Displacement beyond dislocation: Aversive racism in gentrification studies

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Abstract
In this article, we argue for a critical gentrification studies that includes a more expansive and nuanced understanding of how displacement works, beyond the mapping and counting of dislocated bodies. As part of our argument, we introduce the concept of aversive racism to the geographical literature on displacement, pointing to this insidious mode of spatial practice that we argue is widely constitutive of place-making and place-taking processes in gentrifying areas. We do this by first providing a review and analysis of how displacement has been conceptualized and measured in existing geographical scholarship on gentrification, followed by a critical examination of the gentrification literature's engagement with race and racism, and a final argument for an affective approach within a Black geographies framing that encourages more analyses based on experiential encounters with more-than-physical displacement-by-gentrification.

Introduction: Moving beyond dislocation

Discussions of residential displacement in the context of gentrification have been put forward most vociferously in the geographical literature in terms of retrenchment, revanchism, replacement, and reuse from a Marxian political economic perspective (Harvey, 1987; Marcuse, 1986; Smith, 1979, 1996; Zukin, 1982; see also Rose, 1984). But more recently, and after more than five decades of active scholarship and debate, attention to displacement among gentrification scholars is being reinvigorated and expanded through critical encounters across disciplines and scales (Adey et al., 2020), with multiple mechanisms and registers such as "unhoming" (Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020), "home unmaking" (Baxter and Brickell, 2014), "evicting" (Baker, 2021), conceptualized as deracination (Vergara-Figueroa, 2018), articulated from an autoethnographic perspective (Bloch,

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2022b), and placed in the context of dispossession, expulsion, and forced resettlement in the Global South (Brickell et al., 2017; Doshi, 2015; Ghertner, 2014; Gillespie, 2016; Janoschka and Sequera, 2016; Lees et al., 2015; Leitner and Sheppard, 2018; López-Morales, 2016; Lukens, 2021; Rogers and Wilmsen, 2020; Shin, 2016).

This scholarship makes clear that displacement is not an effect of gentrification alone, nor is gentrification the only possible framework for understanding displacement, even in the context of urban redevelopment. Yet notwithstanding the continued urgency to extend studies of displacement into the hitherto marginalized territory, both spatially and conceptually speaking, we contend that there remains much ground to be covered in understanding how gentrification as a process functions as displacement. To this end, we argue that not only is displacement a core component of gentrification and a key structuring feature of Western capitalist landscapes, but that this structuring process unfolds affectively, that is, through the rearticulation and rematerialization of embodied relations within place. This perspective challenges the pervasive methodological orientation in classical and contemporary gentrification scholarship that frames displacement as synonymous with the observable dislocation of bodies.

Building on recent work underscoring the need to understand the temporal and spatial scales of displacement beyond distinct events of mobility (see Addie and Fraser, 2019; Baker, 2021; Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020), we contend that while displacement is certainly a prevailing feature of gentrification, it is a process that functions through people's embodied placemaking capacities, only some of which manifest in physical mobility. In fact, to limit one's focus to observable, measurable dislocation is to understate the scope of how displacement functions as a violent structural phenomenon that produces new power geometries. In what follows, then, we argue for a more expansive and nuanced understanding of how displacement works in the context of gentrification, one that is capable of accounting for displacement as a process that can occur before, beyond, or without physical movement altogether.

This methodological shift also enables a more substantive encounter with the role of race and racism in the processes of gentrification, something that continues to be regularly under-acknowledged in gentrification scholarship that focuses on power relations through the lens of class. Working alongside a number of urban scholars explicitly interested in how "race structures the urban form" (Dantzler, 2021: 114), we contend that race and racism are integral for producing displacement-by-gentrification in the Global North and beyond and through technologies whose effectiveness largely depends on the popular disavowal of their existence. As we show, moreover, the pervasive disavowal and undermining of race as a lens through which to see racism has long hindered a more dynamic engagement with displacement in gentrification studies more generally.

We explore one potential path around these limitations through a consideration of "aversive racism" (Kovel, 1970; Dovidio and Gaertner, 1986, 2004), a form of ambivalent racist practice that functions as a distinctly affective phenomenon and is widely constitutive of contemporary place-taking—and place-making—processes in gentrifying areas of the Global North. While this framework has to date received almost no attention from geographers (cf. Bloch, 2022a), we demonstrate how a focus on aversive racist practice can offer urban scholars an incisive way to grasp how race becomes materialized in processes and landscapes of displacement. What we seek to elaborate here is an agent-centric approach to gentrification studies that is nonetheless thoroughly transpersonal. Our approach draws from the work of scholars situated within a number of traditions, particularly feminist social and urban theory, racial capitalism and settler colonialism studies (Dorries et al., 2022; Dutton, 2007; Ellis-Young, 2022), and Black geographies, the latter especially insofar as it aims to center geographical interest in "agency, experience, and non-material spatial practices" (Allen et al., 2019: 1001). It does so in ways that not only challenge the kinds of "willful blindness" to anti-Blackness and Black experiences characteristic of dominant geographical research and gentrification practice (Morgan, 2016: 188; see also Summers, 2019), but also seek to draw on these knowledges and practices

to articulate more just futures for everyone (Bledsoe, 2021: 1016–1017).

