

A thesis

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Constructing Whiteness: Voices from the Gentrified Old West End

by

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of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in Sociology

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An Abstract of
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The emancipatory city thesis suggests that, through gentrification, communities become more diverse, tolerant, and socially cohesive (Caulfield 1989; Caulfield 1994; Lees 2000; Lees, Slater, and Wyly 2008). However, this research illustrates that, amongst a sample of whites living in the diverse and gentrifying neighborhood of the Old West End in Toledo, Ohio, racial identities are formulated on white advantage and dominance. Through in-depth interviews with 10 Old West End residents, this research suggests that white identities are experienced, constructed, maintained, and projected through the discursive frames of privilege, exclusion, racialized space, and gentrification. This research advocates for increasing interaction between people of different races, the construction of language with which to talk about race, and the creation of safe spaces in which to talk about race. Additionally, this research pinpoints a need for whites to become race aware, and to individually and collectively acknowledge their positions of power and challenge the racist ideologies which uphold those positions. Until these ideologies are challenged by whites and non-whites alike, social relations in and out of

urban settings will continue to be hierarchical and littered with unnecessary and misguided accusations of blame.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

What it means to be white and how one constructs a white identity are often taken for granted in our society. However, the social construction of whiteness stands as an important discourse in a society that is both riddled with a racist past and plagued by ongoing and unsettling white dominance. According to Taylor (2002), “in the absence of what ought to be serious and ongoing discussions about the cultural, political, and social realities that shape race relations in America, we too often ignore the inner workings of daily experiences of race” (xix). The discussions and explorations into the experiences of race and whiteness are paramount to acknowledging and challenging racial hierarchies that continue to place whites in advantageous positions. However, in a society that emphasizes color-blind ideology, talking about race honestly and openly is difficult and often seen as racist. Thus, race remains a controversial issue.

Much like race, gentrification is also a controversial issue. Due to the consequences of gentrification (i.e. displacement, shifts in demographic makeup, etc), the process is often seen in a negative light. Negative conceptualization of gentrification may influence the ways in which people experience, perceive, and think about their transitioning communities. In focusing on the quantifiable aspects of gentrification, such

as the number of people displaced or the average income of the area, the qualitative experience of living in a neighborhood in transition is often ignored. However, this research aims to illuminate that qualitative experience. The emancipatory city thesis suggests that, through gentrification, communities become more diverse, tolerant, and socially cohesive (Caulfield 1989; Caulfield 1994; Lees 2000; Lees, Slater, and Wylie 2008). However, the purpose of this research is to suggest that, even amongst whites living in diverse and gentrifying neighborhoods, racial identities are formulated on white advantage and dominance.

To test this hypothesis, I conducted 10 in-depth interviews in the Old West End neighborhood of Toledo, Ohio. The Old West End lies in the inner-city, adjacent to Downtown, and is home to an increasing number of gentrifiers. In interviewing residents of its historic district, I aimed to highlight the ways in which whiteness had been experienced, constructed, maintained, and projected by these residents within the context of a neighborhood in transition.

In Chapter 2, I will present a brief literature review on gentrification in an effort to give some background on what gentrification has been and may become. In Chapter 3, I will present a literature review on critical whiteness studies, in order to illustrate the ways in which whiteness is socially constructed and privileges are maintained. I will also offer preliminary suggestions for what whites can do to better race relations before I move onto a discussion of how whiteness studies and gentrification intermix. Chapter 4 will present background information on the research site, population, methods, and research paradigm. Chapter 5 will present the findings of this research with a discussion of four major themes drawn out of interview responses. Lastly, Chapter 6 will apply the

findings to two social psychological theories – social identity theory and symbolic interactionism – in an effort to explain the ways in which sociological forces work together to create, maintain, and project whiteness in the Old West End. I will also offer final thoughts on whiteness and gentrification, before providing limitations of this research and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review on Gentrification

While precursors can be identified as early as 1850 (Smith 1996), the term “gentrification” was coined in 1964 by Ruth Glass to describe a process occurring in London where she noted that “larger Victorian houses, downgraded in an earlier or recent period – which were used as lodging houses or were otherwise in multiple occupation – have been upgraded once again” (Glass 1964:xviii, quoted in Smith 1996:33). In addition to describing the physical transformation of urban space involved during gentrification, she also asserted that this urban process had a juggernaut style in that “once this process of ‘gentrification’ starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed” (Glass 1964:xviii, quoted in Smith 1996:33). Inherent in the process is a demographic change. In other words, gentrification is the “transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the central city into a middle-class residential and/or commercial area;” this process often involves racial transformations as well (Lees et al. 2008:xv, 4). Arguably, the social transformations (i.e. class, race) associated with gentrification, including who the gentrifiers are and the effects of/reactions to gentrification, often have a harsher impact on the community than the physical transformations alone. However,

before I discuss the sociality of gentrification, it is important to give a brief explanation of the process itself.

It is important to note that I am by no means attempting to give an all-encompassing account of the research conducted on gentrification or gentrifiers. Rather, I highlighting three primary points: 1) gentrification is a political issue; 2) ideas of place and space make gentrification a geographical and sociological issue; and 3) gentrifiers tend to be white and middle-class.

GENTRIFICATION AS A PROCESS

While Glass (1964) discusses the rapid pace of this urban change, gentrification is hardly instantaneous. In other words, gentrification must be looked at as a process with a temporal order. According to Lees, Slater, and Wyly (2008), gentrification has blossomed through four major waves. These waves were first identified by Hackworth and Smith (2001).

First-Wave Gentrification 1950-1970: Sporadic and State-led

During the first wave, gentrification was “sporadic and state-led” thanks to a world-wide recession (Hackworth and Smith 2001, quoted in Lees et al. 2008:175). Through the process of green-lining, inner cities were targeted by the “public sector” for “reinvestment” (Lees et al. 2008:175). Because of state-involvement, little gentrification was at the hands of individuals. Instead, “state involvement was often justified through the discourse of ameliorating urban decline” (Hackworth and Smith 2001:466, quoted in Lees et al. 2008:175). In other words, the state piloted gentrification as a way to combat

what it saw as worsening inner cities. During this wave, gentrification was largely limited to global cities (Hammel 2009).

Second-Wave Gentrification 1970s-1980s: Expansion and Resistance

The second wave of gentrification is identified by its accompanying “expansion and resistance” (Hackworth and Smith 2001, quoted in Lees et al. 2008:175). Here, entrepreneurialism mixed with a significant increase in gentrification both locally and globally as gentrification spread into smaller cities (Hammel 2009; Lees et al. 2008). Instead of being state-led, gentrification during this period was generally carried out by wealthy professionals working in “central and local government, industry and commerce” (Lees et al. 2008:176). Thus, the second wave began seeing an increase in the role of the private sector (individuals and developers), and an increase in the use of public-private partnerships (Lees et al. 2008:177).

In addition to seeing a change in who was gentrifying, this wave also saw the introduction of “cultural strategies for economic development,” such as art galleries and museums (for example, the Guggenheim) (Lees et al. 2008:177).¹ These cultural forces helped change the image of the city, focus attention on inner city areas (i.e. Downtowns), reinforce the “importance of urban leisure economies,” and served as means to bring additional people (and potential gentrifiers) into the area (Lees et al. 2008:177).

These cultural strategies also led to a shift in the culture of gentrified areas. Areas undergoing gentrification were and are frequently seen as “artsy” and bohemian, whereby

¹ Also see Gotham 2005; Sibalís 2004; and Smith 1996.

the “culture industry...has converted urban dilapidation into ultra chic” (Smith 1996:18). This cultural shift serves as an additional attraction for potential gentrifiers.

Third-Wave Gentrification Mid 1990s - 2001: Recessional Pause and Subsequent Expansion

During this period, gentrification was utilized as a “generalized strategy for capital accumulation...extended and intensified” (Lees et al. 2008:178). Similar to the first wave of gentrification, during this wave we see less emphasis on individual gentrifiers. However, unlike either of the previous periods, the third wave emphasized “corporate developers” as the vanguard force (rather than the state or private sector) behind gentrification (i.e. property development of condominiums, luxury apartment complexes, etc on existing land and/or in existing structures) (Lees et al. 2008:178). Additionally, governments began more intensively assisting in gentrification via “public policy and investment,” gentrification spread to more “remote” areas of the city, and anti-gentrification activists were largely silenced (Lees et al. 2008:178).² This period saw the spread of gentrification into cities in preindustrial nations (Hammel 2009).

Fourth-Wave Gentrification 2001 – Current: Shifting Political Ideologies

Lees, Slater, and Wyly (2008) suggest that since Hackworth and Smith’s (2001) original waving of gentrification, we could be witnessing a fourth-wave of gentrification wherein the characteristics of the third-wave are further intensified by a shift in national, political ideology to “[favor] the interests of the wealthiest households... [and] dismantle

²Also see Hackworth 2002.

the last of the social welfare programs” (183). Additionally, the fourth-wave illuminates the “fine-grained inequalities of class and race” which mark gentrified neighborhoods (Lees et al. 2008:181). In other words, this wave illustrates the importance of class and race in urban change.

Taken together, these waves illustrate the importance of viewing the progression of gentrification as a process. While gentrification itself develops temporally (as suggested in the waves), it also is a temporal process on the ground: a neighborhood does not simply change overnight, and a gentrifying neighborhood certainly goes through a number of changes overtime. Next, I will turn to a discussion of the political and social ramifications of gentrification. Lastly, I will profile the typical gentrifier.

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF GENTRIFICATION

As discussed previously, gentrification inherently involves changes in the economic (class), cultural, and racial makeups of a neighborhood. Because of its ties to these changes, gentrification is a hotly contested issue in terms of the language surrounding the process and its effects. This section will describe the ways in which gentrification is seen as a positive and practical process, as well as how the language of gentrification and the effects of gentrification combine to make gentrification a political, as well as geographical and sociological, issue.

Gentrification as a Practical Process

Gentrification can be seen as a positive process with practical results. According to Byrne (2003), having wealthier people in a neighborhood “increase[s] the number of residents who can pay taxes, purchase local goods and services, and support the city in state and federal political processes” (405-406, quoted in Lees et al. 2008:196). When looking at gentrification in this way, one can see the possible benefits to an entire community, as having people with more disposable income may bring additional services to the neighborhood. Along with additional services come additional jobs that need to be filled by community members (Byrne 2003). The combination of employment and service opportunities, as well as an increase in wealthy, well-educated people may also work to decrease crime in gentrified areas (Byrne 2003; Lees et al. 2008).

Gentrification may also combat the culture of poverty (Lewis 1961) as “lower-density mixed-income communities” aim to break up concentrations of the poor and create a more amicable social mix (Lees et al. 2008:203). According to the emancipatory city thesis, “gentrification is...a process which unites people in the central city, and creates opportunities for social interaction, tolerance, and cultural diversity” (Lees et al. 2008:209). In other words, through gentrification, people resist traditional notions of concrete difference based on race and class as communities are renovated and regenerated both structurally and spiritually (via diversity, interaction, tolerance, etc).

Additionally, some may argue that in smaller, shrinking cities (such as Toledo, Ohio – the site of this research) gentrification does not present itself as a negative process because there is not a lack of space as there is in cities like Chicago, Boston, or New York. However, I contend that regardless of whether or not space is at a premium, the

effects (socially and physically) of gentrification are still seen and felt. In smaller cities, gentrification remains a political, geographical, and sociological issue (which will be discussed later in this chapter) and should not be disregarded only because of the city's size. I will now turn to a discussion of the ways in which the language of gentrification and the negative effects of gentrification combine to make gentrification a political, as well as geographical and sociological, issue.

The Language of Gentrification: White-Washing the Social, Physical and Historical

The term gentrification is loaded. In other words, the language of gentrification usually paints the process in an unfavorable light. To call a neighborhood “gentrified” or to call a home-owner a “gentrifier” is often seen as a negative attack upon what some see as a “natural” process of succession. Whether or not the process is natural, the debate over whether to paint gentrification as positive or negative is seen most clearly through the use of language.

To avoid using the word “gentrification,” gentrification supporters use a myriad of terms in its place, including, but not limited to: conservation, renaissance, redevelopment, rehabilitation, and historic preservation.³ These terms are often masked by the use of the “frontier myth” which suggests that gentrifiers are really “urban ‘homesteaders’,” or “urban pioneers” with an “adventurous spirit and rugged individualism” which takes them to where “no (white) man has ever gone before” (Smith 1996:13). In other words, they are venturing into the inner city as if they were explorers making claims on the land as though no one had made use of the land prior. This

³ This research uses the terms gentrification, historic preservation, and transitioning interchangeably.

discourse suggests that gentrifiers are simply putting the land to its best, and initially intended, use.

However, Smith (1996) suggests that the frontier mythology is really a cover to describe a process by which inner city areas are “regenerated, cleansed, [and] reinfused with middle-class sensibility” (13). Furthermore, he argues that this myth robs neighborhoods of their individual histories when he suggests that it is “so clichéd, the geographical and historical quality of things so lost” in lieu of a “reinscripton of urban space in terms of class and race” (13-15). This idea of social, historical and physical white-washing has also been suggested in a documentary entitled *Boom! The Sound of Eviction*, where an artist declares that “one day you wake up and realize that a city is being white-washed, its polyglot bohemia surgically replaced by a corporate, consumption loving monoculture” (Cavanaugh, Liiv and Wood, quoted in Lees et al. 2008:257).

Physical and social white-washing is also discussed by Jager (1986). In an examination of Melbourne, he describes the “effacing of an industrial past and a working-class presence, the white-washing of a former social stain...through extensive remodeling” (79-80, 83, 85, quoted in Smith 1996:114). In other words, through physical restoration, or “space demarcation” (Santos and Buzinde 2007:326), “the recent stigma of the inner areas [can] be removed or redefined...’the stigma of labor’... [can be] both removed and made other” (Jager 1986:79-80, 83, 85, quoted in Smith 1996:114). Thus, the physical transformations that accompany gentrification, or rather, “urban conservation,” not only alter the built environment, but also effectively work to erase any undesirable (read: working-class) history, or what may be seen as “moral decay” (Zukin

2010:234). Taken one step further, potentially unattractive histories may be further eradicated through the renaming of neighborhoods and streets, and attaining landmark/historical statuses which recall the most favorable periods experienced in the area while emphasizing middle-class (usually white) control over neighborhood definitions (Kasinitz 1988).

The Language of Gentrification: Displacement and Polarization

In addition to white-washing, the language of gentrification as being a renaissance or a pioneering expedition also masks the harsh reality of the process: “the creation of ‘cities for the few’ results in loss of place for the many” (Lees et al. 2008:275). As middle-class gentrifiers move into a neighborhood, poor, frequently minority, residents are pushed out. Due to increasing house values and (subsequent) rents, previous residents simply cannot afford to stay in their homes. Terminology such as “rehabilitation” or “frontier” suggests that nothing is being taken from anyone and paints gentrification as a natural succession, when the reality is quite the opposite. Residents are frequently displaced and neighborhoods segmented based on class and race (Cohen 1998; Glazer 1988; Hammel 2009; Reiss 1988; Zukin 1987), resulting in “yupper-income housing in low-income neighborhoods” (Smith 1996:25). Efforts at gentrification via historic preservation often end with the same results as poor residents cannot afford to restore their homes according to historic standards and cannot demolish the structure due to rules surrounding landmark status. Thus, poor residents are forced to sell their homes to incoming (middle-class) residents and leave the area they have been priced out of (Kasinitz 1988; Tournier 1980). As we can see, Lees, Slater, and Wyly (2008) seem to be

on point when they suggest that, “there is nothing natural or optimal about gentrification, displacement, and neighborhood polarization” (49).

According to the emancipatory city thesis, an influx of middle-class, largely white, residents into a low-income area will increase diversity in the area and lead to a more amicable social mix (Caulfield 1989; Caulfield 1994; Lees 2000; Lees et al. 2008). However, as Lees, Slater, and Wyly (2008) suggest, this is an “uneasy cohabitation” (202). With little social cohesion in gentrifying areas, social classes tend to “self segregate” (Lees et al. 2008:212),⁴ and the relationships between households of different socioeconomic statuses “tend to be superficial at best and downright hostile at worst” (Lees et al. 2008:207).⁵ Thus, gentrification aides not only in the displacement of “native” residents, but also in the polarization of remaining residents within gentrifying neighborhoods.

Gentrification as a Political, Geographical and Sociological Issue

According to Smith (1996), gentrification is more about investment and capital accumulation/return than a desire to be part of a community. At the heart of investment and property ownership in cities of every size are the political concerns of “power, control, and the right to exclude” (Lees et al. 2008:83). In a process that necessarily involves class and race, political questions take on utmost importance: Whose home is this? Whose voice will be heard? “In whose image is space created” (Harvey 1973, quoted in Lees et al. 2008:263)? These few questions and political concerns are at the core of the debates and controversies surrounding gentrification and make it a political

⁴ Also see Butler 1997; Butler and Robson 2001; Butler and Robson 2003; and Smith 1996.

⁵ Also see by Legates and Hartman 1986; Uitermark, Duyvendak, and Kleinhans 2007; and Zukin 1987.

issue as they concern notions of power and authority by certain groups over other groups and geographical space.

As an urban process involving the transformation of space, gentrification is necessarily a spatial, or geographical, process. Geographically speaking, physical space (housing structures, land, etc) is transformed through the process of gentrification. The possession of one's own space is a critical issue involved with gentrification as one group is gaining space and one is losing it. A physical, geographical structure serves as an investment and a means for claims-making. However, this exchange/transformation is also necessarily sociological in that gentrification also involves *place*. In other words, "property is much more than a financial asset – it is a home, the place we belong to and the place which belongs to us, and therefore has a critically important use value which far outweighs its exchange (market) value" (Lees et al. 2008:272).⁶ Property and housing also serve as status symbols through which identity is created, transformed, and maintained (Redfern 2003). Through our attachments, the importance of space and place as sociological issues become obvious as our culture and our identities are produced and shaped within these relations (Santos and Buzinde 2007). Additionally, the social consequences of gentrification, as well as who gentrifiers are (in terms of identity, demographics, etc), also lend themselves to sociological analysis.

GENTRIFIERS

In this section, I will discuss gentrifiers. Similar to waves in which gentrification occurs, Hammel (2009) discusses gentrifiers as progressing in stages. According to

⁶ Also see Martin 2005.

Hammel, the earliest gentrifiers are “risk oblivious,” open to living in neighborhoods that lacked many middle-class amenities, and are seen as “significant investment risks” (365). The stage of gentrifiers typically consists of college students, artists, gay men, lesbians, and/or single mothers, or what Zukin (2010) calls the “hipperati” (7). Together, these groups all desire to escape something, whether it be escaping a long commute to work or school, or escaping discrimination by creating what Hammel (2009) calls “safe havens” in gentrifying neighborhoods (365). The second stage of gentrifiers is seen as “risk-prone or risk-aware in-movers.” These gentrifiers are attracted to the culture (or rather, “counter-culture”) of the neighborhood, the diversity, and/or the less expensive houses. At this stage, gentrifiers are aware of the potential of their investment as they see the neighborhood is gentrifying, and are what Zukin (2010) calls the “bourgeois bohemians” (7). The last stage of gentrifiers is “risk-adverse.” These gentrifiers pay considerably more for their homes, enjoy “upper-middle-class” amenities, and form “elite urban enclave[s].”

As Hammel (2009) points out, it is difficult to apply these stages of gentrifiers to neighborhoods because of the variability in form that gentrification often takes. However, the stages/waves give broad insight to the process and to the incoming gentry.

Reasons for Gentrifying

Whether or not gentrifiers can be easily categorized in terms of stages, we can discuss broad reasons for why gentrifiers are gentrifying. First, starting in the 1980s researchers began to tie gentrifiers to “both liberal ideology and a culture of consumption” (Hammel 2009:365). In this way, gentrifiers were attracted to the

neighborhoods for two reasons: diversity and profit. They were attracted to the diversity of the neighborhood, but also saw the potential for capital accumulation: they were consuming notions of diversity and consuming housing in order to socially differentiate themselves from what they saw as the standardization of consumption in the suburbs (i.e. cookie-cutter homes) (Smith 1996:114).

