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Appropriation, Gentrification, Colonisation: Newly Synonymous?

Seth W. Mehl
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Abstracts

English Français
Appropriation, *gentrification*, and *colonisation* originated as precise technical terms. This study analyses examples of each word in recent mainstream online news texts, and demonstrates that all three have undergone semantic change, particularly metaphorisation and generalisation (cf. Geeraerts [2010: 26]). Language users tend to select and emphasise shared semantic features of each, to the exclusion of other semantic features, such that the terms are in some circumstances, for many language users, interchangeable. I provide factual evidence (cf. Wallis [2019]) or attestations (cf. Zgusta [1971]) of these terms' newly emerging semantic relationships, and I present evidence for *decolonisation* as a preferred contradictory antonym to all three (cf. Murphy [2010]). I analyse examples in which language users actively and critically employ these terms alongside each other, defining or negotiating meanings of each; and I explore possibilities for alternation in some shared attested syntagmatic combinations, such as the *appropriation*, *gentrification*, or (*de*)*colonisation of history*. I discuss mechanisms of change, with reference to the philological tradition (Sperber [1923], [1938]; Nerlich [1992]), structuralism (Ullmann [1963]), and cognitive semantics (Blank [1999]), and propose a process whereby affective charge motivates semantic generalisation in precise technical vocabulary when it begins to be used in contentious, fraught public debate.

Les termes anglais *appropriation*, *gentrification*, et *colonisation* sont originellement des termes techniques précis. Cette étude analyse des exemples de chaque terme dans des textes d'actualité récents en ligne et montre que tous trois ont subi un changement sémantique, en particulier de métaphorisation et de généralisation (cf. Geeraerts [2010 : 26]). Les locuteurs ont tendance à sélectionner et à mettre l'accent sur les caractéristiques sémantiques partagées de chacun des termes, à l'exclusion d'autres caractéristiques sémantiques, de sorte que les termes sont dans certaines circonstances, pour de nombreux locuteurs, interchangeables. Cet article fournit des exemples factuels (cf. Wallis [2019]) ainsi que des attestations (cf. Zgusta [1971]) des nouvelles relations sémantiques entretenues par ces termes, et présente des éléments attestant que le terme *decolonisation* est l'antonyme privilégié pour les trois termes (cf. Murphy [2010]). L'article propose une analyse des exemples dans lesquels les locuteurs utilisent conjointement ces termes de manière active et critique, en définissant ou en négociant le sens de chacun d'entre eux ; il explore également les possibilités d'alternance dans certaines combinaisons syntagmatiques attestées communes, telles que *appropriation*, *gentrification*, ou (*de*)*colonisation of history*. L'auteur discute finalement des mécanismes du changement sémantique, en se référant à la tradition philologique (Sperber [1923], [1938] ; Nerlich [1992]), au structuralisme (Ullmann [1963]) et à la sémantique cognitive (Blank [1999]), et propose un processus par lequel la charge affective motive la généralisation sémantique dans un vocabulaire technique précis lorsque ce dernier commence à être utilisé dans un débat public conflictuel et tendu.

Index terms

Mots-clés : généralisation sémantique, métaphorisation, synonymie, hyponymie, appropriation, embourgeoisement, colonisation, décolonisation, Raymond Williams
Keywords: semantic broadening, metaphorisation, synonymy, hyponymy, appropriation, gentrification, colonisation, decolonisation, Raymond Williams

Full text

Introduction

1 *Appropriation*, *gentrification*, and *colonisation* intersect in contemporary use with discourses of power and culture – and with each other, as evidenced in examples (1) and (2).

> (1) Penn said that he felt like this was colonization, rather than gentrification, but to me they mean the same thing in 2018. (*Complex*, 20 April, 2018, https://www.complex.com/sneakers/2018/04/the-gentrification-of-sneakers-is-killing-the-culture)
>
> (2) Gentrification is modern colonialism and is the physical manifestation of appropriation. (*University News*, 18 April, 2018 https://info.umkc.edu/unews/what-appropriation-and-gentrification-have-in-common/)

2 As this paper will show, all three words originated as precise technical terms, and all three have undergone semantic change: first, they have acquired established metaphorised senses (cf. Kay & Allan [2015: 75-77], Geeraerts [2010: 27], and Section 2 below); and second, they have more recently undergone semantic generalisation (cf. Kay & Allan [2015: 75-77], Geeraerts [2010: 27], and Section 2 below). I present evidence here, drawn from mainstream online news texts in 2018 and 2019, that these three words are in some circumstances, for many language users today, interchangeable; and that they exhibit semantic relations of synonymy and hyponymy, with *decolonisation* emerging as an antonym for all three (cf. Murphy [2010: 110-114], Geeraerts [2010: 82-87], and Section 2 below).

