

## Abstract

*«Give me a break! I'm from Brooklyn, we're not fancy»*

### **Institutions, Housing and Lifestyles in Super-gentrification process A Field and Historical research in Park Slope, New York City**

by

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In an attempt to make concrete linkages between neighborhood change and the boundary-making paradigm, this field and historical study of a New York City's neighborhood, addresses the influences of displacement, housing-abandonment and resettlement in Super-gentrification processes on 1) the types of institutions that emerged to represent different class interests; 2) the types of social groups that came to inhabit the neighborhood; 3) the pattern of that evolution over time; 4) the particular goals, values, and morals that such community organizations evolved; and 5) the social status displays carried out in cultured consumption in housing and leisure.

Employing a multi-methodological and theoretical approach, the study follows the evolution and development of neighborhood change over forty years through the analysis of social groups and their community organizations (looking at archival documents for the past and by in-depth interviews, shadowing and ethnographic observation for the present time), census data analysis, archival/documental research, and visual data.

Community organizations emerged, on the one hand, to represent different class interests - improvement, mandated, ideological - and to emphasize liberal progressive values, on the other. This emergence followed historical and geographical patterns of accelerating gentrification. The study argues that four waves of gentrification showed up across the time and tended to concentrate in four different neighborhood areas, where the incoming groups formed parallel boundary shifts.

Accordingly, I found that different waves of gentrification were associated with the emergence of different types of Gentrifiers over time, and this had to

do with the changing role of post-industrial cities within the American economy, the processes of government/local institution interventions in the neighborhood housing market, the changes in class interests, morals and ideologies, and the increased aestheticized re-scriptings of neighborhood housing choices and lifestyles. Such aesthetic appreciation operated for gentrifiers as a visible marker of social status.

As residential displacement, the disappearance of “old” local stores, and their replacement of upscale shops entailed forms of social inequality that enhanced the lifestyle of new waves of gentrifiers (raising housing values and rents) while, at the same time, forced out morally (by alienation) or practically (by displacement) long-term residents, who helped produce the neighborhood socio-cultural fabric.

Diversity and aesthetic appeal seemed to underlie the motives of wealthier, well-educated newcomers to move into the neighborhood. Interestingly, those have not been changing throughout the different waves of gentrifiers who came to inhabit the community in the last 40 years. However - during the process of Super-gentrification - I found that the more they populate the neighborhood, the more it becomes homogenized and less richly diverse, still quite progressive but in a different way. I would say, in a privileged progressive way.

Despite the fact that the moral order of these institutions has always been the one of community solidarity, culture, education, and growth, I observed at the same time the playing out of the most common paradox of gentrifiers. The desire of diversity and the producing of difference. This is, I believe, the central problem of gentrification: the balance between, or the combination of, pleasure and power. Balancing pleasure and power is a social, political, and moral problem. It brings together many of the concerns about gentrification, the desire for (and the loss of) diversity, and expresses the central thesis of this study.