The second reason given to why gentrification was occurring was that a “new” middle-class was “seek[ing] to identify themselves through the process of gentrification” (Hammel 2009:365).⁷ Using Bourdieu’s conceptualization of habitus, the theorists of this perspective link the “location in which class constitution is produced [with] aesthetic dispositions and social practices” (Lees et al. 2008:120).⁸ In other words, class constitution has more to do with lifestyle choices. This is most clearly seen in Richard Florida’s “creative class” which mixes a “bourgeois work ethic with bohemian culture” (Lees et al. 2008:xx). According to Florida (2002) the creative class wants outdoor recreation (with options for extreme sports, hiking, and climbing), “cultural districts” (182), nightlife and “on demand entertainment” (225), “historic architecture” (Lees et al. 2008:xx), and other middle-class lifestyle options. This class values “individuality,” “diversity and openness,” and “meritocracy” (Florida 2002:77-80). Their class identity is based not only on what they do, but also where they live and what that stands for (229). These amenities of middle-class lifestyle/culture help form a middle-class identity within the inner-city, and this desire for class constitution is why they gentrify.

⁷ Also see Smith 1996.

⁸ Also see Podmore 1998.

Who are the Gentrifiers?

Regardless of their reason for gentrifying, gentrifiers tend to share a few common factors. It is crucial to note here that I am not attempting to provide an all-encompassing description. I accept that there are trends in gentrification which go against the norm and may only be given scant attention here, if any at all. My intention in this section is to discuss the factors common among most traditional gentrifiers. I will briefly discuss gender, race, and sexual orientation in terms of gentrifiers.⁹

Gender. As mentioned previously in the section discussing the stages of gentrifiers, single mothers played a significant role in the first wave of gentry. According to Lees, Slater, and Wyly (2008), beginning in the early 1980s, researchers began to acknowledge that “women were playing an active and important role in bringing about gentrification” (99). A number of other researchers also pinpointed the role of women in gentrification (Boyd 2005; Holcomb and Beauregard 1981; Markusen 1981). However, women are only “marginal gentrifiers” in that females, especially single mothers, “[have] only a very moderate income” which questions both their intent as gentrifiers (moving into marginal areas for profit) and their ability to continue gentrifying (restoring or upgrading their home and additional homes) (Rose 1984, quoted in Smith 1996:102). “Marginal gentrifiers,” namely women, were attracted to gentrifying neighborhoods for the “support services” offered in the neighborhood as well as the community’s proximity to inner-city workplaces (Lees et al. 2008:99).¹⁰ This combination allowed women with

⁹ In presenting only a basic and rudimentary overview of gentrifiers, this discussion only covers three major demographics and necessarily leaves out a number of other factors (i.e. money and education).

¹⁰ Also see Rose 1989 and Rose and LeBourdais 1986.

children to work and take care of their homes and children more easily and with less travel time, and allowed women without children to be closer to occupational opportunities (Lees et al. 2008). This is not to say, however, that only women are gentrifiers. Rather, I have aimed to emphasize the importance of females in gentrification.

Race. The typical conceptualization of a gentrifier is as white and middle-class (emphasizing a general advantage in terms of economics and education based on both race and class). While the most prominent image of gentrifiers fits this profile, a number of researchers have pointed out the importance of recognizing the existence of non-white gentrifiers who may be attempting to avoid racism/discrimination, maintain black culture, and/or keep traditional ethnic and racial neighborhoods in tact (i.e. Harlem) (Boyd 2005; Freeman 2006; Lees et al. 2008; Taylor 2002). However, it is important to point out that whites wanting to purchase homes have an advantage as non-white gentrifiers still face significant barriers in obtaining home loans and community acceptance (Howell 2006; Lees et al. 2008; Squires 2003; Squires 2004). Additionally, black gentrifiers must also fight against the mainstream conceptualization of a white gentrifier coming to displace minority residents (Boyd 2005). Combined, all of these factors make gentrification by whites “easier” and more prolific.

Sexual Orientation. While the typical gentrifier can be gay or straight, gentrification has historically and frequently been prompted by gay people, or more

specifically by gay men (Castells 1983; Lees et al. 2008). Castells (1983) offers three main ways in which gay individuals have aided in gentrification:

1. Affluent gay professionals bought inexpensive properties and hired skilled renovators to improve their use and exchange value.
2. Gay realtors and interior decorators used their commercial and artistic skills and bought property in low-cost areas, and repaired and renovated the buildings in order to sell them at a profit.
3. Less affluent gays formed collectives to either rent or buy inexpensive buildings, and fixed them up themselves (this was the most common form of gentrification). (quoted in Lees et al. 2008 P. 104-105)

In other words, efforts at gentrification are expressed through gays at every social class and are carried out using a variety of means: contractors, decorators, and sweat equity. While this is certainly important, it is also important to look at the reasons why they chose these neighborhoods in the first place.

According to Sibalís (2004), gay individuals are often attracted to marginal areas for a number of reasons¹¹:

a physically attractive historical site, a successful programme of urban renewal by national and municipal governments, a strategic location in the center..., rents and real-estate prices initially low..., a growing gay market..., the determination of certain businessmen to promote a gay lifestyle and the eagerness of a new generation of homosexuals to embrace it. (P. 1754)

All of these attractions serve as a means to make gay individuals feel more comfortable (i.e. gay friendly churches, bookstores, gay bars, etc) and allow them to create “safe havens” (Hammel 2009:365) in neighborhoods they can afford. In addition to these initial attractions, in a discussion of Castells (1983) work on San Francisco, Lees, Slater, and Wyly (2008) suggest that gays often seek out and form these neighborhoods in an attempt to “combat oppression, develop economic and political clout, and gain access to the state

¹¹ This is not an exhaustive list of reasons gay men gentrify. This analysis lacks a discussion of homosexuality, masculinity, and gentrification. For more information, see Lauria and Knopp 1985.

apparatus” (213). In this way, gentrification by gays is both a political stance of unity through physical and symbolic strength in numbers, and an economic decision to live in a community with better services for homosexuals (Castells 1983; Lees et al. 2008; Sibalis 2004). Sibalis (2004) suggests that the notion of strength in numbers is not limited to gays in the neighborhood; instead, the shared experiences of oppression and exclusion can lead to “fraterniz[ation]” and protection among minority groups.

Certainly gentrifiers are not a homogeneous group and include not only gay men, but also lesbians, bisexuals, asexuals, and heterosexuals as well. This discussion is not meant to suggest that all gentrifiers are gay. Rather, I have intended to illustrate the historical importance of gays in gentrification efforts.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has aimed to give a brief overview of gentrification. By no means have I attempted to give a full account of the research conducted on gentrification or gentrifiers. Rather, I have chosen to selectively highlight three key points: 1) gentrification is a contestable, political process whereby neighborhoods become highly exclusionary based on class and race; 2) the ideological conduits of space and place make gentrification a geographical and sociological issue; and 3) while gentrifiers are not a homogenous group, they tend to be white and middle-class. For the purposes of this research, I will focus primarily on the notion of whiteness. The next chapter will discuss in more depth the issue of whiteness, the discourse of critical whiteness, and the connections between gentrification and the construction of white racial identity.

Chapter 3

Literature Review on Whiteness

Despite being historically contested, race and what race means in the United States are still very controversial subjects. Often times, race is thought of as a biological concept that allows a person to determine the innate characteristics of another. However, in the nineteenth century, scholars such as Max Weber and Frank Boaz argued, respectively, that race is not a biological concept; rather it is socially-constructed and there is no real continuum of “‘higher’ and ‘lower’ cultural groups” (Omi and Winant 1986:52). Despite the work of early scholars and their attempts to change the way people look at race, race in America has allowed many individuals the unfortunate ability to play “amateur biologist” or “naïve scientist” by which they use their racial beliefs (which at this point are based on outward appearance) to determine what kind of person another is (Jackson and Heckman 2002). In seeing one’s race, these “amateur biologists” assume that characteristics such as “temperament, sexuality, intelligence, athletic ability, and aesthetic preferences” (among other things) can be both deciphered and fixed upon an individual (Omi and Winant 1986:54). In essence, a “racial etiquette” is formulated. This not only leads to racist ideology, but also aids in racial formation, or “the process by which social, economic, and political forces determine the content and importance of

racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings” (Omi and Winant 1986:53).

The social formation of white racial identity, or whiteness, has frequently been ignored in scholarly research but is, in my opinion, often unconsciously at the forefront of racial debates. By this, I am suggesting that race is a social construct (Ajrouch and Jamal 2007; Gustafson 2007; Hartman 2004; Howard 2004; Jackson and Heckman 2002; Omi and Winant 1986). Whites have socially constructed the concepts of their own and others’ racial identities in order to protect their race and the privileges that accompany it. According to Frankenberg (1993), whiteness is defined as, “First...a social location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second...a place from which white people look at ourselves, and at society. Third...a set of cultural practices that are unusually unmarked and unnamed” (1). She goes on to say that whiteness is, “a relational category, one that is co-constructed within a range of other racial and cultural categories” (236). Best (2003) agrees with Frankenberg by suggesting that white racial identity is socially constructed and that it must be studied “relationally” and as “contextually situated” (898).

Race is a “sociohistorical concept” (Omi and Winant 1986:52). When we look at and study race, we must look at the meanings ascribed upon it as grounded in “specific social relations” and take note of the “historical context in which they are embedded” (Omi and Winant 1986:52). I chose to focus solely on whiteness in the context of race relations because, as Frankenberg (1993) states, “...it may be more difficult for white people to say ‘Whiteness has nothing to do with me – I’m not white’ than to say ‘Race has nothing to do with me – I’m not racist’” (6).

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the social construction of race, particularly in terms of white racial identities. I begin by discussing a few of the specific social relations that have occurred in order to socially construct whiteness and I embed these in history. The work of social identity theorists and symbolic interactionists will subsequently be applied to white racial identity formulation. I will then move on to discuss what it exactly it means to be white by discussing issues of white privilege, color-blind ideology, and strategies used to by whites to avoid race talk. Then, a portion of this research will be used to discuss scholarly suggestions for improving race relations – including creating safe and constructive language to talk about race, creating safe spaces to talk about race, and increasing interaction between races – and criticisms of past research – including a lack of discussion seeing whiteness as a “cultural stigma” (McKinney 2004) and too abstract guidance for what whites can do to combat histories of racism. Lastly, I will illustrate the ways in which gentrification and whiteness studies can intermix through a discussion of the exclusionary nature of whiteness and white privilege in both place and space. I would like to note that it is not my intention to blame all white people of being racist, but rather to illustrate that racism is a system of power that is beyond the individual.

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WHITE RACIAL IDENTITY

The development of whiteness studies can be attributed to the 1980’s and feminists who could no longer ignore the issue of race. In particular, white feminists could not ignore the fact that their standpoints, lives, and criticisms of the world were not really comparable to those of women of color (Frankenberg 1993). Despite having such a

recent conception, my research divides whiteness studies into three waves (or socio-historical trends) that go back in history much further than the 1980's, and to times where individuals began using whiteness as a tool to divide and dominate.

First Wave Whiteness Studies

According to Twine and Gallagher (2008), the interdisciplinary study of the development of white racial identity has occurred in three waves. While somewhat overlapping, these three waves do have their distinct features. The first wave of white studies began with the work of DuBois and his contributions to critical theory. Twine and Gallagher (2008) discuss DuBois' (1935) work entitled *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880*, in which he discusses the process by which working-class individuals came to identify with their white racial identity. During the time of slavery, the white working-class chose to unite with the governing white dominants rather than join hands with working-class freed slaves. The white working-class did this because they were given a greater probability of admission into the white race. By aligning themselves with the domineering white race, they were given access to a social psychological "wage" in the form of "social status, symbolic capital and deference from blacks" (Twine and Gallagher 2008:8).¹² This, in essence, is when an understanding, or rather, recognition, of whiteness began. Roediger (1991) and Lensmire (2008) also suggest that the development of white identity coincides with this time period. Lensmire (2008) sees the reaction of the white working-class as being a way to align with white elites and "define themselves in relation to other workers who confronted even worse conditions than them – enslaved Africans"

¹² Also see Hartman 2004.

(306). Roediger (1991) goes on to discuss that their reactions also set them up to be seen not as slaves or working-class people, but rather as people who were simply not black. In other words, the reactions of the white working-class allowed them to separate their identities from their occupations and focus their identities more solidly on their privileged race. This allowed white laborers to be set apart not only from non-white laborers, but also to all people who did not belong to the privileged, white race.

In effect, what white laborers did was create an “Other.” The process of creating an Other by which to compare one’s (white) self has been well documented by several white studies scholars (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Green, Sonn, and Matsebula 2007; Guess 2006; Gustafson 2007; Howard 2004; Lensmire 2008; Mazzei 2008; Perry 2007; Weis and Lombardo 2002). In line with the development of whiteness recognition, the creation of the Other was impressed upon the blacks by the white working-class as the image of a “preindustrial, erotic, careless style of life that the white worker hated and longed for” (Roediger 1991:14). Here, blacks were made to seem marginal, lagging, and beast-like in terms of their sexuality and lifestyle. In terms of being labeled as more erotic, according to Macionis (2010), minorities are often stereotyped as being “more sexual than whites” (193).¹³ Ellison (1953/1995) states that the social construction of the Other, “projected aspects of an internal symbolic process through which...the white American prepares himself emotionally to perform a social role” (quoted in Lensmire 2008:309). Therefore, there is a social psychological need on part of the white laborers to create the Other by which to compare and give meaning to one’s self and one’s actions.

¹³ Also see Frankenberg 1993.

While Ellison (1953/1995) and Lensmire (2008) saw the construction of the Other as a necessary evil (necessary in the fact that it provided a type of script by which to gauge one's actions), Perry (2007) saw the process of creating an Other as an "extension of the larger question, 'Who am I?'" (378). She reviews and discusses Giddens's (1991) work on self identity and argues that self identity (in this case, white racial identity) will protect itself and screen out those things that threaten its integrity. Therefore, the white working-class creates the Other as a means to distance themselves. Distancing themselves from the Other (read: non-whites) insulates the boundaries between peoples seen as moral and right (whites) and those seen as immoral, wrong, and even abnormal (non-whites). This insulation allows whites to better guard themselves against perceived threats to their moral and privileged identities (i.e. working-class status). This argument is supplemented by a recent study conducted by Weis and Lombardo (2002) which found that white, working-class men in Buffalo, NY continue to construct an Other in order to gauge and compare their "own whiteness and goodness" (7). When white working-class men compare themselves to Others who embody all that is bad and immoral, they are able to justify their privileges as white men as they are seen as good, moral, and right in comparison.

First wave whiteness studies also recognize the "blind spot to racial inequality" (Twine and Gallagher 2008). This recognition began in the 1970's when DuBois argued that white people are generally not conscious of the effects that racial inequalities and prejudices have on society (DuBois 1996; Lewis 2004; Mazzei 2008). In addition, when they are conscious of the possible effects, they refuse to actually "see" it (DuBois 1899/1996; Twine and Gallagher 2008). By refusing to "see" race, whites attribute

nonracial solutions and explanations to events that are racial in their nature (Bonilla-Silva 2006). (This is hardly an old phenomenon; a portion of this research will be dedicated to a discussion of contemporary color-blind ideology.) Due to the reluctance of people of white racial identity to accept the social realities of race, the realities of whiteness have become normalized, naturalized and idealized (Green et al. 2007; Guess 2006; Knowles and Peng 2005; McKinney 2004; Perry 2007; Twine and Gallagher 2008).

The normalization of whiteness has had a massive effect on people who identify with a white racial identity. Due to the normalization of whiteness, it and its privileges are unconsciously unfelt and invisible to whites (McIntosh 1988; Perry 2007; Twine and Gallagher 2008).

Second Wave Whiteness Studies

The second wave of whiteness studies is characterized by accounts of personal or individual racism rather than larger structures that support such racist behavior and systems (Twine and Gallagher 2008). In other words, the focus was on cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957). In a discussion of Gunnar Myrdal (1944), Twine and Gallagher (2008) argue that the question on everyone's mind was how to balance the idea of equal opportunity against the idea of racism and the Jim Crow laws. Research focused on how the average (white) person was thinking about these things rather than what was structurally and socially supporting those thoughts.

In addition to focusing on the individual, the wave also saw the introduction of critical legal theory which saw whiteness (and the laws that gave access and claim to resources given to white people) as property that needed to be policed, guarded and

regulated (Harris 1993; Twine and Gallagher 2008). Also, some attention was given to the ways minorities had been “written out of history” and white normativity (Twine and Gallagher 2008).

It was during this wave that scholars began to explore how immigration had affected the social construction of whiteness (Ajrouch and Jamal 2007; Guess 2006; Howard 2004; McKinney 2004; Omi and Winant 1986; Roediger 2006; Tran-Adams 2007; Twine and Gallagher 2008). In the early twentieth century, Roediger (2006) discusses that incoming immigrants who were not European (i.e. Australians) were often given the label of “inbetween peoples” (Orsi 1992). Other labels included “situationally white,” “not quite white,” “off-white,” “semiracialized,” “and conditionally white” (Roediger 2006:13). The label of “inbetween persons” meant that these individuals were “‘inbetween’ hard racism and full inclusion – neither securely white or non-white...” (Roediger 2006:12). As inbetween peoples, the immigrants found themselves more closely tied to the people of white racial identity only when the issues of minority rights were at hand. However, when only whites and inbetween peoples were concerned, the discussion quickly turned to the deficiencies of the inbetweens. Thus, they were categorized as white based on their outward appearance (read: skin color), but based on their country of origin, they may be considered inbetweens (Roediger 2006).

Second wave scholarship highlighted the situational and historical construction of whiteness. They highlighted the social (rather than biological) construction of whiteness by showing that conceptions of “who is white” have changed over time. For instance, Roediger (2006) highlighted the impact of immigration patterns on whiteness. In 1898, the United States Commissioner of Immigration (Terence Powderly) implemented a new

instrument by which to report and classify the races of incoming immigrants. The new reporting would go beyond simply listing the country of origin because according to Powderly, the old instrument “gives no clues to their (immigrants) characteristics and their resultant influence upon the community of which they are to become members” (quoted in Roediger 2006:15). To undertake this new project, New York City immigration officials would mark off “color,” “country and province of birth,” “mother tongue,” and “religion” to decide which race the incoming people belonged to. These configurations were made without having any question about race in the paperwork that the immigrants, themselves, filled out.

A few years later, when confronting this issue of race and immigration, it was decided that determining race between “white, black, American Indian and others” was fine, “but for the state to count intra-European racial distinctions threatened to end in ‘justifying discrimination against certain *classes* of citizens’ (emphasis mine). Therefore, the United States immigration officials, as well as the commissioner, were far more concerned about keeping the races clearly divided (except for Europeans) than maintaining racial and class equality.

Though it may seem applicable to the situation, Roediger (2006) warns against applying the term “ethnicity” to the issue of what makes a person white or “off-white” because at the time there was no use of the term “ethnicity.” In fact, it was not until after 1940 that “ethnic” or “ethnicity” was regularly used, and almost 1970 before the term “white ethnic” was used or seen (18). Roediger points out in his discussion of the work of Werner Sollors, that this could be another tactic used by whites to maintain their dominant status as well as the divide between races as the “Greek root word *ethos*

possessed a curious double meaning...it usually meant 'others' but could also refer to any 'nation' or 'people,' including one's own people" (21). This can be tied back to the discussion of first wave whiteness studies and the notion of the Other. Thus, the rejection of ethnicity by and for a large number of whites allows whites to utilize the concept of the Other's ethnicity to base their own white identities off of and compare themselves to (Weis and Lombardo 2002). By denying the existence of white ethnics and recognizing the existence of non-white ethnics, people of white racial identity make their whiteness the norm and the ethnicity of the Other becomes strange, exotic, and bad.

