UNEASY GENTRIFICATION IN HARLEM NEW YORK CITY

FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

by

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Abstract

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James C. Egede, Sr.

Advisor: Professor David Chapin

This study has two objectives: The first is to explore group and individual motives and experiences as they react and comment on the gentrification that is unfolding in their Harlem neighborhood. The second is to test the quasi-hypothetical proposition of the study that the motives and experiences of African American and Euro-American participants in the same neighborhood would be significantly dis-similar.

Prior studies in the field of gentrification have focused primarily on the origin, causes, and effects of

gentrification in post-industrial United States, paying relatively little, or no attention to motives that precede gentrification, or the human “experiences” that are integral part of the process. This study expanded and extended the foci of the earlier studies from multiple perspectives.

Designed as small scale qualitative research, the study employed open-ended, in-depth interview, to elicit participants’ data. The data were taped, transcribed, and analyzed for contents of the psychological meanings of gentrification in Harlem from the perspectives of the participants.

The results revealed expected differences and similarities between African American and Euro-American participants. However, the complexities, subtleties, and nuances in the data make the results inconclusive and difficult to interpret, suggesting at times that the differences and similarities are not always based on race, as generally assumed. Therefore, the major finding in this study is complexity. At the levels of motives and experiences, people rely on complex discourses of opportunity and progress, loss of homes, and small

businesses, as they face gentrification that is slowly but surely transforming the Harlem neighborhood.

This study contributes to the literature on gentrification in two ways. It demonstrates that the data that support the assumed differences and similarities between African American and Euro-American participants are complex and subtle, and difficult to interpret, suggesting that making sense of subjective experience can be complex and problematic.

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I owe the success of this dissertation to everyone who contributed to it in various ways. Therefore I want to begin by saying “thank you” in a huge way to my adviser, David Chapin, whose mentorship nurtured and prepared me for this process. David made me believe that I could call on him whenever I needed to talk, and I did. I hope that I did not over do it? Thank you again, David, and God bless!

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Chapter 1

1. Introduction

This dissertation is designed to explore meanings of group and individual attitudes and perceptions of gentrification in Harlem. More specifically this dissertation is designed to examine meanings such as of motives and experiences of gentrification in Harlem while highlighting participants multiple perspectives on race and class. The study examined motives and experiences of African American and Euro-American gentrifiers in Harlem as they observe and comment at different times on the gentrification that is slowly but surely changing the social and physical landscapes of the neighborhood where they live or work.

After very difficult beginnings to establish itself as an African American neighborhood, Harlem enjoyed some hopeful periods in the 1920s and 1960s. However, neglect and abandonment due to disinvestment overshadowed the 1970s and 1980s, plunging many poor African American households into untold misery (Leavitt & Saegert, 1990). Over time, the accrued social and economic benefits in Harlem plummeted, and threatened the stability of the social and cultural status of the neighborhood.

Unemployment, crime, failing schools, homelessness, and drugs, culminated in what allowed detractors to ascribe a deficit-deficiency-model to the sub-culture that subsequently emerged. Parham, White, and Ajamu (1999) cite Moynihan (1965), and Kardiner and Ovesey (1951) as authors of the deficit-deficiency model. The model which began to be used in the late 1950s to 1960s, assumed that Blacks are deficient with respect to intellectual ability, perceptual skills, cognitive styles, and family structure of poor or inadequate environmental stimulations, and other factors.

Policy makers found it difficult to ignore the dismal state of affairs in Harlem. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, Harlem was ripe for gentrification. Because proponents of gentrification were arguing that to rescue a neighborhood such as Harlem with the high concentration of poverty that it had and still has, some level of gentrification was necessary; thus, indigenous residents' resistance or protest against gentrification of Harlem could not hold it off.

My original interest in Harlem and of this topic stemmed from two major factors. The first is concerned with my initial visceral reaction to the downturn of

Harlem as a center for African American culture. During my first year as a Ph.D. graduate student at CUNY in the current Ph.D. program I went to Harlem to investigate “Environmental Pollution”. Going back there for the second time it was not hard for me to see that Harlem was declining at a rapidly alarming rate, and needed to be rescued. Structurally, Harlem was in the thick of things. Massive buildings were going up, others not so massive were boarded up, and others were falling down. I wanted to understand the processes at work, the multi-faceted phenomenon called gentrification that was taking place in Harlem.

I thought that rescuing a world-famous African American neighborhood from permanent decline and destruction was important. But was gentrification the cure all? Was it a sort of broad spectrum remedy, or an antidote-that which Harlem must swallow hook line and sinker in order to overcome the accumulated setbacks of its checkered history? I knew that I did not have the answers to these questions but that the events that were unfolding in Harlem would make a timely study. Therefore, I began to wonder aloud and in time began to ask more questions which later formed the springboard for the present research/dissertation: “What is gentrification?

How do different people and groups understand and experience it? Who are the gentrifiers? Where do they come from? Do they, in fact, see themselves as gentrifiers? How do they view displacement? Can they be objective about displacement as it impacts on the lives of poor, low income folks, whom they are accused of displacing? If they had the opportunity to state their positions how would they describe their experiences with gentrification, given their roles in perpetuating the process? How, in the first place, did they become involved with gentrification and what could be their motives for becoming so involved?

I was intrigued and challenged by what I thought could be their possible answers to each of those questions. Even more intriguing and challenging was the notion that I came to entertain during the later stages of my toying with the idea of gentrification. That notion eventually gave rise to the proposition that emerged for the current study. I came to believe that African American and Euro-American gentrifiers would have different experiences and motives on the major issues of the current gentrification in Harlem, given that African Americans and Euro-Americans have different realities in the United States.

I framed my research questions and began an extensive pilot study by making frequent visits to Harlem and engaging some residents on the street in informal conversations about what they made of the transformation that was taking place in their neighborhood.

The current research was designed as a qualitative open-ended interview method to examine “motives and experiences” of African American and Euro-American gentrifiers in the gentrifying neighborhood of Harlem. Thirteen African American and five Euro-American participants were interviewed.

In the interest of chronological detail, this dissertation takes the following format: Chapter 1 is the Introduction. Chapter 2 focuses on definitions that are germane to and history of gentrification. Chapter 3 provides an overview of Harlem, from socio-cultural and historical perspectives. Chapter 4 addresses the issues of Research Methodology and Methods. Chapter 5 presents the Research Findings. While Chapter 6 draws conclusions, together with discussions.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definitions of Gentrification And Related Terms.

This chapter is intended to be both descriptive and analytical of the term “gentrification” and other related terms used in this study or used in existing literature, in order to assist the reader to better understand gentrification as well as the physical, social, and cultural changes that accompany it. It is important to understand the changes that accompany gentrification, especially as they impact the lives of residents who live in gentrifying neighborhoods, in order to maintain a balanced view of gentrification as a multi-faceted phenomenon which has different outcomes for different people.

The terms defined and analyzed constitute key issues in debates between proponents and opponents of gentrification though the terms selected for definition here are not by any means the only terms that generally emerge in such discussions.

In order to accomplish the task of defining gentrification, it was necessary first to review the

existing literature offering definitions of gentrification and related terms in descriptive and analytic formats {e.g., Palen & London, 1984). Defining relevant terms before literature review in this way is helpful and necessary because it dispels myths about the phenomenon. I will begin by defining “gentrification”, followed by “gentrifier” and “displacement”- both terms are related to gentrification.

2.2. Gentrification

As a term gentrification has a complicated and sometimes confusing history. According to Palen and London (1984; 1980, p.6.), gentrification has been referred to by terms such as “return-to-the-city-movement, stay-in-the-city movement, urban re-invasion, revitalization, upgrading, renaissance”, suggesting that the affected area was, prior to gentrification, economically, culturally, and socially dead. While this may be the case it is also true that the working class households are economically, culturally, and socially devitalized in the process of gentrification as new, more affluent, middle and upper middle class households move in. This is not to say that we should dispose of these terminologies. The point to be made here is that any term used to describe or label any

phenomenon must provide sufficient information, connotations, or images of the phenomenon to prevent unnecessary misunderstanding about the phenomenon.

One source of misunderstanding in the existing theoretical or ideological literature about current inner-city transformation is that different terms used by different scholars to describe the same phenomenon reflect different perceptions of the phenomenon. Given that gentrification has a multi-faceted outcomes for different people, the presence of different perceptions is reasonable.

Another area of confusion derives from the use of the term “gentrification” as a generic term for neighborhood transformation. As in the back-to-the-city hypothesis, Palen and London (1984), argue that the use of the label gentrification in this way conveys an erroneous understanding of the changes in inner city neighborhoods. Gentrification is the most widely used term to describe the process of middle and upper middle class groups moving in and displacing lower income groups in the city neighborhood that previously suffered a decline. However, according Palen and London, this connotation is also inappropriate. In order to corroborate and strengthen

their argument the authors took a scholarly position by reverting to the dictionary definition of “gentry” which is:

> A person of gentle birth; the condition or rank of a gentleman; upper or ruling class; aristocracy; landed proprietors of noble class.
>
> [Palen and London, 1984, p.7]

Hence, gentrification means the return of some landed aristocracy to the city from somewhere outside the city. Data from existing literature suggest that this is not what is happening in American cities. It is well documented that the term gentrification was coined by Ruth Glass (1964) to describe the transformations in London neighborhoods in the 1950s and 1960s.

> One by one, many of the working class quarters of London have been invaded by middle classes-upper and lower. Shabby modest mews and cottages–two rooms up and down–have been taken over, when their leases expire, and have become elegant, expensive residences. Larger Victorian houses, downgraded in earlier or recent periods–which were used as lodging houses or were otherwise in multiple occupation–have been upgraded once again.. Once of 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.
>
> (cited in Smith, 1996).

Smith (1996) argues that Glass's term contains criticism and a negative connotation was understood as the word came into common usage. It is exactly this critical intent that scholars who understand gentrification as a tool of oppression have failed to blunt, despite the vigorous attempts to use more people-friendly euphemisms to clip the class and race edges of gentrification, meaning that Ruth Glass' definition still carries weight in popular imagination.

Another area of misunderstanding that leads to much debate and controversy arises from what Bostic and Martin (2003) refer to as a "racial dynamic" –"whereby White households replace Black households as neighborhood incomes rise" (p.2427). Bostic and Martin (2003) suggest that a significant body of the literature on gentrification makes this assertion (e.g., Freeman & Bracon, 2004), and argue that this racial dimension of gentrification ignores the fact that neighborhood transformations which are a part of gentrification could be set in motion by middle and upper class African American households.

The "back-to-the-city-movement" was a general notion that the changes in the cities are the result of former

suburbanites coming back to re-populate the cities from the suburbs. Currently, there is no credible evidence to support this position, and Palen and London (1984), cite several studies to support the argument that migration from the suburb to the city is not a source of gentrification. According to Palen and London, those moving in and renovating old buildings in the city are primarily stay-in-the-city dual-wage earner-households. In other words, the migration into the central cities seems to be the result of young couples moving from one neighborhood in the city to another neighborhood rather than moving into the city from the suburb.

2.3. Gentrification and Gentrifiers

If there is any agreement in the academic community about gentrification it is that it has no simple definition. To shed more light on gentrification, Slater (2000, p.3.), uses the Oxford English Dictionary (1993), and the Webster's Dictionary of the American Language (1988), to dissect it into component parts: gentrify, -fied, -fying. According to Slater, gentrify means: to "Convert (a working class or inner city district etc.) into an area of middle class residence" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1993). And, gentrify, -fied, -fying is:

> to convert an area, or inner city district etc. into a more affluent middle-class neighborhood, as by remodeling dwellings, resulting in increased property values and in displacement of the poor– hence, the term gentrification.

Thus, if gentrification makes it possible for a wealthy individual to buy more real estate in a gentrifying neighborhood for less money and make a profit, a gentrifier is one who makes it possible for gentrification to take place. In current usage, those who buy real estate in a gentrifying neighborhood and as such gentrify the neighborhood, whether they are individual developers, realtors, or institutions, such as banks, insurances companies, law firms, or home owners, are generally perceived as gentrifiers (Palen & London, 1984). Gentrifiers are gentrifiers, either by directly buying into a gentrifying neighborhood or by indirectly facilitating the course of gentrification by creating the conditions that allow gentrification to take place. Thus, perceived as major players in the gentrification process, gentrifiers are praised for upgrading decaying or declining buildings and infusing a new life line into a community that was hitherto afflicted with a concentration of poverty. But who are gentrifiers? What are their characteristics and personal perspectives? I will attempt

to provide some answers to these questions in the following section.

2.4. Diversity and Characteristics of Gentrifiers

The statement that any “explanation for gentrification begins with the presence of gentrifiers”, Smith (1996, p. 108), is a sufficient and necessary reason to describe gentrifiers in a little more details. Besides, I believe that elucidating any aspects of the diversities and characteristics of gentrifiers, will hopefully help to shed more light on the elusive identities of gentrifiers– especially since Caulfield (1989), who describes them as “resettlers”, warns that gentrifiers “are not a tidy group” (p.618). They are a diverse and enigmatic group in demographic makeup.

After a review of several studies, and those of legions of surveys of gentrifiers, Down (1981), Freeman & Braconi (2004), Hackworth & Holcomb (1999), Kennedy & Leonard (2001), Ley (2001), Peterson (1985), came to the conclusion that gentrifiers are typically middle and upper middle class Whites. They are often well educated and upwardly mobile individuals who are in public or sometimes in private sector occupations. They are in those professions as managers, or in administrative and

technical positions. Gentrifiers are often single, but sometimes married, with or without children. According to Ley (2001), this profile has been repeated over and over again in surveys.

However, Bostic and Martin (2003), referred to earlier, remind us that African American gentrifiers are also making inroads into the gentrification scene, suggesting that Black middle and upper middle class home owners in gentrifying neighborhoods may also be displacing poor African Americans from their homes. Gale (1986), reports that there appear to be no discrepancies among various studies as to the known racial identities of gentrifiers. According to Gale (1986), in Washington, D.C., for example, with a 70 percent (1980) African American population, gentrification is predominantly in Euro-American households. African American and other (nonwhite) gentrifiers account for no more than 14 percent in that city.

On the issue of motive of gentrifiers, without specific reference to African Americans, Redfern (2003, p.2351), suggests that every gentrifier “in the demand side belongs to the same economic class and therefore possesss the same set of motivation”. This raises more

questions than answers which will be addressed later in this dissertation, as far as African American gentrifiers are concerned.

In another study, Karsten (2003), identifies middle class families with children who have opted to stay in the central areas of the city as “yupps” (young urban professional parents). They combine domestic life of raising children with furthering their own careers within urban lifestyle. An analysis of the daily lives of those parents reveals that they are motivated to remain in the city because of the significance of the city factor which enhances the integration of cultural and social contacts with hectic and contrasting lifestyles. Peterson (1985), was one of the first to research this issue of gentrifiers’ attraction to cities and conclude that it is more about property than generic housing. But, like other studies, also concludes that cities offer gentrifiers proximity to work places as well as increased access to cultural centers.

Focusing on the diversity of gentrifiers, Caulfield (1989), classifies gentrifiers along a number of the following axes:

(a) Visibility and tenure: Gentrifiers in this group range from owner-occupier refurbished dilapidated houses, to tenants of developer-constructed houses of new infill structures designed to look aesthetically appealing.

(b) Occupation and income: In this group are marginally employed creative workers such as writers, musicians, and actors who earn their main income from other sources like blue-collar or service areas, to highly paid corporate manager-executives.

(c) Political outlook: Gentrifiers in this group range from people devoted to movements of political left persuasion to those who by preference are strictly conservative.

(d) Cultural affiliation: Gentrifiers in this category range from members in semi-self-contained sub-cultures such as gay or bohemian communities to those whose everyday life, for lack of a better phrase, are considered mainstream.

(e) Household composition and lifestyle: They range from traditionally one-or two-person households to contemporary family type households with many children.

2.5. Displacement

Displacement is, perhaps, the most hotly debated side effect of gentrification. Citing Gale (1986), Griffith (1995, p. 249) defines it as:

> the situation that occurs when incumbent households are forced to vacate their homes because of eviction (for no fault of their own), lease termination, sharply escalating rents, exorbitant property tax increases, or building code citations.

According to Laska and Spain (1980), in Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston, and elsewhere, lower income households close to central business districts (CBDs) were, for example, displaced by higher income households. Yet displacement is often downplayed by researchers who argue that the extent to which displacement is the result of gentrification is not known (Gale, 1986; Griffith, 1995).

Citing Marcuse (1985a), Griffith (1995), describes four types of displacements which he refers to as “direct, exclusionary, chain”, and “pressure” displacements.

In Direct displacement, “a resident is forced out of a home by various means” including legal or illegal means.

Exclusionary displacement, according to Griffith, occurs when a potential resident is prevented from moving

into a neighborhood because gentrification has made it too expensive for him or her to move into that neighborhood.

In chain displacement, a successive chain of households are forced to move out of the same building as it is upgraded beyond a level they can afford.

Finally, displacement pressure occurs when the threat of displacement hangs over residents as they see their neighbors being pushed out and left to remain in fear of when their time will come.

Marcuse [1985a] believes that about 10,000 to 40,000 households are displaced every year in New York City. Who are the displaced? The answer is based on varied and conflicting evidence, depending on whom you ask. Although it is often assumed that Blacks and Hispanics are in the majority of those displaced, relative to proportion of the population, Griffith (1995) cites Durham and Sheldon (1986), to argue that the majority of those displaced are white. This contention is, however, not corroborated by Beauregard (1986a). Cited by Griffith (1995), Beauregard suggests that those likely to be displaced are the poor of any ethnic group, and not necessarily Whites. He describes the displaced as residents of “inexpensive but

architecturally desirable” housing, close to downtown. They are marginally employed or unemployed elderly, single mothers, or working class Euro-American, African American, or Hispanics families. They are easy prey to gentrifiers, not only because they live in neighborhoods that are attractive, but simply because they are poor and marginalized, and do not have political or economic clout to withstand the gentrification and displacement pressures from governments, developers, and landlords.

Displacement, according to Griffith (1995), can be a shattering experience because it leads to loss of community or to homelessness. Large scale displacement of low income households was carried out in the 1950s and 1960s during a nationwide federal program of urban renewal. Urban Renewal will be discussed in more detail below in a separate sub-section headed: “Gentrification and Urban Renewal”.

2.6. Displacement And Social Support

Displacement uproots low income households from homes they have known all their lives and sometimes as noted above renders them homeless or at best pushes them to other neighborhoods that are not “good enough” to sustain life. Throughout history, Africans and aborigines, rural

peasants, and city dwellers have always been conveniently displaced.

> In cutting the roots of so many people, we have destroyed language, culture, dietary traditions, and social bond
>
> (Fullilove, 2004, p. 5)

2.7. Historical Perspective

In most accounts of contemporary literature, especially since Ruth Glass (1964) coined and introduced the term into common usage, gentrification and gentrifiers have made headline news in most major cities of the industrialized world including the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, North and South America, Asia, (Ley, 1996; Palen and London, 1984) for positive and negative reasons. However, it is important to remember that gentrification predates Ruth Glass and 1964. According to Smith (1996), although gentrification proper can be traced to the postwar cities in the advanced capitalist world, there are important harbingers. For example, Smith cites Charles Baudelaire who in his celebrated poem “The Eyes of the Poor”, creates a “poem of love and estrangement”, around what later came to be known as “gentrification”. Set in the late 1850s and early 1860s, Baudelaire uses the poem

to decry what he perceives as Baron Haussmann's destruction of working class Paris by erecting monumental buildings. As the buildings attract the rich to the city, the poor are completely effaced from it. Therefore, effacing the poor from the center of the city at the time is not only indicative of class dichotomy, it is also the one single action that clearly serves as a common link between proto-gentrification and contemporary gentrification.

Continuing the narrative of love and estrangement, Smith also cites others, for example, Marshall Berman (1982: 148-150) who uses Baudelaire's poem to introduce his discussion of modernism in the streets of Paris. In his discussion, Berman equates structural changes and increases in producer services that are unaffordable to the poor with the rise of yuppies, or middle and upper middle class. Friedrich Engels, a social critic, makes similar connections in his discussion of Manchester during the Industrial Revolution. According to Smith, Engels (1975, 84-85) states that in the center of Manchester is the commercial district that mainly consists of offices and warehouses. In the outer Manchester area surrounding the commercial district is an unmixed working-peoples

quarters. Outside and away from the working peoples quarters are the upper and middle class bourgeoisie far off from the working class. This is viewed as a deliberate attempt to separate the poor from the wealthy. Engels is said to be particularly dexterous at drawing this kind of social geography – not only to paint a picture of aesthetic value, and focus on profit from buildings, but also to demonstrate how the miseries of the poor are concealed from the wealthy men and women who live on the outer ring. Engels ideas which he referred to as “Haussmann”, were not intended to mimic Bonaparte’s ideas of “Perfect Paris”, accomplished by erecting boulevards through worker’s quarters and lining the boulevards on both sides with luxurious structures fit only for the affluent. Engels’ monumental project aimed at accomplishing significantly more than Bonaparte–for him, beautifying the whole city of Paris by removing all alleys and lanes and replacing them with luxurious mansions raises the question: who would live in those mansions but the super-rich who could afford them? It is important to remember that these early embourgeoisement plans of Paris, together with the rise of bourgeoisie modernity, not only serve as social functions they are visible links to contemporary gentrification.

