibid., p.175). Again Pahl's question arises: what specifically is added to the analysis by dressing this description up in class categories? Not much, it would appear as he states:

The sociologists' insistence on bringing class into the analysis raises expectations about what is to be gained from paying attention to such analysis which, if not satisfied, results in the scornful dismissal of the subject for being over committed to meaningless jargon...

Theory in much sociological reporting is in danger of becoming a conventional appendage – rather like the Marxist-Leninist preamble to technical papers published by Soviet social scientists in the days before glasnost and perestroika (Pahl 1989, p.717).

The critique of essentialism in Marxist class analysis runs into difficulties when it attempts to produce class analysis of its own. The attempt by Resnick and Wolff to produce a non-essentialist class analysis founders because they still phrase their account within the context of SCA. Even if classes can be defined in non-essentialist terms, their analysis still makes class itself essential. Why else do Resnick and Wolff feel the need to present this plethora of classes?

The question comes down to what we expect class analysis to achieve. I would argue that economic class must by definition have economic interests. These interests should be identifiable from the manner in which members of those classes receive the wherewithal for their sustenance – their income in capitalist societies. But to say this is not to say that members of a class defined on the basis of similar categories of income will necessarily see their interests in the same way.

It is important to note that neither Pahl or Low are antagonistic towards Marxist analyses of class, though I have chosen to highlight their problems in the course of this discussion. The same criticisms could be made of Weberian class analysis. Even though there are considerable ontological and epistemological differences between the Weberian and Marxist theories of class, they are nonetheless theories of *economic* class (D. Sayer 1991). Members of Weberian classes are as committed to economic interests as are members of Marxist classes. The question is not one of Weber versus Marx; it is SCA versus non-SCA. The question naturally arises therefore, if not class, what?

The answer I propose is status. I shall argue that the same structural (class) conditions are experienced in different ways by different groups and individuals. These can be accounted for in terms of status. Differences in status then account for the differences in political allegiance and all the other differences this symbolizes among the proletariat. This would appear to mean a shift from Marx to Weber, despite the fact that the criticisms of SCA apply equally to Weberian as to Marxist class analysis. As this chapter unfolds however, I intend to show that this is not necessarily so.

### 3.5 THE NEW MIDDLE "CLASS" AS A STATUS GROUP

As Sarre points out, Weberian practitioners of sociology have often used the concept of status in challenging Marxist class theory. According to Sarre, the sharpest of these challenges could be found in the work of Frank Parkin (1979). This was not particularly effective; and according to Sarre, Parkin's work "both affirms what it wishes to deny... and fails to demonstrate what it asserts" (1989, p.94). On the other hand, it might be assumed from a Marxist point of view that status is simply a matter of ideology, and therefore epiphenomenal to, or in some way simply derivative of processes of class structuration. It is therefore worth considering the Weberian concept of status to see if in fact either of these assumptions is made.

Weber argued that class situation depended on two criteria: market situation made only important insofar as it affected life chances (Barbalet 1986, D. Sayer 1991). These two criteria create differences inherent in Weber's notion of class because the first, market situation, is essentially a definition in terms of inputs, what you bring to the market, while the second, life chances, is a definition in terms of *outcomes*, what you get from the market. The problem is that one's current market situation not necessarily the same as one's highest achievable situation. If the boss's son is sent to learn the ins and outs of the family business in the traditional manner by starting out on the shop floor, his current market situation is the same as his co-workers, but his life-chances, where he is likely to end up, are considerably different (Runciman 2001). This may seem obvious, but many academic researchers take different positions and make different presumptions with regards to the use of Weberian theory in the notion of housing classes. In fact, as Barbalet points out,

when a new middle class is defined in Weberian terms its class nature tends to be displaced by an understanding of its characteristics for status group formation. Accounts of a new middle class, which point to the peculiarities of its employment market outcomes, are as applicable to treatments of its nature as a status group as they are to its class nature (Barbalet 1986, p.561).

For example, the service class is currently supposed to be characterized by increasing 'social closure', in other words, its ranks come more and more to be filled by the children of its existing members; the service class thus comes more and more to form a class for itself as well as in itself. Savage et al (1988) dispute this view; but the fact is that social closure is a criterion in the formation of a status group, not an economic class. The significance of closure in such studies 'should be seen in the identification of status groups within classes rather than of social classes themselves' (Barbalet 1986, p.573).

Barbalet also points to the fact that 'status groups, *but not classes* were distinguished by Weber... in terms of their different patterns of consumption' (p.561 emphasis added). Also, according to Weber, education, "functional and work class differences are as likely to lead to status distinctions as they are to class differences" (ibid.). The implications of Barbalet's discussions are far-reaching. Once it is appreciated that what are described in the sociological literature generally as well as the gentrification literature in particular as class differences are in fact status differences, then the myriad problems of essentialism, aliens, sin and disease can be overcome. Such an outcome requires more than simply a change in nomenclature however. These authors' use of "class" where they mean 'status' is no mere slip of the pen. Barbalet writes that

The contradictory treatment of class and status in Weberian theory is less visible than it might otherwise be because of the demise of status as an analytical category in neo-Weberian writing on stratification. This is not a resolution of the problem, however, as the class concept has been forced to encompass what had traditionally been regarded as both class and non-class factors. *While it has overloaded the class concept, neo-*

*Weberian theory has failed adequately to consider aspects of social reality, which cannot be equated with class divisions* (Barbalet 1986, p.562 emphasis added).

This confusion of class and status is of considerable theoretical import since the common complaint of anti-reductionist and anti-essentialist Marxist discussions of class is exactly the same as that which Barbalet complains about in neo-Weberian discussions of class; namely that the concept is overloaded, and cannot adequately consider aspects of social reality which cannot be equated with class divisions. The situation is comparable to Rose's (1984) complaint of mix'n'match theorizing in Marxist studies of gentrification – only in this case it is not a non-Marxist theory of gentrification which has been taken over wholesale and dressed up in Marxist clothes, it is a whole (and I would argue misconstrued) theory of social structure which has been acquired. The self-imposed problem of providing a Marxist account of the neo-Weberian middle classes is like a cuckoo in the nest for Marxist theory. It has been deposited from elsewhere and demands and receives copious attention, without those administering ever stopping to question where it came from or why they have to devote so much attention to it. The greatest irony is that these so-called middle classes, for which Marxist theory has been charged with finding a theoretical rationale, do not, according to Barbalet, even have a legitimate parentage in the context of Weberian class theory.

However, Barbalet goes on to argue that Weberian status theory is of hardly any more use than is its class theory. Parkin and others "have complained that Weber's notion of status has been (illegitimately) reduced to mere "prestige" by some of his followers. *Yet there is little in Weber's discussion of status which goes beyond prestige*" (p.562 emphasis added). In fact, "the significant aspects of social reality" which Barbalet argues "cannot be equated with class divisions", equally cannot "be apprehended

through the Weberian conception of status" (p.562). If we accept therefore the force of the argument that questions of status have been unduly neglected in contemporary sociology, this does not, according to Barbalet, encumber us with a concomitant commitment to Weberian sociology. However, it does encumber us with a commitment to some accounts of status. In Chapter five therefore, I sketch out such an account and how it may be reconciled with the Marxist theory of classes.

An account of the formation of status groups is not enough, however. To use status as an independent variable or axiom in this account would simply be to substitute status for class in the SCA model. Group consciousness, be it of class or status, is the aggregate consciousness of the various individual members of that group. For the present however, it is sufficient to note the implications of Barbalet's arguments for the conduct of the gentrification debate, which demonstrate conclusively that the whole debate is misplaced.

To recap, the gentrification debate has tended to revolve around the class issue.

However, as D. Sayer argues, the term "class" has two senses: one is internal, intrinsic to self-consciousness; the other is "a matter of mere "accidental" circumstance rather than inherent being... something which is extrinsic to the essence of personality" (1991, p.69). Max Weber analyzed these relations in terms of status (ibid.). However, Sayer argues, it is in the second sense that class is a distinctly modern phenomenon and of concern to Marxist theory. The second sense is of course that in which class is a purely economic attribute. It is this sense that Marxist theory only recognizes two classes.

Whether the proposition is that gentrification has created a new middle class, or that this new middle class has created gentrification, if the creation of this new middle class can

be linked to economic processes, then Marxist theory is in trouble; hence the vigour with which the gentrification debate is conducted (Hamnett 1991).

However, Marxist theory is only in trouble, as Barbalet makes quite plain, if we slip, illegitimately, from the use of "class" as *economic* class to the use of "class" as *social* class, invoking *status* considerations. If we cannot tie the existence of gentrifiers and gentrification to economic class issues (in other words, if gentrification is not a class issue, in the strict Weberian or Marxist sense of that term), then we cannot use their existence as a proxy by which to debate the competing claims to knowledge made by Weberian and Marxist theories. That it is illegitimate to use Weber's or Marx's theory of (economic) class as though they applied to social class, or status groups, should be clear from the problems of SCA, namely the way in which the actions of gentrifiers becomes explicable only in terms of aliens, sin or disease. Even in Weber's own sociology, the axes along which class and status differentiation occur are supposed to be quite separate. Conceptualizing divisions in society in terms of status as well as class avoids these problems, and provides the sociological rationale for the argument that gentrifiers gentrify because they can, not because they have to.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has now established a framework for a discussion of class issues. The argument has proceeded by demonstrating and problematizing the standard sociological model, SCA, endorsing the concept of status as a means of mediating between structure and agency, and then showing how the concept of status can be introduced into a Marxian theory of class.



This interpretation of Marxist principles permits the defence of the economic focus of this thesis and, in doing so, provides a powerful endorsement of the principle that gentrifiers gentrify because they can. It obviates SCA in Marxist models of society, and in a manner superior to that of Resnick and Wolff's strategy for dealing with the problem. Gentrifiers do not have to gentrify because of their class position because class position only determines behaviour in the sense in which R. Williams uses "determine": setting limits, not dictating actions. In capitalist society, individuals produce and reproduce capitalism at the same time as they produce and reproduce themselves via the acquisition and circulation of money. The outcomes of this productive and reproductive process however are open and must be continually negotiated, revised and updated. Within the broad limits of the necessity to acquire money in order to exercise agency, a whole range of strategies may be pursued. The necessity to acquire money and the conditions under which this money is acquired (the internalization of the rules and the moral order of capitalism) does however explain a particular set of strategies to ensure a secure supply in the ever changing world of capitalist production: the search for centrality in the accumulation process and status group formation – closure – in order to secure this centrality (see Chapter four below). Status group formation cannot however be reduced to labour market segmentation. Status groups incorporate several labour market segments.

There is the danger that simply to substitute for class in discussions of social differentiation would leave the analysis stuck within the confines of the SCA model. In fact, status cannot simply be substituted for class. The crucial difference between status and class is that status is not only acquired, it is also ascribed; there has to be social consensus on status matters where none exist on class issues – class considered

in the internal and external aspects discussed by Sayer (1991). Status norms are internalized by group members and upheld in other contexts. Although closure, the fundamental principle of status group formation, is directed toward monopolization of job opportunities within the context of the capitalist accumulation process, strategies for status group formation are not only pursued in the context of paid employment.

So far however, these contexts have not been specified. They cannot be specified without understanding how status itself is constructed. So far this question has not been addressed. To understand gentrification in terms of clashes between status groups, it is necessary to understand how status is acquired and ascribed. This is the object of the next part of this thesis.

Having therefore sundered the links between housing and class constitution and between class constitution and identity, the next item on the agenda is to forge a link between housing and identity.

## 4.0 STRUCTURE AND AGENCY IN THE MODERN WORLD

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter four will argue that since there are no class distinctions to speak of in the gentrification process, attempting to develop class categories to explain actors behaviour in the gentrification process is no longer needed or necessary. If Marx's (or indeed Weber's) categories of class do not adequately cover all areas of experience of social life, the solution is to develop accounts of these other areas of experience, not to multiply class categories indefinitely.

Cultural materialism rejects psychological explanations of the formation of consciousness, arguing that they take for granted the separations of individuality and society, subjectivity and sociality, and culture and material production in modern life, separations that cultural materialism is particularly concerned to reconcile (Milner 2002, Higgins 1999, Prendergast 1995 and R. Williams 1990). Raymond Williams makes a plea for a revival of sociology of consciousness, which he argues was a fundamental concern of the classical sociology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (1989b and 1990). In response that plea, in Chapter five, I rely heavily on the work of Robert Park and demonstrate that this should be accepted as a summary of classical sociology including also a principle concern with the development of just such a sociology of consciousness as formed under conditions of modernity. I will attempt to elucidate how Park's interests and concepts, in particular, his concept of the marginal man, may be reconciled with Raymond Williams principles of cultural materialism.

I argued in Chapter two that much of the gentrification debate has ostensibly been dedicated to a clarification of the problem of structure versus agency in social theory. Dominated on the one hand by the structure-oriented neighbourhood lifecycle model of Neil Smith's rent gap, and on the other by the agency-oriented post-industrial model of production of gentrifiers approach, the issue of gentrification has been highly conducive to such a debate. However, Chapter three has shown that the conceptualization both of the agents and the structures of gentrification has been quite inadequate to explain its occurrence. Gentrification literature has been hamstrung by the presumption that the problem of structure versus agency must be considered in terms of the context set by SCA, and by the fact that students of gentrification basically disapprove of the activities of gentrifiers. Further hindrance can be blamed principally by the fact that gentrification is used as a synecdoche for modern society.

It is a point of interest that there is a debate over structure versus agency at all. Concern over the very question of structure versus agency is itself a peculiarly modern phenomenon. Though the participants in the gentrification debate, an oversight that has considerably undermined efforts to adequately conceptualize behaviour in the gentrification process, have not recognized modernity. This of course implies that research strategies should be based on the presumption that gentrification is a phenomenon of modernity, which requires rendering a definition of modernity. I argue that the fundamental condition of modernity is concern with meaning. It is ultimately this concern that has allowed gentrification so often to be used as a peg on which to hang debates on structure and agency.

The insistence on treating agency seriously is often quasi-religious in nature. The lack of appreciation of the religious imperatives involved in theorization in social science is partly responsible for the characterization of gentrification in terms of sin. The inclusion of demand issues into cultural materialism provides a materialist basis for taking agency seriously. The assumption that gentrifiers gentrify because they are compelled to, not only means that demand issues in gentrification are by-passed, but so also is agency, despite the ostensible concerns with the status of agency that fuels much of the debate. Furthermore, it shows that a concern for demand issues need not be troublesome in a Marxist account of gentrification, as it has been for Neil Smith (Hamnett 1991, see also Chapter two).

#### **4.2 THE QUESTION OF AGENCY AND THE PROBLEM OF MEANING**

Understanding the means by which the problem of agency is a problem of modernity and how these concepts are linked will demonstrate how the problems of post-industrialist accounts of gentrification arise, and more importantly, how they may be resolved.

Concepts of agency are crucial in the endeavour to explain social life. Agency gives meaning to actors' behaviour and by omitting its significance the role of human behaviour in explanations of social life become reduced to that of an automaton (Runciman, 2001). Most accounts of human behaviour are wisely reluctant to deny the role of agency. The status of agency in explanations of social life has, however, become a political question as much as a philosophical, psychological or sociological one. Consequently, many historical or dialectical materialist Marxist studies have been

reluctant to emphasise the role of agency in capitalist society. Invocation of agency implicitly concedes that human beings have some autonomy of behaviour.

Many Marxists have been reluctant to concede that this is possible in a capitalist society which proclaims freedom of choice but which in fact, in their view, coerces people into conceding to the will of another. This concession denying them the very thing which demonstrates their humanity, namely their creative capacity and their ability to make decisions about how to intervene in nature with, their labour power. Only the advent of communism, according to this camp, will restore the ability of human agents to display agency and hence humanity. Real agency, it would be argued is not possible under capitalism. Those, such as the self-styled humanists, who insist on apotheosizing the role of agency in contemporary society only do so for ideological reasons; they support the capitalist slogans about freedom of choice, or are too proud and wilfully refuse to admit publicly what they know to be the case, that the only freedom of choice they have is in the furnishings of their prison walls.

#### **4.3 POST-STRUCTURALISM AND GENTRIFICATION**

Admitting the possibility of choice means accepting the existence of variety, and of difference. As Chapter two demonstrated, the claims of post-modern theory "to empower or explain variety", that is, to account for agency, have engendered considerable dissent (Massey 1989). If the claims for post-modernity are wishful thinking, however, is there anything that can be rescued from the debates on post-modern theory? I would argue that there are essentially only three aspects. The first and most important being problematization of the condition of modernity itself. Cooke argues for two further considerations. If post-modernism is parody, then that should be

given its due because its "ironic treatment of history" means that "it uses history creatively to criticize, amongst other things, modernism's loss of contact with popular consciousness" (Cooke 1990, p.337).

The second point is that even if modern urban theory is "totalizing", it is, or should be, theorizing, "not a universalistic system, but a system of differences" (Cooke 1990, p.332). Strictly speaking, this is a position derived from post-structuralism (Giddens 1987, Chapter four), but Cooke expands this position into a post- modern urban theory

not as a project in itself but a form of reading for absences, a deconstruction of the ways of seeing and acting which first developed with the onset of early modern urban policy but which have now themselves become exhausted and in need of further democratization and renewal (Cooke 1990, p.342).

This idea that the effects of structures are felt in absences rather than presences is worth very careful consideration. The "production of gentrifiers" approach in effect makes this fundamental error of theorizing presences, the presence of a gentrifier in its gentrified house.

The proposition that we think in terms of differences rather than universals seems initially bizarre. However, the poststructuralist argument is that is only in differences can distinguishable characteristics, and therefore information, or meaning, be created, not lost. This is quite a different conclusion from those drawn by the post-modernists.

The consequence of theorizing in terms of universals is to deny the possibility of choice in human affairs. Gentrifiers, in the universalist perspective (shared by both left and right in this debate), gentrify because they have to. Anything that the gentrification debate illuminates concerning gentrifiers or gentrified neighbourhoods applies equally as well to the rest of the middle class or to the rest of the inner-city. Because they

theorize in terms of universals, they are unable to explain the existence of differences between one section of the middle class or one area of the inner-city and another. The irony then should be that the major problem for these theories of why gentrification occurs is to explain instance where gentrification is absent in areas of the inner-city to which the explanations offered by these theories apply, but in which there is no sign of gentrification.

The arguments for post-structuralism are epistemological rather than sociological. Espousing a post-structuralist position therefore does not imply also endorsing claims about or for post-modern society. As has been seen, there is no evidence even for presuming that there is a post-modern condition which gentrification could be symptomatic of. Therefore, there is no reason for basing research strategies involving gentrification on the presumption that it is. However, these arguments do not affect the vital importance of post-structuralism in guaranteeing theorization, which admits the possibility of choice as a matter of principle, rather than as a concession. Having made this argument for theorizing in terms of differences, however, it is necessary to show how it may be applied in a cultural materialist context.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION: DEMAND AND AGENCY IN CULTURAL MATERIALIST PERSPECTIVE**

Chapter one described cultural materialism as a radical attempt to place the question of agency at centre stage. As this chapter has shown however, attempts to address the question of agency have rarely done so in materialist terms. Consequently, the status of agency in social analyses has remained largely unresolved. Both those who would evince a concern for agency and those who would deny the validity of those concerns are able to marshal arguments, which effectively criticize the opposing position.



However, the current state of the gentrification debate, ostensibly concerned with agency, bears witness that the result has been a stalemate - hence the consensus that a synthesis of the two alternatives is required (Hamnett 1991). This stalemate may be avoided by reconsidering the role of subsistence and therefore demand in Marxist economic thought. Adopting this strategy admits material evidence of the existence of agency, which can also be linked to materialist accounts of structural transformation.

Marx argues that capitalism is characterized by the existence of profit (as a category of income), and that profit depends on exploitation in the labour process. Exploitation arises when workers have to sell their labour-power, alienate their creative faculties and place them at the disposal of the capitalists, but are then only paid the value, which they require to reproduce their labour-power, not the total value of the work, which they perform for the capitalists. Knowing the value of labour-power enables the rate of exploitation to be calculated. Therefore, some definition of subsistence is required to put a figure on the value of labour-power. However, Marx operationalizes this definition in terms of the reproduction requirements of the individual labourer (1967, p277). The unavoidable implication of this is that each individual labourer must consume what is provided for her or him by his or her capitalist employer (Pasinetti 1981). They are unable to exercise choice, agency, and therefore consciousness in their consumption decisions, in effect in their lives outside of the labour process. Since they are also unable to exercise agency in the labour process, the exercise by the working classes of any form of agency is ruled out a priori by Marx's particular definition of subsistence. Marxists tend to alternate between "economism" and "voluntarism" as their basic political strategy for fashioning conditions for a revolutionary transformation of society. The a

priori denial, in Marx's definition of subsistence, of the operation of independent working class consciousness is, I argue, the reason why.

By contrast, redefining subsistence at the social level provides a cogent rationale for arguing that gentrifiers gentrify because they can. Under this redefinition, there is no necessary link between our (common) class position and the amount of money we may receive. Consequently, there need be no commonality in our feelings towards the system that rewards you handsomely and me outrageously. S does not determine C; consequently it cannot determine A. One can therefore be fundamentalist over the question of class and class relations – to insist that class can only be defined in relation to formal position within the economy – without being reductionist – without, that is, reducing behaviour to a reflex of class position. Adopting in other words, Neil Smith's position on the importance of structure without denying Ley's concerns for agency, in fact giving real meaning to Ley's concerns.