Perry (2007) found that the separation of whites from the Other is still very much a contemporary issue. She studied sense of group position and white universal identity in high schools and found that upon the arrival of multicultural week, white students were denied any ethnic heritage. While multicultural week gave people the opportunity to learn about other cultures and perspectives, she argues that it also supported and "reproduced white supremacist, universal tenets of white identity" (306). The support lends its hand to "the public displays of particularities of 'ethnic' students before an audience in which white students were always spectators and never participants. White students tacitly understood that they had no cultural particularities of their own" (306). Here, whites are again the norm while the Other is strange, exotic, and bad.

Third Wave Whiteness Studies

Third wave whiteness studies consist of the newest and most innovative ways of researching white identity discourse. According to Twine and Gallagher (2008), it can be distinguished from the first two waves in three ways. First, third wave whiteness utilizes

innovative research methodologies that allow further exploration into how people “learn race and racism” such as internet sites, racial consciousness biographies, music and photo-elicitation interviews (12). Second, it is characterized by an exploration of the “cultural practices and discursive strategies” that whites use “as they struggle to recuperate, reconstitute and restore white identities and the supremacy of whiteness in post-apartheid, post-industrial, post-imperial, post-Civil Rights” (13). This is done, in part, through feminist research on the ways people partake in “white talk.” And lastly, third wave whiteness looks at the ways immigrants from the Caribbean, Latin America, Mexico (and elsewhere outside Europe) formulate white identities. Third wave whiteness is interested in the “strategic deployment of whiteness” towards these groups and the ways they produce whiteness (13).

In addition to the main three differentiating marks of third wave whiteness studies, this wave also attempts to view whiteness as an assortment of multifaceted identities that “are historically grounded, class specific, politically manipulated and gendered social locations that inhabit local custom and national sentiments within the context of the new ‘global village’” (Twine and Gallagher 2008:6). Therefore, whiteness and white privilege can be seen and felt as a “taken-for-granted entitlement, a desired social status, a perceived source of victimization and a tenuous situational identity” (7).

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

The notion of whiteness will be analyzed using two theories: Social Identity Theory and Blumer’s (1969) three basic premises of symbolic interactionism. Social identity theory will be used to illustrate and evaluate the previous discussion on the social

construction of whiteness while Blumer's premises of symbolic interactionism will be used to explore the issues of white privilege, color-blind ideology, and white discursive strategies toward race talk. (Note: The discussion of Blumer will follow the section entitled, "What it Means to Be White".)

Social Identity Theory

The social construction of whiteness depends quite heavily on the notion of identity and categorization (Hogg 2003; Knowles and Peng 2005; Lewis 2004; Owens 2003; Wong and Cho 2005). According to Hogg (2003), social identity theorists argue that "people define and evaluate themselves in terms of the groups to which they belong – groups provide people with a collective self-concept, a social identity..." (484). Owens (2003) further suggests that self evaluation goes beyond those groups that an individual recognizes themselves as being a part of to those groups that a person is "*socially recognized*" as being a part of (224). By evaluating one's self in terms of those groups they are socially recognized as being a part of, an individual can "accept or reject social definitions that are applied to them, even if others have opposing views" (Owens 2003:224). This concept can be applied to the previous discussion on the social construction of white racial identity in that whites are often unaware of their having a racial identity. While whites may be socially recognized as being a part of the white race, whites themselves may not accept this categorization and are able to reject the collective social definition. In rejecting their position and definition, whites fail to see race as an issue.

Social identities and their place in the lives of all people are extremely important issues to social identity theorists who argue that the purpose of a social identity is to “define, prescribe, and evaluate who one is, how one should think, feel, and act...” (Hogg 2003:484). This helps in understanding how whites categorize the Other. By providing a guide on how to create one’s self, whites know how to create their Other. Hogg (2003) furthers this discussion by stating, “...people have a strong desire to establish or maintain the evaluative superiority of their own group over relevant other groups – there is a fierce intergroup struggle for evaluatively positive group distinctiveness...the context of group behavior rests on the specific social identity that is salient” (484-5). This can be related back to the social construction of whiteness in that in this case, the specific, salient, social identity is not that of being white, but rather the collective social identity is centered around simply not being black (Roediger 1991). By uniting as the opposition to the Other, a struggle does ensue to ensure dominant status. Positive dominant status is fought for by the white racial group engaging in color-blind ideology and the refusal to see race as a real issue.

Further acknowledgement of the creation of the Other by both social identity theorists and self-categorization theorists is seen in Hogg’s (2003) discussion of prototypes. According to Hogg, “people represent groups as prototypes – multidimensional fuzzy sets of attributes that describe and prescribe perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and actions that define the in-group and distinguish it from relevant out-groups” (485). These prototypes eventually lead to depersonalization in that they do not concern themselves with the individual, but rather with the category (or categories) in which a person will fall (Hogg 2003). The idea of prototypes can be related back to the

“amateur biologists” who used physical attributes (namely skin color) to describe and prescribe characteristics to groups of people (Omi and Winant 1986:54). It can also be related to the discussion of how whiteness was socially constructed via immigration officials in the early twentieth century. They too used racial prototypes to distinguish characteristics of the in-group and out-group. Also, they were not so concerned with making sure the unique lives of the individuals were taken into account when the officials guessed their race and how they would act in and benefit their new community. Rather, they were fully concerned with if the person was a part of the in-group (white) or the out-group (non-white). By creating and maintaining these prototypes, the struggle of the governing group to remain dominant is once again observed.

Psychological social psychologists take this argument even further by suggesting that a social identity is a “cognitive *tool* individuals use to partition, categorize, and order their social environment and their own place in it” (Owens 2003:224). This then is a direct effort to “simplify the world of social and nonsocial stimuli into separate groups of like and unlike stimuli” (Owens 2003:224). By applying these arguments to the “intermediate level” of social interaction, which is where one compares their own self category to the categories of the out-group based on perceived social similarities and differences, one can assume that the use of such a cognitive tool is both deliberate in creating the out-group (Other) and maintaining one’s status in the in-group (Lewis 2004; Owens 2003; Turner et al 1987). Such a deliberate act of separation can be compared to the previous discussion on white workers in the enslaved South. When whites purposefully aligned themselves with the white elite rather than the slaves, they partook in a conscious effort to partition, categorize, and order themselves and their lives.

Knowles and Peng (2005) solidify this argument by stating, “White in-group identification may be one mechanism behind these historical and legal phenomena” (238). In other words, the creation of in-group status based on whiteness served as an impetus for categorization based on race instead of class during the time of slavery in the South.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE WHITE

What it means to be white in contemporary American society is a highly debatable subject. Third wave whiteness studies has begun to pave the way for more in-depth understanding by acknowledging that white racial identity is multifaceted and can be seen and felt as a “taken-for-granted entitlement, a desired social status, a perceived source of victimization and a tenuous situational identity” (Twine and Gallagher 2008:7). Furthering third wave whiteness studies and the idea that whiteness is not evenly or equally felt, McWhorter (2005) suggests that in any racist society there are three types of people: “there are oppressed people (those without much power), dominators (those with power who intend to oppress others), and people who exercise privilege (those with power who do not intend to oppress others but do so anyway)” (546). For much of this discussion dominators and those with privilege have been lumped together in order to simplify the concepts presented, however, for this section I will differentiate between the two. In discussing what it means to be white, I will focus mainly on those with privilege who do not intend on committing “individual acts of meanness” (McIntosh 1988:1). My reason for doing this is the increase in use of color-blind ideology in the United States

and its influence on the way meanings are attached to issues of race and the discursive strategies employed by whites to avoid race talk.

White Privilege

As stated previously, the induction of white normativity and the creation of the Other have led to whites being oblivious to the privileges offered to them from their racial status (Ajrouch and Jamal 2007). Despite their apparent invisibility, white privilege is very much a reality and very apparent to those not in the position of whites (Green et al. 2007; Jackson and Heckman 2002; Lewis 2004). McIntosh (1988) discusses the realization of the privileges appointed to her as a white woman. She relates the process of racial consciousness to gender inequality and males. In other words, just as men are not taught to identify male privilege, whites are not taught to identify the privileges that accompany their racial status (Lund and Nabavi 2008; McIntosh 1988). She sees white privilege as “an invisible package of unearned assets that [she] can count on cashing in each day, but about which [she] was to remain oblivious” (McIntosh 1988:31). She goes on to say, “White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks...The pressure to avoid it is great, for in facing it I must give up the mystery of meritocracy” (31-34). In an autoethnographic article by Magnet (2006), she mirrors McIntosh’s hesitance in reference to white privilege by stating that while she is ready to talk about white privilege and how it has benefited her, she is not yet ready to give it up. Allen (2004) goes as far as to say, “all whites gain power, status, and privilege from this system, even if we are actively anti-racist” (130).

Despite whites often being hesitant to let go of their privilege, the privileges that accompany white racial identity are very real. White privilege is defined by countless freedoms/advantages, such as: knowing you can be around people of your own race most of the time (McIntosh 1988), being able to turn on the television and see people that are of your race widely represented, having school curricula that “testify to the existence” of your race (32), not having your race work against you in financial situations, feeling welcome in public institutions, never being asked where you are *really* from (Lund and Nabavi 2008), and feeling you have a voice in your government (Green et al. 2007). These are only a very select few of the privileges afforded to whites. It is important to note, however, that often times these privileges and prejudices are unconscious to the whites who bear them (DuBois 1996; Twine and Gallagher 2008).

Despite often being unconscious to whites, white privilege is foundational to racism. By supporting the status quo and not fighting the structural and social systems that breed racism, whites engage in a form of “everyday racism” (McKinney 2004:39). In addition, white privilege and racism has been maintained, created and reinforced by the induction of color-blind ideology in the United States.

Color-blind Ideology/Racism

The post-Civil Rights era has seen an ideological shift from the blatancy of the racist, Jim Crow South to a new color-blind society (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Color-blind ideology seeks to refute the importance of color and urges individuals to ignore racial dissimilarities in favor of “pan-human characteristics,” or rather, those characteristics

which are universal to all humans (Knowles and Peng 2005:225).¹⁴ While such a discourse may sound like an achievement or progression on part of anti-racist advocates, it has often had the reverse effect (Tran-Adams 2007). Suggesting there are no differences between racial groups and refusing to “see” color has deepened the issue of white universality as color-blind ideology bases itself off of white norms (Green et al. 2007; McKinney 2004). So, as whites “fight” racism with white normativity, they are once again using their white privilege to avoid discussing race. It has been argued that whites have a “vested interest in eliminating race talk” as it “minimizes the extent to which we notice and discuss the lingering effects of white racism” (MacMullan 2005:280). This process of silencing race talk has been identified by black feminist scholars, such as Hill Collins (2004), as central to the “new racism.”

Additionally, by idealizing pan-human characteristics and refuting differences, it has left this generation without the language to successfully discuss issues of race (Best 2003; Bonilla-Silva 2006; McWhorter 2005). In fact, this denial of differences coupled with no safe language for discussion has led many young people to problematize their white racial identity by preoccupying themselves with appearing non-racist (Bonilla-Silva 2006; McKinney 2004).

The struggle to appear non-racist was documented quite well in an article by Best (2003). In an ethnographic study examining the ways in which whiteness is created through interactions between the researcher and the white women being researched, Best found that the women being interviewed varied in reaction from shameful answering to complete refusal of the question when asked if race was an important issue. She found

¹⁴ Also see Lewis 2004 and MacMullan 2005.

that when asking a white woman if race mattered (specifically in the context of shopping), the woman shamefully looked at the floor and whispered yes (905). Later, when interviewing another woman about whether or not she acknowledges racial differences, the woman initially refused to answer. After more discussion, the woman finally “confessed” that she noticed “differences” but did not “see” race. To the women interviewed, even being asked questions about race “registered” as “decidedly racist.” To admit to seeing racial differences was unforgivable and contradictory to how they defined themselves.

Discursive Strategies to Avoid Race Talk

The previous discussion is a perfect example of the absence of acceptable language through which to discuss race. Due to this absence, whites often employ a number of discursive strategies to avoid discussing race (race talk) which creates a racial etiquette (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Green et al. 2007; Gustafson 2007; Lewis 2004; Mazzei 2008; Omi and Winant 1986). The strategies utilized by whites depend on an individual’s personal ideology. The personal style of an individual’s ideology, which can be defined as “its peculiar *linguistic manners and rhetorical strategies*...to the technical tools that allow users to articulate its frames and story lines,” is very important to understanding how one approaches race talk (Bonilla-Silva 2006:53). Bonilla-Silva (2006) gives an example of how such style can be conceptualized:

...the style of an ideology is the thread used to join pieces of fabric into garments. The neatness of the garments, however, depends on the context in which they are being stitched. If the garment is being assembled in an open forum (with minorities present or in public venues), dominant actors will weave its fibers carefully (“I am not a racist, but...”). If, in contrast, the needlework is being done among friends, the cuts will be rough and the seams loose (“Darned lazy niggers”). (P. 53)

In conceptualizing ideology, Bonilla-Silva (2006) discusses eight main discursive strategies used by whites to avoid race talk, or, in other words, to carefully weave the fibers of racial ideology. The eight strategies are as follows:

1. *“Racism without Racial Epithets”*: Race is no longer talked about in a straightforward manner. When talking in public, whites “talk in a very careful, indirect, hesitant manner and, occasionally, even through coded language” (55).
2. *“I am not prejudiced, but...” and “Some of my best friends are...”*: These phrases act as “discursive buffers” that whites use when something they say or have said could sound racist (57). This can be seen frequently during discussions of affirmative action and interracial marriage.
3. *“I am not black, so I don’t know”*: This is used more frequently by young whites before they give very strong opinion answers. It is often heard in conjunction with ideas of reverse discrimination. By going between not knowing and giving strong answers, Bonilla-Silva sees this strategy as illustrating how dangerous color-blind ideology is in that it suggests to people that race does not matter yet issues related to race are met with very strong, racialized opinions.
4. *“Yes and No, But...”*: This strategy is often employed before answering a very controversial and racial subject, such as affirmative action or interracial marriage. The “Yes and No” suggests that they do not want to take sides, yet the “But...” is preparatory for a stand on the issue.
5. *“Anything But Race”*: This strategy allows whites to de-racialize a situation by “interjecting comments such as ‘is not a prejudice thing’ to dismiss the fact that race affects an aspect of the respondent’s life” (62). This is seen often when questions of not having minority friends are asked. This phrase is frequently followed by “carefully but long-winded” statements of explanation (63).
6. *“They are the Racist Ones”*: This projection strategy allows whites to break away from the guilt and responsibility they may feel. It is often found in the context of affirmative action.
7. *“It Makes Me a Little Angry...”*: The use of diminutives allows whites to shroud their racialized opinions and lessen the blow of their answers.

8. “*I, I, I, I Don’t Mean, You Know, But...*”: Rhetorical incoherence is commonly used by whites when they talk about an uncomfortable subject, such as race. Due to the push to be a color-blind society, whites do not have the language to discuss race articulately or coherently.

(Bonilla-Silva 2006:54-70)

Through these eight strategies, it becomes apparent that whites choose their words consciously to appear both non-racist and color-blind. However, Jackson (2008) suggests that when people choose their words this carefully and consciously avoid offensive language, they are not doing it to avoid sounding less racist or contemptuous, but rather they do it for their own benefit and peace of mind. This suggests one of two things: either whites carefully weave the fibers of their personal ideologies as a genuine way to fight racism, or they act with such care and hesitancy in order to make themselves feel better than those who are not so careful. This research, as well as the strategies discussed by Bonilla-Silva (2006), lend themselves more to the latter suggestion.

Regardless of the reasons why whites employ discursive strategies, it is evident that constructive language is missing. Color-blind ideology and racism has stripped this generation of constructive language through which to talk about race, what race means, and how race is felt and lived.

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Symbolic Interactionism

The phrase “symbolic interactionism” was coined and advanced by Herbert Blumer in 1969 in his text, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Within symbolic interactionism, Blumer (1969) argued that there are three “simple” premises on which to rest:

(1) human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them; (2) the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of the social interaction that one has with one's fellows; (3) and meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process and by the person dealing with the things he encounters. (P. 2)

To begin with the first premise, whites can be seen as acting toward their white identity and racism on basis of the meaning these things have for them. By this, I mean that the induction of color-blind ideology in the United States post-Civil Rights era has changed the ways in which people attach meanings to issues of race. Whites are generally taught that race talk is always equated with racism; therefore, no positive meaning is attached to discussing what race is and what race means. Thus, privileges are upheld without much thought to their beginnings or their consequences and discursive strategies are employed to avoid these issues all together.

In relation to the second premise, the meanings that whites attach to whiteness and race are often directly derived from social interaction. As race is a social construct, people learn how to deal with race from the people around them. Discursive strategies are social phenomena. They are not individual mechanisms used by individual whites, but rather have been used in much the same way by a large group of people. Privileges given to whites can also be looked at in this way. When whites become aware of the privileges that accompany their racial background, they will often employ the tenets of dominant American ideology that success is equated with hard work to avoid the issue all together (Weber 1904/1930). These strategies are not inherent to an individual, but rather, they are learned by one's peers.

When the third premise is examined, it becomes important to note that while these things are learned, individual whites do have a say in how they act and how meaning is

attached to things by interpreting the information given to them and modifying it to fit their own personal beliefs. This is most closely related to those people who work against the racist ideologies taught to them and is illustrated in the following section.

ADVANCING RACE RELATIONS: WHAT WHITES CAN DO

Suggestions of ways people (particularly whites) can combat the racist ideologies taught to them often vary from extremely individualized action, such as self reflection, to very abstract, collective action such as race treason and “appalling whites to action” (MacMallan 2005:284). The research conducted on the social construction of whiteness has yielded three main recommendations for fighting racism and improving race relations: creating safe and constructive language, creating safe spaces, and increasing interaction with people from all backgrounds.

Creating safe and constructive language. While the issue of needing appropriate language to discuss contemporary racial matters was previously mentioned, its importance leads it to be discussed again in this section. The work of Bonilla-Silva (2006) on the use of discursive strategies to avoid race talk illustrated that young whites have no idea how to articulate their views on race and racism. According to Howard (2004), the language of race right now really only speaks to the problems created by whites and generally makes people feel guilty. In reference to the study of whiteness conducted in high schools by Perry (2007), she states, “White students...have no language to define white culture and identity; it had not been pointed out and named for them, but was ‘just there,’ ‘everywhere,’ and nowhere in particular” (382). This quote

illustrates that the absence of language can be attributed to a lack of social instruction. When looking at this through the lens of a social identity theorist, dismantling the creation of an Other can be seen as a daunting task when white youth are making use of these illusory prototypes through invisible ideological language that sets the norm (“just there,” “everywhere”) against the abnormal. Without real, constructive language, breaking down racist ideology is nearly impossible. This argument is mirrored in the work by Best (2003), when she states, “...language in its ordinary and situated uses performs or produces the very actions or subjects it claims to simply describe” (903).

Creating safe spaces. The creation of safe and constructive language lends it hand to the importance of creating safe spaces in which to talk about race (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Gustafson 2007; Lund and Nabavi 2008; Weis and Lombardo 2002). Consistent with this idea, Gustafson (2007) urges a “commitment to creating space for more inclusive knowledge produced by diverse voices from multiple locations” (158). Lund and Nabavi (2008) take this a step further and suggest that people begin to think about how to create safe spaces in which to both discuss and act upon race and racism. Rather than being another person who “just doesn’t get it,” spaces need to be constructed in order help one another understand the importance of race and the meanings attached to it (28).

The importance of safe spaces is best illustrated by looking through the lens of symbolic interactionism, specifically Blumer’s second and third premises. As discussed previously, within Blumer’s second premise, the meanings that whites attach to whiteness and race are often directly derived from social interaction. In relation to the third premise, the meanings whites attach to race and racism are learned. By creating safe spaces in

which to discuss issues related to race, people (particularly whites) will have the opportunity to socially dismantle the racist ideologies taught to them via interaction.