Smith (1996) provides more examples by citing several works; that of Roman Cybriwsky, who recites a nineteenth-century story of a family displaced from a tenement in Nantes in 1685. According to Cybriwsky, the law of Nantes signed by Henry IV in 1598 guarantee poor Huguenots certain rights, rights such as access to housing. However, as the law or edicts are revoked about a century later by Louis XIV, massive displacement of the poor by landlords, merchants, and other rich people takes place.

Nonetheless, except for earlier proto-gentrification which was sporadic, contemporary gentrification by whatever name, whether it is called “embourgeoisement, Haussmann”, or “Improvements”, did not emerge until the middle of the nineteenth century. Contemporary gentrification or anything that resembles it when it emerged was not ubiquitous or global. It was sporadic and primarily restricted to a few cities in Europe, Australia, North America, and other places with urban histories that warrant disinvestment of housing stock and consequent urban revitalization.

By 1930 and 1940, gentrification as we know it today still remained a sporadic occurrence, even in the United States. Evidence of gentrification proper emerged in the

post World War II period. It is not surprising, therefore, that as previously noted in 1964, Ruth Glass, a sociologist, coined the term “gentrification” to describe changes that were taking place in London neighborhoods in the 1950s and 1960s (Palen & London, 1984). Throughout the 1970s, interest in rebuilding or revitalization of large cities in the United States soared. Then gentrification quickly became popular by couching it in “catchy” terms such as “development, renovation, revitalization, renewal”. In fact, according to London and Palen (1984), those terms were used to refer to changes in land use pattern or changes in the composition of neighborhood populations or simply to the notions of new forms of race and class reorganization. Patterns of such new social, cultural, and economic reordering of inner cities have been the same in many inner cities throughout the United States and in other cities throughout the world. Apart from couching gentrification in people-friendly terms, there were other reasons for the popularization of gentrification. Similar to the 19th century experiences in London and Paris, gentrification was seen as a tool that could be used to curb working class power and consolidate city control in the hands of upper and middle class. Gentrification also presented the cyclical economic

opportunity to make money by replenishing aging and decaying housing stock.

Throughout the twentieth century, different methods have been used to assign groups into different land space. For example, in the periods from 1900 to 1953, racial restrictions and restrictive covenants were used to keep nonwhites out of white neighborhoods (Massey & Denton; 1984; Plotkin, 1999).

Although the outcomes of re-organizations of land and building uses that later came to be known as "gentrification" have so far had mostly "class" underpinnings, in some countries such as the United States of America, they have also had race implications. Smith (1996, p.37), for example, cites Maureen Dowd, who paints a picture of the Georgetown scene in Washington DC, to introduce and focus the discourse on "race":

> They gentrified Georgetown, an unfashionable working class neighborhood with a large Black contingent. As Mrs. Alsop told Town and Country magazine: The blacks kept their houses well. All of us had terrible guilt in the 30s and 40s for buying places so cheaply, and moving them out.

Since 1985 existing literature has been replete with bodies of work that attempts to explore the reasons for

the emergence of gentrification or theories that explain the multi-faceted process. Unfortunately, much of those research and theoretical explanations of the process have been, at best, inconclusive or conflicting. Citing London and colleagues, Griffith (1995), divides the causes of gentrification into four distinct categories: demographic, ecological, socio-cultural, and political-economic. This division is based on the results of a survey of 48 American cities that explored each of the causes. The survey also looked into why gentrification occurred in some cities, and not in others. They believed it was necessary to employ a large sample in this study because earlier studies in the literature to that time employed relatively fewer samples (i.e. fewer cities).

Demographic explanation

A demographic explanation assumes that changes in the composition of the population have possibly led to emergence of gentrification because of in-migration. Griffith cites London (London et al. 1986, 371) who argues that the baby-boom generation has put extraordinary burden on the housing supply, making the rehabilitation of the inner cities at least a partial solution to the housing shortage. In addition to the baby-boomer hypothesis, they

cite the age at which people get married and start their own families, declining birthrate, women's entry into the work-force, and increased number of two-income households as possible causes of gentrification.

Ecological Explanation

An ecological explanation of gentrification rests on the argument that a declining industrial base, together with a growing service sector, make urban environments more suited for residential land use. Therefore, the need to deploy existing housing stock to the fullest became more attractive.

Socio-cultural Explanation

This perspective assumes that learned values and ideologies control behavior. More specifically, that as more people learn or believe that living in the city is fashionable and more particularly that it is a sign of wealth and influence to live in the city, others join them to do what is in vogue, thereby increase the potential for gentrification .

Political-economic Explanation

A political-economic explanation revolves around private and public forces that derive from both Marxist and

traditional perspectives. The Marxist perspective is illuminated by Smith (1987, 1986) by means of his rent-gap theory which assumes that as investors refuse to invest money to certain areas, property values in those areas decline and create slum conditions that make gentrification inevitable.

While the traditional perspective argues that the rising cost of land and transportation together with availability of inexpensive properties in slum neighborhoods encourage gentrification.

2.8. Gentrification And Urban Renewal

Gentrification is a multi-faceted process that evolves and spreads more often than not with private funding. Urban Renewal, on the other hand, is a federal government sponsored program pursued by a wide range of cities since Word War II. Urban renewal has a history and a definite beginning. Despite these dissimilarities between the two on the issue of origin, gentrification and urban renewal are inextricably linked. Each is perceived by some (more particularly, poor Blacks and Hispanics, and others in the low income range) as instruments of oppression, instruments of oppression that serve the common function of removing the poor from inner city

neighborhoods away from downtown business zones. In order to elucidate further the linkage between gentrification and urban renewal, it will be necessary to first give an overview of the history of its creation to gain an insight on how and why it was created. Urban renewal was later characterized as an agent of "Negro Removal”–in both lay and academic communities. When and why was it created, why did it change course to victimize the very population it was created to serve? I will now turn to the history of its creation in order to answer some of those questions.

Urban Renewal

Unlike gentrification, urban renewal was created by Title 1, of the Housing Act of 1949-a federal program aimed at revitalizing aging and decaying cities, locked in an endless circle of decline, mostly due to federal housing policies (Massey & Denton, 1993). From the onset, the program was fated to fail faced by two rival forces with conflicting interests: one of those forces was the local growth machine, and the other was the liberal labor coalition. The liberal coalition had as its primary concern the creation of more affordable public housing for the poor, including subsidized housing, and restoration of slums. On the other hand, the growth machine which

included but not limited to the U.S. Savings and Loan League, the Mortgage Bankers Association, the National Association of Real Estate Board, and the real estate committee of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, had among its many concerns, the protection of real estate values, clearance of downtown slums for business and large institutions to expand, and in particular, protection at local government level, and powers of eminent domain to facilitate deals with recalcitrant private citizens who may be countering hold-out prices (Domhoff, 1983). The concerns of these two forces overlap, but of more detrimental to accomplishment to the program objectives was that planners and service providers became collaborators to inflate numbers and falsify books. For example, according to Leavitt (1996),

> The prescription back then was simple: Use a local arm of a government agency to come up with a catchy slogan, have urban planners and social service professionals rationalize already agreed upon decisions that satisfy federal funding requirements, and raise the expectations of the poor by asking them what they want but rarely incorporate their ideas. To complete the picture, lace guidelines with vague language about improvements for the poor, allocate residents a few program dollars and deal with everyone who suggests that something is amiss with name-calling.

Set up as exemplified above, it was not surprising that while the publicly and legally declared goal of the program was the grand plan of revitalizing the nation's cities for the benefit of the rich and poor, urban renewal functioned almost exclusively to benefit business interests at the expense of low income groups. The following is part of what happened:

> At the moment, planners of urban renewal place more emphasis on beautiful buildings, landscaping and arterial routes over which the white suburbanites can hasten to and from work in the central city without having the contact or view the "victims" of 300 years of deprivation as they wallow helplessly in their human misery which the slums dictate
>
> (Editorial, Pittsburg Courier, Feb.27, 1965)

It should be recalled here that earlier, in what was perceived as Baron Haussmann's destruction of working class Paris, the wealthy were spared the discomfort of coming face to face with the miseries of the poor by means of beautiful mansions. This is one way in which gentrification and urban renewal are closely linked. They are tools for separating the wealthy from the poor.

It is a wry joke that "urban renewal" is used as a euphemism for "Negro Removal". This was what it amounted to in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s when urban renewal was used on a large scale to shunt Black families from one

slum area to another crowded neighborhood. In one example, reported by Roy Wilkins, in the Oakland Post (1971), Judge Keith in a law suit brought by Black residents of Hamtramack, held that:

> the city has intentionally planned and implemented urban renewal and other government projects to the purpose of removing a substantial portion of Black citizens from the city. In one project, 57 percent of the people forced out were Black; in another 70 percent of the 1,200 people affected were Black. The Negro population dropped in six years from 14.5 per cent to 8.5 percent
>
> (Wilkins, Oakland Post, 1971).

The records of urban renewal and its aftermath across the nation are well known by urban historians and social scientists. In Roanoke, Virginia, as described by Fullilove (2004), residents of an African American community were devastated and humiliated when they were displaced to make room for urban renewal which began in the 1950s and continued into the 1960s and 1970s throughout the United States. Within those periods, Urban renewal or “negro removal”, according to Fullilove, was used as a tool to erase 2,500 neighborhoods in 993 cities. I will give one example each in two major cities, Chicago and New York City.

Chicago and New York City

Because of the powers vested in local government, corporate bodies and large institutions can invoke the legal magic of “eminent domain” to unilaterally acquire land. The University of Chicago is one of those institutions that have exercised such powers. Another equally famous and celebrated University is Columbia, currently threatening to exercise such powers in Harlem to acquire roughly one fifth of that neighborhood. Records of each of these two institutions are instructive, not only because each used eminent domain to acquire land from poor helpless citizens, each is also a revelation on how easily the concept of “common good” in relation to urban renewal can be inverted in legal terms to deprive the ordinary citizen. However, on point of common link between gentrification and urban renewal as instruments of “pushing out” the poor from their rightful place of habitat, each is another example.

Urban renewal in Chicago, as in most major cities, involved massive demolition, slum clearance, and rehabilitation. Legal instruments for accomplishing these proceeded, at first, from local to state legislation, resulting at different times in Neighborhood Development Corporation Act of 1941, (amended in 1953); the Blighted

Areas Redevelopment Act of 1947; the Relocation Act of 1947; and the Urban Community Conservation Act of 1853 (Arnold Hirsch, 2004). As may be noticed from the titles of these Acts, the earliest interest in order of importance was put on slum clearance, followed by redevelopment, then conservation of threatened but not yet deteriorating buildings. But it is important to add that the new legislation had three main functions. It increased the city's power of eminent domain to confiscate property for common use; it allowed the "write-down" formula which made it possible for the city to pass such property to private developers at a greatly reduced price; and the state provided assistance for relocation of displaced residents. While most institutions had direct ties with political machines, it must be said that some institutions were more connected than others. The manner in which Chicago University pursued urban renewal to its best advantage at the time was instructive on the key role that can be played by an institution when it occupies positions of influence with both the downtown business community and the Democratic political machine. According to Domhoff (1983), during the formative years of urban renewal, between 1949 and 1953, Chicago University openly provided aid to both planners and downtown business groups which

left it in well connected positions with these groups. Building on those connections, when the opportunity arose, it vigorously lobbied for city projects surrounding the University (e.g.; urban renewal of Hyde Park) and succeeded. Taking the initiative for Hyde Park, as it did with the Illinois Urban Community Conservation Act of 1953, the University enjoyed the unusual position of having the law tailored to the university's needs. Advancing in stages, throughout the 1950s and sometimes functioning under earlier Acts, the University acted forcefully to a process of racial transition that was brought about in clearance projects to the north, preventing a huge "white" flight. By 1970, the University and other agencies had invested $100,000 in the area, with an additional matching fund of $300,000.00 from private agencies. By the end of 1969, 3,166 units were completed in high-rise towers and town houses. While Whites were among those displaced in Hyde Park, and on the North and West sides, urban renewal, again in these areas meant "negro removal". Between 1948 and 1963, about 50,000 families, and 18,000 individuals were pushed out. To no one's surprise, by 1969, federal district court judge, Richard Austin, discovered that 99 percent of residents in Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) that were mostly high-rise

towers were black; and that 99.5 percent of high-rise towers, were for the most part, in black or racially changing areas.

Chapter 3

HARLEM

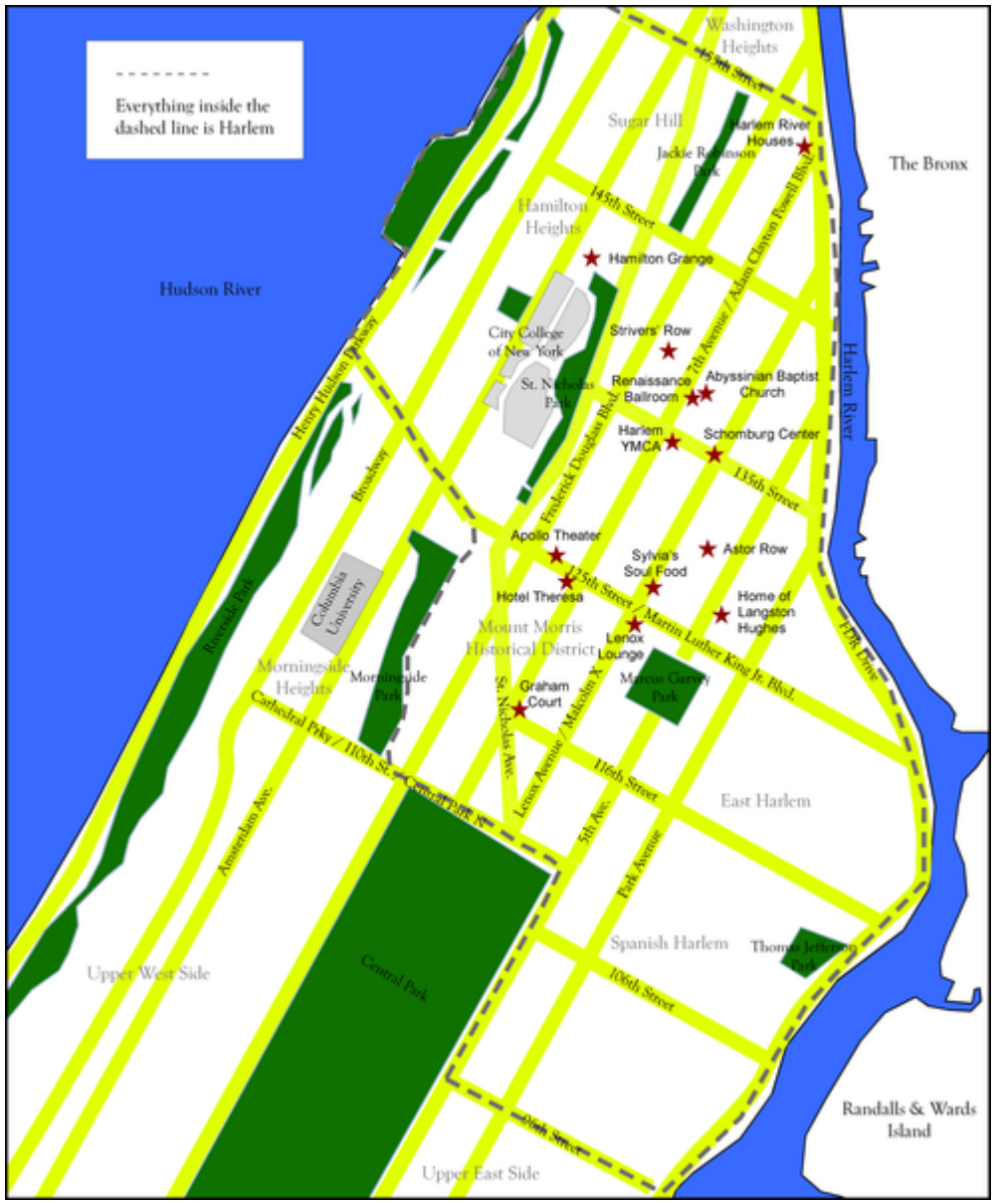
3.1. Establishment of Harlem

Harlem was a promise
Of a better life, of a place where a man didn't
Have to know his place
Simply because he was Black
(Walter Dean Myers, 1997).

Harlem is the focus of this chapter for two primary reasons: (1) It is the setting for the current research therefore deserves to be highlighted. (2) It is "home" and a cultural center recognized by most people around the world and African Americans in particular and all Africans in general. This chapter is, therefore, an attempt to trace the history of Harlem–including its social and cultural history–in order to locate it in its proper perspective. But it is also an attempt to demonstrate that gentrification is indeed taking place in Harlem. I will begin with a geo-historical description of its location within the surrounding neighborhoods. Then, proceed from the time when Harlem was viewed as a Dutch neighborhood around 1658, through different periods–including the 1860s, when it served as a quiet seclusion for many wealthy Europeans, until after decades of struggle, when it passed on to become a predominantly African American

community in the 1920s and 1930s, to the contemporary period of the evolution of gentrification in Harlem after a long period of neglect and abandonment.

3.2. Location



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Harlem_map2.png

Harlem occupies a huge chunk of northern Manhattan from 110th street, comprising three city districts that include West Harlem, Central Harlem, and East Harlem, with a population of approximately half a million people (Maurrasse, 2006). It stretches north and south from First Avenue to Fifth Avenue, from 96th street to 155th street, west and east, and from St. Nicholas Avenue to the Hudson River (New York Magazine, March 10, 2003; Alleyne, 2003). But these vital statistics are only some of the reasons why Harlem is important or deserving to be studied as an African American community.

Harlem was initially established as a permanent Dutch settlement in 1658. Ever since, throughout its glorious history, groups of people of different national origins have settled in Harlem. At one time it was the German, English, Irish, and French, followed by what was then regarded as an “influx” of Italian and Jewish immigrants in the early 1800s. According to Maurrasse (2006), before the arrival of other white immigrants Harlem was home to affluent whites only. Therefore, the neighborhood of Harlem was very highly placed and promising: people spoke of Harlem as a great developing city. Osofsky (1966,

p.71), confirms that the Harlem Monthly Magazine (1893), reported that:

> It is evident to the most superficial observer that the center of fashion, wealth, culture, and intelligence, must in the near future, be found in the ancient and honorable village of Harlem.

For the next two hundred years, Harlem was stable and prosperous. According to Maurrasse (2006), there is evidence of the wealth of the period which speaks to Harlem's past glory. These can still be seen today in stunning works of architecture here and there amidst dilapidated buildings in Harlem. Living in Harlem, according to Murrasse, was a status symbol which the rich celebrated with pomp and pageantry.

Harlem had its ups and downs from the time of its establishment. What happened next to drain the hopes and vitality of the burgeoning center of fashion, culture, and intelligence, as Harlem has been described, can best be summarized from an account of the great historian, Osofsky. According to Osofsky (1966), after centuries of farming the arable Harlem farm-land which brought Harlemites great wealth the land lost its original level of productivity. Rather than eke out a frugal living in a country that had plenty and privilege many well-to-do settlers began to abandon their homesteads to go

elsewhere. Thus, Harlem’s decades of years of stability vanished in a twinkle of an eye and so did its fame. By 1838, the New York City Board of Aldermen described Harlem as “a third or fourth rate country village.” As a result, the estates of the absentee landlords were sold for less at auctions to those who went in search of cheap properties. Irish immigrants and others squatted on the abandoned land or built mud flats in the river fronts. They created shantytowns of two room cottages put together with bits of wood, twigs, barrel staves, old pipes, or tin cans, hammered together. In spite of its unstable statuses and precarious conditions Harlem remained gorgeous and peaceful.

Behind the new urban sprawl Harlem’s squatters earned their living by raising animals and vegetables for local consumption. According to Osofsky (1966, p.73), a noted historian observed that in the 1890s to walk through the woodland shade of Harlem was always a charm. “The clear brooks, the yellow leaves of autumn, the birds–lead one to forget the city and all its toils”.

3.3. Becoming An African American Community

Harlem was forced to become a predominantly African American community by racism and violent attacks by white New Yorkers (Homberger, 1994). Following numerous attacks and murders of dozens of African American in the July 1863 draft riots, a significant number of African Americans moved uptown to the western section of Harlem known as Tenderloin (Osofsky, 1966). Tenderloin was later renamed “Black Bohemia”, a phrase, chosen for its racial tone and connotation. The Tenderloin race riot of 1900, which resulted in police beatings, and mob assaults, brought about another movement of African Americans northwards to Harlem. The first few African Americans who arrived in Harlem alarmed race conscious white New Yorkers, who did everything in their power–including denial of new-comers access to mortgage–and appealing and receiving support of city newspapers to orchestrate adverse publicity against African Americans.

The tide was turned against white New Yorkers, according to Homberger, when the midtown Manhattan site of one of the oldest African American congregation was purchased by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company for over $500,000. Armed with that amount, the church bought

thirteen large apartment houses were bought on 135 Street near Lenox Avenue for rental to African Americans. As the number of African Americans in Harlem increased so did the number of Whites who took flight from Harlem. For the first time, Blacks were able to occupy some of the finest houses in the city that were originally constructed with Euro-Americans in mind–though at a very exorbitant cost ($35-$45 a month). That amount was exceedingly high, considering that African Americans could only find low paying jobs as janitors, laborers, or waiters (Homberger, 1996; Osofsky, 1966).