3 This study emerged from The Keywords Project, whose *Keywords for Today* [2018] 'updated' Raymond Williams's [1983] collection of essays on words whose multiple meanings are "contradictory" and "contested", leading to "cross purposes and confusion in public debate as well as in personal conversation" [The Keywords Project 2011-2016]. These multiple meanings often include senses newly emerging through ongoing semantic change (The Keywords Project [2011-2016]). At the project's 'Keywords Seminar' in 2016, twenty University of Pittsburgh postgraduate students "overwhelmingly voted *appropriation* the most important of the keywords that the seminar was discussing" [The Keywords Project 2018: 10]; I subsequently began exploring *appropriation* in mainstream online news texts. I view this as digitally updating Williams's methods for observing

contemporary semantics and use: Williams clipped examples from a few accessible paper news sources, whereas I set up daily Google News alerts for each term, digitally 'clipping' and saving the results, and reading through thousands of examples in context. Like Williams's work, this method cannot be exhaustive (as I explain in Section 1), but it elicits enough examples to evidence facts of semantics via attestations of use, and to draw meaningful conclusions.

4 In the next section, I outline my data and methods. In Section 2, I define key concepts as they are used in my semantic analysis, particularly *metaphorisation*, *generalisation*, *synonymy*, *hyponymy*, and *antonymy*. In Section 3, I describe established senses of each word, including established metaphorised senses and newly emerging semantic features that broaden the range of applications of each term. In Section 4, I analyse and discuss examples of writers and speakers actively and critically defining or negotiating the meanings of the terms in relation to each other, as in examples (1) and (2), and argue that each term's increasing vagueness – in the form of laxness of use (cf. Cruse [2011: 200], and below), as language users select specific semantic features and ignore others – allows language users to see these terms as synonymous or hyponymous. In Section 4, I analyse examples in which the terms are used in common syntagmatic combinations, exploring possibilities for – and potential limitations to – alternation. In Section 5, I address theoretical implications and mechanisms of change, with reference to the history of semantic theory, and propose a process whereby precise technical vocabulary becomes increasingly vague when it begins to be used in contentious or fraught public debate.

1. Data and methods

5 The study aims to analyse 'factual evidence' of meaning in use, i.e. evidence that a term or expression has been and can be used with a particular meaning in a particular text type (cf. Wallis [2019: 61-62]). Here, the text type under scrutiny is mainstream online news. Factual evidence can be contrasted with 'frequency evidence', i.e. evidence of how often a linguistic phenomenon occurs in a language sample, generally in relation to frequencies of other related linguistic phenomena (Wallis [2019: 61-62]). Unlike frequency evidence, factual evidence is not quantitative, and the present paper does not aim to ascertain quantitative frequency information. This approach parallels standard lexicographical practice of collecting attestations of use as evidence of word senses (Zgusta [1971: 55-56]). Examples here were collected from mainstream online news texts, extracted via daily Google News (https://news.google.com) alerts from October, 2018, through October, 2019, with occasional searches via Google News after those dates. Terms for daily Google News alerts included *appropriation*, *gentrification*, and *colonisation*, which also yield derived and inflectional forms and spelling variants, such as *decolonization* and *appropriating*. Searches yielded approximately 5 to 15 results per day, per word, for a total of thousands of attestations of each word in use. Results were closely inspected and examples were selected to evidence established and new meanings and use.[1]

6 Google News data sources are not transparent, but include thousands of online English language news sources around the world, such as websites of major broadsheets, popular news websites, specialist or industry news, alternative news, local news, and community websites (cf. Watanabe [2013], Segev [2010]). Google's algorithms are not transparent, nor are they reproducible – it is understood that they adapt to individual user practice, and they are subject to ongoing revision by Google engineers. Moreover, Google News data are not carefully sampled to represent a population of language use, and therefore do not constitute a language corpus in the strict sense – it would therefore be inappropriate to apply inferential statistics to Google News data in an attempt to determine trends in general language use. These limitations, however, are not drawbacks for this study's aims of identifying factual evidence or attestations of these words' lexical semantics.

7 Just as I rely on online news texts as a digital update to Williams's [1983] clippings, I rely on the *OED Online* as a digital update of Williams's use of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. I use *OED* definitions critically, for comparison and reference. Also for comparison, I occasionally cite frequency data from very large online English corpora, particularly to affirm relative newness of syntagmatic combinations.[2] The Keywords Project paid close attention to new syntagmatic combinations (as does the *OED*), and this is arguably part of what renders *Keywords for Today* timely (cf. Renouf [2019]). I do not aim to fully explore histories and discourses around established combinations such as *decolonising the curriculum* – such major discourses are analysed elsewhere far more thoroughly than would be feasible here (cf. Bhambra *et al*. [2018], Alvares & Faruqi [2012] on *decolonising the curriculum*); I provide further references below where appropriate.

