

Microgeographies of Retailing and Gentrification

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ABSTRACT *It has long been argued that gentrification is a process of consumption as well as production but, in the main, analyses of consumption and gentrification have only tangentially or anecdotally considered the retail spaces of gentrified neighbourhoods. In this paper we investigate the nature of the retail landscapes of gentrification, using empirical evidence from Sydney, Australia. We point to micro retailscapes that differ between gentrified neighbourhoods that suggest a divergence of consumption practices between different groups of gentrifiers. These consumption practices are considered both in terms of their relations to identity (through food and the conception of the body) and to the spaces of the city. The paper concludes by drawing out the implications for future research on the consumption practices of the new middle class and the working class in an international context.*

KEY WORDS *Gentrification; retailing; Sydney; new middle class; consumption.*

Introduction

It has long been argued that gentrification is a process of consumption as well as production (see Lees 1994a; Hamnett 1991). Living in inner-city neighbourhoods, in houses with a certain aesthetic sensibility is not only a strategy of capital, but also a lifestyle choice that expresses the identities of those who belong to a new middle class of professionals and service workers. Mills (1988), for example, has suggested that gentrifiers seek to consume a particular home-based aesthetic. More recently, attention has turned towards other consumption experiences of gentrifiers. Most notably, May (1996) has examined the ways in which the consumption of 'exotic' foods is deployed by gentrifiers to connote with ethnic diversity and a sense of the cosmopolitan, points echoed in Sydney by Hage (1997). Our goal in this paper is to further extend understandings of gentrification and consumption by focusing on a form of consumption comparatively absent in the debate: retailing. We make the argument that the retail spaces of gentrified neighbourhoods reflect the consumption practices and identities of gentrifiers, but that the nature of these spaces in different gentrifying neighbourhoods varies quite significantly. The first part of the paper establishes why and how a focus on the retail spaces of gentrification may be insightful. We then explore these links between retail spaces and the identities of gentrifiers through empirical work conducted in Sydney.

Gentrification and retailing

The question we pursue in this paper is: what sorts of *retailing* spaces and practices are associated with gentrification? Anecdotal evidence suggests that a central component of the gentrification landscape is its 'retailscape', the mixture of shops, restaurants and services that attract people to, and surround, the lifestyles of the gentrifiers. For example, for Beauregard (1986), the consumption style of the new middle class engenders new consumption spaces outside of the home, principally restaurants, cinemas and nightclubs. Similarly, McDowell (1997) comments tangentially that the location of gyms and other similar services adjacent to, or in, inner London is far from coincidental. Rather, their location is a reflection of their use by those for whom employment in inner London requires a healthy and carefully managed physical appearance. Starting from the position that gentrification involves new patterns and significance of consumption, Zukin (1990, p. 40) argues that 'gentrification's consumption markers are explicitly identified with a specific type and use of space'. This spatial form and use is more typically understood in residential terms, such as the architectural markers of Victoriana used by inner Melbourne residents to evince their distinctiveness (Jager 1986). But, suggests Zukin, gentrification's spatial form may also be in its more obvious consumption spaces like main streets. Here we see a proliferation of goods and services that cater to gentrifiers, with main streets starting as an enclave of upper-middle-class domestic consumption, then linking to new concentrations of creative capital such as in advertising, architecture and publishing (p. 50). Carpenter and Lees (1995) take up these cues in their sketch of the common elements of landscapes of consumption in gentrifying New York, London and Paris.

The most comprehensive study of retailing and gentrification has been undertaken by Ley (1996), who explicitly analyses the forms of retail change coincident with, and related to, gentrification. Retail districts like Vancouver's Kitsilano, for Ley, become important external markers of the cultural identity sought by gentrifiers. In the case of Kitsilano, 'hippy' retailing was originally significant. Second-hand stores predominated because of a concern with history, craft shops because they were anti mass merchandise, and health food for its obvious organic connotations. For Ley, what is most significant is the rebuttal of mass consumption conveyed by these stores:

Stores exuded the idiosyncrasy of individual retailers rather than the predictable uniformity of the chains; in a series of constant reversals, the old and the recycled were valued as well as the new and the fashionable; the hand-produced and organic were presented in place of the standardized and machine-produced; a personalized transaction between buyer and seller sought to rehabilitate retailing from the impersonality of corporate marketing. (p. 185)

It is also significant, according to Ley, that such 'hippy' retailing had a limited lifespan. By 1988 Kitsilano had undergone a process of embourgeoisement with a dramatic increase in the number of goods and services available 'that offer a heightening of experience, the shaping of a life-style and an identity around positional goods' (p. 302). This embourgeoisement is reflected in the Toronto neighbourhood of Yorkville in the early 1990s being described in terms of luxury. According to Ley 'Yorkville is now a place of consumption with style in mid-town Toronto, a tangle of galleries, French restaurants and boutiques' (p. 298).

