North American gentrification? Revanchist and emancipatory perspectives explored

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Abstract. By offering a response to recent calls for a 'geography of gentrification', the author attempts to move on from the intractable theoretical divisions and overgeneralizations that continue to pervade the gentrification literature. The research described in this paper takes the form of a comparative assessment of the gentrifying neighbourhoods of South Parkdale, Toronto, Canada, and Lower Park Slope, New York City, USA. A central part of this research has been an engagement with two contrasting academic discourses on gentrification, the 'emancipatory city' (a Canadian construct) and the 'revanchist city' (a US construct), to examine how gentrification may or may not have changed since these discourses were produced and articulated. The author combines narratives from in-depth interviews (with a particular focus on displaced tenants) with supplementary data from secondary sources and demonstrates that gentrification is neither emancipatory nor revanchist in either case. This has important implications for how gentrification is understood and evaluated in Canada and the USA. Although one can see crucial broad similarities both in the causes and in the effects of gentrification in each neighbourhood (which would appear to endorse casual references to 'North American gentrification'), the process is also differentiated according to contextual factors, and the nuances of the gentrification process are illuminated and clarified by international comparison. In sum, the author points to the need to exercise caution in referring to 'North American gentrification', especially as a geography of gentrification is only in its infancy.

Introduction

By the early 1990s disagreement over the causes and significance of gentrification had reached boiling point (for example, Hamnett, 1991; 1992; Smith, 1992). Helpful interjections from Clark (1992) and Lees (1994a) tried to reconcile theoretical divisions with the notion of complementarity, whereby "comparing and informing one set of ideas with another", as Lees put it (1994a, page 139), would advance our understanding of the process. However, in a paper that has quickly become required reading for gentrification researchers, Wyly and Hammel (1999, page 718) observe that, "despite attempts to forge a new synthesis, much of the gentrification literature remains balkanised along lines of debate established a generation ago." Bondi was so troubled by the resilience of earlier debates (such as economics versus culture, property supply versus consumer demand, structural Marxism versus liberal humanism) that she pondered whether a disintegration of gentrification research "might actually be a sign of good health" (1999, page 255).

There are indeed signs that gentrification discourse is locked within the zeitgeist of the 1980s. Take, for example, a recent essay by Hamnett, published in a text intended as an academic guide to contemporary urban issues. After reviewing some recent work, his conclusion could have been written in the 1980s:

"I am dubious of the extent to which the rent gap is a principal driver of this process. There is no doubt that property prices in potentially gentrifiable areas are relatively low and that this is, or was, one of the key attractions for gentrifiers, but it is not a sufficient explanation" (2000, page 337).

Badcock (2001, page 1561) is also in concert with earlier debates:

"It is impossible to escape the structuralist and functionalist overtones of the rent-gap hypothesis... . Apart from this, an exclusive focus upon the production of gentrifiers runs the risk of missing other crucial aspects of inner-city restructuring, tenurial transformation and class changeover".

Although the debates of earlier years were extremely important, divisions between leading theorists were overdrawn. For example, a rehashing of the Smith (economics) versus Ley (culture) debate is rarely far from recent contributions to gentrification, yet it is preposterous to suggest that Ley (1996) ignored the economy in his comprehensive account of the emergence of a new middle class in the postindustrial city, and it is simply wrong to argue that Smith (1996) ignored the impact of cultural factors in his influential work on the emergence of the 'revanchist' city. As Ley has argued in a recent paper:

"the interdigitation of economic and cultural competencies and pursuits in the gentrification field makes any statement of mono-causality questionable. It is not a matter of whether economic or cultural arguments prevail, but rather how they work together to produce gentrification as an outcome" (2003, pages 2541–2542).

Like Ley, I advocate a move away from gentrification research that falls into old ideological and explanatory divisions, and do so by following a research direction that has been sidelined by the resilience of earlier debates—the 'geography of gentrification'. Although geographers are the dominant academic voice in the study of gentrification, only recently have they begun to recognize the need to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its geography (Lees, 2000; Ley, 1996; Slater, 2002). Intriguingly, it is two sociologists, Butler and Robson, who have put forward the strongest argument yet for a geography of gentrification:

"Gentrification... cannot in any sense be considered to be a unitary phenomenon, but needs to be examined in each case according to its own logic and outcomes" (2001, page 2160).

Understanding the geography of gentrification requires an effort to examine the contextual specificities of the gentrification process whilst retaining a sensitivity to more general factors that constitute the engine behind the process. In a North American context, two very different discourses have emerged from the study of gentrification in Canada and the United States, and a research agenda that seeks to understand the geography of gentrification must be sensitive to these discourses to gain an historical grasp of the process in different national contexts and a grasp of the different perspectives that emerged from researching it (see Slater, 2002). In the next section I briefly summarize these discourses before setting out the two aims of the paper.

Discourses of gentrification from the United States and Canada

The *revanchist city discourse*, a negative construct arising predominantly from the study of gentrification in US cities, especially New York City, is almost the exact opposite of the *emancipatory city discourse,* a positive construct that has emerged in large measure from the study of gentrification in Canadian cities such as Toronto and Vancouver. The notion of revanchist (revengeful) gentrification comes from Smith, who viewed the late 1980s gentrification in New York as the spatial manifestation of "a race/class/gender terror felt by middle- and ruling-class whites" (1996, page 211) who believed that the city had been stolen from them by the working class, especially by minority and immigrant groups. For Smith gentrification is an attempt to retake the city from the working class. As he pointed out in later works (Smith, 1998; 1999) neoliberal revanchism in the 1990s under Mayor Giuliani filled the vacuum left by the failure of 1980s liberal urban policy in New York City and was consolidated by blaming the failures of

earlier liberal policy on the disadvantaged populations such policy was supposed to assist. By clearing the streets of 'undesirable' elements with the use of 'zero-tolerance' policing, Giuliani prepared entire neighbourhoods for gentrification. As the city's economy recovered in the 1990s, the crime rate dropped, and public spaces were privatized and commodified, New York City became an arena for lavish middle-class consumption—yet the people who had to be swept away and/or incarcerated to allow this to happen were ignored under the fanfare of success attributed to Giuliani and his followers.

Smith is not alone in his vilification of gentrification. Although 'revanchism' per se may not be the explanatory framework in other work, *themes* of revenge and loss are seemingly omnipresent in the literature on US gentrification. Take Abu-Lughod (1994, page 340) on the East Village in New York:

"it is ... easier for government to destroy community than to nurture this intangible element of the human spirit. To some extent, while the developers and most particularly, the long arm of the law of the City of New York that aided and abetted them, failed to convert this portion of an old quarter into a paradise for yuppies, they succeeded, at least for the time being, in killing much of the precious spirit of the neighborhood. The funereal pall that in 1991 hung over the community is the legacy of their efforts."

A further portrayal of revengeful gentrification comes from Robinson (1995) in his account of grass-roots resistance to the gentrification of San Francisco's Tenderloin district. Robinson is quick to attack the middle classes and their institutions:

"A variety of upscale developments threatened the Tenderloin ... . A danger to current neighborhood character arises when such developments show success and inspire even greater numbers of new developments. This process could ultimately lead to a middle- and upper-class consolidation in the Tenderloin's border areas—a consolidation that could be a starting point for further upscale invasions" (1995, page 489).

Regarding Chicago, Betancur (2002) presents an account of the erosion of working-class Puerto Rican community life caused by the gentrification of the West Town neighbourhood. Arson, abandonment, displacement, class conflict and, 'speculation and abuse' are woven into a mournful tale of loss and, above all, "the bitterness of the process and the open hostility/racism of gentrifiers and their organizations toward Puerto Ricans" (page 802). Gentrification as brutal revenge forms the undercurrent of this work:

"The ethnic enclaves that managed to hold on through the years are also falling prey to gentrification—especially as their now senior population dies. As gentrification advances, the community continues resisting the ever-stronger blows coming from the forces of gentrification" (page 805).