Increasing interaction. A number of scholars discuss the importance of increasing the exposure of whites to people of different races and cultures (Allen 2004; Green et al. 2007; Perry 2007; McWhorter 2005). Association with different races and cultures has been reported to increase white's perception of their own racial identity (Perry 2007). According to Allen (2004), increasing interaction is a cornerstone of combating a lifetime of racism. He suggests that while whites may talk about dismantling racism amongst themselves, it means little unless they "engage in strategic and solidarity discussions with people of color about the dismantling of white supremacy" (131).

In dealing with increased interaction, McWhorter (2005) takes it one step further and suggests that whites actively commit "race treason" (548). Race treason is associated less with actual legality and much more with "violating the customs that create and maintain group cohesiveness" (549). She explains that acting disloyal to one's whiteness used to be much more difficult and confrontational, but suggests that it can be done now in such ways as "making a career playing music developed by and usually associated with black artists... having black friends and lovers...and refusing to allow a white person's veiled racist comments to pass unremarked" (550).

Similar to the previous recommendation of safe spaces, the suggestion of increased exposure and interaction can be tied back to Blumer's second and third premises. As whites increase their exposure to and interaction with people of different races and cultures, they change the meanings they have attached to race. If meanings are

derived directly from interaction and these meanings are learned, then by looking at increased exposure through the lens of a symbolic interactionist, it becomes apparent that this suggestion is very important in fighting racist ideology.

CRITICISMS AND SHORTCOMINGS OF WHITENESS THEORY

Studies on whiteness have provided a great deal of insight into how white racial identity has been socially constructed. There are, however, three primary criticisms that can be applied to the research on white identity thus far. First, I do not think enough attention has been given to white identity as a “cultural stigma” (McKinney 2004). According to research conducted by McKinney (2004), young white people (those who are most likely to be strong proponents of color-blind ideology) feel they are “(1)...unfairly accused of racism; (2)...have no special niche set aside for them in popular culture; and (3) ...are forced to accept other cultures” (44). These claims can possibly be attributed to white privilege, but because they can serve as a way to dismiss the reality of racial importance in the lives of whites, I believe it deserves further investigation on how and why these claims are made. Additionally, as whites face the reality that they are becoming the statistical minority in the United States, they are becoming more cognizant of their racial identity (Jackson and Heckman 2002; McKinney 2004; Wong and Cho 2005); therefore, I believe this issue needs to be explored further. While the third wave of whiteness studies, laid out by Twine and Gallagher (2008), indicates that more attention will (presumably) be given to this topic, recent research has largely ignored this topic.

The second primary criticism of whiteness theory up to this point is that it does not offer much guidance on exactly how whites are supposed to combat their prejudices and the racist ideology that they have been taught. While scholars will often give a list of things that can be done, the majority of them are far too abstract to ever put into practice. For example, it has been suggested that there is a need for safe and constructive language as well as safe spaces in which to use that language. However, precisely how any of this is going to be put into practice is not found. Additionally, some of the recommendations, such as increasing interaction with people from other races and cultures, are sometimes unfeasible. For instance, for a person wanting to fight racist ideology in largely white, rural areas of the United States, increasing exposure to differences may not be a possibility.

The last primary criticism of whiteness theory is its lack of discussion about how whiteness and urban phenomena mix. This serves as a key focus of this research.

COMBINING THE URBAN AND WHITENESS: GENTRIFICATION AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WHITE RACIAL IDENTITY

The purpose of this research is to examine gentrification and whiteness. As of yet, this chapter has not examined how whiteness and urban phenomena mix and/or relate. This section will offer preliminary insight on the ways in which gentrifiers utilize white privilege and affirm their white identities through the process of gentrification.

In a simple reiteration, I would like to point out what characterizes the discourse of whiteness. According to Hartigan (1999),

...whiteness has two primary characteristics: first, its operations are assumed to be fairly uniform, establishing the normativity of white mores and behaviors, along with the social homogeneity valued by this collective; whiteness manifests a certain logic in its political, aesthetic, and historical sensibilities – that blackness is its symbolic other. Second, in structural terms, *whiteness is articulated and lived* by whites as a residual category of social forms that elude the marks of color or race. Whiteness effectively names practices pursued by whites in the course of maintaining a position of social privilege and political dominance in this country. (P. 16, emphasis mine)

In other words, I would like to emphasize not only the exclusionary character of whiteness (i.e. creating an Other), but also the notion of whiteness being lived. In whiteness being lived, the ideas of space and place become increasingly important. In his research on whiteness in Detroit, Hartigan (1999) points out the “distinctive role of *places* in informing and molding the meaning of race” as he argues that “the meaning of race...varies from location to location, depending on...economic order, ...demographics, ...political styles...and class compositions,” while also claiming “that racial identities are projected onto social space as a means of identifying individuals and positing the significance of their connection to collective orders” (14, author’s emphasis). In other words, *place* (physical location) and one’s attachments to their *space*, act as mediums through which racial identities (both individual and collective) are created, maintained, and projected. In changing neighborhoods, such as those affected by gentrification, notions of racial identity are significant and serve as the focus of this research.

Similar to other categories of whites, the racial identities of white gentrifiers are often characterized by white privilege and a sense of entitlement (Lees et al. 2008; Powell and Spencer 2003). This mirrors Smith’s (1996) conceptualization of the revanchist city which argues “that right wing middle- and ruling-class whites [are] seeking revenge against people who they [perceive] ha[ve] ‘stolen’ the city from them”

(quoted in Lees et al. 2008:222). This revenge is completed through “physical, legal and rhetorical campaigns against scapegoats, identified in terms of class, race, gender, nationality, sexual preference...” (i.e. an Other) (Smith 1996:227). In other words, through gentrification efforts, whites are using their positions of privilege and social dominance to “take back” neighborhoods which they see as rightfully theirs (due to advantages based on race, class, gender, etc). Their access to “physical, legal and rhetorical campaigns,” as well as their contacts with “political administration and media” further illustrate gentrifiers’ positions of power and privilege through cultural and social capital (Smith 1996:227).¹⁵

In the previous chapter on gentrification, I touched on a number of issues related to whiteness and white privilege: white dominance in the incoming gentry, displacement of lower-income (primarily non-white) residents, and white identity and language/name making (streets, neighborhoods, etc). The ability of white gentry to make these changes is, in itself, a privilege related both to their class position (middle/upper) and their race. However, I would like to discuss the notion of whiteness and language a little more fully. As discussed previously, gentrifiers often use coded language (i.e. renaissance, historical preservation, etc) to mask the effects of gentrification (i.e. displacement). This language also masks the privileges inherent in gentrifiers. In other words, “whites resist being labeled as ‘gentrifiers’ in order to elude being objectified as privileged” (Hartigan 1999:19). Thus, gentrifiers are fully aware of their dominant social positions within gentrifying neighborhoods.

¹⁵ Also see Butler 2008.

Language is also important in terms of defining and representing neighborhoods. As discussed in Chapter 2, incoming gentrifiers often eradicate neighborhood histories via the renaming of neighborhoods and streets and the attainment of landmark statuses. Martin (2005) suggests that local (native) residents have no say in the reimagination of neighborhoods as the “mediated representations of the place” begin to act as an “imaginary colonization” whereby histories are “sanitized” in lieu of a white, middle-class definition and representation (70-71). According to Kasinitz (1988), “the ability to create and control the relevant cultural symbols” in a community is controlled by “groups hoping to make their particular definition of ‘the neighborhood’ dominant” (164). In his study of the Boreum Hill section of Brooklyn, Kasinitz found that residents felt gentrifiers “manufactured themselves a history; an Anglo-Saxon history...” (168) via two primary strategies: 1) he found that landmark statuses “demonstrated how one group in an area can utilize state policies as a means of making its particular social and aesthetic vision of the neighborhood a reality;” and 2) house tours strongly promoted the new vision of the community (171-172). As this discussion illustrates, whites not only utilize language in an attempt to control and construct the definitions of their new community (as white and middle-class friendly), but also have the means to project said definitions (via contacts in politics, media, landmark statuses, house tours, etc) and appear “moral[ly] superior” (Zukin 2010:3). Again, we see the importance of white privilege in the form of social and cultural capital.

Lastly, I would like to point out the importance of language in terms of discussing race. Not only do whites utilize discursive strategies to avoid talking about race, but their white privilege also offers them the advantage of not having to *live* racism and

discrimination. Together, these advantages help explain Chapter 2's discussion on the lack of social mixing in gentrifying neighborhoods. Put simply, through their relative positions of power and dominance, whites have the privilege of living in a white world where they do not have to interact with other racial groups. In turn, this offers whites the freedom (read: privilege) of not discussing race (and, in turn, seeing it as a non-issue), and "the luxury of omitting the violence of gentrification" (Smith 1996:44). Because of these privileges, the ways in which white gentrifiers discuss race and define diversity are increasingly important. Smith (1996) agrees when he argues,

The pursuit of difference, diversity and distinction forms the basis of the new urban ideology but it is not without contradiction. It embodies a search for diversity as long as it is highly ordered, and a glorification of the past as long as it is safely brought to the present. (P. 114)

In other words, while white gentrifiers are attracted to gentrifying neighborhoods due to the cultural milieu of tolerance and diversity, their desire for diversity is highly limited to what will not challenge their middle-class lifestyle. Clearly, the role of diversity (in terms of actual interaction and definition making) within gentrifying neighborhoods is of utmost importance due to these inherent contradictions.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research is not to accuse all people of white racial identity of being racist. Rather, my intent mirrors that of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2006) who states,

I see the problem of racism as a problem of power...The analysis of people's racial accounts is not akin to an analysis of people's character or morality....ideologies, like grammar, are learned socially, and therefore, the rules of how to speak properly come 'naturally' to people socialized in particular societies. Thus, whites construct their accounts with the frames, style, and stories available in color-blind America in a mostly unconscious fashion. (P. 54)

By viewing the social construction of white racial identity through the sociological lenses of social identity theorists and symbolic interactionists, it is apparent that whiteness and the meanings attached to it are socially constructed. White privilege, color-blind ideologies, and racism are not individual problems and should not be researched as such. They are born out of a system of power that is beyond the individual. As a group, people of all races, cultures, and backgrounds must fight the racism that plagues our nation and our world. This must begin, however, by whites recognizing their unequal advantages and the unfair and racist social and structural systems that afford them such advantages, including those apparent in gentrification efforts. Only through these challenges will racism be fought and conquered.

This chapter has aimed to offer an in-depth look at the social construction of whiteness and critical whiteness theory. Additionally, I have offered a brief overview of the preliminary ways in which gentrification and whiteness studies mix by discussing the ways in which gentrifiers utilize their whiteness. Whiteness studies will provide a major theoretical background for the rest of this study as this research aims to uncover the ways in which whiteness is constructed, utilized, maintained, and projected by residents of the gentrifying Old West End neighborhood of Toledo, Ohio. Further discussion on the ways in which gentrification and whiteness studies intermix can be found in chapters 5 and 6.

The next chapter will discuss the site for this research – the Old West End – and the methods utilized in this study. I will begin by discussing the shrinking city of Toledo, Ohio before examining the Old West End neighborhood's position within Toledo as well as the demographic comparisons between the two. Lastly, I will review the methods used

in the study as well as the research paradigms which informed the design of the research methods.

Chapter 4

Site and Methods

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss how this research was conducted and the neighborhood in which the study was focused. I will first discuss the research site before moving on to the methods of this research.

RESEARCH SITE

Toledo

This research focuses on gentrification and whiteness in a single neighborhood – the Old West End (OWE) – in Toledo, Ohio. Toledo is located in Lucas County and rests in the northwest corner of Ohio, approximately 60 miles from the center of Detroit, Michigan. Nestled in the southwestern bend of Lake Erie, Toledo rests in the North American Rust Belt. Like many other cities in the Rust Belt, Toledo flourished in the 1800s and 1900s (Forsyth 2009), but today is a shrinking city. According to Haase (2008), shrinking refers to “spatial and land use of urban regions faced with depopulation, aging, and out-migration” (1). When a city undergoes shrinkage, “large parts of the inner city are affected by an absolute and relative population loss as well as an industrial blight, both of which produce residential and commercial vacancies, urban

brownfields, and abandoned sites” (Haase 2008:2). The following discussion of the shrinkage of Toledo is important as shrinkage changes the social and physical geographies of cities and may impact the way gentrification takes place.

In line with the effects of shrinkage, Toledo has encountered great population loss. According to the United States Census Bureau (2008), the population of Toledo (excluding the metropolitan area) as of 2008 was 293,201. This is a percentage decrease of 23.6% of the population, or approximately 90,799 people since 1970 (United States Census Bureau 2008, 1970). Table 4.1 illustrates the population trends in Toledo from 1970 to 2008. While some of this loss may certainly be attributed to Toledo’s long standing presence in the industrial workforce and the change in the global nature of work (from industrial to information), *USA Today* writer Nasser (2006) suggests that some of the loss may also be attributed to changing family dynamics in terms of who is moving out and who is being encouraged to move in. According to Nasser (2006), a number of shrinking cities in the Rust Belt are encouraging young professionals to locate in shrinking cities to help boost change and development in communities. At the same time that young professionals (who are generally single or have smaller families) move in (for a number of reasons including historic architecture and shorter commute times), larger families move to the suburbs (Nasser 2006). Thus, the total population of cities decreases and gentrification begins to take place. However, this argument needs to be taken with caution, as not all cities are able to pull in young professionals, and population loss is simply that – a wholesale loss. Additionally, with an increase in free space, gentrification efforts in shrinking cities are not necessarily the same as they are in cities where space is at a premium. Rather than fully gentrified neighborhoods, neighborhoods like the OWE

are slowly gentrifying with a smaller number of gentrifiers in a much larger space. This study utilizes a qualitative approach to determine the ways in which a small number of residents in OWE Historic District are experiencing race and community within the larger context of gentrification in the neighborhood.

Other factors associated with population loss in Toledo include the expansion of the suburbs (and accompanying “middle class flight”), the construction of I-75 through the OWE and other similar neighborhoods, “urban disturbances in the wake of the Detroit riots of 1967,” and violent conflicts between “union workers and nonunion contractors” (Forsyth 2009:72-74).

Table 4.1: Population Shrinkage Trends in Toledo, Ohio between 1970 and 2008

	2008	2006	2000	1990	1980	1970
Population	293,201	298,446	313,619	332,943	354,635	384,000
Percentage Change from Previous Year	-1.8	-4.8	-5.8	-6.1	-7.6	Total Change 1970 - 2008 -23.6

Source: United States Census Bureau 2008, 1996, 1970, n.d. *Note: The population figure from 1970 was listed as “preliminary” in the 1970 Census.

In line with population loss, Toledo houses a number of vacant or abandoned buildings. As of 2000, Lucas County as a whole (including the Toledo metropolitan area) had 196,259 housing structures (United States Census Bureau 2000a). However, 6.8%, or 13,412 of these were vacant (United States Census Bureau 2000a). Thus, in shrinking cities like Toledo, vacant housing structures may not make competition for space as

intense as it is in places like New York, but we are still able to see gentrification in terms of desired space and the changing nature of place. (Please note that the figure discussed above does not account for vacant retail or business structures as this research does not focus on gentrification's effect on commercial structures. However, a drive through any old, industrial city – Toledo included – leaves little to the imagination in terms of the existence of abandoned sites, urban brownfields, and vacant business structures.)

Old West End

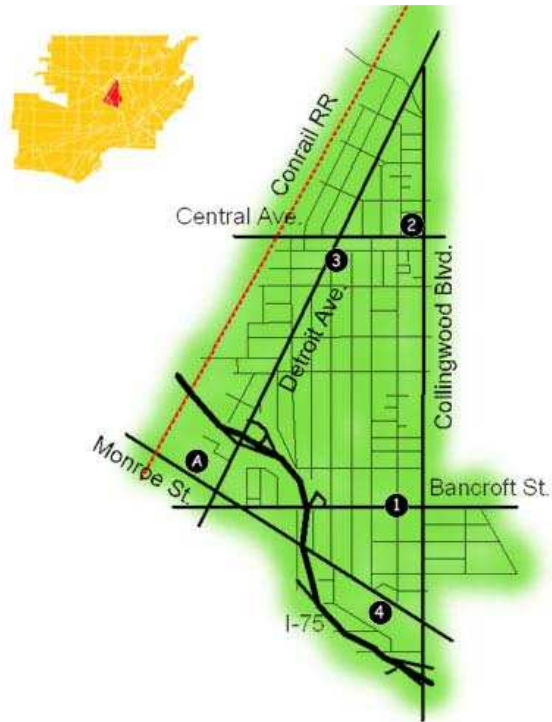
The OWE neighborhood lies in inner-city Toledo, adjacent to Downtown. The OWE became designated as an “Historical District” in 1973 and consists of 25 city blocks, bound in by Collingwood Boulevard, Glenwood Avenue, Monroe Street, Islington Street, and Collins Street (Forsyth 2009; The Women of the Old West End n.d.).

¹⁶ Figure 4.1 presents a map of the OWE (the historic district rests in the center of the triangle) as well as the OWE's position within Toledo.

This neighborhood is unique in that it houses “one of the largest collections of late Victorian (1880-1910) houses left standing in the United States” (The Women of the Old West End n.d.:1). A number of these homes housed some of Toledo's earliest successful entrepreneurs, such as Edward Libbey (best known for his in the glass industry) (LaShelle and Wall n.d.). Architecturally speaking, homes in the OWE are also known for their expansive front porches. These porches continue to serve as a major point for socializing in the community.

¹⁶ The OWE neighborhood extends beyond the historic district. The 25 city blocks represent only the OWE Historic District proper.

Figure 4.1: Map of the Old West End



Source: Toledo Neighborhood Guide n.d.

Since the community has a history with redlining, the majority of the aforementioned homes in the OWE were owned by whites. According to Forsyth (2009), the 1960's were a time of both racial conflict and tolerance. As redlining subsided and the neighborhood was opened to potential homebuyers who were black, some whites became angry and moved from the area. However, Forsyth (2009) argues that the whites that stayed "embraced living in a racially integrated neighborhood, and an unlikely coalition emerged of Old West End family members, middle- and working-class African-Americans, and new urban homesteaders, including Ohio's most visible concentration of gays" (77).

In addition to being nationally known for its historical homes, the diversity in the OWE helped to cast the neighborhood in a unique public mythology as a place of artful eclecticism, tolerance, inclusivity, and diversity – or rather, “the Bohemia of Northwest Ohio” (Forsyth 2009:68). The community holds an annual OWE Festival to celebrate these ideals. The festival kicks off with the King Wamba Carnival Parade. Toledo’s version of a Mardi Gras parade aims to “[celebrate] the birth of summer” and “[showcase] the cultural and ethnic diversity unique to Toledo’s Old West End Neighborhood” (King Wamba Parade n.d:1). In addition to the parade, the OWE Festival also features an ArtFair, car show, craft and food vendors, yard sales, a live music and performance tent, arboretum events, porch parties, and house tours.

Using data from the 2000 Census, we can see that, when compared to Toledo as a whole, the OWE is unique in many other ways. On average, the OWE is less white, slightly older, has more vacant housing structures, is slightly less educated, poorer, and has higher home values. The following comparisons can be seen in Table 4.2.

1. Demographically speaking, the OWE neighborhood stands in stark opposition to Toledo.¹⁷ In terms of race, the OWE is 66.2% black and 28.9% white (United States Census Bureau 2000b, 2000c). However, Toledo as a whole is only 23.5% black and 70.2% white (United States Census Bureau 2000d). Thus, the OWE neighborhood is nearly the mirror opposite of the city it resides in.¹⁸ For this reason, this research aims to look at whiteness in the

¹⁷ The figures for the OWE were found by combining Census data for Lucas County census tracts 16 and 21. While these tracts are slightly larger than the OWE Historic District proper, the figures still give an adequate picture of the demographic makeup of the neighborhood as the OWE extends beyond the historic district.

¹⁸ Forsyth (2009) also suggests that the OWE has a “roughly 60/40 African-American majority” (77-78).

OWE – where whites are a statistical minority in terms of population, and yet retain the cultural and economic privileges of whiteness.