These transformations of retail spaces that occur alongside the gentrification process are not surprising in light of recent geographical research on consumption, identity and

retailing. The buying of commodities has been identified as increasingly important to the construction of people's identities (e.g. Jackson & Thrift 1995). In other words, the types of commodities bought, such as clothes or foods, symbolise lifestyles and senses of self. The visibility of the consumption practices of the new middle class is a key characteristic of gentrification. For some, the consumption landscapes of gentrification, especially the residential environment (Mills 1988; Ley 1996), are distinctive and set the new middle class of gentrifiers apart from other members of the middle class. According to Jager (1986), for example, the purchase and renovation of Victorian terraces enables members of the new middle class to express their difference from an established suburban middle class. It is through consumption, then, that gentrifiers seek to establish their distinctiveness.

Consumption, identity and retailing

In the main, links between consumption and identity via gentrification have ignored other aspects of identity, especially gender and ethnicity. Yet also important in understanding consumption is the argument that identity is multi-faceted, including elements of class, gender, race and ethnicity. In relation to geographies of consumption, Jackson and Thrift (1995) make the argument that consumption produces many forms of identities. Thus in what follows we consider the intersections of gender, ethnicity and class through the retail landscapes of gentrification. It may be, for example, that patterns of consumption in gentrified neighbourhoods are both classed and raced. According to Hage (1997), 'cosmo-multiculturalism', or preferences for international food and demographic diversity, is also a construction of the dominant, Anglo-Celtic society in that it distances gentrifiers from multicultural others. A similar aesthetic, rather than lived, appreciation of exotic food and cultural diversity was expressed by the inner London residents in May's (1996) study. There, residents expressed a liking for the availability of exotic food and other cultures in their neighbourhoods, whilst distancing themselves from substantial cross-cultural contact. New middle-class identities may, in other words, be Anglo-Celtic. These identities may also be gendered, just as gentrification is a gendered process (Bondi 1999). For instance, are there gendered constructions of the body displayed in gentrified neighbourhoods? We attempt to answer some of these questions in the following analysis.

Retailing plays a central role in both consumption practices in general and in relation to gentrification more specifically. In a general sense, retail spaces — like shopping centres, department stores and main streets — are spaces in which commodities are bought and sold, and their meanings negotiated. Jackson's (1999) work in North London, for instance, shows how consumers negotiate their identities in and through particular shopping centres. It is also the case that retail spaces can also be locally embedded and therefore geographically variable. Crewe and Lowe (1995) document how the locational strategies of some retailers are directed, at least in part, by cultural considerations such as the identity or sense of place of a particular neighbourhood. Consequently, they argue that the particular mix of shops in a local area can reinforce a distinct geographical retail identity that then attracts further similar forms of investment. Such microgeographies of retailing also create distinct locales with which individual consumers can identify and in some senses develop their sense of identity. The presence of distinctive retail identities seems to have particular pertinence to gentrification and retailing in Sydney, where the identity of local shopping districts is used both to mark out the identity of the neighbourhoods and attract potential gentrifiers.

The 'urban village' atmosphere of many inner Sydney neighbourhoods is frequently remarked upon as distinctive and desirable in both general press reports and in real estate marketing campaigns (Bridge forthcoming; Stymes 2000).

These microgeographies of retailing also alert us to possible differences between gentrified neighbourhoods. Differences in the gentrification process across nations (e.g. Badcock 1989; Lees 1994b), within nations and within cities (Butler 1997) are increasingly highlighted. Butler's (1997) work on London implies that being a gentrifier in Hackney is different from living in gentrified Hampstead. He points to the material and lifestyle differences that exist between public sector professional employees on lower incomes but with considerable cultural capital and largely Labour Party voting, with those professionals working in the private sector on high incomes and more conservative orientations. These strands of the middle class are beginning to occupy different neighbourhoods that have all experienced gentrification in terms of their prior working-class histories but are now developing distinct ambiances depending on the types of gentrifiers that occupy them. Pressures in the housing market mean that the income differences between fractions of the middle class are becoming evident in spatial separation in different neighbourhoods. The question that interests us in this paper is whether there are also distinctive retail ambiances in gentrified neighbourhoods. In other words, does the particular ensemble of commodity outlets and performance spaces in the gentrified high street point to evidence of distinct consumption aesthetics developing in different neighbourhoods?