Much of the impetus in the gentrification debate comes from the presupposition that to be fundamentalist about class is to deny the validity of other areas of experience. This presupposition depends implicitly on accepting Marx's restrictive definition of subsistence, which allows for no possibility of self-expression. Using the system level definition of subsistence, it is possible to develop an economic framework which gives expression to Sayer's observation that "what is most socially consequential in capitalism is not the class relation on which it rests, but the wider "abstraction" of sociality and subjectivity entailed in the generalization of the commodity form which this relation make possible" (1991, p.90). If there is patriarchy, or if there is racism, their effects are experienced by 'sovereign individuals of capitalism" (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner

1986), created through the reduction of social relations to exchanges of abstract labour. To argue, as do Matthews (1984) and Johnson (1989), that class is inherently a patriarchal concept because women's labour is only accounted as being of value when women "enter the male world of paid work" (Johnson 1989, p.682) is surely to put the cart before the horse. Patriarchy is inherently a class concept because it is through class relations that patriarchy is experienced. Although Johnson is being ironic when she writes, "class is inapplicable to women except when they enter the masculine economy either as potential or as actual paid workers," (Johnson 1989, p.682) she in fact encapsulates the point precisely, as Massey (1989) points out.

The bottom line in these debates on the operation of patriarchy (or racism) in capitalism is that women's (or ethnic minorities") actual or potential capacity to labour is not adequately recognized or compensated. But to argue this is to concede the fundamentally capitalist principle that recognition ought to be in the form of financial compensation for what then immediately becomes abstract labour, performed by sovereign individuals of capitalism. Marx criticizes the trade unions for marching behind banners displaying demands for better wages when they should be displaying demands for the abolition of the wages system. When it comes to the question of domestic labour, the same point stands. To argue, as Massey puts it, from "classes as historically constituted social phenomena" to "class as a concept... confuses two issues and fails to make the conceptual point it is [sought]... to establish" (1989, p.693).

As Massey argues, the whole point about capitalism is that it makes for "a very partial view of society", in which "the whole area outside paid work and the preparation for paid work is omitted from consideration" (1989, p.693). But it does not seem to me that the

solution is to treat those areas outside paid work (including, not least, gentrification) implicitly as though they were in principle analyzable as paid work, an implication which, I repeat once more, is based on an acceptance of Marx's definition of subsistence. Defining subsistence in terms of the requirements for the reproduction of the labour – power of each individual worker rules out the possibility of workers being able to exercise consciousness in a form, which is not completely determined by their place in the economic structure. It is this definition of subsistence that underpins the SCA model. Consequently, as I have shown, we are presented with the spectacle of people who would in other situations applaud Marx's opposition to Utopian socialism, actually assessing arguments within Marxism on the basis of idealist and essentialist presuppositions about human nature (see Chapter 4.3 above). In Chapter five, I develop a sociology of consciousness in which the relation of the experience of waged labour to the experience of those activities, which take place outside paid work, is more adequately theorized.

As for this chapter, viewing agency in terms of choice and demand satisfies the desire to place agency at centre stage. To do so, however, demand (and hence economic theory) must be incorporated into the premises of any explanation of social life, and that explanation must therefore be founded on the theorization of difference. In other words, this chapter provides a philosophical underpinning for the insistence that gentrifiers gentrify because they can. Chapter seven looks at the economic issues in more detail. In the meantime, having argued that the value of money provides material evidence of consciousness, agency and structure, it is still necessary to provide an account of how that consciousness is created under the particular conditions of modernity.

## 5.0 ROBERT PARK AND THE DIALECTICS OF MODERNITY

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Since Chapter two, I have been arguing that the problems in explanations of gentrification reflect a deep-rooted problem in sociological theory. The gentrification debate, not unnaturally, tends to obscure these problems. The deep-seated nature of these deficiencies has meant that it has been necessary to provide a reconstituted theory of structure, consciousness and agency, before an explanation of gentrification can be provided that avoids the problems of the accounts of gentrification analyzed in Chapter two.

Chapter five will expose the problems that lie at the heart of most discussions of agency in gentrification studies and propose instead a materialist conception of agency in capitalist society in which money is the medium of structure, agency and therefore consciousness. It can be argued that this permits one to be fundamentalist about class without being reductionist about behaviour or motivation. It is correct to argue, as Levine (2003), Massey (1989) and Milner (2002) do, that a fundamentalist position on class cannot provide an account of social life, which comprises the totality of human experience. However, the answer is not to dilute the specificity of class, but to derive an account of consciousness, which includes the experience of class but is not reducible to it. This is the larger purpose of this chapter. This also means of course providing an account of social life into which gentrification can be fitted, and not, as in the gentrification debate, the other way round.

Specifically however, in terms of providing the basis for an explanation of gentrification, this chapter also completes the last part of the agenda set out in Chapter two and three for overcoming the problems identified in the gentrification literature. This problem consists of how to break the presumed link between housing and class constitution so that a distinction can be made between class and status. Thus, allow the mediation of consciousness in reactions to class situation; and finally to establish a link between housing and status which does not rapidly re-establish a place for class, or more precisely, which preserves the autonomy of individual consciousness in the face of structural determinants. This chapter argues that such a link may be established by means of the works of Robert Park.

However, although I recommend that attention be paid to Park's writings, this chapter is not about Robert Park, it is about modernity and the social context in which gentrification occurs. Chapter four concluded by stating that this chapter would demonstrate a link between housing and identity. However, why housing should have such a role at all is a question that also needs to be answered, and this chapter addresses this issue also. Saunders (1989 and 1990) has generated considerable debate over whether or not owner-occupied housing does provide ontological security. However, this debate has concentrated on the qualities that make owner occupation a privileged form of housing tenure, and not so much on the qualities of housing itself. The fact that housing does have such a role, I shall argue in Chapter 5.4 below, is one of the features that make gentrification a phenomenon of modernity.

Having argued for the past three chapters that the state of the gentrification debate reveals serious difficulties in the very heart of sociological theory, which have acted to

the detriment of attempts at explaining gentrification, the works of Robert Park may not seem the most obvious place to start rectifying the situation. In the next section, I attempt to justify why one should think of using Park's work to discuss the problems of modernity.

The organization of this chapter is as follows. First we have an outline of Park's dialectic as sociology of consciousness, then an outline of its complementarities with Marx's, using Raymond Williams' arguments that human ecology should be the basis of socialist practices, followed by an account of the role of space and spatial relations in dialectic of socialization and social change in modern life. Once this account has been developed it is then possible to understand the significance of housing in defining status in conditions of modernity. Gentrification on this account will have significant effects on the constitution of status, not class. Furthermore, far from being post-modern, it will be shown that gentrification is quintessentially a product of modernity. However, simply to say that gentrification is a product of modernity is not enough. Modernity provides the context only, within which gentrifiers exhibit their ability to gentrify because they can.

## **5.2 PARK'S DIALECTIC BASIC PRINCIPLES**

Park's dialectic begins with a consideration of the fundamental bases of human behaviour, that is a search for the fundamental social element (Park 1955). His considerations do not lead him to socio-biology, to find the social element in the "instincts" of human beings. "Even if they may be said to exist", these instincts "themselves are in a constant process of change through the accumulation of memories and habits", (Park 1952, p.174), that is, through the development of consciousness.

The fundamental human element is not instinct but the tendency to act itself, i.e. the "attitude" (ibid.). Park describes the determination (that is to say, the negation of the formlessness) of an individual's attitudes in terms of dialectic between self-consciousness and other's attitudes (1952, p.174). Park quotes on numerous occasions Dewey's aphorism that society exists "in and through communication" (Park 1925 and 1952, p.174-175). Communication gives form to attitude and attitudes form self-consciousness and self-determination.

The formation of the attitude is a synthesis of experience and ambition, in which the ego surveys its past, reflects upon it, and projects itself into the future (Park 1969, p.358).

Attitudes are the processes by which the tendency to act is continuously transformed into actual actions, which thereby generates further experience (Park 1955, p.274).

Each stage in the ongoing process of socialization therefore takes place through the acquisition of experience, in particular through communication. Communication gives form to attitudes, attitudes form self-consciousness and the acquisition of self-consciousness leads to self-determination. The dialectics of socialization can then be presented as dialectic of naivety, nonconformity and self-consciousness (1952, p.203).

Communication also presupposes a "universe of discourse", in which compromises are made and decisions are reached over actions to be taken (Park 1925 and 1952, p.173). This "universe of discourse" which comprises communication and socialization contains two opposing and contradictory poles; on the one hand consensus, but on the other conflict or competition. Although these two poles may be isolated for descriptive purposes, all actual social relations, expressed in the communications and interactions



one individual has with another, contain and express both these elements (Park 1952, p.178-179).

By referring us to habit, custom and mores, Park appears to make the mistake of reverting to the past tense. But it would be wrong to suggest that this is the category error, which Williams suggests. As I have argued above, this habit and its associated category errors arise from social processes, not simply from poor conceptualization. Park's account of the struggle for status therefore is not some a priori idealist teleology. The struggle for status is inextricably intertwined with alienation and self-consciousness.

The fact of communication implies the existence of other individuals/persons who are themselves aware of the ultimate incommunicability of their experience, and thus aware of their separate, alienated status. Alienation is not to be construed simply in terms of self-consciousness and the awareness of an ultimately incommunicable isolation; a world of "brooding, subjective inscrutable egos" (Park 1952, p.203). The ensemble of gestures an individual acquires in the course of socialization goes to make up that individual's character, the role that that individual plays as a person. Alienation is therefore objectified in the concept of the "person". Reflecting on the fact that "is probably no mere historical accident... that the word "person" in its first meaning is a mask", Park comments

In a sense and insofar as this mask represents the concepts which we have formed of ourselves, the role we are striving to live up to, this mask is our "truer self", the self we should like to be. So, at any rate, our mask becomes at last an integral part of our personality: becomes second nature. We come into the world as individuals, achieve character, and become persons (Park 1967, p.191).

Since therefore "the individual's status is determined to a considerable degree by conventional signs -by fashion and by "front"..." (Park 1952, p.47), status itself is the objectification of alienation.

For Park, our "self-consciousness is just our consciousness of [our]... individual differences of experience, together with a sense of their ultimate incommunicability (Park 1925 and 1952, p.175).

Park describes this form of consciousness as a 'subjectivity' which is at once a condition and a product of human life" (1967, p.190). Williams' and Sayer's descriptions of the historical specificity of this subjectivity means that this should be more properly understood as a condition of modern life (Higgins 1999, D.Sayer 1991, see also Connolly 1988 and Giddens 1990). This presentation of the conditions of modernity as universal and trans-historical is a flaw in Park's work, but this flaw takes nothing away from his account of the processes of socialization under the conditions of modernity (see Chapter 5.3 below).

Self-consciousness is therefore consciousness of our alienation from each other. Park comes very close to defining the condition of humanity in existentialist terms – to be human is to strive to overcome alienation, but never to succeed since this would mean that the striving would cease and therefore the quality of human-kindness is lost. Unlike the existentialists however, Park concentrates on the social rather than the personal consequences of this condition:

This world of communication and of "distances" in which we all seek to maintain some sort of privacy, personal dignity and poise is a dynamic world, and has an order and a character quite its own...[in which] ...the conception which each of us has of himself is limited by the conception which every other individual, in the same limited world of communication, has of himself and of every other individual...

The consequence is -and this is true of any society -every individual finds himself in a struggle for status: a struggle to preserve his personal prestige, his point of view, and his self-respect. He is able to maintain them, however, only to the extent to which he can gain for himself the recognition of everyone else whose estimate seems important... From this struggle for status no philosophy of life has yet discovered a refuge (Park 1925 and 1952, p.176-177).

The acquisition of status is not shorthand for high social status. On the external, or extra-personal, level, status is the social validation of the person, the individual-in-society, the bearer of social relations. At the personal level, the acquisition of status is a moral issue, in the sense of internalizing the mores or customary obligations inherent in interpersonal communication (Park 1955, p.267). At the same time, status is part of an individual's self-conception, or the projection of action into the future (see Chapter 4.5).

Just as action results in the development of an individual, so also it results in the development of society:

Societies are formed for action and in action. They grow up in the efforts of individuals to act collectively. The structures, which societies exhibit, are on the whole the incidental effects of collective action (Park 1952, p.181).

Action tends to the development of social structures, and social structures in turn impose their characteristics upon the acting members of that society:

The same forms which co-operate to create the characteristic social organization and the accepted moral order of a given society or social group determine at the same time, to a greater or lesser extent, the character of the individuals who compose that society (Park 1967, p.188).

Habitual actions become recognized as gestures, 'since what one does is always an indication of what one intends to do' (Park 1955, p.18). As habitual actions develop into customary modes of behaviour and moral regimes, societies develop into organized

structures capable of reproducing themselves intergenerationally. The development of social structures consequently follows a similar Hegelian dialectic:

Institutions are always... the accumulated effects of tradition and customs they are always in the process of becoming what they were predestined to be, human nature being what it is, rather than what they are or were.

[They therefore] seem to be... a product of the type of dialectical or rational communication, which is the peculiar practice of human beings (Park 1952, p.246, p258).

To summarize, Park's dialectic of socialization is an account of struggle between the pressure to conform (being) and the determination to be an individual (negation) (Park 1952, p.203). Socialization leads to the formation of a person, defined, as an individual-in-society ("The individual represents the human being outside of society. The person represents the individual in society" Park 1950, p.20). It involves a dialectic of alienated, objective being (simple unmediated attitude and self-consciousness -the result of experience); negation (determination of attitude by others); and becoming (the self-conscious determinate person -a synthesis of self-consciousness and determined mediated attitude). However, society (and all its structures) is itself created and recreated through these same processes. There is no dividing line between the social and the psychological, either in theory or practice.

The struggle for status (the dialectic of status) deals with some of the most important themes in Western philosophy since Hegel. Furthermore, since his account of social change derives from the same principles as does his account of human nature, Park's dialectic avoids many of the problems of the unwarranted separation of a whole way of life into separate idealist categories, problems which have bedevilled sociology before and since. Park's dialectic therefore gives us a very useful way of approaching the question of status, which, while it can make use of Weber's insights, does not owe

anything to Weber's views on social organization. Nor does it owe anything to Marx. However, it should be clear, from what has so far been seen of Park's dialectic that, in principle it ought to be reconcilable with Marx's. I shall argue that the difference between the two dialectics is one of particular interest to gentrification research, not of fundamental differences in ontology or epistemology, and that therefore it is worth trying to reconcile the two. Achieving such a reconciliation not only strengthens both but also means that the last piece of the jigsaw may be put in place, namely a sociological account of the development of consciousness which includes the experience of class but which is not reducible solely to class considerations. It gives us the conceptual apparatus necessary to construct the link between housing and status to understand why on the one hand gentrifiers gentrify because they can, and on the other why this expression of free will is so bitterly resented by Marxists.

### **5.3 MOBILITY, MARGINALITY AND CONSCIOUSNESS**

Chapter three argued that we are (nearly) all members of the proletariat. Here I argue that experience of the marginal man stands for the experience of everybody living under conditions of modernity, confirming Shields argument that "Marginality" is a central theme in Western culture and thought" (1990, p.276). Marginality is a characteristic condition of modernity. Chapter 4.5 argued that Marx's limited account of the experience of everyday life outside of the immediate context of capitalist production ought not to be supplemented by the unnecessary expansion of the categories of class into areas outside of that context. However, by incorporating Marx's account of the moulding of consciousness in that context into an account of the formation of consciousness across "a whole way of life" (R. Williams 1977, p.63). Given that the

conditions (marginal and proletarian) characterize the daily experience of most of us, Park's account of the development of the consciousness of the marginal man would appear to fill that gap.

Park's dialectic is specifically concerned with the formation of consciousness. Marx, however describes (1967) only how consciousness is shaped; he emphatically does not describe how consciousness is created:

My view is that each particular mode of production and the relations of production corresponding to it at each given moment, in short, the "economic structure of society", is "the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness" and "that the mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life" (Marx 1967, p.175).

As Blanchard (1985) argues, the experience of class can only be experienced personally. The parallel experience of marginality and proletarian status make for a potentially fruitful linkage between personal and collective experiences. Park argues that the experience of the struggle for status of classes in capitalist society is experienced by its members in the same fashion as that of the marginal man. The processes whereby individuals struggle for status are the same processes by which individuals are brought to terms with their status, as they reconcile their ambitions with the achievements. Marx's dialectic is described by Park as "a struggle of economic or functional classes for social status in a social hierarchy" (Park 1950, p.304). The struggle for status in this instance takes place in the context of an otherwise derived social hierarchy, the hierarchy of class in capitalist society. Classes of people who are partially but permanently excluded from the "imaginary community of the nation" (Hall and Jacques 1989, p.9) struggle to be recognized as individuals-in-society by other classes. Friedmanns (1977) concepts of central and peripheral labour become very

important here (see Chapter 5.4 below). Like the marginal man in modern society, the proletariat is both partly included and partly excluded from capitalist society (Clever 1979). Like the marginal man, the proletariat also not only epitomizes the problems of its society, but also provides the promise of its dissolution (Marx and Engels 1848). Park's account of the development of the consciousness of the marginal man provides a useful complement to Marx's account of the shaping of that development consciousness through the experience of the capitalists production process.

Equally importantly, Park's account of the formation of the consciousness of the marginal man thus permits the incorporation of questions of space and spatial relations into a dialectic of social change which, I shall argue below, is superior to anything currently on offer in the literature. This then permits a discussion of the social origin and estimation of use values (such as housing) and their relation to exchange value. It is then finally possible to show the importance of a sense of place in the constitution of identity, which is to say in the constitution of a status as a person within the context of a capitalist mode of production. It is these three characteristics of the development of consciousness in modernity, I shall argue, which give gentrification its potential for social conflict.

#### **5.4 GENTRIFICATION, MOBILITY AND MODERNITY**

So far in this chapter, I have attempted to construct a link between place and status, which, though relevant to Marxist analysis of the conditions of capitalist society, did not depend on Marxist accounts of class and class struggle to explain those links. Instead, I have attempted to develop Park's sociology of consciousness along lines suggested by Raymond Williams' arguments for cultural materialism, so as to construct an alternative

link between place and status. Previously, I have shown how the same process which creates a sense of place in the course of socialization, namely the acquisition of experience through mobility, also gives rise to the circumstances which can undermine that place. Mobility, according to Park, is the only way in which new experience may be gained. Mobility also means that the experience thereby gained is different for all. Hence, mobility lies at the root of the need for language and of self-consciousness (Park 1925, 1952, p.173). The fact of locomotion is therefore a crucial aspect in the processes of socialization, from which society, culture and civilization are derived and through which they are maintained (Park 1925 and 1952 p.92-3). Mobility is the quintessential attribute of civilization, and civilization is the antithesis of culture and a sense of place.

Mobility, in the sense in which Williams describes it, may be taken as the defining characteristic of modernity. The marginal man is the characteristic personality of this modernity. For Williams, it is the unwilled (and unwilling) separation of areas of experience which mobility brings that is the root cause of marginality. However, mobility, in the sense in which Park describes it, is a trans-historical characteristic of human beings, much as labour is for Marx. According to Marx, it is the conditions under which the labour process is conducted, which are historically unique event. It is the buying and selling of labour power that makes capitalism historically unique. We can think of mobility in the same terms, a trans-historical characteristic of human beings experienced in specific and historically unique ways.

In this respect, I have argued that much of what Park has to say on the impact of mobility on consciousness and socialization is implicitly an analysis of the impact of



modernity on consciousness. Modernity may be defined as the subjective experience of capitalism, including, but not restricted to, the immediate experience of the labour process. Both Park and Williams see mobility as the hallmark of that experience. Neither however sees mobility as a cause. Instead, what "underpins the transitory, fleeting and contingent experience so many have seen as the hallmark of the modern condition" is the alienation peculiar to capitalist society (Sayer 1991, p.88). Williams is explicit on this point, while Park's theory of alienation is expressed in much more personal terms.

For an analysis of this experience, Marx's account of the definite forms of social consciousness, which correspond to the capitalist mode of production, is appropriate for this purpose. Sayer (1991) has shown how Marx's account of the creation of abstract labour in the development of capitalist relations of production stands for a general abstraction of the social from the personal, with the consequence that:

The social world of capitalism has become something we inhabit -Durkheim's society *sui generis* -rather than some ways we are, and it is this estrangement of the real content of social life that grounds the abstractions which come to stand in for it: modernity's representations (which is to say, its re-presentations) of both society and self (Sayer 1991, p.88).

The abstraction of the social from the personal creates a profound subjectivity in the individual: it is just this interiorized subjectivity, which Connolly (1988) argues is the principal focus of Nietzsche's philosophical enquiries.

The subject is unified in terms of personal biography, but dislocated from any social integument; ...Modernity constitutes individuals as subjects not through, but in opposition to the real sociality which concretely defines and differentiates them (Sayer 1991 p87).

One consequence of that subjectivity is a profoundly altered attitude to space and place. More specifically, what is modern about it is its representation of the stream of consciousness of the subjective individual of modernity:

The consequent awareness is intense and fragmentary, subjective primarily, yet in the very form of its subjectivity including others who are now with the buildings, the noises, the sights and smells of the city, parts of this single and racing consciousness...

...the fantasy of the Oriental city begins from the smell of bread in Boland's van, but each sight or sound or smell is a trigger to Bloom's private preoccupations. Under the pressure of his needs, the one city as it passes is as real as the other.

This is the profound alteration. The forces of the action have become internal and there is a no longer a city, there is only a man walking through it (R. Williams 1989a, p.292).

The subjectivity, and mobility, of the modern individual apparently tends therefore to the utter abolition of place. However, this subjectivity of this modern and mobile individual also results from living on the margins of culture and civilization. As I have argued, this tension between the apparent abolition of place and the continuing pressures to invest in places with meaning as a consequence of the very same processes of socialization is an essential component of the "profoundly contradictory" experience of modernity, where "individuals are perpetually given between "personal" experiences and public identifications, differences which cannot be represented, and representations which deny difference" (Sayer 1991, p.89). This account of the subjectivity of the modern marginal mobile individual provides the basis of the distinction of the social space of use values from the abstract space of exchange values for which Gottdiener was only able to make an assertion.