2. Resting in the inner-city, 15.1% of the OWE's housing units are vacant (United States Census Bureau 2000b, 2000c). On the other hand, only 7.8% of the housing stock in Toledo is considered vacant (United States Census Bureau 2000d). As discussed previously, vacancies are a consequence of a shrinking city and are most pronounced in inner-city areas, such as the OWE (which is also equipped with much older homes – i.e. Victorian). Of the occupied homes, the OWE and Toledo are roughly equal in terms of renters and owners, with Toledo as a whole having only slightly more owners (59.8% versus 40.6%) (United States Census Bureau 2000b, 2000c, 2000d).
3. The city of Toledo has over 3% more people with a bachelor's degree or higher than the OWE neighborhood (United States Census Bureau 2000b, 2000c, 2000d). As discussed in Chapter 2, one of the groups that starts the first wave of gentrification is college students (Hammel 2009). Thus, it will be interesting to see how the OWE's education demographics have changed (more college degrees, less, etc) in the 2010 Census.
4. On average, in 1999, the OWE was poorer than the city of Toledo at large. The median household income for the OWE was over \$4,000 less (\$28,435.50 versus \$32,456) than the income for Toledo (United States Census Bureau 2000b, 2000c, 2000d). The same was true for the median family income for the OWE as it was over \$1,200 less (\$39,908 versus \$41,175) than the entire city (United States Census Bureau 2000b, 2000c, 2000d). Additionally, the

OWE had a larger percentage of individuals living below the poverty line. In 1999, 1,940 individuals, or 25.1% of the population of the OWE, was considered below the poverty line (United States Census Bureau 2000b, 2000c). However, in Toledo as whole, only 17.9% of the population was in this category (or 54,903 individuals) (United States Census Bureau 2000d). This becomes increasingly interesting when we look at median house value.

5. The median house value for single owner-occupied homes in the city of Toledo was \$75,300 in 1999 (United States Census Bureau 2000d). In the OWE, this figure jumps nearly \$8,000 dollars to \$82,950 (United States Census Bureau 2000b, 2000c). However, many of the historic homes (especially on Robinwood Avenue, Parkwood Avenue, and Glenwood Avenue) sell for much higher than the median.

Table 4.2: Demographic Comparisons between the Old West End and Toledo as a Whole

	Old West End	Toledo, Ohio
Total Population	7,719	313,619
Race		
White	2,227 (28.9%)	220,261 (70.2%)
Black	5,112 (66.2%)	73,854 (23.5%)
Median Age	35	33.2
Housing Units	3,643	139,871
Owner-Occupied	1,479 (40.6%)	77,062 (59.8%)
Renter-Occupied	1,613 (44.3%)	51,863 (40.2%)
Vacant	551 (15.1%)	10,946 (7.8%)
Number of People with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	1031 (13.4%)	33,091 (16.8%)
Median Household Income	28,435.50	32,546
Median Family Income	39,908.50	41,175
Individuals Below the Poverty Line	1,940 (25.1%)	54,903 (17.9%)
Median House Value for Single Owner-Occupied Homes	82,950	75,300

Source: United States Census Bureau 2000b, 2000c, 2000d *Note: The numbers in parentheses represent percentages of the total population within each category (OWE or Toledo as a whole).

In Chapter 2, I suggested that gentrification often results in an influx of white-middle class residents. In saying that, I must admit, these figures present the neighborhood in a way that makes it seem as though the demographics of the OWE are the mirror opposite of neighborhoods undergoing gentrification. However, together, these demographics give us a better understanding of the position of the OWE in relation to Toledo as a whole, as well as the position of gentrifiers in the OWE Historic District in relation to the expanded OWE. It is important to note that the OWE is a synecdoche in that while the OWE is majority black and poor, the small core of middle-class whites (found primarily in the center of the historic district) have been able to define and represent the community in line with their interests. In other words, the core of gentrifiers or historic preservationists,

while small in number, act as the dominant ideologues of the OWE. So, while the *entire* OWE may not be gentrified and may be majority black and poor, the historic district and the areas surrounding that core do contain a number of gentrifiers who are able to define and illustrate the neighborhood as a whole according to their own social and aesthetic visions. When looked at in this way, we are able to see that the figures discussed previously may suggest the presence of a process akin to gentrification in the following ways. The OWE has higher median house values despite having a higher percentage of minorities, fewer highly educated people (it is unclear whether this number has increased from the past or will increase in the future), lower median household and family incomes, and a higher percentage of people living below the poverty line. With higher home values in a majority low-income, minority area, we see gentrification and “the creation of ‘cities for the few’ [which] results in loss of place for the many” as neighborhoods begin to transition (Lees et al. 2008:275). This becomes increasingly important when looking at residents through the context of whiteness – which is the purpose of this research. Next, I will discuss the methods of this research.

METHODS

Population and Sample

The target population for this research is the residents of the Old West End. This study utilizes a purposive snowball sample. A purposive sample is one in which subjects have been chosen on the “basis of the researcher’s judgment about which ones will be the most useful or representative” (Babbie 2008:204). In line with research conducted on the “discursive repertoires” of whiteness by Frankenberg (1993), I have chosen to

“intentionally ‘overrepresent’ some ‘types’ of experience” (16, 27) – namely, experiences of whiteness. In other words, due to time restraints and the focus of this study on whiteness, I chose to have an all-white sample. To gain this sample, I utilized existing social networks (i.e. University of Toledo faculty and students) to find residents living in or close to the OWE Historic District. While utilizing networks, snowball sampling was used when asking contacts and research participants to supply names of people they know who may also be interested in participating in the study. A total of 10 research subjects participated in this study. Due to the nature of my sampling technique, this study is not generalizable to all whites in gentrifying communities, all whites in the OWE, or all whites in general. This research aims *only* to analyze the experiences of the particular subjects involved.

Data Sources

This research employs two primary data sources: U.S. Census data and personal interviews. Census data from 1960-2000 has been used to illustrate current and past trends in the demographic makeup of the OWE and Toledo as a whole. A discussion on the analysis of the Census data can be found earlier in this chapter.

Despite the use of secondary Census data, this research is primarily based on qualitative data gathering and analysis. I conducted 10 in-depth interviews. All participants were white, nine out of 10 lived in the historic district (the 10th lived a half block from the border), two were active members of the Old West End Association and one was an active member of the Women of the Old West End. Each interview lasted from thirty minutes to two hours and was conducted in a location of the participant’s

choice (personal homes, coffee shops, and business offices). The interviews consisted of 16 semi-structured, open-ended questions (these can be found in Appendix A). The questions aimed to illuminate the themes of sense of community, neighborhood satisfaction, neighborhood change, and race relations, and the concepts of community, diversity, and whiteness. With the participant's permission, each interview was recorded and notes were taken during the duration of the discussion.

Rather than interviewing a large number of people from which to derive quantitative frequencies, I chose to utilize a qualitative methodology and interview a small number of people living in a single sub-area within the OWE – the historic district. The decision to use a smaller and more focused sample was made so that I could more easily analyze discourses of race and community experience, as well as examine how racial identities are formed and maintained within transitioning neighborhoods. These methods are similar to other researchers in the fields of urban sociology/anthropology and race relations. Urban sociologists and anthropologists often conduct qualitative research with in-depth interviews to derive an understanding of the myriad ways in which people define their surroundings and their communities, and create spatial and social identities (Anderson 1990; Dunier 1999; Freeman 2006; Susser 1982; Taylor 2002; Venkatesh 2002). In a study conducted on a transitional neighborhood (read: gentrifying neighborhood) in the Eastern United States, Anderson (1990) not only lived in the community he was studying, but he also hung around neighborhood hot-spots, interviewed community residents, and partook in community events in an effort to describe community life (including fear, improvement, racial tension, etc) from the perspectives of both long-term residents and the in-coming gentry. By utilizing

qualitative methods, Anderson (1990) was better able to identify the ways in which identities and meanings were constructed within the community. Likewise, race scholars also engage in personal interviews to more carefully examine the variations in discourse (Best 2003; Frankenberg 1993; Hartigan 1999). More specifically, critical whiteness scholars conduct in-depth personal interviews to better understand and grasp the discursive nature of race construction in society. For example, Hartigan (1999) utilized a qualitative methodology which included him living in the area of study and conducting personal interviews. These methods were used to determine the ways in which race and class intertwine to produce racial situations and affect the experience of race and living in inner-city Detroit. In both of these examples, living in the neighborhood where the study was being conducted and attending neighborhood events gave researchers special insight to the every-day workings of a neighborhood. Unfortunately, due to time and financial restraints, I was unable to do either. Despite not living in the OWE and not attending neighborhood events, studies concerning meaning construction and lived experience are better suited to qualitative data gathering, such as in-depth interviewing. These methods allow the researcher to be better able to sift through the subtleties of personal interaction. In both urban and race studies, variations in discourse are examined to illustrate the intersections upon which discourses, identities, and meanings are created and maintained (i.e. race, class, gender, sexual orientation, space).

The utilization of interviews to highlight the discursive natures of both race and community construction is also justified by the social psychological theories discussed in Chapter 3. Social identity theory suggests that people categorize and partition their social environments based on power (i.e. ability to accept or reject collective and self-

definitions) and in-group/out-group status (Hogg 2003; Owens 2003). In order to understand the ways in which the residents of the OWE both consciously (and sometimes unconsciously) partake in categorization and definition making, it is important to talk to people and analyze both their explicit responses, as well as their implicit suggestions and body language. In other words, interviewing allows the researcher to “read” the ways in which responses and experiences exhibit notions of exclusion or inclusion (i.e. pausing, scratching one’s head, sighing, nodding, hand gestures, etc). Within transitional, or gentrifying, neighborhoods like the OWE, the notions of in-group and out-group are important in terms of determining one’s personal identity and collective self-definitions as the physical and social makeups change and traditional identities and conceptualizations may be challenged.

Symbolic interactionism also justifies the use of in-depth interviews. Symbolic interactionists focus on the discursive nature of meaning construction (Blumer 1969). In other words, these theorists are interested in the ways in which people construct meanings based on interaction and interpretation. Interviewing, along with analysis of the interviews, gives me the opportunity to examine the meanings people attach to different experiences (i.e. racial experience, class, community boundaries, etc). Again, in a study of a transitional neighborhood, the meanings people attach to race and space are of utmost importance, as the nature of space and place are changing and the makeup of the neighborhood is shifting. Interviewing allows me to more fully delve into these issues.

Overall, the aforementioned social psychological theories, along with the research conducted by urban sociologists/anthropologists and race scholars, have prompted me to examine race, space, experience, and meaning through in-depth interviews. Quantitative

methods, such as surveying or mass interviewing, would miss the subtleties found in in-depth interviews. This is why I chose to interview only 10 residents and analyze their responses more thoroughly. The following section will describe the ways in which I have analyzed the interviews.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this research has a basis in grounded theory. Grounded theory aids in the formation of my research design and analysis as I have aimed to be both “scientific and creative” (Babbie 2008:324). According to Babbie (2008), this is achieved by thinking comparatively, obtaining multiple viewpoints, stepping back, being skeptical, and following research procedures. To follow proper guidelines for qualitative research and accomplish these directives, each interview was looked at with skepticism and with an acknowledgement of the personal nature of experience, taking into consideration the subjective nature of reporting (Babbie 2008; Gubrium and Holstein 1997; Schutz 1967, 1970).

Upon completion of the interview process, I began reviewing the interviews for key themes. Within the 10 interviews, I found four major themes: privilege, exclusion, racialized space, and gentrification. In line with grounded theory, themes were found not by looking only at what was said by participants, but also at what was not said – what Frankenberg (1993) calls “tip-of-the-iceberg moments” (i.e. identifying what may be being left out or is “not being expressed”) (41). The themes were chosen based on the frequency in which the themes appeared in the discussions of the respondents. A more thorough discussion of each theme can be found in the next chapter.

In analyzing the interviews, I did not make an effort to differentiate between what was discussed by females compared to males, what was discussed by the rich compared to the poor, or what was discussed by homeowners compared to renters. This research did not seek to differentiate based on demographics as the sample was far too small to offer any, even rudimentary, results. It is important to again note that this research is in no way generalizable. The responses are particular to the 10 individuals interviewed for this research and the analysis is particular to my understanding of the participant as well as my knowledge of the subject matter (i.e. gentrification, whiteness, the OWE). I am aware that, given a different sample from the OWE, these results may be very different. Additionally, in preparing for this research, I did not look closely at the OWE's major neighborhood organizations [the Old West End Association (OWEA) and the Women of the Old West End (WOWE)], since I wanted to focus on residents (both homeowners and renters) and their perceptions of these organizations. In this case, I believe what people tell me happens and what people think of the associations are far more important and illuminating than studying the organizations themselves. By focusing on what people tell me about them, I am better able to see how OWEA and WOWE may be perceived by neighborhood residents, at least by those residents who participated in my research. Furthermore, it is important to note that no questions were asked that explicitly introduced the concept of gentrification. I never mentioned gentrification or clarified if some of the things that respondents were describing were defined by the study to be efforts at gentrification. The *only* mention of gentrification was in the title of this paper as listed at the top of the informed consent form, which was presented to each respondent prior to interviewing and was read and signed by all 10 respondents. This consent form

mentioned that identify formation was a primary focus, but did not give any further details related to whiteness, gentrification, or the nuances of the analysis. A copy of the informed consent document can be found in Appendix B.

In conclusion, the next chapter on findings and analysis relies not on secondary organizational data, but exclusively on the primary interview data. In the next chapter, I will provide an analysis of the interviews conducted for this research. I will develop the themes mentioned above and present specific examples from the interviews themselves.

Chapter 5

Findings and Analysis

While the last chapter focused on the ways in which the interviews were analyzed, the purpose of this chapter is to discuss and analyze the findings from qualitative data gathered in the OWE. In analyzing the interviews, I found four major themes: privilege, exclusion, racialized space, and gentrification. By privilege, I am referring to the inherent advantages given to whites solely as a function of their belonging to the white race (for a more thorough discussion, please see Chapter 3). While many of the privileges I will discuss are, I believe, unconscious to the respondent, it will become more apparent through the discussions of exclusion, racialized space, and gentrification that some instances of privilege are quite salient, recognized, and performed. In terms of exclusion, I am referring to the ability of certain members of the community to consciously exclude and include only certain residents of the neighborhood.¹⁹ In discussing racialized space, I am referring to instances in “urban America, [where] the adherence to spoken and unspoken boundaries between black and white spaces translates social relations of racism

¹⁹ I fully acknowledge that not all exclusions are conscious or meant to be deliberately harmful to those who are excluded. However, this research will only discuss those interactions which seem to be calculated.

into spatial terms” (Taylor 2002:2). Lastly, the theme of gentrification refers to the perceptions held by OWE residents of their transitioning community.

It is important to note that race is not alone in forming these themes as class was frequently discussed within the context of the OWE. Living in a mixed income and mixed race neighborhood most certainly framed many of the respondents’ responses. As this research focuses primarily on whiteness, I will refrain from discussing class in depth.²⁰ However, I will touch upon it within each theme and in the next chapter as I discuss the findings and position them within the larger social and structural systems and processes in the United States.

PRIVILEGE

Within the theme of privilege, responses were classified into three major areas: color-blind ideology/depersonalization of race, ignoring one’s own race, and having a voice in the government.

Color-blind Ideology/Depersonalization of Race

In Chapter 3, I argued that color-blind ideology seeks to refute the importance of color and urges individuals to ignore racial dissimilarities in favor of those characteristics which are universal to all humans (Knowles and Peng 2005; Lewis 2004; MacMullan 2005). The refusal to talk about race acts as a privilege for white people who when not acknowledging the importance of color (in terms of unequal social standing, institutional

²⁰ Much of the literature on race and gentrification explicitly discusses class. For more information on how class impacts transitioning neighborhoods, please see, for example: Anderson 1990; Freeman 2006; Smith 1996; Taylor 2002.

racism, every-day racism, etc), are easily able to reject race as a lived experience for many Americans.

Since our society lacks safe (without sounding racist) language with which to discuss race, many of my respondents hesitantly discussed racial matters, or simply insisted that color did not matter. When asked if they knew of any racial situations happening now or that had happened in the past in the OWE, nearly every respondent struggled to attribute race to any major problem. After careful thinking, eight out of 10 respondents identified some situation that may have a racial undertone, whether it be loud music by teenagers, teenagers rough housing, gang markings, or crime. However, even when discussing situations that may be potentially racialized, respondents made sure to discuss incidents that were outside of their experience. In other words, the racial situations they discussed never involved them personally – race was depersonalized.

During the interviews, many respondents utilized discursive strategies (see Chapter 3) to avoid making the conversation seem racialized or racist. In one woman's interview, crime was frequently discussed as she often feared for her safety living in an almost all-black area of the OWE. However, despite growing up and constantly being told she was white, and clearly being cognizant of both her own and others' races as an adult, she frequently assured me that she was not racist, and was *only* mentioning color because *other people* would see what she was describing as a color issue. When discussing changes in the neighborhood that she saw as positive, she stated, "I think more white people have moved in, and again, not because I'm prejudiced against black people, but it's just, it's, um, equaling out a bit." So, while her statement could certainly be taken to have prejudicial or racist undertones, she utilized more of a color-blind approach by

downplaying the importance of race, even though she was explicitly discussing the racial makeup of the neighborhood. Being able to rely on these types of discursive strategies to both avoid talking about race and giving proper importance to the saliency of race acts as a privilege for white residents who do not have to acknowledge the experience and power of race in shaping their lives and their neighborhoods.

Two respondents also side-stepped the importance of race and racial situations by utilizing the phrases, “it’s just the way it is,” and “if this world were a fair world.” Both of these statements were utilized in conjunction with discussions about the segregation of the neighborhood (the first in terms of neighborhood events, and the second in terms of public schools). In the first example, “it’s just the way it is,” the woman was asked to talk about what goes on in the neighborhood (the house tours, festival, etc). After describing a number of events in the neighborhood, she began talking about jazz events in the park. She told me that these events generally draw more black people than most events. When asked why she thought more black people were seen at the jazz concerts, she told me she thought it was the music and most musicians there were black. She then told me that she wished she “would see them at more things.” She continued,

... but all of the social events, mostly, anything at The Mansion, anything at, ya’ know, our festivals, everything is open to everybody, ya know? It’s just a matter of gettin’ goin’... Nothin’s closed, like nothin’s all white or nothin’s all black, it’s just (lowers her voice) the way it is.

In the second example, “if this world were a fair world,” a man was asked to describe to me the mix of residents in the neighborhood. He told me that he thought the neighborhood was “pretty old” and “there are not a lot of young families in the OWE, and not a lot of people with, with kids, and that has to do with, with the schools....” When asked what was so bad about the schools that made people avoid the

neighborhood, he said to me, “well, ya know, Toledo is a racist town.” He then briefly discussed the racial makeup of the area’s public schools (suggesting Scott High was “98 percent, 99 percent black”) and said,

The public schools that serve the OWE neighborhood are, are overwhelmingly minority. And (pause) ya’ know, if, if (laughs) if, this world were a fair world, it wouldn’t, it wouldn’t be that way, and you wouldn’t have people, um, ya’ know, the white people who are in families in the neighborhood who do have children sending their children to Catholic schools and private schools, but that’s the way it is, and it’s very, it’s depressing. But I, I merely get depressed about it. I don’t have kids, so it doesn’t affect me, but it is certainly a fact of the neighborhood.

As stated previously, the ability for whites to use illusory language and by-pass the notion of race as an important issue (nationally, locally, individually, and institutionally) is a privilege. Whites have the advantage of not having lived a life of prejudice and discrimination.²¹ Statements such as “it’s just the way it is,” and “if if this world were a fair world,” not only privilege whites by allowing them to ignore the histories of racism that non-whites have lived, but also suggest that racism is natural and unchangeable – in both cases failing to challenge the social, economic, and structural positions of dominance held by whites in society. Additionally, references to the normality of processes in society are based on white norms. The dominant social, political, and economic position of whites, both in society at large and in the OWE, allow them determine what is normal and what is fair. For instance, “if this world were a fair world” neglects to acknowledge that race and racism are social constructs. It also neglects to acknowledge the advantageous position of whites, including the respondents, in the “fair” world and in the OWE. Life in the fair world is most certainly a privilege enjoyed by most whites. (I understand this may not be as true for low-income whites.)