8 I situate my analysis within historical semantics; I analyse classic categories of semantic change, particularly generalisation or broadening (cf. Kay & Allan [2015: 75-77]; Geeraerts [2010: 26-27]), and metaphorisation (cf. Kay & Allan [2015: 75-77], Geeraerts [2010: 27]), which I discuss further in the next section. I also analyse classic categories of semantic relations, particularly hyponymy, synonymy, and antonymy (cf. Murphy [2010: 110-114], Geeraerts [2010: 82-87]), also discussed in the next section. The aim is to use these established frameworks to rigorously and systematically investigate the semantics of *appropriation*, *gentrification*, and *colonisation*.

2. Semantic change and sense relations

9 Generalisation and metaphorisation can be seen as 'classical' types of semantic change because they constitute part of "the core of most classifications", and "link up most closely" with the rhetorical tradition [Geeraerts 2010: 26]. Metaphorisation is a process whereby "one concept is described in terms of another"; the "mapping" of the one to the other can become conventionalised [Kay & Allan 2015: 81]. Typically, metaphorisation describes a process whereby a word with a strictly physical sense is used to convey an abstract sense; that is, an abstract concept is described in terms of a physical concept (Kay & Allan [2015: 154]) – but this is not necessarily the case (Geeraerts [2010: 33-35]), and metaphorisation often instantiates as a concept from one domain described in terms of another domain. The linguistic definition of *metaphor* is different from the everyday definition of *metaphor* as figurative rather than literal language. Crucially, in linguistics, metaphor is not "a figure of speech" [Kay & Allan 2015: 150], nor is it ad hoc, even if metaphorical uses may originate as hapax, only to be conventionalised later on.

10 Generalisation occurs when a word develops a new meaning whose range of application is superordinate to, and thus includes, that of an older meaning (Geeraerts [2010: 26-27]). The new range of applications is overall larger than the older range of applications. The word in its new sense refers to "a broader, less specific concept" [Kay & Allan 2015: 75]. *Specific* can be understood as 'type specificity', in which the less specific meaning is superordinate to the more specific meaning (cf. Cruse [2011: 199]). *Less specific* can also be understood as a reduction of semantic specifications or semantic features; that is, a semantic specification that once restricted the meaning of the word is no longer present, allowing the word's range of applications to grow. Reduced specificity may also be understood as increasing vagueness, whereby the new, less specific meaning is more ill-defined, or applied in more lax ways, than the older, more specific meaning (cf. Cruse [2011: 200]). When the meaning is applied in lax ways, semantic features that were once essential to the meaning may, in the newly generalised sense of the word, be present or absent, inconsistently.

11 With all semantic change, "the original meaning either may remain present or may disappear after the development of the new meaning" [Geeraerts 2010: 27]; indeed, older meanings are most often not lost, such that the outcome of semantic change is most often stable, long-term polysemy (Traugott & Dasher [2002: 11]). It would therefore not be

surprising to observe new meanings of *appropriation*, *gentrification*, and *colonisation*, which exist alongside older meanings. Whereas an individual example of a word used with a new sense does not prove semantic change, consistent examples of a word used with a new sense can be compelling evidence of semantic change.

12 Synonymy is a relationship between two words "that mean the same as each other" [Murphy 2010: 110], either in their full range of applications, or in specific examples or contexts of use (Geeraerts [2010: 84]). If two words are substitutable in use, then they are synonyms (Murphy [2010: 110], Geeraerts [2010: 84]). 'Total synonymy' between two words implies that they have the same full range of meanings, i.e. that they are polysemous in the same ways; 'partial synonymy' holds when two words are substitutable in one or more of their senses, but not all senses (Geeraerts [2010: 84]). For example, a metaphorised sense of word *a* may be interchangeable with a metaphorised sense of word *b*, even if their older, concrete senses are not interchangeable; this scenario renders the two words partially synonymous. However, even when comparing just one sense of two words, it is rare for the meaning or use to be exactly the same, so synonymy frequently concerns meanings "that are not perfect synonyms, but that differ only slightly"; when two words are substitutable in some contexts but not others, they are "near-synonyms" [Murphy 2010: 110-111]. In this paper, I explore possibilities for partial synonymy, near-synonymy, and substitution in use, and I describe contextual limitations to substitutability.