We offer, next, a review and analysis of how displacement has been conceptualized and measured in existing geographical scholarship on gentrification, arguing that the methodological reliance on the counting of bodies that is pervasive in both quantitative and qualitative research has severely impeded our understanding of displacement as a process of embodiment. We follow this with a critical examination of the gentrification literature's engagement with race and racism, pointing to a persistent methodological colorblindness that we argue is linked to the tradition of identifying displacement through the counting and mapping of bodies discussed in the preceding section. We argue that a more theoretically nuanced concept of how racism takes place is needed in gentrification studies, one that understands racism as a technology through which embodied relations in and with place are materialized at multiple scales. We follow this with an introduction of aversive racism, which we introduce to geography as a subtle yet insidious mode of affective spatial practice that is widely constitutive of place-taking and place-making processes in gentrifying areas.

Engaging affect in the study of displacement-by-gentrification

Racial aversiveness, avoidance, and less-than-articulated hostilities are not merely personal proclivities or the inert orientation of individuals; rather, they are active, embodied, and material forms of placemaking practice that function through—not in spite of—ambivalent racial encounter. Building in part on Bonds (2020: 779–780) who writes of a renewed interest among geographers in "theorizing whiteness beyond privilege and 'the social condition of whiteness'… to instead focus on the processes, structures, and institutions producing white dominance," we introduce aversive racism to the discussion of displacement.

Our approach to displacement-by-gentrification begins with the affective economies that "[re]align … bodily space with social space" (Ahmed, 2004a: 119). This approach sees the empirical reality of displacement-by-gentrification neither through the counting and mapping of bodies in particular locations, nor in the individual emotional experiences of actual or expected dislocation from place, but rather in the dynamic processes through which people and places are reproduced and repositioned in relation to each other and to broader modalities of power, or what Massey refers to as "power-geometry" (Massey, 1993). It is a distinctly affective methodology in the sense that these power-geometries are understood to manifest spatially less as a function of where a body is located than of what a body can do in terms of embodied capacities and potentialities.

Challenges to the dominant conceptualization of displacement as the actual or anticipated physical movement of bodies in space, and the proposition of a more nuanced and open understanding of displacement have been waged before. Davidson (2009), Davidson and Lees (2005), and Marcuse (1985) were particularly influential in loosening the grip of Cartesian understandings of space on critical gentrification studies, and their work has ushered in a wide range of research that takes seriously the experiential, emotional, and otherwise more-than-material dimensions of displacement. For example, geographers have shown via case studies of gentrification in places like the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Greenpoint (Stabrowski, 2014) and Bushwick (Valli, 2015), the London borough of Hackney (Butcher and Dickens, 2016), Mexico City (Linz, 2021), and elsewhere, that in addition to processes of spatial dislocation for ethnic minorities, the elderly, and working-class residents, gentrification occurs in psychic (Fullilove, 1996; Ji, 2021; Meyer, 2021; Seitz, 2022; Westin, 2021) and affective registers (Addie and Fraser, 2019; Frank, 2021; Jones and Evans, 2012; Linz, 2017; Pain, 2019; Wilhelm-Solomon, 2021) through the everyday loss of "agency, freedom, and security to 'make place'" (Stabrowski, 2014: 795). Throughout this work we find recognition that in many instances of gentrification, "it is the relationship to a place that is displaced, rather than an individual being physically removed" (Wynne and Rogers, 2021: 397).

There is, however, one important dimension of how displacement functions affectively that is

often underplayed or overlooked even in much of this scholarship. This is the dimension of displacement beyond dislocation or rupture—displacement as the production of new affective relations in and with place. To be clear, we are not critiquing the crucial focus in this scholarship on how displacement functions, in the words of Wilhelm-Solomon (2021: 977), as "depotentiation"—"the diminishment of both power and [affective] potentiality" (see also McElroy and Werth, 2019). But we are emphasizing that dislocation, depotentiation, etc., are always partial descriptions of the displacement process. Defining displacement in this dimension alone obscures how gentrification is a productive process (Hackworth, 2002: 815), comprising not just the rupture of place relations but their materialization.

Massey (1992/2018: 170) warned against this perspective in her work on place, emphasizing that the co-production of people and places necessarily remains an open process, with each new arrangement producing new social-spatial effects. This dynamism is a particularly significant feature of McKittrick's (2006, 2011) theorization of a "black sense of place" as well, a formulation that builds in part on Massey's work and which illustrates how a unidimensional focus on racial violence has a distinct tendency to reproduce a pernicious dichotomy in which Blackness is associated with placelessness and absence, and whiteness with coherence and permanence. As we argue in the paper, the racial violence of displacement must not be understood as a process by which Black geographies are simply emptied out of their inhabitants, but rather as a complex mode of racial encounter that contains both dispossession and continued struggle (see Safransky, 2022), and where power and place remain in tension.