Underlying this subjectivity is the fact of social relations taking the "fantastic form of relations between things" (Marx 1967, p72) -commodity fetishism:

It is this alienation of the social, in which human beings' collective capacities manifest themselves as the attributes of material things, which is in [Marx's] view the ground of modern individualism.

People appear to be independent of one another because their mutual dependency assumes the unrecognizable form of relations between commodities. ...individuals appear to be self-sufficient nomads only because the social relations which really link them -and give them their concrete identities... - do not appear to them as such, as relations of persons. They assume, on the contrary, "the fantastic form of relations between things" (D.Sayer 1991 p64).

However, these "things", social objects constituted by meaning, also bear the tensions of modernity. Even as commodities, in which form they mediate social relations, they still bear use values.

The duality of the commodity is clearly the template for [Marx's] analysis of a wide variety of other bourgeois social forms: in particular, of those forms which both individuality and community assume within modern capitalist societies. In both instances concrete particularity is masked in abstract generality, with a resulting mystification. The qualitative and particular differences which concretely make individuals who they are, appear inessential to them, while the generic equality which appears to characterize their subjectivity is abstract, formal and illusory (D.Sayer 1991, p.79).

Included in these things, mediating social relations in which "concrete particularity is masked in abstract generality" are those things, which can constitute places and spaces simultaneously: buildings, streets, and parks.

I have argued that explanations of gentrification are flawed since they attempt to use gentrification merely as a starting point for reflections on modern society. This thesis reverses the order of exposition, beginning with modernity and then placing gentrification in this context so defined. Since, in modernity, 'social relationships are no longer palpably the foundations of individuals' identities" (Sayer 1991, p.88), and are instead mediated through things, public representations of status become all the more important to the construction of those identities. In Chapter three, I argued that this condition underlay the importance of fashion in conditions of modernity, and that gentrification could fully be understood in those terms. Housing, as a use-value is an

extension of the individual-in-society, and as an extension of the individual in-society, it is also a status symbol; as indeed are all items of consumption in modern capitalist society. As I have argued above however (see Chapter 5.2), the usefulness of use values depends on the state of social development, because as extensions of the individual-in-society, they are also extensions of an individual's status. Use values are not trans-historical verities. In opposition to Saunders' arguments (reviewed in Chapter four above), it is therefore the modernity of modern society which makes housing a status symbol, and owner-occupied housing in particular a prized status symbol, not any characteristics or qualities innate to housing or the tenure. However, housing's role in establishing status does not explain the basis of the conflicts, which arise over gentrification, nor does it explain why even the participants in these conflicts should represent these as class struggle.

What is peculiarly modern about a modern city, which puts yet further difficulties in the way of the articulation of what Sayer calls the "collectiveness of disadvantage, the sociality of subordination" (1991, p.89) is residential segregation, whether by function, by race or ethnicity, or by class or status. Not only is residential segregation an aspect of modernity, but without residential segregation, gentrification could not occur, or more precisely, could not be experienced in the way in which gives it its (so-called) class character. The effect of residential segregation is to extend the status bound up in the consumption of the use-value of housing to a whole area, to a particular place.

Gentrification is usually associated with the identification of a place as a place, even before the place is itself recognized as such by its current inhabitants. Caulfield's account of gentrification in Toronto (1994), or Atkinson's account of gentrification in

London (2000) bear witness to this important aspect of the gentrification process. The creation of London's Dockland (Short 1989) as an identifiable region is only the latest example. Before the advent of the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC), no such region existed in the popular imagination and each area composing the Dockland was seen as a separate entity. If a generic title were applied to the area at all, prior to the creation of the LDDC, it would have been London docklands. The (grammatical) differences in the qualification, capitalization and number are slight but very telling.

The counterpart of segregation is succession. If residential segregation extends the status immediately derived from the consumption of housing to the place, however, defined in which that housing is situated, then the conflicts, which arise over gentrification, are conflicts over the appropriation of particular areas for such purposes.

With residential segregation, fashion is at the same time extended from the consumption of housing to whole areas. Individuals belonging to one status group find that their social spaces of use values have become transformed into abstract space of exchange values. Sacred places of socialization become secularized and trivialized as fashion accessories. The realization is forced into one's consciousness that the "possession of things [including places] appears accidental and extrinsic to who persons are" (Sayer 1991, p.89). Culture is replaced by civilization, to become eventually, possibly a place of socialization once more, but for different groups of people with cultures of their own (Linder 1996). 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, not in the grinding of the gears of the SCA-based machinery of class struggle. Resistance to gentrification is resistance to the derangement of the personal and the social in modernity -resistance to the "unbearable lightness of being" (D.Sayer 1991, p.152-155). However, to argue for the importance of status in gentrification studies, and conversely to deny the importance of class, in particular as this is theorized by SCA models, is not to deny either the salience of capitalism, or that tensions and pressures for change exist in a society dominated by status considerations. The experience of modernity is one of a constant and unresolved tension; a tension which derives from the fact that the experience of socialization and acquisition of status is continually undermined by the reduction of all social forms, status and meanings to the calculus of exchanges of abstract labour.

This argument, it might reasonably be objected, completely overlooks one of the arguments advanced against gentrification, namely that by converting housing from working class multi-occupancy to middle class single-family occupancy, it reduces the supply of working class housing available in working class areas, causing even greater pressure on the non-gentrified working class housing nearby. Resistance to gentrification therefore can sometimes begin with working class people organizing to safeguard the availability of housing for themselves and their children, and not in some lofty notions about modernity, and tensions between place and space in the construction of personal identities.

There is of course no question that middle class homes are under-occupied, sometimes considerably so, by comparison with working class homes, and that therefore the displacement caused by gentrification places pressure on working class accommodation

elsewhere (LeGates and Hartman 1986). No matter how much pressure there might be, I would still argue that this housing stock argument is a rationalization of the status conflicts, which arise in gentrification.

Assume for the sake of argument that there was a sudden difference in fertility, in which half of all working class families suddenly decided to have one or more children each and there were no racial or ethnic differences among the working class, which could be held accountable for this. This differential increase in fertility would place just as much pressure on working class housing stock and pose as many difficulties in safeguarding it for future generations of the working class as even the worst displacement through gentrification. It is highly unlikely however that the pressures caused by increased numbers of children would lead to conflicts between the prolific and the non-prolific in the working class. Instead, demands would be made for the government to do something about providing more housing. This is of course the left's response when the traditional white working class complain about immigrants (with their large families) coming over here, taking their jobs, ruining their neighbourhoods, altering their culture – undermining their status.

The only difference between the two cases of immigration – ethnic and gentrifying – which could account for these differences in response is that the middle-class immigrants are assumed able to look after themselves, whereas the foreign immigrants are assumed to have immigrated out of political or financial necessity. While clearly, the accuracy of both assumptions need not be in doubt, the fact that the interpretation of the validity of the working class verbalization of this response is treated with such respect in the one case and such disdain in the other betrays an inconsistency of response in the

two cases. However, it tacitly concedes the argument that gentrifiers gentrify because they can. To avoid such a concession, it might be argued that the housing crisis forces middle-class people into gentrifying and thereby forces them into conflict. However, this argument merely confirms what the "effect on supply of working class housing" argument itself overlooks, that the problem lies in the lack of housing, not in middle class usage of what is available.

What is of greater interest not so much the inconsistency of the left's position in regard to immigration as what this inconsistency represents: the articulation of what is clearly a status conflict in the language of class. Despite all the arguments advanced in Chapter four against the misidentification of class with status, the double meaning of social science ensures that this misidentification continues as a social process as well as a category error. Again, this is a consequence of modernity. Sayer argues that "class is itself a distinctly modern category" (1991, p.69), and that "the immediate experience of social reality" is status rather than class "while those forms in which our sociality is represented concerted obscure the relations which actually constitute it, class above all" (p.88).

This is because, under conditions of modernity, class

...presents itself as a matter of mere accidental circumstance rather than inherent being, as something which is extrinsic to the essence of personality. The point is not merely that—as Marx recognizes—capitalism offers more individual mobility than previous forms of society. It is rather that class does not seem to define the individual in the same way. There is an apparent split between the "private individual" and the "class individual", which is predicated on the "accidental" nature of that which makes individuals members of classes - their property in "things" external to themselves. In principle anybody may own property, just as all are free to stay at the Ritz Hotel. (Sayer 1991, p.69-70)

This split between the private and class aspects of self-consciousness and sociality "compromises the identity of both bourgeoisie and proletariat" (Sayer 1991, p.71). In



particular, the "individualizing division of labour, which is constitutive a relation of capitalism as class itself" means that the modern world "is an atomistic, fissiparous kind of place, and social identities are abidingly fragmented and contradictory" (ibid.), while "individuality is experienced as non-social, "purely" personal" (ibid., p.88).

Nowhere is this derangement of the personal and the social more evident, for Marx, than in class. The latter in fact emerges as a highly problematic category. ...

Class in short is not the same kind of immediately experienced social reality as Stand [status] (ibid., p.88-89).

The language in which the conflicts over gentrification are expressed is the language of status, but I argue it is actually the language of class. It is class because in conditions of modernity this is the form in which our sociality is represented, and which, ironically, obscures the actual class basis of that experience; what Sayer calls the split between the private and the class individual, and what Park and Williams call the situation of the marginal man. As noted in Chapter five, Sayer suggests that it is this situation, not class, which is "most socially consequential in capitalism" (Sayer 1991 p90-91).

Consciousness is not simply moulded by relation to economic structure, as the SCA model would have us believe. It is rather the interaction between the economic and non-economic activities of individuals-in-society in pursuit of their daily goals, an interaction experienced as a constant tension between these activities, which both moulds and creates individual and class consciousness in capitalist society -the consciousness of the marginal man and of the proletariat both.

In Redfern (1992), it is argued that the working class/middle class division is one of status based on centrality in the capitalist labour process; status which is continually in danger of being undermined under the centrifugal pressures of capitalist accumulation, where all that is central is rendered peripheral, if possible. Central status has to be

fought for, continuously, in positional, not simply confrontational, struggles, (such as the "gentrification of the bourgeoisie" see Chapter 2.3.1 above). If this is so, then the so-called class conflict over gentrification would appear to be indeed as Park described Marx's account of class struggle, "the struggle of economic or functional groups for social status in a social hierarchy" (1967, p.304). The language of class used in the conflict over gentrification and the arguments about displacement derived from this, are consequent upon the experience of modernity and its tensions between place and space in the construction of personal identities.

The gentrification debate raises many issues. However, the inadequacies of the standard sociological model, within which these issues are discussed, are so profound that it has been necessary to indicate in some detail an alternative picture of the links between consciousness, agency and structure; before gentrification can be explained, it is necessary to describe the context in which it occurs. Having described this context, however, it remains necessary to demonstrate the specific circumstances, which make it possible for gentrifiers to behave in the ways they do. To fail to demonstrate the specificity of gentrification within this larger context would be to fall into the trap of the post-industrialists, i.e. making modernity rather than post-modernity into the new middle class.

## 6.0 The “Rent Gap” And The Theory of Rent

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### 6.1 AIMS AND ISSUES

In Chapter two, I argued that explanations of gentrification fall by and large into one of two categories, which I termed neighbourhood lifecycle (i.e. the production based camp) or post-industrialism (i.e. the consumption based camp). To this point in the thesis, I have, in effect, concentrated on post-industrialism. Chapter three and four discussed the metaphors of post-industrialism and linked them to Pahl's criticisms of SCA, and Chapter five outlined an alternative model of the context in which gentrification could be sited. However, as it was discussed in Chapter five, the explanation of the links between status, place, mobility and marginality in the experience of modernity does no more than provide gentrification a context. If, as was argued, the experience of modernity was to live on the margins of two cultures, in an indefinite present, as subjective individuals inhabiting society – the iron cage of modernity – rather than society being particular aspects of what we are, then this is an experience which affects us all, gentrifiers included. Though modernity provides the context in which the gentrification process is carried out, modernity itself cannot be the explanation of the causes of gentrification, nor can capitalism.

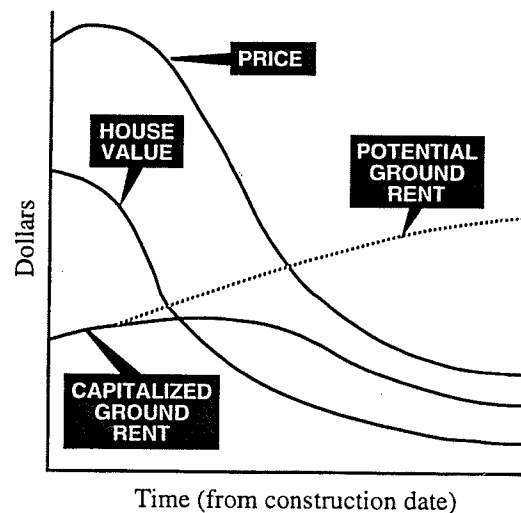
Having ruled out post-industrialism as the explanation of the causes of gentrification, it remains the work of this chapter to investigate the alternative hypothesis, neighbourhood lifecycle. I will concentrate on one particular version of this hypothesis, the “rent gap” theory. The rent gap theory is essentially a measure of the difference in a site's actual value and its potential value at “best use.” When the overall rent gap in an

area is determined to be great, it is suggested that the area will undergo gentrification as developers identify this difference as an economic opportunity on which to capitalize (Smith 1987). Neil Smith's rent gap theory of gentrification has received a substantial amount of attention since it first appeared in the *Journal of the American Planning Association* in 1979 (1979a). Indeed, it would not be overstating the case to argue that without Smith's vigorous defence (see N. Smith 1979a, 1979b, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1987, 1996a and 1996b, N. Smith and Lefaivre 1984, Schaffer and N. Smith 1986, N. Smith and P. Williams 1986, P. Williams and N. Smith 1986) of the rent gap explanation of gentrification that there would hardly have been a gentrification debate at all.

Urban theory has traditionally been concerned with how developments at the centre of the city have worked themselves out toward the periphery, with the connection between changes in the centre of the city and changes at its edge made via the theory of urban rent. From Ricardo onwards, the role of rent has been theorized as securing the "highest and best use" of land and the co-ordination of land uses in the accumulation process (Haila 1990). Smith's "rent gap" hypothesis is an attempt to show how the workings of the urban land market by itself produces gentrification (N. Smith 1979a, 1979b, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1987, 1996a and 1996b). This has the advantage of avoiding the "consumption functionalist" perspective of the "production of gentrifiers" approach. However, Neil Smith makes the same mistake that the post-industrialists do, namely he leaves no room in his theory for alternative explanations of gentrification. More specifically, Neil Smith fails to provide sufficient credence to the role that demand plays in causing gentrification.

Accounts of the theoretical bases of the rent gap are given only in Neil Smith's articles (1979a, 1982 and 1996a). The original formulation was presented by Smith (1979a), as a conclusion to a discussion of whether or not gentrification represented a "back to the city" movement. Smith argued that gentrification did represent a "back to the city" movement, but "by capital, not people" (Smith 1979a, p547). In presenting Smith's arguments here, I ignore the problems of "base-superstructure" as presented in Chapter two and of SCA as presented in Chapter three. Nothing presented here detracts from those problems, but the intention is to highlight a different, though related, set of issues. Before going any further, it is important to point out the following model, which is the fundamental basis of Neil Smith's argument:

Figure 6.1 Smith's Rent Gap Model



(Source: N. Smith 1996a, Figure 3.2, p.65)

In its original formulation, the rent gap arises as the result of the operation of neighbourhood lifecycle processes, in particular, "filtering down" though it could simply be the result of upward revaluation of potential land values through comparisons of alternative uses for a site. Gentrification occurs when the rent gap is "wide enough" (N.

Smith 1979a, p545). In 1982, Neil Smith made two modifications to his 1979 rent gap theory. First, the rent gap was conceptualized in terms of a "devalorization cycle" instead of a "depreciation cycle":

Depreciation refers strictly to changes in price, whereas devalorization is a deeper economic process implying the loss or negation of value as a necessary part of the valorization process (N. Smith 1982, p147).

Second, the account was placed in the wider context of the necessity for "uneven development" in the course of capitalist accumulation. "Gentrification is part of a larger class strategy to restructure the economy" (N. Smith 1982, p.153). However, despite these wider, and deeper, references the processes described appear to be much the same:

Essentially, the valorization of capital invested in an inner-city built environment leads to a situation where the ground rent capitalized under current uses is substantially lower than the ground rent that could potentially be capitalized if the land use were changed. This is because devalorization leads to physical decline, which in turn lowers the market price of the land on which the dilapidated buildings stand. When, and only when, this rent gap between actual and potential ground rent becomes sufficiently large, redevelopment and rehabilitation into new land uses becomes a profitable prospect and capital begins to flow back into the inner-city market (N. Smith 1982 p149).

Devalorization" and "uneven development" appeared as little more than mantras to be chanted throughout this account, which could easily fit into a neoclassical analysis of gentrification processes (Harnnett 1984, p.311). This mix'n'match theorizing was the focus of Rose's (1984) critique, reviewed in Chapter two above.

## **6.2 THE RENT GAP AND ITS METAPHORS**

### **6.2.1 Functionalist Reasoning in the Rent Gap Hypothesis**

The obvious criticism to be made of Smith's approach is what can be called its "rent logic", or its reductionist approach to the question of the causes of gentrification.

Hamnett (1984) made just this criticism. Where he argued that

in order to explain satisfactorily the central questions of why gentrification occurred where and when it did, it is necessary to explain first its concentration in a limited number of large cities, second, its rapid growth in the late 1960's and early 1970's, and third its specific areas of occurrence in cities. Smith's theory helps explain only the third of these (Hamnett, 1984, p.310).

The first two questions could only be answered by considering employment and demographic changes, which Smith had "resolutely" dismissed (*ibid.*), because he had categorized all the explanations into two types, "the cultural and the economic" (*ibid.*). Hamnett's point of view is that Smith argues that both of these types of explanation share a common perspective: "an emphasis on consumer preference" (N. Smith 1979a, p.539 quoted in Hamnett 1984, p.311), which Hamnett flatly dismisses as opposed to Smith's dismissal of "the changing occupational and demographic structure of the population" (1984 p.311), Hamnett asserts their importance, as having

convincingly made the case that changes in occupational structure are central elements of the capitalist mode of production. Deferred child-bearing can also be interpreted as a response to rapidly rising house prices. Thus even in terms of Smith's own materialist frame of reference his analysis is both deficient and partial. In consequence, Smith is only able to explain in general terms the occurrence of gentrification in certain areas of cities. He is entirely unable to explain why gentrification has occurred in the type of cities at the time it has (*ibid.*)

As was noted in Chapter 2.3.3, Hamnett argues that five factors must be taken into account when considering gentrification, namely: city size; demographic and household structure; lifestyle and preference shifts; house price inflation; and employment base and occupational structure of certain large cities (Hamnett 1984, p.298). However, having listed them, Hamnett does not explain how they relate to one another. Instead of theorizing how these factors may relate to one another and then using gentrification as an example of how they interrelate, he uses gentrification as the sole nexus through which the postulated factors are related. Although Hamnett's criticisms of Smith are well taken therefore, his explanations of gentrification suffer from the problem that they are all "theoretically unconnected with each other" Warde (1991, p.225). Their only links lie

in the gentrification phenomenon itself. Consequently, though Hamnett disagrees with Smith with regard to the importance of employment and demographic factors, his conclusions as to how each factor contributes to the total understanding of gentrification is quite tentative (Hamnett 1984, p.304-305). These end with a "synthesis" "of the various explanatory factors", which can be criticized for being obvious if not overly vague; factors:

it would appear that changes in the demographic and employment structure have led simultaneously to a growing concentration in certain large cities of young, relatively affluent and highly educated childless households, frequently with one or more city-centre workers with a strong preference for accessibility. They have faced (and partly created) a structure of housing supply and rapidly rising house prices which, if it has not actually necessitated inner-city residence, has certainly pointed strongly in that direction (Hamnett 1984, p.305).

Hamnett and Smith in fact share a common perspective, namely that of base-superstructure. In much the same manner as Rose (1984), Hamnett (1984 and 2000) is able to identify problem of base-superstructure but is unable to couch it in problematic terms. Thus, he criticizes Smith insofar as to "write off material changes such as the changing economic and demographic structure of the population as "cultural" factors is as untenable" as their categorization as "cultural" is "erroneous" (2000, p339). Hamnett therefore endorses Smith's belief that while "the material" is clearly important, "the cultural", equally clearly, is not (ibid.). To force a distinction between materiality and culture in the way that Hamnett does is clearly to subscribe to the validity of "base-superstructure" modes of thought. Hamnett was undoubtedly correct to criticize Smith's dismissal of cultural factors. However, Hamnett's dispute is not with Smith's assertion that the cultural is by definition unimportant, just that Smith should not have labelled particular factors as cultural and therefore unimportant.



Smith however responded otherwise to Hamnett's criticisms. He accepted "Hamnett's (1984) critique of earlier work (Smith 1979)":

for conflating a variety of lifestyle and demographic arguments under a somewhat grab-bag concept of consumption-side and consumer-preference explanations (N. Smith, 1987a p163).

However, Smith did not accept fully the implications drawn by his critics: in particular, he wanted nothing to do with the "production of gentrifiers" approach, which had developed out of the criticism of his earlier work (by Rose as well as Hamnett). This reformulation of Marxist analysis, Smith argued, posed dangers of its own, notably a reliance on some form of consumer-preference model, "no matter how watered down the conundrum of gentrification does not turn on explaining where middle class demand comes from" (ibid.)

Rather, it depends on where it is expressed, i.e., "in the central and inner-city" (ibid., p.164):

In this context, I would defend the rent-gap analysis (Smith, 1979) not as in itself a definitive or complete explanation but as a necessary centre piece to any theory of gentrification (N. Smith 1987a, p.165).