In this section we have traced conceptual connections between the acknowledged characteristics of gentrifiers, their associated consumption practices, and possible retail implications. Whilst retailing has not been systematically analysed in the gentrification literature, two avenues of investigation can be drawn out of geographic understandings of retailing. The first is the role that retailing plays in the construction of identities through its encouragement of particular sets of consumption practices. We are especially interested in the sorts of consumption practices supported in the retail spaces of gentrified neighbourhoods. Second, retail geography alerts us to the existence of microgeographies of retailing, or locally distinctive ensembles of retail establishments. Thus we are also interested in exploring whether the retail spaces of gentrified neighbourhoods are geographically distinct.

The retail fabric of four inner Sydney neighbourhoods

We explore the nature of retailing in gentrifying neighbourhoods through a case study of four neighbourhoods in Sydney's inner west (Figure 1). Sydney is an appropriate site for this analysis because of its diversity and the longevity of gentrification there. The social upgrading of older working-class housing and neighbourhoods began in the inner eastern neighbourhood of Paddington in the 1970s, extending throughout the inner western suburbs in the 1980s and 1990s (Engels 1999; Kendig 1979). Table 1 illustrates the demographic characteristics of these neighbourhoods. In Balmain, house prices are highest, coincident with a large number of highly paid professionals. Rozelle is contiguous with Balmain, but with slightly lower house prices and a more mixed population. In retail terms, Balmain and Rozelle are served by a long main street — Darling Street, with hubs at either end. In both these neighbourhoods the housing stock tends to be a mixture of brick terraces and renovated and extended weatherboard 'workers' cottages'. Glebe and Newtown, on the other hand, are also dominated by brick terrace houses, similarly renovated and extended. The main street of Glebe —

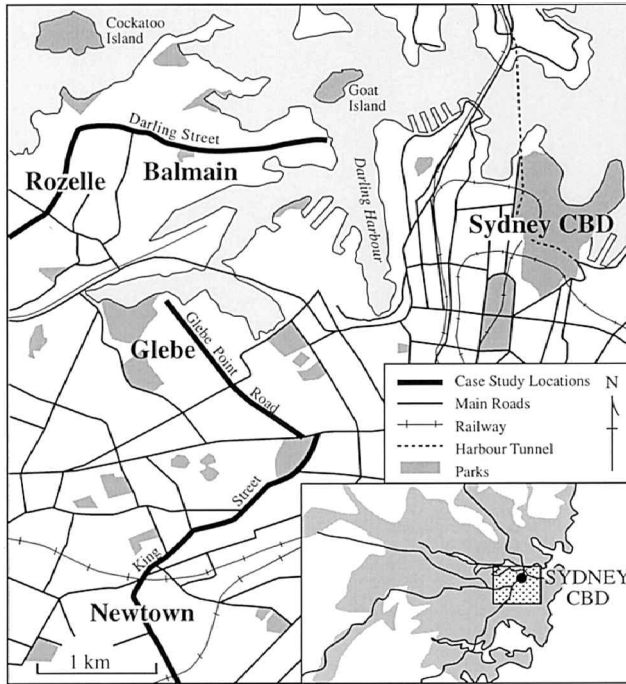


FIGURE 1. Case study locations in inner Sydney.

Glebe Point Road — hosts a variety of shops and businesses, and is similar in length to Newtown’s King Street, which is also a main thoroughfare to the city centre. Newtown boasts a more mixed population with a considerable number of university students. It is also home to a large gay population. Glebe is also mixed but along different lines (see Engels 1999). It has a large public housing stock, and hence the lowest median income of all four neighbourhoods. It also has a significant number of professionals and high house prices (second only to Balmain). Common to all these neighbourhoods is their image as places to eat, shop and be seen. This image is promulgated by the Sydney media, where food, and its locations, have become something of an obsession. According to one journalist ‘restaurants and cafes have played a major role in the ascendancy of the inner west. As the number of restaurants, cinemas and cafes have increased exponentially, the inner west has gained a certain cachet’ (Stymes 2000). Similarly, a recent profile of Sydney’s ‘eat streets’ included all four neighbourhoods discussed here, and a derisory comment on Balmain drew a considerable number of responses from residents and businesses alike.

The empirical discussion that follows is based on two forms of information and analysis. The first is a straightforward inventory of these main streets. We document the types of retail establishments found on the main streets of the neighbourhoods of Balmain, Rozelle, Glebe and Newtown and classify each of these in terms of the types of retail outlet or service provided. This information allows us to present an overview of the composition of these retail spaces and compare them with what is known of the consumption practices of gentrifiers. Whilst we are aware that it is not only local

