

“EROTIC-PARK SLOPE”

The Everyday Racialization of Sexualized Interactions in (super)Gentrified Brooklyn

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Abstract

Through a two-year (2011-2012) urban ethnography, with over 60 interviews from residents and key community/institutional stakeholders, this research investigates the social significance of cross-race sexualized interactions and encounters occurring in the super-gentrified neighborhood of Brooklyn's Park Slope in New York City (Lees 2003; Slater 2003; Butler and Lees 2006; Manzo 2012).

Since the late 1960s, this community have changed from working class neighborhood occupied by minority and white ethnic residents, to neighborhood which is strongly associated with gentrification and is currently inhabited by large numbers of middle- and upper-class whites who are not strongly identified with longstanding white ethnic communities. While past gentrification research has focused on racial/ethnic diversity within different waves of residents and "communities of Yuppies", by using public sexuality as a symbolic interactional lens, this investigation includes both residents and other users of public space/resources (shoppers, socializers, etc.) to highlight the high frequency of encounters which are both cross-class and most frequently cross-racial/cross-ethnic.

This research argues that in a gentrifying neighborhood, there is substantial slippage between White as a racial/ethnic category and White as a proxy for lifestyle and consumption practices associated with particular incoming residential groups. In this case, the way of living often serves to "cover" racial/ethnic differences within the community of gentrifiers, aka those with shared class, lifestyle, and consumption practices.

Keywords: Conflicting dimensions of Race/Ethnicity, Super Gentrification, Public Sexuality, Urban Intersectionalities, Feminist Geographies, Brooklyn.

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