Smith's concession to his critics was not that expansive insofar as while he accepts their criticisms, he does not accept that they touch his central hypothesis. He interprets the criticism not as a problem of conceptualization, but rather as a problem of expression. If not the complete story, then explanation the rent gap should remain the "necessary centre piece" to any theory of gentrification. Smith was on sure ground in this regard as his rent gap arguments are not overly affected by either Hamnett's or Rose's criticisms.

There is however a fundamental criticism in current gentrification literature. Despite the refinements and concessions Smith has made over the years in his arguments

surrounding the rent gap, it remains a tautological proposition. Gentrification occurs "when the gap is wide enough" (N. Smith 1979a, p.545), and "it is most likely to occur in areas experiencing a sufficiently large gap between actual and potential land values" (N. Smith 1987b, p.464). Ley, probably Smith's most persistent critic, comments unfavourably on the fact that

almost ten years after its first presentation it still has not been made empirically accountable... Smith... has no empirical results of his own to report (Ley 1987, p.466).

Ley does, however, not appear to notice the tautology that lies at the heart of the concept of the rent gap. The criterion of "sufficient wideness" is enough to stave the rent gap hypothesis from any empirical criticism. The proof of "sufficient wideness" lies in the pudding of the gentrification phenomenon – no gentrification, rent gap "insufficiently wide". Moreover, Ley fails to point out the greatest inadequacy of the rent gap hypothesis, which is an explanation of why rent gap arises in a certain place. Ley offers no insight into the mechanism that makes a particular place become more valued by potential investors at a specific point in time.

Runciman (1968, p.40) argued, "tautologies have proved a perennial weakness of functionalism". I shall follow through the implications of Runciman's observations below.

Clark argues that Smith's definition of "capitalized land rent" is ambiguous and would be better split into two terms: "actually realized land rent", which continues to decline, and capitalized land rent proper,

namely the valorization of future land rent income by the sale of land. This is more in line with capitalized land rent, the evidence here suggests it usually rises during a period prior to redevelopment. Indeed, it only makes sense that the sellers of dilapidated properties try to appropriate part of the "actually realized land rents" expected to materialize in the near future (Clark 1988, p.188).

The difference between the two accounts can best be understood by comparing Clark's model (1988, Figure 7, p.147) with Figure 6.1 above. In Smith's account the rent gap continues to widen indefinitely. Whereas in Clark's account, the rent gap closes immediately prior to gentrification.

I do not seek to dispute Clark's careful empirical investigations of a rent gap in Malmö, Sweden. Nor do I wish to debate his principal conclusion, namely that the "empirical evidence of these studies supports the view outlined by Neil Smith" (Clark 1988, p.252). Nor even do I wish to dispute Clark's "marginal" deviations "from Smith's conceptual scheme..." (ibid.). What remains at issue is that none of Clark's empirical findings and marginal deviations rescues the "rent gap" hypothesis from the problems of functionalism. If the gap does start to close immediately prior to gentrification, this is because the capitalized ground rent component represents expectations of future revenues from redeveloped land. His revised version is therefore as self-fulfilling as Smith's original formulation – no expectations, no closure, and no gentrification.

If gentrification occurs when the rent gap is wide enough by definition, then the proposition that the rent gap causes gentrification is no longer an empirical one. Instead, it is functionalist. To paraphrase Runciman (1968, p.40-41), what in fact we want to do and according to Smith are prevented from doing is to undergo an empirical consideration carried out by those institutions and individuals which have a pecuniary interest in the existence of a rent gap. This, however, is of little utility if what is meant by the rent gap depends upon the generative or adaptive results of what it does, which in this case, "generates" gentrification.

Far from being a necessary centrepiece to any theory of gentrification, as Smith insists, the rent gap hypothesis is not, strictly speaking, a hypothesis at all. It describes a condition of the gentrification process; at by virtue of being descriptive in nature it does not seek explanatory powers. It should not therefore be considered a hypothesis, as it is incapable of being falsified in the manner of hypothesis. Moreover, it does not address the larger problem as it sorely describes a feature of gentrification without explaining its causational variables.

Another deficiency of functionalism, particularly relevant in light of the criticisms made in Chapter 2.4, "is that it is incapable of accounting for historical change" (Runciman 1968, p.113). Whether gentrification explanations are oriented toward consumption-side or production-side accounts, they share a common perspective, namely functionalism. Smith therefore is justified in defending his position against the Hamnett and Rose criticism, but only to the extent that they cannot offer a fundamental critique since they share so many of the same presuppositions with Smith. As Runciman (1968 and 2001) argues however, the questions begged by a functionalist account may in fact prove useful in really explaining the phenomenon it describes. In this case, the question posed by the existence of a rent gap is what generated it.

### **6.2.2 The "Circuits" Metaphor**

Smith, following Harvey, argued that the already existing urban environment acted as a repository for investment capital when opportunities elsewhere, in "the broader economy", were limited (N. Smith 1982, p.150). Employing an electrical metaphor, of capital "flowing" through various investment "circuits" was employed. The already built environment represented one such circuit, 'switched' on in response to crises in the

“primary circuit”, i.e., the circuit of financial capital (e.g. global equity markets). This switching of investment into the built environment revives the profit rate, enabling the financial circuit to be switched back on again. In other words, investors turn to alternative types of investments when traditional sources of investment, equity or bond markets, are not providing the necessary financial returns. Harvey based this metaphor on Desai (1979), though Desai’s “circuits”, of commodity, productive and money capital, are in fact representations of the different “moments” in a single circuit of capital as value-in-process.

Smith argued that growth in the financial circuit outstrips growth in the built environment circuit. This then fuels land values throughout the urban area. These enhanced land values are not reflected in rents of developed land (returns from the built environment circuit) because the value of the activity currently undertaken on this land cannot afford these higher rents. This differential growth accounts for the growth of the rent gap. The rent gap therefore is symptomatic of a crisis in the built environment circuit, a crisis resulting from the barrier to accumulation posed by the longevity of fixed capital in the built environment. Gentrification, which is just one part of an overall restructuring of space, including downtown redevelopment, condominiums, harbour malls, represents the closing of that gap.

with falling rates of profit in the major financial sectors, financial capital seeks an alternative arena for investment, an arena where the profit rate remains comparatively high and where the risk is low. At precisely this point, there tends to be an increase in the capital flowing back into the built environment... The underdevelopment of the previously developed inner-city, meaning the systematic lack of capital investment in those locations, brought about the rent gap, and this, in turn, laid the foundation for a locational switch of capital invested in the built environment, simultaneous in part with a sectoral switch (N. Smith, 1982, p150).

The circuits metaphor and the notion of rent as a barrier to the flow of those circuits is central to Smith's advocacy of the rent gap as the necessary centerpiece to any explanation of gentrification. The dynamic relation of flows to barriers also strongly implies that Smith sees gentrification as a circular process. Whereas the inner-city once was a barrier and now is profitable, so the suburbs will act as a barrier until the inner-city becomes a barrier once more.

The fundamental difficulty with Smith's circuit's metaphor is that it does not recognize the specificity of different sectors of production. Haila notes that to regard the built environment circuit as a repository of investment capital passively responding to crises in the financial circuit denies the real estate sectors, "own dynamic" (Haila 1990, p.291). Haila's criticism is an implicit recognition of the failure of the circuit's metaphor to distinguish between different sectors of production. There is only one path at any time by which capital can flow through the circuits. Consequently, if capitalism is to have a crisis, accordingly it will have them in all sectors at once. The circuit's metaphor undermines the possibility that a barrier could arise in anyone sector independently of all the others. It thereby undermines the possibility of the switching of the flow of capital from one sector into another. Smith's circuit's metaphor does not therefore alter the ex post facto nature of his arguments for his rent gap theory. Moreover, the circuit metaphor ignores very real things such as redlining of urban areas, or the standardization of loan products by lenders to the extent where inner-city loans do not adhere into any of their categories of tract house, strip malls, power centres, etcetera.

Plausible though Smith's account initially appears the changing status of the built environment with respect to the resolution of crises undermines it. At the outset of his

account, the built environment is presented as a repository for capital unable to flow elsewhere due to crises clogging the financial circuit. By the end, however, the built environment forms an attractive investment opportunity in its own right because of successful growth in the financial circuit.

Smith seems to be aware that there is a problem, revealed in the immediate retreat from certainty: "it is at precisely this point that there tends to be an increase in capital flowing into the built environment (1988, p.150). This tendency is a result of the growth of awareness in the investment opportunities provided by the built environment because of successful growth in the financial circuit. The precise timing of the switch depends however on the development of a crisis in the financial circuit. While it can be argued that the perception of favourable investment opportunities in the built environment follows on from the crisis in the financial circuit, it cannot at the same time be argued that the crisis arises from the barrier posed by the existence of fixed capital in the built environment unless conditions in the two circuits are identical.

If the conditions in both sectors are identical, no distinction can therefore be drawn between them. Consequently, if the rent gap arises as a result of a crisis in both the built environment and financial circuits, then the "circuits" metaphor is unsustainable. Similarly unsustainable is the implication derived from the circuits metaphor that gentrification is a cyclical process. The debilitating effects of over-reliance on metaphors to explain gentrification are not a prerogative of post-financialist approaches to gentrification.

### **6.2.3 Rent as a Barrier**

Smith's view of rent as a barrier, which lies at the heart of his rent gap theory, is inspired by Marx's definition of absolute rent (Marx 1967, 159-161), where Marx is held to have argued that rent does indeed form a barrier to accumulation. To confront Smith's barrier argument therefore is to confront the debate on Marx's theory of rent. The literature on this is enormous (Malone 1986, Graham 1992, Higgins 1999, Levine 2003, Kirk 1996, Redfern 1991 and Haila 1989, 1990) and falls beyond the scope of this thesis.

The rent gap is a gap between rents for a plot of land calculated on the basis of two different uses. Smith (1979a) distinguishes between "capitalized ground rent" and "potential ground rent".

Ground rent is the claim made by landowners on users of their land; it represents a reduction from the surplus value by producers on the site. Capitalized ground rent is the actual quantity of ground rent that is appropriated by the landowner, given the present land use...

Potential ground rent is the amount that could be capitalized under the "land's highest and best use" (N. Smith 1979a, p.543).

In the case of owner occupancy, Smith argues that ground rent is capitalized when the building is sold and therefore appears as part of the sale price (*ibid.*).

As noted above, Clark (1988) argued that Smith's use of the term capitalized ground rent is "ambiguous" its reference to present rather than future income. This does not alter the 'structural quality' of this form of rent, namely its ability to intercept, on the landowner's behalf, the flow of surplus value to the land user. As an interception of surplus value, capitalized ground rent therefore has an impact on accumulation.

Smith argued further that this impact was negative. Capital fixed in the built environment resolved one immediate accumulation problem (e.g. N. Smith 1979a, p.541, 1982, p.150), but creates another. The built environment creates a barrier to



further accumulation because of the long turnover period of capital invested there. Haila identifies this attitude toward rent, a barrier to accumulation as a specific phase "of consensus in the 1970s" (1990, p.278) in the modern history of rent theory.

The physical structure must remain in use and cannot be demolished without sustaining a loss, until the invested capital has returned its value. What this does is to tie up whole sections of land over a long period in one specific land use, and thereby to create significant barriers to new development (N. Smith 1982, p.149).

New developments therefore take place elsewhere, in particular in the suburbs: "It is this spatial shift of capital investment that led to... the rent gap":

To summarize, the investment of capital in the central and inner-city caused a physical and economic barrier to further investment in that space. The movement of capital into suburban development led to a systematic devalorization of inner and central city capital, and this, in turn, with the development of the rent gap, led to the creation of new investment opportunities in the inner-city precisely because an effective barrier to new investment had previously operated there (N. Smith 1982, p.149).

There can be no question that the new investment opportunities in the inner-city arose precisely due to an effective barrier to new investments, but Smith's argument is undeniable precisely because it is *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. Thus, the question which must be posed is, can the characteristics of that barrier be defined without recourse to a circular argument?

Smith argues that the cause of this barrier is the slow physical decline of the building stock. However, this decline is described in terms of devalorization of capital, in other words not in physical but in value terms (N. Smith 1982, p.149). Smith justifies this by reference to Marx's definition of productive labour, which he links to Marx's definition of productive consumption (N. Smith 1979b, p.164). However, the meaning Marx gives to "productive" when referring to productive consumption is different than that used when referring to productive labour, and Smith appears to confuse them.

Labour, for Marx, is an active process of consumption of raw materials in the creation of new products (Marx 1967, p.290). The consumption of raw materials for this purpose is productive consumption. This can be accomplished whether or not labour itself is productive, that is, productive of surplus value. Smith quotes Marx's example of the jobbing tailor patching a capitalist's trousers. The tailor is paid out of the capitalist's income, i.e., out of surplus value. The tailor's labour is therefore not productive, since it generates no surplus value on its own account. However, raw materials, cotton thread, needles, labour power have been used up in the production of the use value of the patches. This consumption is therefore productive.

Smith's belief that capital can be productively consumed is also erroneous. Productive consumption is indeed the basis of the formation of constant capital, but only when the means of production are used up in the creation of a use value for sale as a commodity, i.e., in productive labour. Therefore, when Smith argues "the physical structure must remain in use and cannot be demolished without sustaining a loss, until the invested capital has returned its value," he is incorrect to link this to the physical depreciation of the building (N. Smith 1982, p.150). The building certainly can be demolished, at any time, provided only that the rentals from the building replacing it cover the cost of any unrealized value from the demolished building.

Admittedly, Smith is always able to argue that it is not the physical condition of the building, which counts, but the rent gap between its present and its highest and best use. Even ignoring the problem of functionalism in the rent gap hypothesis overall however, there is a constant suggestion in Smith's writings that this gap will only appear

when the physical deterioration of the building has reached an advanced stage, one at which its present value is minimal.

The steady devalorization of capital creates longer term possibilities for a new phase of valorization, and this is exactly what has happened in the inner-city...

this devalorization cycle for housing [consists of] five stages: new construction and first phase of use, landlordism, blockbusting and blowout, redlining, abandonment

...devalorization leads to physical decline, which in turn lowers the market price of the land on which the dilapidated buildings stand (N. Smith 1982, p.147, p.149).

Smith here makes the same mistake that Marx argued befell Ricardo

Those economists who like Ricardo, regard the capitalist mode of production as absolute, feel... that it creates a barrier itself, and for this reason attribute the barrier to Nature (in the theory of rent), not to production (Marx 1967, p.242).

Smith's barrier argument succumbs to this same problem insofar as the physical attributes of the building stock are made into the reason for the long turnover time of the capital invested in them. The pace at which the building deteriorates is made to determine the rate at which the capital is released in the form of rent income to the owner of the property.

Buildings, like all other commodities in productive consumption, transfer their value as constant capital via the services they provide to the services produced through their use. But this does not imply a rate of physical deterioration, i.e., a loss of use value, concomitant with that transfer of value as capital. If productive consumption is not to be linked with physical deterioration, how should it be treated? Correcting the errors in Smith's interpretation of productive consumption paves the way toward an understanding of the causes of the rent gap.

For Marx (1967 p.317), capital comprises two equal aspects, the labour process, which creates it, and the valorization process, which realizes it. The means of production and

labour power are to the labour process as constant and variable as capital is to the valorization process. Both aspects are different moments of the dialectic of capital as value-in-process.

As value-in-process, capital cannot be consumed; it can only be transferred from the means of production and labour power to commodities. Consumption of the use value inherent in the commodity is accompanied by the enhancement of labour power, i.e., the transfer of constant capital enhances variable capital. The money transferred in payment for the right to consume that use value is the price equivalent of the value transferred from the commodity (which may be an item for productive or unproductive use) to labour power in the course of its consumption.

Once sold, it is the commodities use values, not their values, which are productively consumed. A consumer of a use value looks at the commodity bearing that use value as a source of use value only. What is at hand is the question of the consumer qua consumer: the question of how to deal with the investment potential of a property. Smith was incorrect therefore to state that a mortgage represented the productive consumption of capital (1979b, p.164). It is as money, the universal commodity, that a mortgage advance is productively consumed, not as capital. The mortgage is capital for the mortgage finance institution, but not a commodity for the mortgagee.

The productive consumption of a mortgage is virtually instantaneous. Its use value is to enable the purchase of the property for which the mortgage advance was made. By contrast, the productive consumption of the property will typically occur over many years, during which time its building services contribute to the reproduction of the labour power of its occupier. The productive consumption of this use value may continue long

after the proportion of the value of the constant capital transferred to the value of the labour power enhanced has fallen to a very low level.

The value of a house is transferred as constant capital via the housing services it provides to the labour power reproduced in that house. The "devalorization" of the property arises because wage rates rise, as part of the general increase in productivity of the economy at large, i.e., of social labour. Consequently, the proportion of constant capital utilized in the reproduction of labour power, the value transferred in productive consumption from the house, necessarily falls.

This fall in the flow of value of building services is only obliquely related to the physical deterioration of the house as such. The theory of capital vintages assumes an historical sequence of more and more productive machinery coupled with rising real wage rates. Machinery of a particular vintage is abandoned when the rising wage rates mean that the value of that vintage's output is entirely absorbed by wage costs. The abandonment then is entirely due to economic, not physical, reasons (Harcourt 1972).

Capital vintage theory was developed as a defence of neoclassical concepts of capital, but the principle, it can be argued is nonetheless applicable to the analysis of the origins of the rent gap. Buildings are abandoned because the rising productivity of social labour reduces the contribution of their services to the reproduction of that labour to a minimum, not because of their physical condition. To paraphrase a well known proposition in economic development theory, the rent gap arises not because buildings are exploited, but because they are not exploited enough.

### 6.3 THE REVANCHIST CITY

In his book entitled *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*, Neil Smith ushered into the gentrification debate the concept of the "revanchist city" (Smith 1996, p.45). This contentious label originates in nineteenth-century French history – the revanchists were a group of middle-class nationalist reactionaries opposed to the working-class uprising of the Paris Commune, who sought "*revanche*" (i.e. revenge) on the poor who had, and were, trying to displace them from the city (ibid.). From Smith's perspective, the example of the actions of revanchists is the "most fitting historical pretext for" contemporary gentrifiers in United States inner-cities in the boom periods of the late 1980s and mid-1990s to the present day (ibid., p.211). For example, he notes in the preface that revanchism "embodies a revengeful and reactionary viciousness against various populations accused of "stealing" the city from the white upper-classes" (ibid., p.xviii). Smith depicts the inner-city as a dangerous and depressed space, riddled with suffering and crime and populated by a deliberately marginalized working class composed primarily of non-Whites. Similar to other urban Marxist commentators (e.g. Jacob Riis, Mike Davis, etc.), Smith's implied intentions are to shed light on economically depressed inner-city communities and their inhabitants and give a voice to the marginalized "other half" through a detailed account of the history and causes of gentrification. Smith clearly sees the process of gentrification as the spatial expression of the revanchist "middle- and ruling-class white's" attitude towards the menacing and threatening "new urban frontier" (ibid., p.211).

Smith states that there are two important factors fuelling this revanchist anti-urbanism; first, the collapse of 1980s economic boom followed by the recession and economically

subdued period of the early 1990s. More specifically, Smith argues that the revanchist population blamed and resented the working class for contributing to the collapse of the property market. Smith then arduously demonstrates that the revanchists exercised their wrath on marginalized and subordinated United States inner-city residents. He states that the revanchists exercise this revenge due to their reaction "to an urbanism defined by recurrent waves of unremitting danger and brutality fuelled by venal and uncontrolled passion" (ibid., p.212). Secondly, Smith states that revanchism is both documented and fuelled by the media's daily "obsessive portrayal of the violence and danger" in United States inner-cities (ibid., p.211). Smith examines the conjointment and influence of media and the revanchist attitude, in the form of paranoia and fear, which pervaded the political administration of New York City. Smith utilizes particularly militant quotes from civic officials during the 1988 and 1991 disturbances in Tompkins Square Park in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, to bolster his argument that the revanchist attitude has been adopted by those in power to maintain control over the inner-city (ibid., Chapter one).

One of the key aspects that Neil Smith introduces into the gentrification debate is the role of globalization at a local level. Using some European examples and primarily United States case studies, Smith argues that gentrification is a manifestation of global shifts in culture, people and the political economy. By utilizing concepts advanced by Gregory, Smith focuses on how gentrification is the inevitable result of the interplay between globalization and local environments. For example, Smith applies Gregory's concept that "places are local condensations and distillations of tremulous global processes" to his revanchist city thesis (Gregory 1994, p.122). It is true that it is possible to find examples of direct links between globalization (e.g. global investment

capital) and gentrification within particular neighbourhoods. However, there are many properties, neighbourhoods and cities in Europe and North America where the affects of globalization have not led to gentrification.

The revanchist thesis is based upon, and arguably preoccupied with the role that fear plays in American cities. The United States has had a long held fear and loathing of cities, which dates back to Jefferson (Kunstler 1993, Chapter four). The problem with the revanchist thesis is that it inaccurately states that fear and anti-urbanism is a global phenomenon inherent within capitalism. This is simply not the case. There are many examples throughout Europe and North America where urbanism is not only celebrated, but it is widely embraced by local populations. This is perhaps Smith's greatest folly, the fact that the revanchist thesis fails to account for differences that exist between neighbourhoods and cities where urbanism is experienced and perceived differently. However, it is not only Smith that makes this mistake, but all Marxists. Marxism has always been insensitive to difference, "almost as insensitive as the dominant capitalist culture which is the subject of Marxist critique" (Sibley 1995, p.x).

