

Voices of Cully: Experiencing the Home amid Gentrification

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Abstract

The Cully neighborhood is situated in the northeast quadrant of Portland, Oregon. It is a 2.75-square-mile plot of land and home to roughly 13,000 people. In addition to being one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Portland, it is the most densely populated, with the smallest amount of parkland per capita. Over the past two decades, home value has increased 203 percent in Cully, compared to a 90 percent citywide increase. We interviewed residents of the Cully neighborhood to explore their relationship to home amidst conditions of gentrification. Gentrification literature and mainstream media coverage most often focus on neighborhood-scale socioeconomic processes of gentrification, ignoring the home as the space where gentrification is experienced first and most intimately. This article takes steps toward analyzing the scalar impacts of gentrification, moving beyond and below a neighborhood-scale analysis to consider the ways in which gentrification impacts residents inside their homes—homes which, we argue, can take on both sanctuary and imprisoning qualities. Just as gentrification will look different depending on researchers' and/or policymakers' conceptualizations, so too will anti-gentrification interventions. Developing place-specific anti-gentrification solutions entails listening to the voices of experience, the voices of residents.

Gentrification Beyond the Neighborhood, Within the Home

IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, and in other well-known gentrifying neighborhoods in the United States, reports of rising rents and forced evictions, the influx of hipsters and bike lanes, and the replacement of locally owned corner stores with microbreweries and coffee shops dominate gentrification-related media coverage (Bodenner 2015, 2016; Kaysen 2016; Semeuls 2016; Wainwright 2016; Jennings 2019; King 2020). In 2016, *The New York Times* published interviews with a dozen young native New Yorkers, revealing that while some welcomed the new amenities accompanying the gentrifying class and others lamented a perceived loss of community, not one was able to afford an apartment in his or her childhood neighborhood (Kaysen 2016). *The Atlantic* similarly reported that in the Ballard neighborhood of Seattle,

Washington, old-growth-fir houses were being torn down and replaced by “slap-dash concrete, high-capacity condo/retail complexes” (Bodenner 2015). This was done as a part of the city council’s attempt to develop urban villages as a means of preventing sprawl.

Such stories of gentrification are not limited to the United States. Media coverage of the phenomenon is echoed in European countries as well. For example, *The New York Times* reported in 2017 that the arrival of 60,000 people over the previous year in Berlin had resulted in overcrowding, competition over housing, and an increase in “leases canceled for the slightest triviality” (Wilder 2017). In response, local grassroots coalitions had taken to the streets in protest, carrying signs proclaiming “We’re all staying” and “Say no to crowding.” City authorities responded by introducing rent caps, a partial ban on vacation rentals, development-free zones, and increased social housing subsidies. Such interventions attempting to preserve the livability of a neighborhood are commonly enacted to mitigate the negative impacts of gentrification.

In Portland, Oregon, as reported in *The Atlantic*, “African Americans who were once a majority in Northeast neighborhoods have been displaced to ‘the numbers,’ which is what Portlanders call the low-income-far-off neighborhoods” (Semuels 2016). Portland is just one city that has recently been put on the map for its increasing youth culture and associated amenities (Fowler & Derrick 2018). The cases of Brooklyn, Seattle, Berlin, and Portland exemplify both the conventional understanding of gentrification as well as a fulsome discourse of those reporting the phenomenon. According to the dominant narrative, a neighborhood undergoes rapid transformation, pointedly serving a young, upper-income, creative class, and displaces long-term residents as well as the long-standing cultural fabric of the neighborhood. Although the print media consistently allude to housing, by highlighting the displacement of residents and the demolition of old homes for the construction of newer and shinier units, the ways in which residents experience gentrification *inside* their homes have been ignored.

Examination that ignores the home is not limited to the print media. Academic scholarship follows a similar tendency toward conceptualizing gentrification with an exclusive spatial framing of the neighborhood. Academic literature may offer a more nuanced and place-specific examination of gentrification, but it nonetheless excludes the home. A prime example is provided in geographer Loretta Lees’ (2000) review article. Lees urges the attention to varying geographies of gentrification by introducing two

contradictory experiences of the phenomenon. The *emancipatory city* thesis demonstrates that, for some who would be considered gentrifiers, the city is experienced as a liberating space. For example, according to Forest (1995), the gay community in Los Angeles was able to explore and affirm its identity through the gentrification of West Hollywood. This thesis is implicit in literature focusing on the gentrifiers themselves and their forms of agency. The *revanchist city* thesis, however, considers “the privileging of middle class desires and the effects of the advancing gentrification ‘frontier’ on other class fractions” (Lees 2000, 399). The *revanchist* thesis is well represented in the aforementioned reports by *The New York Times* and *The Atlantic*.

According to Lees (2000), there is not *a* gentrification, but *multiple* gentrifications (see also Lees et al. 2008). Although these theses implore greater place specificity in gentrification debates and attention to how places are constructed, the spatial scale of analysis is, again, too often limited to the neighborhood. Gentrification is differentiated from case to case, but analysis among the cases remains at the neighborhood scale. The home remains overlooked as the space where gentrification is experienced most intimately.