All this could not be in greater contrast to the emancipatory discourse on gentrification emerging from Canadian city research. The work of Caulfield (1989; 1994) on Toronto's gentrification explains the process as a very different kind of middle-class reaction; not against the working class, but against the repressive institutions of suburban life. Caulfield viewed gentrification as a critical response to the city's postwar modernist development and growth boosterism in what became known as the 'reform' era of the 1970s (Caulfield, 1988). The gentrifiers of Toronto were seen to be breaking free from "a routine of placeless space and monofunctional instrumentality" (Caulfield, 1989, pages 624 – 625) that defined the 1960s. As Lees (2000, page 393) pointed out, Caulfield's focus was perhaps less on critical social practice and more on "emancipatory social practice". Caulfield appeared optimistic about gentrification—in this Canadian context, it was a process that liberated the middle classes, united different people in the central city, and created opportunities for social interaction and tolerance.

Caulfield's work was influenced by the long-term investigations of Canadian central-city 'embourgeoisement' undertaken by Ley (1996), who argued that the process was initiated by countercultural groups seeking inner-city spaces as an expressive act of resistance against 1960s modernist ideology. A collective disdain for the monotony of suburban life, and for the stultifying conventions of the postwar Fordism that facilitated suburban expansion, overcame resilient pathological images of inner-city neighbourhoods and transformed them into what Ley termed "oppositional spaces". These were "socially diverse, welcoming difference, tolerant, creative, valuing the old, the hand-crafted, the personalized, countering hierarchical lines of authority" (Ley, 1996, page 210). Although Ley is more critical than Caulfield of the process of gentrification, particularly its ability to rob cities of their affordable housing stocks and displace the vulnerable, his portrayal of the process is not entirely negative, principally because of the research context—the Canadian inner city.

Research aims and methods
In this paper, comparing gentrification in South Parkdale, Toronto, and Lower Park Slope, New York City, I have two aims. First, I will consider how far the powerful discourses of gentrification that have emerged from each local and national context (emancipatory from Toronto, Canada, and revanchist from New York City, USA) reflect what is happening in one gentrifying neighbourhood in each city. If gentrification has changed everywhere as much as Hackworth and Smith (2001) and Hackworth (2001; 2002) argue, does the nature of gentrification in two currently gentrifying neighbourhoods still sit well with the discourses that emerged from earlier studies of the process? This is not so much an effort to test discourse empirically but rather an effort to assess the extent to which gentrification may or may not have changed since these discourses were produced and articulated. Second, by providing an empirical assessment of the specificities of gentrification in two different neighbourhoods, in two different cities, in two different countries, I will contribute to the debate over 'continentalism' in urban research in North America (Garber and Imbroscio, 1996; Goldberg and Mercer, 1986; Mercer and England, 2000; Slater, 2002; Yeates and Garner, 1976). At a time when very casual references to 'North American gentrification' still appear in even the most popular textbooks (Yeates, 1998), it seems important to undertake comparative research on an enduring aspect of urban transformation. Although many more comparative (USA – Canada) studies are required before we can make bold conclusions for or against a 'continentalist' approach to the process, my intention in this paper is to provide some *preliminary* insights into the geography of gentrification in North America.

The neighbourhoods in this study were selected for two related reasons. First, they were (and still are) gentrifying, rather than gentrified; I have so far spoken of gentrification as a process of change, and it seemed crucial to undertake research in two places where this process could be observed as it was happening, rather than after the event. Second, they are widely seen as being among the last neighbourhoods to gentrify in both central cities, and thus they offered enticing opportunities to uncover the similarities and differences between two places experiencing what has become known as 'postrecession gentrification', a hallmark of which is the apparent diffusion of the process into neighbourhoods that escaped earlier rounds of reinvestment (Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Smith, 2002). I draw on insights from a broad range of interviewees in each neighbourhood and, arguably, break new ground in the discussion of comments made by the displaced working class in both areas. Displacees were contacted through liasing with community groups in each neighbourhood as both collaborator and consultant, with the goal of understanding and challenging policies and practices

threatening low-income tenants. Other interviewees (for example, politicians, gentrifiers, realtors) were recruited through the strategy of 'snowballing' (see Valentine, 1999). Qualitative insights were backed up by inspection of numerous secondary sources (census returns, planning documents, media reports), an important vault of useful background information. Both cases will be discussed in turn before bringing the findings together and commenting on how this research contributes to an understanding of the geography of gentrification.

South Parkdale, Toronto, Canada: from deinstitutionalization to gentrification
South Parkdale (figure 1, see over) grew rapidly in the late 19th century as one of Toronto's first commuter suburbs, facilitated by the development of the railway and later the streetcar along King and Queen Streets (Laycock and Myrvold, 1991). In the early 20th century the neighbourhood "was considered one of Toronto's most desirable residential locations" (CTPB, 1976, page 7). With the 1922 opening of *the* major public amenity of the city, Sunnyside Amusement Park, adjacent South Parkdale became known as the 'Village by the Lake [Ontario]' (Filey, 1996), with fine Victorian and Edwardian terraces and some substantial mansions housing a largely elite and upper-middle-class population.

In the 1950s, when Toronto became a prime site of experimental modernist planning, expressways leading to suburban expansion were signs of progress, legitimized by the morally charged banners of 'slum clearance' and 'urban renewal' (Kipfer and Keil, 2002, page 238). Even though it was not a slum by any stretch of the imagination, South Parkdale was in the path of the construction of the Gardiner Expressway between 1955 and 1964 and thus in the way of 'progress' (Filey, 1996, page 131), and therefore its southern reaches were designated as a slum to be cleared.[1] By 1959, South Parkdale was cut off from Lake Ontario, the principal amenity that had encouraged its settlement. Along with Sunnyside Amusement Park, over 170 houses were demolished, and entire streets disappeared (Caulfield, 1994, page 33). Many of the mansions and terraces were demolished to make way for high-rise apartment buildings; others were abandoned by owner-occupiers and sold to absentee landlords or investment firms, who divided them into smaller apartments, and some properties remained vacant as the neighbourhood went into economic decline. Outgoing residents were replaced by a sustained influx of low-income immigrants, particularly intense following the liberal immigration policies of the federal government after the 1968 election of Pierre Trudeau (Croucher, 1997). In this era, devalorized, disinvested South Parkdale, with an inner-city location offering convenient access to the types of employment most readily available to new immigrants, such as manufacturing and personal services (Murdie, 1996, pages 224 – 225), and its cheap rental accommodation in the wider context of Toronto's highly competitive rental housing market, became a 'gateway' neighbourhood for those seeking a new life in Canada's largest city. Far from being segregated along the lines of one ethnicity, South Parkdale became one of the most ethnically diverse yet most economically traumatized communities in Canada.

Another crucial factor underpinning the changing social geography of South Parkdale was its proximity to the Queen Street Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, for a long time the largest facility of its kind in Canada (Court, 2000).