Displacement-by-gentrification, beyond counting bodies

Popular debates around gentrification have stalled in their wrangling over displacement as a feature. In the academic literature, too, "the jury is still out" (Freeman, 2005) regarding gentrification's

relationship to displacement (see also Brown-Saracino, 2017; Desmond and Gershenson, 2017; Freeman and Braconi, 2004; Hamnett, 2003; McKinnish et al., 2010; Sims, 2021; and Zimmer, 2022 for similar claims). However, in a review of the widespread application of the concept of displacement within gentrification scholarship, Elliott-Cooper et al. (2020: 493) challenge such an assertion, contending that "there can be no doubt that gentrification and displacement are linked." In fact, they argue, displacement is its "defining feature" (Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020: 503). Given that gentrification has been tied to the removal of existing communities since the term was coined by Ruth Glass in the early 1960s to describe a process that included the middle-class "invasion" of working-class London neighborhoods (Glass, 1964: xviii–xix), the weight of this claim may not be as self-evident as it deserves to be. This is in part because despite some early appeals by scholars to focus attention directly on the consequences of gentrification for the populations facing removal (see Gale, 1985; Hartman, 1980; Henig, 1980; Marcuse, 1985; Smith and Williams, 1986), after more than 50 years of work, a robust and consistent body of empirical scholarship on displacement-by-gentrification has yet to materialize (Bernt and Holm, 2009; Easton et al., 2020; Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020; Helbrecht, 2018; Slater, 2006). As Elliott-Cooper and colleagues demonstrate, one reason for this is that there remains an urgent need to better understand the range of ways that gentrification functions as displacement in the first place, particularly the dimensions of the process that have long exceeded the methodological frameworks commonly employed by gentrification scholars.

Following Elliott-Cooper et al. (2020), we expand this call for researchers to work with a conceptualization of displacement that is more inclusive of the variety of forms displacement takes in the context of contemporary gentrification. We begin in this section by offering a critical overview of the dominant methodological approach to conceptualizing and measuring displacement in gentrification studies, arguing that the primacy of quantification—a methodological stance that prevails in much of the qualitative scholarship on gentrification as well—has largely obscured the affective dimensions of

this process. Our argument is not that measuring and counting have no place in gentrification studies; rather, we aim to demonstrate how scholars' reliance on the counting of bodies and their movement through space to "prove" that displacement is occurring ultimately limits our capacity to grasp displacement-by-gentrification as a more complex rearticulation of people's embodied relations in place.

Quantitative approaches to measuring and mapping displacement have proliferated in gentrification studies for decades, a trend that shows little sign of abating (Easton et al., 2020; Preis et al., 2021; Zuk et al., 2015; see Barrett and Mergenhagen, 1984; Ding et al., 2016; Freeman, 2005; Hwang, 2020; Hwang and Sampson, 2014; Lee and Hodge, 1984; Zhang et al., 2020). Easton et al. (2020: 287) observe that this work is "dominated by studies which attempt to measure migration to or from 'dwellings' within given neighbourhoods across a fixed time period" (see also Zuk et al., 2015), an approach that reifies what they describe as a "unidimensional conceptualisation of direct, measurable displacement underpinned by a Cartesian notion of space." Such studies have long relied primarily on census data for these measurements, looking for actual or expected changes in neighborhood composition as signaled through quantifiable indicators (or proxies) like income, racial demographics, educational attainment, housing costs or tenure arrangements, and more (Preis et al., 2021: 408; see also Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2019).

Recent reviewers of the problem are by no means the first to identify gentrification researchers' reliance on these quantitative methods for measuring displacement. In fact, some of the earliest warnings about the limitations of such methods for gentrification research came from scholars who were among the first to use them in their work (see Barrett and Mergenhagen, 1984; Galster and Peacock, 1986; Henig, 1980). Still, from that time forward critiques of these quantitative methods have overwhelmingly framed their limitations in terms of the relative robustness of datasets rather than as a problem with quantification itself. Put another way, the critical focus has been on improving efforts to measure and map displacement by expanding the scope and precision of the quantifiable data collected—introducing new datasets, new indicators, and new proxies (see Atkinson, 2000; Bostic and Martin, 2003; Davidson and Lees, 2005; Ding et al., 2016; Galster and Peacock, 1986; Hwang, 2020; Newman and Wyly, 2006), or by turning to novel techniques for analyzing that data (see Hwang and Sampson, 2014; Reades et al., 2018). Even as researchers have struggled to produce reliable and consistent data about where gentrification is occurring—even when those frameworks are applied to research in the same cities and neighborhoods (Barton, 2016; Mujahid et al., 2019; Preis et al., 2021)—proposals for rectifying the problem have largely continued to rely on the very methodological approach responsible for creating it in the first place (see Easton et al., 2020; Holm and Schulz, 2018; Preis et al., 2021).

One problem with this methodological adherence to counting and mapping bodies in gentrification studies is that it places the burden of proof for displacement on the shoulders of those facing removal. Newman and Wyly (2006: 27) identified this issue as plaguing empirical work when they wrote that "estimating the scope and scale of displacement and exploring what happens to people who are displaced have proved somewhat elusive … as displaced residents have disappeared from the very places where researchers or census-takers go to look for them." Atkinson (2000: 163) had also recognized the problem, conceding that searching for missing residents is akin to "measuring the invisible" given the fact that absence is a prerequisite for validating the displacement effects of gentrification. But simply supplanting quantitative methods with qualitative approaches is not enough to avoid this problem, particularly if such methodologies retain a conceptual understanding of displacement as fundamentally a dislocative phenomenon observable in residential mobility (cf. Watt, 2018).