Excluding an examination of how gentrification is experienced within the home contributes to universalizing the concept of gentrification as a single neighborhood-scale process. This universalizing tendency relates in no small part to the economic thinking in gentrification studies. Scholars have thus far been interested in identifying the forces that propel rapid and class-targeted development (Glass 1964; Smith 1996; Smith 1982; Redfern 2003; Kennedy & Leonard 2001; Lees et al. 2008). As a result, gentrification continues to be conceptualized as a neighborhood-scale economic transformation, as it first was by Ruth Glass in 1964. As she observed in inner London, “One by one, many of the working class quarters have been invaded by the middle class...once this process of ‘gentrification’ starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the working class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed” (Glass 1964, xvii). To be sure, gentrification comprises neighborhood-level economic restructurings worth examining. However, a “district” or a neighborhood is comprised of individual *homes*. And *homes* are where the lives of the urban poor and working class take place.

In the rare case the home is brought into the interrogations of gentrification, it is cast as either a place where people live happily or a space from which people are displaced, a Manichean-like practice of representation that flattens actual lived experience. Yet the home is experienced as a complex space, one

that interacts and changes in concert with a multiplicity of external processes. Dominant gentrification discourses, however, fall short in imagining the home as a space that is subject to change. Rather, the home is most generally implicated as a passive piece in a larger, neighborhood-wide process.

The purpose of this article is to contribute to gentrification scholarship by examining how people experience the home as a result of gentrification. We do this by conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews with long-term residents inside their homes, located within the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood of Cully, in northeast Portland. By analyzing their perceptions and feelings of their homes amid gentrification, we show how experiences inside the home reflect broader political-economic processes and social restructurings; notions of the home as impervious to external forces do not stand. Conceptualizing the home as both *emancipatory* and as *confining*, we illustrate the ways in which the home is a mediated space, rather than a static one. Forces outside the home shape experiences inside the home, creating a space that acts as both a sanctuary and a prison.

Background, Methodological Pivoting

The Cully neighborhood is situated in the northeast quadrant of Portland, Oregon. It is a 2.75-square-mile plot of land and home to roughly 13,000 people (see Figure 1). It is the most densely populated neighborhood in Portland and has the smallest amount of parkland per capita. Families with children occupy 32.6 percent of households, compared to 26.4 percent city-wide (City of Portland Bureau of Planning 2008, 7–8). Cully is also more ethnically and racially diverse than the city as a whole (see Figure 2). The Cul-

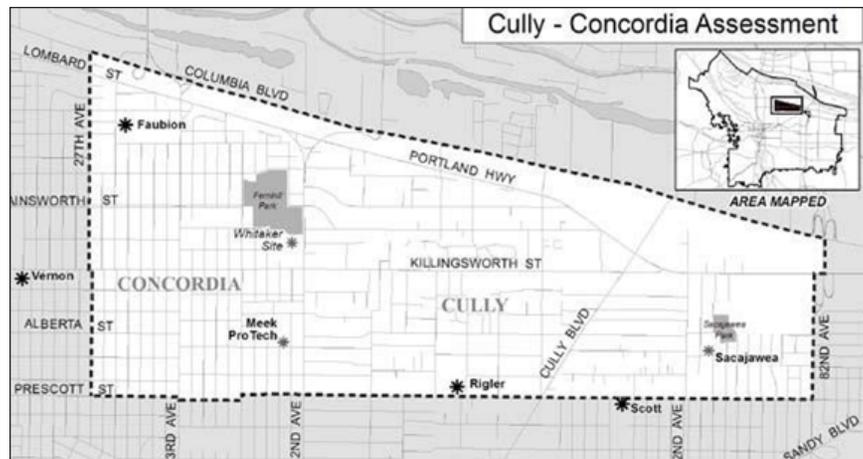


Figure 1.—Map of Cully study area (City of Portland Bureau of Planning 2008).

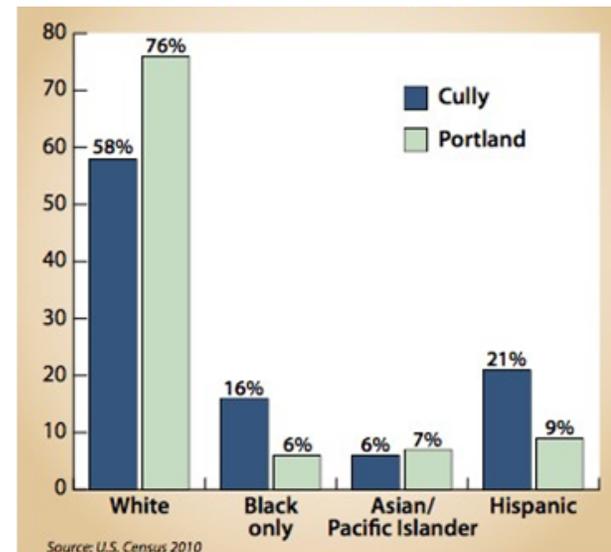


Figure 2.—Cully Racial Demographic (US Census 2010).

ly neighborhood in particular is home to a large number of aging and elderly, with residents aged 55–59 and 60–64 increasing 52.6 percent and 57 percent, respectively, between the years of 2000 and 2010 (US Census 2010). Over the past two decades, home value has increased 203 percent in Cully, compared to a 90 percent citywide in-

crease. These conditions make Cully ripe for rapid population change, following a well-known pattern witnessed in the adjacent Alberta and Mississippi neighborhoods, which are notorious frontiers of gentrification in Portland.