As the housing market collapsed, landlords competed against one another. Sometimes they had to lower their rents or promise the first few months free in order to attract potential African American tenants. As African American individuals moved into Harlem, so did institutions, such as churches, branches of the Urban League, founding of the NAACP, YMCA, YWCA, small businesses, social service agencies, and others (Maurrasse, 2006). The influx of African American population into Harlem was after 1910. By 1920, hundreds of millions of dollar of property were owned by African Americans (Homberger, 1996). A majority of the ‘Negro’

residents were low income, but Harlem also immediately attracted Black elites, such as doctors, lawyers, successful business people, and famous artists, who found their niches in the housing stock recently vacated by Euro-Americans-fleeing from Harlem. Today, owning a home in one of those exclusive areas such as Sugar Hill, and Striver's Row, are highly regarded as a symbol of success by many African Americans (Maurrasse, 2006). But Harlem was valued not just by the wealthy African Americans people but by Black people all over the world because it served as home and center of African American culture.

3.4. The Struggle To Own Harlem

Harlem came into being as an African American community by default. The following two conflicting circumstances developed at about the same time to make it possible. One created the need for the production of more housing; the other supplied specious justification for imposing restrictions on those whom the White population decided were not welcomed. Between 1890 and 1914, the huge increase in the number of African American migrants from the South to New York City created a dire need for accommodation to house the newcomers. At about the same period (Maurrasse, 2006), the plan to build a new subway

system between Lenox Avenue to 145th street, the Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT),trumped up a great deal of excitement among real estate developers because of the anticipated volume of business they hoped the project would generate. But real estate developers over-produced, and created a glut in housing, especially in West Harlem, designated for the very wealthy. In order to cater to their needs and comfort luxury housing with elevators, servant quarters, and butler pantries, was constructed. At that time Waldorf Astor was said to have built an apartment house on 7th Avenue for $500,000, which by today's value would runs into tens of millions. The IRT was completed in October, 1904, to 148th street, carrying 600,000 passengers per day at 45 miles per hour, but it did not create as much housing need as speculated. New York City as whole was also caught up in the construction frenzy and built too much residential housing in anticipation of increasing need. To demonstrate their scorn and disdain for colored people, many Harlem white landlords formed Housing Associations, with the sole purpose of denying African Americans entry into Harlem. They used a series of methods, including restrictive covenants, direct intimidation, and "whites only" signs to put limitations on colored entry into Harlem. As soon as

covenants were drafted, signed, and notarized, they were assumed to be binding and treated as if they had the force of law.

Many Property Improvement Associations, similar to the ones mentioned above, were also formed with the sole purpose of ensuring that those “Negroes” who were already in Harlem were hunted and driven out. Other community groups consisting of realtors, business people, journalists, clergymen, members of the Board of Commerce, and local citizens, were established to halt what they saw as Negro invasion of Harlem. Osofsky (1966), observed that one of the most visible and active of such property improvement association, was the Harlem Property Owners Improvement Corporation (HPOIC), active between 1910 and 1915. At one of the association’s rallys, its founder, J.G. Taylor, told his audience that: “We are approaching a crisis; it is the question of whether the white man will rule Harlem, or the Negro (Osofsky, 1966, p. 107”). Continuing, in a blustering speech, Taylor urged his audience to: “Drive them [meaning Negroes] out, and send them to the slum where they belong, (p. 107) Mr. Taylor found ready support in the Local Newspapers which sponsored vituperative articles urging people to wake up

and organize into movements to drive out the “coon, darky, nigger, black plague” out of Harlem. According to Osofsky, (1966, p.107) in 1911 the Harlem Property Owners’ Improvement Corporation (HPOIC) admonished and fired their fellow white Herlemites to action in Home News Editorial in the following words:

> When will the people of Harlem wake up to the fact that they must organize and maintain a powerful anti-invasion movement if they want to check the progress of the black hordes that are gradually eating through the very heart of Harlem?

Meetings of Property Owners were held sometimes in White churches that were responsive to the prevailing ideas which suggested that African Americans were like infectious plagues that must be isolated from healthy Euro-American community.

But the Restrictive Covenants failed. Even the most powerful of the numerous associations could not stop the Negroes from settling in Harlem. There were many reasons why. Negroes found ways to cross the color line and enter Harlem because Euro-Americans in Harlem did not have a uniform strategy on real estate issues. Many Euro-American landlords panicked and for economic reasons began to relax the terms of the restrictive covenants and eventually began to rent or sell to Blacks who were willing to pay

inflated prices. The following notice, one of many such notices placed on a tenement building in Harlem in 1916, (Osofsky, 1966, p. 110), speaks to the frustrations of the white developers and landlords resulting in their readiness to succumb to the Negroes' relentless insistence on occupying Harlem without further adieu.

NOTICE

We have endeavored for some time to avoid turning over this house to colored tenants, but as a result of rapid changes in conditions .. this issue has been forced upon us.

But, Smith (1996) advances another reason based in a much larger economic context. He argues that because African Americans were charged higher rents and mortgages, as stated above, than any other groups, it was difficult for Euro-American landlords to resist the temptation to rent or sell to African American. Therefore, according to Smith (1996, p. 143).

> Black residents who moved into Harlem in the early years of the century largely saved the financial hides of the white landlords, speculators, and builders who overdeveloped

Instead of being compensated for that, he argues, those residents, their children, and their children's

children were repaid by a series of concurrent disinvestments from Harlem housing over nine decades and rendered Harlem vulnerable to any type of take- over.

When the Euro-American landlords and developers succumbed to let the Negroes into Harlem, little did they suspect that they were facilitating their own inevitable exit from Harlem (Maurrasse, 2006).

3.5. Harlem Renaissance

By the 1920s, African Americans had struggled and won the fight for Harlem! No sooner did they find their niches in Harlem and settled down than they found that Harlem as home was a source of creative inspiration. Talented African Americans artists were literally inspired, creative men and women of all descriptions: writers, painters, sculptors, and poets, of the caliber of Langston Hughes, James Weldon, Zora Neale Hurston, Countee Cullen, Jesse Fauset, Dorothy West, Nella Larsen, James Weldon Johnson, among others, forced the world to a halt to acknowledge their exposition of matchless talents in what was to be known as Harlem Renaissance (Maurrasse, 2006). The Harlem renaissance was important because it brought the world to look at Harlem as “the unofficial capital of Black America” (Kugel, 2006), and it created a sense of

pride among all peoples of African descent. At the same time, it drew the attention of the white population who began to consume African American literature as never before. It opened the doors to sexual liberation, because many major figures of the time–and perhaps, even now–were gay, and it set a style which many in the enlightened world community could not resist.

Although Harlem Renaissance was essentially noted as a period of prolific production of African American arts and literature, it was also a period that produced world class African American music icons of the stature of Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, and Charlie Parker (mentioned earlier).

Harlem Renaissance was a galvanizing tool that pulled Black artists and non-artists together, rekindled their sense of pride and identity, and empowered them politically and economically as never before.

3.6. The Other Harlem

Conceptualized as both “Heaven” and “Hell” (Taylor, 2002, p.1), Harlem is the “proverbial Promised Land”. But it is also the inner city neighborhood where high crime, unemployment, drugs, failing schools, poverty, and racial

strife, are rife. It is where residents live in deplorable conditions between abandoned buildings, boarded up at times, with leaking plumbing, faulty electric wirings, rotting floors, decaying wooden stairs in hallways with no circulating air, or outside windows, and narrow kitchens with threadbare linoleum that hold in smell and dirt, in block after block, street after street, creating a malignant culture in a world of its own, within a mainstream world (Levitt, and Saegert, 1990).

This “hellish” characterization may sound dismal but that is the bane of urban American cities, the mark of many years of neglect and abandonment and deliberate government policies in the 1970s. Harlem typifies where Blacks, Hispanics, and the poor live throughout America.

Wallace (1990) attributes the social disorganization that characterizes the communities where poor Blacks and Hispanics live to a program of planned shrinkage. According to Wallace, there is now a mounting evidence that the lack of protection, or provision of essential municipal services which plagued communities of the South Bronx, Central Harlem, Brownsville, and Bushwick, and spreading to other neighborhoods, is the result of a deliberate government policy. In that context, Wallace’s

work complements McCord's and Freeman's (1990) study which examined patterns of excess mortality in Harlem, to conclude that "men in Bangladesh", one of the poorest countries in the world, have more likelihood of survival beyond age 35 than men in Harlem.

3.7. Evolution of Gentrification in Harlem

After a long period of neglect and disinvestment (Massey and Denton, 1996) that affected places where most African Americans and Hispanics live-including Harlem, gentrification at last arrived in Harlem. According to a Report of the Institute for Children and Poverty (2006) accompanying the arrival of gentrification in Harlem are some forms of social economic and physical changes. In Central, East, and West Harlem between 1990 and 2000, an influx of higher income better educated households moved in to re-vitalize the once poverty stricken neighborhood by investing in the infrastructure creating new jobs and reducing crime. Those are worthy improvements! However, it is important to note that going hand in hand with the improvements are also increased prices of goods and services resulting in eventual displacement and possible homelessness of the original low income residents.

The Institute for Children and Poverty (2006) has identified five potential indicators or predictors of gentrification: income, education, rents, and housing values and race. Based on the Institute's data, table 1 represented below shows changes in Household Income in Central, East, and West Harlem that are attributable to gentrification over a period of ten years, from 1990 to 2000. Household income is one of the main indicators of gentrification. As a transformed neighborhood undergoes a face-lift it attracts new higher income residents. Table 1 below shows such a change represented as median household income by year and percent for Central, East, and West Harlem.

Table 1. Median Household Income by Year and Percent Change

Neighborhood	1990	2000	% Change
Central Harlem	$17,289	$19,920	15
East Harlem	$19,416	$21,295	10
West Harlem	$27,104	$27,365	1

Source: Population Division- NYC Dpt. Of City Planning; US Census Bureau 1990 to 2000 Census

Table 2 below levels of education for residents, is another primary indicator for gentrification. It is

represented here as a percentage change for residents over the age of twenty-five with a college education between 1990 and 2000 for Central, East, and West Harlem. Households moving into a gentrifying neighborhood generally have higher levels of education as well as higher earning potential than the current residents, see table 2, below.

Table 2. Percent of College Graduates over 25 by Neighborhood

Neighborhood	1990	2000	% Change
Central Harlem	10.4	14.5	39
East Harlem	11.5	14.4	25
West Harlem	26.5	28.0	6

Source: Population Division- NYC Dpt. Of City Planning; US Census Bureau 1990 to 2000 Census

Other than household income and levels of education changes in housing cost are also important predictor of neighborhood gentrification (Report of the Institute for Children and Poverty, 2006). As households with higher education and levels of income arrive social and economic changes are accelerated-especially in the demand for rental housing which also consequently increases. Table 3 below shows a significant increase in median rent from 1990 to 2000 in Central, East, and West Harlem.

Table 3. Median Gross Rents by Year and Percent Change

Neighborhood	1990	2000	% Change
Central Harlem	$413	$483	17
East Harlem	$415	$463	12
West Harlem	$533	$600	13

Source: Population Division- NYC Dpt. Of City Planning; US Census Bureau 1990 to 2000 Census

There is a direct relationship between rents charged and housing values; the latter regulates the former either by pushing it upwards or downwards. Therefore housing values are also important predictor of gentrification. Table 4 below shows that median housing value increased significantly except in Central Harlem with a relatively smallest change. With median household income in Central, East, and West Harlem in the seventeen to twenty-seven thousand dollars, most low income households in those neighborhoods cannot afford to buy a home there. In time, most of those households will be displaced and perhaps become homeless.

Table 4. Median Housing Values by Year and Percent Change

Neighborhood	1990	2000	% Change
Central Harlem	$227,648	$250,000	10
East Harlem	$91,483	$242,105	165
West Harlem	$220,104	$420,270	91

Source: Population Division- NYC Dpt. Of City Planning; US Census Bureau 1990 to 2000 Census

One of the byproducts of the process of gentrification is a redistribution of the racial composition of the gentrifying neighborhood. Table 4 below shows that as a neighborhood undergoes gentrification the White population increases and Black population decreases. This is the case in all three areas of Harlem between 1990 and 2000, see table 5 below.

Table 5. Percent Change in Racial Composition, 1990-2000

Neighborhood	White	Black
Central Harlem	45	-5
East Harlem	9	-2
West Harlem	-5	-16

Source: Population Division- NYC Dpt. Of City Planning; US Census Bureau 1990 to 2000 Census

From the 1980s and 1990s, the Real Estate developers have been telling us that Harlem is on the rise again. But Neil Smith (1996) says it more with clarity when he tells us what the developers are not telling us.

> Whites, they become urban pioneers. They're another variety of frontiersmen. They live this daring life and it's part of what they do. But then the outpost is around the corner. They'll press a button and goddamned police'll be there just like that… Of course they capture this sort of thing, park area, park space. There's good transportation routes, bus comes through here. They capture properties like this. What they intend for Harlem is that it not be Harlem again.
>
> (Wallace, in Smith, 1996, p.140).

Gentrification began in a few selected large cities around the globe, e.g.; in Europe and North America, as a result of global economic recession in the 1970s. Nonetheless, contemporary gentrification often linked with reinvestment in urban middle class rehabilitation and is nowadays generally used as an instrument of restructuring the physical, social, cultural, and economic geographies of cities. Gentrification that is evolving on the landscape of Harlem is no exception. Because of this trend Dorothy Pitman Hughes, Founder and Organizer of NYC Agency for Child Development, laments that:

> Harlem is under siege, as the final phase of a 35 year plan to gentrify Harlem takes effect. The recent designation of Harlem, as a Federal Empowerment Zone brings $300 million government dollars into Harlem under a false banner…. Harlem will be transformed from a Black community to a White one within the next ten years.
>
> (Hughes, 1999, p.i)

Due to gentrification Harlem is on the rise again. But for whom, some Harlem residents are asking. All of a sudden Harlem is the home of pricey new condos and a changing demographic. It has transformed from being a name that caused embarrassment to where everybody, including former President Clinton, wants to be. In the advent of gentrification, private citizens and a former president are not the only ones who want a piece of Harlem. Institutions such as Columbia University also have eyes on Harlem.

3.8. Columbia University

Columbia University plans to create an enclave by expanding into Manhattenville which stretches from 125th to 133th Street and from Broadway to 12th Avenue in Harlem (Kundnani, 2006; Eviatar, 2006). The University has a seven billion dollar expansion budget to carry out this ambitious campus expansion program, otherwise known as the Manhattanville Project.

This expansion program represents the most dramatic institutional stage of the process ofnational chain stores and forcing out mostly African Americans who have lived in Harlem all their lives. “Harlem is bleeding while Columbia expands” according to Nellie Hester Bailey, executive

director of Harlem Tennant Council, [in an interview with Amsterdam News]. And, according to Dorothy Hughes (1999, p.VI), “Harlem is under siege, as the final phase of a 35 year plan to gentrify Harlem takes effect”. Therefore, many African American residents in Harlem are uncertain about what the future of Harlem will be.

Discussions between Columbia University and the local community to finds ways of reaching some compromise have broken down because of what opponents see as Columbia’s inflexibility. While the community is ready to accept a compromise that allows Columbia to build around existing houses and manufacturing in Manhattanville, Columbia insists that it wants to acquire every piece of property in the two by five blocks area. In the face of protest by Harlem residents, Columbia University’s president, Lee Bollinger, warns that the university will reserve its right to acquire the covetous piece of Harlem by “eminent domain” if the university has to. E*minent domain*, is a form of compulsory purchase, which under US law allows cities to wrestle a piece of real estate from a private citizen for its own use or for use by an institution or corporate body if they can demonstrate that they can put the property or piece of land to better use than its

current use. Thus, the threat to further segment Harlem comes not directly from elected government or property developers, but from Columbia University–a major education institution. If and when that happens, Columbia University stands to acquire approximately one fifth of Harlem and become one of the biggest landlords in Harlem (Eviatar, 2006, Kundnani, 2006, Maurrasse, 2006, Robertson, 2005,).

Columbia University argues that it wants to create “an academic enclave that will both nurture intellectual progress and revitalize an urban area”.

3.9. Problem Statement and Research Questions

A popular view in the existing literature, framed as a “racial dynamic”, according to Bostic and Martin (2003), generally leads to much debate and controversy. Simply put, the “racial dynamic” assumes that in the field of gentrification white gentrifiers predominate. Therefore, gentrifiers who displace black households as neighborhood incomes rise, for the most part, are white gentrifiers. While this statement may well be valid, Bostic and Martin argue that this racial dimension to gentrification ignores the fact that neighborhood transformations could also be set in motion by middle and upper class black households. This raises more questions than answers.

According to Redfern (2003), everyone involved in gentrification on the demand side is in the same economic class and as such possess the same motivations. If we took Redfern, Bostic and Martin seriously, the questions that must be answered are these: “Are Black gentrifiers displacing poor African American home owners from their rightful homes and apartments? What could be their motive?” In order to explore this rhetorical question, I pursued the more empirical question:

How do African American and Euro-American gentrifiers in Harlem assign meanings to their interactions with their environments? Are their experiences the same, or different? In what areas are their experiences the same or different?

Hitherto much of the work on gentrification, according to Freeman (2005), has focused primarily on theorizing about the origin, causes, and meanings of gentrification in post-industrial United States. But relatively little or no attention has been given to “motives” that precede gentrification, or the “human experiences” that are integral part of the process, especially from multiple perspectives. This study will address that gap.

Chapter Four

4.0. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

I will begin this chapter with a reflection on my thought processes that culminated in my choice of methodology that was applied to the current study and the rationale for the application of that methodology. Therefore, in the following section, I will describe the actual methods used, including methods and procedures in preparing to conduct the research, in collecting the data, in inductively analyzing the data while focusing on the meanings of participants to generate a process that Creswell (1998, p.14) argues becomes “expressive and persuasive in language” that one ultimately exhibits as the outcome of the study. How to assemble the myriads of approaches inherent in methodology became the major, though not by any means, the only issues that preoccupied my thoughts as I planned the dissertation project. For example, how was I to gain access to the neighborhood of my research interest and “select” participants for the interviews in a neighborhood in transition where residents may not be easily accessible or willing to openly share their thoughts on motives and experiences with a complete

stranger whose own motives of the study they may even doubt or question?

4.1. Methodology

This study was designed mainly as a small-scale qualitative project. Qualitative research involves data "in the form of words, pictures, descriptions, rather than in numerical form" (Monette, Sullivan, and Dejong, 2005, p.219). According to Alasuutera (1998); Ospina (2004), qualitative research is a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning-meaning, that is, how people make sense of their live experiences. Previous researchers who used qualitative research (e.g. Creswell, 1998; Seidman, 1998; Alasuutari, 1998; Goethals et. al, 2004; Monette, 2005) found it to be a reliable means of investigating meanings of important life experiences of individuals. Thus, this methodology is eminently appropriate in this study that sets out to investigate the following research question:

> From the perspectives of African American and Euro-American gentrifiers, what are the differences, if any, between the motives and experiences of African American gentrifiers and Euro-American gentrifiers in the ongoing transformation of Harlem, New York City?

The adoption of qualitative methodology was also encouraged by the realization that in the field of gentrification, precise knowledge is currently sketchy and inconclusive. Also, there is little theoretical understanding of the cause and effect of the phenomenon, making it difficult, if not impossible, at our current level of knowledge, to develop precise hypotheses, or operational definitions. When there is sketchy or imprecise knowledge to develop hypotheses, researchers have often turned to qualitative research because it is exploratory by nature. In qualitative research, it is possible for researchers to put any prior knowledge they may have on their subject of study on hold, so that they can embrace that subject anew with a “let’s find out” empirical attitude.

Another factor that encouraged the adoption of qualitative research was that “experience” and “motive” as subjective human dimensions, as represented in this study, have personal meanings, and feelings, that cannot be easily captured by use of quantitative methodology that deals in numbers, counts, and measurement of things. Therefore, qualitative research which uses narrative descriptions, and lengthy, and broad-ranging interviews

was considered the most appropriate methodology for this dissertation.

4.2. Methods: Research Design

The research was designed to examine motives and experiences of African American and Euro-American gentrifiers in Harlem. The research design is an open-ended in-depth interviewing of 13 African American, and 5 Euro-American gentrifiers, as participants.

It is important to specify here that within the broad category of African Americans, there are sub-groups of “Blacks”, such as immigrants from Africa, or the Caribbean, and other parts of the world. Similarly, within the broad category of Euro-Americans, there are sub-groups of “Whites” who may be from Ireland, Italy, Germany, and elsewhere. In an ideal world, or situation, one may argue that my broad two-category-design may contain the possibility of bias, since that design apparently denies individuals in Harlem who are neither African Americans, nor Euro-Americans, the chances to participate in the study, therefore, it must be emphasized that neither the world, nor the situations I had to confront during the recruitment of the participant were ideal. Therefore, strategically, my broad two category design was best

suited to a study (within my timeline) where I did not have the luxury of interviewing whomsoever I wanted to interview. Thus, the participants are largely middle class, male, female, home owners, or community leaders, of age levels ranging from 32 to 65, who have lived or worked in Harlem for at least 12 months prior to the time of the interview. It is important also to add that while three of the participants have lived in Harlem for more than three decades, two have lived there for more than five decades.