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[1] As Toronto's former chief transportation engineer, Robert McBride, recently pointed out, "When … [the Gardiner Expressway] was built and designed … it was fabulous, a work of genius really … . It didn't much matter how sensitive the road was or what implications it might have had for the area it went over because that, by and large, simply wasn't relevant" (quoted in Hall, 2001).
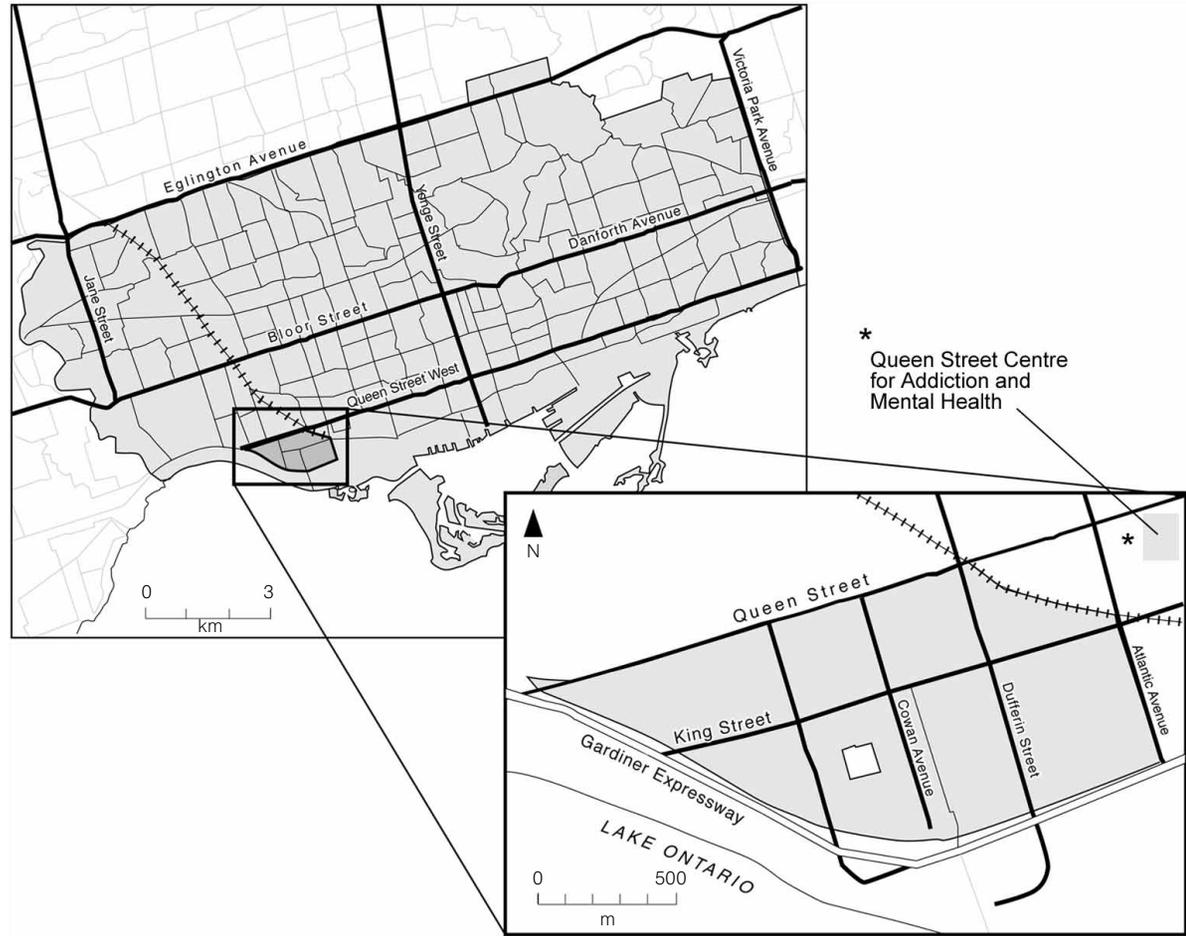
Figure 1. The South Parkdale study area, Toronto, Canada.

The radical shift of the provincial government towards the deinstitutionalization of psychiatric patients in favour of 'community-based care' (Dear and Taylor, 1982; Dear and Wolch, 1987; Marshall, 1982; Simmons, 1990), together with the retraction in the role of the welfare state under economic recession and a provincial fiscal crisis (Hasson and Ley, 1994; Lemon, 1993), had profound and lasting effects on a neighbourhood already under stress from metropolitan restructuring and devalorization. Together with the closure of the nearby Lakeshore Provincial Psychiatric Hospital in 1979, it discharged thousands of patients into South Parkdale in the early 1980s (Marshall, 1982; Simmons, 1990).

South Parkdale suffered disproportionately from a lack of community aftercare services for discharged patients. As Dear and Wolch (1987, page 107) put it, deinstitutionalization in Ontario was "a policy adopted with great enthusiasm, even though it was never properly articulated, systematically implemented, nor completely thought through." Housing was neither plentiful nor adequate for the needs of the mentally ill, and by 1981 it was estimated that between 1000 to 1200 ex-psychiatric patients lived in South Parkdale (Simmons, 1990, page 168), in a neighbourhood that by 1985 contained only 39 official 'group homes' for such patients (Joseph and Hall, 1985, page 150). The majority of discharged patients gravitated to unofficial boarding homes, [2] rooming houses, or tiny 'bachelorette' [3] apartments in the single-family dwellings of the old South Parkdale which saw prolific (and usually illegal) conversion during the 1970s (CTPB, 1976). With by far the highest concentration of deinstitutionalized patients in Toronto left to their own devices, it was argued that South Parkdale became a 'service-dependent ghetto' (Dear and Wolch, 1987, page 108). [4]

Given this backdrop, it might seem unlikely that gentrification could take place. Although there are sizeable pockets of poverty in the neighbourhood that show few signs of improving (Filion, 1991, page 561), qualitative accounts have demonstrated that a number of factors have joined together to facilitate gentrification, as the following residents revealed:

"We moved here [in 1997] because of the location. It is really easy to get into Downtown if you work in the city, like 20 minutes on the streetcar, and as my husband often goes to Niagara on business, he can get right on the Expressway in about two minutes. The houses here are so beautiful, and affordable, which was a big reason for us because everywhere else was so expensive. Plus, they're Victorian, and large, and you just can't find this type of housing anymore without paying a fortune for it. You get way more space for the price in this neighbourhood, and our friends who stop by just can't believe how little we paid for this place. Yes the crime is a concern and yes it is a rougher neighbourhood than many others but the benefits far outweigh those burdens" (Kathryn, interview, 29 January 2001).

[2] The often intolerable conditions in boarding homes were captured poignantly by Capponi (1992), a discharged patient who became a leading mental healthcare advocate.

[3] A bachelorette is a mini-apartment, often converted from a rooming house unit—one room which simultaneously contains sleeping, living, and dining space, with a separate bathroom within the unit.

[4] A recent newspaper article perpetuates this negative 'discourse of decline' (Beauregard, 1993): all of South Parkdale's residents supposedly live "in the shadow of run-down apartment buildings on nearby streets that stand like walls, fracturing the neighbourhood. A neighbourhood rife with poverty, drugs, and prostitution ... no place for a child to grow up. Broken glass and wild screaming on the street at night. Prostitutes strolling down the sidewalk. Drunks splayed on the grass asleep" (Philip, 2000).

"I guess I liked the architecture, the wide, tree-lined streets, the easy access to Downtown and the park [High Park, Toronto's largest public park], and above all, because people were bothered by what they saw on the streets, it was incredibly cheap. I had always wanted a Victorian home and this was the only neighbourhood left where they were affordable [in 1999]. As I am an interior designer and the place needed a lot of work, it was ideal for me to experiment with my ideas. When you settle here, you wonder what all the fuss is about, really. It's a great place to live and not as pretentious as some other neighbourhoods" (Paul, interview, 17 February 2001).

These comments suggest that it was the reputation of South Parkdale that kept property values down. As house prices rose elsewhere in the city during the 1990s, a growing segment of professional middle classes found a rich and affordable Victorian and Edwardian architectural heritage on the broad, tree-lined streets of South Parkdale, with easy access to employment in downtown Toronto.