With the original goal of gathering narrative data about homeowners' experiences living in Cully, we conducted semi-structured interviews with nine long-term residents. Race, age, and family and home sizes varied among the participants, but all shared the economic distinction of being low income (see Table 1). The interview schedule opened with questions about the individuals' family, including questions such as "Where are you from? Where are your parents from?" and then turned toward questions about the individuals' experience living in Cully, including "How long have you lived in the neighborhood? Have you seen Cully change since moving here? Do you feel as though you can get what you need from the businesses in Cully without leaving the neighborhood?" Final questions prompted the individual to comment on the spatiality of his or her social networks, including questions such as "Do you feel connected to your neighbors? Do you participate in community organizations in/outside of Cully?" Interviews lasted between half an hour and two hours and were conducted in the residents' homes. All interviews concluded with an open question for stories about living in Portland and/or the Cully neighborhood and thoughts on the interview that had just transpired.

Table 1. Demographics of Participating Homeowners

Participant Demographics	
Percentage of Minority Participants (African American or American Indian)	44%
Percentage of Participants Age 55+	78%
Percentage of Disabled Participants	56%
Average Years in Cully	10+
Average Household Size	3
Average Household Income	\$23,337

In the course of conducting interviews, we noticed a certain phenomenon: While our questioning was designed to elicit commentary on changes within the Cully neighborhood, thereby replicating the default analytical scale identified in the opening of this article, respondents, when given the opportunity to explore more emotive concerns, preferred to talk about their homes. While most were aware of the changes occurring in their neighborhood, we found that participants redirected conversation to their personal experiences of the home, for example, expressing pride of homeownership, alluding to stresses associated with maintaining the home, and/or voicing feelings of being trapped by their homes. In line with our Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodological framework,¹ we recognized the need to adjust our interview schedule, pivoting to further explore experiences of the home. Rather than maintaining a rigid focus on perceptions of neighborhood-scale change, we encouraged participants to guide the conversations themselves.

Residents' testimonies, as we explore in greater depth below, highlight tensions between experiences of the home as a source of pride and the home as a source of confinement. Though contradictory, these experiences of home, for our participants, are true and legitimate. In fact, the contradiction follows a certain logic: Amid conditions of gentrification, the Cully residents sought greater sanctuary in their homes; greater attachments to home were accompanied by heightened feelings of entrapment. These testimonies, whether or not residents were cognizant of their contradictions, complicate Edenic portrayals of the home.

1 Participatory Action Research (PAR) focuses on the needs and desires of research participants. PAR empowers autonomy and self-determination by placing the opinions, ideas, and experiences of those being researched in high esteem, and bringing "citizens and local knowledges directly into the exchange" (Fischer 2000, 171).

Perhaps experiencing the home as simultaneously emancipatory and confining is a common phenomenon. However, as our investigation suggests, gentrification serves to exacerbate and exaggerate these would-be contradictory experiences. We redirect the conversation away from a neighborhood-scale analysis to the homeowner and the way he or she experiences gentrification inside of the home, to highlight the temporality and local specificity of the gentrification process and to argue that any single generalizable theory—or even a polarized two (i.e., supply and demand theses of gentrification)—is insufficient.

Addressing the Lacuna in the Room: Conceptualizing the Home

"For our house is our corner of the world."
—Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space* (1958)

While the home has been largely excluded from public and academic discourses on gentrification, early thinking on the home is provided by mid-twentieth-century humanist geographers. These scholars depict the home as separate from the outside world, as a protected space that remains untouched by external neighborhood, citywide, statewide, and even nationwide forces. For example, Bachelard, in his classic *Poetics of Space* (1958), conceptualizes the home as a "primal space that acts as first world or first universe that then frames our understanding of the spaces outside" (quoted in Creswell 2014, 39). This perspective excludes consideration of the influence of outside spaces and phenomena on human experience inside the home. In this manner, the home is understood as an *ideal* space.