²¹ I acknowledge that some groups of whites have encountered prejudice and discrimination. For a discussion of the social construction of what constitutes “white,” please see Chapter 3.

In refusing to see race, whites often attribute non-racial explanations and solutions to situations that are racial in nature (Bonilla-Silva 2006). While the use of phrases like “it’s just the way it is” certainly plays a part in this, other respondents more explicitly denied the possibility of race in racial situations. One respondent recounted to me a story of an altercation that her black handyman had with her neighborhood. While working on the side of her house, her handyman placed his ladder in the neighbor’s driveway. However, she assured me that enough space was left for her “white neighbor” to be able to safely leave his driveway. When the neighbor saw the ladder in his driveway, “there was a little confrontation.” At that point, she told me that the handyman,

... started jumping up and down and saying ‘He’s a racist! He’s - He’s disrespecting me! I’m gonna get...’ (she trails off) Ugh. And I said, ‘[Bob], I can’t deal with this.’ Now that’s a very specific thing and its a - and it is very personal – having to with what I know about [Bob] and his psychological instability and the fact that I have to - I have to be very careful to be clear with [Bob] about what I want done and how I want it done. And I had to explain to him that no, my neighbor is not a racist. But my neighbor has watched [Bob] make enough messes in the neighborhood and in my backyard in particular...At any rate, my neighbor does not give *anybody* whatever his color is... any, uh, leeway for what he considers *stupid* and, and *unacceptable* behavior and that’s why he didn’t want the ladder on his side.²² (respondent’s emphasis)

In this particular story, the respondent described an altercation that could have possibly had racial and/or racist undertones. Rather than directly acknowledging the possibility that her neighbor truly was racist and truly was attacking this man unfairly, she immediately sided with her neighbor in lieu of the handyman’s routine “stupid” behavior. Additionally, despite acknowledging that her neighbor could have got out of his driveway, she proceeded to question the handyman’s psychological instability.²³ In this

²² The handyman’s name has been changed.

²³ Obviously, it is impossible for me to know whether or not the individuals in question are psychologically unstable or racist.

way, she was performing what researchers call the “medicalization of deviance” (Szasz 1961). Macionis (2010) points out that “people are too quick to apply the label of mental illness to conditions that simply amount to a difference we don’t like” (223). In this case, the accusation of racism stands for the difference she did not like. Rather than acknowledging the possibility of racism, she confronted her own discomfort with the thought of her neighbor potentially being racist with a suggestion that the fault for the confrontation lay *in* the handyman (Festinger 1957). The ability for whites to reject the existence of racism is a privilege awarded to people who do not fit society’s typical conceptualization of who is racialized and who is affected by race. The privilege to ignore these “knee-jerk reactions” to race (as one respondent called it) can quite easily be taken for granted in a society where whites depersonalize race and refuse to talk truthfully about the power of race and the concerns of people who are and/or may feel victimized by racism.

Ignoring One’s Own Race

The above discussion of color-blind ideology and depersonalizing race illustrates the privilege whites have to ignore both their own race and the reality of race being a lived experience. However, this section will deal exclusively with the answers respondents gave to a question in which I asked when was the first time they became aware of their own race. Of the 10 respondents, only three acknowledged a time in their life when they knew they were white: one became race conscious while reading materials by the Black Panther Party; one realized they were white while living in East Toledo as he was given unfair advantage over black children when he was young (and was later

chased by the black children as a result); and one as she navigated high-school in the OWE where she was surrounded by non-white students who called her names like “White Girl” and “White B*tch.”

While some of the respondents were able to feel their own race and be race aware (even if only for a moment), the majority of responses to the question were aimed at discussing the point in their life where they realized that *other* people were *different* from themselves. For example, one respondent said,

That’s an interesting question. I don’t, I don’t know. I think I must have been very, very young. As far as I can recall, like I, I, I mean I remember being in kindergarten with kids of different races, so I don’t. And I just remember, not, ya’ know, not like, not feeling like it was anything weird or strange – there were just different colored people in the world.”

In this example, instead of focusing on the ways in which *she felt different* as a white woman, the respondent focused on the point in her life when she realized that *people were different from her*. Rather than acknowledging her whiteness, she used her whiteness as a norm on which to base and compare other’s appearances. In this way, whiteness was seen as the average – a translucent or invisible concept that was neither acknowledged nor processed as having any real meaning. Granted, the respondent was recounting her childhood, and the expectation of her being able to process race and racial privilege is a bit unrealistic; however, she did not then recount to me a time where she was able to acknowledge her being white as an adult. Considering that the majority of respondents gave similar answers, I am left to assume that they have yet to fully become race aware and come to terms with what whiteness means both to them and to society at large.

Unlike the rest of the respondents, one respondent was quite confused by the question. Upon being asked, he crinkled his face, sat forward, and said to me,

Aware, aware of *our own race*? I don't know. I, I guess I don't know what you, what you mean....I, I, I, I guess I don't know when I, if I was ever *aware* of my - you mean realize that, that there were other - people were different than me? Is that what you are saying? Or? I'm not sure what you're... (respondent's emphasis)

This response is a perfect example of what Bonilla-Silva (2006) called “rhetorical incoherence” (discussed in Chapter 3). This respondent was clearly made uncomfortable by the possibility of his having a race and could not find the language to discuss whiteness or what being white is or means. Rather than acknowledging his own race, he refers to the differences he sees in *other* people. Yet again, whiteness is invisible and is the norm upon which all other races are compared.

Even those respondents who were able to acknowledge that their race mattered – at least to the people around them – were unable to fully grasp the power of their race. When describing the process through which she became aware of her race, a respondent told me that she was constantly reminded that she was white growing up and her response to those people was, “Oh, I'm white? Ok (laughs). Whatever you say (voice raises as if she is talking to a child).” In this example, despite being told that she was white (which infers that her whiteness matters to other people), she refused to accept that her race also made a difference in the lives of both her and the people around her.

All of these examples illustrate a special privilege awarded to whites to deny their own race and the powers that come along with that race. The majority of respondents clearly were confused by the notion of having a race. Ignoring one's own race and the privileges that accompany having a white racial identity allows whites to ignore race as a

lived experience for both whites and non-whites, and allows whites to discount their own positions within society which often affect how race is experienced by other people (i.e. discrimination, prejudice, etc). By refusing to see race and the ways in which whiteness continues to affect race relations, whites are essentially preventing challenges, or threats, to their privileges, power, and societal dominance.

Having a Voice in One's Own Government

Researchers have illustrated the capacity and expectation of whites to feel like they have a voice, or a say, in the creation and maintenance of their surrounding social structures (including government) (Green et al. 2007; McIntosh 1988). McIntosh (1988) touches upon a number of privileges related to this, including being sure one's "voice [will be] heard in a group" even if you are the minority, being able to "criticize" one's government without "being seen as a cultural outsider," and feeling "somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance or feared" when leaving organizational meetings (P. 32-33). In these ways, feeling like one belongs in the government, or at least has some ability to help determine how social systems are run, is a privilege.

Only two people interviewed for this research were active participants in the Old West End Association and only one was an active member of the Women of the Old West End. Despite a majority of respondents not being active in neighborhood associations, every person I spoke with in the OWE felt they had a voice in the neighborhood – at least to the extent that they wanted to have a voice or felt they needed one. When asked if they felt they were accurately represented in the community and had

a voice in the neighborhood, one respondent stated, “I feel like I know who to go to and it would be easy for me if I had a concern that I wanted to, that I wanted to make known.” Another respondent mirrored this statement when he suggested, “I feel that if I need to have my voice heard, I know where the meetings are, and I know how to go there, and I know how to make noise (laughs)... I think my voice is heard if I want it to be.” Both of these respondents, along with every other respondent, felt as though they would have no obstacles to getting their voices heard in the community. However, only one acknowledged that she was unsure if this was the case for other races (read: blacks). While she started to question their representation in the neighborhood, she quickly said that she could not say if they felt accurately represented because “they don’t come to anything to be represented.” So, rather than looking at the situation from a critical race perspective and acknowledging her potential privilege within the community, she simply blamed non-whites for any discomfort or disjoints they may feel in this neighborhood. (I will discuss this more fully in the section on exclusion.) This was the case for every respondent. None of the residents participating in the interviews explicitly discussed the possibility that their voices would be heard only because of their racial positions in the neighborhood.

In addition to discussing neighborhood organizations, one respondent discussed her hopes in relation to the election of the first black president in the United States – Barack Obama. According to this respondent, she hoped that the new president would improve race relations in society. More specifically, she hoped that the president would stop “reverse racism.” According to her, “all my life I’ve just heard about how the plight of black people is so bad because of white people. And it’s like, it’s not my fault.” In

other words, she hoped that by people seeing that we have a black president, they would stop telling whites that their actions were in anyway discriminatory or creating obstacles for blacks. In this example, the respondent explicitly denied any notion of white privilege. Instead, she felt victimized in her majority black neighborhood– not because she, herself, was prejudiced, but because others were prejudiced toward her. This was exemplified in her saying, “it just sucks being a minority, you know?”

Both of these examples – respondents feeling like they have a voice in their neighborhood association and the respondent hoping that “reverse racism” ends – fail to acknowledge the inherent privilege of whites in government. Additionally, they fail to acknowledge that whites have always had a voice in their governmental organizations (i.e. all white presidents, lack of minority presence in neighborhood organizations) and thus, have always been privileged civically. The fact that the neighborhood organizations in the OWE, namely the Old West End Association and the Women of the Old West End, continue to lack a minority presence despite being located in a majority black neighborhood deepens and strengthens this privilege within the community. I will discuss this in more detail in the section on exclusion.

Whether it is through the use of color-blind language, depersonalizing race, denying the importance of their whiteness, or feeling they have a voice in the OWE Association, whites in the OWE effectively maintain their positions of power within a majority black neighborhood. I argue that the ideas of white privilege and white dominance take on even more importance when discussing a gentrifying neighborhood as

racial tensions arise and racial makeups start to shift. Equally important to the OWE and all gentrifying/transitioning neighborhoods is the notion of exclusion.

EXCLUSION

In addition to white privilege, the respondents frequently discussed the exclusionary politics of the OWE. For the purposes of this research, I will discuss exclusion within and by neighborhood organizations.

Exclusions within and by the neighborhood organizations seemed to vary based on both race and class. Despite being open to all members in the community, according to two active members of the OWEA and one active member of WOVE, both organizations currently lack a minority presence. According to an active member of WOVE, when she joined WOVE she was “disturbed” by the lack of association with black people. She was then asked if she knew why WOVE was formed. When she said no, the president of WOVE said to her, “Well you know, originally, we kinda formed it and kept black people out of the club.” Even knowing the history of the organization, she was surprised that 20 years later she only knew of three black women to have ever been active participants in WOVE. She tells me that she was “disturbed” by the continued lack of black membership because the “percentage around here is much higher than three against 30.” Her choice of words in this last statement is worth noting. Rather than discussing the percentage of blacks in the neighborhood compared to WOVE as *three of 30*, she says *three against 30*. This language could attest to continued racial tension within WOVE as well as racial differences in terms of goals for the future of the neighborhood.

As we continued in the interview, she continued to go back to the lack of black participation in both the neighborhood organizations and community events. On several occasions, rather than fully acknowledging the racist histories of the organizations (particularly WOVE) and the possibility of any racial hostility still existing amongst club members, she blamed a lack of participation upon blacks themselves when she said,

[I] guess that they just don't really care. And I have seen that. True. Lovely people to talk to. Our neighbors are black - terrific people to care about one another, but they don't join into the association or the Women of the Old West End.

While she later briefly acknowledged that maybe they may still feel uncomfortable joining the (overtly racist) group, she failed to appreciate the reality of the situation: the group was formed *explicitly* to prevent black residents from joining. In suggesting that they just don't care about joining WOVE or OWEA, she seemed to infer that they do not care about the neighborhood, or improving the neighborhood like she and the others in the organizations do. This is another situation in which she is privileged to not have to recognize the realities of individual and institutional racism.

In discussing the lack of minority presence in neighborhood events, another respondent also suggested that it was the fault of blacks. Rather than saying they don't care, this respondent suggested that it was a "culture" thing because "African American people have got a different culture than us." While again later acknowledging that perhaps blacks are still "leery" of whites, he still blamed minorities for the lack of interaction, and also failed to look critically at the past or acknowledge and appreciate how the experience of joining a (formerly) racist organization and attending organization events must feel to non-whites. Again, we see that ignoring the reality of race and racism being lived experiences is a privilege of whites.

Outside of the internal operations of the organizations, neighborhood residents took notice of practices and programs produced and supported by the organizations that had both implicit and explicit aims of exclusivity. Organization e-mails implicitly, yet effectively, directed exclusion. I first learned about the association e-mails in an interview with a young female. She told me that when she lost her cat she “spontaneously” met someone who was a member of the neighborhood association and he put her on the OWEA’s e-mail list. However, she became concerned with the tones of the e-mails as she felt they put too much emphasis on crime and too often cited young black men as suspects in neighborhood altercations. When asked if everyone in the neighborhood got these e-mails, she replied that she didn’t know, but didn’t think many African Americans were getting the e-mails. When asked why, she said she did not know if they had been “invited.” She also questioned if her black neighbors would feel welcome in getting the e-mails due to the “repetitive and constant” suggestion that crimes were being committed by black teens. While several other respondents discussed neighborhood e-mails (mostly in the context of personal e-mail lists, not the OWEA), none mentioned that they were on any official e-mailing list. When asked about the association e-mails, one gentleman told me that he didn’t know what I was talking about – he did not know the association had any kind of official list. In this case, the association e-mails clearly excluded some people in the neighborhood. While I cannot be sure if the organization intended this to be the case, the perception that the female respondent had that many blacks probably were not receiving them is significant, since she clearly noticed some type of racial exclusion within the neighborhood and assumed that whites were the primary recipients of the e-mails. If these interviews were any indication, it

appears that at least implicit exclusion on part of the neighborhood organizations is seen and felt by neighborhood residents.

More clearly seen and felt by neighborhood residents are the association's explicit aims to exclude some segments of the neighborhood. According to a respondent who, in the past, had been an active participant in the OWE festival planning, parts of the festival in recent years have been,

Deliberately trying to ensure that there weren't places for black youth to congregate, uh, or to have them congregate, um, in marginal areas. Like they had a youth thing at Scott High School one year....Things that were taken for granted when I was a kid – like closing the streets um which made it nice for walking around, for kids riding bikes and skateboarding, and all those kinds of things, have been, uh, um, cut back dramatically, um, and one of the reasons I heard stated at the meetings was to um, uh, because, you know, groups of young people, um, and I'm trying to think of what the code word was, um would, ya' know, there'd be huge groupings of, um, kids, um, who I think everybody knew were African American youth.

When asked if people in the neighborhood took issue with these deliberate exclusionary practices, he responded,

I think there were, I mean I know there, uh, were people that took issue with it, um, uh, both directly and indirectly. Um. And of course the festival planners are a small number of people in the neighborhood and, um, uh, uh, volunteers and so forth and its um, so it's difficult to say....but it seems like the kinda, the current is moving in that direction.

I then asked if these practices were still going on, at which point he said, "I think that the changes to the festival that were made three or four years ago are now just taken for granted – they don't close as many streets...." When assuring me that festival planners only make up a small proportion of neighborhood residents, he also told me that he was sure some people in the neighborhood genuinely wanted to have more activities for kids in the area (i.e. the "youth thing" – which was actually music – at Scott High School).

However, as he pointed out, Scott High School is a bit of a distance from where the majority of festival activities take place, resting about seven blocks from the OWE Commons (a major meeting place). Thus, even when people are genuinely trying to promote constructive activities, they are still far removed from the heart of the festival. Also worth noting here is the perception people in the neighborhood have of Scott High School. Nearly every person I interviewed expressed their disgust at the state of public schools in the OWE. Several mentioned that the public schools were highly segregated since whites often paid for their children to go to private and parochial schools. So, the fact that the “youth thing” was at Scott High School meant that organizers most likely did not intend for it to be attended by white youth; it was, as the respondent suggested, a ploy to prevent groups of black youth from “congregating” or hanging out at the festival.

Two respondents also discussed the festival’s decision to decrease the number of streets closed during the festival. Both of the respondents discussed a time in the past (about 20 years ago) when black youth would “promenade” down the street after the festival. According to one respondent, these “gang parades” would entail people in cars driving slowly down the street as people walked alongside the car and shouted. He called this a “show of force.” This became an issue for neighborhood residents who wanted to leave the neighborhood but could not because the streets were sealed off. While these “gang parades” no longer occur, according to the respondents, they produced racial tension. This racial tension, which builds on centuries of racist ideologies and fears about the collective power of black people, most likely served as an impetus for the more recent efforts to prevent any kind of gathering of black youth. So, rather than dealing with the underlying issues (prejudice, discrimination, racial tension), festival organizers simply

decided to alter the festival (i.e. open up streets) in an attempt to exclude the groups that they assumed caused the most trouble – black teens.

These examples illustrate that the respondents saw and felt both implicit and explicit exclusions within the OWE. These exclusions were highly racialized and caused discomfort for some of the respondents who felt very strongly about fighting racial injustice both in their neighborhoods and in the larger society. However, despite the distaste that some members may have for these acts, they have now become institutionalized and normalized. Of equal importance to the idea of exclusion and privilege becoming normalized is the notion of racialized space.

RACIALIZED SPACE

Arguably one of the most important themes to draw out of interviews conducted in a gentrifying neighborhood is racialized space. As mentioned previously, racialized space refers to instances in “urban America, [where] the adherence to spoken and unspoken boundaries between black and white spaces translates social relations of racism into spatial terms” (Taylor 2002:2). Racialized space does not occur in a vacuum. In other words, the notion of racialized space examines the ways in which neighborhood residents collectively create geographical and mental boundaries within their communities that are based on notions of race and racial identity. In neighborhoods of mixed income and neighborhoods in transition, these racialized spaces are also certainly intertwined with

class as well.²⁴ This section will identify the geographical and social boundaries that are seen and felt by the participants in this research.

To begin, it is important to note the boundary that many respondents touched upon: the Wood Streets.²⁵ To many respondents, the “Wood Streets” (Glenwood Avenue, Robinwood Avenue, Scottwood Avenue, Parkwood Avenue, and Collingwood Boulevard – all running North-South) served as a reminder of the class differences within the neighborhood. The houses on the Wood Streets tend to be larger (some mansions), have more space around them than the houses on the side streets, and have wider streets in front of the homes. All of these differences allude to the fact that the people living in homes on the Wood Streets probably have more resources to care for the properties, and are probably of a higher social class. One respondent living on a Wood Street called the maintenance of his property a “second career.”

Like class, race also seemed to be a factor when distinguishing between the Wood Streets and side streets. The notion of class and race intermingling to create neighborhood boundaries is evidently historical. According to one respondent, “the way it started out is, the rich people lived on the Wood Streets and that’s where the big houses were, and the black people, that would be the help, would live on the side streets.” In this way, segregation was built into the neighborhood. What makes this respondent’s statement more interesting is the fact that he did not differentiate between white and black, but rather rich and black. Additionally, the respondent made sure to mention that blacks were the help. Here, whiteness is assumed to be the norm, is left unsaid, and is invisible and

²⁴I will not focus on class, per say, but will briefly mention the importance of class in determining and creating these spaces.

²⁵ This term was used by a number of respondents.

assumed to be synonymous with the notion of having money. Thus, we see that when class and race intermingle, only blackness becomes a significant factor as it is singled out and set apart, both ideologically and geographically. Again, we see that ignoring whiteness serves as a privilege of white residents who do not feel their race is affective, and are thus able to ignore race as a lived experience.

The separation of whites and blacks according to block still seems to stand true in the OWE. While a few of the respondents suggested that their block was diverse, most could only count a few black people to have ever lived on their block.²⁶ However, nearly every respondent suggested that while the OWE was one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Toledo, it was still quite segregated in terms of who lives on which block. In other words, while the OWE is diverse in numbers, the neighborhood is not thoroughly integrated – whites and blacks still occupy different blocks.