Gentrification in South Parkdale is also associated with the 1990s spread of the arts and cultural scene along the Queen Street West axis (for the historical context, see Ley, 1996, page 94). For many who know the area, the South Parkdale section of Queen Street West represents the 'final frontier' of the street's artistic and cultural (and social) transformation (for a critique of the frontier imagery associated with artists and gentrification, see Smith, 1996, pages 12 – 29). Although reinvestment along it has been pedestrian compared with the rapid gentrification of areas to the east in earlier decades, the last few years have seen the appearance of bohemian cafes and stores and, particularly, small independent art galleries. The Parkdale Village Arts Collective (PVAC) was formed in 1994 under the auspices of the federally funded Parkdale Village Business Improvement Association (PVBIA) with the objective of 'promoting the arts community' in the neighbourhood—hardly surprising given the PVBIA's mission 'to revitalize the Village of Parkdale'. The PVAC regularly houses exhibitions of contemporary art on Queen Street (http://www.g1313.org) and has become something of a centrepiece for the large community of artists—and their middle-class patrons—in Toronto's west end. One of the PVBIA's main strategies has been to redesignate the neighbourhood as 'Parkdale Village, 1879' on many of the streetposts and publicity documents—an effort to erase South Parkdale's immediate past and encourage the middle classes to buy into the rich architectural heritage of the neighbourhood.

The resettlement of middle-class homeowners and tenants has caused problems for the large number of low-income tenants in the neighbourhood,[5] at the forefront of which is the threat of displacement resulting from either the closure or the deconversion of rooming houses and bachelorette buildings. The cheapest form of permanent rental accommodation currently available in Toronto, both these types of housing are a consistently vital resource for the city's low-income population. Together with gentrification, a lack of profits for landlords, NIMBYism from middle-class residents' associations (see Lyons, 2000), new zoning restrictions, and closure through illegality and poor safety standards, these housing types have declined significantly in number across Toronto since the 1980s, a decline that a number of researchers have linked to the growth of homelessness in the city (Dear and Wolch, 1993; Filion, 1991; Harris, 2000; Layton, 2000; Ley, 1996; Peressini and McDonald, 2000).

Rooming houses and bachelorettes in South Parkdale have long been a source of community conflict, especially between low-income tenant advocates and the South

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[5] In 1996, 93% of the population in the neighbourhood's four census tracts were tenants, and the average household income was $34 004 per annum compared with the citywide average of $68 251 (Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Population).

Parkdale Residents' Association (SPRA), a small group of middle-class homeowners who joined together to voice their concerns to the municipal government about the continued presence of such housing, which they viewed as a hindrance to South Parkdale returning to their ideal of 'Parkdale Village'. Where the SPRA is primarily concerned with the 'effects on the community' and on property values, tenant advocacy groups in the neighbourhood are concerned with the abysmal and hazardous conditions for many low-income (and often mentally ill or disabled) tenants in these dwellings, and lobbied hard for the City's recognition of and action towards these conditions. By the mid-1990s, the City was under intense pressure from South Parkdale's residents, and realized that action on the low-income housing in the neighbourhood was required to mediate the ongoing conflicts within its borders.

In December 1996 the City of Toronto passed a by-law that prohibited any rooming house or bachelorette development or conversion in South Parkdale pending the outcome of an area study. The results were released in July 1997, in the form of proposals entitled "Ward 2 [now Ward 14] Neighbourhood Revitalization" (CTUDS, 1997). An analysis of this document provides an insight into what the City of Toronto viewed as the principal problem of the area—the presence of low-income single persons in single-person dwellings. [6] The broad objective was spelled out concisely and without disguising the intent: "To stabilize a neighbourhood under stress *and restore a healthy demographic balance*, without dehousing of vulnerable populations" (CTUDS, 1997, page 17, emphasis added). Tables, graphs, and, most importantly, language were used to illustrate what was unhealthy: "the area has gone from a stable neighbourhood, with a healthy mix of incomes and household types, to one with *a disproportionately large number of single occupancy accommodation*" (CTUDS, 1997, page 1, emphasis added).

Just as Sommers (1998, page 296) found in the 'skid road' district of Vancouver, the neighbourhood's inhabitants "were considered to be the *cause* of urban blight and decay" and the neighbourhood itself was "distinguished precisely by its lack of both families and the respectability that somehow accompanied them". Although the objective states that 'dehousing' of vulnerable populations would be avoided, it is not easy to see how this can be achieved, because South Parkdale's most vulnerable are 'singles'— welfare-dependent, mentally ill, and socially isolated. A defensible argument can be put forward that these proposals were not drawn up to improve the conditions for singles already in South Parkdale but rather to reduce the percentage of singles in the neighbourhood, with families taking their place:

"[We will] deal fairly with properties that already contain bachelorettes and rooming houses, so that the credibility of the City's Zoning By-law is not diminished, the properties are maintained at, or above, minimum health and safety standards and, over time, *these small units are gradually replaced with larger units and the tenants are relocated*" (CTUDS, 1997, page 17, emphasis added).

A new zoning system was proposed for South Parkdale that would limit the number of units permitted in existing rooming houses and bachelorettes, together with their inspection and legalization, and 'strategic prosecutions' and possible closures of the 'worst-case' properties. The proposals were presented at a community meeting organized by the City in South Parkdale in October 1998. The meeting was taken over by the Parkdale Common Front, an informal coalition of antipoverty activist groups that were against any form of discriminatory zoning and argued that these proposals were tantamount to 'social cleansing' (Kipfer and Keil, 2002, page 255; Lyons, 1998).

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[6] In 1996, 45.1% of all households in the neighbourhood were single-person households (Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Population).

Table 1. Manifesto of the Parkdale Pilot Project, Toronto (source: PPP representative, June 2001).

Goals
Retain housing.
Improve building and housing and safety standards.
Community improvement.

Strategies
Regularize existing bachelorettes and illegal rooming houses.
License regularized bachelorettes and rooming houses.
Ensure ongoing compliance with standards.

Responding to criticism that the proposals had been exclusive of low-income interests in the neighbourhood, the City invited members of all stakeholders to a series of meetings, in what became known as the 'Parkdale Conflict Resolution'. In October 1999, the outcome of the meetings was published (CTUDS, 1999, page 3), yet the Parkdale Common Front still maintains that "The proliferation of illegally converted small dwelling spaces has contributed to the decline of health of the community." The 1996 ban on all new conversions remained in place, but this time a team of planners and building inspectors was formed to deal with the illegality, overcrowding, and poor safety of many of the existing multiunit dwellings, called the Parkdale Pilot Project (PPP), whose manifesto is presented in table 1. The requirement for licensing eligibility was that all units in a building must comply with the minimum unit size of 200 ft^2 (CTUDS, 1999, page 14). A study undertaken in 1976 by the City of Toronto revealed that many bachelorette units are as small as 90 ft^2 (CTPB, 1976, page 59)—as many remain unchanged since this study was undertaken, bringing buildings 'up to standard' would almost certainly lead to the loss of many bachelorette units and displacement of tenants. On the rationale behind the scheme, a representative of the PPP explained that:

> "Generally accepted planning principles suggest that healthy neighbourhoods support a diversity of housing opportunities for families, couples and singles. There is a planning concern that by tipping the balance too much in favour of small, essentially single-person housing, that healthy diversity will be lost and the area will become ghettoised as more and more of the housing stock is abandoned by families and converted into bachelorettes and rooming houses.... So what we are doing now is bringing current conversions into the light, and banning all new ones" (representative of the PPP, interview, 20 June 2001).

This form of "municipally-managed gentrification" (Forrest and Murie, 1988, page 148) is a concerted effort to break away from the social geographies of South Parkdale's immediate traumatized past, legitimized through the normative principles underpinning the well-established promotion of 'social mix' in Canadian urban planning (Dansereau et al, 1997; Harris, 1993).