This interpretation came under critique by late-twentieth-century feminist geographers, who argued that experiences of home are conditioned by class, gender, and broader social regimes. Gillian Rose asserted that for many women, the home is not a space of safety but rather one of "drudgery, abuse and neglect" (1993, 56). Adverse experiences of the home are created, and exonerated, by outside social-economic forces that create and legitimize institutional inequalities. The home is reinterpreted as a space of *confinement*, far from the emancipatory realm imagined by Bachelard. Building on early feminist critiques of the home, bell hooks (1990) claims the home as a place of *resistance*. Having grown up in a racially segregated society, hooks experienced home as a space of freedom from outside oppression, a place where "people are relatively free to forge their own identities" (quoted

in Creswell 2014, 41). Such experience contributes to the home acting as a protective space, where the resident is free from outside prejudice and other restrictions.

Feminist and other critical geographers diverge on how the home is experienced. However, their collective critique of the home as an idealized space, as put originally forth by Bachelard and other humanists, betrays notions of the home as a discrete space, of walls that are impenetrable from outside forces operating at multiple spatial scales. In toto, the post-humanist arguments compel us to imagine the home as highly subjective and changing over time. It is not static.

Home as Sanctuary

“The hermit is alone before God. His hut, therefore, is just the opposite of a monastery. And there radiates about this centralized solitude a universe of mediation and prayer, a universe outside the universe. The hut can receive none of the riches ‘of this world.’ It possesses the felicity of extreme poverty; indeed, it is one of the glories of poverty; as destitution increases it gives us access to absolute refuge.”

—Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space* (1958)

Guiding this evaluation of home as sanctuary is Romanian Philosopher Mircea Eliade, who has long been considered “something of an axis mundi” (Biles 2007, 294) among scholars of sacred space. Eliade (1959) posits, “Every construction or fabrication has the cosmogony as paradigmatic model” (45); i.e., the creation of the world, whereby the universe unfolds from a center, is the archetype for every human gesture and thus every human settlement. A cosmic symbolism is enacted by the structure of a sanctuary.

In this section, we imagine the home as a primary space—the center—much like Eliade’s sanctuary. The home acts as a sanctuary by both literally and metaphorically protecting its occupants from the outside world. We identify three ways the home acts as a sanctuary. First, by dint of its physical structure, the walls of the home shield occupying humans from outside elements and create a sense of safety and refuge. Second, the home acts as a sanctuary by facilitating freedom of expression and fostering familiarity with possessions that are contained within, creating a certain liberation-through-privacy to enact our identities. And, third, the home acts as a sanctuary by granting financial security as well as the projected image of stability.

Privacy and Protection

The home protects its occupants by creating a physical barrier between them and the outside world. The location and physical appearance of a property can furthermore establish or hinder the sense of safety. A majority of homeowners we interviewed referred less specifically to the physical protection of the house and more to the feeling of security cultivated by the Cully neighborhood.

Five of the nine participants named quietness as their primary reason for liking the neighborhood. Several responses alluded to the calmness of Cully: “Well, it’s quiet except on the fourth of July of course,” “It’s not a high traffic street... It’s pretty quiet,” and “I like being off the road, and, you know, it’s quiet back here for the most part.” Others responded less specifically, typified in the following reference to comfortability:

When we picked this house, one of the highlights was that in the backyard we have really nice trees, and being next to the schoolyard and a church over here. It just felt really nice and comfortable and we haven’t regretted it since we moved in.

Testimonies point to a shared reverence for the rural feel of Cully, its open spaces, old-growth trees: “I love the old growth trees, the lushness of the vegetation,” “It’s really green so the trees, I like that,” and “We have redone the backyard since we bought the house but at the time my husband, before we had kids and everything, fancied himself an urban farmer so he wanted a lot of space.”

A sense of security is generated by these physical conditions, as seen in the following exchange:

Interviewer: “Why do you like living in Cully?”

Respondent: “The peace and the quiet and, I’d say, the privacy... because, I mean, there’s not too many people getting into your business. We don’t really have to worry too much about break-ins or getting ripped off or stuff like that. It’s pretty safe, it’s a pretty safe neighborhood.”

Three residents, all with children or grandchildren, mentioned the proximity to parks as a reason for liking Cully. Frequent references to the greenness of Cully exemplify the ways in which aesthetics cultivate feelings of (in) security. For instance, with varying opinions, four residents brought up the poor road conditions in the neighborhood. Two residents identified a lack of sidewalks and poor walkability as contributors to their primary distaste about the neighborhood. In contrast, one resident wanted to “leave the

potholes alone because they slow down the cars,” and another said she was “happy we don’t have sidewalks because it decreases the foot traffic in our neighborhood.” Though residents’ beliefs about what enriches Cully’s livability varies, they share an understanding that a neighborhood’s physicality has the ability to cultivate or hinder livability.

Cully residents value the home as a protective space for its location within the neighborhood. One resident contrasted Cully with other Portland neighborhoods: “You know, if I were in Southeast I wouldn’t feel that way, no way, but here I feel safe.” The home acts as a sanctuary by creating physical boundaries between the occupant and the outside world. But walls are permeable. Outside conditions shape inside conditions. Cully residents feel safe inside their homes because, as indicated in interviews, they perceive the surrounding neighborhood to be safe. And perceptions of safety hinge on neighborhood aesthetics.