TABLE 1. Selected socio-economic characteristics of the four neighbourhoods

	Newtown	Glebe	Rozelle	Balmain
Number of people	13 778	13 601	6088	12 173
Percentage aged (years):				
0–19	13	18	17	17
20–34	45	36	34	30
35–49	24	21	28	27
50–64	10	12	12	15
65+	7	9	9	10
Median age (years)	32	32	34	36
Percentage of population	62	60	68	69
Australian born				
Managers, administrators and professionals as percentage of those in labour force	34	45	46	55
Percentage of households:				
Couple with children	22	20	30	32
Couple without children	20	16	23	22
One-parent family	7	13	10	8
Group household	19	14	11	11
One-person household	17	17	13	15
Percentage of dwellings owner/purchaser occupied	39	27	53	48
Median weekly individual income (\$)	450	350	550	550
Median house price (\$)	335 000	460 000	429 000	565 000

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (1996).

residents who frequent these retail spaces, it does seem reasonable to assume that local residents make up the greatest proportion of their shoppers. Our second form of information gathering and analysis is cultural, focusing on the more aesthetic and symbolic dimensions of these spaces. In particular, we collected information on menu details, food styles, shop names, advertising strategies and architectural styles (see Goss 1999). We were interested here in the symbolic systems of these retail spaces — how they communicate meaning and the connections between these meanings and other symbolisms of gentrification. Our intention is not to draw direct parallels between what we read in these retail spaces and the consumption practices and identities of those using them. Rather, we analyse these material forms and their associated symbols in order to gain more understanding of the range of meanings available to consumers. Whilst this methodology clearly has shortfalls in relation to the meanings derived by actual consumers, it does enable an understanding of the connections between the symbolic workings of these spaces and the well-known symbolic attributes of gentrifiers.

The composition of establishments in these main streets is shown in Figure 2. Approximately one-third of outlets sell some kind of commodity, followed closely by restaurants, then services, by which we mean local services like real estate agents, laundromats, dry cleaners and solicitors. Some housing remains, especially in Glebe, with a small proportion of premises vacant when we took our inventory. Community uses include facilities like libraries, community centres and seniors' centres, a comparatively minor use of space. More conventional entertainment venues — live theatre, night-clubs, pubs — were not significant, with the exception of Newtown.

There are a number of general features of the retailscapes of these inner west

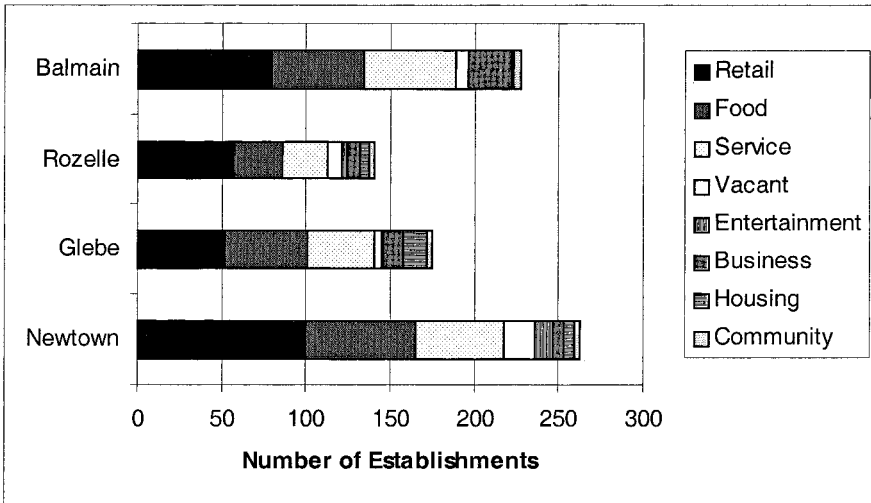


FIGURE 2. Composition of establishments in the four neighbourhoods.

Source: authors' field surveys.

neighbourhoods that require comment. First is the lack of 'chain' stores in any of the categories. With the exception of supermarkets in Balmain and Newtown, franchised wine and beer stores in all neighbourhoods, and a bakery franchise called 'Bakers' Delight', retail outlets on these streets were not part of a chain of stores. The same applies to services, with the exception of some real estate agents. Sydney's retail landscapes provide a particularly sensitive indicator of the balance of forces in gentrified neighbourhoods due to the absence of retail chains of cafés and bars, as well as shops, so common elsewhere in the gentrified neighbourhoods of Western capitalist countries. It may be that there is more scope for local innovation in terms of commodities sold and consumption styles as well as the local retailscape matching local consumption practices. A second point is that these neighbourhoods are places of business as well, although much more so in Balmain than the other three places. Just over 10 per cent of the retail/commercial operations in Balmain are businesses that do not directly cater for the local community. They cover the offices of property developers, word processing/secretarial services and small creative sector businesses like architects and design firms.