4.3. Methods: Access to Participants

Participants were recruited through friends of friends who live in different parts of New York City by word-of-mouth or through flyers distributed by them at selected non-public sites. The flyers, designed by the Principal Investigator, requested that: “Gentrifiers, Urban Pioneers, Real Estate Developers, Neighborhood Change Agents, or Home Owners” who were interested in taking part in research on “Gentrification in Harlem” contact the Principal Investigator of a study by that name through a given e-mail address, or telephone numbers. This procedure proved to be successful for recruiting African American gentrifiers though it took some long waiting for that to happen. On the contrary, the same method proved to

be unsuccessful for recruiting Euro-American gentrifiers or African American community leaders who live or work in Harlem. Access to White gentrifiers in their homes was an impossible task. And reaching them in their places of work was even more difficult because every effort to contact them was thwarted by an ever present gate-keeper whom one must first pass to reach them. Attempts to communicate my interest in writing to interview them also failed. My letters were not answered. Resorting to a “networking strategy” did not work for me, probably because my range of network contact was not expansive enough.

Given the complex and busy time schedule of community leaders, gaining access to them was also difficult because of the presence of the aforementioned gatekeepers whom one must also first pass to gain access to the leaders. A break, however, came unexpectedly many months after the study began when a highly placed and respected member of the CUNY Graduate Center faculty lent his name which later became an opener to many doors.

During the initial planning period, other factors, such as age, income, and level of education were considered to be necessary for inclusion. However, as it became more and more difficult to recruit participants for

the study those factors were dropped in order to increase the likelihood of recruiting potential participants who fulfilled the primary criteria, namely, that they were African American, Euro-American, male or female, home owner, or community leader, who work or reside in Harlem for at least 12 months prior to the commencement of interviewing.

4.4. Methods: Research Periods

The data for this study were gathered over 13 months, beginning from March, 2006, to April, 2007, following clearance, and later, renewal of documentation with the CUNY Graduate Center's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB is the institutional "watch dog" for all research at the CUNY academic community that involve human subjects.

Despite the initial promise of a small pool of interested African American and Euro-American participants who had initially expressed some willingness though not commitments to participate in the study as described above, volunteers for the study were hard to come by. The interviewees were not randomly selected because it was never intended that they be randomly selected. Following their introduction or my personal approach to those

individuals, they volunteered their time because they were sufficiently interested in the subject of the study.

4.5. Methods: Data Collection

The data for this study were collected through an in-depth interview. The purpose of an in-depth interview is not simply to ask questions and receive answers, or test hypotheses. Rather, the in-depth interview, according to Seidman (1998), is conducted in order to understand the experiences of other people and the meaning that those people attach to their experiences. Therefore, interest in other people is key to the basic assumptions of this approach (Seidman, 1998). The participants were encouraged to limit their attentions on the ongoing transformations that are taking place in their neighborhood and share as much as they were willing to share on how the transformation has impacted their own lives. The interview consisted of an open-ended monologue in which the participants did most of the talking, often with only little interruption when the interviewer introduced a new topic or needed clarification or elaboration of the topic under discussion. Structured questions were prepared as a guide or road map, but once the interviewing was in session, the participants were free to go in whatever

direction they wished to go and share as much as they wanted to share.

Twelve of the eighteen interviews were a single session interview consistent with what I have described so far. However, it is important to state here that I was largely influenced by Seidman's (1998) ideas of a three part interview. Consequently, I began with a two part interview, my own adaptation of Seidman's (1998) three part series which lasted for 90 minutes per sessions, spread over three to seven days. Instead of the Seidman's 3 x 90 minutes, mine was a 2 x 60 minutes. The two part interview was, therefore, what I started with. I had hoped to use it with respect to all participants until reality struck. I observed that many community leaders were knowledgeable in the area of the study, and used to giving interviews. Moreover, community leaders had very busy time schedules which made it more difficult for them to give interviews. Therefore, as a practical matter and since some of them were able to give as much detailed information in single interviews; more particularly, because it was always a matter of fighting tooth and nail even for that single interview I had to settle for single session interviews. Therefore, only 6 of the 18

participants were interviewed in two sessions. Thus, most were only interviewed in one session; the rest of the participants were interviewed in one single interviews. With respect to those participants who were interviewed in the two part format it was observed that during the second session many were repeating what they had said before, suggesting that a two-part interview was unnecessary, at least, for this particular study. This is not, however, to dismiss the idea of a two-part, or three-part interviews, as unnecessary. It is possible that using this technique at another time for another population may lead to entirely different outcomes.

4.6. Appropriateness of In-depth Interview

I believe that the in-depth interviewing is an appropriate method for this kind of qualitative study. My belief has to do with a proposition which is simple but intriguing; a part of which I have already described. Going directly to the people and asking them to share with you something about the meanings they attach to their experiences can open up the complexity of the issue addressed. Alasuutari (1998, p. 142), made the idea of going directly to the people quite explicit when he cited Harre and Secord (1972), to suggest that if we want to

know why people behave the way they do, “why not ask them?” And why we should go and ask them becomes even clearer if we listened to Lawler (2002) who in the context of narratives in social research postulates that although the experience that people have of their lives remains with them, but people are not transparent carriers of those experiences. Instead, people are interpretive devices through which they represent the experience to themselves and to others. It follows therefore that if we want to know something about other people’s experiences our best move is to go to them and ask them. In this study, I did precisely that.

Also, Creswell (1994), and Seidman (1998), and others, used in-depth interviews successfully in their studies by going directly to the people and obtaining results which were found to be both credible and believable. Therefore, I was largely encouraged to use in-depth interviewing method to elicit a particular kind of information from both African American and Euro-American gentrifier, and community leaders who live or work in Harlem.

4.7. Methods: Data Transcription

The data gathered from Harlem consisting of in-depth interviews was tape-recorded. All the interviews were transcribed, full text, with the help of a SONY transcription device which helps to regulate the flow of interviewee's speeches. Each interview averaged 18 one and a half spaced pages representing altogether approximately 324 pages of text.

4.8. Method: Analysis of Data

The transcribed data collected from Harlem were analyzed for content using Atlas-ti qualitative data analysis software. With the use of Atlas-ti the data were read and open coded for content. Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain that coding represents the process in which the data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways. This involved highlighting statements in the data that were considered significant and assigning a descriptive labels to them for future recognition, thus making it possible for items that appear potentially relevant to be identified and permitting comparison between different parts of the data that were significant to the research question to be made. Throughout the period of the data analysis the emphasis was primarily on statements that showed similarity or

difference between the motives and experiences of African American and Euro-American gentrifiers. Supplemental to that attention was paid to whether there was any difference between:

(a) community leaders and noncommunity leaders responses

(b) Male and Female responses.

In our analysis we anticipated that motives led people to take actions. More specifically we expected that motives led respondents to take different sets of actions; for example, actions to stay in the neighborhood, move out of the neighborhood, or move from elsewhere into the neighborhood. “Moving” could be initiated in order to “avoid bad” or “seek good”; and avoiding bad may be for personal or community reasons, e.g. because of physical danger, or damage to community or one’s self, high cost of living, lack of culture, or group image. On the other hand, seeking good may be to make a profit, stay close to relatives or friends, to places of worship, of entertainment, music, dance and culture.

4.9. Methods: Oblique Language

During the interview sessions rapport was generally established and participants were open and candid. As a result I truthfully hold what they told me to be valid and credible. Nonetheless, I still find it preferable not to

rule out the possibility that a participant might resort to use of oblique language, or not reveal true feelings about an issue. This is why: When issues are above board and open, people speak frankly. However, when held views are based on prejudice or unpopular positions and open expressions of those views could be challenged, people may not speak frankly. Instead, they use oblique language. Oblique language is introduced to this study not only to remind us of how issues concerning race and class are articulated, or avoided by members of the wider society, but also to demonstrate how an ordinary well meaning, apparently nonracist members of a gentrifying neighborhood such as Harlem can replicate among themselves some of the wider biases and conflicts of the wider society. In my Second Year Research for the doctoral examination on “oblique language” (Egede, 2002), it was observed that sometimes people did not speak frankly on some issues because of the risk of being challenged or perceived as racist or dogmatic. For example, in that study, when a long-standing white resident of a gated community was asked to describe the changes (if any) that had taken place in her community since she moved in, she said:

> The world has changed, more so today than ever before, society has changed, the community has changed. [They] still feel they have been

> [prejudiced] against. In other words, a rule is a rule until it affects [them]. Then, a rule is not good.

In the above statement, the meanings of “they”, “them” and “prejudiced” are clearly loaded, more so, because this investigator, and that resident, at the time were discussing racial orientations. Therefore, it appeared that the speaker was clearly trying to be evasive. She was using oblique language to possibly avoid open and frank expressions of her views and possible challenges by those whom she implicated in her statement. By continuing to lament that the world and the community have changed without saying explicitly what about the world or community has changed or indeed why and how those changes have affected her life in the gated community, she was speaking in oblique language. No amount of probing at that time was enough to make her divulge more of her inner thoughts. She was deliberately withholding what might have been useful information and preventing us as well from having any access to the sources of her apparent dissatisfactions.

In the Egede (2002) study, it was anticipated that because of the inherent and particularly sensitive race-class tone of the study participants might employ oblique

language to hide, avoid, side-track, deny, or obfuscate intended or precise meanings, in order to escape the risk of being challenged by those whom their statements might implicate. To the contrary and thanks to the participants' openness and candor the strategy of oblique language was minimally used-here and there-by participants in both groups when, for example, a speaker employed a pronoun in a non-complimentary manner to substitute for a noun that was not previously introduced. However, in order to avoid trivializing the development of this emerging and important interviewing analytical tool it is preferable not to pick a hole in every sentence of a participant's statements. I will therefore not belabor this point any further by dissecting minor examples of oblique language used in this dissertation.

Chapter Five

RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1. Coding and Analysis

After coding and analyzing the interviews, a list of fifteen topics were found to be recurring throughout the analysis, in order to address the participants concerns as well as answer the research questions. The participants concerns generated from reading the interviews, and analyzing them included but are not limited to: “What does gentrification mean?, Affordable housing, Displacement and its consequences, Home ownership, Profit motive, Nonprofit motive, Harlem and African American culture, Harlem over time, Luxury of choice and selection, Mixed gentrification, Fears of Cultural Erasure, Wrong set of priorities, Conspiracy, Who is a gentrifier? Poverty, Safety, Stability, and Security. The realization on further analysis that some topics could be addressed under the same heading prompted the formation or development of a second and final list, which includes:

(1) “What does gentrification mean?

(2) Who is a gentrifier?

(3) Displacement and it’s consequences.

(4) Harlem and African American culture.

(5) Affordable housing.

(6) Profit motive.

(7) Fears of Cultural Erasure.

These topics are summarized in Table 6, below, in the same order, indicating what each topic means to each of the two group.

Table 6 – Summary of Recurring Topics And What They Mean to Each Group

#	Topic	African American	Euro-American
1	What does gentrification mean?	Forcing people, and mom and dad shops out	Development
2	Who is a gentrifier?	Not me, it's other people	Not me, it's other people
3.	Displacement and its consequences	High rent, high mortgage, and homelessness	Difficult to prove
4	Harlem and African American culture	Important for preservation of Black identity and heritage	Interested in culture of diversity, though deep down serious appreciation is not a big issue
5	Affordable housing	A major concerns	Motive for buying into Harlem
6.	Profit motive	Some	Some
7.	Fears of Cultural Erasure	Very concerned	Quite concerned

5.2. Results

One way to gain access to the content of people's experiences is to go directly to them and interview them (Alasuutari, 1998; Lawler, 2003). To reiterate, in this study, I have done precisely that-gone directly to the people of Harlem (participants), and elicited their responses through open-ended, in-depth interviews, which were analyzed as stated above. In-depth interviews have been used to gain useful insights for understanding subjective experiences and motives of individuals and groups (Seidman, 1998; Creswell, 1998]. Subjective experiences, according to Lawler (2003, p. 118), are "social products produced by people within the context of specific social, historical, and cultural locations". Therefore, what you are about to read are produced as reconstructed stories of two distinct groups: African American gentrifiers, on the one hand, and Euro-American gentrifiers, on the other hand. As reconstructed stories, it is important to remember that they are selective, and not necessarily presented here as materials for theory building from which extrapolations, or generalizations, to similar situations could be made, though they may contain the ingredients for theory building.

Table 2, as shown below, highlights the demographic representations of those interviewed in the study. As can be seen from it, more African American participants than Euro-American participants were interviewed. This could create a problem of bias, especially in a study such as this which goal is to explore multiple perspectives of race and class in Harlem housing in the United States. The problem of bias is minimized if we bear in mind that the study is about subjective experiences of two different groups.

It is hard to be clear and precise about what people said; the task becomes even harder for the researcher when it comes to representing it in writing. Nonetheless, I have represented the stories of the participants' experiences as fairly and accurately as they were told to me during the in-depth interviews, in most cases by reproducing full texts of participants. I will begin that task in section 5. 3, titled: "What Does Gentrification Mean?" [to the participants] immediately after table 3, below, which shows race and gender of those interviewed.

Table 7.

Race and gender of interviewees

#	Race	Gender
1	EA	F
2	AA	M
3	AA	F
4	EA	M
5	EA	M
6	AA	M
7	AA	F
8	AA	M
9	EA	F
10	AA	M
11	AA	F
12	AA	F
13	AA	M
14	EA	M
15	AA	M
16	AA	M
17	AA	F
18	AA	M

Key:

AA = African American

EA = Euro-American

M/F= Male/Female

Y = Community Leader

Table 8: Participants' Attitude and Perception of Gentrification.

#	Race	P/NP	Sex	Gent.	Com/Leader
1	EA	NP	F	BAD	-
2	AA	P	M	GOOD	-
3	AA	P	F	GOOD	-
4	EA	P	M	GOOD	
5	EA	P	M	GOOD	
6	AA	P	M	GOOD	-
7	AA	P	F	G/BAD	Y
8	AA	P	M	GOOD	-
9	EA	NP	F	G/BAD	-
10	AA	P	M	BAD	Y
11	AA	NP	F	G/BAD	Y
12	AA	NP	F	BAD	Y
13	AA	NP	M	BAD	-
14	EA	P	M	GOOD	-
15	AA	P	M	GOOD	Y
16	AA	NP	M	BAD	-
17	AA	NP	F	G/BAD	
18	AA	NP	M	BAD	-

Looking at table 4, above, and asking the questions: Does any of the following: race, sex, being a community leader,

profiting and not profiting affect participant's attitude and perception about gentrification? The answers to the questions are complex. Part of the reasons is that those who are profiting from gentrification rarely admit it. However when it comes to making a profit it seems that "profit" not "race" is what colors perception and attitude-though there is evidence as we will find out later that for the most part African Americans speak negatively about gentrification.

As can be seen from table 4 above, out of the eighteen participants in the study, eight of the participants, regardless of race and class, perceived gentrification as "good"; while ten viewed it as good and bad. The statement is based on content analysis of participants' responses. For example, the participant who said: "gentrification can bring back the lost days of glory" to Harlem is obviously excited about gentrification, so he is rated with saying that gentrification is "good". While those participants who direct our focus to the plight of "mom" and "pop" stores in Harlem and lament that such stores are vanishing fast because rents are too high are rated with viewing gentrification negatively, or suggesting that

gentrification is “bad”. However, in order to address the subject of what gentrification means to the participants more fully I will now proceed to the next section, below.

5.3. What Does Gentrification Mean?

This first section of the results begins with an exploration of “meanings”; more specifically, exploration of the meanings of gentrification to the participants as they witness their neighborhood undergoing a process of transformation.

In this section we find that for the most part African American participants describe gentrification negatively. For example, as far as they are concerned, the massive gentrification of Harlem means supplanting one culture over another. It means pushing out poor indigenous residents, it means marginalizing those low income members of the community.

> Gentrification, to me, means changing the culture of the community so that in general people who are in the lower economic status are moved out or marginalized. That wasn’t the original meaning of the term, but that is what it means in todays’s lingo. When someone says to me, the Harlem community is facing gentrification, that’s generally what they mean, or that’s how I interpret the term.
>
> (AA,F, 11).

Another African American participant perceives gentrification in purely economic terms, but questions whether the economic terms are not being exploited racially-especially when a wholesale removal of a people from their neighborhood is carried out for social and economic gains.

> Gentrification is an economic term, the question is whether the economic term is utilized for racial purposes. You can gentrify within your culture, as well as outside your culture, so the ability to come into a community, or neighborhood, and move people out of their neighborhood for economic gain, or social gain, to a large degree is what is generally considered gentrification.
>
> (AA, CL, M, 10).

We find also that African American participants are not just concerned about losing their cultural identity as mass removal of low income members of their community is being carried out. They are, also, concerned about escalating prices in their neighborhood, of increasing lack of affordable housing, of rising costs of commercial units, and the insatiable greed of big corporations who want local stores “closed out”, to make way for big corporations. (For information on some of the local small businesses that were forced out of the neighborhood, please see Appendix 3 page 178). African American

participants believe that rooting out of local African American small businesses is real and veritable, again see appendix 3, page 178. One African American participant tells this story as a function of his own experience.

> More people are forced out of the community where they lived because it is unaffordable, it means a change of demography, it means sky rocketing rent for commercial space, it means big corporations are always clamoring for more space.
>
> (AA, M, 18).

In many people's conceptualization, there are good reasons why gentrification is not accepted by all and sundry–especially the poor - in Harlem. Most people believe that gentrification is the excuse produced by the rich to trample on local poor residents' inalienable rights. Thus, gentrification is viewed with suspicion in Harlem especially that its proponents couch it in terms of "improvement, or development", improvement or development, that is supposedly designed primarily to improve the lot of the local community. Now, some claim, that everyone knows, that the so-called improvement or development has tragically become a powerful tool to remove indigenous members of the community and their small businesses from Harlem.

When Hughes (2000) warned in her book that Harlem was under siege, some African American residents in Harlem were doubtful. Now, however, they know that improvement that pushes people out of the homes they have lived in all their lives and strips them of their means of livelihood is not one in their best interest. One African American participant who describes himself as a victim of gentrification in Harlem where he operates a small business makes no apology when he argues on behalf of that position that gentrification is not an improvement. If at all gentrification is an improvement, he says, it is only so for the developers who make huge profit from it. According to him, for the ordinary residents, gentrification is a devastating tool where residents cannot even do business in their own neighborhood.

> There is no improvement in this situation. It is only an improvement for the gentrifier. But for those who are the residents, it is disastrous, where they cannot do any business in their own community. Because their small businesses will be completely eroded.
>
> (AA, M, 18).

The fact that gentrification is viewed as an instrument of oppression, that it robs poor Harlem residents of both their homes and local stores resonates deeply in many residents thoughts. Harlem residents,

according to this participant, are afraid that the massive gentrification of their neighborhood will slowly erase African American culture, and the small businesses that serve the community. This kind of concern is voiced by a female African American participant. According to that participant, who is also a Realtor, many African American small businesses in certain geographic areas of Harlem will be forced out because they cannot survive.

> The mom and pop shop that were here as part of Harlem, will be unable to operate because of high rent, so that to me is the negative side of gentrification, they are unable to survive, lots of stores now on Lenox Avenue will be moving out, they are not going to be able to pay.
>
> (AA, F, 7, DE/R)

The fear of outsiders moving in and taking over drags many African American residents in Harlem into a recurring emotional roller coaster. They perceive what some see as an influx of newcomers to the community as a threat to their secured way of life. Here are three examples of residents who express such deeply-held sentiments:

> Gentrification means change in the nature of the community. It means bringing in one group of higher economic standing to take the place of people with lower economic standing. Some people know it as pushing out of poor and low income residents of the gentrifying community.
>
> [AA, CL, M, 10).

> It means people of different class, or racial background moving in and pushing out indigenous residents, who are mostly poor renters, and almost invariably blacks and Hispanics, who in most cases have never lived anywhere else before.
>
> [AA, M, 13).
>
> Well, one inevitable result of this is the rehabilitation, and new construction of housing at a cost that is far beyond the economic reaches of those long time residents who were here before this new gentry class came. And also, with gentrification comes the commercial development of a community in which luxury services and amenities that did not exist in the community before are developed, or are created to serve these new gentry class because you want them to stay, you want them to have this attraction. It's for the entire neighborhood, but it's the issue of cost which concerns some folks, the working class residents, whether or not, they are able to afford them
>
> [AA, CL, F, 11).

This is not, however, to suggest that all African Americans view gentrification negatively. Discussions of gentrification in Harlem are sometimes complex and difficult to compartmentalize into African American and Euro-American formula in terms of motives and experiences. For example, some African Americans have, without a doubt, benefited from gentrification, having on occasions, admitted to being happy with what is "going on" in their neighborhood. Though, on second thought, the following African American participant almost took back her words

when she considers “self” versus “group” interest to admit that she does not like the way that African American people are being uprooted and thrown out from their homes. Such considerations are important for community building. But they are also sources of nuances and subtleties that may become parts of the significant results of this study. Agonizing at her own success, instead of relishing at the outcome of buying into gentrification at a time when the price of real estate was low, she explains finding herself at a cross-road thus:

> It is very difficult for me to say because as a home owner, I am happy to see what is happening because by nature, I want my property to increase in value, and I know it will because the neighborhood is becoming multi-racial. On the other hand, as a Black person, I don’t like to see that Black people are being uprooted and thrown out.
>
> (AA, F, 3).

There is little disagreement that gentrification is a complex process; and some would argue its outcome is unfair and uneven to different people. Consequently, one would assume that most African American participants would speak negatively of gentrification. That may not be true because there are always exceptions; the following exceptions demonstrate the point. The first is the view of

a male African American community leader who makes a dispassionate assessment of gentrification and concludes that gentrification is not necessarily an evil thing. The other is the view of a female African American community leader who [though not in so many words] draws similar conclusions. She admits that in order to solve the problem of poverty which has engulfed the community, new investment from those of higher income was necessary.