Possessions

The home allows space to forge identity without the risk of outside judgment. Possessions inside and outside the home reflect the occupant’s identity back onto them, as well as serving as everyday reminders of the freedom to alter their space as they choose. This dialectical relationship is witnessed in the following statements: “I can pretty much do whatever I want to my home. Every tree that is on this place, I planted. Every shrub that is on this place, I planted,” and “I’ve planted like nine trees on my own property.”

The residents whose spaces were most adorned with possessions tended to spend the most time in their homes for lack of transportation or disability-related limitations. The same resident who expressed pride in having planted every tree and every shrub on his property had nearly three thousand DVDs stacked from floor to ceiling in his main sitting room: “I’m running out of room. People have joked with me ‘Why don’t you start renting them out?’”

Another resident who rarely left his home had mirrors strewn about the living-room floor, which he explained were for a mirror wall he was building in the back of the house. His house was decorated with antiques he had found at estate sales throughout the years. In contrast, residents with greater mobility tended to keep cleaner spaces and have fewer possessions inside the house.

Household pets were another indicator of residents’ sense of rootedness. Obvious affection toward animals emphasized how possessions allow an

individual to construct his or her personalized sanctuaries. One resident fostered dogs as a hobby and spent twenty minutes discussing the process of fostering and training the animals she housed. Another resident’s cat, which he called Sweetie, spent a majority of the interview on his lap. He expressed that his veterinarian expenses were a distinct source of shame for him. Another resident spoke to his dog, which hobbled around, crying: “Hello, sweetie pie, what’s your trouble? What’s the matter baby?” He joked that neither of them were aging very well.

Financial

The home protects its owner as an investment, sustaining in the wake of external transformations. Many residents noted the ways in which Cully had changed since their arrival, which ranged from ten to twenty-nine years prior. Despite—or perhaps in light of—the recognition of vulnerability to displacement, residents felt extreme pride of home ownership. The home reveals itself as a fundamentally protective space and as the origin of its occupant’s sense of stability. One resident who lived in and maintained his mother’s house remarked, “People need a place to live, you know? It’s just part of the human existence.” Residents felt pride in their decision to buy a home: The purchase was regarded as a step forward both personally and financially. Take, for instance, the following statement: “I got it in my mind that I wanted to buy a house because I was 50 and didn’t have any investments”; “I felt that it gave me more freedom than an apartment; I also discovered that it cost less than having an apartment”; “It’s cheaper than renting... I thought it was a practical idea at the time...instead of just throwing your money into something where then you leave and have nothing, it seemed to make more sense”; and “I was getting tired of getting disrespected by my landlord...and one dreary Saturday afternoon I happened to be looking through the nickel ads and one had this address.”

The purchase of a home promised a new life, the creation of new memories. The home becomes associated with memories, acting as a backdrop for the occupant’s life. Bachelard’s assertion that the home “is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind” (1958, 6) is witnessed in the statement, “My kids were raised here, my husband did a lot of work on it and it’s my life.” Further exemplification is provided in another exchange:

Respondent: “Owning a home gives me more freedom, more comfort.”

Interviewer: “Do you still feel that way?”

Respondent: “Oh yes, yes indeed, I have fought diligently to stay here. Last year they kept trying to put me into different kinds of homes for the elderly and I don’t want that. I would prefer staying here until the final day comes, if that’s at all possible.”

The homeowner’s relationship with the home becomes more intense over time. Whether meaning is forged by relationships that tie down an occupant to the space or the home grows as a liberating space, attachments increase over time, never lessen.

Home as Prison

The following analysis of home as prison is based on the Foucaultian idea that “*humane conditions of confinement are nonetheless conditions of confinement*” (Foucault 1995). A great deal of prison research has been dedicated to conceptualizing human beings as psychologically imprisoned by society (Crewe 2015; Ievins & Crewe 2015; Green 2016; Pratt & Miao 2017). For example, the infamous Stanford Prison Experiment (Haney et al. 1973 cited in Turner 2006, 41) found that “ordinary people assigned to the roles of prisoner and guard would naturally and automatically accept and enact these roles.” The individual as a prisoner is socially determined (Turner 2006). Thompson elaborates on the findings of Haney et al. (1973), asserting “Prisons and punishment are performative. They construct *special sites*, appeal to certain audiences, involve ritualized acts and entertain or appall” (Thompson 2004, 57, emphasis added). This body of prison scholarship implicates the home as a “special site” for the performative aspects of discipline and punishment (Foucault 1995). While much research has yet to be done on the social determinism enacted by and within the home, our analysis here begins the discussion. We explore the home as a material manifestation of identity. Conceptualization of the home as a prison points to the ways in which a home, or a cell, is personalized space embedded in broader systems and physical structures of confinement.