The idea that whites and blacks occupy different blocks may play into the notion of racialized space in terms of where people feel safe and the places and areas that people avoid. In discussions with two respondents, it became clear that Collingwood Boulevard served as a stopping point for a number of OWE residents, and the closer that one got to Collingwood, the more questionable the area became. When discussing what she did not particularly like about the neighborhood, one respondent told me that she sometimes felt threatened on Collingwood at night since she had been chased down the street in the past. Another respondent who lived less than a block off Collingwood (to the east) suggested that the further east you go, the more “dodgy” the area becomes. Unlike the other respondents, she seemed to focus quite heavily on crime and fear in the neighborhood.

²⁶ I fully acknowledge that this result could be a function of my particular sample.

She mentioned that house break-ins were common and discussed a friend who had been murdered in what police assumed to be a racially incited and gang-affiliated crime. Whether her emphasis on crime was because she felt truly threatened or because she lived on a majority black block, I cannot be sure. However, I assume that it is combination of both since most of the people interviewed who lived on the Wood Streets or further west of Collingwood Boulevard suggested that the perception of crime in the neighborhood was a bit overblown. Several had friends or encountered police officers who balked at the notion of living in the OWE because of crime. Despite these reactions, they suggested that as long as you had an “urban sensibility” and took safety seriously (as they presumed one would in any urban setting), you would see that crime in the OWE was not significantly worse than any other neighborhood in the city. In other words, the respondents living closer to the boundary of Collingwood Boulevard felt their neighborhoods were more diverse, but also felt more threatened in the neighborhood. Perhaps living in areas described as more diverse (read: more black residents) aided in the construction of fear since residents living further from Collingwood Boulevard felt that the perception of crime in the OWE was overblown.

However, even amongst the people who downplayed crime, there seemed to be a working knowledge of where they could safely venture and where they felt threatened. In one interview, a man who worked approximately three miles from his home told me that he did not feel safe riding his bike to work. According to him,

There's this sense that if I go a little too far (pauses, smiles, and lowers his voice) east, a little too far west, a little too far north, a little too far south, then things could get weird. I mean I, I don't ride the bicycle to, to, to [work] because it involves going through – I've, I've ridden my bicycle in 20 years twice to [work] and both times I've been scared (laughs). Maybe I'm timid (laughing). And I don't think I'm over, I don't think I'm overly timid, I mean when you, when you, when you are sort of pedaling along looking like a [professional] and you see some guys exchanging substances in (laughs) very fancy looking cars, you say 'I don't think I wanna be here.' But yeah, that's not within, that's not within our little enclave, that's you know, it's in-between *there* and *here*.

(So not necessarily within the OWE proper?)

Within, yeah, within the larger definition. Right? There's the larger definition and then there's the little definition. And the larger definition, as you know is, is, is a much, much more *inclusive* one than, than the area that, that the historic district has the overlay on So, with, within my block, on *my* block I feel very safe, but when I get, when I get to someone, not, not, no, when I get out of the historic district into someone else's block I don't feel quite so safe.²⁷

In this example, despite having lived in the neighborhood for over 20 years, the respondent still felt threatened by leaving his block and especially threatened leaving the historic district. Other respondents mirrored these statements. One respondent suggested that "we are sorta in an island here, ya' know. You go, you go three blocks in any direction and you're in uh, a ghetto type, you know?"

This community is by no means gated, thus these responses allude to a sort of racialized space whereby residents have mentally insulated themselves and set up geographical boundaries of where they feel safe. Considering the racial and class makeups of the neighborhood as being majority black and majority poor (see Chapter 4), these boundaries are clearly determined by both class and race differences (read: poor black areas are to be avoided). Furthermore, the language of "ghettos" and "fancy

²⁷ The information in the brackets has been changed to protect the identity of the respondent. The changed information does not alter the integrity and intent of the quotation. The text in parentheses indicates the researcher asking a clarifying question.

looking cars” (i.e. rotating wheels, etc) are highly racially and economically charged. According to Taylor (2002), “ghettos...are marginalized areas where black/white boundaries reinforce a dualistic hierarchy of coded racial and racist meanings... [featuring] a seemingly ‘invisible hand’ of preference” (2). Thus, not only does this language and these examples suggest racial and class differences between whites and blacks, but they also suggest possible *perceived* divides in culture. In the OWE, these differences and divisions are at the heart of the notion of racialized space and have been used to justify efforts at gentrification. The next section will discuss the respondents’ thoughts on gentrification.

GENTRIFICATION

Before I begin discussing findings related to gentrification in the OWE, it is important to again note that no questions were asked that explicitly introduced the concept of gentrification. However, the majority of the respondents discussed – some implicitly and some explicitly – gentrification in the OWE.

A number of respondents discussed gentrification when they first entered the neighborhood. According to one woman, “I have really been struck by the amount of gentrification that went on, and this would have been during the late ‘80s and the ‘90s, and it had to do with a very large influx of gay and lesbian people.” A few other respondents acknowledged the role of gays and lesbians in preserving the neighborhood, but none described it in much more detail than this woman. (I assume this is because they were not familiar enough with this history.) Other respondents acknowledged their own position as gentrifiers in the neighborhood. Upon reading the informed consent, one man

looked at me and said something akin to “Gentrification? That’s us. We’ve been here since 1991.”²⁸ Additionally, nearly all respondents acknowledged an increase in affluent people moving into the neighborhood, which some may argue attests to the existence of gentrifiers. When discussing these gentrifiers, a number of respondents utilized language of gentrification (see Chapter 2) by referring to residents as homesteaders or neighborhood “pioneers” who were moving onto all-black blocks. This language, much like the language of privilege, exclusion, and racialized space, is highly charged in terms of class and race and suggests that rich whites are staking out new territory within the OWE.

Despite having a number of residents attest to gentrification in the OWE, other residents outright refused to accept the notion of the neighborhood being gentrified. Upon reading the informed consent form, one woman asked to see evidence, only to later agree that perhaps there was some gentrification on the “fringes.” Another man suggested that in relation to the OWE, “there aren’t enough gentry in Toledo to gentrify it.” Whether these were mechanisms by which to reject the label of “gentrifier” and its inherent privileges (Hartigan 1999), or honest beliefs that the neighborhood had not been gentrified, is unclear. However, regardless of whether residents agree that the OWE is gentrified, a number of the respondents discussed the notion of gentrification, or what is considered historic preservation, in the OWE.

When asked why they moved to the OWE, a number of respondents offered answers that were remarkably similar to the reasons given in the literature for why people move into areas and start to gentrify, as stated in Chapter 2: proximity to work, proximity

²⁸ This quote is an approximation of what he said and was taken from my hand-written notes. This was said prior to my turning on the recorder as he had not yet finished reading the informed consent.

to Downtown, cheap housing prices, and a desire to live in a diverse neighborhood. For some residents of the OWE, the desire to live amongst other races, ethnicities, and cultures was certainly the major selling point for the OWE. Many expressed their desire to combat stereotypes about what it is like to live around people who are of other races and other social classes. However, as many respondents mentioned, capital and the desire to make a profit also attract a number of residents, including those seen almost uniformly in a negative light, such as absentee landlords and out-of-town flipping companies (companies that come in and improve/renovate homes in an attempt to sell them quickly and make a large profit). The distaste directed at these groups is not only about their desire solely to make a profit, but is also focused on their lack of personal connection to the home. Additionally, these groups were also criticized for the lack of care given to the property after the home was preserved, such as lawn care. In general, rental properties were looked down upon in these neighborhoods. One woman felt it threatened “pride in ownership,” and others felt the historic integrity of the homes was ruined when homes were divided into apartments. So, divisions were created in the neighborhood based on why a person came to the neighborhood and what they were planning on doing, or not doing, to the home in question.

Overall, the respondents seemed to desire an increase in both the speed and the amount of residential as well as commercial gentrification in the OWE. Several of the respondents emphasized their desire for an increased commercial presence in the OWE. Two discussed the corner of Delaware Avenue and Collingwood Boulevard as a site of many failed businesses and wished for an increase in shops around that area. Another respondent mentioned his desire for some type of coffee shop in the neighborhood.

Despite the presence of a coffee shop at the aforementioned corner, he told me that he rarely went there because he rarely went to that part of the neighborhood as it was away from Downtown (yet less than a handful of blocks from his home).

Aside from commercial desires, a number of residents wanted to see an increase in residential gentrification in the OWE. According to one respondent who openly acknowledged [his] role in gentrification - though the neighborhood when [he] moved in was “still not what [he] would call gentrified” -

...every year that we have been here, it's gotten a little bit better as far as condition of homes, uh, activity on the streets, ya' know, the number of, uh, burglaries or robberies, or whatever, violence, has gone down a little bit every year....So, we continue to have this neighborhood gentrified.

In this example, the respondent insisted that increased gentrification will continue to have positive impacts on the community in terms of crime and home conditions. Another respondent suggested that while things have gotten better over time, he wished things would happen more quickly. When asked what he wanted to happen more quickly, he said that he was coming from a “beautification” stand point. In other words, he wished the community would look better, faster. Implicit in this response is the desire to see fewer vacant buildings and unkempt properties. However, what both respondents neglect to mention are the race and class dynamics involved in terms of who is gentrifying. If a large number of incomers are white (as was suggested by a respondent discussed in the section on color-blind language), then gentrification could be appear to be a tool used to white-wash the neighborhood, or at least the areas closest to the historic district, of its diversity and history.²⁹

²⁹ See Chapter 2 for a more thorough discussion of white-washing.

Whether or not the OWE is a truly or fully gentrified neighborhood, the fact that a number of residents perceive it be either gentrified or gentrifying is important. This is not to suggest, however, that all respondents were supportive of increased gentrification efforts. One woman suggested that she wished people would stop trying to make the OWE more “special,” “unique,” and “better” than any other neighborhood in Toledo. Additionally, a number of respondents mentioned what they considered to be a nearly absurd obsession that some preservationists (or gentrifiers) had with historic particularity and neighborhood rules. So, we can clearly see that the issue of gentrification in the OWE, whether it exists not, is a conflictive one. This research has not aimed to discuss the quantifiable realities of the OWE – of whether what these residents have purported is true or false. Rather, I have aimed to focus on the discursive nature of experience. The negative light that is often cast on gentrification (see Chapter 2) certainly affects the way these residents perceive changes in their neighborhood, which, in turn, influences the ways they talk about their community and their experiences in it. The purpose of this research has been illustrate what white people determine as important in the experience of both race and community life in the OWE and how this helps to shape and maintain identity. In other words, if gentrification, historic preservation, or community transitioning is important to the interview respondents, then it is important to this research since perceptions of the existence and/or non-existence of gentrification most certainly affect the way people experience life in the OWE.

This chapter has illustrated the four major themes found in the interviews conducted with OWE residents: privilege, exclusion, racialized space, and gentrification. The respondents illustrated that the neighborhood is highly divided based on class and

race. These divisions not only support and maintain the dominant position of whites, but effectively work to allow whites to ignore the realities of race for both themselves and others, while preventing their dominant status from being challenged through exclusionary practices, racialized space, and gentrification. Together these themes illustrate a model for looking at the ways in which race (particularly whiteness) aids in the construction neighborhood experience. The purpose of this chapter has not been to blame my respondents for their thoughts on race. I also have not intended to present them in a light that suggests they are racist people who knowingly engage in personal attacks against non-whites. This chapter has aimed to illustrate the importance of looking at the structural conditions upon which people of good conscience are taught to think of race, and the importance of recognizing the inherent privilege whites have in being able to avoid discussing race. Our society lacks safe language through which to talk about race (Best 2003; Bonilla-Silva 2006; McWhorter 2005), which encourages the perception that discussing the realities of race is both negative and inherently racist. In gentrifying/transitioning neighborhoods, having the ability to safely discuss race with constructive language is of utmost importance. Without honest and real discussions about race and what race means, breaking down the racist ideologies both within the OWE and in society at large is impossible. This will be discussed more in the next chapter.

In the next chapter, I will discuss and analyze these themes and findings within the contexts of the social psychological theories first introduced in Chapter 3: social identity theory and symbolic interactionism. I will also discuss ways in which this

research ties into larger notions of race, gentrification, and identity construction. Finally, I will discuss the limitations of this research and offer suggestions for future research.

Chapter 6

Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, I will discuss and analyze the findings of the qualitative data gathered in the OWE within the contexts of social identity theory and symbolic interactionism (theoretical frameworks first introduced in Chapter 3). I will then discuss how these findings can be situated within the encompassing framework of race and gentrification in the United States. Finally, I will identify some limitations of this research as well as suggestions for future research both within and outside of the OWE neighborhood.

DISCUSSION

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory was first introduced in Chapter 3 where I discussed the ways in which white identities are formulated and maintained through various means of identity politics. While much of the discussion in Chapter 3 is certainly relevant in terms of explaining these findings, I will not repeat my previous arguments. Rather, I will present a very brief overview of the theory and relate my findings to the discussion at large.

Within social identity theory, the notions of self- and collective-definition making and group identification/categorization (i.e. in-group versus out-group) are of utmost importance as these processes work to both create and maintain white identities and white dominance. In formulating their own identities, and the identity of their community, the respondents in this research selectively engaged in definition making and definition rejecting. According to Owens (2003), people evaluate themselves according to which groups they are “socially recognized” as being a part of (224). Despite being socially recognized as part of the white race, the respondents routinely and deliberately ignored their advantageous positions within the community. In ignoring the privileges that accompany their whiteness (i.e. not having to talk about race, not having to see race as a lived experience, and having an automatic voice in the community), the respondents effectively rejected the notion of their whiteness being at all affective in their communities or in their interactions. The lack of personal race cognizance on part of whites has aided in their views of race and racism as being a non-issue for whites, while at the same time being a natural and unchangeable issue for non-whites. Considering the demographics of the neighborhood as being majority black, the absence of real discussions about race and the power of whiteness (i.e. color-blind ideology, depersonalization) act as forms of resistance by whites and aid in the formation of a dominant status and collective-definition based largely on “hidden” and normalized racial hierarchies and privileges. In de-emphasizing the power of race (in the lives of both whites and non-whites) in the OWE, residents that see race as an important issue and feel race through lived experiences are relegated to an Other status characterized by a sense of social and geographical racism. In other words, people who acknowledge and experience

racism in the neighborhood are categorized as different, and serve as a base from which whites compare themselves, normalize their whiteness, and justify neighborhood hierarchies. In this way, those who acknowledge and experience racism justifiably occupy lower social statuses than whites who may maintain that race and racism are dated concepts and no longer matter in today's color-blind society.

According to Owens (2003), efforts at group identification and definition making aim to “simplify the world of social and nonsocial stimuli into separate groups of like and unlike stimuli” (224). In this way, social identity theorists emphasize the importance of looking at group identification and classification based on in-group and out-group statuses. As discussed in the last chapter, exclusion and group boundary policing (in terms of both exclusion and racialized space) are certainly important in the OWE – at least to the participants of this research. Additionally, race and class in the OWE intermix to produce multiple layers of hierarchy in the neighborhood. In interviewing residents for this research, I identified a number of in-group/out-group dichotomies that have both race and class dynamics: white/black, middle-class/lower-class, people who interact in the neighborhood/people who don't interact in the neighborhood, Wood Streets/side streets, non-racist/racist, and non-racial/racial. In each of these dynamics, differences are both geographic (i.e. bigger houses on Wood Streets, logistical obstacles for black youth, racialized spaces of use and safety for white respondents) and social (i.e. tolerance, race, interaction, class). All of these group dichotomies include both class and race, but within the OWE the respondents aimed to deemphasize the power of race in creating and maintaining these groups, despite clear racial undertones within each category. For example, in my discussion of exclusion, blame was placed on blacks for their lack of

interaction rather than on the history of racist organizations in the neighborhood. Here, we can see that there is an explicit grouping of people who interact (in-group) versus people who don't interact (out-group), but there is also an implicit grouping of white (in-group) versus black (out-group). Despite the visible white versus black composition of neighborhood organizations, the respondents largely failed (or had another perspective, albeit maybe one of denial) to see the ways in which the organizations may serve as tools of white identity construction, maintenance, and projection. The grouping of whites and blacks into (ideologically) competing groups was also seen in the more implicit exclusionary practices used by the neighborhood organizations (i.e. e-mails) as few respondents knew of the e-mails and one questioned the diversity of e-mail recipients. In both of these examples, categorizations and definitions based on in-group and out-group statuses resulted in a "vicious cycle" of prejudice and discrimination (Macionis 2010), in which white attitudes about race resulted in continued subordination of non-whites (i.e. blacks being blamed for their own exclusion, blacks potentially being left out of e-mail lists). This, in turn, resulted in the affirmation of the ethnocentric attitudes of many whites – all while whiteness as an active and affective definition was denied and rejected.

Even amongst those respondents who acknowledged possible racial tension in the neighborhood, racialized events were never made personal; all information/evidence that could potentially be seen as racialized or racist was distanced from their individual experiences. This was an especially important tool used in the discussions of racialized space: respondents acknowledged neighborhood boundaries of safety, but never positioned themselves as active creators of those boundaries. Thus, whiteness is again made transparent in an effort to downplay the importance of race in creating

neighborhood hierarchies and boundaries. This de-emphasizing of the power of whiteness in order to position one's self in the neighborhood serves to solidify group definitions and in-group/out-group statuses.

Thus, when looking at the responses of OWE respondents, we see that social identity theory highlights the ways in which definitions, categorizations, and group membership statuses help create and maintain white identities, white advantage, and white dominance in the OWE. By categorizing groups based on perceived similarities and differences, the respondents continued to draw upon notions of what race is and what races means to demarcate the neighborhood in ways that make their own white identities appear at best indistinguishable from other neighborhood residents, and at worst nonexistent or non-affective.

Symbolic Interactionism

While social identity theory helps us understand the formation and maintenance of group identities and statuses, symbolic interactionism gives us insight on the ways in which people create the meanings they attach to race and whiteness. According to Blumer (1969), symbolic interactionism rests on three major premises:

(1) human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them; (2) the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of the social interaction that one has with one's fellows; (3) and meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process and by the person dealing with the things he encounters. (P. 2)

I will discuss my findings within the context each premise separately.

First Premise. In saying that the ways humans act is based on the meanings they have about what is being acted upon, this premise illustrates the importance of color-blind ideology and its ability to depersonalize race. According to Frankenberg (1993), color-blind ideology is really about “power evasion,” which,

...rather than complete nonacknowledgement of any kind of difference...involves a selective attention to difference, allowing into conscious scrutiny – even conscious embrace – those differences that make the speaker feel good but continuing to evade by means of partial description, euphemism, and self-contradiction those that make the speaker feel bad. (P. 156)

In other words, whites make a conscious effort to avoid talking about race in order to make them feel better about themselves and their whiteness (Jackson 2008). For the respondents in this research, our society’s adherence to and emphasis on downplaying the importance of race via color-blind language has left them without the language to safely or adequately discuss race in their transitioning community. Instead, by being taught that talking about race is always negative, the respondents acted toward race talk with hesitancy or flippancy. In other words, society has insisted that talking about racism, and the concept of race in general is wrong, so talking about it today feels akin to white supremacy. By not challenging the notions of race talk as negative, or race as being a non-issue, a number of respondents were able to actively uphold their privileges and not seeing race as a lived experience. For those respondents who acknowledged that they were race aware (of their own whiteness) or who were outspokenly anti-racist, privileges were still upheld by not discussing the need for “collective action” (on part of whites) to challenge the pervasiveness of color-blind ideology and racism in general (Lipsitz 1998). In other words, despite being aware of the power race, race was still acted upon with the meanings derived from color-blind ideology (i.e. not to be spoken about). While

respondents handled the meaning of racism interpretively and had the choice of living their lives as anti-racists, the meanings attributed to racism were still largely formed out of color-blind language and not fully challenged or discussed.