Such approaches continue to constrain even critical qualitative studies of gentrification to this day, which, we argue, owes much to Marcuse's (1985) influential argument that displacement begins in some instances as "pressures" placed upon the

poor by incoming residents who alter neighborhoods to fit their own needs, and in the process contributing to a sense of alienation for existing community members. Marcuse argued that "displacement affects more than those actually displaced at any given moment … [as] families living under these circumstances may move as soon as they can, rather than wait for the inevitable; nonetheless they are displaced" (1985: 207). While Marcuse's work is widely regarded as an important early acknowledgement of the "emotion-laden form of displacement" (Valli, 2015: 1193), we nonetheless see in the notion of "displacement pressures" a lasting reliance on the evidence of eventual physical movement, even if that movement has not yet occurred and its "actuality," in Marcuse's words, remains "only a matter of time" (1985: 207).

To be sure, a number of scholars influenced by the work of Marcuse have since succeeded in broadening discussions of displacement beyond individualized dimensions of residential mobility (see Bernt and Holm, 2009; Danley and Weaver, 2018; Mazer and Rankin, 2011; Slater, 2009). Yet others have further elaborated the linkages between displacement and gentrification through the inclusion of increasingly granular ethnographic data informed by highly nuanced understandings of the broader temporality, multi-scalarity, and emotional complexity of existing residents' lost sense of place and belonging (see Kern, 2012; Sakizlioğlu, 2014; Stabrowski, 2014; Valli, 2015; see also Newman and Wyly, 2006). Still, even as scholars expanded their focus and their methods, the notion that displacement is, at its core, a phenomenon of forced dislocation has been remarkably resilient among qualitative researchers. Even Elliott-Cooper et al. (2020), in arguing for gentrification studies to "move beyond" Marcuse's conceptualization, call instead for the development of Atkinson's (2015) perspective on displacement as a "process of *un-homing* that severs the links between residents and the communities to which they belong" (p. 494, italics in original). While we certainly agree with their arguments that "more robust data are needed to confirm displacement is occurring" and that "any investigation of gentrification-induced urban displacement must consider the type of

gentrification, but also the *scale* and *speed* of the process" (2020: 504, italics in original; see also Baker, 2021; Easton et al., 2020; Kern, 2016), we caution that this does not necessarily move us very far beyond Marcuse's approach. This is because it retains, at least implicitly, an understanding of displacement as a phenomenon primarily defined and measured through the movement of bodies across a threshold from visibility to invisibility, presence to absence. This threshold is real and important, but there remains work to be done in seeing and understanding displacement beyond bodies extracted from proximate space.

Displacement is not, we assert, merely a downstream dislocative effect that "unfold(s) over time" (Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020: 502; see also Lombard, 2013), but rather a process that reshapes people's immediate embodied attachments in and to place. To be clear, we understand that displacement most often does manifest as dislocation and forced mobility, and that the absence of empirical evidence of forced outmigration should not contribute to a sense of ambivalence (cf. Atkinson, 2004; Freeman, 2006, 2009; Pattillo, 2007; Sullivan, 2007). We also accept Wyly's (2023: 65) resent assertion that "we listen carefully to the voices of the dead, of those who shape cities and urban ideas of the past, present, and future." But it is our contention throughout this article that displacement need not be measured through absence—observed, anticipated, or denied—for it to be validated and rendered actual by scholars.

In this, we echo Baker (2021: 797, 798), who argues that displacement—conceived in his research as "evicting"—must be encountered as it is "lived in the 'now', as a duration of time" which "produces particular durations of being or ways of life for those caught up in its processes." The dominance of quantification as a methodological frame for identifying and measuring displacement in gentrification studies is a fundamental impediment to this expanded perspective. This is because quantifiable indicators, while suitable for visualizing the location and movement of bodies, are nonetheless incapable of helping us understand displacement as itself a process of embodiment, that is, as a process wherein bodies function as active sites through

which social and cultural relations are produced "at the same time as the body is being 'made up' by external forces" (Cresswell, 1999: 176).

Here we assert that expanding embodiment as a methodological concern within gentrification research will entail and enable a more expansive idea about what displacement means, one that goes beyond questions of whether, why, and how people are compelled to move through urban space. For Butcher (2012), embodiment "relates to the spatiality of bodies and the affective and performative aspects of living in and making spaces and places," but we argue that such a conceptualization of embodiment does not go far enough to include the less-than-observable, hidden transcripts, so to speak, of navigating the racialization that invariably facilitates place-taking and place-making. Rather than merely attending to the involuntary movement and observable corporeality of displacement, our overarching claim is that we must conceive of displacement as affective in multiple dimensions (see also Simonsen, 2013).

We see aversive racism, a phenomenon we explore next, as contributing to the very process through which people and place are rearranged in ways that do not merely physically or emotionally exclude particular people from urban space, but that reinvent the affective life of urban space itself. Expanding our perspective in this way, however, requires a recognition of how race, to paraphrase Stuart Hall (1980: 341), functions as the modality through which these encounters are lived. Yet as we argue, gentrification studies largely continue to gloss over fine-grained analyses of racial production and exclusion, perpetuating a failure of the geographical imagination to attend to the nuanced, expansive, and politically dynamic understanding of how displacement takes place in contemporary urban environments.