The home acts as a confining space (1) by way of ideological attachment and (2) the burdens associated with owning a physical structure as a financial investment. In some capacity, evidence of the home as a sanctuary also stands as evidence of the home as a prison. First, the walls that establish privacy and protection also act as barriers to the outside world and foster physical and emotional isolation. Second, the possessions inside and outside the home that establish familiarity and represent expression also act as an increasing financial burden on the homeowner; similar to the home itself, maintaining accumulated possessions fosters attachment to the home. Fi-

nally, the physical and financial burden of owning a home in a gentrifying neighborhood limits the homeowner’s mobility. Increasing property values make it difficult for the resident to compete with neighboring properties, and thus restrict their ability to sell the home.

Isolation

Isolation occurs due to a perceived lack of neighborhood cohesion and a lack of neighborhood resources. One resident discussed at length the ways in which her experience growing up differed from her experience of living in Cully today:

When I grew up the neighborhood was taught [that] everybody looked out for you. On a day like today you would see kids all up and down the streets and you just don’t see that anymore. For one reason, it’s not safe. For another reason, a lot of people don’t encourage their kids to go out because they just don’t feel good about it.

Contrasting the past with the less-favorable present is common for residents of gentrifying neighborhoods, well established in media reports and academic literature on gentrification (Lees 2000; Lees et al. 2008; Baram 2018). Literature and media reports indict the home as a space where people retreat in lieu of spending time with neighbors, but ignores this pattern as a potential source of isolation. Feelings of isolation are exacerbated by lacking neighborhood cohesion, exemplified by the following exchange:

Interviewer: “Do you feel connected to your neighbors?”

Respondent: “No. I don’t know them from a hole in the wall...no one has ever made the gesture of coming to see me or talk to me or whatever, and I have really not been in shape to do it.”

Multiple residents identified poor mobility as the reason for their disconnection from the neighborhood. Mobility is limited for a number of reasons, including financial and time restraints associated with maintaining a home. In the following exchange, a resident explained why he was unable to participate in neighborhood decision-making:

Interviewer: “Do you ever attend neighborhood association meetings?”

Respondent: “I can barely keep my yard cut, I just don’t have time.”

Financial stresses force residents to prioritize the maintenance of their home over other financial obligations: “Property values are high and I have such a hard time keeping this home and I have no life, I can’t afford an automobile—my van has been sitting here needing a new transmission for three

years.” Obligations such as replacing a transmission, attending neighborhood association meetings, or paying vet bills end up on the back burner.

The lack of and/or poor access to transportation cultivate isolation for elderly and disabled homeowners. In the following discussion, one resident alludes to the relationship between transportation and maintaining interpersonal relationships:

Respondent: “Transportation is my biggest problem, I can’t ride the bus because it’s too painful. I have to go through Ride Connection, which requires a four-day in-advance request... I could utilize them more but isolation is a problem for me.”

Respondent: “Both my sisters are living in the area.”

Interviewer: “Do you see them?”

Respondent: “No I don’t see any of them—mostly because of the transportation issue. If you notice on the list there, I also have vertigo, which makes it very difficult to go places.”

Vulnerable residents are often dependent on others for completing basic tasks, such as going to the grocery store or to medical appointments. Those without strong support networks fight to get their basic needs met and often struggle to leave the house. Reliance on others fosters dependence and forces residents with limited mobility to adjust their habits to suit their caretakers’ timelines: “I have someone who is willing to take me to Winco, I go once a month and buy my entire months worth [of groceries].”

One resident talked explicitly about his reliance on others for being able to participate in life outside of the home, saying, “Let’s face it, I am dependent, I am really dependent, I am dependent on my disability income, I am dependent on resources, I am dependent on the kindness of other strangers.”

In gentrifying neighborhoods, resources for folks with limited mobility are lacking due to the influx of young, able-bodied, financially stable renters and buyers. Consequently, long-term, vulnerable residents spend a majority of their time inside their homes and most any interaction with the outside world still takes place from inside. One homeowner reflects on his physical limitations and isolation, saying, “Depression is a problem... I work hard at my thinking.” This same resident said the David Romprey warm line was his primary contact with others. The hotline provides a space where people can call “just to talk... They are trained to affirm and validate one’s experiences and viewpoints and feelings and thoughts... They don’t help, they just listen.”

For homeowners with financial and/or physical limitations, the home acts as a space of confinement. The same walls that foster a sense of privacy and protection also act as material and emotional barriers from the outside world. For some, the home is itself the cause of isolation, while for others, the home is simply a space where isolation is experienced most intimately.

Possessions

Possessions inside and outside the home foster familiarity, ensuring comfort for the occupant. But these same possessions require physical and financial maintenance. Residents, particularly those who have become less able-bodied over time, expressed the burden of maintaining their personal assets: “I used to have flower beds out front. I had three of them and I finally got to a point where I just couldn’t take care of them anymore. I used to have an electric train running through my backyard and I finally had to give it up last year because I couldn’t take care of it either.”