#### **6.4 CONCLUSION**

Smith's rent gap theory implies however that gentrification is a cyclical process. Barriers appear in the built environment and are overcome by gentrification, only to arise as barriers once more. Through gentrification, the value of the built property is periodically brought back into line with its site rental value. What this argument overlooks however, is that while indeed ground rents have risen compared to the value of the property, traditionally this has led, not to gentrification but to further subdivision of the property. Neil Smith's rent gap argument makes the mistake, of assuming that gentrification



occurs because the ground rent is high, rather than explaining the height of the rent by the fact, that gentrification can or does occur, because of numerous other conditions.

Other conditions also need to be met, the first, already noted in this thesis, is for there to be residential segregation by status, and for residential segregation to carry the marks of status. The second is the private ownership of property and investment in construction carried out for profit (i.e. speculation) rather than to meet a need. Third, there must be either private or public financing of housing stock available to implement or carry out improvements. These contingencies together constitute what Ball (1985 and 1987) calls 'structures of provision'. This concept is particularly useful since it emphasizes the fact that buildings are not simply a "reflection" of demand, but an interpretation of that demand, by speculative builders operating under specific economic conditions. These were, and still are, the exploitation of rising land values rather than labour in the production process, the methods of financing speculative building, and the tenures under which the properties were occupied.

Finally, there must exist different income levels among house owners, otherwise there would be no displacement. All of these conditions are historically contingent, which in itself argues against the circumstances which helped create gentrification ever occurring again.

Within the context of these capitalist structures of provision of housing, a second set of contingencies helps determine whether gentrification will occur. For example, gentrification cannot occur without gentrifiable property, e.g. housing stock in need of "home improvements". It does not of itself imply that these improvements, if carried out, will be accompanied by a change of occupation. This will only occur if the costs of

improvement are so great that mortgage finance institutions decide that they can only be mediated through a new occupier with a substantially higher income than the former.

The question as to what is 'substantial' and what is not is impossible to say. There is no real boundary between displacement and gentrification. The one fades into the other.

It will be the purpose of Chapter seven to discuss several of the variables that contribute to gentrification. This discussion will only indicate the development of the supply factors in gentrification however. It will show how gentrifiers can gentrify, if they so desire. It will not account for the roots of that desire.

Thus in conclusion, criticisms of Smith's work are rooted in the fact that he stressed the importance of production at the expense of consumption. In addition, rent gap theory does not tell us enough, or anything, about the gentrifiers. This has been a popular angle of attack; Hamnett argued that "although the gentrification process does involve capital flows, it also involves people, and this is the Achilles heel of Smith's supply side thesis" (Hamnett 1991, p.180, emphasis added). Ian Munt's research in Battersea formed the basis of his lament over Smith's lack of attention to demand; he objected to Smith's apparent implication that "individuals respond passively to capital movements" (Munt 1987, p.1177). The distaste stemmed from the perception that gentrification cannot take place without the existence of a "pool of gentrifiers", or consumers who have a desire to live in the inner-city. These critics argued that people have individual preferences regarding their place of residence, and Marxist analyses such as Smith's work seemed to eschew this concept in favour of an approach, which emphasised the centrality of capital fluctuations within urban areas.

The problems of the application of rent-gap theory can be found in empirical research. It is a theory, which does not explain gentrification in younger cities with a less industrial past, and due to the country in which it was formulated (the United States) perhaps it is "applicable only to gentrification led by developers who rehabilitate completely abandoned neighbourhoods" (Munt 1987, p.1177). David Ley, perhaps the chief proponent of consumption-side explanations, put this in harsher terms - "almost ten years after its first presentation it has still not been made empirically accountable" (Ley 1987, p.466). Many critics observed that gentrification is not simply the renovation of an abandoned housing stock; new residential developments are very much a part of a gentrified landscape, and may involve very different prerequisites to the rent-gap. Another objection came from several European scholars, for whom the perils of the rent gap were alien, as cities such as Paris, Amsterdam and Stockholm had never experienced disinvestments on the scale of Anglo-American cities. In short, the rent-gap failed to explain why gentrification occurred in some cities, and not in others.

In sum, it is without doubt that Smith's formulation attracted widespread criticism. In 1992, Smith believed he had been misrepresented in the critiques, saying "I do not now believe, nor have I ever believed, that the rent gap is the only and sufficient explanation of gentrification" (Smith 1992, p.112). But to understand the nature of the critiques, it is useful to turn to the arguments of the consumption-side school.

## **7.0 The Pre-Conditions for Gentrification: Avoiding Linear Monolithic Explanations**

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### **7.1 AIMS AND ISSUES**

The last chapter sought to deconstruct some of the inherent problems with a neighbourhood lifecycle or rent gap approach in explaining gentrification. This chapter seeks to trace the processes involved in gentrification as it occurs in modern times, thus placing some more historical flesh on the economic bones of the models presented in Chapter six. It concentrates on multi-causal explanations of gentrification and the role of gender in gentrification. This chapter will rely primarily on Canadian examples due to the author's familiarity with this country's urban development and structures.

### **7.2 MULTI-CAUSATIONAL EXPLANATIONS OF GENTRIFICATION**

In this section, I will contrast the existing monolithic explanations of gentrification by providing a brief overview of the multi-causal variables that contribute to the gentrification process. Many of the variables described in this section fall either into the production or consumption-based camps. By citing examples from both camps, the intention is to further corroborate the position taken in this thesis that future gentrification research must not remain static and polarized, but instead become sensitized to the multi-causal explanations of gentrification which transcend either theoretical position.

The variables elucidated below do not represent an exhaustive list, nor are they intended to remain static in nature, but rather they highlight gaps and issues that occur in gentrification discourse.

Many gentrifying homebuyers are attracted to older neighbourhoods for reasons of aesthetics. Most gentrifying or gentrified neighbourhoods often contain similar amenities, which typically include an abundance of mature trees (i.e. large calliper trees), historical buildings (circa eras preceding World War II and sometimes protected through historical preservation overlays and covenants), decorative landscape and streetscape elements (e.g. benches, ornamental iron fences and brick or stone sidewalks) and art (e.g. murals and outdoor art pieces). These amenities, often limited in supply within North America, contribute to making inner-city areas more attractive and thus appealing to possible gentrifiers.

Explanations of gentrification should include an analysis of demographic changes and shifts. For example, Munt argued that there was a direct correlation between a maturing baby-boomer and aging baby-buster cohort with "a tremendous demand on housing supply", and that this has subsequently contributed to gentrification (Munt 1987, p.1189). More specifically, maturing baby-boomers become 'empty nesters' once their children, the baby-busters, leave home. These 'empty nesters' often decide to downscale their homes and move into condominiums located in gentrified or gentrifying neighbourhoods. Furthermore, the baby-buster children of these empty nesters, some of whom are bohemians and students, often leave home and move into neighbourhoods that are either starting to, or are already active in the process of becoming gentrified.

Another important demographic change is that many households now relies on two incomes as an increasing number of women are employed outside the home (see next section). Most gentrification researchers agree that women are engaged in the process of gentrification due to their changing position within the labour market. Women are securing professional and managerial jobs located within Central Business Districts (CBDs). Their wish to live in housing close to their workplace is not simply to reduce commuting costs, but to provide "a solution to problems of access to work and home and of combining paid and unpaid labour" (Warde 1991, p.229). As a result of their commitment to careers, women postpone marriage and childbearing, and do not only live in dual-earner "small, affluent households" (Bondi, 1991, p.192). As a result, there has been an increase in the number of single women professionals living alone in gentrified areas.

The changing geography of sexuality in the inner-city, namely the presence of more active and visibly gay and lesbian populations, has contributed significantly towards gentrification in the inner-city (Lauria and Knopp 1985). For example, gay men are able to become gentrifiers as many of them are single, young, uninterested in immediately having children and are typically connected to a relatively prosperous service economy (ibid.). These aforementioned demographic changes, along with several others, lead to the restructuring of the residential geography of the inner-city and the process of gentrification.

As does Neil Smith, I would strongly argue that gentrification could not occur in the absence of specific economic preconditions. Most notably, an inner-city area will not gentrify unless there is a supply of gentrifiable property. This property may take the

following forms: abandoned railways and intermodal yards, abandoned and/or depreciated decaying factories and warehouses, vacant land (usually cleared as a result of public health concerns), commercial or industrial buildings, and older housing that has depreciated in value relative to local and regional resale markets. While the latter property types are a necessary precondition needed for gentrification to occur, by no means does the presence or abundance of these properties automatically lead to gentrification. The process of gentrification is predicated on the supply of gentrifiable property, although it does not necessarily follow that the process will occur. Several inner-city neighbourhoods in Edmonton, Alberta and Winnipeg, Manitoba present examples in which substantive gentrifiable areas fall into this latter category. Two such examples are Edmonton's Boyle Street or Winnipeg's North End neighbourhoods. Moreover, the gentrification of either of these neighbourhoods is unlikely to take place in the foreseeable future as a result of the regional population's social stigmas and entrenched negative stereotypes associated with these two areas in Edmonton and Winnipeg.

Another important economic factor that often leads to gentrification is the supply of affordable housing options in newly gentrifying inner-city areas. The presence of affordable housing, whether it is in the form of depreciated housing or reconvertable industrial buildings, often attracts bohemians and students. To borrow from Neil Smith, these population groups are often associated with being the pioneers or initial catalysts of gentrification. Gratz and Mintz (1998) credit these two groups with the gentrification of New York City neighbourhoods such as Soho, NoHo, Tribeca and Greenwich Village.

As discussed throughout this thesis, one of the contributing factors in the cause of gentrification is post-industrialism. In this thesis, and throughout gentrification research, the advent of post-industrialism is associated with the emergence of a new upwardly mobile middle class. Unlike the middle class of the industrialist era, many members of the contemporary middle class are quite affluent, frequently unmarried and/or without children, highly consumer and status oriented and more urban (as opposed to suburban) in their geographical orientation (Hamnett 2000). This post-industrialist middle class is heralded by those within the consumption camp as the primary agent of gentrification.

In addition to post-industrialism, the advent of the post-modern economy is also proclaimed by researchers within the consumption camp as being one of the primary causes of gentrification. The post-modern economy has brought with it the explosive growth of globalization, which in turn has led to shifts in education and immigration patterns as well as to new consumption and capital investment paradigms. The global economy has facilitated the unprecedented rise of a new service economy in much of the western world. Factory and agrarian employment has now been replaced with both low paying tertiary employment (e.g. employees at McDonald's and Wal-Mart) and with high paying knowledge-based employment (e.g. financial service and technology based employees and engineers) on a scale not previous seen. The growth of the latter type of employment has generated new sources of wealth for what has already been described as the new middle class.

Most gentrifying and gentrified neighbourhoods share geography as the common denominator. "Location, location, location!" is the often-heard mantra of many real



estate agents active in these neighbourhoods. Of the chief causal factors of gentrification are the geographic benefits inherent to inhabiting inner-city areas. More specifically, many gentrifying or gentrified neighbourhoods are in close proximity to business/employment areas or to major transit corridors or nodes. Many newly gentrifying areas benefit from the synergies created by being in close proximity to other gentrifying areas.

Much of the literature on gentrification fails to emphasize or recognize the important role that governments play in the gentrification process. Many local, provincial or federal governments operate housing grant or tax credit programs that give developers the necessary incentive needed in order to initiate the gentrification of neighbourhoods. Downtown Edmonton has recently initiated efforts aimed at instigating gentrification. Many would credit the City of Edmonton's housing grant program that was part of the 1997 Capital City Downtown Plan. This program provided developers a grant of \$4,500 per completed unit of housing within the downtown area. The program has been considered quite successful and has substantially contributed to the recent residential building boom found in downtown Edmonton. In addition to financial incentives for developers, the various levels of government have implemented programs established to encourage property owners to perform home improvement by assisting with the costs. An example of this is the Edmonton municipality's historical grant program that provides property owners with funds necessary to restore houses and buildings deemed historically valuable. This program has contributed towards the gentrification of both downtown Edmonton and the neighbourhood of Oliver, as lower income renters have often been displaced when older multi-family buildings are restored and turned into high

end condominiums. These newly gentrified properties are only affordable for dual and/or high income earners.

One of the tools available to governments that wish to encourage and facilitate gentrification is the ability to change land uses. Governments can create or amend neighbourhood plans and incorporate within these policy statements new land use designations that often stimulate new development. As already noted, the City of Vancouver facilitated the gentrification of the False Creek area by changing the plan for the area and by also rezoning properties to more intensive land uses (Ley 1987a).

Local and provincial levels of government are also able to encourage the intensification of land through the creation of green belts, also referred to as urban growth boundaries. These green belts, such as the frequently cited one in Portland, Oregon, have restricted suburban development, which has resulted in intensified development efforts and the inward movement of capital (Krumholz and Star 1996, p.246). Inevitably, much of this return of capital and development pressure to the central city results in the gentrification of some inner-city neighbourhoods.

Governments can also direct development by shifting capital spending towards public transportation infrastructure, such as subways, light rail transit or busways that are often concentrated in central areas of cities. For example, investing in new subway lines, such as the recently opened Sheppard line in Toronto, Ontario has resulted in the gentrification of North York neighbourhoods located near stations along the line.

The post-industrialist middle class often chooses to live in urban, rather than suburban areas. Members of this middle class frequently reject a highly consumption oriented lifestyle often associated with suburban living. Moreover, some of these members do

not wish to live in the suburbs, thereby consciously avoiding becoming agents of suburban sprawl. In contrast to suburban areas, members of this new middle class are attracted to gentrifying areas where they can find a concentration of likeminded people, i.e. individuals that share their same lifestyle, philosophical, political and spiritual values. Proponents of the emancipatory city thesis, discussed in Section 7.4 would emphasise the desirability of living in urban areas for the perceived kinship they can find with others of the same neighbourhood.

Lastly, it is important not to understate the importance and role of safety and public perception of crime in either assisting or hindering the process of gentrification. As aforementioned in the examples of Edmonton and Winnipeg, there are inner-city neighbourhoods where gentrification is unlikely to occur as a result of the public's negative imagery associated with an area. It takes a lot of time, and often alternative policing techniques, before a population's social stigmas and entrenched negative stereotypes towards some inner-cities will change. Inner-city neighbourhoods like Harlem in New York City have benefited from the implementation of a "broken glass theory" approach to policing. In recent years, the previous public perception of Harlem as having dangerous streets and a high crime rate has ameliorated notably (Hellman 2002). This change in perception has greatly contributed to the gentrification of Harlem from the late 1990s to the present day (ibid.).

### **7.3 WOMEN IN THE GENTRIFIED HOUSING MARKET**

Women are increasingly purchasing residential property independently. The impact of female entry into the housing market cannot therefore be ignored in any study of gentrification. However, great caution needs to be exercised when considering the

statistics of women's participation in the housing market, in particular their participation in the gentrification process. To put their participation in context, Table 7.1 presents some statistics on the interactions between female participation in the labour force, homeownership rates, and average income based on gender in Canada.

For the purposes of this thesis, the analysis and discussion of the role of women in the gentrification process occurs within the Canadian context. Canada has been utilised as an example both because of my familiarity with Canadian gender trends and because Canadian statistics are more readily available to me. Moreover, one may reasonably ascertain that statistics and trends in other Anglophone countries are comparable to the levels stated in Canada.

Female participation in the economy experienced a surge during the Second World War, just as it had in World War I, although the increase was to a lesser degree a matter of the quantity than it was a matter of the expanded range of sectors in which women were newly able to participate. A recent article by Statistics Canada stated that the past several decades have witnessed dramatic growth in the share of women who are part of the paid workforce (Statistics Canada 2003, p.6). As shown below in Table 7.1, the rate of female participation in the labour force has increased dramatically between 1951 and 2001.

Table 7.1 Female Labour Force Participation Rate in Canada, 1951 – 2001

Year	% of Female Working Age Population Employed
1951	24.1 %
1961	29.7 %
1971	39.9 %
1981	51.0 %
1991	59.9 %
2001	60.7 %

Source: Statistics Canada and McVey and Kalbach 1995, p.251

In 2002, 56% of all women aged 15 and over had jobs, up from 42% in 1976 (Statistics Canada 2003, p.6). As a result of these trends, women now account for 46% of the Canadian employed workforce in 2002, up from 37% in 1976 (ibid.), although a greater percentage of women have more part-time than full-time occupations proportionately compared with the ratio of part-time to full-time employment of men (ibid., p.9). Nonetheless, as shown in Table 7.2, there are still a large number of full-time female workers within Canada.

Table 7.2 Full-Time Workers in Canada by Sex for Total Population over 15 Years and Over

Year	1990	% of Total	2000	% of Total
Male	8,508,000	54.92	9,250,000	53.38
Female	6,984,000	45.08	8,079,000	46.62
Total	15,491,000	100.00	17,328,000	100.00

Source: Statistics Canada

Another important trend in the female labour force is the rise of average incomes for women. Between 1975 and 2000, average incomes for women rose by 321.5%.

However, as Table 7.3 illustrates below, while female incomes have risen in real terms, they have failed to keep pace with average incomes for males in Canada.

Table 7.3 Average Incomes by Sex in Canada for Total Population over 15 Years and Over

Year	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	% Increase Between 1975 and 2000
<b>Male</b>	7,964	13,461	22,689	33,733	31,117	36,865	363.0 %
<b>Female</b>	5,430	9,776	12,378	19,630	19,208	22,885	321.5 %
<b>Female Average Income as a % of Male Average Income</b>	68.18	72.62	54.55	58.19	61.72	62.07	

Source: Statistics Canada

Table 7.4 below shows the changes in home ownership levels in Canada 1941 – 2001.

#### 7.4 Homeownership Rates in Canada, 1941-2001

Year	Homeowners as a Percentage of All Households
1941	41
1951	56
1961	59
1971	54
1981	56
1986	57
1991	62.4
1998	64.9
2002	64.6

Source: [www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/famil09a.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/famil09a.htm) and Bourne and Ley 1993, p.288

Even though homeownership has risen throughout this period nationally (see Table 7.4), it has not increased proportionately with the increase of female participation in the labour force and rising average incomes for Canadian women. One may assume that

this is due to the fact that housing prices have grown proportionately to rising male and household incomes rather than to female incomes. In other words, the increase in income and house prices is very closely linked, as would be expected given the practice of mortgage companies to tie mortgage lending to rising incomes. Ergo, while many more women are employed in Canada with rising salaries, many of them do not have the incomes needed for homeownership. Thus, single women are not likely to be active as gentrifiers particularly as gentrified areas typically have high housing prices relative to other areas (Fitch 2001, p.250-257).

If the cost of new building establishes the price of all housing, regardless of its actual historic and renovation costs, as most commentators agree is the case (see Chapter six above), then households will in the long run be allocated to housing on the basis of its price and their income. The ability of developers to rehabilitate old properties according to modern standards more inexpensively than it would be to rebuild those properties means that gentrifiers come to be allocated to the inner-city.

The impact of changing gender relations offers little insight into the causal factors of the gentrification process. Specifically, an analysis of these figures alone cannot lead to a determination of whether house prices rose in response to demand from women entering the labour force, and expressing their new found economic muscle in the housing market, or whether women who would have otherwise given up a career because of marriage have been forced to remain in full-time employment simply to help meet with the mortgage repayments. Did the entry of women into the labour market push up the price of housing or did the rising price of housing drag women into the labour market?

If the purchase of gentrified houses or condominiums does increasingly require the resources of a two-income household, and single women are increasingly entering the market for property, then, their occupational dynamics cannot be ignored (Bondi 1990). The tables shown above provide an attempt to redress this balance by considering the growth of the female labour force during this period and, in particular the growth of average income for women.

Several scholars have contended that considerations of gender in the gentrification process should not be demarcated from those of class constitution. For example, Liz Bondi has argued that we should understand gender as a social relation within the prevailing class structure, and women gentrifying as a response to "different structures of patriarchy" (Bondi 1991, p.196). This reflects the feminist discourse regarding gentrification; it is seen as a process into which women are sometimes forced by oppressive class relations experienced through their gender, rather than moving to the inner-city as a matter of geographic preference. In addition, patriarchal relations of the post-war suburbs, which were fuelled by the man's role as the primary earner relative to the woman's domestic position, have broken down due to the increasing availability of higher education and to the emancipatory nature of the women's movement. Peter Williams has claimed that higher education "allowed many women to exercise choice over roles they took... and many were encouraged to reject suburbia physically (just as they were rejecting it mentally)" (Williams 1986, p.69). Such commentary enables us to discern not only the "push" and "pull" factors giving rise to the increasing number of young middle-class women in inner-city residences, but also the fact that gentrification is a visible, spatial response to status and gender relations in urban areas.



To conclude, this section has sought to highlight some of the gender issues in the gentrification process. It has shown the importance of women in this process in two ways, as contributors to joint house purchase, and as purchasers in their own right. The rise in the incomes and proportion of female labour participation since the 1960s parallels the growth of gentrification in the inner-city. However, it does not appear that the causes of this possible female contribution to gentrification is likely to be substantial at this time and it would therefore be incorrect to conclude from the forgoing analysis that gentrifying areas are filled with large numbers of single women. Instead, this analysis demonstrates that though of great interest in understanding the processes of gentrification, sole female participation in the labour markets does not significantly contribute to the process of gentrification.

#### **7.4 THE EMANCIPATORY CITY**

In reaction to and in sharp contrast with Neil Smith's revanchist city thesis, Jon Caulfield has advocated and promoted the concept of an "emancipatory city". In his book entitled *City Form and Everyday Life: Toronto's Gentrification and Critical Social Practice*, Caulfield depicts the inner-city neighbourhoods of Toronto, Ontario as liveable, vibrant, dynamic, cosmopolitan, inclusive and safe. Loretta Lees substantiated the claims made by Caulfield, when she argued in her 2000 article that many inner-city areas were in fact emancipatory in nature, and clearly not revanchist. Unlike Smith's representation of the inner-city as an environment overrun with misery, crime and violence, Lees offers a rather different representation of the inner-city as encompassing all of the aforementioned attributes of an emancipatory city. Moreover, Lees views gentrification as a phenomenon that unites inner-city people through the creation of spaces and

neighbourhoods that encourage social interaction between individuals of varying religious, ethnic and monetary backgrounds.