Aversive racism as affective place taking

The centrality of race and racism to processes of displacement by gentrification remains underacknowledged in the academic literatures or outright dismissed in popular conceptualizations (Fallon, 2021; Hwang and Ding, 2020; Lees, 2000, 2016; Rucks-Ahidiana, 2022). Recently, however, a growing number of scholars—the majority working outside of geography—have reinvigorated debate about gentrification's explicitly racialized process (see Addie and Fraser, 2019; Dantzler, 2021; Hightower and Fraser, 2020; Muñiz, 2015; Ramírez, 2020a, 2020b; Roy, 2017; Rucks-Ahidiana, 2022). Our work aims to support and extend this perspective within the geographical scholarship on gentrification. We encourage such scholarship by offering a reflection on "aversive racism" (Kovel, 1970; Dovidio and Gaertner, 1986, 2004), a form of ambivalent racist practice that is integral to neoliberal urban placemaking.

Kovel (1970) first utilized the concept of "aversive racism" to describe a subtle mode of white racist practice that he argued could be distinguished from the more overt "dominative racism" characteristic of the unabashed bigot. Whereas the dominative racist, he wrote, "represents the open flame of racial hatred" (1970: 54), aversive racists are characterized by their contradictory attachments: on the one hand, they maintain a perhaps implicit investment in white racial community formation; on the other, they harbor—or at least desire to be seen as harboring—liberal social values of racial equity and inclusion. From the "heat" of dominative racism, then, Kovel distinguished aversive racism by its "coldness," confronted by the proximity of racial others, the aversive racist politely looks away, avoids intimate engagement, and chooses inaction, while simultaneously refusing to admit even to themselves their aversion (1970: 54–55).

Our understanding of aversive racism owes much to the work of Dovidio and Gaertner (1986, 2004), who have built on Kovel's framework in a body of psychological research that now spans nearly fifty years. Dovidio and Gaertner (2004: 8) argue that aversive racism is particularly likely to be put into practice in "situations" where "normative structure is weak [and] guidelines for appropriate behavior are vague" (Dovidio and Gaertner, 2004). Conversely, "because aversive racists consciously recognize and endorse egalitarian values and because they truly aspire to be nonprejudiced, they

will *not* discriminate in situations with strong social norms when discrimination would be obvious to others and to themselves" (Dovidio and Gaertner, 2004, italics in original). Still, even in these situations aversion to racial others will eventually be expressed in "subtle, indirect, or rationalizable ways"—particularly when this aversion can be justified "on the basis of some factor other than race" (Dovidio and Gaertner, 2004; see also Forman, 2004).

We are not, however, interested in dimensions of aversive racism that veer into what Gordon (2001: 22) has described as a kind of psychoanalytic determinism, or those that seem concerned with developing a typology of racists. We also reject the tendency, which is often implicit in the psychological scholarship we are drawing from, to interpret beliefs and emotions as originating within already coherent subjects (Ahmed, 2004b). Rather, our approach builds on Dovidio and Gaertner, thereby theorizing aversive racism as a mode of practice operating in the affective interaction between bodies and the material world, or in what Ahmed (2004b: 8) has called "affective economies"—"where feelings do not reside in subjects or objects, but are produced as effects of circulation." The unconscious does play a role in this interaction, particularly by mediating the ambivalent relationship between aversive racists' deep-seated attachment to racial hierarchy and their desire to be seen—by themselves and by others—as nonracist. Rather, we echo those geographers who understand "the unconscious on the outside; [as] the worlds' unconscious worlds" (Kingsbury and Pile, 2014: 5). And for this reason, we contend that the framework of aversive racism, at least as we theorize it here, brings the epistemology of "white ignorance" (Mills, 2007) directly into discussions about displacement by gentrification.

We invite the reader to consider here the "innocent" and "colorblind" matter of taste and its function within consumption and placemaking practices in gentrifying areas, which we suggest are contexts in which existing, normative structures and guidelines—particularly in relation to value—are contested. As scholars like Zukin (2008) have long observed, gentrifiers often reveal a distinct ambivalence toward the cultural products and practices of existing, non-white residents in these areas. While richer, whiter newcomers are attracted by the idea of authenticity, they are often also "repelled" by the consumption practices of existing residents, "or by the way their bodies consume public space" (Zukin, 2008: 745). Such repulsion extends beyond the safeguarding of "moral geographies" (Cresswell, 1996; Hubbard, 2000) and personal feelings of what Sibley (1995) and Pile (1996) have identified as disgust and anxiety for how others inhabit space, to the "dangerous" animals they keep (Bloch and Martínez, 2020; Tissot, 2011), the speed at which they move (Kern, 2016), the soundscapes they produce (Summers, 2021), and the legal nuisances they produce with their very being (Bloch and Meyer, 2019; Graziani et al., 2022; see also Blandy and Sibley, 2010). Summers (2019) more recently addresses and complicates the concept of targeted consumption as integral to displacement practices (see also Summers and Howell, 2019), whereby the aesthetic of disembodied Blackness, but not lived Blackness itself, is a desirable form of capital for land speculators and consumers of already existing places. Similar examples in this vein speak to how appeals to taste—and to taste's negative form, disgust—are used by the agents of gentrification (not just incoming residents or business owners themselves but state actors and private developers) to disguise and rationalize racial aversion and protect their public reputations and personal self-images as nonracist. But there is more to the story when we look at this affectively.