Possessions are an extension of the homeowner’s identity. An inability to maintain one’s possessions thus creates negative feelings that the homeowner may direct at the home space in its entirety rather than the individual possession. The home transforms from a space of relaxation to one of tension when adornments become a source of stress rather than expression:

Furniture is highly overrated, I would be happy in a tiny house the size of my kitchen... All I need is a place for my bike, to put my guitar and pretty much that’s it except the basic essentials of life—something to cook with, something to wash with but mostly I live in that space anyway. I don’t really use the rest of the house, it’s just a place to accumulate junk and to try to get rid of the junk and you know the yard is huge; it’s a double lot so that’s a lot of work. I pretty much hate being a homeowner.

Possessions hindered the homeowner quoted above from selling her house and leaving the neighborhood. She continued,

That’s just a big chore to sell a house, and so that’s a big deterrent. It’s kind of an overwhelming proposition to move... It’s just too much work to be a homeowner, especially on a lot this size... You can’t just shove the whole lot into a landfill and any kind of flat surface in the house is just covered in a week.

While residents boasted about their neighborhood’s improving aesthetics, they simultaneously expressed anxiety over maintaining their properties. Residents feel responsible for maintaining their property’s physical appearance in part due to the internalization of perceived new neighborhood

aesthetics. Those who were more physically able kept up their properties themselves, but did so out of fear of losing their place in the neighborhood. One resident said his home was “Definitely a lot of upkeep, and I’m the only one doing it so you know, can’t be getting lazy. Yeah, if I don’t do it, it won’t get done. I’m very dependent on here so...”

On the other hand, those who lacked the financial and physical means of maintaining their properties relied on sparse neighborhood resources:

You know, I’ve remodeled two homes, but I can’t mow the lawn now. I can’t do housework. There just aren’t resources for poor people to get help for those things...in terms of household work and yard work... Very, very few and you have to be like a third of the median income or less than that.

Another resident expressed concern over the consequences of being unable to maintain his property:

I just want to have my house in order and clean and I can’t do that anymore and I can’t get the help to do that and I can’t do yard work anymore. It’s just getting harder to maintain my home and I don’t want to end up in a concrete floor studio apartment in an extra care facility, but that’s where I’m headed to be honest.

The inability to maintain personal possessions inside and outside the home transforms the home from a space of comfort and familiarity to one of discomfort. For others, the possessions that cultivate refuge, also contribute to feelings of confinement by supplying the occupant with stimulation that might otherwise be found outside the home. Consider, for example, the resident who had three thousand DVDs and received up to seven magazines a day. Possessions have the power to convert the home from a financial investment to a financial burden, limiting residents’ ability to build equity and wealth more generally. Possessions are difficult to divorce from the home because they are an extension of the homeowner’s identity. They can become distinctly burdensome because they exist in the resident’s living room and impact the occupant more frequently and intimately than the house as a structural whole.

Financial

The home as a financial investment requires continual maintenance or otherwise diminishes in value over time, transforming from a wealth-building entity into a wealth-building impediment. This is clear in the following Cully resident’s statement: “I’ve been house broke ever since I moved into this

house.” For homeowners in gentrifying neighborhoods, increasing property values and competition over housing accelerates this transformation. The home becomes an increasingly imprisoning asset over time when proper maintenance is untenable.

Cully residents considered buying a home to be a step in the direction of financial and personal stability. Homeowners reflected on their feelings at the time of the purchase, saying, “I felt that it gave me more freedom” and “It’s cheaper than renting... I thought it was a practical idea at the time.” One resident who said, “I got it in my mind that I wanted to buy a house because I was 50 and didn’t have any investments” reflected on feeling disillusioned by the idea of homeownership:

It was based on faulty thinking, you know this idea that people who own homes are more stable and have a life... and uh, also that it was an investment. It’s not an investment... You can’t touch the equity. I just knew nothing about financial security or personal finance and what made a responsible person. I just never had those.

Other residents echoed the sentiment of feeling trapped by home ownership. Still, keeping their homes despite new socioeconomic pressures associated with the processes of gentrification, was regarded as a point of pride. The resident quoted above reflected on a time during which he lived on fifteen percent of his net income and frequently visited food banks: “It was hell, pure unadulterated hell, but I saved the house. It was all I could do.” Another resident discussed her life after losing her husband in 1999: “After I lost my husband, I really haven’t done much of anything which may not be a good thing, but that’s just the way I am. I mean I have enough energy to work and try to maintain my house and that’s about all I can do.”

Residents become confined by the home because it is their primary and often only investment. As a result, homeowners work desperately to save the investment, which becomes increasingly strenuous as the surrounding neighborhood gentrifies. The resident who once lived off of fifteen percent of his net income said he was considering moving into the shed in his backyard and renting out the main house “just to be able to live... just to be able to stay.”

As a neighborhood gentrifies, competition over housing increases and long-term homeowners experience the financial burden of maintaining their property value. Homeowners are often forcefully displaced and newer, more expensive units replace their homes. Cully residents understand this process, as exemplified in the following testament:

There is mold in some houses and that qualifies you to tear the house down. For example there's one lady, she lives on the corner in a 15,000 square foot lot, well her house has mold in the basement so it can be torn down and they'll build five homes there or fifteen townhomes, and that's a problem all over the city—homes being destroyed. Four hundred in the last ten years have been torn down, I heard that number last week.”