Proponents (Butler 1997, Caulfield 1996, Lees 2000 and Ley 1996) of the emancipatory city thesis also argue that gentrification is a consequence of suburban development. More specifically, they argue that gentrification is an emancipatory social practice that occurs partially as a reaction to the cultural and social structures and values that exist in suburban areas (Caulfield 1989, p.624). From the perspective of gentrifiers, the suburbs are merely places for weekend retreats from the city, or worse, vile generic places where urban notions of the public realm, tolerance, social interaction and cultural expression are either repressed or rejected. Ley went so far as to suggest that gentrifiers are really members of a counter-culture, where former hippies have now become gentrifying yuppies (Ley 1996).

The emancipatory and revanchist theses are obviously contradictory. At first glance, one might argue that one cancels out the other, and vice versa. Both theses, however, have a role to play in explaining the causes and describing the phenomenon of gentrification. The emancipatory city thesis provides greater validity to the idea that there is a new middle class, which functions both directly and indirectly as an agent of gentrification. As well, the emancipatory city thesis sheds light on some of the differences that exist between inner-city neighbourhoods in the United States and Canada. Neil Smith asserts, by use of case studies set in the United States, that gentrifiers are actually revanchists that deliberately and indirectly contribute to the displacement of pre-gentrification residents. He argues that they do this through their financial and political economic structures, which they either control or influence. Whereas, scholars such as

Lees, Ley and Caulfield argue that gentrifiers are helping to create more liveable and balanced neighbourhoods, unlike the suburbs.

The problem with the emancipatory city is that it is far from universally applicable. More specifically, detractors of the emancipatory city thesis could easily argue that many gentrifiers act as individuals who act with an "every person for himself or herself" mentality. Furthermore, it is not realistic to assume that most participants in the gentrification process are inclined to extend their cultural and social networks beyond their immediate friends, colleagues and family. This, one might argue, is particularly the case between residents of varying ethnic, religious and socio-economic that inhabits inner-city neighbourhoods. Moreover, it is naïve to state that gentrification will inherently create a tolerant environment, when the very process of gentrification inevitably leads to the displacement of people, the polarization of incomes and, in some instances, the establishment of mono-socio-economic cultures.

## **7.5 CONCLUSION: WHY IS THERE SO MUCH CONTROVERSY OVER GENTRIFICATION?**

In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate that the causes of gentrification are multi-causal, rather than uni-monolithic. So why then is there so much controversy over explanations for gentrification? Bondi notes that fundamental to gentrification is contrast:

This perspective implies that gentrification is, by definition, a process of transition. It is, therefore, liable to be self-defeating in that, if an initial invasion of new territory is successful, the source of contrast may eventually be entirely expunged (Bondi 1991, p.117).

This returns us to the themes of gentrification as fashion, as discussed in Chapter two and the larger questions of culture discussed in Chapter five. As aforementioned, the

'simple laws of supply and demand' could explain the rise in property prices once the buildings became renovated. Whatever the reasons underlying the conditions of supply and demand, however, the social consequences of gentrification cannot be deduced from the economic rationale for its existence, namely the gains made from improving an existing housing stock. If gentrifiers are seizing upon areas, which, in the act of being seized upon, make those areas fashionable, then improving housing stock merely facilitates this activity.

It should also not be argued that the social consequences of gentrification could be deduced from theories of economic class. Fashion itself has no intrinsically class or status connotations. But fashion is used to make statements about identity, and as Raymond Williams makes clear, these statements, like all other communications between individuals in society, are imbedded in the culture of that society (R. Williams 1990, p.23). Although I have argued that class considerations cannot explain gentrification, I have been careful to avoid any suggestion that societies in which gentrification occurs are not class based. Class is fundamental to gentrification, but not in the directed unmediated fashion indicated by SCA (see Chapter three).

## 8.0 The Gentrification Debate: Class and Hegemony

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### 8.1 AIMS AND ISSUES

This thesis has demonstrated the problems associated with the gentrification debate, namely that gentrifiers gentrify because they have to, whereas I would argue that participate in the phenomenon because they can. What then motivates the gentrification debate onwards? What gives gentrification such political and social significance when it is of such limited quantitative and historical importance? Furthermore, the account of gentrifiers' motives in gentrifying has been largely passive. The question of why people might actively wish to gentrify has yet to be properly investigated. To answer all these questions it will be necessary to return to themes presented in the first four chapters of this thesis, thus shifting attention back from the question of gentrification as a housing market phenomenon to the question of the construction of identity in the city, and the role of a sense of place in constructing that identity.

Chapter five discussed how conditions of modernity render it necessary to actively create a sense of place. In the anonymous city, houses, in their role as homes, represent the stable moment of Park's "mobility, stability, consciousness" triad, and this gives effect to housing in constituting a 'sense of place'. Issues of status and identity would not have any relevance to gentrification; if housing in general (including gentrified housing) did not itself have an important role in the construction of identity. Beginning with the personal should not implicitly mean neglecting questions of class and class-consciousness. However, as Blanchard (1985) argues, quite correctly, an

understanding of class-consciousness can only begin from an understanding of individual consciousness (see Chapter 5.4). Personal identity under conditions of modernity is, as Sayer (1991) makes clear, founded in class-based exploitation. In this last chapter, I wish to explore how sense of place is specifically affected, not just by the experience of modernity generally but also by the specific experience of class society. In particular, this sense of place is constructed within the context of an ongoing hegemony<sup>13</sup>, which seeks to overcome the class contradictions, which lie at the heart of the capitalist mode of production (see Chapter one). It is the way in which the constitution of houses as "places" is articulated within a particular hegemonic project that class relations enter gentrification.

Understanding how issues of identity and place relate within and to this wider context is therefore crucial to understanding the significance of gentrification. I shall argue that while, quantitatively speaking, gentrification itself is not significant, contests over gentrification resonate throughout a much wider cross-section of society insofar as they relate on the one hand to the struggle to maintain a dominant, yet contested, hegemony, and on the other, to the construction of identity through a sense of place.

From a cultural materialist perspective, the question of hegemony is an inseparable part of the question of the material conditions of production and reproduction. One cannot look just at work and housing without also looking at the meanings bound up in and produced with them. At the same time, the importance of hegemony must not be allowed to obscure the fact that any accumulation process does not simply depend on

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<sup>13</sup> *HEGEMONY* is the cultural materialist perspective as an active process of presenting capitalist exploitation as the natural and therefore inevitable condition of modern life (R. Williams 1977 and Jackson 1989).

the reproduction of the social relations, which constitute it. It also depends on the accumulation of material products (or in the case of gentrification, the lack of accumulation of material products, i.e., houses available to be gentrified). Indeed it is the emphasis placed on looking at the actual material production of gentrifiable houses, which enables it to overcome the difficulties of conceptualization and explanation of gentrification from which other analyses have suffered. Every other analysis has simply taken it for granted that the capacity to produce gentrified housing exists. Nevertheless, to understand the controversy over the material processes of gentrification it is necessary to understand their symbolic aspects, and this means taking the metaphorical aspects of gentrification seriously, not dismissing them as obscuring, in some chaotic fashion, the "real" relations of gentrification (see Chapters one and two). Only in examining how the metaphor of gentrification itself invokes persistent themes in a dominating and long-standing hegemony, is it possible to show how gentrification relates to class.

## **8.2 HEGEMONY AND PLACE**

A successful hegemony (or hegemonic project<sup>14</sup> – Hall 1988, p.168) is one able to articulate personal experience convincingly, but in a manner that suggests that the experience is natural, therefore inevitable and unchallengeable. Hegemonic practices always involve processes of struggle and contestation, however; they are not unchallengeable themselves (R. Williams 1977, p122-125). As Hall writes:

"Hegemony" implies: the struggle to contest and disorganize an existing political formation; the taking of a "leading position" (on however minority a basis) over a number

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<sup>14</sup> *HEGEMONIC PROJECT* is where a person or group seeks to dominate some other group of people.

of different spheres of society at once – economy, civil society, intellectual and moral life, culture; the conduct of a wide and differentiated type of struggle; the winning of a strategic measure of popular consent; and thus the securing of a social authority sufficiently deep to conform society into a new historical project. It should never be mistaken for a finished or settled project. It is always contested, always trying to secure itself, always “in process” (Hall 1988, p.7).

Hegemony proceeds by means of selective tradition (R. Williams 1977): from the myriad events which have occurred in the past, only hegemony emphasises those which advance its strategy to render natural the current, historically specific, forms of class-exploitation that it seeks to defend.

Social science depends on the same processes of selective tradition as do hegemonic practices: of all the events that have occurred in social life, the social scientist makes a selection in order to ratify his or her explanation of those events. Thus, Smith highlights ‘structure’ while Ley, looking at the same processes, highlights “agency”. The hegemony exercised by the social scientist over his or her material, while it can be challenged by other, equally hegemonic accounts, is further evidence that power produces knowledge rather than vice versa.

Successful construction of hegemonies “from above” depends on making connections with personal experience “from below” (Hall 1988, p.8). Raymond Williams (1977) argues that it is at such points of connection that hegemonic practices are at their strongest but also at their most vulnerable, since they are most open to challenge. A sense of place constitutes one such point of connection.

The concept of “place” is not to be regarded as a pre-existing independent entity; it is always created and re-created by the inhabitants of that place (R. Williams 1990). This means that “place” is created and re-created with reference to personal experience and therefore to memory. A ‘sense of place’ is consequently experienced at the personal or



individual level, rather than at the collective or class level (see Chapter five). However, memory is inevitably selective, and thus, it is that personal experience of a sense of place that can be retrieved and adapted to a particular hegemonic project.

### **8.3 CLASS STRUGGLE, STATUS AND THE STRUCTURING OF IDENTITY**

As argued in this thesis, the question of identity is one that Marxists have tended to ignore, as Hall et al (1989) concede. Blanchard, comparing and contrasting Engels, and Baudelaire's motives for writing about the city makes clear the reason why:

[For Baudelaire] life in the city is primarily a question of identification with the others with whom he shares a common space...

This quest for the self, which was of no concern to Engels, because the social critic flatters himself that his only problem is to know others in their external material context, is the fundamental problem in the city (Blanchard 1985, p.104-106).

In Chapter 5.6 above, it was argued (see 5.5 above) that status and identity are rendered fluid by the constant re-organization of work under conditions of capitalist accumulation, and introduced the concept of indirect, positional, forms of class struggle in order to bring out this experience of class more clearly. Whereas direct, confrontational, struggle is over participation in specific labour processes, positional struggles are for central status with regard to the processes of capitalist accumulation (Redfern 1992).

As discussed above and in Chapter three, status is displayed and ratified in the consumption of possessions (McCracken 1988), in particular in the possession of private property. But private property is predicated on conditions of civil society, and in such a society, other people are, as Marx said, not a realization of the property-owner's freedom, but a barrier to it. The right to exclusive occupation of an area, the right to real

property, naturally (under capitalism) denies that right to others. Ironically, "property", therefore, "must be willing to bear the cost of government and the law" (Offer 1981, p.401), ironic because it must be willing therefore to permit governments to appropriate property, in taxes.

The pursuit of status via property raises many other contradictions among the obligations, dependencies and insecurities, which accompany such a pursuit

Like Isaiah Berlin's fox, this book "knows many things". ...the development of land law and the distribution of tenures, the unfolding of political discourse, the certitudes of economics and the constraints of the economy, the development of interest groups, the growth of social movements, and the mental and cultural dimensions of ownership. Behind this diversity of appearances, one senses a stubborn hedgehog, who "knows one big thing". This is the pursuit of security and esteem: fleeting possessions that can only be captured and secured by the institutions of property (Offer 1981, p.xiii).

It is not so much the hypocrisy, or unattainability of the ideals sought, in the pursuit of status in a society, which apparently only property can secure; rather it is that, given such a society, this is the "necessary form" of the contradictions which lie at its heart. Indeed, given that those contradictions have not substantially altered, one can see why gentrification could have such an important function, not merely as a means to assisting personal accumulation, but also as a means of acquiring status in a specific cultural conjuncture. However, as was argued in Chapter 5.6: "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..."

However, even active resistance to gentrification from the potential displacee does not imply class struggle between them and their displacee. Rather, gentrification should be regarded as condensing the results of positional struggle for central status in the labour process. This is not to suggest, as do the post-industrialists, that gentrification

"expresses" the attempt of some social group to create, constitute or reconstitute their class or status position, that gentrification is "expressed" through housing, and therefore has an ideal existence prior to or separate from housing (for the same reasons as "place" has no such prior existence either). Status is, notoriously, expressed through symbols. But, as Raymond Williams writes, the meanings such symbols convey "is always produced; it is never imply expressed" (1977, p.166). Housing, like other forms of consumption, has a dual role: in the reproduction of labour power; and in the shaping, maintenance and enhancement of status. However, it is also a place in which those other forms of consumption and status formation are carried on. It is the sense of place, which these activities engender, and the space, which these activities occupy, which gives housing its unique role in positional forms of class struggle over the labour process.

Gentrification cannot therefore be thought of as an explicit or unmediated outcome of positional struggle, either. Contests over the meaning of an urban place, and the status to be derived from it, help us understand the hegemonic significance of gentrification "from below", that is, from the point of view of questions of personal security (status) both of those displaced by the process, and also the pretensions to status exhibited by the gentrifiers. This is how descriptions of contests over gentrification are usually framed (N. Smith 1996, see also Chapter one and two above). However, such descriptions are only half the story, and this is why gentrification's metaphors or the metaphors of those who up to now have been involved in the gentrification debate, more properly are so inadequate. Gentrification also needs to be understood "from above", from the point of view of those doing the displacing, as forming a bridge between a real material source of experience and its representation, "through specific ideological forces

and campaigns" (Hall 1988, p.137), in terms of a more general hegemonic project (Hall 1988, p.154). It is in this context that the metaphors of "country" and "city" are produced. Only then, are they adapted and put to use in the service of gentrification.

#### **8.4 THE COUNTRY AND THE CITY**

Of all the metaphors associated with gentrification, the most important is that of 'gentrification' itself. The term 'gentrification' is derived from 'gentry', the English non-aristocratic rural landowning class. London and Palen (1984) report a lively debate on a range of (equally metaphorical) terms, such as inner-city revitalization and urban renaissance, thought suitable for the processes covered by the term gentrification. Despite this, the original coinage, by Glass (1964) has stuck in all Anglophone countries where the processes of middle class occupation of working class areas have been reported. The explanation of why this should be so, explains the reasons why gentrification attracts so much attention. This explanation also provides a suitable conclusion to all the themes presented and discussed in this thesis.

Williams argues that the very completeness of the interaction between environment and "society" can allow the facts of human labour in the construction of that environment to be quite unrecognized (R.Williams 1990, Jackson and S. Smith 1984, p.193-194), appear natural, and to become therefore the subject of a dominating hegemony. Raymond Williams (1990) develops this argument by exploring the history of ideas of country and city in English literature, specific ways of seeing and not-seeing class exploitation.

Throughout much of history, the exploitative social systems, first feudalism and then agrarian capitalism, through which the land has been worked, have at the same time represented the countryside as paradises, centred on the landlord's country-house. With the country-house and grounds, all social relations that went into the maintenance of house and grounds were deemed harmonious, by definition. The exploitation of rural labour on which the whole edifice depended could thereby be overlooked, in some cases, even physically removed.

As capitalism moved from the country to the towns, literary attention turned to the new forms of social, though still exploitative, relationships being created in the towns. It was impossible to cover up the consequences of exploitation in the towns. However, those consequences were typically not attributed to the social system which had created both city and country, in their various ways, but to 'the city' or 'city life' itself. The vision which developed therefore was one in which the exploitation which had created the city was not so much ignored as obscured by the hustle and bustle of the city.

This developing image of the city led in turn to developments in the imagery of the country. Writers, such as Thoreau, began to describe and contrast the country as being an idyllic oasis from the city (Kunstler 1993, Chapter three). The country, in other words, was heaven because the city was hell, and the country was now defined as everything the city was not. The country became, not merely a site of innocence however, but a place to retreat or retire to when city life became too much; rarely, if ever, was it seen as the site of labour. City dwellers, along with the occupants of the country houses, now connived at the existence of rural exploitation.

Freedom in the modern city came to be seen less in terms of escape, and more in terms of possibilities, enlargement of identity, heightening of faculties, and a heightening of danger (R. Williams 1989a, p.280). While the ideas of sanctuary and refuge formerly associated with the city, and now associated with the home, came, in a last ironic twist, to be associated with the country.

These literary images of country and city, which developed with the development of capitalism, are evidence of the development of new forms of consciousness, as well as the persistence of the older forms. The new sense of mobility (see Chapter five) was one response to the experience of the modern city; the sense of marginality yet another and both of these surrounded new structures of feeling as to what constitutes a sense of place (ibid.). These structures of feeling were and are persistently expressed in metaphors of 'country' and 'city': 'country' as a place of refuge, security, status and identity, 'city' as a place of adventure, insecurity, and lack of status (and therefore no identity).

These images can be linked to other aspects of modernity – marginality, in particular, architectural styles adopted in the creation of suburbia demonstrates: suburbanites as marginal men and women, buying into an idyllic country image:

Poised between a recent history, which for many was best forgotten, and an uncertain future; anxious only to secure a worthy home in a good clean environment for a growing family, the occupant of Dunroarnin's semi-detached was happy with echoes made of Britain's Tudor past and largely oblivious of the ironic observations made as to his taste. Blurred, inaccurate, romantic, patriotic, the 'Tudorbethan' timbers, leaded lights to casement windows, chevron and herringbone pattern brickwork on the more expensive detached houses were all triggers to the responses which the mythological Elizabethan age evoked (Oliver et al 1981, p.164).

It is this experience, from below, that informs the metaphors of country and city, which provide the vocabulary of gentrification. In this view from below, the country or the

home not only appears to be a retreat from the pressures of city life, but actually is such a retreat ("reification is a social process, not a... category error" (Sayer 1991, p.65).

Nonetheless, the metaphor of country and city advanced herein depends on accepting also a particular class view of the country, on denying in one way or another the exploitative class relations, which have formed the present shape of the country (and also the city). The displacement of the obvious relations of class exploitation in the country leads it to be seen instead as a 'natural', and/or 'timeless' state, a consolation, a reconciliation between 'man' and 'nature', after the unnaturalness of the 'city'. But it is a reconciliation achieved only by acceptance of a myth, in which all labour in the country, and all requirement for labour as well is dispensed with.

Although Williams develops his arguments in the context of English literary history, these arguments are capable of being more widely applied. Williams (1989a) himself makes this claim in his Chapter three, where he considers the extension of the system of 'country and city' to the world at large.

"Country" and "city" are metaphors not just of exploitation, but also of place – "place" in the "city" and "place" in society. It is that dual sense of place which gives rise to the political importance of gentrification as an element in hegemonic practices. One objective of hegemony is to lay claim to (or to bid for) status as a member of the "imaginary community of the nation" (Hall 1988, p.8). Gentrification, as shown below, attempts to create and then lay claim to exclusive membership of the 'imaginary community' of the 'one-nation' – therefore classless – (gentrified) 'neighbourhood' (see Pahl 1989, Williams 1989a). As well as condensing an aspect of a specific conjuncture in urbanization and capitalist accumulation and the hegemonic strategies surrounding

these issues, gentrification is also fulfilling a need (for identity through the construction of a 'place'). In creating a place for themselves, gentrifiers at the same time exclude the original inhabitants from belonging to this place. In fulfilling a need for them, to create meaning in their lives under conditions of modernity, they deny the original inhabitants the ability to fulfill the same need.

## **8.5 HEGEMONY AND THE ROLE OF CLASS RELATIONS IN GENTRIFICATION**

Gentrification, as Bondi posits, is a matter of contrast (1991). However, the contrast she points to is one between the (comparatively) rich and poor. Gentrification has also been defined in terms of its contrast with the suburbs, because of the challenge it offered to theories of urbanization and urban growth (see Chapter six above). The notion that something radically different was occurring in cities with the onset of gentrification is one which is frequently found in gentrification literature, post-industrialism in particular, hence the contrast with the suburbs – gentrification: a new form of housing for the middle class, ergo, a new middle class. As opposed to both Bondi and the post-industrialists, the contrast upheld by gentrification is really between “country” and “city”.

Images of country and city, which dominating hegemonies have represented the development of capitalism back to its subjects, are ways of seeing and not-seeing class-based exploitation. In gentrification, in the country instance, not-seeing the positional struggles involved as ones related to exploitation either of the groups who have been displaced or indeed of the gentrifiers themselves. This is a function which the exchange professionals (estate agents in particular) mediating the process are well served to carry out. As a result of their mediation, the gentrifier never has to deal with the displacement he or she has brought about.



There is, however, another form of displacement in the gentrification process. The metaphor implicit in the term gentrification is not only an attempt to import "country" relations into the city. It also makes a statement about the "city" of hustle and bustle, anonymity and danger:

It is of the utmost importance to analyze, precisely, the mechanism through which the tilt in the crisis of hegemony from consent to coercion is publicly signified... how it wins legitimacy by appearing to be grounded and connected, not simply in myths, fears and speculations, but in the experience of ordinary people... Crucially... it is sustained by what we might call a displacement effect: the connection between the crisis and the way it is appropriated in the social experience of the majority...

The second stage is where the moral panics converge and overlap: where the enemy becomes both many-faceted and "one"; ...the thin end of that larger wedge: the threat to the state, the breakdown of social life itself, the coming of chaos, the onset of anarchy... (Hall and Jacques 1989, p.36-37).