> Well, it [gentrification]is a two-edge sword, perhaps a three, or four edge-sword. One of the edges, I think to some degree, when you are talking about a renewal of a community, then gentrification is necessary. By that I mean economic diversity, when you have high concentrations of poverty, as you had, and as you still have, in a lot of Upper Manhattan. There is a lack of capital, and there is a lack of services, there is a devaluation of the neighborhood, so I think you need to have investment, and that could only come about, certainly, with the influx of capital, and movement of people of higher income into the community.
>
> (AA, CL, M, 15).

> One of my friends who had a property in Brooklyn told me he went to Court and gave the judge the deed of his property, they were having so many problems, he couldn't afford to keep it up, the judge called the Family Court, he went there to the court and gave the judge the deed of his property, so you know, it's fair that people are so concerned with the gentrification because I think that a lot of it is different to this community. I think it's great that somebody who can afford a house that

> would cost nine hundred thousand dollars, or one million dollars wants to live in Harlem. I think that that says a lot about the community, I think it makes it a stronger community. Now, I would be concerned if that was really pushing everybody of higher income person out, but I know that there are many developments here in Harlem that aren't doing that. The difficulty, I think is the "change", people have a very hard time dealing with change. But I have lived here all my life, and other than when I was a young child, when I didn't know that much about the community, but in my adult life, within the last twenty-five years, thirty years, this is the best I have seen as far as functioning, as far as the number of restaurants, as opposed to bars, because we have restaurants around that are pretty good. You used to have bars in every corner, and alcohol retail in every establishment, that's not a good functioning community, and the majority of those bars were not black owned.
>
> (AA, CL, F, 11)

Going back to the history of gentrification and gentrifiers, as well as looking into how Harlem was led to fall into decay and decline, in the midst of plenty in other geographic areas of New York City, this participant surmises that gentrification means planned decline of a neighborhood, and its eventual revitalization for the benefit of the privileged. Therefore, according to this participant, gentrification, its practices and policies mean one thing: "opportunity" for some, and "forceful removal" for others. This is an interesting contrast, this participant is neither fearful, nor subdued; she wants her

questions answered so she can more appropriately define gentrification.

> How can one say that it's natural transformation that sixty percent of a community, the greater community of Harlem with a population of three hundred thousand people, that sixty percent of its housing stock was owned by New York City, because the houses fell into states of disrepair and neglect that the government found it necessary to take them over. The city itself came to be a pretty bad landlord, in some cases, worse than the previous landlords, so we have to look at that, and we have to look at what led to the inevitability of gentrification, and gentrifiers, we have to look into why gentrification creates opportunity for some, and not for others.
>
> (AA, CL, F, 12).

Yet another African American participant speaks, if reluctantly, of gentrification as a necessary evil. The fact that this participant was at some other times a harsh critic of gentrification speaks further to its complexity. Simply put, it seems as though her unasked question is: "How can one achieve the soft edge of gentrification without its rough edge?" She puts it this way:

> It is a serious situation. I live in the neighborhood and I am doing this job. I like my job, I love my neighborhood. I love Harlem, I love what it represents, I love the energy. But, on the issue of gentrification, there are times when I think that certain things have to happen to make things better.

[AA, DE/R, F, 7).

While a significant number of African American participants are doubtful about what gentrification in Harlem has in store for the population, Euro-American participants, for the most part, speak positively of it. As far as they [participants] are concerned, gentrification means economic boom; it means opportunity and progress, a chance to renew the neighborhood by pumping new money into its economic system. These kinds of ideas are exemplified in the following Euro-American participant's comment. According to him, gentrification may be viewed as a windfall, one that could help re-build and bring back something tantamount to a second renaissance to Harlem.

> a lot of different things. It means revitalization, pumping in certain economic energy into the community, a needed boost to the economy. Seriously, gentrification can bring back the lost days of glory to Harlem. I know some people would see this differently but if anyone knows how to gain without pain, let them tell me, I will be curious to know.
>
> (EA, M, 5)

Another Euro-American participant has lofty optimism about gentrification in Harlem; he is so enthused about

the great potential that Harlem holds as a community with great diversity that he is willing to go as far as equating that potential with [like the last speaker] a second renaissance. He says:

> I see Harlem as a community with great potential, and I am thrilled about it. I am concerned that interest groups could hamper the development of that potential. I hope that Harlem will be there to enjoy a second renaissance and the diversity which only gentrification can bring about for the benefit of everyone.
>
> (EA, M, 4).

But not all Euro-American participants speak positively of gentrification. To some, gentrification has something about it that is not attractive. For example, this female, Euro-American, participant sees fundamental oppression and exploitation of the poor and vulnerable, who are more often than not, African Americans, and Hispanics. But she values changes in Harlem and her block.

> Gentrification has a negative connotation in my mind, it’s something to do with pushing out people of lower economic standing for purposes of investment by people of higher economic standing.
>
> [EA, F, 1).

And it could also be said that this last speaker’s interest in Harlem goes far beyond “negative and positive” categorization of Harlem–especially in African American,

and Euro-American, terms. She envisions something almost grandiose, like the possibility of her part of Harlem, developing into something she has never before experienced anywhere else in this country. She articulates these innovative views thus:

> Yea, yea, I think it's nice to be part of a neighborhood that is seen as desirable. But that's not something that holds a great deal of value for me, personally. Again, I think that I am saying something that I said to you before: this place, this block, this street, in particular, holds out a possibility for a community that I haven't experienced anywhere in the United States for all the years that I have lived here, that has more value and meaning for me.
>
> (EA, F, 1).

5.4. Who is a Gentrifier?

The central argument of this section is that it takes at least two to assign and validate a nominal label. One that assigns the label and the other to whom the label is assigned to make the label stick and accepted as a valid descriptive label otherwise that label is a meaningless or wasted non-word. However, in this study, when the question: "Do you see your self as a gentrifier?" was put to both African American, and Euro-American participants, even to those who are home owners in the gentrifying neighborhood, no one agreed that they are gentrifiers.

Each one of them, both African American and Euro-American participants answered in the negative. For example, the response of one Euro-American, male participant, was quick and unwavering, even though he bought an apartment in Harlem. He said:

> Oh no, I am not. I am definitely not a gentrifier. (EA, M, 5).

When pursued further for the purpose of clarification, the same, Euro-American male was even more forceful in his refusal to be seen as a gentrifier. As far as he is concerned, to be a gentrifier, one has to be making an economic gain. And economic gain, he said, he is not making:

> There is something about being a gentrifier that I am not. I think that a gentrifier is the home owner, or developer, who is making an economic gain from the process of gentrification. I am not doing that.
> (EA, M, 5).

Just as a Euro-American participant makes a disclaimer even though he has just bought into gentrification by owning a piece of Harlem, an African American participant, who is, in fact, a developer/realtor, also declines to being a gentrifier. Instead, he speaks in a long discourse of “enabler” and “stabilizer”, sometimes not so easy to

follow, by which he sought to exclude himself from the rank of gentrifiers. This is how he argued to drive home the point about what he does as an “enabler” and “stabilizer”.

I have reproduced his discourse in full; it may seem too long for some readers, but please, bear with us. It is important to note also that the woman he is talking about in this monologue is a home owner, not a renter, as it is generally assumed that only renters are displaced.

> No, I am an enabler, and stabilizer. I’ll tell you what I mean. I go to people and say. I put it this way, I have a woman who is seventy years old. She owns a Brownstone, she has a hard time walking up the stairs, she probably hasn’t been to the top floor for six or seven years, and you know, I said to her: do you want to stay the twilight of your years in the area you have grown accustomed to, or you want to have.. you know a lot of people that age, when they make a wholesome change in their lives, it kills them you know, because it becomes too disorienting. What we do is go to them and say listen; we can help you, we can either partner with you, or we find you a partner, we can retrofit the entire property, we can make it ADA compliant, we can convert it to a condominium, you can sell the upper floors, or three floors, and stay on the patio floor, and enjoy your garden, take some money off the table, and enjoy the rest of your life. When you pass away, or you decide to do what you want to do, you don’t have to worry about it, sell one condo apartment. That’s the way in which people will stop being stressed and financially compromised. I help them to make decisions that in

> the long run are good for them. I help them to stabilize. I am not a gentrifier, I am an enabler, and a stabilizer.
>
> [AA, M, 8).

The next participant, also an African Ameri can, and a real estate operator, does not see himself as a gentrifier, either. But the logic he employed to exclude himself from the ranks of gentrifiers is different. According to him, gentrifiers are housing agents who create situations that make it possible for gentrification to take place. Believing therefore that he has not created a housing condition which made it possible for gentrifiers to gentrify, he is happy to boast that he is not a gentrifier.

> Actually, no, I haven't created any situation. If we are defining it by those individuals who have done things that allow for gentrification to take place, technically I am not, I haven't created any housing that allow for gentrifiers to gentrify.
>
> (AA, M, 6).

When you re-direct the same question: "do you see yourself as a gentrifier?" to a female, Euro-American participant, there is no difference in the responses between a Euro-American 'gentrifier' and an African American 'gentrifier', or between a male 'gentrifier'

and a female ‘gentrifier’, difference that is, in the way that they each declined to accept the label “gentrifier” as a legitimate label to pin them down for their involvement in gentrification.

Could it mean that no one wants to be seen as the entity or a group of entities that are held to be responsible for pushing the most vulnerable members of society into oblivion especially when this is done for purposes of investment and profit? If so, is making a profit so overriding that nothing else matters, that they would do anything to make the profit, anyway? Another Euro-American participant who recently bought an apartment in Harlem, also argues that she is not a gentrifier, simply because she does not see herself as one. Then, she goes on to say that there is something about gentrifiers that she does not, and cannot, accept. As each participant, so far, carefully lays the grand rules by which they can be judged, and included or excluded, in the group labeled “gentrifier”, it is not surprising that she follows suit to exclude herself. According to her, she is not a gentrifier because she does not want to be a part of the negative phenomenon:

> Because I don’t want to be associated with the negative phenomenon, I don’t want to see myself as

> a gentrifier. And certainly in terms of my economic standing, I am closer in economic well being to the people who have lived here in this neighborhood for years and years than I am to what my image of a gentrifier is, but I am associated with a phenomenon where many people who have lived in this neighborhood over the next few years will no longer be able to afford to rent in this neighborhood, that I cannot deny.
>
> (EA, F, 1).

5.5. Displacement And Its Consequences

The central theme of this section, as the subheading suggests, is concerned with one of the major negative side effects of gentrification–'displacement'-and its consequences, especially to the weak and vulnerable. In this study, we find that there are clear differences between African American's and Euro-American's conceptualizations of the problem, though there are exceptions, and subtleties in the way that each doses it. For example, while Euro-American participants argue that it is difficult to prove actual displacement since households move for different reasons, African American participants, who can more closely relate to the problems of displacement, point to the devastations of displacement as perpetuated by the economically powerful. Hence one outraged African American participant who can no longer

hold back what he feels speaks the often unspoken words when he asks:

> Can you imagine how much hardship this [this, meaning displacement] can cause to those families whose lives are uprooted in that way?
>
> (AA, M, 18).

Who really are the economically powerful who cause hardships to low income households and small businesses? The above African American participant who describes himself as a victim of gentrification answered that question when he named the Real Estate developers as the rich and powerful who displace the poor and small businesses, citing himself as a typical example.

> The Real Estate people who have all the power are saying to you if you don't like our terms, there is the door. The next guy will give me more money than I am asking you. This is what it boils down to, they have been trying to throw me out of this place, there is no particular reason, we pay our rent but the landlord has decided to terminate me as a tenant here because he says so.
>
> (AA, M, 18).

An African American community leader who has lived in Harlem for more than half a century recounts another story which further confirms the cold and impersonal fashion in which displacement exacts its toll. Her story is about

some blocks of buildings known as Lenox Terrace. If Lenox Terrace according to her represents the worst about displacement, it also represents developers' greed at its worst, for it demonstrates most vividly the inherent callousness of the profit oriented market system. On this block of housing development known as Lennox Terrace, the African American community leader speaks of how about 300 families whose mothers and grandmothers had lived there for generations were hoisted out onto the street because they could not pay the new rent hike.

> The one place that I see gentrification happening that is frightening is the Lenox Terrace. The Lenox Terrace was an old Housing Development in Harlem for many, many, many, decades, some of the families in there have owned their apartments for three to four generations. When they [*the developers*] went in and looked at the original leases for those apartments, and it didn't matter whether it was your mother or grandmother that lived there, and you were raised in that apartment, if you were not on the original lease, they put you out. Then, they started to fix the apartment up, the rent was very, very low on the original leases. I mean rents were like six hundred to eight hundred dollars a month for two bedroom apartment. You can't get that in New York, in Manhattan any more, so in one way these people had a right to go in and get back their apartment. But what I see on the street is like three hundred families. They are displaced! Now you displace them and you go in there fixing the apartments, now the rent is eighteen hundred to one thousand, five hundred dollars a month, and the

> people who live there cannot afford it. The people who were displaced cannot afford that, that is gentrification at its worst!
>
> (AA, CL, F, 17).

"Where have all those people gone to?" The community leader's spontaneous reply was:

> I don't know. But I know that they are not dead, and are no longer living in the homes they had lived in all their lives.

This is how she says it works: As the new constructions of housing reach a cost that is far beyond the economic reaches of long-time residents, and as the community transforms and luxury goods and services that did not exist in the community before are developed to serve the new 'gentry' because they want them to stay, the argument that the transformation is for the entire community is brought in. Thus, for the next Euro-American participants, it appears that all that matters is the cosmetic design to diversify the community, while using purchasing power to significantly reduce the number of the original residents.

> I see Harlem as a community with great potential, and I am thrilled about it. I am concerned that interest groups could hamper the development of that potential. I hope that Harlem will be there to enjoy a second renaissance and the diversity which

> only gentrification can bring about for the benefit of everyone.
>
> (EA, M, 5).

When that speaker was pressed to comment specifically on displacement, he resorted to doubt and denial, and implied that actual displacement is hard to prove. He argues:

> I understand that some people are displaced, and have to leave the neighborhood because of changes that are taking place, but some are leaving their neighborhoods all the time, anyway.
>
> (EA, M, 5).

When for the purpose of clarification, he was asked to speak to whether he thought there was any difference between leaving a neighborhood voluntarily, and leaving involuntarily, he became evasive and oblique, and remained steadfastly in denial.

> I am not an authority in this field, but what I hear is that people say that it is very difficult to obtain the truth about why people leave. For example, for whatever reason people leave if it coincides with the time an area is being transformed, people would say that gal is leaving the area because of the transformation.
>
> (EA, M, 5).

However, for many African Americans in this study, it is always the issue of cost which concerns the folks as

working class residents. For example, it is whether or not, they are able to afford the cost of housing, whether or not they are the owners of local businesses, and whether or not, they can withstand economically the commercial transformation when larger businesses come in to force out small mom and pop corner shops that matter. And for a few African Americans, especially those who are in the Real Estate industry, who make their livings from profits from real estate transactions, issues of cost which concern working class folks is secondary. One such African American, in the real estate industry, surprisingly, argues that there is no such thing as displacement, which goes to demonstrate that the issues in gentrification, sometimes, do not divide along race but class, along who benefits from gentrification, and does not. He argues:

> I don’t believe that gentrification equals displacement, and I manage a lot of low income housing, exclusively for the use and benefit of low income individuals. I have not seen displacement resulting from the emergence of various city sponsored projects in affordable housing. X and I developed 200 units of low income housing, specifically funded by the city and state government. I think what people do is, they confuse a couple of things. They say, well, this new building is going up, or it’s going to be converted, or modernized, and therefore, that means people are being displaced. I think it’s more the

> case that there were such levels of vacancy underutilization of property within this community, that there was more than enough room for the development of new projects which would not specifically serve low income population but they will serve a new demographic gentrifier, that, in fact, there is room for everybody. What I think rather is, in displacing individuals, what may happen, or what does happen, is over time, there would be a reduction in the available units for the low income individuals. To me, that is not the same as displacement.
>
> (AA, DE/R, M, 6).

5.6. Harlem And African American Culture

When participants speak of Harlem and African American culture, they are referring to variations of many cultural styles. Each cultural style promotes a wide range of what is called African American culture. They are referring to cultural styles such as food, music, musical performance, arts and painting, clothes, clothing store, restaurant, hair-braiding, or weaving. Further, the cultural styles may include individual or group affect, or social responses which sums up the group ethos; and religious and social institutions, which form the bedrock of the group identity and reason for being. Moreover, they may also be referring to the great migration which resulted in popularization of Harlem by the presence of many African Americans from the South, as well as the

Harlem Renaissance of the 1 920’s and 1930’s. Everyone – African Americans and Euro-Americans, alike-speaks positively about African American culture.

Although all participants speak positively about African American culture, it is important to note here that the general position from which African American participants speak of African American culture is distinctively different from the general position from which Euro-American participants speak about it. African American participants speak of African American culture as insiders who believe that culture connects to the past and provides guidance in the moment, and the future, as well as serves as a protective bulwark that shields them from enemies, or oppressors. Moreover, African American participants take African American culture seriously; when African Americans look at themselves in the mirror, they are pleased with the image of themselves which represents the culture they promote.

Euro-American participants, on the other hand, speak of African American culture as outsiders; they perceive African American culture as unusual and entertaining, but there is a great deal about African American culture which they do not know. Though they recognize African American

culture (to include music, literature, painting etc.) right from the Renaissance of the 1920s, and 1930s, and respect it, still, they perceive it as outsiders, and there are a great deal about African American culture that they do not know, or understand.

In this study, we find that African American participants are unanimous in their agreement of the need to promote and preserve the African American culture for posterity. Some do this as a first step by returning to Harlem after decades of absence. Hence one African American participant found it necessary to disclose why he came to live in Harlem.

> I came here because it is a Black community. They are the ones that I can identify with the way I live, and the food I eat, just like other people move to other parts of the city, either ChinaTown, Little Italy, or Greek area.
>
> (AA, M, 3)

Just what else is the matter about African American culture? What is it about African American culture that dictates the way African Americans think, what they think, feel, sense, believe, and how they express their pains and joys-that make them and others speak so positively about it? One African American community leader attempted to give some of those questions his own rendition.

> I think that every Black person represents black culture. I think that some know it more than others, in addition to that, there are some people who are more distinctly identified in the cultural capacity than others, whether they are artists, or performers. African American culture is institutions, of course, whether they are the National Black Theater, or the Apollo theater, Harlem National Alliance, Harlem week, or whether they are Night club, or the restaurant. African American culture is all these things. When you walk into a black restaurant you are walking into a black culture, whether it's a Haitian restaurant, whether it's a Jamaican restaurant; when you walk into a clothing store, no matter who is there, what you see there is a reflection of their culture, so culture takes many forms. We have people who are extraordinary icons like Harry Belafonte, Gloria Amin, the Doggey Freshers from the Hiphop, Whynton Marsalis, Max Roach, Lionel Hampton, to name a few.

(AA, CL, M, 10).

Another African American participant articulates African American culture in terms of something that happens at a distance, that one chooses to go see, and mingle in and relish, or stand aside to enjoy, in private homes, night clubs, and other social centers, all of which constitute forms of African American culture, and some of them Euro-Americans do not even know about. Some Euro-American participants speak of African American culture in Harlem interchangeably with cultural diversity and present it as their motives for coming to Harlem, while African

American participants speak of it as a panacea that sustains life which makes the quest of it so meaningful when they return ‘home’ to it for sustenance. That is why one African American participant speaks so positively about African American culture when he proudly declares why he came back to Harlem.

> I came to Harlem, to make Harlem my home because of culture, the Black culture that exist in Harlem. ..I do believe there is social life in Harlem that white people don’t even know about.. in arts, music, meeting other people, the way black people meet people, socializing, relating; things that are in other communities, but we do in ways that are related to us.
>
> (AA, M, 2).

One Euro-American, female, participant also spoke positively of Black culture. She gave African American culture as part of her motive for settling in Harlem, and confesses that what she finds most enduring about African American culture lies in the warmth and friendliness of the people. According to her:

> ..people greet you as you walk down the street, and inquire about how you are doing and things like that.. one of the things that has helped in being comfortable like I said was that people in the neighborhood have been very friendly from the beginning.

(EA, F, 1).

Though tireless in wanting to maintain continuity with the past and present through their culture, the perception is that certain attitudinal posturing sometimes displayed by Euro-American developers are inimical to enhancement of African American culture. Though such behavior may be a drawback, it is not in itself a sufficient discouragement to African Americans. The fact that such kinds of overt manifestations of racial disparagement are nothing new in race relations in the United States of America did not make it less painful when one African American female participant felt emotionally crushed when a Euro-American developer told them at a recent Developers' Meeting that:

> Okay, we are going to have a commercial space downstairs, but we don't want any hair braiding.

Some African American culture such as hair braiding spills out onto the street, and stands out clearly as a symbol of racial pride, but that it gets defined by others, in terms of what is okay, and what is not okay; commercially viable, and not commercially viable, is unfortunate, and reprehensible! Hence, the African American participant who has hard-nosed interest, or

cultural ties with the “motherland” reacted emotionally to what was seemingly her economic interest by walking out because of the Euro-American developer’s statement about hair braiding.

In her own words this is how and why she became so troubled by the remark that she had to leave the meeting:

> They named everything that was a part of our culture as things they don’t want. It was very sad. I thought the developer would not have to do that. That was one time when I got really emotional. I began to cry and had to leave.
>
> (AA, DE/R, F, 7).