Eating in and eating out

The consumption of food has been identified as a key marker of new middle-class identities. This group is 'money rich but time poor' which means they have a higher propensity to eat out. Also, the consumption of particular cuisines, especially in a restaurant setting, has been identified as one of the ways in which the group establishes its difference, or distinction (see May 1996). Finally, the identity of these streets is highly dependent on food, as mentioned above. The centrality of food is borne out by our analysis. Places to eat food are central components of these main streets, comprising between 20 and 30 per cent of businesses (Figure 2). There are a number of ways that these food outlets are connected to gentrification and identity.

TABLE 2. Restaurant mix

	Newtown	(%)	Glebe	(%)	Rozelle	(%)	Balmain	(%)
Café	19	29.2	20	40.0	9	31.0	10	34.5
Thai	9	13.8	1	2.0	5	17.2	4	13.8
Indian	5	7.7	6	12.0	0	0.0	4	13.8
Italian	5	7.7	5	10.0	3	10.3	7	24.1
Vietnamese	4	6.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	10.3
Greek	3	4.6	1	2.0	0	0.0	2	6.9
Take-away	3	4.6	7	14.0	6	20.7	11	37.9
Chinese	2	3.1	0	0.0	1	3.4	0	0.0
Indonesian	2	3.1	1	2.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Turkish	2	3.1	1	2.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
African	1	1.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
European	1	1.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Japanese	1	1.5	1	2.0	0	0.0	1	3.4
Lebanese	1	1.5	1	2.0	1	3.4	1	3.4
Malaysian	1	1.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Mexican	1	1.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
ModOz	1	1.5	3	6.0	4	13.8	8	27.6
Nepalese	1	1.5	2	4.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Noodle	1	1.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	6.9
Traditional	1	1.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Vegetarian	1	1.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Portuguese	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	3.4
Thai/Malay	0	0.0	1	2.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
US	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	3.4
Total	65		50		29		55	

Source: authors' field surveys.

One link between food and gentrification is through coffee. As seen in Table 2, the most common type of restaurant is what we classified as 'café', a place selling coffee and light meals. The setting was informal and relaxed. Many of these cafés are open to the street to enhance the ambiance of conviviality and a safe consumption space. As Michael Smith (1996) has pointed out in his analysis of Starbucks,¹ the consumption of coffee in relaxed, conspicuous environments has become a key component of some class identities. Our analysis adds a finer geographical grain to Smith's work. The café culture in these neighbourhoods is also locally embedded, in at least two ways. First, none of the cafés were part of brands or chains of stores that operate nationally or even across Sydney. Indeed, there remains considerable speculation as to whether Starbucks or any sort of coffee chain could succeed in Sydney (Saville 2000). Second, coffee is sold, or uniqueness established, through references to Italy and 'Italianness', a reflection of the popular recognition that it was post-war Italian migrants who 'taught' Sydneysiders an appreciation for coffee. These references are most obvious in the names of cafés, like 'La Biga Roma', 'Bar Contessa' and 'Bar Lazio'.

A second connection between gentrifiers and food is captured in Jon May's (1996) phrase 'a taste of the exotic'. According to May, members of a 'new cultural class' in inner London use their taste for, and experience of, exotic food as a means of sustaining their class position. These gentrifiers expressed that the consumption of authentic, exotic food was the key distinction of their location. As summarised by Cook and Crang (1996, p. 136) 'these urban spaces not only allow the digestion of foods but also

practices of flanerie in which, even if not eaten, construction of the global and its parts can be gazed at and provide imaginary gratifications'. Similarly, in Sydney, Ghassan Hage (1997) has recently argued that 'ethnic eating' is a classed discourse aimed at establishing a cultural distinction between the cosmopolitan inhabitants of inner Sydney, and the residents of western Sydney. In particular, the residents interviewed by Hage used 'ethnic eating' (again where authenticity was the key element) to express their 'classiness' (p. 136).

If we look at the sorts of food available in these restaurants then the 'exotic' figures prominently. In all of the neighbourhoods more than 23 cuisines were available to be consumed, including some familiar to Sydney residents like Indian, Indonesian, Italian, Thai, Vietnamese and Lebanese, but also including the more unfamiliar Mexican, European, US, Portuguese and Nepalese cuisines. It is certainly the case, then, that those who wish to consume 'exotic' food can certainly do so in these neighbourhoods, especially in contrast to the limited range of cuisines found in Australian suburbs (see Mullins *et al.* 1999). It is important to note, however, the considerable differences between the four neighbourhoods. In terms of both range of cuisines, and the relative predominance of 'ethnic eating', Newtown is distinctly different from the other three neighbourhoods. All but two of the cuisines are to be found in Newtown (see Table 2), and ethnic food comprises about 60 per cent of the available restaurants. This is not to say that 'culinary multiculturalism' (a term used by Hage 1997) does not characterise the other neighbourhoods. It is to say that it is far more dominant in Newtown, followed, in order, by Glebe, Rozelle and Balmain. Interestingly, in these three neighbourhoods ethnic eating takes on a much more transient form, being based in the markets held there on Saturdays and Sundays. These are retail spaces that consist of stalls operated by small operators selling homemade crafts, second-hand goods, and food. Both Balmain and Rozelle, for example, emphasise the variety of fresh, 'authentic' food available there.