From 1995 to 2003 the threats posed by gentrification were compounded by the aggressively neoliberal conservative provincial government (see Keil, 2000; 2002). In June 1998 their unfortunately named Tenant Protection Act came into effect. A centrepiece of the Act was the introduction of *vacancy decontrol*—the elimination of rent control on vacant units. When an apartment becomes vacant through 'natural turnover', the landlord may charge whatever he or she thinks can be made on the unit to a new tenant. The comments of interviewees confirm that landlords now have a powerful financial incentive to attract a new tenant, and often do so with maintenance improvements:

> "I've lived here since 1995, and I usually paid my [Can]$400 [per month] rent on time. Then two years ago [early 1999], the landlord puts a letter under my door saying he has re-financed the building and has put in a new boiler [furnace], so my

rent will be $630, and if I can't pay it then I should take it up with the [Ontario Rental] Housing Tribunal. So I called him and said you can't do this as I can't afford it, and then he says to me 'I know you have been a good tenant but I can't afford to keep you here anymore'. So I tell him how desperate I am because I only get $520 a month in welfare. I think he started to feel sorry for me and then he says I can stay for $450. I thought that is better than being on the street, so that's what I pay now" (Celia, interview, 22 March 2001).

This leaves Celia, an unemployed single mother with bipolar disorder, living in a bachelorette building with her 2-year-old daughter, with [Can]$70 a month for all necessities other than rent. Bob, a pensioner who has lived in the neighbourhood for 36 years, revealed the problems that the neighbourhood's gentrification causes for seniors without a substantial pension fund:

"I got kicked out of my house [in 1999]. I couldn't afford the rent anymore as it kept going up and up as all these young folks started moving into the neighbourhood. My rent was the same for 15 years, but I think around 1994 it started to creep up as the landlord said his bills were becoming too high. I fell five months behind and then the landlord had me evicted about two years ago. Then my friend Irene who lived in the apartment next to me says that he then leased it to this young couple for [Can]$1050 a month, which is double what I paid! Now I live with my younger sister … . I'm looking for places all the time, as I don't want to be in a retirement home as I am too young for that, but there's like one ad in *The [Toronto] Star* every week and it's gone by the time you call up" (Bob, interview, 23 March 2001).

Not only are there stories of threatened and actual displacement, there is also a worrying contradiction between the two levels of government concerning the PPP. Following mandatory maintenance and safety improvements ordered by the PPP inspectors, the landlord can apply to the province for an 'above-guideline rent increase'[7] allowed under the Tenant Protection Act—so the costs of regularization can be downloaded to tenants. If the municipal government really is attempting to improve the existing housing stock 'without dehousing of vulnerable populations' its work may be undone by this loophole in the provincial government's tenant legislation. The qualitative result is that, through this contradiction, both levels of government appear to be moving ever closer to the goal of rebalancing the 'unhealthy' demographics of South Parkdale.

Lower Park Slope, New York City, USA: 'overspill' gentrification and organized resistance
The mid to late 1990s real-estate boom in New York City coupled with the extraordinary salaries that were made in the city's corporate world led to what Lees (2000) has termed the 'supergentrification'[8] of the Brooklyn neighbourhoods where gentrification had matured during the 1980s. Hackworth (2001) has collectively called these mature zones the 'reinvested core' and is correct to argue that "property markets have recovered and become even more exclusive than before. It has, as a consequence, become virtually impossible to find affordable housing in Lower Manhattan and northeastern Brooklyn" (page 875). As the stock market recovered in the mid-1990s, there was exclusive-end reinvestment in Park Slope, Brooklyn, that can be treated as symptomatic of the post-recession 'third-wave' of gentrification identified in recent research (Hackworth, 2002;

[7] Each year, the provincial government set a guideline (usually between 2% to 4%) that must be followed by landlords, and rent increases must not exceed this guideline without permission from the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal.
[8] Lambert and Boddy (2002, page 21, note 4) are suspicious of this terminology, describing it as owing much to "the temptation to coin catchy neologisms". Whether we accept 'supergentrification' or not, there is little doubt that the increasing exclusivity of gentrified Brooklyn is having a major effect on surrounding areas that did not gentrify in earlier decades.
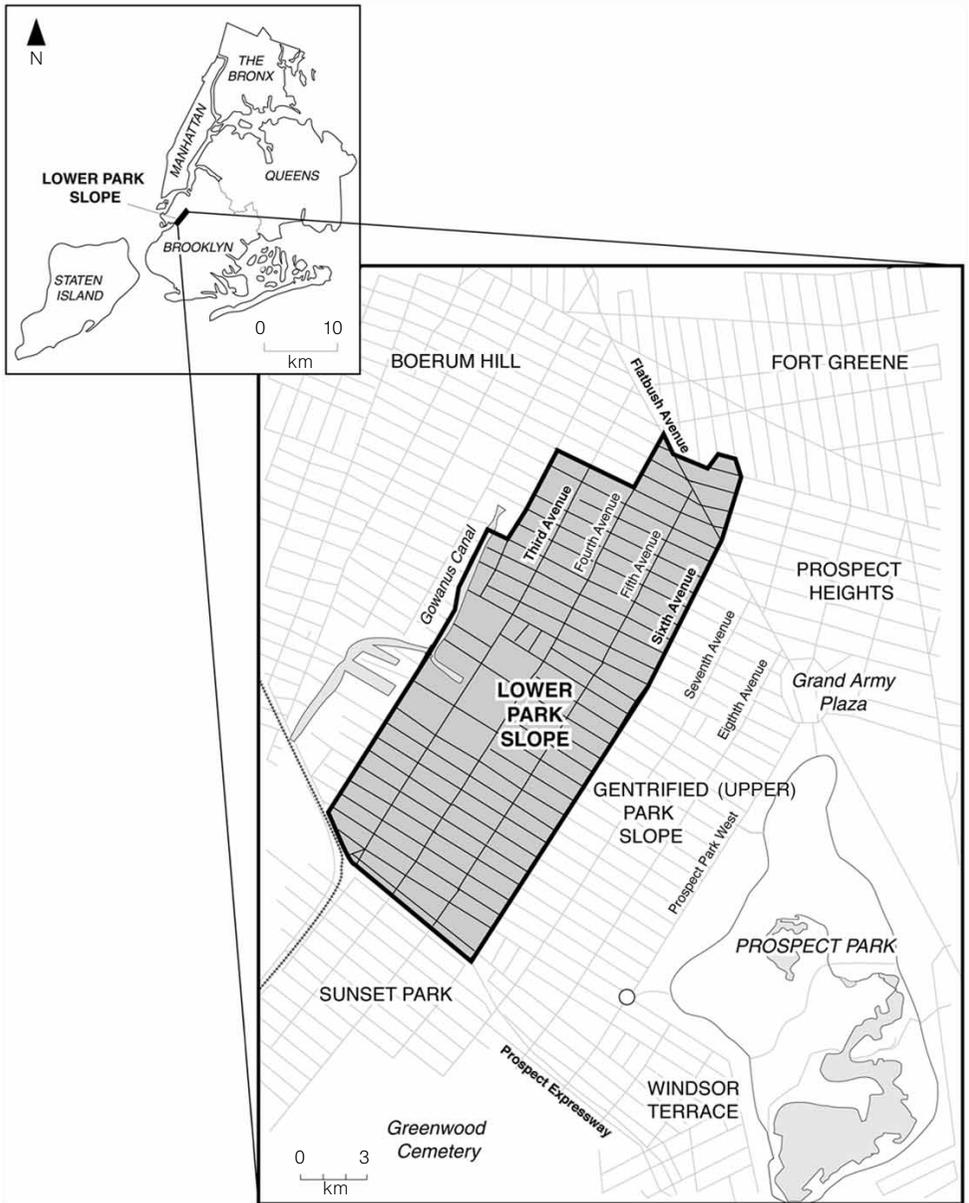
Figure 2. The Lower Park Slope study area, New York City, USA.

Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Smith and DeFilippis, 1999). The personality of gentrification has changed in tandem with the internationalization of real estate and financial markets, and Lees (2000, pages 397 – 398) has outlined these changes as follows:

> "gentrifiers in Park Slope today are significantly wealthier than gentrifiers in the past. Sweat equity is not a prominent feature of the process today. Indeed, contemporary gentrifiers have to be wealthier than ever before because of average prices for single-family townhouses have *doubled* since 1997.... This rapid appreciation is linked to the dramatically increased value of the New York stock market and the financial services industry, whose profits have (re)lubricated gentrification in New York City."