13 Hyponymy 'is the "type-of" relation'; for example, an apple is a type of fruit, so *apple* is a hyponym of *fruit* (Murphy [2010: 109]). Put differently, hyponymy is the "relationship of semantic inclusion that holds between a more general term… and a more specific one" [Geeraerts 2010: 82].

14 Finally, antonymy is "oppositeness of meaning" [Geeraerts 2010: 85]. Antonymy can take many forms; what is observed and discussed in the present study is contradictory antonymy, which holds when the assertion of one term entails the negation of the other, and *vice versa* (Murphy [2010: 120]).

3. Semantics of *appropriation*, *gentrification*, and *colonisation*

3.1. *Appropriation*

15 *Appropriation* originated in the late 14th century as a term related to private property, referring to a transfer of ownership (*appropriation*, n., *OED Online*). A semantically narrower financial sense originated in the 18th century, indicating transfer of finances for a particular purpose (*OED Online*). The expansion of *appropriation* into broader social and cultural domains seems to have begun with *appropriation art* (The Keywords Project [2018: 10-11]), originating in the late 19th century, referring to an artist directly re-presenting pre-existing artwork, with some degree of alteration (*appropriation*, n., *OED Online*).

16 *Cultural appropriation* emerges in the mid-twentieth century, and is defined by the OED as "unacknowledged or inappropriate adoption of the practices, customs, or aesthetics of one social or ethnic group by members of another (typically dominant) community or society" (*appropriation*, n., *OED Online*). In this definition, what is deemed *inappropriate* will inevitably be subjective and contentious, particularly in discussions of social groups and their practices, customs, or aesthetics, while interpretations of *ethnic group*, *community*, and *dominant* are also contestable. Insofar as *cultural appropriation* is an extension of older meanings of *appropriation* from relatively concrete domains (property) into more abstract domains (cultural practices, customs, or aesthetics), we can

see this change as metaphorisation (cf. Kay & Allan [2015: 81]), and the metaphorised sense is well-established, even while older senses including the financial sense remain in use. *Cultural appropriation* and *appropriating culture* are both common in 2018-2019 online news texts, as in examples (3) and (4):

> (3) Last week, Kacey caused cultural appropriation outrage over the 'sexualized, degrading' way she donned a Vietnamese áo dài without pants onstage in Dallas. (*Daily Mail*, 17 October, 2019, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-7581775/Kacey-Musgraves-reveals-penned-two-songs-tripping-praises-LSD-opening-mind.html)

> (4) Grande was accused of appropriating Japanese culture with her usage of Japanese lettering for aesthetic purposes in the "7 Rings" video. (Gladi Suero, *The Daily Campus*, 10 September, 2019, https://dailycampus.com/stories/ariana-grande-accuses-forever-21-of-stealing-her-image-while-designers-accuse-her-of-the-same)

17 Because *appropriation* relates to social or cultural groups and power relations, it also often entails categorisation of nationality, ethnicity, or race (such as *Vietnamese* in example (3); *Japanese* in example (4)). In some texts, the first appearance of the word *appropriation* alone clearly refers to 'cultural appropriation', though it is not the case that *appropriation* can only indicate 'cultural appropriation', nor that the expression *cultural appropriation* is redundant or pleonastic.

18 In 2018 and 2019, many university newspapers ran articles advising students how to avoid cultural appropriation in Halloween costumes – indeed, the apparent salience of this issue on American campuses may have contributed to the Keywords Seminar students' selection of *appropriation* as their most important keyword (The Keywords Project [2018: 10]).

19 Beyond these established uses, there is a considerable number of creative syntagmatic combinations. I present two examples in this section, which illustrate innovative use and semantic change; other examples are discussed, with a focus on the semantic relation between *appropriation*, *gentrification*, and *colonisation*, in Sections 4 and 5.

20 The author of example (5) employs the expression *gender appropriation* to argue that (trans) women are inappropriately adopting the practices and indeed the very identities of (cis) women:

> (5) Instead, transgenderism is gender appropriation and the subversion of laws intended to protect women. (*Townhall*, 8 October, 2019, https://townhall.com/columnists/marinamedvin/2019/10/08/stop-appropriating-my-gender-n2554281)

21 The provocativeness of *appropriation* is particularly clear here, insofar as its use depends on potentially contentious categorisation of human beings, as well as experiences of disempowerment. Arguments that trans women are not women, but are inappropriately adopting the identity of women, emerged as early as the 1970s (cf. Raymond [1979]). However, *gender appropriation* does not occur in the Google Books corpora, COHA, COCA, or enTenTen15, affirming that *gender appropriation* has only recently begun to be employed in these arguments.