There is another sort of connection between food retailing and gentrification that needs to be emphasised, evident in the category of 'modern Australian'. This is the cuisine favoured by cookery writers and restaurant reviewers, consisting of such dishes as 'wok fried Blue swimmer crab omelette' and 'Atlantic salmon tartare with saffron linguine, tomato and chive vinaigrette'. This food is also cosmopolitan, but more in the sense of hybridity than authenticity. In this cuisine, Australian sensibilities like fresh seafood are married with Asian influences. In these four neighbourhoods we see this sort of food offered in restaurants such as 'Omnivore' and 'Pocket's Creative Cuisine' in Balmain. Modern Australian is much more dominant in Balmain; indeed, it is the most important sort of food after take-aways and cafés. As well as geographical differences, different constructions of ethnicity are evident here. The food landscape of Newtown suggests that non-Anglo ethnicities are to be appreciated through consumption practices that emphasise diversity and authenticity (the latter evidenced by the frequent use of the word 'authentic' in menus and on restaurant windows). In Balmain, the consumption of ethnicity is to be mediated by a sense of sophisticated 'Australianness'. In sum, these retailscapes highlight not only the role of representation of ethnicity in consumption spaces, but also its variability over space.

The role of food in new middle-class identities extends beyond restaurants and eating out. Also important in these neighbourhoods is what we could call 'eating in', or buying food to prepare and cook at home. Food shops also represent tasteful consumption, from delis to health food stores and greengrocers selling only the highest quality produce from a range of authentic local sources and 'exotic' locations (Zukin 1990;

TABLE 3. Mixture of retail establishments in the four neighbourhoods

	Newtown	(%)	Glebe	(%)	Rozelle	(%)	Balmain	(%)
Food	22	22	9	17.6	16	28.1	21	26.6
Clothing	20	20	5	9.8	3	5.3	22	27.8
Home	19	19	9	17.6	18	31.6	15	19.0
Books	10	10	8	15.7	2	3.5	3	3.8
Knick-knack	10	10	9	17.6	7	12.3	2	2.5
Secondhand	7	7	2	3.9	3	5.3	0	0.0
Pharmacy	5	5	2	3.9	3	5.3	2	2.5
Music	4	4	3	5.9	0	0.0	3	3.8
Computer	1	1	1	2.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Personal	1	1	1	2.0	1	1.8	3	3.8
Stationery	1	1	0	0.0	1	1.8	1	1.3
News	0	0	2	3.9	3	5.3	3	3.8
Pets	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	2.5
Sport		0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	2.5
Total	100		51		57		79	

Source: authors' field surveys.

May 1996). Supermarket food retailing is certainly an option in these main streets, though it is overlain by other forms of food retailing. There is a conventional supermarket in Balmain and a small grocery store in Rozelle. Newtown's only supermarket is a Woolworths Metro, a nationally owned and operated store that explicitly attempts not to be a supermarket. It highlights fresh and prepared produce and positions itself as catering to busy people who find grocery shopping tedious (see Pritchard 2000).

Even more interesting is the proliferation of stores selling 'specialty' food, captured in Table 3 in the category of retail food. Difference, homemade and gourmet are the key themes here. There are numerous delis, and even conventional butchers make the availability of organic meat a selling point. Organic food is also prominent, simply advertised like the 'Good Grocer' and 'Everything Organic'. Most well known in terms of gourmet food is 'Simone Logue's Fine Foods' in Balmain, selling cakes, pies and other 'home prepared' ready-to-eat meals. Although Rozelle does have outlets that represent the overt consumption styles of a gentrified neighbourhood, its more transitional and 'local' character is represented by the highest figure for food retailing as a proportion of all food sales (including restaurants and take-aways). A final component of food retailing is desserts, like 'Belle Fleur Chocolates' in Rozelle and 'Just Desserts' and 'Pudding Shop' in Glebe. Our analysis hence adds another layer to the ways that food consumption has been understood in relation to gentrification. These retailscapes certainly support 'eating out', but also prominent is the buying of gourmet food to 'eat in'.