The cumulative result of the 'corporatization of gentrification' (Smith and DeFilippis, 1999, page 650) has been the rise of Park Slope from one of the elite residential communities of Brooklyn to one of the most desirable neighbourhoods in the entire city, a symbol of New York's remarkable (though now waning) economic revival of the late 1990s.

Lower Park Slope, bordered by 6th Avenue to the east, 3rd Avenue to the west, Flatbush Avenue to the north, and the Prospect Expressway to the south (figure 2), in contrast experienced only sporadic gentrification when Park Slope was gentrifying intensely in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s (Carpenter and Lees, 1995; Gelb and Lyons, 1993; Lees, 1994b; Lees and Bondi, 1995). However, in the postrecession era, sales and rental prices have become so prohibitively high in gentrified Park Slope that the middle classes are now finding that the only affordable accommodation is in Lower Park Slope. The term 'overspill gentrification' has been noted elsewhere (Dantas, 1988), and it is a useful image to apply to Lower Park Slope and also to many other previously nongentrified New York City neighbourhoods—they have become "reservoirs of gentrification overflow" (*New York Magazine* 12 March 2001, page 51). Such overspill in Brooklyn has been intensified by the 1997 New York State Rent Regulation Reform Act which introduced 'high-rent vacancy decontrol', meaning that any rent-stabilized apartment renting above US$2000 per month leaves the rent-regulation system completely, enabling landlords to charge whatever they like to new tenants once these apartments become vacant. This has "whittled away the stock of rent regulated apartments" (Hevesi, 2002) in Manhattan, where the majority of these expensive apartments are located, and has pushed young stockbrokers, publishers, dot-com, and new media entrepreneurs from Manhattan's 'Silicon Alley' and even young lawyers and doctors out into more affordable, gentrifying neighbourhoods in the outer boroughs of Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx (Phillips-Fein, 2000, page 29).

Lower Park Slope's current gentrification (table 2) is quite a turnaround from its condition in the 1970s and 1980s, when three decades of disinvestment had culminated in serious dilapidation and abandonment of some of its housing stock and the erosion of its economic and tax base—a neighbourhood 'ravaged by decay', as one assessment put it (Lawson, 1984, page 248), with little political bargaining power to attract the kind of reinvestment it needed for its residents. Its housing stock was and remains nothing like as 'handsome' as that further 'up the Slope', and thus none of it has gained Landmark Preservation status, one of the catalysts of gentrification nearer to Prospect Park (Lees, 1994b). Lower Park Slope was in every sense left behind by the 'success' of Upper Park Slope, and perhaps this is best expressed by the fact that 7th Avenue became a bustling commercial strip during this time, whereas 5th Avenue "witnessed a proliferation of crime during the 1970s as a result of narcotic trafficking", where

Table 2. Indicators of neighbourhood change in Lower Park Slope, New York City, 1980–2000 (source: US Bureau of the Census).

Indicator	1980	1990	2000
Population	33 909	31 827	33 940
Total number of housing units	14 022	13 583	14 919
Median housing income (US$)	14 923	28 976	42 500
Median monthly gross rent (US$)	211	563	816
Median owner-occupied home value (US$)	189 002	249 436	344 854
Percentage of residents over 25 with bachelor's degree	12.5	17.1	22.2
Percentage of finance, insurance, and real-estate sector workers	12.4	11.6	10.1
Percentage of professional and related service workers	20.7	30.6	38.1

"The dangers associated with this problem nearly vacated the retail stores and residents" (Merlis and Rosenzweig, 1999, page 13). Interviews with people familiar with the neighbourhood during this time offered more evidence of the social consequences of disinvestment, and fear of crime and particularly a crack house in the heart of Lower Park Slope became a central theme in the recollections of some interviewees:

> "I didn't come down the hill very often as a kid [in the mid-1980s]. It wasn't very safe, and it was very deserted. There were few bodegas [corner stores], certainly no good restaurants, and it had a kind of downward feel about it. There was a crack house on President Street that was well known as a place to avoid, and that made the neighbourhood pretty unsafe. There were hookers on Degraw Street, and I remember being told by my mom to avoid certain places, you know, as a teenage girl it wasn't really safe" (Stacey, interview, 3 December 2001).

> "I guess in the '80s, the neighbourhood where we are right now was about as different you can imagine. If you were middle-class, you wouldn't come down here unless you were either a trouble maker or looking for trouble. Like on President and 5th, there was this crack house where apparently you would give some money to the guy on the door, he would then call up to the guys on the second floor, and they would throw the drugs and god knows what else down to you. There were no cops, and just a lot people shooting up and getting high" (Jeremy, interview, 21 December 2001).

Notwithstanding these comments, it would be incorrect to portray Lower Park Slope as an arena of outright misery and suffering during this period. The views expressed above were from middle-class (non-Hispanic) whites, but further qualitative accounts of the neighbourhood during this era provide a more nuanced version of a place that offered different experiences of urban life for different people—in this case, along the lines of class, experienced through ethnicity. Although none denied the crime and drug problems of the era, working-class Hispanic residents offered contrasting views of the neighbourhood as a community, where attachments to place were strong and social ties strengthened through shared religious and cultural beliefs. For example:

> "It was much more of a neighbourhood [in the 1980s] than it is now. You saw many more familiar faces, and people tended to look out for each other. There were some places where you would have to watch your back, like near the crack house, but my street, Union, was a place where you didn't have to worry because if someone gave you any trouble about 10 people were always out on their stoops watching what was going on. Another thing is that when a new family moved in, it was a major event and everybody knew about it. These days you can't tell who is new and who isn't, as everyone moves around so much more" (Luis, interview, 6 November 2001).

> "Looking back [to the 1970s and 1980s] I do remember recognising more people as I walked along the streets, stopping to talk with those folks I knew by name, that kind of thing. That still happens from time to time, but the only place where you get any sense of community these days is the church, or things which the church organise. I'm sure it's the same for a lot of these neighbourhoods which have gone upmarket, as people who move in today don't have time for the community, so it kind of breaks up into little pieces, and your family or your church become your community" (Rosario, interview, 15 November 2001).

A discussion of differing neighbourhood sentiments based on ethnicity necessitates a profile of the changing ethnic composition of Lower Park Slope (table 3). Perhaps the most interesting phenomenon exhibited by these data is the contrast to what has been happening in New York City over the past twenty years. During this time, the city has seen a continuing net out-migration of non-Hispanic whites (which began in the 1950s),

Table 3. Ethnic origin of Hispanic and non-Hispanic residents in Lower Park Slope, 1980–2000 (source: US Bureau of the Census).

Ethnic origin	1980	1990	2000
Non-Hispanic	*55.1*	*60.5*	*64.6*
White	36.8	39.5	40.8
Black	15.6	16.5	14.8
American Indian	0.2	0.3	0.2
Asian or Pacific islander[a]	na	3.9	5.0
Other race	2.5	0.3	0.6
Two or more races[b]	na	na	3.3
Hispanic	*44.9*	*39.5*	*35.4*
White	21.6	16.1	13.1
Black	1.9	4.0	2.0
American Indian	0.1	0.2	0.4
Asian or Pacific Islander[a]	na	0.4	0.2
Other race	21.2	18.8	17.0
Two or more races[b]	na	na	2.6

na—Data not available from census.
[a] This separate category was introduced in 1990.
[b] The 2000 Census was the first to give respondents a chance to identify themselves as belonging to more than one racial category.

and a significant in-migration of other ethnic groups—a pattern especially evident in Brooklyn and the Bronx (Abu-Lughod, 1999; Lobo et al, 1996; 2002; Warf, 1990). In 1980, non-Hispanic whites formed 52.0% of the city's population, but by 2000 that figure had dropped to 35.1% (US Census). In 1980, people of Hispanic origin constituted 19.7% of the city's population, but by 2000 that figure had increased to 26.9% (US Census). Note from table 3 how Lower Park Slope exhibits a very different trend, in that it has been *gaining* in non-Hispanic whites and experiencing a *decrease* in the number of Hispanics of all ethnic origins. The only aspect of the Lower Park Slope data that chimes with the current immigration patterns of New York City is the increase in the Asian population. These data suggest that gentrification in Lower Park Slope has had a significant impact on local ethnic transition through an influx of white gentrifiers replacing or displacing Hispanic (and to a lesser extent black) residents. There is little question that the neighbourhood as a whole is becoming 'whiter', and several of my interviewees of different ethnic backgrounds referred to gentrification as the 'whiting-out' of the neighbourhood.