As Ahmed (2004b: 83, 85) explains, "the common presumption that taste is a matter of purely personal preference, a 'gut feeling,' masks the fact that disgust is clearly dependent on contact: it involves a relationship of touch and proximity between the surface of bodies and objects." Taste is always also a matter of touch, "as senses that require proximity to that which is sensed" (Ahmed, 2004b: 83). Aversion, in other words, does not originate inside individuals but is instead produced in bodily proximity to others. It is an affect, not a belief. Moreover, the encounter does not end with proximity: in disgust, the body recoils, and "[this] movement is the work of disgust; it is what disgust does … disgust brings the body perilously close to

an object only then to pull away from the object in the registering of the proximity as an offence" (Ahmed, 2004b: 85). Aversive racism, as a pulling away, is put into practice when, for instance, white, middle-class gentrifiers avoid forming meaningful social relationships with their non-white, less advantaged new neighbors.

Aversiveness, in these cases, is about more than who is (not) invited to dinner, though; it manifests in a host of other material ways—for example, by channeling economic and social investments away from long-time residents as gentrifiers choose "better" schools for their children elsewhere (Butler, 2003). In other cases, aversiveness manifests perhaps less as a "pulling away" by white people than as an exclusive claiming and remaking of place—or social relations more broadly—on their behalf. Relatedly, as Bloch (2022a) argues in the context of neighborhood watch technologies, "community building"—that bedrock of white place-making security fantasies—is necessarily defined as much by exclusion as inclusion. Similarly, Rankin and McLean (2015) have shown how commercial shopping streets in gentrifying areas of Toronto become important sites of racialized class antagonism as predominantly white planners, business owners, and consumers possess visons for place-making that may be "progressive" in some ways but nonetheless share a racialized sensibility that delegitimizes and excludes the practices of existing non-white residents in reality.

Lipman (2004: 54, 171), meanwhile, has pointed to how "good" schools serve as "real estate anchors" in gentrifying areas in Chicago, facilitating not just further private redevelopment in those areas, but contributing to a citywide "discourse of social discipline and subjugation that is highly racialized" and which helps actively structure a variety of other material processes, from eviction to labor differentiation. This is displacement as the materialization of power geometries, or as Massey (1994: 149) puts it, "not merely the issue of who moves and who doesn't … it is also about power in relation to the flows and the movement. Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement,

others don't; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it" (Massey, 1994: 149).

We assert that violence permeates these manifestations of aversion no less than those of the more "dominative" forms of racial antipathy, despite the routine attempts by practitioners to launder their aversion of its explicit racialism. We (Bloch and Meyer, 2019) highlighted this in our work on self-identified white liberal residents of a gentrifying community in Los Angeles who articulated rehearsed narratives about inclusivity and the disavowal of repressive police practices, yet continued to call upon police to discipline community members of color (reframed through the race-neutral terminology of "gang members") even in the absence of observed criminality (see also Bloch, 2022c). In their work, it is apparent that the act of laying claim to space betrays a tension between whites' self-perception as non-racist and their investment in a symptomatic security politics that actively facilitates the policing of racial others (see also Meyer, 2021). What is particularly important to underline about this tension is that both racial apathy and racial antipathy are two sides of the same coin, fused in ambivalence (Forman, 2004).

Bloch and Meyer's (2019) formulation of "implicit revanchism," like the framework of aversive racism here, addresses how this ambivalence reshapes and reproduces power geometries in gentrifying contexts. We see how even unacknowledged racial aversion is routinely weaponized by in-coming white residents against existing residents of color through its resignification into situational and ostensibly race-neutral languages of crime, gangs, neighborhood aesthetics, quality of life concerns, etc. (see also Parekh, 2015; Tate and Page, 2018). In this sense, what we refer to as the "cutting edge" of implicit revanchism (2019: 1108) functions similarly to that of the practice of "unseeing" Blackness in Summers' (2019: 161) work—both describe a technique, with ambivalence as the active ingredient, for (re)making place on behalf of white people by disembodying aesthetic and material culture from the existing, non-white bodies of those who live and produce it, even when those bodies remain in place. This is the

epistemology of white ignorance in action. This, too, we argue, is displacement.

Aversive racism in neighborhood spaces

We argue that the concept (and reality) of aversive racism can serve as one practical lens through which gentrification researchers can better understand the racial violence of displacement as it occurs beyond the dimension of residential mobility—that is, as an affective, embodied, and relational phenomenon. Aversive racism describes white people's judgment of and feelings held for racialized others that are expressed as willful avoidance and implicit out-grouping. Elaborating on aversive racism within a self-proclaimed "inclusive communities of care," Henkel et al. (2006: 103) observe how members react toward black residents in ways that "involve discomfort, uneasiness, disgust, and sometimes fear … [but] do not reflect open hostility or hatred." Such contradictory feelings within "ideal communities," as Young (1990: 133) puts it in her work on the politics of difference, manifest as a "racism of avoidance."

Our claim that a serious engagement with race remains largely avoided or altogether absent from the gentrification literature may surprise some readers, not just because race has figured so squarely in popular discourse on gentrification, but also because scholars have been referring to race in analyses of neighborhood change since some of the earliest work on gentrification in geography (e.g. Cybriwsky, 1978; Schaffer and Smith, 1986; Smith and Williams, 1986). Yet from that early work onwards, the dominant theorization of gentrification has been of an intrinsically class-based phenomenon in which other modes of differentiation like gender and race are deemed important, perhaps, but not elemental (Fallon, 2021). Consequently, while race is not entirely missing from the geographical literature on gentrification, its impact on this process has routinely "been subsumed under the class effects" (Bondi, 1991, 1999; Kern, 2012: 29; see also Boyd, 2008; Brahinsky, 2014; Cahill, 2007; Fallon, 2021; Rucks-Ahidiana, 2022; Warde, 1991; for examples

of race's direct subsumption to class, see Freeman, 2005; Hamnett, 2003).