Another African American participant who fought hard to make sense of what is seen as emotionally charged effrontery rendered his own interpretation of the charged predicament thus:

> Anything that is independent is threatening to the system. When you begin to make things happen without having to bow down to the system, it raises eyebrows. You know hairdressing is an art which was passed on from generation to generation. When you put it on a commercial level, you don’t require much financing except your skill and space; they don’t like that.
>
> (AA, M, 18).

However, while not completely dismissing the hair-braiding anecdotal incident as a an over-reaction on the

part of the African American participant, an African American community leader cautions in a very detailed argument that it is possible that the developer's statement is made out of economic considerations rather than a blatant disregard for African American culture. He argues:

> Well, that is the sensibility of one developer, or probably a whole group of developers who represent the hard edge of gentrification. I don't know if the developer in this case is black, or white. Hair-braiding, you must understand is, I think perceived as a commercial activity that would likely not pay the kind of rent that would give the developer the kind of return he or she is looking for. And, I dare say, that is likely to be, you know black developers, in some cases they are in partnership with white developers, in other cases, they are not. But, I think, hair braiding, therefore, not seen as an economic proposition that works for them. Secondly, it may be a value judgment on the part of some people, maybe they want a higher level of economic activity, so I don't think, and I'm not one unwilling to confront racism or racial motivation anywhere I see it, but the economic motivations in those situations are strong, so, some would see it as being a class matter, maybe if they could pay ninety dollars a square foot, they would have them, but I dare say that if they could pay ninety dollars a square foot, you will see a lot more than we do now, you see what I'm saying? There is nothing classy about a fast-food chain, or some of these retailers you see there, but I think it is an economic proposition that is layered with class, or maybe tinged with race as well.

> “So you think the lady may have overreacted?”
>
> I’m sure she interpreted it probably in the most negative way that she could. I think that is understandable, but I do know a little something about the motivation of developers, because we work with them. I think first and foremost, it’s an economic proposition.
>
> (AA, CL, M, 15).

5.7. Affordable Housing

If the demand for affordable housing has overtaken its supply nationwide, it is much more so in Harlem, New York City, than anywhere else, suggested David Jones in the Amsterdam News (2007). In this study, participants spoke of the concept of affordability differently. Thus, for African American participants there is a major concern that affordable housing is becoming a thing of the past in Harlem as gentrification progresses. While for Euro-American participants “affordable housing” is the motive for buying into Harlem. Therefore, affordable housing is a relative term. For example, some Euro-American participants who had the means to buy from the stock of affordable housing in Harlem it was an opportunity, therefore spoken of in positive terms, while some poor indigenous Harlem residents who do not have the means, and are afraid of being forced out of Harlem, speak of

affordable housing in negative terms. Here are some examples. A female Euro-American participant, who owns an apartment in Harlem, speaks of how and why she became involved in the gentrification of Harlem in the first place.

> Just looking through the newspapers, in the Real estate section and I saw an ad, I saw an ad for an opportunity, it said: affordable housing" opportunity in New York, and it was a developer who had received funds from the city.
>
> (EA, F, 1).

However, more interestingly in this study, we find also that as Euro-American participants tender "affordable housing" as a motive for buying into Harlem, African American participants decry it as if it were their nemesis-the reason why they will move out of Harlem, or be forced to move out of Harlem to who knows where? Meanwhile, the Euro-American participant, even with little household income, reflects on how he bought into the Harlem gentrification:

> I am here because the price of the apartment was within what I could afford. It is very near every place else, my work, lower Manhattan where all things happen. I am here because it makes sense to me, I was able to buy more for less. Who wouldn't do what I did if they had the opportunity?
>
> (EA, M, 4).

Although African American participants position themselves as underdogs, the views of some of them are sometimes at variance with each other. Hence, we find, for example, that as one African American community leader participant, who is a vocal critic and public advocate of affordable housing asserts that “housing is a human right that ought to be provided to all those who cannot provide them for themselves. Another African American participant, and Realtor, realistically poses the “who” question:

> Clearly, there is not enough affordable houses, there is no question about that, but the real question is who is going to subsidize the deficit, who is going to pay for it? Am I in business to make money? Do I have to subsidize the state deficit? Who am I, am I a real estate guy?
>
> (AA, DE/R, M, 6).

As if in defense of “profit-making”–the same African American real estate participant, whose livelihood depends on rising real estate value, if I understand him correctly, makes the poignant point that Harlem is going to become less and less affordable to the lower, and even the middle class households. As if to deaden his declarative statement, he felt the need to quickly add that it is not racist, without equally seeing the need to

explain why the short fall in affordable housing hurts some groups more than others.

> If I am on the same point, I think I agree, increasingly over time Harlem is going to become less affordable, soon lower class, even the middle class, I don't think it is going to be affordable to them. It's going to be economically stimulating, it's going to create a kind of more high end environment. It is not racist, it's economic, the fact of the matter is, this is Manhattan, one of the most coveted real estates in the world.
>
> (AA, DE/R, M, 6).

Without attempting to resolve any of the issues, or propose some actions that any one, or responsible agency, should take to address the problems of affordable housing, a Euro-American speaker makes a somewhat conciliatory statement that boils down to a mere wish:

> I would like to see Harlem being successful in promoting a large quantity of affordable housing that suit low income earning families in the community.
>
> (EA, M, 4).

Not long afterwards another Euro-American participant suggested that more affordable housing could be supplied indirectly by the city through making some sorts of concessions in the form of inclusionary housing to developers.

> With inclusionary housing. Inclusionary housing is when the Department of City Planning allows developers to create three, four, or five more stories on top of buildings if they allocate a good percentage of the space to lower, and low income families.
>
> (EA, F, 9).

Some participants claim that the Harlem gentrification program was not introduced to them initially as “gentrification”, that selected developers received huge funding and other tax abatements from the city to encourage them to develop Harlem without making a wholesale removal of people with lesser income. But has this worked in favor of indigenous Harlem residents? An African American community leader explains, as if he were a public spokesperson for the government:

> What I am saying is there have been programmatic measures to try to soften the edges of gentrification, as it relates to housing. Now, people will say that yes, they are not reaching the poorest of the poor. In many cases, they are not, but that raises the issue of, well, does that mean that everyone should be a home owner. Maybe not, what it does mean is that everyone ought to have a decent place to live in, if he or she can, so the city ought to do more, but remember the further down you reach in terms of lower income, fifty percent of medium income, forty percent of medium income, the more you go, the more the city, and state, and indeed the federal government, must subsidize, you see the developers are not going to dip in if it does not result in profit for them.

(AA, CL, M, 15).

Many African American residents in Harlem are not impressed by mere words, no matter how high sounding. Therefore, they have an issue with “development”, which has been developed and marketed to them as a “social-economic miracle”–a social-economic miracle at least, as they understood it, that emerged at last to heal and transform the physical, social, and economic neglect of their neighborhood forever.

On the contrary, miracles are not what they are experiencing now in Harlem. How were they supposed to accept lack of affordable housing, rent hikes, and displacement, as development? An incredulous and outraged African American participant speaks out.

> It is very difficult for me to agree to that because the point is, it has to be affordable. But we don’t see anything being affordable any more. The Brownstones 15-20 years ago were going for eighty to ninety thousand. Now they are in the market from one and a half million. What I am saying is the changes they are bringing about is lucrative for the people who bring those changes, but way out for the residents who cannot afford them.
>
> (AA, M, 18).

5.8. Profit Motives.

Most people believe that gentrification is primarily concerned with making money (profit). This study confirms that while “profit” is indeed a motive for people to become involved in gentrification, it recognizes also that there are sub-motives besides profit, that sometimes, at least at the level of data analysis of the current study, it was not always possible to delineate “motive” and “sub-motive” with specificity in terms of African American and Euro-American participants. This becomes particularly difficult to say with any certainty, because in most cases, it is “others” who make the profit attribution, not the individuals themselves who make it about themselves. From the following African American participant’s perspective everyone–African American or Euro-American-is in there for the profit, no doubt about that.

> Right now, the motives of gentrifiers in Harlem is “money”, no question about it! People see the economic opportunity, you know, you go in there, take a depressed piece apart, low priced building, and fix it up to a high rise condominium, and have people paying six hundred thousand to seven hundred thousand for one bedroom and two bedroom room apartments, wouldn’t you want to do something like that?
>
> (AA, CL, F, 17).

Because Euro-American middle and upper middle class predominate in the field of gentrification, it is hard for some African Americans to believe that any Euro-American could buy into the gentrification in Harlem if not for the profit. In an attempt to articulate that perception, the following African American participant uses the pronoun “they” without having previously used the noun [oblique language?] to refer to “Europeans” and suggests that they are looking for just the best deals, but not so for African Americans, whom he said, are looking for the cultural experience by remaining or returning to Harlem.

> [They] are just looking for the best deals real estate-wise, whereas the Black people look for that and the cultural experience, that is the return to my root aspect, so to speak. Even if I grew up in Detroit, you know, if I am a Black person and move to New York, and working now, the right thing to do is go for the community that looks like Detroit. Now I am looking for something that will replicate what I had, what I grew up in. I think that is the way it’s going to be.
>
> (AA, M, 6).

Continuing in the same vein another African American participant argues that Euro-American developers are primarily looking for profit. Also, they are on a mission

to repopulate New York, a glorious New York without African Americans, or non Euro-Americans.

> Well, the overriding factor, I think is profit. They want a return on their investment. And of course, they are visionaries, they envision a New York City, I think, without a substantial number of working class, and people of color. They want them out. I think that they want to repopulate the inner city demographically.
>
> (AA, CL, M, 10).

When an African American community leader was asked to specify whether she thought the motives of African American were similar to those of Euro-Americans, she dodged the question by excusing African Americans who he said are returning to an African American community to raise a family, and possibly to raise equity in their property, which by implication means that they are not essentially profit motivated:

> This isn't to say that all Whites share the same motive. But I certainly think with respect to African American professionals who are moving in, but I don't think that those numbers are comparable to those of Whites, I don't even think that you can begin to compare the two. I think they are looking to coming back to African American community, they are buying a house to raise a family, they realize that they can create equity in the investment. Never mind that the bubble is bursting, that is another story.

(AA, CL, F, 12).

The frequently made argument that Euro-Americans invest in Harlem purely for the profit is, again, corroborated by another participant, even though he quickly adds with relief, that the lure of the architectural beauty of the homes in Harlem could also be additional motive for Euro-Americans buying into Harlem. He says that:

> They [meaning Euro-Americans] are coming here because of what they can get here. They are tired of living in a box. For a million dollars here, you can get quite a lot that you cannot get downtown. Downtown, what you get for a million dollar is a two bed room, like a box, living on top of fifty other people. To think that you could get a six thousand square foot home with a small backyard, and the beauty and the detail of the home, architectural beauty, and a million dollar guaranteed to go up in value.
>
> (AA, CL, F, 17).

Then, the question was framed differently without exactly specifying, “African American” or “Euro-American”. Though the participants are aware that the study is about African American and Euro-American gentrifiers, it asked: From your perspective are the motives of gentrifiers, more

or less the same, or do you see different motives amongst different gentrifiers?

> Different motives, at the top of the motivation is economic return, which means to a large degree, how can we get to making the move, with a less output, meaning, can I get property that is valued, and I know that the property is valued, I use the number, a million dollars. Can I gentrify that area so that the property value goes down dramatically with an understanding that I can turn that around once it is gentrified and increase the property value to be far more than a million dollar, so therefore, can I find a way as opposed to spending a million dollar to purchase some property and building on it, and make profit? Can I find a way that drives down the value of that property so it is fifty thousand dollars, knowing that in a short period of time, once I re-acquire that property, I can drive it up to two million dollars which is pretty consistent with what is happening in the Harlem community.
>
> It's not that there are different motives, it's people who want to have similar persons to be in their neighborhood, whether it's familiar, whether they are a certain type of profession, and they are looking for doctors to be among doctors, they are looking for artist to be among artist, so there are different ways of approaching the gentrification aspect of it, so that you can drive people out in many ways, you can attract people in many ways.
>
> (AA, CL, M, 10).

As most African American participants share in the belief that Euro-Americans would not return to the Harlem they once abandoned if not for the ideas of making a

profit, one African American community leader destroyed that argument by proposing that even the African American investor would not return or remain in Harlem if they did not believe that their own investments in the Harlem real estate market would appreciate in value over time, making the findings as revealing as they are complex. According to that community leader, it is difficult, if not impossible, to remove the notion of profit from any buying or selling transactions in real estate transactions, whether the buyer or seller is African American or Euro-American.

> I don’t believe African Americans who are moving here, will move here, if they did not believe that it would be a good value proposition. Though moving back in here is layered with, or buttressed with raised pride, or cultural pride, etc., the value proposition is still the same, you can still buy a brownstone here, of comparable scale for significantly less, than you can buy a brownstone thirty block south of here, [below 90th street]. Now, I think for both groups, the value proposition is first, and foremost, especially when you are talking about economic classes that are parallel. Okay, but when you go on from that, Whites may also want to move here because of the same value proposition, pure and simple.
>
> (AA, CL, M, 15).

The only Euro-American participant who responded to the question on profit as a motive, chose not to focus on profit, per se. She dwelt instead on “motive”, suggesting that owning a home, rather than renting, was a motive for buying into Harlem. However, although owning a home was important, the place where the home was located was just as important for her. She took her time to describe what it was that brought her to live in Harlem.

> Owning a home rather than renting, liking the neighborhood, architecturally and aesthetically, I think that those two are probably the highest up on the list. Other factors are stability and security.
>
> (EA, F, 1).

Is stability then a motive?

> Yea, that holds a great deal of value for me, personally. This place, this block, this street in particular, holds out a possibility for a community that I haven’t experienced anywhere else in the United States.
> (EA, F, 1).

What are some of those possibilities that you envisage?

> Well, like I said, to me one of the important things, or one of the nice ideals, that I have about the place that we live, the neighborhood that we live in, is that there is diversity, and that people come together when necessary to accomplish things, to plant trees, to rally a politician about an issue that concerns them in the neighborhood, and those kinds of things seem like a real tangible

> possibility, and there is a framework to prove that you can do those things in the neighborhood, so, that's the kind of community that I am talking about.
>
> (EA, F, 1).

5.9. Nonprofit Motive

This section is unique for two major reasons: (1) it stands out in sharp contrast to the previous sections–in particular, to the last section on "Profit Motive". (2) It represents an ideological position which suggests that gentrification need not mean displacement of the poor and vulnerable. This position is demonstrated in the views and works of a formidable African American community leader and participant, currently at the helm of a multi-denominational nonprofit organization. She is important to my study on gentrification in Harlem because her ideas and those of the organization she represents are interlocked in a common belief that you can transform a neighborhood without displacing its original residents. This is not to suggest that this participant and her organization are the only such individuals and organizations on such noble missions in Harlem. I write about them because they opened their doors to me to peep in and ask questions about their work.

The following excerpts taken directly from the open-ended interview with that participant speak to some of the works of the organization–beginning from the time of the organization's foundation, to how and why the organization was able to function as a nonprofit organization in a market laced with endless possibilities to make huge profit as many others are making. The fact that the goal of the organization is to reverse the negative effect of gentrification (displacement) makes this participant's responses a compelling revelation of what is worth emulating. When the Principal investigator asked the participant to tell us something about how the organization came into being, the following is what she said:

> Well, it's Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement. When we started it was Harlem Churches for Community Improvement. And the real issue was that the churches that had been here in Harlem, a strong, vibrant community, had felt the impact of the wave of the betterment of the 1970's, and the crack epidemic that followed in the 1980's so that everything around many of the churches was becoming abandoned. The churches were losing membership, and even the good solid members were often reluctant to even park on the block, in front of the churches they went to.
>
> (AA, CL, F, 11).

When a place slips into decay due to poverty and unemployment and its residents take to crime and drugs in order to survive, its population begins to drop. In Harlem, many church-goers began to leave and head off to the suburbs, but they did not abandon Harlem. They came back to help, to worship, and give a helping hand to the people they left behind. Thus, deep down concern for the less fortunate gave rise to a vibrant, nonprofit organization that is currently making a monumental difference in the lives of poor Harlemites. Continuing, she said:

> And some of the men had begun to go, and our community was losing them, and some of those church members began to say: “I’m willing to do something for this community”, even if they no longer lived here, they were interested in this community. Now, of course there were always other places of escape. Members left to those places where there were a thriving middle class. But were still attending church and very active and very committed to the community they left behind. But the vast majority of the block, the road block like one hundred and forty-nine street, one hundred and fourteen street, and one hundred and thirteen street, all those blocks in between, were devastated, so you know the reputation that Harlem had: crime was high, and the place unsafe. We looked at those things, and out of concern for our people, our first priority in 1986 when we began the work was to provide affordable housing for all because there was so much blight.
>
> (EA, CL, F, 11).

The extraordinary thing about HCCI, I understand, is that it is comprised of many different religious denominations that would ordinarily not come together to embrace a common purpose. How so?

> Yes, the unique thing about HCCI is we are about 19 churches in the Harlem community, we started as 16, we have mostly churches, but we also have two mosques, and one synagogue– who are all in our membership, everybody is from this community; Methodist, Baptist, Catholic–you know, you name it, it's people's faith, those who wanted to make a difference in this community, with a house of worship, those are the people who came to be a part of our organization, part of the community. There are lots of contributors, and most of the people we serve are from this community.
>
> (EA, CL, F, 11).

Although the goal of the organization was to build affordable housing in an area that was slowly becoming gentrified, the Investigator asked the participant if she saw her organization as "gentrifiers?" Her response to that question was prompt and unequivocal; it reminded us of earlier responses where others had failed to accept the label "gentrifiers".

> Well, no, our goal has been really to create housing for people who are born here and live here, so technically, we are not. What we are doing would be gentrification if we fixed the houses up and targeted people with much higher income level to move into them. But in general, we target people of low income who have been in this community. If you would had talked to many of the residents in my housing, they would have told you: “Oh yes, I used to live in one hundred and thirty eight street, then I moved to one hundred and fifty-two Street, now I live in one hundred and forty-four Street”. So, it is people from this community that are moving into our housing; therefore, we are not gentrifiers.
>
> (AA, CL, F, 11).

Since there were many vacant lots available for the asking, your organization must have had the luck of the draw. Is this an accurate assessment of your seminal period?

> But see, the difference is, and what people don’t like to really look at, is what happened in this area, when HCCI came into this immediate area. There were so many vacant lots, and vacant buildings; but there were also so many rats, running up and down the street. Unfortunately, today, as there are some constructions going on now, you still see some rats running up and down the street. But this community, this Harlem community, central Harlem community, has grown from fifty thousand people, now to about ninety thousand in the 1980’s, so there were these thirty thousand and forty thousand vacant lots, and vacant buildings, vacant units, vacant apartments, sitting around. That was one of the things that made the neighborhood so unsafe. This place where we are

> sitting down now is fine, but this was a multi-level drug facility; they had underground tunnel, they used the abandoned properties, somebody could come in through a hole in the tunnel, somebody could fill in the “order hole” in the other side of the street, and people came in from the north-east region to buy drug, and everybody knew about this, and nothing was happening to correct it, so we focused on what was one of the worst corners involved and say we are going to work on this, and make it affordable housing.
>
> (AA, CL, F, 11).

What is “affordable housing?”. How does one qualify for affordable housing?

> They never look at the little small area like expenses track, or a community board. They forget what is called area medium income. In doing the area medium income they look at the metropolitan statistical area, which is not Harlem at all, but the law here in New York city area, includes very poor area and pretty well to do area, so the area medium income right now might be a verified knowledge, so when we do housing and we say it’s affordable for people at sixty percent area medium income, that sixty per cent area medium income is roughly about forty something or fifty thousand dollars. So, fifty thousand dollars for a family of four is not very low income. And, when you talk to people who are here in Community Board 10, they say but that is terrible because the area medium income for this community board, if you were only to look at this community board, is twenty-one thousand. When I’m building housing at affordable income for a family of four that earns fifty thousand dollars in Harlem where the average person only earns twenty thousand dollars, then that doesn’t seem

> affordable. But also when you look at this averages, you got to look at the whole area, that average isn't average for the working people whose average is that of everybody who is on SSI, social security, public assistance, and so those incomes, some of those people that go into that average, what they mean is three hundred dollars, or four hundred dollars a month but they might be living in New York city housing project, and be paying forty dollars a month rent because of the limited income, paying house rent of not more than thirty per cent of annual income is considered affordable housing.
>
> (AA, CL, F, 11).

Since New York City became the landlord of the abandoned buildings, making them the new owners of sixty percent of the housing stock in Harlem, I would think that you would have to deal with different arms of the city routinely in your work. Do you encounter any bureaucratic roadblocks in your dealings with the city?

> What the city wanted to do in this area was put in housing that was a hundred percent low income, that is, with no body's income being over twenty-five thousand dollars a year. Our organization said "NO". When you create a community that is all low income, you are doing a disservice; you need a community that has different economic levels of income in order to achieve a fully economically integrated community. Our purpose will be that every building, not just every block would have people of different income, but when you are using government financing, it is very difficult to stratify income to the extreme. And so, we ended up in a long discussion and took a long period of time

> to get the housing development that we did. We continued to stick by the fact that we wanted only different income levels to be in the community.
>
> (AA, CL, F, 11).

I understand that your organization provides other services apart from providing affordable housing to Harlem residents. What are some of those services?