This 'ethnic edge' to gentrification is the major factor that has led to a prominent campaign to resist the process, one that aims to prevent a complete reversal of the yesteryear character of the neighbourhood. Resistance has been taking place under the auspices of the Fifth Avenue Committee (FAC), a nonprofit community group founded by local residents in 1977. For more than two decades, the FAC has raised millions of dollars to rehabilitate many abandoned buildings, transforming dilapidated properties into affordable housing under a 'sweat equity program'.[9] Their current mission is

"to advance social and economic justice in South Brooklyn, principally by developing and managing affordable housing, creating employment opportunities, organizing residents and workers, and combating displacement caused by gentrification" (FAC, 2001, http://www.fifthave.org).

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[9] The leaders of FAC now realize the inherent contradiction—the more attractive they make the streetscape, the more people want to live there, and so the more rents are driven up. So, ironically, the FAC are one piece of the problem!

The threat of displacement in Lower Park Slope is compounded by the fact that the neighbourhood contains many apartment buildings with fewer than six units, which are exempt from rent stabilization laws [10]. In 1999 the FAC undertook a survey of how many small buildings had changed hands in the neighbourhood between 1996 and 1999. It was concerned about the fact that a change in ownership in unregulated small buildings leads to significant increases in rents as new landlords seek to claim back on their mortgage and maintenance payments and seek to profit from overspill gentrification by attracting wealthier tenants. It found that 21% of buildings had changed hands—a remarkable pace of turnover indicating booming real-estate activity. Qualitative evidence revealed that landlords are cashing in on overspill gentrification, and Gloria, a single mother who worked in a day-care centre and who lived in such a building, provided one of many stories of displacement:

"Five months before the end of the [annual] lease [in 1999], I got a notice that my rent was going to jump from [US] $750 a month to $1400 a month. My income was $19 000 a year at the time, so there was no way I could pay it. I went to the landlord and asked him why the rent increase was so steep, and he's like 'that's how much I can get, that's how much I want from you'. I decided to stay and see what happened at the end of the lease, and when he came to ask me for the rent and I said 'I can't pay it', he gave me an eviction notice right there. I was basically homeless for four months, so I stayed with a friend in Queens for a while, and then when school started again for my [12 year-old] son we went back to Brooklyn and stayed with his Godmother while all my stuff remained in storage. It was a pretty tough time for him as he didn't really understand why we had to move, and I felt bad because a kid really needs a permanent home, you know?" (Gloria, interview, 29 September 2001).

It is stories such as these, where blameless victims of a property boom end up almost blaming themselves, that have prompted the FAC into action. To combat displacement, it devised a strategy in 1999 called a Displacement Free Zone (DFZ), where a territory was marked out in which the FAC claimed there would be 'no evictions' of low-income and moderate-income tenants. Initially a 36-block area, following a two-year trial run the zone has now been extended north and south to cover the entire neighbourhood and actually crosses the southern border of my study area into the neighbourhood of Sunset Park. The purpose of the DFZ is to preserve the ethnic and class diversity of the neighbourhood, keep its housing stock affordable and residents stable in their homes, and to respect the needs of its long-term (particularly ethnic minority) residents and senior citizens. It actively aims to discourage anyone from what the FAC calls 'profiteering at the expense of our community'—a reference to people buying a building and then evicting the long-term, low-rent-paying tenants either to attract new tenants who can afford much higher rents or to claim the building back for themselves.

The FAC will consider the case of any tenant who meets the criteria in table 4, and it relies on tenants to come forward, as it has no way of tracking large rent increases or incidences of tenants being served eviction notices. If it hears about a rent increase that threatens displacement, it will try to negotiate a compromise with the landlord and if that fails, it will work with religious leaders to appeal to the landlord's 'conscience', or demonstrate in front of the landlord's home or business, or generate media attention about the unfairness of the eviction. If these tactics fail, and the case goes to court,

[10] In New York City, rent stabilization applies to apartments in buildings with six or more units built between 1947 and 1974 and to tenants who moved into pre-1947 buildings with six or more units after 30 June 1971 (Brecher and Horton, 1991; van Ryzin and Kamber, 2002).

Table 4. Criteria for eligibility to receive assistance from the Fifth Avenue Committee, New York City.

Criteria
The tenant lives within the DFZ (Displacement Free Zone) area.
The tenant lives in a small building that is not protected by the rent laws.
The tenant is low-income.
The tenant is being evicted because the landlord wants to increase the rent dramatically.

Priority is given to tenants in the following situations
The landlord has other housing and financial options and is raising the rent simply
    to increase profits.
The landlord is an absentee owner.
The tenant is a long-time resident of the neighbourhood and/or senior citizen.
The tenant is facing a housing emergency and has no other housing options.

it has the support of South Brooklyn Legal Services to defend the tenant. The great strength of the strategy is that it increases the visibility of displacement and draws marginalized community members into organizing—extremely vocal and public resistance to displacement may discourage landlords from buying houses in the neighbourhood solely for investment purposes. However, the strategy may alienate owner-occupiers or incoming higher income tenants who may be 'community minded', and also the FAC may be targeting the wrong people, when it is the lack of rent stabilization rather than land-lords themselves that seems to be the most pressing problem. It is encouraging, however, that evictions have dropped by nearly 40% in the DFZ from November 1999 to November 2001 (according to an FAC representative), although empirical difficulties in measuring displacement make it unclear how much of that drop is a result of activism.

Discussion
There are some very striking similarities in the gentrification of the two neighbour-hoods discussed above, which suggest that 'North American gentrification' may not be such an invalid generalization. A continentalist perspective is bolstered by remarkably similar narratives of loss of place experienced by displaced tenants in each neighbour-hood, whose experiences provide some sense of the disruption caused by gentrification to established communities. A particularly glaring finding from both case studies is that gentrification would not be happening with anything like the magnitude I have described if there were tighter rent regulations enforced by higher levels of government. South Parkdale's gentrification is gathering steam because the Tenant Protection Act in fact removes any protection low-income tenants have by providing landlords with a de facto 'license to displace', for rents can be raised substantially once a current tenant leaves. It is no surprise to hear tenant advocates talk about increases in incidences of tenant harassment and of a proliferation of maintenance improvements that are designed for prospective tenants, not those currently occupying a unit. In Lower Park Slope, the long-time lack of rent stabilization affecting most of the housing stock is an enduring dilemma for tenants and the FAC, and landlords being targeted by the FAC often defend their tactics by stating correctly that they are not breaking the law in raising the rents to levels beyond the means of current tenants. With respect to more general theoretical statements on gentrification, this comparative work offers an endorsement of the complementary perspective advocated by Clark (1992) and Lees (1994a). Both neighbourhoods studied exhibit the cyclical history of investment, disin-vestment, and reinvestment that remains a leitmotif in structural accounts of the process, yet they also exhibit another leitmotif in that gentrification is driven by the expansion of professional middle classes in a postindustrial metropolis who seek

the locational and cultural advantages of inner-city neighbourhoods regardless of the disinvested past of those neighbourhoods. A further similarity offered by qualitative accounts presented earlier is that the gentrification of both neighbourhoods is leading to what Robson and Butler (2001, pages 77 – 78) have called a 'tectonic' social situation, where

> "relations between different social and ethnic groups in the area are of a parallel rather than integrative nature; people keep, by and large, to themselves…. Social groups or 'plates' overlap or run parallel to one another without much in the way of integrated experience in the area's social and cultural institutions. This does not make way for an especially cosy settlement, and many residents, middle-class or otherwise, speak of palpable tensions."