The replacement of affordable housing with expensive units affects both the financial landscape and the social fabric of the neighborhood. This jeopardizes the ability for some to stay in place, as explained by this long-term home owner:

Property taxes in this neighborhood are already about \$4,000 dollars a year. And to me, if I have \$700,000 to buy a home, they may come in and make demands for improvements that the people here now aren't comfortable with. For instance, they want sidewalks. Well, I'm happy we don't have sidewalks because it decreases the foot traffic in our neighborhood... So, you know, we just really cringe when we see that potentially happen.

Alternatively, homeowners experience forced *non-displacement* because their house cannot compete with the current housing market. They are unable to sell:

Interviewer: “How long do you intend to stay in Cully?”

Respondent: “Rest of my life. I don't have any choice. This house made 30,000 last year, just being here. Did you know Portland is the number one city in the country for the rate of property value increase?”

Vulnerable homeowners in gentrifying neighborhoods are often confronted with the decision to either hold onto a losing investment or be foreclosed upon:

I don't plan on going anywhere, as long as I can keep my house. I'm trying to work with Wells Fargo, so they can do something with my mortgage because it's just way too high. I don't want to sell it or anything, I don't have any plans on going anywhere but if I can't continue to afford it, shoot, I might be in foreclosure.

In either case, the home, which was initially purchased under the aegis of freedom and security, imprisons the homeowner.

Maintaining the value of a home requires either direct or indirect upkeep by the homeowner. In the case that the homeowner is physically unable to

perform the maintenance—consider the replacement of a roof or any other large-scale project—they must have the means of hiring someone else to do the work. For vulnerable populations, who are often low-income and/or physically disabled, maintaining the physical integrity of the house becomes onerous, if not impossible. Cully residents are becoming increasingly confined to their homes by a competitive housing market and, as a result, living in unhealthy and unsafe conditions to be able to stay in the neighborhood.

Concluding Discussion

Journalists and scholars alike have overlooked, and perhaps looked away from, how gentrification is experienced in the home. To address this lacuna, we conducted interviews exploring Cully residents' relationships to home and how those relationships are shaped by conditions of gentrification. The scalar shift in focus, bringing the home to fore, carries with it important implications for the way policymakers and academics understand and develop anti-gentrification interventions.

Our introduction of the home into gentrification literature iterates and expands on Lees' (1994, 2000; see also Lees et al. 2008) geographies of gentrification. To combat the harmful impacts of gentrification, as she asserts, the process must be understood as place-specific, as having varying scalar impacts, and as a process that impacts individuals and individual households in radically different ways. The home offers a compelling unit for analysis because experiences inside the home mirror and are mediated by broader economic and social restructurings. Conceptualizing the home as both a sanctuary and a prison encourages us to imagine gentrification as *both* emancipatory and revanchist, as a phenomenon that must be addressed based on the affected population's unique characteristics. Our examination of residents' experience of the home furthermore contributes to feminist geographers' critiques of humanistic interpretations of home.

Although journalists and scholars alike recognize the impacts of gentrification on the housing market, their analyses ignore the way gentrification is experienced inside the home. The home has been represented either as a space where people live happily or one from which people are displaced. But it is overlooked as a space that is in and of itself vulnerable to change. As a result, anti-gentrification strategies have tended to identify the neighborhood as the primary scale of intervention—implementing rent caps, increasing social housing subsidies, and non-development zones to restrict the influx of upper-income occupants—and the experiences of homeowners have been excluded from the debate. This examination of the home as a changing and

transformative realm serves to redirect the focus of gentrification theorization away from neighborhoods and onto homeowners.

Mitigating displacement is an important anti-gentrification strategy. However, proposing non-displacement as a stand-alone intervention is insufficient. Without distinguishing between disparate types of displacement (i.e., renters vs. homeowners), the equally damaging phenomenon whereby long-term residents become confined to their homes—an involuntary non-displacement of sorts—is ignored.

Conversations with Cully residents indicate that building and/or preserving healthy neighborhoods is more complicated than building parks, putting in bike paths, or zoning the perfect ratio of commercial and residential land. It requires a compassionate and thoughtful investigation into the needs of the neighborhood's most vulnerable members, because gentrification manifests differently and is not simply an issue of preserving affordable housing. It is a phenomenon that reaches beyond and below the neighborhood scale, affecting the day-to-day lives of individual residents. Too long has gentrification been conceived primarily as a singular economic process whereby low-income people are displaced due to the onslaught of development. Too often have quantitative approaches been used to adumbrate the lives of residents. Resisting social harms associated with gentrification means humanizing those who are being harmed, and the place to start is in the home, their primary dwelling.

Our hope is that these research findings have captured the complexities of one gentrification while providing some additional language and/or frameworks to discuss them. A neighborhood is a messy coalescence of families and friends and social groups, all experiencing gentrification differently because they experience life differently.

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