> Well, I think, my goal right now, or that of the organization right now, is really focused on wealth building, and the reason we are focused on that is because we are concerned about gentrification too; I am not making light of gentrification. This is what I mean. Rather than worrying about gentrification, or pointing out and saying: look what that big developer is doing, we do several things: we run financial literacy class, almost every Thursday evening in this room, we have a financial literacy class where we teach people about saving, budgeting and balancing a check book, planning, setting goals, fixing up credits when there are bad credits, saving for a home, and learning the process of getting a mortgage. Because we think if you don't own it, you can't control it. We do all of that work. What we would like to see in the future, is a community where our residents have a greater stake in the community. I see in ten to fifteen years from now, we will build multiple income buildings. Our housings have regulatory agreements, we will continue to create affordable home ownership opportunity, and we will continue to heavily market those to this community, so that we would have created many more home owners, and hopefully, with home ownership, will follow the typical path that those people will become more civically engaged, they will work better with their

> families, they will have wealth passed on to the next generation.
>
> (AA, CL, F, 11).

5.10. Fears of Cultural Erasure

Gentrification is generally understood to create tension between those moving in and those moving out, or fearful of moving out. In Harlem the developing tension is unique-in the sense that it is three pronged. As some stories of tension are being told, more are developing among (1) Euro-Americans and African Americans who are moving in (2) among Euro-Americans and African Americans who have lived in Harlem all their lives, as well as among (3) Euro-Americans and African Americans who are moving out. Those who are moving out are resentful because they are convinced that they are being ousted by the “in-movers” who have both money and influence to make them leave. In addition, African Americans who are either moving in or are long time residents are resentful and fearful that as soon as Euro-Americans move in they quickly begin to assert their rights as home-owners by arguing against some aspects of the African American culture which they do not understand. The developing tension is therefore said to be the result of fear and resentment, on the part of some African Americans, against

some Euro-American new comers who are accused of arriving in Harlem with the intention of replacing the African American culture with other cultures.

However, it is important to begin this narrative by first acknowledging that what is known about the growing tension is primarily anecdotal in nature, as reported by participants on both sides–perhaps, also, in addition to what is known from Newspaper accounts. Thus, as reported, tension has not erupted into open hostilities yet though by various accounts tempers are rising to the fore. African Americans express their feelings of fear of cultural erasure by in-movers at different levels; sometimes verbally and at other times without the use of words. One African American participant, also a Realtor, caught in the middle of things because of the nature of her work, puts it relatively mildly but powerfully when in relating her experience to this Investigator paints a picture of a quiet gentle sadness in the air, of something very subtle yet ominous, as she did her rounds showing houses to prospective clients. She says:

> Sometimes when I’m out showing a house and someone walks by and glances over, and looks at us, there is sadness that comes about, a little bit of..you know

(AA, DE/R, F, 7).

Is this on your part, or on the part of the other person glancing over?

> I think on both, but..neither one would say anything, neither one would vocalize what they feel, but we know what they feel, it is not a sense of hopelessness for me. It is a sense of defeat, their sense of looking at the other person, and saying: “I have lived here for thirty, or forty years, and you are selling the house next door to persons outside this community”. Now, that I think of it, it is not anger for me, it is despair.
>
> (AA, DE/R, F, 7).

Practically every participant has a rendition of the observed tension between the African American and Euro-American camps. None, however, has framed what may look on the surface like cultural clash, as what the following African American participant delineates as fear of ultimate erasure of African American culture as a consequence of Euro-American in-movers.

> One of the things about gentrification that we don’t talk about is the inevitable cultural clashes that are already taking place here in Harlem. For example, black working class families because there are no backyards, or space at the back of the buildings congregate in front of their building for holidays to barbecue and celebrate. But the new white gentry cannot take it; they want those who have been here for decades to change in order to please them.
>
> (AA, CL, F, 12).

Sometimes each story has similar attributes that you begin to wonder if it is not the same story circulating at such a high frequency and speed amongst residents with inflections in the narratives that represent personal styles, yet look like a new story by the time it makes a full circle. But there are no grounds to suspect, or invalidate the substance of each narrative. The following version by an African American community leader speaks also to the fact that seeing some African Americans congregate in the front a porch of a building instead of meeting inside their houses may be somewhat problematic for Euro-American new comers to ignore.

> I have no doubt, I have no doubt! I have not read of wholesale eruption that rose to the level of violence. What I have heard of anecdotally is a member of my Board that had a Real Estate business lives in Harlem. He is selling his brownstone, which is adjacent to brownstones of folks who have been there a long time, they had some issue to discuss, and congregated on the steps. He said to me that when some prospective buyers saw these folks who were standing and congregating, he turned around, and got back in his car, so, it has that kind of impact. I have no doubt about their authenticity; these folks who have been here for a long time, some of them are on fixed income, feel vulnerable. I suppose if I were in their shoes, I would feel vulnerable too. I just don’t know that there is any thing that anybody can do about that, at the end of the day.

(AA, CL, M, 15).

To the contrary, the anecdotal representation by the next community leader not only confirms the existing tension between the African American and Euro-American groups, it also suggests that such tension may have even escalated to the level of violence, though warns that they are all rumors which may or may not be true, or may even be rumors driven by other factors that may not be racially motivated.

> I've heard of it; I heard there was a robbery near Lenox Avenue, they attacked a woman, shook her upside down, and took all the money out of her bag, with her bag in her hand. Now, all of these might be exaggerated but I have heard of them. But in the same vein, I have seen white people walking down my block at two o'clock in the morning. I have seen them walking down my block, at times that I always walk down the block by myself without any fear in the world.
>
> (AA, CL, F, 12).

The first Euro-American participant who spoke on this issue appears to corroborate the point about robbery. Although he has walked by and heard snide remarks that are not complimentary about white people, makes it clear that it did not happen to him per se as a white person in an African American community. Has he heard of a growing tension between African Americans and Euro-Americans?

> For the most part, no, but I have encountered it [tension] a little bit.
>
> (EA, M, 4).

Was this recently?

> Recently, no! It was when we first moved in here, the people didn't want to talk to me, didn't want to shake my hand, and I have heard of other white neighbors who have had the same experience. We heard comments actually, once or twice, walking up the street people [black men], having conversation, and as you walk by, you know, you hear some comments about white people moving in.
>
> (EA, M, 4).

That was when you first came here?

> Well, I haven't encountered anything else, I would say, for the past year, or so.
>
> (EA, M, 4).

Would you consider the neighborhood safe?

> I haven't had any problem. But one friend of mine has. He said there was one attempt to rob him; another friend of ours, and one of their white neighbors in the condo complained of threats to rob them. I don't feel any safer, or less safe here in this neighbor than I do anywhere else.
>
> (EA, M, 4).

Then, another Euro American participant would neither confirm, nor disconfirm, the existence of such stories circulating in the neighborhood. Instead, she renders a

somewhat clinical explanation by taking the position that it is possible, just possible, that there are anxieties about moving into other people's neighborhood and displacing some therein. Therefore, it is possible that those "in movers" project their own anxieties onto those whom they are displacing, and accuse them of hostility.

> Well, you know, I don't know, I can't speak for other people's experience, each individual experiences may be different from my experience. I think it is possible that there is an anxiety, that people project their anxiety about moving into a neighborhood, and displacing people, project that unto those who are being displaced, and it gets articulated as hostility towards them. In my experience, that hasn't happened. Why that is? I can guess because I am a woman, I am an immigrant, it's because I approached moving into the neighborhood as moving into a community that has existed for a long time, which I am privileged to be joining, rather than that people should be thankful to me for moving in, I have always seen my move to Harlem as having a possibility of building a community, building and blending experiences, rather than me versus them. What other people think or perceive about their move, you know, I can't speak from their position.
>
> (EA, F, 1).

Chapter six

DISCUSSION

This study addressed the highly contentious topic of: “Gentrification in Harlem, New York City”, in order to gain insight into African American and Euro- American participants’ motives and experiences of gentrification in Harlem. In the interest of clarification and benefit to any reader who may not have read section: “4.2. Methods: Research Design”, before this section, I repeat that open-ended interviewing was employed to explore the attitudes and perceptions of 18 African American and Euro-American adult male and female home owners. Some of those men and women (participants) interviewed about the physical and social changes that are taking place in Harlem are also Community leaders, Realtors, Business people, and Graduate students. With such a wide range of backgrounds represented in the participants’ experiential base due to age education and longevity of stay in Harlem, it was expected that a wide range of opinions would be aired on the research questions, which are:

> How do African American and Euro-American gentrifiers in Harlem assign meanings to their interactions with their environments? Are their experiences the same or different? In what ways are their experiences the same or different?

The participants did express a wide range of opinions. Some of the opinions revealed distinct differences but the differences did not always divide precisely along race lines. Many participants saw the gentrification of Harlem as having negative consequences, while others saw it as having positive outcomes. But there is so much complexity and subtlety and nuance in the data. After analyzing them for content, the primary finding of this study is “complexity”. The secondary finding is the astonishing revelation that none of the participants agreed to be called “gentrifier”. This finding is as astonishing as it is complex because being a gentrifier was what qualified them for the study in the first place. I will attempt to flush out the complexity, nuance, and subtlety in the finding in the following pages of this discussion.

In this study, six out of the seven female participants saw gentrification as either “bad”, or “good” and “bad” at the same time. Bad, for example, is described by the following two participants; then followed by a third who found gentrification as good and bad for the reasons she advanced:

> Gentrification has a negative connotation in my mind. It’s something to do with pushing out people

> of lower economic standing for purposes of investment by people of higher economic standing.

> One inevitable result of this [*gentrification*] is the rehabilitation, and new construction of housing at a cost that is far beyond the economic reaches of those long term residents who were here before this new gentry class came.

As the above female participants bemoan the loss of low income residents and constructions of new housing at a cost that is far beyond what long term residents can well afford to gentrification, another female participant below is visibly pleased that her property value is appreciating now that her neighborhood is becoming multi-racial. At the same time, however, this same participant is sad because poor low income residents are being pushed out of the community. The complexity and contradiction in the data become more obvious if one were to ask the question: “But who is doing the pushing out, now?” It would seem like the female participant wants to both eat and keep the same piece of cake at the same time. She explain this complexity thus:

> It is very difficult for me to say because as a home owner, I am happy to see what is happening because by nature, I want my property to increase in value, and I know it will because the neighborhood is becoming multi-racial. On the other

> hand, as a Black person, I don’t like to see that Black people are being uprooted and thrown out.

Though skeptical at times, we find also that all the five Community Leaders seem measured or cautious in their views that gentrification is both good and bad. As Community Leaders, they see gentrification as good and bad because they can see the necessity of swallowing the bitter pill now in order to improve the economic health of the community later. But who would benefit from the improvement to the community later is a question which response is often suppressed in the discourse about the beauty of gentrification. The following Community Leader who appears to understand what it will finally take to lift the Harlem community out of poverty reluctantly agrees to accede to gentrification and promote the idea to her people:

> It is a serious situation. I live in the neighborhood and I am doing this job. I like my job, I love my neighborhood. I love Harlem, I love what it represents, I love the energy. But, on the issue of gentrification, there are times when I think that certain things have to happen to make things better.

> The difficulty, I think is the “change”, people have a very hard time dealing with change. But I have lived here all my life, and other than when I was a young child, when I didn’t know much about

> the community.. but in my adult life, within the last twenty-five years, thirty years, this is the best I have seen as far as functioning, as far as the number of restaurants, as opposed to bars, you used to have bars in every corner.
>
> Well, it [“it” being gentrification] is a two-edge sword, perhaps a three, or four edge-edge sword. There is a lack of capital, and there is a lack of services, there is a devaluation of the neighborhood, so I think you need to have investment, and that could come about certainly, with the influx of capital and movement of people of higher income into the community.

Further, at the level of “making profit”, while ten of the eighteen participants are assumed to be making profit or benefitting from the process of gentrification in Harlem, eight is assumed not to be doing so. A participant is assumed to be profiting or benefiting from the process of the gentrification in Harlem if they are Realtor/Developers, Homeowners, or they have themselves directly or indirectly admitted to buying or selling or taking part in the overall economic activities of the gentrifying neighborhood. Notwithstanding, no participant agrees that they are making money, only others and not themselves are.

> Right now, the motives of gentrifiers in Harlem is “money”, no question about it! People see the economic opportunity, you know, you go in there, take a depressed piece apart, low priced building, and fix it up to a high rise condominium, and have

> people paying six hundred thousand to seven hundred thousand for one bedroom and two bedroom room.
>
> Well, the overriding factor, I think is profit. They want a return on their investment. And of course, they are visionaries, they envision a New York City, I think, without a substantial number of working class, and people of color. They want them out. I think that they want to repopulate the inner city demographically.

Not every participant is interested in making money, or taking advantage of gentrification to enrich him or herself. The following participant, though bought into gentrification, took the opportunity to explain what else is important apart from making money.

> I think it's nice to be part of a neighborhood that is seen as desirable, but that's not something that holds a great deal of value for me, personally, and again, I think that I am saying something that I said to you before, this place, this block, and this sort of street, in particular, holds out a possibility for a community that I haven't experienced anywhere in the United States for all the years that I have lived here. That for me has value, and has meaning for me.

Considering these responses, all the participants could have been placed in one single group without significant difference or loss of empirical integrity. Instead the Research Design placed them in two distinct groups of African Americans, and Euro-Americans. As two groups there is evidence that both groups perceive

gentrification in negative and positive terms, though for different reasons. The different reasons are sometimes articulated through shades of meanings represented as subtleties and nuances which constitute the complexity. I will continue with this discussion and describe the participants from now on in terms of two separate groups. The following is why.

My original conception of the study was that I would find fundamental differences between African American and Euro-American participants. I assumed that if gentrification policies and practices make it possible for gentrification to create opportunities for some and not for others, one could certainly expect to find differential responses to the research questions and other sub-questions such as “What does gentrification mean?” But my data did not support my assumption. Instead, what I find is “complexity”.

To many African American participants, at least, as they conceptualize it in their real life experience, gentrification means:

> formal and informal eviction, and that’s important because that addresses what is happening in Harlem today.

Continuing, according to them gentrification means that:

> More people are forced out of the community where they have lived because it is unaffordable, it means a change of demography, it means sky rocketing rent for commercial space, it means big corporations are always clamoring for more space.

Gentrification means the “ability of people of higher income to come into a community, or neighborhood, and move the people out for economic or social gain”. This is particularly troubling to many African Americans of lower income status. But they cannot articulate the issues themselves. Those who could, for example, the African American Community Leaders recommend that which is hard to swallow; encourage them to look at the long term goal, because gentrification in the run will help rid the community of the pervasive concentration of poverty which has engulfed the Harlem community for decades. But by accepting the African American Community Leaders’ recommendation, poor African American residents are accepting that it is okay for “mom and pop stores” which were part and parcel of of Harlem be erased from Harlem community; or that their fear of outsiders moving in and taking over Harlem is nothing to worry about. If those local shops and their keepers and lots of other stores in

Lenox Avenue, for example, are completely wiped off because their owners are no longer able to pay the rent, or their landlords have refused to renew their leases, who will benefit from the transformed community? Instead of bounding to together to find answers to such questions, some African Americans are happy to be making money by retrofitting their homes and houses and selling or renting them. One may then ask the question: What is wrong with that? Not much, only those same African Americans are almost at the same time expressing dissatisfaction that low income African American residents are being pushed out of the community. This is not only a complex and contradictory position to be in it is one that is likely to cause psychological dissonance.

On the other hand, to some Euro-American participants, gentrification means opportunity and progress, like pumping money into the economy. This view is reflected in the following Euro-American participant's statement.

> It means revitalization, pumping in certain economic energy into the community, a needed boost to the economy. Seriously, gentrification can bring back the lost days of glory to Harlem.

In this regard, gentrification means renewal of a community. But it also means great potentials for the renewed neighborhood, a neighborhood some on both sides envision will re-emerge sooner than later as a rebirth or Renaissance, in the image of Harlem of the 1920s and 1930s, with all its medleys of sorts, together with its profound artistic creativity, and cultural styles that catapulted Harlem once upon a time onto Euro-American consciousness. All those may be excellent and achievable ideas. But can one reconstruct a whole without all of its missing parts? If so, how is that possible? If not, how can one then speak of a new Harlem without the African Americans who formed the nucleus of all that Harlem had been? For whom, then, is the transformation or revitalization of Harlem if the indigenous Harlemites are displaced and misplaced in the process of that transformation? This is a conundrum that further points to the complexity of gentrification and my findings.

On the question, “Who is a gentrifier?” it seemed on the surface that it is all “similarities” and no “differences” between the African American and Euro-American participants in the responses they gave to the above question. But superficial impressions can be

misleading! With more detailed analysis, the data reveals nothing but contradiction and complexity. First, why does everyone refuse to acknowledge that they are the “gentrifiers”, given that being a gentrifier was what attracted them to the study in the first place. The flyers that were distributed among potential participants made that clear. Therefore, accepting that there are no differences between African Americans and Euro-American participants because they said so themselves should be interpreted with caution. Caution is necessary because there are subtleties and nuances in the manner in which each participant framed their rejection of the label, “gentrifier”. For example, one Euro-American participant claims that she is not a gentrifiers because she is closer in economic well-being to the residents who have lived there in Harlem for years and years and years than what her image of a gentrifier is. While another Euro-American participant said he is not a gentrifier because “there is something about gentrifiers that he is not”. What was one to make of those responses? They are not gentrifiers, even though they fit the definition, at least, according to the operational definition of the current study. As if to remind us of the definition of “gentrifier” an African American Community Leader responded to the question as if

she saw the need to first clarify the definition for the benefit of those who may still be in doubt. Speaking as the official head of her “not-for-profit” institution she argues that:

> We create housing for people of lower income who were born here. We are not targeting people of higher income from outside this community, therefore, technically we are not gentrifiers.

Knowing that no one wants to be perceived as a gentrifier is remarkably important because it takes us back to Palen and London (1984) who saw the need to ask whether in fact home owners in the United States of America who are otherwise not “gentries” by birth or inherttance as in the United Kingdom, can be appropriately called gentrifiers. This kind of argument is a reflection of the shades of meaning that are seen in this study as nuances and subtleties.

Also, on the question of the fate of African American culture in Harlem, it seemed at first glance that there are no differences between the way that African Americans and Euro-Americans receive African American culture in Harlem.

In order to more appropriately address the issue of African American culture in Harlem let me step back a bit by reiterating that African American culture refers to variations of many cultural styles as described by various participants. Indeed, African American culture is all that has been described so far, and more! More, because no matter how much one may try, it is not possible to delineate the culture circumscribe it or capture the essence of the culture in one comprehensive definition. Therefore at best it can only be said that African American culture is a combination of time-honored system of values customs traditions and practices that guide African American people's cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to life circumstances in mostly segregated communities in the United States. To quote Nobles (1986) in Parham, White, and Ajamu (1999, p.14), African American culture "provides a general design for living, and a pattern for interpreting reality". Viewed in the context of Harlem, African American culture is a system of mores that has not only promoted self worth and group identity in African Americans in Harlem, it has also provided them with physical and psychological space within which to feel free and independent. African Americans therefore take African American culture very seriously.

For the purpose of this study that African Americans take African American culture very seriously is the distinguishing mark between the way that African Americans and Euro-Americans view the culture. Though it is not expected that Euro-Americans will muster the same zeal as African Americans towards African American culture, the least that African Americans expect from Euro-Americans is that they respect it and leave it to them as African Americans to define the culture and determine what aspect of it is to be promoted and not promoted. Whenever African American culture has been allowed to thrive without encumbrances it has served African Americans and non-African Americans well. It has allowed Harlem to become a survival communal community-that flourished and allowed those who have to live side by side with those who have not, in one cohesive community for the benefit of all. It has blown the minds of some non African Americans and exposed them to warm hospitality, the African American style, which is why some confessed that it’s part of the reason for their buying into the Harlem gentrification,

> People greet you as you walk down the street, and and inquire about how you are doing and things like that.

Nonetheless, this study finds that because Euro-Americans are “outsiders” to African American culture, they see African American culture as “quaint” and “entertaining”. Take Hair braiding, for example, which to African Americans is more of an inside a person culture, something that you wear on to make a cultural statement, the skills of how to, is acquired through long persistence and perseverance then passed on from one generation to another. African Americans feel that the Euro-American developer’s message that there will be commercial space, but no hair braiding is an affront, definitive, and judgmental from a Euro-American view point.

Although both African Americans and Euro-Americans speak positively of African American culture in Harlem, some African Americans see the Euro-American developer’s statement as an audacious attempt to erase the African American culture, and usurp their right to decide which aspect of the culture is important enough to be promoted, or not promoted. Although the African American female participant’s walk out from the developers’ meeting was seen as a reasonable move by many African Americans, some African Americans believe as we have seen earlier that she has the right as an insider to feel emotionally crushed.

It was not as some may conclude of the uneventful remark an overreaction largely blown out of proportion to produce a storm in an empty tea cup. But the data here are not without complexity. As noted above an African Americans Community Leader participant indicated his disagreement with the African American female participant when he suggested that that was one developer's or many developers' sensibility, as noted above. Yet, another African American participant argued vigorously that:

> When you begin to make things happen without having to bow down to the system, it raises eyebrows. You know hairdressing is an art which was passed on from generation to generation. When you put it on a commercial level, you don't require much financing except your skill and space; they don't like that.