The "city" metaphor, which sustains gentrification, has just such a displacement effect as Hall describes here. All of the moral panics quoted are also and at the same time, characteristics of the "city" of sin and disease, in opposition to which the "country" offers such a consoling vision. In a gentrifying area, the gentrified properties are the ones with the burglar alarms, or video camera entry systems. In cities like Vancouver, Toronto, San Francisco, London and New York, the "reclaiming" of the inner-city by the middle classes for the forces of law and order is one in which the state, both central and local, has long had a stake.

The hypothesis advanced by Ley (1980, 1982 and 1996) that African-American "ghettos" in American cities could be best interpreted in terms of Caesar's Gallic Wars – The inner-city as a frontier outpost – could now be reversed. This hypothesis by Ley is in striking contrast to the imagery of similar inner-city neighbourhoods that Smith depicts in Chapter one of *The New Urban Frontier*. In Ley's interpretation, it is not the African-Americans but the yuppies that, it is intended, should occupy the inner-city frontier

outposts on behalf of the conservatives. Similarly, in local government, the strategies of social engineering pursued by various historical New York City governments described by Smith (1996), selling off public properties to redevelopers for "luxury" accommodation in marginal wards is by now well known. These strategies are partially responsible for the so-called Rudy Giuliani effect, where longstanding Democrat seats in New York City constituencies have fallen to the Republicans in recent years. However, in gentrified Toronto, which has consistently returned Liberal or New Democrat councillors, the gentrifiers took over the apparatuses of the local state, beginning with the end of rent control (Caulfield 1994, Caulfield and Peake 1996, also see Chapter seven above). Restriction and control over mobility helped turn their "space" into their "place"; precisely, however, to control the encroachment of traffic and thus the "city" into their "space". This only serves to demonstrate the way hegemony is "lived", even by those who would, in other areas and on other fronts, define themselves in opposition to it.

If my interpretation of gentrification is correct, then the challenge gentrification apparently poses to theories of urbanization is less strong than the post-industrialists suppose. However, it does add further weight to the need to investigate the origins of gentrification in the development of suburbia. The difference between gentrification and suburbanization is that in the latter, "home" is realized by going to the "country", so far as that is possible (Kunstler 1993, p.40). In the former, "home" is realized by bringing the "country" into the town; more precisely, by bringing a particular (selective) tradition of "country" relations into town (ibid.). Just like suburbanization, gentrification depends on importing the "country" way of not-seeing exploitation outlined by Raymond Williams as a means of coping with the "city". Davis reports how the 1930s suburbanites were described as "pioneers" (Oliver & al. 1981, p.79) in the territories of suburban

"Dunroamin". Neil Smith has consistently criticized the frontier imagery of gentrification (Schaffer and N. Smith 1989), but this imagery appears the result once again of social process, not simply category error, evidence of just such a hegemonic strategy in operation.

The idea of "urban pioneers" is as insulting as the idea of the original pioneers in the West. Now, as then, it implies that no one lives in the areas being gentrified – no one worthy of notice, at least (N. Smith 1982, p.139).

The precise metaphorical location of "the country" may be different in different contexts, but wherever the location, the "city", is common throughout modernity, and, as the "city's other", the "country" plays the same role in each case – that of granting the viewer the privilege of not seeing the exploitation which has created the image thus presented.

The importance of class in gentrification issues is not therefore the supposed differences between the (so-called) middle class and the (so-called) working class, but the experience of class. Marginality is not just a condition of modernity, but of capitalism. As was argued in Chapter five, everyone who can be considered to be part of the proletariat, or in other words, sells their labour for a living, is in some sense living on the margins of culture and civilization. These individuals are partially incorporated and partly excluded from the modes of capitalist production, partially included and partially excluded from the imaginary community of the nation, trying to remain central, but always in danger of being rendered peripheral to the capitalist accumulation process. Hegemony offers consolation for the insecurities it itself helps create. It is in this sense that gentrification helps people interpret their lives in class-specific ways, and frames the demand for gentrified housing in a class-specific form. In this sense also, gentrification is both a product of a dominating hegemony, and helps carry that hegemony forward.

To summarize, the encouragement given to gentrifiers by government (local, provincial or federal) policies reinforces the "country" metaphor that the gentrifiers do not engage directly in the displacement created by gentrification. Instead, gentrification is presented as "reclaiming" the inner-city, and those displaced presented as "marginal". On the other hand, the strategy is not one, which succeeds without conflict. It is in the resistances encountered in the process of carrying that hegemony forward that the impact of gentrification resonates for far wider sections of the population than its quantitative significance would suggest.

The challenge to identity created both by the re-evaluation of a place through the processes of gentrification, and by the labelling process this implies, is not one which is simply accepted by those affected by the change in the sense of that place. Indeed the otherness engendered in the working class inhabitants of the gentrified area by the gentrifiers' views of them as exotic, colourful characters to be found only in the alien "city", itself helps to create the resistance to gentrification.

Inasmuch as gentrification is a qualitatively new process, it engenders its own resistances. However, the themes of "reclamation" and "improvement" are ones with which the potential displacee may also identify, though the medium through which these processes are constituted is not themselves, but the newcomers. In other words, aspirations toward reclamation and improvement of soon-to-be gentrified neighbourhoods may well extend to the potential displacees as well as to the potential gentrifiers. The difference, however, is that the investments required are funnelled not via the displacee, but via the gentrifier.

The term "gentrification" then has stuck, despite a wide range of proffered alternative descriptions. It has stuck in Anglophone countries generally because of certain associations between visions of the "country" and the visions of a certain class, visions associated with a dominant and dominating hegemony, even though the in-movers are not necessarily, nor even usually, from the non-aristocratic rural land owning class (the original gentry). Gentrification is aptly named because it signifies the importation of this version of the "country" back into the "city". This vision of the "city" is one, which obscures rather than ignores the relations of class exploitation that underlie it. Therefore one must not regard the "country" way of seeing as a callus and wilful refusal to accept the consequences of profiting from a particular conjuncture of exploitation relations, though it may be all of these. Instead, like the alternative vision of the "city", it is a feature of the dominant and dominating hegemony, and one, which carries that hegemony forward. Gentrification is a specific instance of the selective tradition that hegemony promotes. It is this reference to the wider themes of this dominating hegemony that gives gentrification its resonance, and causes it to attract so much attention and controversy.

In questions of gentrification, one comes to realize that it is very difficult to not only separate questions of form from questions of content, but also to decide which of the material artefact (i.e. the gentrified house, or its symbolism), and the statements it makes, actually is the form and which the content. This indicates not only the futility, but also the theoretical vulnerability, of attempting to make a separation of the form and content of social production, whether it is of gentrified housing in particular, or of commodities or value in general. Culture produces particular forms of material production, both in the way that production is undertaken, and in the material products

that result, as well as producing particular forms of social relationship and consciousness.

Taking seriously the metaphorical aspects of gentrification also enables one to avoid the sterility of the debates over what to name the phenomenon and whether or not it is a "chaotic concept". As a metaphor in a particular hegemonic discourse, it possesses a "contradictory unity" that notions of a "chaotic concept" in the gentrification literature seem unable to address. It would be unsuccessful, as a metaphor in this hegemonic discourse if that metaphor were simple myth, i.e. had no material referent. However, as seen in Chapter six, gentrification is only part of a continuum of potential improvements to the housing stock. The metaphor of gentrification thus appropriates aspects of a real material process and change in the constraints and opportunities yielded by the housing market. In so doing, those using, benefiting from, and living this metaphor are participating in the constitution of a hegemonic discourse in which real anxieties of identity arising from living in a particular capitalist city in a particular period of crisis in capitalist conjunctural relations are resolved via the creation of new meaning in and for the places in which they live. The potential for creating this meaning is given only by the peculiar circumstances of the impact of a capitalist housing market, on a housing market in a capitalist, class-based society. Gentrification could only occur, in its metaphorical and material unity, in a class society.

However, just as in capitalist societies, these processes of production and reproduction are contradictory unities, so also are the "class-laden" meanings they condense and constitute. The interpretation of gentrification offered in this thesis may be regarded as evidence of the validity of this proposition.

## **8.6 SUMMARY**

Throughout this thesis, I have tried to make sense of scholarly gentrification research and discourse. The discussion and analysis conducted in this thesis has centred on a single paramount research problem, namely, what are the root causes of gentrification? I have asserted throughout this study that it is impossible to provide a single or linear universal theory that explains why the phenomenon of gentrification occurs. Instead, I have argued in Chapter Seven that a multi-causal explanation of gentrification is needed. While a sole antecedent of gentrification cannot be determined, this thesis has articulated that gentrification is the result of a complex interplay between a number of variables that occur when a set of particular preconditions is present.

I have demonstrated that the two dominant explanations of gentrification, Marxism and post-industrialism, are only partially valid as they state that gentrifiers gentrify because they are subject to forces beyond their control due to the rise of a post-industrial society and the reappearance of rapid accumulation of wealth in capitalist urban centres. These two camps falter, as neither is capable of providing sufficient explanations about why gentrification occurs in only some inner-city areas, and not in other areas.

In the following subsections, I will briefly highlight the main research findings that arose from the questions outlined in Chapter 1.3.

### **8.6.1 Why are there so many varying opinions on the definition on gentrification?**

A common problem persists throughout scholarly gentrification research and discourse; namely, what is the definition of gentrification? Marxists and post-industrialists have their own conflicting definitions of gentrification. Post-industrialists, such as Hamnett

(1984), and Marxists, such as Smith, offer five contrasting reasons for the occurrence of gentrification. These contrasting explanations contribute to, and define what gentrification is for each of the two camps. To demonstrate how these camps act as alternatives under both, post-industrialist and Marxist analyses of gentrification, it is useful to compare those factors discussed by Neil Smith (1986, p.22) and Hamnett (1984, p.298):

Table 8.1 Post-Industrialism versus Marxism in Explanations of Gentrification

<b>Post-Industrialism (Hamnett)</b>	<b>Marxism (Smith)</b>
Impact of city size, and changes in the trade-off between preference for space and accessibility	Suburbanization and the emergence of the rent gap
Changes in the demographic and household structure of the population	Deindustrialization of advanced capitalist economies and the growth of white collar employment
Lifestyle and preference shifts	Spatial centralization and simultaneous decentralization of capital
Changes in relative house price inflation and investment	Falling rate of profit and the cyclical movement of capital
Changes in the employment base and occupational structure of certain large cities	Demographic changes and changes in consumption patterns

Where Hamnett refers merely to “changes” and ‘shifts”, typical of the postulates of post-industrialism, Neil Smith’s categorization can be re-arranged into a definite sequence, which it is possible to subsume under the general heading of “centralization and decentralization of capital”. However, that sequence is one, which would not be opposed by the proponents of a post-industrial societal explanation and view (N. Smith and P. Williams 1986, p.56).

Regardless of the five aforementioned explanations of gentrification, both camps use the word “class” when describing aspects and processes of gentrification. The problem



with the word "class", however, is that it is a loaded word, which carries with it many varying connotations and meanings. Although it is important to note the complicated nature of using the word "class", it is nonetheless almost unavoidable in most definitions of gentrification. In this thesis, the use of the word "class" has been deliberately avoided in the definition of gentrification. Nonetheless, it is clearly implied.

This thesis has argued that the very way in which think about how gentrification is conducted and understood is of interest in exploring the conditions of contemporary society, whether we are able to gentrify or not. As a phenomenon of modern culture, gentrification (or gentrifiers) cannot be explained or understood in isolation from that culture; nor can it be defined in opposition to it, as the post-modern other of contemporary society (see Shields 1990, p. 276). This partly explains why it is difficult to establish a universal definition of gentrification.

#### **8.6.2 Why do some inner-city areas become gentrified while others do not?**

There is no simple or universal answer to this question. Time and time again, participants in the gentrification debate have failed to provide irrefutable explanations explaining why only some inner-city properties or neighbourhoods become gentrified and others do not. Gentrification researchers, such as Hamnett, have complicated the gentrification debate by asking why some inner cities become gentrified and others do not? If neighbourhood lifecycle is the dominant paradigm in urban theory, why are not all neighbourhoods which have been constructed at a similar time, and which are likely at a roughly similar distance from the city, at the same stage of the urban lifecycle? Similarly, if we do now live in post-industrial society with all the wider social changes it invokes, it has to be asked why are all inner-city properties not gentrified, instead of only

some? The reasons posited for the existence of gentrification in one part of the city cannot reasonably be claimed not to exist in other similar parts.

In order to avoid becoming encumbered by this complication and confusion in the gentrification debate, both theoretical camps have become reliant upon broad based over-explanations of agency. The argument that gentrification should be seen in the context of wider social changes is of course undeniable, so also is the argument that it should be seen in the context of the previous history of the neighbourhoods in which it occurs. Consideration of how gentrification is theorized must inevitably be predicated on theories of wider social change, but change obviously takes place over time, and through people altering the conditions in which they find themselves. However, studies of the gentrification process have tended to rely on one of two explanatory devices. The first is a model of an historical sequence, which loses its historical character by being presented in a cyclical, inevitable form. The second is a hypothesis of social change, which in fact contains no historical process at all. Consequently, there is no real sense of historical time in these explanations, thus no real sense of historical change.

Burgess argued that all neighbourhoods are subject to a derived lifecycle (1967). His neighbourhood lifecycle employs a concept of cyclical time, whereby stage one is followed by stage two and so on, but eventually stage one returns. Post-industrialism employs epochal time and thus divides history into a simple before and after, with the split depending on an idealist definition of the significant moment and disregards questions of development before or after (Williams 1977). It shares this outlook with the neoclassical economic orientation of some. In both cases, the gentrified properties' previous history is not considered.

Given the lack of a truly historical perspective, it is hardly surprising that in both lifecycle and post-industrial accounts, the role of agency is minimal compared to the role of structure. Agency is the process by which both agents and structures are produced and reproduced in historical time. The inevitability and predictability of gentrification in both types of account makes agency redundant as an explanatory variable in gentrification studies. Although the post-industrial thesis posits a new middle class whose emergence and existence is evidenced in the gentrification process, the emergence of this new class seems from examination of this literature to have a peculiarly painless process. The only suggestion that gentrifiers might face difficulties comes in Rose's discussion of "marginal gentrifiers" (Rose 1984). Even this could be subsumed under the general heading of difficulties faced by first time buyers.

It is the base-superstructure mode of analysis, which is responsible for these failings. Although the human rights proponent claims to be giving an account of gentrification which privileges agency above structure, as does the non-Smithian left, their accounts are in fact as heavily structuralist as those they mean to criticize. Consequently, the grounds for claiming a consensus in the approach to gentrification are spurious. There is no blending of structure and agency in this consensus. Instead, what is left is a compendium of different structuralist explanations, all which are equally unacceptable. On all sides, there is the presumption that the question of agency has been addressed when, as this thesis has demonstrated, any possibility of the ability to do otherwise has in fact been completely ruled out.

### **8.6.3 Is gentrification a phenomenon of modernity?**

Gentrification is a quintessential product of modernity. I have argued that explanations of gentrification are flawed since they attempt to use gentrification merely as a starting point for reflections on modern society. This thesis reverses the order of exposition, beginning with modernity and then placing gentrification in this context so defined. Moreover, I argue that gentrification research should focus on modernity and the social context in which gentrification occurs within it.

One of the reasons that gentrification is a phenomenon of modernity is that housing plays a paramount role. More specifically, the gentrification debate has concentrated on the qualities that make owner occupation a privileged form of housing tenure, and to a lesser degree on the qualities of housing itself. In order to understand the significance of housing in defining status in conditions of modernity, this thesis has outlined Park's dialectic as a sociology of consciousness, then outlined its complementarities with Marxism by utilizing Raymond Williams' arguments that human ecology should be the basis of socialist practices. This has then been followed by an account of the role of space and spatial relations in dialectic of socialization and social change in modern life. Gentrification on this account will have significant effects on the constitution of status, not class. Furthermore, far from being post-modern, it will be shown that gentrification is a quintessentially a product of modernity. This proves once more that few of the post-industrialist explanations of gentrification. However, simply to say that gentrification is a product of modernity is not enough. Modernity provides the context only, within which gentrifiers exhibit their ability to gentrify because they can.

Mobility, in the sense in which Williams describes it, may be taken as the defining characteristic of modernity. The marginal man is the characteristic personality of this

modernity. For Williams, it is the unwilled (and unwilling) separation of areas of experience which mobility brings that is the root cause of marginality. However, mobility, in the sense in which Park describes it, is a trans-historical characteristic of human beings, much as labour is for Marx. According to Marx, it is the conditions under which the labour process is conducted, which constitute a historically unique event. It is the buying and selling of labour power that makes capitalism historically unique. We can think of mobility as a trans-historical characteristic of human beings experienced in specific and historically unique ways.

In this respect, I have argued that much of what Park has to say on the impact of mobility on consciousness and socialization is implicitly an analysis of the impact of modernity on consciousness. Modernity may be defined as the subjective experience of capitalism, including, but not restricted to, the immediate experience of the labour process. Both Park and Williams see mobility as the hallmark of that experience. Neither, however, sees mobility as a cause. Instead, what "underpins the transitory, fleeting and contingent experience so many have seen as the hallmark of the modern condition" is the alienation peculiar to capitalist society (Sayer 1991, p.88). Williams is explicit on this point, while Park's theory of alienation is expressed in much more personal terms.

The subjectivity, and mobility, of the modern individual apparently tends therefore to the utter abolition of place. However, this subjectivity of this modern and mobile individual also results from living on the margins of culture and civilization. As I have argued, this tension between the apparent abolition of place and the continuing pressures to invest in places with meaning as a consequence of the very same processes of socialization, is

an essential component of the "profoundly contradictory" experience of modernity, where "individuals are perpetually given between "personal" experiences and public identifications, differences which cannot be represented, and representations which deny difference" (Sayer 1991, p.89).

#### **8.6.4 Why should quantitative explanations of the causes of gentrification be considered inadequate?**

In contrast to the image portrayed in Marxist and post-industrial camps within the gentrification debate, there are actually very low numbers of properties actually or potentially affected by gentrification. The arguments advanced by either camp would indicate that there should be wide-spread gentrification.

The Marxists believe that all or most properties that have a low value relative to its potential value will result in the process of gentrification. As well, they also argue that gentrification happens due to the shifts in the global financial market place from equities to properties. However, there are many examples of properties throughout North America and Europe, where parking lots, vacant or underutilized buildings have continued to avoid gentrification. Likewise, there are cities and neighbourhoods that never receive new capital despite monetary shifts towards property investment.

The post-industrialists contend that there is a large and economically robust new middle-class that is capable of being the agent for large-scale gentrification. However, the pattern of gentrification is grossly inconsistent and quantitatively insignificant from neighbourhood to neighbourhood and conversely from city to city.

One could thus assert that both of these camps fail in their explanations of gentrification, as they are incapable of explaining the absence of gentrification from the inner-city

areas in which it does not occur. Moreover, the arguments cited in both camps are couched in such general terms that they could apply to all members of the middle classes or to every inner-city area, not just those associated with gentrification. Therefore, these arguments for the causes of gentrification, in fact, over-estimate its quantitative significance.

#### **8.6.5 What are the problems associated with Marxist explanations of gentrification?**

This thesis has outlined many of the problems that exist in Marxist explanations of gentrification. First and foremost, are the inevitable questions that arise about Smith's rent gap theory, which forms the basis of most Marxist gentrification research. Smith's rent gap theory implies that gentrification is a cyclical process. Through gentrification, the value of the built property is periodically brought back into line with its correct value. What this argument overlooks however, is that while land value has risen compared to the value of the property, traditionally this has led, not to gentrification, but to further subdivision of the property. Neil Smith's rent gap argument makes the mistake of assuming that gentrification occurs because the ground rent is high, rather than explaining the height of the rent by the fact that gentrification can or does occur because of numerous other conditions.

Other conditions also need to be met, the first, already noted in this thesis, is for there to be residential segregation by status, and for residential segregation to carry the marks of status. The second is the private ownership of property and investment in construction carried out for profit (i.e. speculation) rather than to meet a need. Third, there must be either private or public financing of housing stock available to implement or carry out improvements. These contingencies together constitute what Ball (1985

and 1987) calls "structures of provision". This concept is particularly useful since it emphasizes the fact that buildings are not simply a "reflection" of demand, but an interpretation of that demand by speculative builders operating under specific economic conditions. These were, and still are, the exploitation of rising land values rather than labour in the production process, the methods of financing speculative building, and the tenures under which the properties were occupied.

Finally, there must exist different income levels among house owners, otherwise there would be no displacement. All of these conditions are historically contingent, which in itself argues against the circumstances which helped create gentrification ever occurring again.

Within the context of these capitalist structures of provision of housing, a second set of contingencies helps determine whether gentrification will occur. For example, gentrification cannot occur without gentrifiable property, e.g. housing stock in need of "home improvements". It does not of itself imply that these improvements, if carried out, will be accompanied by a change of occupation. This will only occur if the costs of improvement are so great that mortgage finance institutions decide that they can only be mediated through a new occupier with a substantially higher income than the former. The question as to what is "substantial" and what is not is impossible to say. There is no real boundary between displacement and gentrification. The one fades into the other.

In conclusion, criticisms of Marxist positions within the gentrification debate are rooted in the fact that they stress the importance of production at the expense of consumption. In addition, rent gap theory does not tell us enough, or anything, about the gentrifiers.



This has been a popular angle of attack as Hamnett argued, "although the gentrification process does involve capital flows, it also involves people, and this is the Achilles heel of Smith's supply side thesis" (Hamnett 1991, p.180). Ian Munt's research in Battersea formed the basis of his lament over Smith's lack of attention to demand; he objected to Smith's apparent implication that "individuals respond passively to capital movements" (Munt 1987, p.1177). Munt's argument stemmed from the perception that gentrification cannot take place without the existence of a "pool of gentrifiers", or consumers who have a desire to live in the inner-city. Post-industrialists argue that people have individual preferences regarding their place of residence, and Marxist analyses such as Smith's seemed to eschew this concept in favour of an approach which emphasised the centrality of capital fluctuations within urban areas.