22 In example (5), *appropriation* is employed creatively in two ways: first, it is extended to gender as a social category, rather than more common uses in relation to categories of nation, ethnicity, or race; and second, it includes not only inappropriate adoption of customs, practices, or aesthetics of another group, but also the inappropriate adoption of or claim to another group's identity. In established uses of *cultural appropriation*, a member of one group adopts the practices of another group, but does not claim to be a member of the other group, and is indeed universally understood to be not a member of the other group. In example (3), for instance, celebrity 'Kacey' (Musgraves) does not claim to be Vietnamese, and is universally understood to be not Vietnamese; that fact is essential to the meaning of *cultural appropriation*. In example (4), celebrity (Ariana) 'Grande' does not identify as Japanese, and is universally understood to be not Japanese. The author of

example 5 is arguing that trans women are not only inappropriately adopting customs and practices of cis women, but also adopting or claiming an identity as women. This is a new semantic feature of *appropriation* in syntagmatic combination with *gender*.

23 In example (6), *identity appropriation* is another innovative syntagmatic combination. Like *gender appropriation*, *identity appropriation* is used to describe an inappropriate claim to a social or cultural identity:

> (6) According to Leroux, one of the most dangerous manifestations of what he terms "identity appropriation" arises when groups form and claim some type of Indigenous ancestry in an effort to stop real Indigenous communities from asserting their rights. (*CBS News*, 10 October, 2019, https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/federal-candidates-claims-indigenous-identity-1.5314614)

24 While *identity* is often discussed alongside *appropriation*, this coinage is novel; the author describes non-indigenous people falsely claiming indigenous ancestry. Like *gender appropriation*, this sense is apparently derived from the established sense of *cultural appropriation* as inappropriately adopting traditions of a disempowered other, and a perceived similarly between inappropriately adopting traditions and inappropriately adopting an identity by claiming ancestry. The co-text around example (6) shows that the claim to ancestry is an explicit claim of an identity label rather than any adopted, enacted, or performed customs, practices, traditions, or aesthetics. Like *gender appropriation* above, *identity appropriation* requires an adjustment to the established sense of *appropriation*; but unlike *gender appropriation*, *identity appropriation* here does not include the adoption of associated customs, traditions, or aesthetics.

25 It is worth observing that *identity appropriation* is entirely different from the common term *identity theft*. The oldest meaning of *appropriation* is substitutable in some contexts with a sense of *theft*, rendering them partial near-synonyms; the fact that *identity appropriation* and *identity theft* are entirely distinct and unambiguous reflects the semantic discreteness between the newer abstract sense of *appropriation* in relation to culture and older senses of *appropriation* as material 'theft'.

3.2. *Gentrification*

26 *Gentrification* originated in academic discourse in the late twentieth century, with a narrow, technical sense indicating "the process by which an (urban) neighbourhood is rendered middle class" (*gentrification*, n., *OED Online*; cf. Glass [1964]). Both *urban* and *middle class* are vague, insofar as they are ill-defined (cf. Cruse [2011: 200]), and are prone to being contentious in their social, cultural, economic, and political entailments and implications (cf. The Keywords Project [2018: 364-368] on *urban*; Williams [1983: 60-69] on *class*;). *Gentrification* in academic discourse is seen as a process of neighbourhood change whereby rising property values yield a range of results (cf. Lees *et al*. [2008]), which may include any or all of the following: the displacement of local residents; loss of residents' personal or collective histories and heritage; increasing profits for developers, businesses, and property owners; and (perhaps more peripherally), changing neighbourhood aesthetics (cf. Butler [1997]). As I show in the examples here, language users can pragmatically emphasise some of those features, and exclude others, to indicate just one or some elements of established meaning in any instance of use. This selection of features constitutes laxness of application, a form of vagueness, as features are applied in 'loose' ways (cf. Cruse [2011: 200]).

27 Example (7) reflects the centrality of 'displacement' in some uses of *gentrification*:

> (7) Much of the discussion during public comment and from the council dais used the terms displacement and gentrification interchangeably. (*Fresno Bee*, 3 December, 2018, https://www.fresnobee.com/news/local/article222458970.html)

28 Example (8) emphasises established meanings of displacement, loss, and profits:

> (8) But these policies have a disproportionate impact on protected classes of individuals, including the communities Howard Law student attorneys interact with in Washington, D.C., where gentrification is causing low-income residents to be displaced at some of the highest rates in the country. (*Howard Newsroom*, 28 October, 2019, https://newsroom.howard.edu/newsroom/static/11441/howard-law-students-faculty-experts-respond-hud-s-move-restrict-fair-housing)