Consuming and creating home

Many of the discussions of gentrification have focused on the importance of a particular style of house and its furnishings. The main streets of these gentrifying neighbourhoods certainly confirm and support the importance of home. As in food retailing, no major furniture chain is found in these streets, neither are there large hardware stores that presumably cater to the do-it-yourself renovators. The processes of upgrading are confined to the interior designs and furnishings of gentrified dwellings rather than the

physical renovation of the properties. Smaller, but always 'tasteful', items for the home can be purchased from these main streets. Home decoration is important, reflected in the predominance of linen, window coverings, flowers, picture framers and upholsterers available. Design and individuality are emphasised. For example, there is a store in Glebe Point Road that prominently announces itself as a seller of Alessi merchandise; just down the road from 'Australian Living' and 'Architectural Heritage' selling new and old furniture, and restored fireplaces. There are notable geographical differences here. For example, the differences between Rozelle and the contiguous but 'smarter' neighbourhood of Balmain are emphasised by the fact that proportionally almost twice the number of retail outlets in Rozelle are devoted to the home and the garden and to second-hand shops (see Table 3). Rozelle is the only one of the neighbourhoods with children's shops indicating a greater family orientation in Rozelle compared with the classic childless partners of the more consolidated gentrified neighbourhoods.

The shop names given to 'home' retail outlets in these neighbourhoods also signal exclusive consumption. This is particularly true in Balmain, which has the more exclusive shops and plays hardest on the knowing consumption of its clientele, especially by punning the names. 'Blind Attraction' is a blinds and small furniture shop. 'Prima Cosa' is an up-market kitchen decoration shop and 'Holy Sheet' a linen store. In Glebe the names tend to be more prosaic — 'Architectural Heritage' (selling antiques and restored fireplaces), 'Metropolitan Hardware', and 'Australian Living' (furniture store). Home stores in Newtown emphasise trendy styles — 'Studio Z Furniture Gallery', 'Nova Vita-Recycled Shop' with a sign 'preserving our environment' and selling mainly wooden furniture, and 'Citizen Cane Interiors' selling cane furniture, cushions and vases. The ethnic theme is maintained in 'Eastern Flair' and in the now widely adopted fashion for Futon beds, sold in Newtown in 'Fantasy Futons' and 'Futon Beds'. Yet retailers are able to trade on local production or Australian goods such as the 'handmade in Australia' sign at 'Art of Stone' selling candlesticks, vases and the like. The traces of hippy retailing are found in the numerous knick-knack shops on King Street such as 'Beyond' selling jewellery and incense burners, and 'Noo Noo' selling 'tribal'-style gifts and jewellery. Overall, the differences in the retail signage indicates contrasts between comfortable knowing consumption in Balmain, emphasising sophistication and wit, and the more hip slogans on the shops in King Street, Newtown — with Glebe lying somewhere in between. The ambience of these retailscapes suggests a younger set of consumers in Newtown in the trendy 'communication' professions, especially the media, advertising, PR, computing, design, performing arts and the more well-established traditional professions of finance, insurance and law in Balmain — a fact supported by statistical evidence and the marketing strategies of estate agents in the area (Bridge forthcoming).

Creating and managing the self

Creating and managing mind and body can be partially achieved through consumption. McDowell (1997) suggests that such body management may be important because of the occupations of the new middle class. Moreover, for Bourdieu, bodies and their associated consumption practices are classed (see Dowling 1999). The middle classes are more concerned with fitness and 'healthy eating'. This sort of self, and specifically the idea of the self as a project, is reflected in these main streets. Just as the home is an ongoing project, so too, it seems, is the new middle-class self. Like David Ley's findings in Kitsilano, fashion and clothing were important, with similar themes to those



FIGURE 3. Composition of personal service establishments in the four neighbourhoods.
Source: authors' field surveys.

identified in relation to food. Designer 'names' (not mass-produced brands) and individuality are evident. Interestingly, in Balmain the shop names aim to communicate an altogether more chic image with single names offering minimalist, exotic or ironic imagery — take a number of the clothes shops — 'Men', 'Acte', 'Suyu'; 'Strelitzia', 'Naked'. In Newtown there is a semiotics of trend setting, with clothing stores named 'Rave', 'Seduce', 'Miss Behave' and 'Ripoff' (second hand). This trendifying extends into the types of retail outlets not usually associated with the front lines of fashion — such as an optometrist with corrugated iron effects on the walls.

Many services were also about self-management. Certainly there were the conventional doctors, dentists, physiotherapists, or 'mainstream' medicine that you would find in most Sydney main streets (see Figure 3). But there were also gyms and personal fitness trainers, with names like 'Body Corporate' and 'Phyne Physique'. More startling were the abundant alternative therapies. In Balmain, the 'Balmain Centre' housed a massage therapist, acupuncture, homoeopath and herbalist, whilst in 'Mystery's Complete New Age Centre' there was a bookshop, clairvoyant, workshop and psychic reading. In Glebe we find 'The Meditation Space' and 'The Glebe School of Yoga'. The concentration in Newtown is greater, including 'Body and Beyond' and 'The Healing Centre'. Figure 3 suggests, then, different strategies of body and self-management. In Newtown and Glebe, the maintenance of a healthy mind–body connection seems paramount, whereas in Rozelle and Balmain the management of appearance (hairdressers, beauty parlours) predominates. In all these retailscapes, nevertheless, the key mark of distinction appears to be well-cared-for body.