The problems inherent in the application of rent-gap theory can be found in empirical research. It is a theory, which does not explain gentrification in younger cities with a less industrial past, and due to the country in which it was formulated (the United States) perhaps it is "applicable only to gentrification led by developers who rehabilitate completely abandoned neighbourhoods" (Munt 1987, p.1177). David Ley, perhaps the chief proponent of consumption-side explanations, put this in harsher terms - "almost ten years after its first presentation it has still not been made empirically accountable" (Ley 1987, p.466). Many critics observed that gentrification is not simply the renovation of an abandoned housing stock; new residential developments are very much a part of a gentrified landscape, and may involve very different prerequisites to the rent-gap. Another objection came from several Canadian and European scholars, for whom the perils of the rent gap were alien, as cities such as Vancouver, Toronto, London, Paris, Amsterdam and Stockholm had never experienced disinvestments on the scale of

American cities. In short, the rent-gap failed to explain why gentrification occurred in some cities, and not in others.

#### **8.6.6 What are the problems associated with post-industrialist explanations of gentrification?**

The problem with post-industrialism is that there is no theoretical or evidential support to substantiate its claim that there is a new, and gentrifying middle class. There is no evidence, from analysis of the history of modernism and post-modernism, of a change in social conditions large enough to facilitate all of the gentrification that has occurred in Europe and North America. Although shown to be problematic, arguments for post-industrialization as an explanation for gentrification have maintained their currency in the gentrification debate because of their common philosophical basis with the "production of gentrifiers" approach; namely a concern for the status of gentrifiers as active agents. This concern manifested itself in the realist critique of neighbourhood lifecycle with its conclusions that gentrification is a chaotic concept. In other words, the problem with post-industrialist explanations of gentrification is that they confuse the production of gentrifiers, with an analysis of chaotic conception, rather than base-superstructure.

#### **8.6.7 Are class distinctions needed or necessary to explain gentrifier behaviour in the gentrification process?**

Gentrification is not about class constitution, but about identity and status under conditions of modernity. It cannot be about class as we are all mostly members of the proletariat. I argue that the experience of the marginal man stands for the experience of everybody living under conditions of modernity, confirming Shield's argument that "Marginality is a central theme in Western culture and thought" (1990, p.276).

Marginality is a characteristic condition of modernity. Chapter 4.5 argued that Marx's

limited account of the experience of everyday life outside of the immediate context of capitalist production ought not to be supplemented by the unnecessary expansion of the categories of class into areas outside of that context. However, by incorporating Marx's account of the moulding of consciousness in that context into an account of the formation of consciousness across "a whole way of life" (R. Williams 1977, p.63). Given that the conditions (marginal and proletarian) characterize the daily experience of most of us, Park's account of the development of the consciousness of the marginal man would appear to fill that gap.

Conditions of modernity render it necessary to actively create a sense of place. In the anonymous city, houses, in their role as homes, represent the stable moment of Park's "mobility, stability, consciousness" triad, and this gives effect to housing in constituting a "sense of place". Issues of status and identity would not have any relevance to gentrification; if housing in general (including gentrified housing) did not itself have an important role in the construction of identity. Beginning with the personal should not implicitly mean neglecting questions of class and class-consciousness. However, as Blanchard (1985) argues, quite correctly, an understanding of class-consciousness can only begin from an understanding of individual consciousness. Personal identity under conditions of modernity is, as Sayer (1991) makes clear, founded in class-based exploitation. In this thesis, I have explored how a sense of place is specifically affected, not just by the experience of modernity generally, but also by the specific experience of class society. In particular, this sense of place is constructed within the context of an ongoing hegemony, which seeks to overcome the class contradictions, which lie at the heart of the capitalist mode of production. It is the way in which the constitution of

houses as "places" is articulated within a particular hegemonic project that class relations enter gentrification.

Housing, as a use-value, is an extension of the individual-in-society, and as such, it is also a status symbol, as indeed are all items of consumption in modern capitalist society. However, the usefulness of use values depends on the state of social development, because as extensions of the individual-in-society, they are also extensions of an individual's status. The modernity of modern society makes housing a status symbol, and owner-occupied housing in particular a prized status symbol. However, housing's role in establishing status does not explain the basis of the conflicts that arise over gentrification, nor does it explain why even the participants in these conflicts should represent these as class struggle.

What is peculiarly modern about a modern city, which puts yet further difficulties in the way of the articulation of what Sayer calls the "collectiveness of disadvantage, the sociality of subordination" (1991, p.89) is residential segregation, whether by function, by race or ethnicity, or by class or status. Not only is residential segregation an aspect of modernity, but also without residential segregation, gentrification could not occur, or more precisely, could not be experienced in the way in which it gives its (so-called) class character. The effect of residential segregation is to extend the status-bound up in the consumption of the use-value of housing to a whole area, to a particular place.

The language in which the conflicts over gentrification are expressed is the language of status, but I argue it is actually the language of class. In conditions of modernity class is the form in which our sociality is represented, and which, ironically, obscures the actual class basis of that experience; what Sayer calls the split between the private and the

class individual, and what Park and Williams call the situation of the marginal man. Sayer suggests that it is this situation, not class, which is "most socially consequential in capitalism" (Sayer 1991 p90-91). Consciousness is not simply moulded by relation to economic structure, as the SCA model would have us believe. It is rather the interaction between the economic and non-economic activities of individuals-in-society in pursuit of their daily goals; an interaction experienced as a constant tension between these activities, which both moulds and creates individual and class-consciousness in capitalist society - the consciousness of the marginal man and of the proletariat both.

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## INTERNET WEBSITES USED

Dr. Murphy. Department of Anthropology, College of Arts and Sciences, The University of Alabama. [www.as.ua.edu/ant/Faculty/murphy/cultmat.htm](http://www.as.ua.edu/ant/Faculty/murphy/cultmat.htm)

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**APPENDIX**

# A New Beginning?: Making Sense of the Gentrification Debate

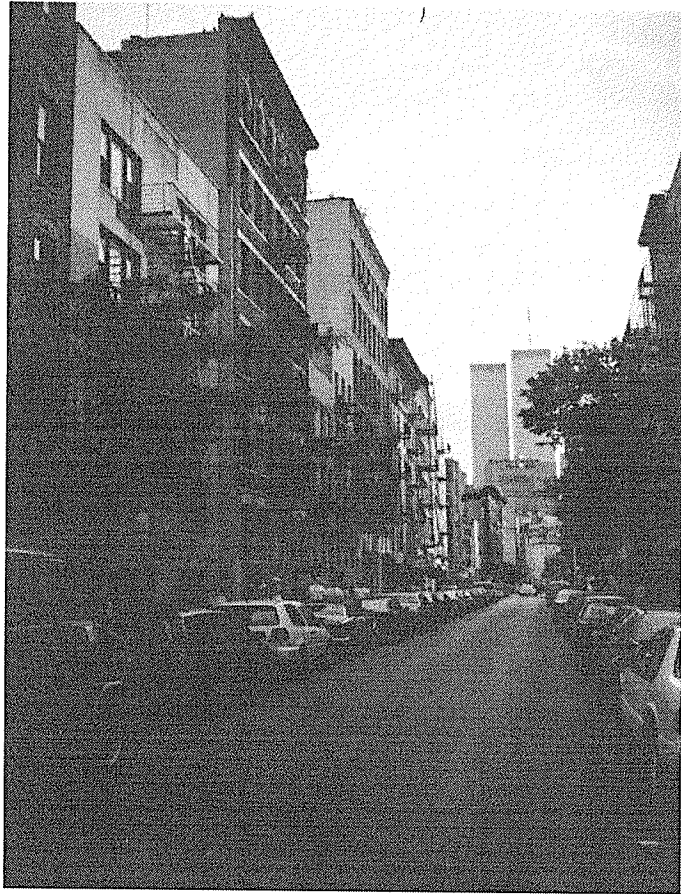
Simon O'Byrne, BA  
Master of City Planning Candidate  
August 18, 2003

# Introduction

1. Research Questions
2. Scope and Objectives
3. Research Methodology
4. Analysis and Findings
5. Conclusions
6. Areas for Further Research



# Definition of Gentrification



Gentrification is applied to the process whereby more affluent and upwardly mobile individuals move into poorer and more marginalized areas in the inner-city, whether they be residential areas, old warehouses or industrial districts. This socio-economic shift within an inner-city district or neighbourhood usually often leads to a change in the character of the affected area and the displacement of many of the original pre-gentrification occupants.

# Research Questions

- Why are there so many varying opinions of the definition of gentrification?
- Why do some inner-city areas become gentrified and others do not?
- Is gentrification a phenomenon of modernity?
- Why should quantitative explanations of the causes of gentrification be considered inadequate?

# Further Research Questions

- What are the problems associated with Marxist explanations of gentrification?
- What are the problems associated with post-industrialist explanations of gentrification?
- Are class distinctions needed or necessary to explain gentrifier's behaviour in the gentrification process?

# Scope and Objectives



- Conduct a literary survey of scholarly gentrification research and discourse
- Review arguments and problems associated with Marxist and Post-Industrialist (Consumptionist) Camps

# Scope and Objectives



- Deconstruct linear and universal explanations of gentrification
- Provide rationale as to why a multi-causal explanation of gentrification is needed

# Research Methodology



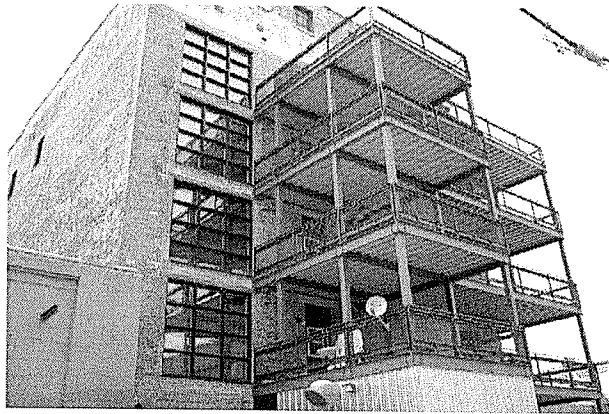
- Literature review
- Overview of main academic contributors to gentrification debate
- Focus on only European and North American scholars
- Focus on journal articles and books that pertain to one of the two main theoretical camps
- Apply both a cultural materialist and Marxist analysis to gentrification literature

# Research Methodology

## Production Versus Consumption in Explanations of Gentrification

	<b>Neighbourhood Lifecycle or Production Based Camp</b>	<b>Postindustrialism or Consumption Based Camp</b>
<b>Main Academic Contributors</b>	Neil Smith, Eric Clark, Raymond Williams and Peter Williams	David Ley, Robert Beauregard, Chris Hamnett, Liz Bondi, Damaris Rose, Tim Butler, Loretta Lees and Jon Caulfield
<b>Theoretical Explanation of Gentrification</b>	Rent Gap	Human Agency
<b>Theoretical Influences</b>	Marxism; Geographies of Class Relations and Class Struggles; and Radical Social Theory	Weberian Liberal Humanism; Human Geography's Cultural Analysis; Role of Human Agency over Economic Structure; and Post-Industrial Urbanization
<b>Agents of Gentrification</b>	Capitalists	New Middle Class

# Analysis and Findings





## Why are there so many varying opinions of the definition of gentrification?



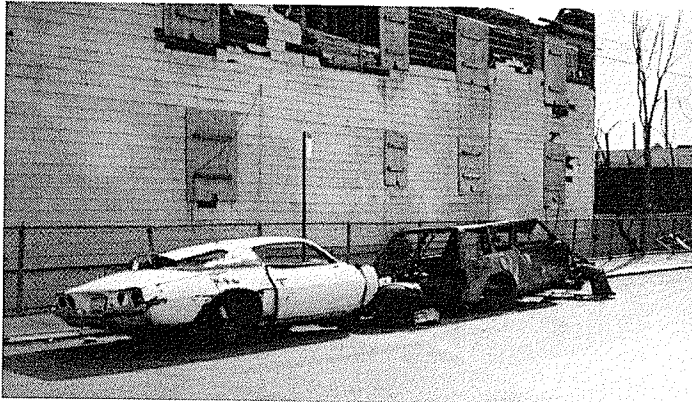
- Most definitions typically use the word “class” when describing aspects and processes of gentrification
- Post-industrialism locates gentrification in the superstructure and Marxism places gentrification in the base

# Why are there so many varying opinions of the definition of gentrification?

## Post-Industrialism versus Marxism in Explanations of Gentrification

<b>Post-Industrialism (Hamnett)</b>	<b>Marxism (Smith)</b>
Impact of city size, and changes in the trade-off between preference for space and accessibility	Suburbanization and the emergence of the rent gap
Changes in the demographic and household structure of the population	Deindustrialization of advanced capitalist economies and the growth of white collar employment
Lifestyle and preference shifts	Spatial centralization and simultaneous decentralization of capital
Demographic changes and changes in consumption patterns	Falling rate of profit and the cyclical movement of capital
Changes in the employment base and occupational structure of certain large cities	Changes in relative house price inflation and investment

## Why do some inner-city areas become gentrified and others do not?



- There is no simple or universal answer to this question
- Both camps argue for a historical perspective
- Marxism - Neighbourhood lifecycle employs a concept of cyclical time
- Post-industrialism - Social Change through epochal time

## Is gentrification a phenomenon of modernity?



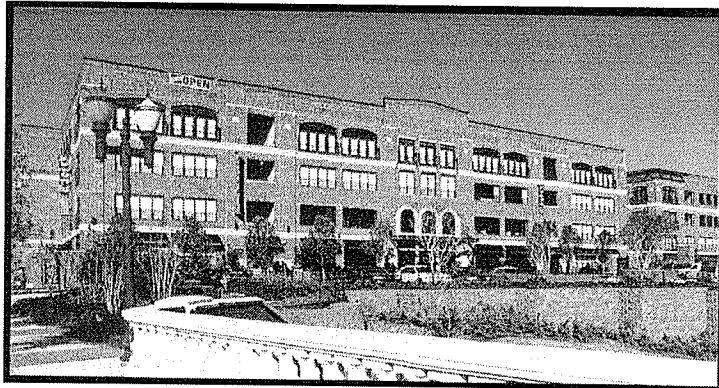
- Yes, because gentrification is a quintessential product of modernity
- Housing defines status in conditions of modernity
- Home owner occupation is a privileged form of housing tenure unique to modernity
- Large scale socio-economic mobility is a defining characteristic of modernity
- Modernity may be defined as the subjective (conscious) experience of capitalism
- Robert Park - We are all mostly marginal people who encapsulate the problems of modernity, i.e. proletariats who both participate and are excluded from capitalist society

## Is gentrification a phenomenon of modernity?



- Subjectivity, socialization and mobility of the modern individual erodes the concept of place
- Contradiction in modernity - Abolition of place and the continuing pressures to invest in places with meaning as a consequence of process of socialization
- “individuals are perpetually given between “personal” experiences and public identifications, differences which cannot be represented, and representations which deny difference” - Sayer 1991

## Why should quantitative explanations of the causes of gentrification be considered inadequate?



- There are actually very low numbers of properties actually or potentially affected by gentrification
- Both Marxist and post-industrial camps arguments suggest broad based gentrification
- Marxists believe that properties with a low value relative to potential value will result in the process of gentrification
- Post-industrialists contend that there is a large and economically robust new middle-class, which acts as an agent for gentrification
- They use such general terms and theories that could apply to most middle class, or to most inner-city areas

# What are the problems associated with Marxist explanations of gentrification?



Problems with rent gap theory:

- While land values may rise compared to the value of a property, this sometimes leads to subdivision of the property instead of gentrification
- Theory falsely assumes that gentrification occurs because the ground rent is high, rather than explaining the height of the rent by the fact that gentrification can or does occur because of numerous other conditions
- Rent gap theory does not tell us enough, or anything, about gentrifiers (e.g. women, wealthy immigrants, etc.)

# What are the problems associated with Marxist explanations of gentrification?



- Marxism's base-superstructure metaphor fails to account for demographic, cultural, environmental and technological changes and differences - thus, the inability to explain why some areas gentrify and others do not
- This metaphor also inhibits the role of agency within social phenomena, as historical materialism contends that social life stems from the material economic base-superstructure

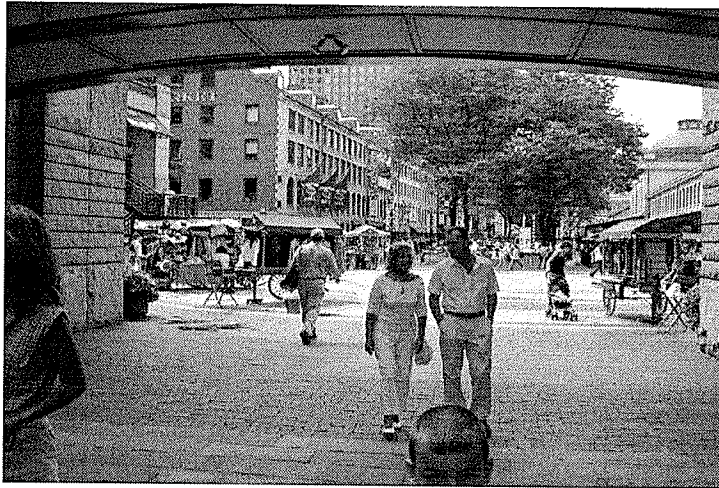


## What are the problems associated with Marxist explanations of gentrification?



- Marxist camp stress production at the expense of consumption, i.e. demand
- Gentrification cannot take place without a “pool of gentrifiers” who desire to live in the inner-city
- Does not explain gentrification in younger cities with a less industrial past
- No substantiating empirical research
- Does not explain why gentrification occurs in some cities, and not in others

## What are the problems associated with post-industrialist explanations of gentrification?



- There is no theoretical or evidential support to substantiate the claim that there is a large gentrifying new middle class
- Fails to account for affects of globalization (e.g. global capital investments)
- Does not recognize gentrification as a chaotic concept
- Fails to account for direct and indirect government initiatives that cause gentrification

## What are the problems associated with post-industrialist explanations of gentrification?



- Fails to examine or recognize the preconditions immediately prior to gentrification
- Incorrectly labels gentrifiers as a new middle “class”, rather than as a status group
- Use of synecdochical qualities to explain gentrification
- Fails to recognize the role that suburban development had on creating gentrifiable properties - residential social segregation by status

## Are class distinctions needed or necessary to explain gentrifier's behaviour in the gentrification process?



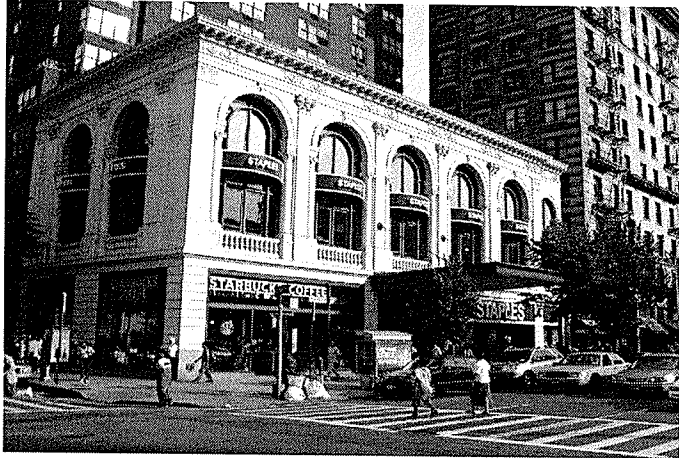
- Gentrification is not necessarily about class constitution, but about identity and status under conditions of modernity
- Modern society is mostly made up of members of the proletariat - which most of us belong to as most individuals are forced to work for money
- Class-consciousness can only begin from an understanding of individual consciousness
- Housing, as a sense of place, is tied into experiences of class society
- However, housing, as a use-value, is also an extension of the individual-in-society

## Are class distinctions needed or necessary to explain gentrifier's behaviour in the gentrification process?



- Within a modern capitalist society all items of consumption, such as housing, are status symbols
- Owner-occupied housing is a particularly prized status symbol
- Residential segregation is to extend the status-bound up in the consumption of the use-value of housing to a whole area, to a particular place
- The individual experience of gentrification is expressed through the language of status

## Are class distinctions needed or necessary to explain gentrifier's behaviour in the gentrification process?



- However, class is the form in which our sociality is represented and understood, i.e. how we see it as a group/society
- Class distinctions direct attention away from studying the specifics of individual gentrifier's actions
- Additionally, class distinction falsely assume that gentrification can be used as a metaphor by which a part of society is used to represent the whole of modern society

# Conclusions

- Gentrifiers gentrify because they *can*, and not because they *must*
- Gentrification is a transient, not a cyclical phenomenon
- Monolithic and linear explanations and theories of gentrification should be replaced by complex multi-causational explanations that blend and utilize several different theories
- Gentrification should only be viewed as a complex process that occurs as a result of a multitude of reasons (e.g. aesthetics, demographics, economics, post-industrialism, post-modern economy, location, government, transportation, environmental, spiritual and philosophical, historical, policing and cultural capital)

# Areas for Further Research

- Empirical research needs to be done, which will substantiate multi-causational explanation of gentrification
- Both the Marxist and post-industrial camps need to blend their theories and accept the merits inherent in the other's argument - researchers need to employ a cultural materialist perspective, while simultaneously embracing an economic orientation
- Marxists must use consumption-based ideas to fill the gaps in their theories
- Post-industrials must incorporate production-based ideas



# Areas for Further Research

Gentrification researchers must do the following:

- Try to understand the formation of consciousness of gentrifiers so that they can define and articulate the ways that agency is exhibited
- Try to think of gentrification not just in terms of class constitution, but in terms of identity and status under conditions of modernity
- Avoid separating individuals from society, subjectivity and sociality, and culture and material production in modern life