As we have observed, each group spoke positively of African American culture. However, a closer look reveals that while all responses were positive, subtle differences exist. For example, African Americans speak and take African American culture very seriously. Therefore when the culture is threatened, slighted, or assailed by others, they feel hurt and humiliated. They have a need to promote and preserve the culture for the purpose of defining their own identity, and passing it on to

posterity. It was not surprising therefore that an African American female Realtor, Community Leader participant, felt emotionally crushed when a Euro-American developer told her at a Public Developers' Meeting that there would be a shopping "space downstairs but no hair braiding will be allowed". According to her:

> They named everything that was a part of our culture as things they don't want. It was very sad. I thought the developer would not have to do that. That was one time when I got really emotional. I began to cry and had to leave.

If the data in the current study were not complex, a majority of African American participants would, for example, be expected to support that speaker's position. Her re-action to the Euro-American developer's imperative may seem reasonable and in line with what would be expected of a group member who seeks to promote a culture that African Americans want to preserve. But such a perspective does not necessarily follow. The speaker was quickly challenged by another African American Community Leader who states in response to her complaint that:

> Well, that is the sensibility of one developer, or probably a whole group of developers who represent the hard edge of gentrification.

Does this community leader then think that the African American community leader who shared this story overreacted? It seems that he did, though not in so many words. See if you would draw a different conclusion.

> I'm sure she interpreted it probably in the most negative way that she could. I think that is understandable, but I do know a little something about the motivation of developers because we work with them. I think first and foremost, it's an economic proposition.

The issues here are complex. Some African Americans believe that the African American participant's reaction was valid and appropriate, others not. However, there seem to be a consensus among those who advise caution for African Americans not to conclude summarily that the Euro-American developer who ruled that "hair braiding" will not be allowed has something against African American culture. According to them, it may well be that his decision was very much a reflection of his economic interest as the African American Community Leader pointed out. But how could anyone tell for sure what his motives were? We know that other Euro-Americans speak positively of African American culture in Harlem, that while African American culture may not have been the precise reason why some of them moved to live in Harlem, it is what some of them have

liked so much about Harlem that not only make them to want to live there, but also cause them to enjoy living there.

Another area of gentrification that has become the focus of much controversy is “displacement”. For the most part, African Americans see displacement as one of the major drawbacks of gentrification because African Americans are often the victims of it. Therefore when a Euro-American argues that displacement is difficult to prove since people leave their neighborhoods for many different reasons, it would seem at first that the line is drawn, that African American participants speak negatively about displacement, and Euro-American participants are indifferent or insensitive to the consequences of displacement because they are not on the rough edges of it. On he contrary, the data in this study do not support such generalized conclusions.

For example, one African American Realtor participant contrary to what would have been expected if ideological positions were based on race alone argues that there is no such thing as displacement. According to him, people panic when they see old buildings being refurbished or retrofitted, then they quickly jump to conclusions that

there is going to be displacement. On the other hand, one African American Community Leader states that:

> The one place that I see gentrification happening that is frightening is the Lenox Terrace. The Lenox Terrace was an old Housing Development in Harlem for many, many, many, decades, some of the families in there have owned their apartments for three to four generations. When they [*the developers*] went in and looked at the original leases for those apartments, and it didn't matter whether it was your mother or grandmother that lived there, and you were raised in that apartment, if you were not on the original lease, they put you out.

The above two participants' contributions to this discourse not only make it more complex, they also highlights instances of the fundamental exploitation of African American people in the name of development or re-vitalization. The first two, one African American, the other Euro-American, deny the existence of actual displacement and dare anyone to prove it. The third speaker, an African American Community Leader is frightened and nervous about the callousness of the process of displacement at Lenox Terrace where African Americans who had lived there for three to four decades are hauled out unto the street with impunity, yet this speaker is one of the Community Leaders who, if reluctantly, approves of gentrification. Her narrative

leads another African American participant, who describes himself as a victim of gentrification and therefore a vociferous critic of it-especially in relation to landlords who raise rents arbitrarily or refuse to renew leases-to ask the question:

> Can you imagine what hardships we go through being kickked out from our homes or places of business?

Although this is a rhetorical question that may never be answered, it should not be forgotten that (Fullilove, 2004, p. 5) cautioned that:

> In cutting the roots of so many people, we have destroyed language, culture, dietary traditions and social bonds.

It is precisely that these issues are never addressed comprehensively that many African Americans in danger of being displaced are continually in anguish about their fate.

On Profit Motive as discursively represented in this study, it seem that “benefitting” and “not benefitting” rather than “race” appears to be what determines “negative” or “positive” assessment of gentrification. Therefore viewed through the lenses of race the difference between African American participants and Euro-American

participants are not clear-cut. Because participants, whether African American or Euro-American are either “profiting” or “not profiting” from the process of gentrification. But attempts to make this distinction almost immediately becomes complex when one considers that those who are making the profit are not saying so. Like being a “gentrifiers”, only “others” are the ones making the profit. One African American participant started this finger pointing by stating that those who are profiting from gentrification are the Real Estate developers because they have both the money and the opportunity. Therefore, they are the ones making the profit; their overriding motive is profit, they want a good return for their money. If the motive of all developers is money who then qualifiers as a developer? In our operational definition in this study, home owners, developers, gentrifiers, or any one directly or indirectly makes it possible for gentrification to take place are all one and the same.

Therefore if Euro-Americans who buy into the Harlem gentrification are said to be making money according to some African Americans, one would assume that African Americans who also buy homes in gentrifying Harlem neighborhood would also be making money. But, not so,

according to African American participants who argue that the motives of African American are different because they are returning to Harlem to raise a family, reunite with their people and promote a culture, even if they may also be making some profit in the process. This is a subtle difference between African Americans and Euro-Americans in terms of making a profit. However, that subtle difference is immediately challenged by an African American community Leader who argues that “African Americans will not be moving here if they did not think that in time their homes would appreciate in value”.

Therefore findings in this section also suggest complexity and contradictory motives. As a major area of similarity, the study finds that, everyone, African American or Euro-American, who bought into the gentrification of Harlem, would not have done so if they did not have what they referred to as “value proposition” in mind. That is to say, if they did not believe that at some point in time, “profit” would accrue on to their investments.

On the other hand, as home owners, if African Americans and Euro-Americans who bought homes in the gentrifying neighborhood of Harlem (whether they admit it

or not) expect their homes to appreciate in value, and hence make a profit, it follows that African American home owners may just as equally as Euro-American Home owners be displacing poor African American home owners from their rightful homes. This argument becomes particularly relevant and complex in light of the admission by an African American participant who revealed that his Landlords are African American Religious Organization.

Although some Euro-American participants give “location” and “proximity to arts and cultural centers”, and “affordability”, as their primary motives for buying into Harlem, a majority of the African American participants interviewed believe that Euro-American motive for buying into the Harlem gentrification is different. According to African American participants, “profit” is the primary motive of any Euro-American buying into Harlem, a community they once abandoned. This is how African Americans view it:

> They would not buy any property in Harlem for any other reason, because they like to take advantage of anything that will increase their wealth, whenever they can.

Further, although some African American participants, on occasion, openly express satisfaction that their Brownstone homes have greatly appreciated in value, other African Americans discount the profit motive and argue that they are returning, or remaining in Harlem, to add to the improvement of the African American community, and that by so doing, they are helping to promote and preserve their African heritage. Thus, in African American participants' conceptualization, what others may construe as profit motive is mitigated by "cultural expediency" therefore making a profit in their own estimation is excusable. Seen in that light Euro-American participants whom they say is only there for the "profit" is the only party benefitting from the Harlem gentrification.

Assuming that the above argument holds, it is important to remember that not all Euro-American participants involved in the gentrification of Harlem are there to exploit and profit from it. Although all home owners in Harlem will eventually profit from such ownership sooner or later, one female Euro-American clearly shows that "profit" as a motive, is not important for her. As she puts it a list of other things such as "security, diversity" and "aesthetic values" matter more

to her. She says that she values the architectural and environmental qualities of Harlem more than the expectation that her property value will appreciate over time. This means in essence that her attraction to Harlem includes the fact that there are in existence many old buildings there in Harlem that she is attracted to. She is also attracted to the way those buildings look, by the old things she finds in those buildings. Moreover, she is attracted to the churches in Harlem, the parks, and other cocky little things about this place [Harlem] she now calls her home-a home that she has now come to know and like in an amazing way. She sees Harlem, her neighborhood–the neighborhood where she dreams of diversity and community building, where she dreams of people coming together to accomplish things like planting trees, and rallying a politician about an issue that concerns all in the neighborhood. As if to validate her position she joins the Block Association because she believes that:

> this place, this block, this street in particular, holds out a possibility for a community that I haven’t experienced anywhere else in the United States for all the years that I have lived here.

One nonprofit Housing Group run by an African American Community Leader and participant is the Harlem Congregation for Community Improvement, Inc (HCCI). I mention them again here not because they present a complex or contradictory data but because they represent in my mind, fair mindedness, an extraordinary group of individuals and organizations that chose to eschew profit in an environment where endless opportunities to make money exists. HCCI came together to turn block after block of dilapidated buildings in central Harlem into affordable units for low income Harlem residents who would have otherwise been displaced. HCCI not only provides housing units for a huge low income population, they also run a fully integrated economic community programs which seeks to encourage home ownership for low income families. For those with little education, HCCI runs workshops aimed at teaching people how to balance the check book and keep their homes as renters, or owners, respectively. The hallmark of HCCI’s goal is to give “hope” to some of those whose hopes could have been dashed to pieces. This in its self is a demonstration that it is possible to have gentrification without displacement. This is not to suggest, however, that HCCI is the only group or organization in Harlem that does such a magnanimous work

at a time and place where there are huge profits to be made. The rationale for choosing what looks like a moral high ground in an environment that has become a fertile economic setting is not complex as explained by the participant who is also at the head of the organization. She explained that:

> Rather than worrying about gentrification, or pointing out and saying: look what that big developer is doing, we do several things: we run financial literacy class, almost every Thursday evening in this room, we have a financial literacy class where we teach people about saving, budgeting and balancing a check book, planning, setting goals, fixing up credits when there are bad credits, saving for a home, and learning the process of getting a mortgage.

Conclusion

The major finding in this study of “complexity” is based on the responses of men and women from different walks of life profession and experience. They were interviewed for the study because they come from the population about which they spoke. The secondary findings on “gentrifier, motive, culture, and experience” are too nuanced and complex to warrant any exactitude in definition. Notwithstanding the participants’ experience vast knowledge and leadership in the Harlem community the opinions expressed by this unrepresentative sample may differ from those of the other members in the same community. Therefore the findings are not held to be absolute truth about the changes that are taking place in Harlem.

Before now relatively little or no attention was given to “motives” that precede gentrification or the “human experiences” that are integral parts of gentrification. While this study has helped to fill some gaps in those areas additional studies will be needed to determine for example whether to continue to label home owners in the United States who are not otherwise “gentries” by birth or inheritance, “gentrifiers”.

Moreover, in the current study, there are unresolved issues on “displacement” and “affordable housing” and some of the other issues already alluded to above. For example, as one of the rough edges of gentrification, displacement is used almost synonymously with gentrification which practices and policies are discursively represented and justified as opportunity, development, and progress. Where are the displaced? Unfortunately, the scope of this study did not allow me to trace and interview those who were displaced from their homes. As a follow up to this study, it might be useful to trace and interview people who were forced out of their communities in order to give them voice to articulate their experiences.

Harlem is an acknowledged African American neighborhood. Luckily in this study though complex and difficult to disentangle sometimes there are sufficient areas of similarity between African American and Euro-American experiences. If some planning is brought in even at this late stage, perhaps, hopefully, a diverse community that embraces other cultures could emerge to exist side by side with the dominant African American culture. It would be unfortunate if this opportunity to develop such concept is missed, and African American

cultural icons and cultural institutions are crushed to make room for corporate “developments” in the name of gentrification.

Appendix 1

Interview Guide

1. In order to conform to one of the requirements for this study, can you please tell me how you classify yourself? I mean in terms of race, or ethnicity?

2. Do you [also] live here Harlem?

3. How long have you lived/worked in this neighborhood?

4. Do you remember what made you decide to live or work in Harlem?

5. Where did you live/work before you came to live/work in Harlem?

6. I am going to assume that you have heard of the terms gentrification, and gentrifier before? How do you understand the terms? Please, take them one at a time to share with me as much as you want to.

7. And gentrifier?.

8. Do you see yourself as a gentrifier? Why? Why not?

9. What does gentrification of Harlem mean to you?

10. Some have equated gentrification with displacement of indigenous residents. Do you agree with that assessment?

11. For whom, do you think, is Harlem being transformed? Who will live behind the doors of the grand renovations that are now taking place in Harlem?

12. Some have argued that displacement has nothing to do with

gentrification. How would you comment on that statement?

13. And others have likened gentrification to urban renewal, the housing program of the 60s and 70s. Do you see any similarity between the two?

14. A black lady who attended a recent Harlem Developers' Meeting had this to say:

> The developer said to us': "okay, we are going to have commercial space downstairs, but we don't want hair-braiding". They named everything that was a part of our culture as a part of what they didn't want. It was very sad! I thought the Developers would not do that. That was one time, I really got emotional, I did cry, and had to leave".
>
> Do you think the African American lady has over reacted? If you think she has over reacted, why? If you do not think so, why?

15. What do you think are the motives of gentrifiers in the current gentrification in Harlem?

16. Some African Americans in Harlem have expressed concern

that at the rate many Euro-Americans are moving into Harlem, the significance of that community as the center for African American culture would be greatly watered down. Do you think so?

17. Given all that you have said in this interview, where do you see Harlem as an African American icon in the next two or three decades?.

18. Do you think that there is a danger that Harlem might remain Harlem but without African Americans? Should African Americans worry about this?

19. What in your opinion is the role of government (local and state) in the current gentrification of Harlem?

20. Do you think the motives of African American gentrifiers are the same as the motives of Euro-American gentrifiers?

21. In what ways are the motives of African American gentrifiers the same, or different, from the motives of Euro-American gentrifiers?

22. After all that you have said in this interview what do you think of gentrification now?

Appendix 2

Recruitment Flyer

AN EXCITING NEW STUDY OF URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS
ARE YOU
A HOME OWNER?
AN URBAN PIONEER?
A REAL ESTATE DEVELOPER?
A NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE AGENT?
IF YOU ARE,
JAMES EGEDE
A GRADUATE STUDENT IN THE CITY
UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK (CUNY) IS
WAITING TO MEET AND SPEAK WITH YOU
ABOUT TRANSFORMATIONS OF URBAN
NEIGHBORHOODS IN NEW YORK CITY

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY IS TO EXPLORE GENTRIFICATION IN ORDER TO BETTER
UNDERSTAND HOW DIFFERENT RACIAL GROUPS RELATE AND ASSIGN

Appendix 3

Mom and Pop Stores

GENTRIFICATION

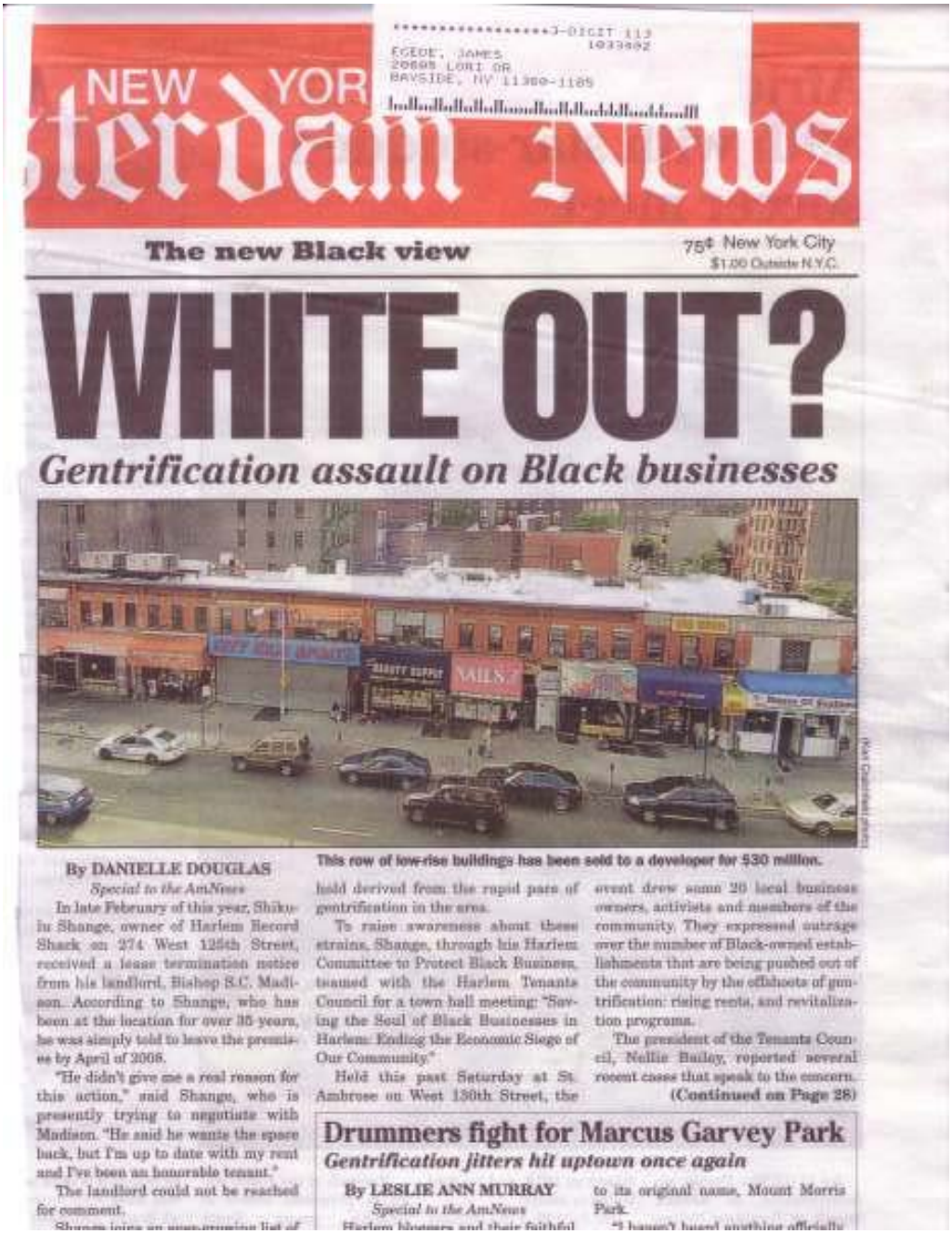
verse
ssession
ing effect

ARCUS BEASLEY
tional reporting by
DREW HOLDER
rial to the AmNews
at they are doing is
e possession (a process
ich title to another's
property is acquired
t compensation)," said
t Julius Tajsidin, refer-
e the rapid and relent-
entrification of Black-
l businesses by buyers
re not native to Harlem.
late February, the
sive gentrification of
m snagged yet another
—the well-known
lo Shange, the owner of
m Record Shack at 274
125th Street. Now other
-owned businesses are
to be pushed out. Two
people are Vera Wi[illegible]

Closure of Copeland's another sign

By TALISE D. MOORER
Amsterdam News Staff

cleansing—to the benefit of a handful of millionaires, accord- Times, "Calvin Copeland was



NEW YOR
sterdam News

The new Black view

75¢ New York City
$1.00 Outside N.Y.C.

WHITE OUT?

Gentrification assault on Black businesses

This row of low-rise buildings has been sold to a developer for $30 million.

By DANIELLE DOUGLAS
Special to the AmNews

In late February of this year, Shiku-lu Shange, owner of Harlem Record Shack on 274 West 125th Street, received a lease termination notice from his landlord, Bishop S.C. Madison. According to Shange, who has been at the location for over 35 years, he was simply told to leave the premises by April of 2006.

"He didn't give me a real reason for this action," said Shange, who is presently trying to negotiate with Madison. "He said he wants the space back, but I'm up to date with my rent and I've been an honorable tenant."

The landlord could not be reached for comment.

Shange joins an ever-growing list of

hold derived from the rapid pace of gentrification in the area.

To raise awareness about these strains, Shange, through his Harlem Committee to Protect Black Business, teamed with the Harlem Tenants Council for a town hall meeting: "Saving the Soul of Black Businesses in Harlem: Ending the Economic Siege of Our Community."

Held this past Saturday at St. Ambrose on West 130th Street, the

event drew some 20 local business owners, activists and members of the community. They expressed outrage over the number of Black-owned establishments that are being pushed out of the community by the offshoots of gentrification: rising rents, and revitalization programs.

The president of the Tenants Council, Nellie Bailey, reported several recent cases that speak to the concern.

(Continued on Page 28)

Drummers fight for Marcus Garvey Park

Gentrification jitters hit uptown once again

By LESLIE ANN MURRAY
Special to the AmNews

to its original name, Mount Morris Park.

Why many African Americans in Harlem are outraged. For nearly fifty years, businessman, restaurateur, Calvin Coperland, owner of the historic Copeland Restaurant on

West 145 Street was forced to close its doors to the Harlem public. Copeland Restaurant's last gospel brunch was on Sunday, July 29, 2007. According to Moorer (2007), Copeland Restaurant:

> was the meeting ground for political strategic planner. It was the closet place where you could inhale "grandma's country grub" with family and not be there. It was where you could get your gospel fix during Sunday brunch.

Other African American businesses are fighting to remain open. One such businesses operated by Shikulu Shange, is Harlem Record Shack at 274 West 125th Street. Mr. Shange sees himself as a victim of gentrification because at the end of each lease period the people of Harlem have come together to help him make his case for renewal with is landlords.

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