Premise Two. If meaning arises out of interaction, the discussion of racialized space becomes increasingly important. I have already argued that people act toward race and whiteness based on the ideology of color-blindness, as if color does not matter and race is not salient. However, according to the residents interviewed for this research, race is still very much an issue in terms of creating personal and community boundaries. Racialized space does not exist in a vacuum – within the context of whiteness, it is the collective, rather than individuals, that determine which spaces are to be used and which are “safe.” The geographical and mental boundaries in the OWE (i.e. Collingwood Boulevard, the Wood Streets) help to form and maintain ideas of race in the neighborhood by means of maintaining block segregation based on race, class, and perceived level of safety. If whites are learning to deal with race through interactions with people around them, and block-by-block segregation is any indication, it makes sense that the respondents would feel as though race does not matter. In other words, block segregation acts as a type of insulation from the realities of race. These insulations most certainly affect the ways in which whites (or at least those interviewed) give meaning to race as they help determine one’s interactions.

The notion of majority white neighborhood organizations is also important in terms of interaction and insulation. Without a minority presence, and subsequent lack of organizational interaction with non-whites, it was easy for the whites I interviewed to de-

emphasize the saliency of race and the reality of race being a lived experience. Without historical racist obstacles (i.e. white only organizations, physical alterations of the festival to stop groupings of black youth), it was easy for the respondents to fail to see the ways in which their whiteness aided in their feeling like they were represented and had a voice in the community. In these ways, the respondents' interactions served to solidify their privileges. In other words, by interacting only with other whites (who were not discriminated against and who did not face neighborhood obstacles), the ideas that race did not matter and was not a contemporary reality were strengthened. Furthermore, by not interacting with people who felt race as a lived experience, whites are able to ignore the realities of their whiteness and justify their positions and privileges.

For those respondents who were outspokenly anti-racist and wanted to challenge popular stereotypes about race and class, the meanings attached to race were slightly different. By interacting with people of color, they began to see that race was still an issue. However, these respondents still neglected to see (or perhaps were in denial of) the power of their own whiteness. In other words, their interactions had given rise to the notion of race affecting others, but not themselves. In this way, race continued to be depersonalized as it was not seen to affect them.

Premise Three. Blumer's (1969) last premise suggests that meaning construction is interpretive. In other words, while collective definition-making is important, individual whites do have a say in their actions and beliefs. According to Lipsitz (1998), "We do not choose our parents, but we do choose our politics" (viii). A number of respondents were outspokenly anti-racist during their interviews. A number of respondents discussed their

desire to end racism and racial injustice. Some of these respondents had worked with anti-racist organizations when they were young, and others discussed how they currently wanted to challenge the stereotypes surrounding what it means, or is like, to live in a racially and economically diverse neighborhood. These individuals exemplify Blumer's (1969) third premise, as they have chosen to position themselves in the OWE – a neighborhood in transition - to challenge the notion that racism is inescapable.

Thus far, I have only given anti-racism scant attention, and I certainly do not want to paint a picture of whiteness as being inherently bad. Rather, I want to illustrate, “the problem with white people is not our whiteness, but our possessive investment in it” (Lipsitz 1998:233). In other words, being white is not the problem. The problem lies in white people's neglect/failure/hesitancy to challenge racial hierarchies and the unjust, unfair, and unequal privileges that accompany their whiteness. This neglect/failure/hesitancy was shared by all the respondents as none fully discussed the power of their race. For the individuals who have moved to the OWE to challenge racism deserve praise and recognition. However, simply living there is not enough. According to Lipsitz (1998), whites have a “possessive investment” in their whiteness which discourages giving up the dominance and privileges attached to simply being white. Additionally, Lipsitz (1998) points out that whiteness is about more than behavior; racism and our “possessive investment in whiteness” can only be challenged when we “face the hard facts openly and honestly and admit that whiteness is a matter of interests as well as attitudes” (233). In other words, while living in the OWE and being implicitly anti-racist (in terms of not committing acts of meanness toward non-whites) is a step in the right direction, it will not result in widespread reform of race relations in the United

States, because it still avoids real discussions about what race means and how whites continue to occupy positions of privilege.

Blumer's (1969) three premises illustrate that attitudes toward race do not occur in a vacuum. Through interactions and interpretation those interactions in a largely color-blind society, the respondents conceptualized race in a way that downplayed its significance. This de-emphasis largely resulted, at least in part, in the maintenance of white dominance through the transparency of whiteness and the rejection of race as a lived experience.

Why This Matters in the Old West End

The OWE is a neighborhood in transition. While I believe that the OWE is home to an increasing number of gentrifiers (i.e. flipping companies, historic preservationists, people concerned with increasing their home values) discussed by interview respondents, I do not believe it is fully gentrified as of yet. In other words, the neighborhood is still in transition. If the interviews are any indication, a number of people in the OWE are open to an increase in gentrification efforts. However, my opinion of whether or not the OWE is gentrified is of little importance.

In the last chapter, I argued that whether the OWE was actually gentrified mattered less than whether or not people felt the neighborhood was gentrified within the context of the popular conceptualization of gentrification always being negative. This argument is similar to Zukin's (2010) research on "authenticity" in cities; she found that in cities changed by "renewal and revitalization," the "quantitative has morphed into

qualitative change, for both our visual and emotional experience of the city” (221). In other words, studying the qualitative aspects of neighborhood experience and neighborhood change is becoming increasingly important. Within the context of gentrification in the OWE, the interactions that a person has in their community, as well as the meanings they attach to both their own and other’s identities, are largely dependent upon the community in which they live. In this way, whether the OWE is truly gentrified matters only if the respondents found it to be an important factor in their neighborhood experience. In fact, they did, and living within a gentrifying and transitioning community certainly had an influence on their responses.

It is important to look at the discursive nature of race in gentrifying communities as gentrification often has racial undertones. In analyzing the interviews for this research, I found that the OWE seemed to be laced with racial undertones. In a neighborhood that is majority black, the opportunities for integration are endless. However, as evidenced by my interviews, the neighborhood continues to be littered with social and geographical divides (both actual, and those in terms of perceived racialized space) which have resulted in the upholding of white privilege and white dominance. In Chapter 2, I introduced the notion of “space demarcation” (Santos and Buzinde 2007:326), whereby whites utilize physical restoration to erase “the recent stigma of the inner areas” (Jager 1986:79-80, 83, 85, quoted in Smith 1996:114) and any signs of “moral decay” (Zukin 2010:234). The desire to return the OWE to its historic sanctity, what Zukin (2010) would call its “authentic” character, via historic preservation and gentrification, appears to have disregarded a portion of the OWE’s more recent history that has been, and continues to be, characterized by having a majority black population. Returning the

historic district to its authentic character runs the risk of neglecting to acknowledge the racist history of the neighborhood – whites living in the big houses on the Wood Streets, blacks on side streets, blacks excluded from neighborhood organizations. This is not to say that neighborhoods like the OWE cannot “evolve,” but, rather, that the return to history is selective and often amplifies the history of whites (more so than non-whites) in the neighborhood.

Within the OWE, the opportunities that whites have for becoming aware of their privileged positions are also endless. While I cannot speak for the entire community, the participants in this research largely neglected or refused to realize the power of their own race in shaping their experience in the community and the meanings they attached to race and racism. While some aimed to fight racism and racist ideologies, they did not seem to grasp the importance of their own whiteness and the privileges that accompany it. While some were active in neighborhood organizations, they largely neglected the possibilities of persistent racism in keeping blacks out, and neglected to see the organizations as a tool of white identity construction, maintenance, and projection.

While the respondents may have used the notions of privilege, exclusion, racialized space, and community experience through gentrification as a way to identify themselves and maintain their white identities, it is important to once again note that some people in the neighborhood are taking steps to fight racism and racist ideologies. While their whiteness is still a lived, yet seemingly transparent, experience for them, their efforts at changing race relations should not be downplayed. Both becoming race aware and working to end white supremacist belief systems/structures are especially important

goals in gentrifying areas where demographic profiles may be shifting, and racial and class tensions may be coming to a head.

CONCLUSION

The emancipatory city thesis suggests that through gentrification, communities become more diverse, tolerant, and socially cohesive (Caulfield 1989; Caulfield 1994; Lees 2000; Lees et al. 2008). However, this research has shown that even amongst whites living in diverse and gentrifying neighborhoods, racial identities are constructed through white advantage and dominance – including privilege, the power to exclude, and the right to spatialize white interests. When looking at race and gentrification through the dual lens of social identity theory and symbolic interactionism, we see that, through categorization and definition building in a society rife with pressure to conceal the significance of race, whites are able to define what may threaten their dominant positions as the Other and thus maintain their dominant positions of privilege. Additionally, through the utilization of color-blind ideology, the depersonalization of race, and social interactions, a number of whites attribute a meaning to race that paints racism as natural, unchangeable, and essentially a non-white, non-salient issue. In neighborhoods undergoing gentrification, these positions of power and ideologies of equality and equity may work to downplay the racial undertones of the actions of incoming largely middle-class and white gentry, which tend to ignore and white-wash the histories and makeups of the neighborhoods at hand. In other words, in an attempt to protect their “possessive investment[s] in whiteness” (Lipsitz 1998:vii), white gentrifiers use their positions of dominance to normalize racism

and depersonalize the experience of race to appear justified in restoring or revitalizing a neighborhood.

This research has aimed to illustrate the ways in which white identities are socially constructed by “deconstruct[ing]...assumptions of neutrality and natural meanings,” in an attempt to illustrate how “racism is embedded in space and spatial practices” (Taylor 2002:3). In line with deconstruction, I argue that,

We must be insistently aware of...how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology. (Soja 1989, quoted in Taylor 2002:3)

In gentrifying areas, it is important to look at how race and space intermix and how racial identities, particularly those of whites, are “projected” onto neighborhoods (Hartigan 1999). By looking at the ways in which whiteness is projected onto space (i.e. neighborhood organizations, racialized space, segregation, etc), we are able to see gentrification as a political, geographical, and sociological issue. Innately political, gentrification continues to transform space in the interests of certain groups while leaving out the history and interests of others (Zukin 2010). In other words, white histories and interests are amplified and black histories and interests are often muted and/or discounted. Innately geographical, gentrification continues to involve the change of *space* in terms of shaping and transforming landscapes and physical structures. Typically, when talking about gentrification, we are seeing neighborhood space being transformed from non-white to white areas/locales. Lastly, gentrification remains a sociological issue through the conceptualization of *place*. People become attached to their space and develop feelings of belonging (Lees et al. 2008:272; Martin 2005; Redfern 2003). In gentrifying neighborhoods, the determination who is better equipped to “belong” (i.e.

membership in organizations, feeling like you have a voice) may have racial undertones, which makes it a sociological issue. Additionally, the ways in which white residents in gentrifying communities create and maintain their identities and their dominant status also presents itself as a sociological issue. This research has acknowledged both race and gentrification as being political, geographical, and sociological issues, and these issues have been illuminated within the themes of white privilege, exclusion, and racialized space.

While the participants in this research emphasized the notions of white privilege, exclusion, and racialized space within the context of gentrification in the OWE, it is important to note that this does not make the OWE special. Whites everywhere must come to terms with their privilege, acknowledge the exclusions based on those privileges, and recognize the ways in which their racial attitudes are translated into spatial boundaries. What makes research in the OWE unique is its location in Toledo, Ohio. In research conducted in Detroit on the discursive nature of whiteness, Hartigan (1999) found that in some neighborhoods, “there are very few means by which racial differences can be ‘properly’ spatialized” (86). I agree, and argue that this stands true for Toledo as a whole. When looking at smaller cities, it is important to note that while gentrification exists, the cities are limited in terms of the choices people have for housing – especially if they are seeking a diverse neighborhood – and for becoming actively anti-racist. In Toledo, perhaps living in the OWE is an effective way to fight racism. However, while I fully understand that people may come to the OWE with the best of intentions, it is crucial that whites in any sized city become aware of their positions within their neighborhood, while challenging racism as a collective that is both aware of its whiteness

and ready to admit that whites “can only become part of the solution if [they] recognize that they are part of the problem” (Lipsitz 1998:22).³⁰

In Chapter 3, I presented three main ways that whites can challenge racism and become race aware: create safe and constructive language, create safe spaces in which to talk about race, and increase interaction with people of different races. This research presented on the OWE supports these suggestions. In addition to these suggestions, whites need to individually and collectively acknowledge their positions of power and challenge the racist ideologies which uphold those positions. Within communities that are gentrifying or in transition, whites need to acknowledge that there is a “poisonous system of privilege that pits people against each other and prevents the creation of common ground” (Lipsitz 1998:xix). Whites must recognize and accept that their dominant positions make gentrification inherently racial and work toward a “common ground” by rejecting the racist ideologies that have been so naturalized and normalized. Until these ideologies are challenged by whites and non-whites alike, social relations in and out of urban settings will continue to be hierarchical and littered with unnecessary and misguided accusations of blame.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

It is important to again note that I am by no means suggesting that this research offers an all-encompassing view of the OWE, whiteness, or gentrification. This research is no way generalizable to all gentrifying communities, all whites in the OWE, or all

³⁰ In Chapter 3, I suggested that the suggestions for advancing race relations were too abstract. While my suggestion of working as a collective to become race-aware is also abstract, it stands as a more structured and feasible suggestion.

whites in general. Any results or generalizations discussed in this section are specific to the participants of this research and their experiences of race and community in the OWE. Additionally, any statements made about the neighborhood were taken from the analysis of the interviews; I understand that this could present a misconstrued picture of the OWE.

Admittedly, this research also has gaps. Throughout this research, I have struggled to discuss anti-racism by whites in gentrifying communities. The tension between moving to a community as an act of anti-racism and the act of living in that community not being enough (to end racism) is not particular to this research. As suggested in Chapter 3, critical whiteness studies largely fails to provide concrete guidance as to how whites should proceed in improving race relations. As a theoretical framework, critical whiteness studies is able to provide insight on the ways in which white identities are formed to ignore race, but has yet to develop tangible directions on where to go from here. Unfortunately, this research is limited by that same problem. However, constructing language, creating safe spaces, increasing interaction, and becoming race-aware to challenge white advantages are steps in the right direction.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

More research needs to be conducted in the OWE on the ways in which whiteness is constructed before OWE-specific generalizations can be made. Future research should include more research subjects, as well as non-white respondents, in order to get a more well-rounded picture of racial dynamics and perceptions in the OWE. Additional research

in the OWE should also be conducted on block and school segregation as the respondents were keenly aware of the lack of integration in the neighborhood.

Outside of the OWE, additional research needs to look at the ways in which whiteness is constructed in urban communities and the ways in which concepts such as “diversity” are constructed amongst gentrifiers (i.e. challenging the emancipatory city thesis – see Chapter 2). Further research also needs to be conducted on the ways in which whiteness is constructed in communities (gentrifying or not) that are explicitly and consciously focused on being racially integrated (i.e. Maplewood, NJ and Mt. Airy in Philadelphia, PA). Additionally, more research needs to be conducted on gentrification in shrinking and smaller cities.

Lastly, more research needs to be conducted on concrete ways in which all people, but especially whites, can begin to improve race relations. Without tangible directives, whiteness will remain dominant and the progress of race relations will remain stagnant.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Are you over the age of 18?
2. How long have you lived in the OWE?
3. Do you own your home or do you rent?
4. What brought you here?
5. What has kept you here?
6. Do you participate in the neighborhood association?
 - a. Do you feel like you are appropriately represented in the community? Do you feel as though you have a voice in what goes on?
7. What do you think about the public mythology surrounding the OWE? (As being diverse and accepting.)
8. Tell me about the OWE. How would you describe the community to someone who maybe wanted to move here or wasn't familiar with it? What is it like to live here?
 - a. Do you feel a strong sense of community in the OWE?
 - i. What does that mean to you?
 - b. Has the neighborhood changed since you've moved here?

- i. Have there been any changes in the OWE since you've been here that you haven't liked?
 - ii. Have there been any changes in the OWE since you've been here that you do like?
 - iii. How would you describe these changes?
 - c. OR – Is there anything you don't particularly like or would change about this neighborhood?
 - d. OR – Is there anything you particularly like about this neighborhood?
9. Tell me about what happens in the OWE - Festivals, House Tours, etc.
- a. What do they mean?
 - b. Who are they for?
 - c. Who comes?
10. How would you describe the mix of residents in the community?
- a. Would you say it is diverse?
 - b. How do you define diverse?
 - c. What do you mean by "diverse?"
11. How often would you say that you say you interact with people of other races/social classes/sexual orientations?
- a. What about on a leisure level – porch interaction, BBQs, game nights, etc?
12. Do you see yourself living in the OWE in 5 years? Why/why not?
13. Do you think in 5 years the OWE will be better or worse? Why?
14. Do you think your experience is fairly representative of all other people in the OWE?
15. When was the first time you become aware of your race?

16. Are you aware of any racial situations in the Old West End?

Appendix B

Informed Consent Documentation



Department of Sociology and
Anthropology
Mail Stop 956
2801 Bancroft St.
Toledo, Ohio 43606-3390

ADULT RESEARCH SUBJECT - INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Constructing Whiteness: Voices from the Gentrified Old West End

Principal Investigator: Barbara Chesney, Associate Professor of Sociology;
Department Chair, 419.530.4075;
Jenny Northrup, Student-Investigator, 419.309.7035

Purpose: You are invited to participate in the research project entitled, “Constructing Whiteness: Voices from the Gentrified Old West End,” which is being conducted at the University of Toledo under the direction of Barbara Chesney. The purpose of this study is to explore what it is like to live in the Old West End and to examine resident identity formation

Description of Procedures: This research will take place in the Old West End during March 2010. You will be asked to answer a series of interview questions. Your participation will take about 30 – 60 minutes. With your consent, your interview will be audio recorded.

Permission to record: Will you permit the researcher to audio record during this research procedure?

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	_____			Initial
	Here			

After you have completed your participation, the research team will debrief you about the data, theory and research area under study and answer any questions you may have about the research.

Potential Risks: There are minimal risks to participation in this study, including loss of confidentiality. Some of the questions asked may make you feel uncomfortable or anxious. At your request, the interview can be stopped at any time.

Potential Benefits: The only direct benefit to you if you participate in this research may be that you will learn about how sociological interviews are conducted and may learn more about community and identity. Others may benefit by learning about the results of this research.

Confidentiality: The researchers will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you provided this information, or what that information is. The consent forms with signatures will be kept separate from responses, which will not include names and which will be presented to others only when combined with other responses. Although we will make every effort to protect your confidentiality, there is a low risk that this might be breached.

Voluntary Participation: Your refusal to participate in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled and will not affect your relationship with The University of Toledo or any of your classes. In addition, you may discontinue participation at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits.

Contact Information: Before you decide to accept this invitation to take part in this study, you may ask any questions that you might have. If you have any questions at any time before, during or after your participation or experience any physical or psychological distress as a result of this research you should contact a member of the research team (Barbara Chesney/419.530.4075 and Jenny Northrup/419.309.7035). If you have questions beyond those answered by the research team on your rights as a research subject or research-related injuries, please feel free to contact the Chairperson of the SBE

Institutional Review Board, Dr. Barbara Chesney, in the Office of Research on the main campus at (419) 530-2844, or Dr. Jeff Busch at (419) 530-2416.

Before you sign this form, please ask any questions on any aspect of this study that is unclear to you. You may take as much time as necessary to think it over.

SIGNATURE SECTION – Please read carefully

You are making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above, you have had all your questions answered, and you have decided to take part in this research.

The date you sign this document to enroll in this study, that is, today's date must fall between the dates indicated at the bottom of the page.

Name of Subject (please print)	Signature	Date
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Name of Person Obtaining Consent	Signature	Date
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THE UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO

SOCIAL, BEHAVIORAL & EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

The research project described in this consent form and the form itself have been reviewed and approved by

the University of Toledo Social, Behavioral & Educational Review Board (SBE IRB) for the period of time

specified below.

SBE IRB # : _____

Approved Number of Subjects: _____

Project Start Date: _____	Project Expiration Date: _____

_____	Date: _____
Barbara Chesney, Ph.D., Chair	
UT Social Behavioral & Educational IRB	