Even conventional purveyors of personal service like hairdressers were characterised by a strategy of distinction. Names and advertising that either represented local connections (e.g. 'Balmain Crop Shop Opposite the Cop Shop', 'Tiger Hairdressers' — Tigers being the local football team — or playing to recent international trends in fashion and clubbing, such as the mainstreaming of certain elements from S&M culture, like 'Headmistress: Discipline for Hair in Newtown'). The self of the gentrifier,

in summary, is one where mind and body are to be connected through both mainstream and alternative therapies, whilst simultaneously maintaining status.

Summary and implications

Our analysis in this paper suggests that retailing is certainly an interesting window on the types of consumption practices associated with gentrification. Most simply, the commodities sold, style, architecture and naming strategies of stores located in the retail spaces of these gentrified neighbourhoods confirm the consumption practices of the new middle class identified elsewhere. In particular, our analysis underlines the importance of restaurant eating and individualised rather than mass consumption in all spheres. But we have also highlighted forms of consumption rarely remarked upon. These include the buying of gourmet food to cook and/or reheat at home, and the importance of mind and body management in the self of the gentrifier. Given their position in these retail spaces, food for home consumption and care of the self deserve much more in-depth study in the consumption practices of gentrifiers. Also worthy of further examination is the gendering of these landscapes. We were explicitly alert for gendered representations in retail spaces, yet found gender to be comparatively insignificant. Further work is required to establish whether this absence is due to the nature of these retail spaces and their representational strategies, the consumption practices of gentrifiers, or a combination of both.

This analysis of retailing in four different, but similar, neighbourhoods has also been instructive for the light it sheds on the geographical variation in gentrification and its consumption markers. We have clearly identified differentiation in the functional mix and names of retail outlets, and the overall retail ambiance of the four neighbourhoods. Newtown's retail landscape prioritises the consumption of 'exotic' food, maintenance of a healthy self through alternative therapies, and an image of being trendy. Glebe's food is characterised by cafés and a similar concern with alternative therapies. Rozelle and Balmain are very different. Rozelle is more focused on food, home and children's commodities, with a mixture of 'exotic' and modern Australian restaurants. Balmain has the most 'distinctive' retail landscape; one that emphasises the consumption of hybrid cuisines, designer clothing and food, and a carefully manicured physical appearance. This geographical diversity has at least two implications worth outlining.

Firstly, our analysis supports research that points to the importance of the microgeographies of retailing. These microgeographies represent, we argue, increasingly localised consumption landscapes (in terms of the production relations of retailing). This specialisation is not the sort that resulted in an enhanced visibility and the benefits of comparative buying that were the features of traditional models of retail geography. Now the retail experience is styles of consumption and the neighbourhood retail ambiance itself. There is a world of difference between the consumption habits of a middle-aged academic in Glebe and the wearing of designer minimalist chic of a young professional resident of Newtown. In this sense neighbourhood differentiation in retailing takes account of the generational effects in the consumption of commodities. The new middle class is also becoming increasingly differentiated in terms of economic capital and its consumption practices are becoming more diverse. These different consumption styles are represented in the mix of commodities, shop names and geographies of cuisine that are emerging even within the established inner west of Sydney. Still required is further investigation of the strategies of retailers and other institutions (for example, the state) that produce these microgeographies. Why is it that

retailers locate in these neighbourhoods? Are they different from retailers in other parts of Sydney?

Secondly, the degree to which Sydney's retailscapes are unique in showing a fine-grained differentiation between gentrified neighbourhoods needs to be explored. There is some discussion, for example, as to whether gentrification in Australian cities is different from that in the USA and UK (see Badcock 1989) and if Sydney's global connections make it distinctive even within the Australian context (Murphy & Watson 1997). A comparison of retailscapes in gentrified neighbourhoods in selected cities across the globe would potentially throw some light on the degree of consensus or diversity of the class practices. Another element that the Sydney case raises is the relative levels of commodification of the gentrification aesthetic in different cities across the world. The absence of retail chains might give gentrification a more nuanced and localised character in Sydney. In other Western cities the retailscapes and the commodity relations of gentrification might be more standardised. More finely textured local research is required, then; so too is international comparative research.

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NOTE

- [1] Starbucks is a multinational chain of cafés noted for its openness to the street and consistent, quality coffee. Originating in Seattle, USA, it is now found on most continents. The first (and thus far only) Sydney Starbucks opened in early 2000.

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