29 As in example (8), many discussions of *gentrification* address ‘classes of individuals’, and like *appropriation*, this often depends upon categorisation systems for race, ethnicity, or nationality: specifically, *gentrification* often – but not always – by default indicates a large influx of white residents into a neighbourhood whose established residents are people of colour, as illustrated in example (9):

> (9) Where gentrification normally means an increase in the white middle class population as immigrants and people of color are displaced, the tour’s speakers said that in Flushing, the largest demographic influx consists of wealthier immigrants from mainland China. (*QNS*, 22 October, 2019, https://qns.com/story/2019/10/22/queens-college-professor-gives-a-luxury-development-tour-of-flushing/)

30 Use of *gentrification* sometimes focuses on the superficial aesthetics of neighbourhood change, rather than the lived experiences of displacement and race (cf. Butler [1997]).

> (10) Yet there are plenty of us out there who remember when Finnieston really wasn’t the gentrified hipster hangout it is today populated by cool bars, interesting shops and swanky restaurants. (*Glasgow Live*, 20 October, 2019, https://www.glasgowlive.co.uk/news/history/places-populated-finnieston-before-birth-17083251)

31 In the co-text of example (10), displacement, loss, and racism are absent. Instead, the author describes a lost ‘scene’ with associated ‘edginess’. The loss of an ‘edgy’ aesthetic is essential to this semantic feature of *gentrification*. Because some language users understand *gentrification* as essentially the loss of an edgy aesthetic, and others understand *gentrification* as essentially the displacement of people of colour and the loss of their local heritage, the result can be “cross purposes and confusion” [The Keywords Project 2011-2016] in public debate and private conversation about gentrification, and *gentrification* is thus a keyword in Williams’s [1983] sense.

32 In example (11), the quoted speaker argues that *gentrification* can preserve culture:

> (11) “Gentrification can be a good thing for everyone if it preserves the culture of a neighborhood,” Carol Poore, a faculty associate in ASU’s School of Public Affairs, said… “Roosevelt Row still has some charm.” (*State Press*, 30 November, 2018, https://www.statepress.com/article/2018/11/spcommunityroosevelt-row-continues-to-undergo-cultural-shifts)

33 The speaker in example (11) shifts the focus of *gentrification* from lived experience of displacement, loss, and racism to the notion of whether ‘culture’ and ‘charm’ can be ‘preserved’. The idea that ‘culture’ can be ‘preserved’ would be oxymoronic alongside the semantic feature of loss of residents’ personal or collective heritage; *gentrification* in example (11) thus excludes the semantic feature of loss of heritage.

34 In novel syntagmatic combinations, *climate gentrification*, *green gentrification*, and *school gentrification* serve to specify the causes and effects of gentrification as displacement; these new combinations communicate an established sense of neighbourhood change while highlighting intersecting issues of the climate, policy, and schooling, respectively:

> (12) Land grabs like this, Ajibade explains, are often a symptom of ‘climate gentrification’, in which poor communities are made to vacate land that could be

safely settled by the rich. (*New Internationalist*, 18 October, 2019, https://newint.org/features/2019/10/18/negotiating-just-retreat-rising-seas)

35 In example (12), *climate gentrification* is in quotation marks, with a clear gloss, indicating the newness of the expression and the expectation that readers will not understand it. Example (12) refers to features of established senses of *gentrification*, including rising property values and displacement. Modification by *climate* specifies gentrification resulting directly and primarily from one specific cause, the climate crisis. This can be seen as hyponymic enrichment, whereby immediate context adds "features of meaning to a word which are not made explicit by the lexical item itself" [Cruse 2000: 121]; put differently, *climate gentrification* is a type of *gentrification*. *Gentrification* can be caused by many factors, and *gentrification* itself does not necessarily specify any one particular cause; the syntagmatic combination with *climate* specifies the otherwise unspecified cause.

36 Example (13) refers to symptoms of gentrification resulting exclusively from 'green' policy initiatives:

> (13) These kinds of unintended consequences are called 'green gentrification' – when investments in sustainable infrastructure and initiatives in a city push out and price out lower-income residents. (*Green Biz*, 3 January, 2020, https://www.greenbiz.com/article/how-prevent-city-climate-action-becoming-green-gentrification)

37 Example (13) conveys semantic features of established senses of *gentrification* – specifically displacement and loss, in relation to classes of neighbourhood residents. Modification by *green* specifies that it is locally implemented green initiatives that increase demand for local property among middle-class renters and buyers, causing property values and rents to rise, and resulting in displacement. Like example (12), this specification arises via hyponymic enrichment (cf. Cruse [2000: 121]); *green gentrification* is a type of *gentrification*. Just as *climate gentrification* is not 'gentrification of the climate', but 'gentrification caused by the climate', *green gentrification* is 'gentrification caused by green policy initiatives'. We do not therefore observe *gentrification of the climate* as an alternate to *climate gentrification*, nor *gentrification of green policy* as an alternate to *green gentrification*. This is in contrast to the common alternation between, for example, *appropriation of hairstyles* and *hairstyle appropriation*.