Although these similarities offer much support to recent attempts to point out how gentrification has 'generalized' (Smith, 2002), there are some equally striking differences between these two case studies that challenge references to 'North American gentrification'. Perhaps the most obvious is the very strong and well-organized campaign of resistance in Lower Park Slope, in contrast to the sporadic and disorganized activism that formed the now dissolved Parkdale Common Front in South Parkdale. Differences in the cultures of community organizing in Canada and the United States have been observed by others (Stoecker and Vakil, 2000), and can be attributed to the difficulties of challenging the multitiered political structure affecting Canadian cities, whereas the United States has a long history of urban community organizing. New York City in particular has seen arguably the strongest antigentrification activism anywhere, always a point of reference for the leaders of the FAC, who are trying to formalize and strengthen the informal resistance that has been taking place in surrounding neighbourhoods for years, such as that depicted in Muniz's (1998) compelling study of Puerto Rican women resisting displacement in the Brooklyn neighbourhood of Sunset Park. There is also a key distinction in the role of urban policy in that the South Parkdale case is a more overt policy-led attempt to 'rebalance' the population of the neighbourhood and encourage gentrification, whereas I found urban policy in Lower Park Slope to be more muted, yet providing considerable freedom to large real-estate companies (way more prevalent than in South Parkdale, where they are almost nonexistent) to sell gentrifying Lower Park Slope to those who cannot afford to live in gentrified Brooklyn. One strategy of real-estate brokers has been to market the neighbourhood as 'South Slope', 'Centre Slope', 'Prime Slope', and so on, capturing the attention of investors and developers by associating less-striking sections of the area with the well-known architectural and economic riches of gentrified Park Slope. A final difference, by no means insignificant in terms of how gentrification is perceived and challenged, is the type of social group most vulnerable to displacement: deinstitutionalized psychiatric patients in South Parkdale, and low-income Hispanic tenants in Lower Park Slope.

Comparing gentrification in three European cities, Smith (1996, pages 185 – 186) argued that

> "general differences really do not gel into a sustainable thesis that these [instances of gentrification] are radically different experiences… the existence of difference is a different matter from the denial of plausible generalisation. I do not think that it makes sense to dissolve all these experiences into radically different empirical phenomena."

In South Parkdale and Lower Park Slope, although similarities are indeed the source of important lessons to be learned in how gentrification operates once preconditions are in place, it makes very good sense also to differentiate the empirical evidence, because the differences observed are crucial factors in how gentrification is

both experienced *and* contested. The research outlined in this paper demonstrates that it is important to a geography of gentrification to reveal in equal weight what might be 'plausibly general' *and* 'radically different' between two or more cases of gentrification.

With respect to the discourses outlined earlier, whether or not we agree with the politics and explanations of their architects, it is important to understand that their arguments are contextual in terms of both space and time. My findings from South Parkdale show that the 'reform era' that led to Toronto's earlier gentrification is well and truly a chapter of the past. There is now no evidence of any emancipatory potential in gentrification. I do not wish to refute the arguments of Caulfield, Ley, and other scholars who discussed the 'critical social practices' of the marginal middle class (for example, Rose, 1996), but one would be hard pressed to find anything positive to say about the *current* middle-class resettlement of South Parkdale. 'Postrecession gentrification', largely driven by neoliberal municipal and provincial policy and occurring in a neighbourhood with more than its fair share of low-income hardship and social problems, is not an instigator of social interaction but social tension, leading to the unhappy coincidence of reinvestment and displacement, home improvement and homelessness, renovation and eviction. The problem with the Parkdale Pilot Project is that the balance of South Parkdale's housing stock is *already* tipped in favour of bachelorettes and rooming houses that house single persons, and to make it a 'healthy' neighbourhood with 'a diversity of housing opportunities' for 'families, couples, and singles' requires eradicating some bachelorettes and rooming houses and displacing those who inhabit them. It is a sobering thought that the City of Toronto (helped along by provincial tenant legislation) has been paving the way for a different and more sinister kind of emancipatory practice, one that involves 'liberating' South Parkdale from the ball and chain of deinstitutionalization and low-income housing conversions—a liberation that implies shifting the people and changing the buildings that have defined this neighbourhood for generations.

On the revanchist discourse, there can be little doubt, as MacLeod (2002, page 616) has pointed out, that revanchism offers a "deeply suggestive heuristic" with which to assess contemporary urban class transformation. Smith himself (1999, pages 202–203) has argued that:

"It also would be a mistake to confuse repression with revanchism, however much the latter might include the former. Repression may have many rationales, whereas revanchism is about revenge."

Revenge is a strong word; but is it too strong with respect to Lower Park Slope's current gentrification? A term coined to describe the situation in the Lower East Side of New York, the credibility of revanchism has been bolstered by the insertion of neoliberal urban policy into the vacuum left by the failure of 1980s liberal urban policy across a number of US cities (Wyly and Hammel, 2001). I do not doubt the existence of revanchism in certain places, and the purpose here is not to deny nor downplay its power in the restructuring of urban space in favour of more affluent citizens at the expense of vulnerable populations. I am troubled, however, by the uncritical acceptance of contemporary gentrification as a consummate expression of revanchism and the assertion that revanchism is a defining feature of all cities undergoing gentrification (Smith, 1996). The gentrification of Lower Park Slope is not a revanchist attempt by the policy fortress and the white middle class to take the neighbourhood back from the working class. In a booming housing market that has made many New York neighbourhoods affordable only to the corporate elite, the middle classes have fewer options than ever before and are 'overspill' settlers in this neighbourhood not by choice but by *few other choices*. Although theirs is not a predicament anything like that

of those who are displaced from the neighbourhood, it would be a misplaced charge to call their actions unanimously revengeful.

Smith argues that the revanchist city "is a divided city where the victors are increasingly defensive of their privilege, such as it is, and increasingly vicious defending it" (1996, page 227). I found it hard to detect any kind of vicious defence of Lower Park Slope by the middle class. Equally as interesting is the fact that many of the supposed 'victors' in the divided city are now so concerned about these ever-widening divisions around them that they have begun to show concern about gentrification. The Fifth Avenue Committee could not operate without its middle-class patronage. In saying this, I do not want to paint a rosy picture of gentrification whereby different social classes are residing in Lower Park Slope without any kind of problem, but I do want to argue that revenge is not the most appropriate word to attach to gentrification in this context. In sum, just as it is important to understand emancipatory gentrification as space-specific and time-specific, the same applies to understanding gentrification as a form of revanchist antiurbanism.

In sum, it is striking that the discourse not usually associated with Canadian city gentrification is arguably strengthened by the South Parkdale case—the middle-class NIMBYism and the municipally managed gentrification I discussed are perhaps closer to the thesis of revanchism. Similarly, the discourse not usually associated with US city gentrification is arguably strengthened by the Lower Park Slope case—middle-class participation in activism and the affection for 'old city' neighbourhoods are hardly opposed to the central tenets of the emancipatory city thesis. But *neither* case sits comfortably with either discourse, and this is because of the context and contingency of each discourse with respect to space and time. Future research on the process must not get bogged down by overdrawn theoretical divisions but rather should engage with its status as both a geographical expression of complex, intersecting processes that *transcend* the usual dichotomies of urban geographical scholarship and a lens through which we can view the nuances of contemporary urban transformation.

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