This privileging of class dynamics over race in studies of gentrification reflects what Brahinsky (2014: 1261) identifies as a persistent tendency in critical geographical thought to interpret capital accumulation as the central urban force, a tendency that has traditionally led to race being "sidelined as a superstructural effect of capitalism." The problem with this approach is that it fails to recognize what Robinson (1983/2000: 2) famously observed: that pre-existing logics of race "permeate the social structures emergent from capitalism," producing what he called racial capitalism as a "historical agency." Writing in this tradition, Melamed (2015: 77) explains that "capital can only be capital when it is accumulating, and it can only accumulate by producing and moving through relations of severe inequality among human groups…" With this in mind, we argue therefore that while numerous gentrification scholars invoke race as a demographic category or marker of cultural identity, very few adequately account for how race is materialized as a potent *technology*—not a personal attribute but an external, agentic device (Coleman, 2009; see also Mills, 1997)—that fabricates the inequalities they seek to measure by structuring and arranging people, places, and social relations along particular and contingent axes of value and power. We call this racism.

Even as Lees (2016: 208) notes the continued lack of attention to race in gentrification scholarship, she asserts that race-based gentrification in which "white gentrifiers displace black and non-white ethnic minority populations" is "a stereotype that needs deconstructing," particularly in examples of gentrification outside the United States. She reiterates this hesitation in her argument that, in the United Kingdom, where much of the debate on gentrification in the geographical literature has been focused, "race is not a fixed transhistorical category whose meaning is always the same, as could be said of the United States" (2016: 210). To be clear, our claim is not that race is a fixed, transhistorical category anywhere; rather, we are arguing that racism, nonetheless, operates everywhere that capitalism does. This is precisely why the theory of racial

capitalism serves as an excellent foundation for a "geography of gentrification," which Slater (2004: 1192) envisions would require an examination of the "contextual specificities of the gentrification process whilst retaining a sensitivity to more general factors that constitute the engine behind the process."

Further, the engine of racial capitalism and neoliberal urban development practice is not just a Global North phenomenon, but also a developmental feature found in Latin America and elsewhere in the Global South (Díaz-Parra, 2021; Garmany and Richmond, 2020; Gotham, 2014; Jones and Varley, 1999; Mele, 2017; Rhodes, 2010; Summers, 2019; Valle, 2018). Here too, class is used by powerful actors as a proxy for race in these efforts, particularly in places where race and class correlate strongly (Valle, 2017; see also Brahinsky, 2014; Carlson, 2020). And it is the ideology of colorblindness that provides justification for this erasure. In a move that resonates more than a little with tendencies in the gentrification scholarship that we identified above, powerful urban actors in governmental and private development roles routinely deny the enduring significance of race as an ordering technology and instead redefine it as merely a matter of individual identity (Mele, 2016). In this sense, the so-called race-neutral urbanism—like colorblind ideology broadly—does not so much ignore race as render it depoliticized, individualized, *merely* cultural (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Forman, 2004; Omi and Winant, 2014). This is how, for example, the purveyors of neoliberal urban (re)development in the United States legitimize real estate markets as race-neutral (Taylor, 2019) while simultaneously manipulating Blackness as what Summers (2019: 4) strikingly terms "an aesthetic infrastructure of gentrification": Blackness is harvested from Black people, flattened into disembodied, aesthetic markers of difference that are used to attract attention and new investment to areas targeted for redevelopment (see also Bledsoe and Wright, 2019: 16; Bonds, 2019; Loyd and Bonds, 2018). Summers (2019: 160) describes the ambivalence inherent in this process as held together through the practice of "unseeing" Blackness—adopting an affective orientation that valorizes Black aesthetics while continuing to ignore, exclude, and devalue Black people.

Similar forms of ambivalence have been noted by scholars elsewhere, such as in the cases of gentrifiers who blithely self-identify as non-racist "diversity seekers" in the Netherlands (Blokland and Van Eijk, 2010), self-proclaimed anti-racist "white liberal" placemakers in Los Angeles (Bloch and Meyer, 2019), and others (see Gotham, 2014; Ley, 2003; Mele, 2013, 2016; Rhodes, 2010; Zukin, 2010). Such work has added to our understanding of how neoliberal urbanism relies on the ideology of colorblindness to obscure the centrality of race and racism within gentrification processes. And it points to the need for a theory of racism that extends beyond merely describing the unequal outcomes of processes like gentrification. Racism must be accounted for as the active, embodied practices that materialize racial hierarchies through the unequal distribution of resources, harms, and capacities among people (Ahmed, 2004b; Gilmore, 2002), including the capacities to make place.

It is this approach that we argue remains especially underdeveloped in gentrification scholarship, and we suggest that rectifying this will entail developing methodologies better suited to grasping the affective mobilization of racial abstraction in action—occasionally as explicit hostility but arguably more pervasively today as highly ambivalent, yet no less violent, forms of placemaking/placetaking. As a step toward outlining what such a methodological reorientation might look like, we invite readers to consider the framework of aversive racism.