38 In example (14), *school gentrification* refers to the effect of gentrification on schools, as families are displaced and school children are forced to move from one district (catchment area) to another:

> (14) The 100 participating schools are required to use socioeconomic variables as set-aside categories to diversify their schools and to stop public school gentrification that may exclude students historically served by the schools. (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 20 October, 2019, https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/commentary/school-choice-charters-parents-segregation-20191020.html)

39 Unlike *climate gentrification* and *green gentrification*, *school gentrification* is not 'gentrification caused by schools', but rather 'gentrification of neighbourhoods, which affects schools'; modification of *gentrification* with *school* specifies the space where the consequence can be seen. The compositionality of *school gentrification* is in contrast to *climate gentrification* and *green gentrification*; modifiers of *gentrification* exhibit flexible compositional semantics (cf. Cruse [2000: 68]).

40 *Gentrification* has undergone metaphorisation insofar as it has been applied to semantic domains other than neighbourhoods.

> (15) When burial space does finally, inevitably run out, the bodies of New Yorkers who are marginalised, poor and disenfranchised – or even simply not rich – will be the ones spending eternity somewhere other than the city in which they lived. There

will be no room for them. It will be a kind of gentrification of the dead. (*The Guardian*, 12 July, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/jul/12/the-gentrification-of-death-in-new-york-eternal-rest-will-soon-be-a-luxury)

41 In example (15), *gentrification* applies to cemeteries, an extension from one geographical site (neighbourhoods) to another, which still involves displacement, loss of heritage, and increasing profits.

42 Example (16) presents *gentrification* as a process of change to geographical sites that do not cause displacement. They do, however, result in increased profits, and arguably a loss – or at least a trivialisation – of heritage, alongside altered aesthetics:

(16) “Dark tourism,” as the growing trade is known, involves profiting from places that were once sites of shame and horror, contributing to what Mr Doughton calls the “gentrification of terror.” (*The Independent*, 22 October, 2019, https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/nazi-bunker-hotel-hamburg-germany-second-world-war-a9165846.html)

43 In example (17), ‘the shoe game’ refers to sneaker culture, explained in the article co-text as the appreciation and collecting of sneakers (trainers), based on design aesthetics, particularly in relation to cultures of basketball and hip-hop:

(17) The gentrification of the shoe game is a clear indication that proves, where people of color go, pop culture follows. (*Odyssey*, 24 April, 2019, https://www.theodysseyonline.com/air-force-nikes)

44 The co-text of example (17) argues that as the prices of cultural accoutrements like sneakers rise, along with profits, early participants in the culture are ‘priced out’ – which corresponds to displacement. This example also involves race categories and whiteness, as *gentrification* so often does. It represents a semantic move from one domain to another, moving beyond geographical sites, and is thus another metaphorised use of *gentrification*.

45 *Gentrification of language* is illustrated in examples (18) and (19):[3]

(18) The gentrification of language by removing curse words puts us into a bubble and sets a standard of a higher class of language which does not exist in reality. (*The Prospector Daily*, 4 February, 2014 https://www.theprospectordaily.com/2014/02/04/who-gives-a-fuck/)

(19) In the past two seasons the show has not only defined PC culture as the gentrification of language, but has savaged a particular liberal taboo by mocking Caitlyn Jenner. (*The Guardian*, 31 March, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2017/mar/31/the-town-hall-affair-wooster-group-norman-mailer-germaine-greer)

46 Example (18), from a university student newspaper, might alternate with *bowdlerisation*. *Gentrification* here is the introduction of a newly ‘high-class’ language, with its associated linguistic meaning and aesthetics, which ‘does not exist in reality’ and is therefore inauthentic, artificial, or unreal; and the displacement of a putatively lower-class, authentic, real language, with its essence or meaning as well as its edgy aesthetic. The transfer from the domain of neighbourhoods to the domain of language is metaphorisation. Example (19) could reasonably alternate with *bowdlerisation* as well, but it replaces the ‘high-class aesthetic’ of example (18) with a ‘PC’ (‘politically correct’) or ‘liberal’ aesthetic. Again, the transfer from the domain of neighbourhoods to the domain of language is metaphorisation, whereby ‘PC’ language – with its associated content, meaning, and aesthetics – replaces the putatively more ‘real’, lower class, politically incorrect, edgy language, content, meaning, and aesthetics.