Continuation

In his account of proximate dislocation, Bloch (2022b) speaks to how displacement is so highly localized in impoverished communities that it fails to show up in the data that represents the in- and out-migration of bodies. For Bloch (Bloch, 2022b), proximate dislocation, or what Fullilove and Wallace (2011) identify as "serial forced displacement," consists of moving from one apartment building to another on the same block, and then back again after successive routine evictions,

which is an expected part of the rental landscape in poor communities. Such movement and concomitant displacement-induced trauma is not captured in census data and often eludes even the empathetic ethnographic gaze. Bloch argues that it takes personal narrative recounted in autoethnographic reflection to capture what it means to be displaced, discriminated against, and made delinquent in such contexts. The data revealing such displacement is held at the scale of the body, which evades typical methods of counting in traditional gentrification research.

Fine-grained work on personal experience with displacement pressures is relatively marginal within gentrification methodologies. While emotion has long been at the center of feminist thinking on placemaking (Davidson and Bondi, 2004; Davidson and Milligan, 2004), experiential studies on place-taking that understand the depth of attachment and how "urban trauma becomes hard-wired in place" (Pain, 2019) via evocative and somatically stored memory have been slower to materialize (cf. Bloch, 2022b; see also Drozdzewski et al., 2016; Hayes-Conroy, 2018; Till, 2012; Simandan, 2019). We do, however, have models for such approaches. Kern's work has been generative in connecting emotion and the body to an understanding of more-than-material displacement. As Kern (2012: 34) puts it, the body is a critical site for the study of gentrification, and "the potential value of increased attention to emotion and embodiment lies … in the possibility of articulating the experience of displacement on new terms, taking into account affective experiences, symbolic displacement, and the displacement of emotional landscapes." As Kern (2016: 443) further argues, there are certainly "subtle forms of exclusion that, despite being less 'material' … still materialize in bodies and practices as place meanings are altered."

Following Kern and others working to engage with "displacement from a perspective that puts perceptions, feelings, and emotions in the forefront" (Valli, 2015: 1191), we too contend that there remains much work to be done not only to underscore the indelible connection between displacement and gentrification, but to formulate methodologies that will allow us to better understand how displacement functions as an embodied phenomenon. We, therefore, second Baker's (2021: 7) call for "research that pauses to pay attention to [and] explores the subjective and embodied experiences of displacement." Such a research agenda, he continues, is facilitated by methodologies that "involve continuities of history and space, ongoing forms of observation, and writing methods which describe [the] 'now'" (2020: 14).

Along with the need for a displacement methodology, geographers are well aware of the need to "fill the ethnographic void" (Lees, 2003) in urban-based research. The need to produce multifaceted methodologies in order to conduct research on a range of radically inclusive and otherwise metaphysical processes of placemaking has been expressed in various contexts within the discipline. For example, Dowling et al. (2017: 825) look to methodologies that advance more-than-human conceptualizations by seeking to "engage, research and re-present sensory experiences, emotions, affective atmospheres and flows of life." Similarly, multifaceted and non-representational methodologies, according to Lorimer (2005: 84), might expand "our once comfortable understanding of 'the social' and how it can be regarded as something researchable."

By way of focusing on the effects of aversive racism, we attend to an affective methodology with the inclusion of a Black geography research framework. We argue that a Black geographies approach, like a concerted conceptualization of Latino placemaking (Rios and Vazquez, 2012), provides the discreet and critically engaged methodologies which might attune researchers of gentrification to the importance of "shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions" that reveal, we argue, more-than-white placemaking capacities (Lorimer, 2005: 84).

In calling for a methodology guided by a reckoning with aversive racism and affective dimensions of displacement, we argue that a Black geographies approach, which ontologically and epistemologically "pays attention to multiple scales, discourses,

and concrete action" that form Black spatial expression, be at the center (Bledsoe, 2017: 34; see also Allen et al., 2019). Building on what Davidson (2023) and Soja (2010) identify as "metro morals" and "spatial justice," respectivly, a Black geographic methodology sparks critical inquiry about the making of what Anderson (2015) reveals as the "white space" of supposedly shared communities, and therefore allows us to more systematically question what McKittrick and Woods (2007: 5) refer to as the "normative practice of staking a claim to place." Such an intentional methodology likewise intervenes in what McKittrick (2011: 951) identifies as "the ongoing destruction of a black sense of place in the Americas," and, furthering Fullilove's (2016) point, relies on the counternarratives and reveals the mechanism by which neighborhood "improvements" spell disaster for Black communities for whom "urban renewal is Negro removal."

The collecting of such counter narratives in situ can be accomplished by way of a reflexive attentiveness to Black spatialities as a model for critical rootedness in "Black humanity and Black spatial and aspirational imaginaries within the milieu of Black place-making practices" (Harris, 2019: 5). In short and simply put, a Black geographies methodology used to identify affective displacement wrought by aversive racist practices must enable geographers to, as Harris (2019: 1) argues, "challenge data collected by way of a white normative gaze and/or white supremacist epistemologies." It is here, at this theoretical, methodological, activist-oriented, and "most intimately 'sovereign' scale" (Gilmore, 2002: 16) of agentic and autoethnographic inquiry that the realities of displacement beyond dislocation can better be represented in the literature on gentrification.

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