47 Examples (18) and (19) evidence an additional semantic element of *gentrification* in these metaphorised uses: *gentrification* as the replacement of authenticity with artificiality. Established meanings of *gentrification* described above include a range of features: displacement, profit, loss of heritage, or changing aesthetics; however, this emphasis on artificiality replacing authenticity is new.

48 Example (20) introduces 'gentrification of politics':

> (20) In a word, this diluting of critical, even revolutionary ideas is a "gentrification" of politics, whereby a consumable image of an idea, an historical event, or a political belief replaces the real-life complexity of that idea or event or belief. And ours, I'm sorry to report, is an unbearably gentrified era of political thinking. (*PS Mag*, 24 July, 2019, https://psmag.com/ideas/resisting-fascism-means-resisting-the-gentrification-of-politics-lgbt-pride)

49 In co-text around example (20), *gentrification* is defined in multiple ways, including its original concrete sense of neighbourhood change via demographic 'replacement', as well as in a metaphorised sense, transferred from the domain of neighbourhoods to the domain of political thought. In its metaphorised sense, *gentrification* indicates that 'sanitised', 'consumable' (profit-making) politics and thought are replacing complex, 'critical', 'revolutionary', non-commodified, 'real-life' politics and thought. The emphasis on displacement aligns this metaphorised use with established meanings of *gentrification*. In addition, like examples (18) and (19), we see an emphasis on artificiality replacing authenticity.[4]

50 The derived, prefixed forms *de-gentrification* and *anti-gentrification* do not occur in mainstream online news in 2018 and 2019 with metaphorised meanings, and there are no new syntagmatic combinations like *de-gentrification of terror*, for example, nor *anti-gentrification of the shoe game*.

3.3. *Colonisation*

51 *Colonisation* is derived from *colonise*; both originate in political discourse in the 17th and 18th centuries, with precise technical meanings indicating the establishment of colonies (*colonisation*, n., *OED Online*). *Decolonisation* is formed in the first half of the twentieth century, and entails – at least – legal, political, and material facts of colonial independence, and the removal of colonial forces from colonised land (*decolonisation*, n., *OED Online*). Alongside legal and material facts of removal, *decolonisation* may also indicate repatriation of land to formerly colonised indigenous people (Tuck & Yang [2012: 1], discussed further below). Examples (21) and (22) illustrate recent uses referring to established, formal colonial histories of occupation of land:

> (21) Leopold was so committed that he personally directed and financed the explorations and colonization so that the entire project was independent of the Belgian government. (*The Christian Science Monitor*, 14 January, 2020, https://www.csmonitor.com/Books/Book-Reviews/2020/0114/Land-of-Tears-offers-a-chilling-look-at-European-colonization-of-Africa)

> (22) "General Assembly resolution 71/292," he noted, "called for an advisory opinion on the matter from the International Court of Justice and, in February, the latter concluded that the process of decolonizing Mauritius was not lawfully completed in 1968." (*FPMag*, 26 October, 2019, https://rinj.press/fpmag/october-2019/mauritius-slams-uk-us-for-insulting-africa-and-ignoring-un-chagos-resolution/)

52 The definitions above have consequences for human beings across all aspects of life, across multiple generations, and beyond the apparent conclusion of formal, material, or legal (de)colonial historical processes, so broad social, cultural, and psychological meanings have been perennially apparent in *colonisation* and *decolonisation* (cf. Rothermund [2006]). The abstract social, cultural, and psychological elements of meaning are well-established, used extensively since the mid-20th century (*decolonisation*, n. *OED Online*; cf. Rothermund [2006], Thiong'o [1986], Nkrumah [1964], Fanon [1963]), and cannot be seen as occasional or ad hoc figures of speech. While (*de*)*colonisation* can indicate the abstract and concrete entailments and consequences of historical colonial processes, those processes and histories can be seen as constituting a single, coherent – if

expansive – domain, and I would therefore argue that use of *colonisation* and *decolonisation* to indicate abstract social and cultural consequences of historical colonial processes does not constitute metaphorisation.

53 Unlike *de-gentrification*, *decolonisation* has for decades been extremely productive with abstract meanings, which remain linked to historical decolonial processes. One important example is *decolonising the mind*, popularised via Ngugi wa Thiong'o's [1986] book of that title. *Decolonising the mind* indicates a "struggle to seize back… creative initiative in history through a real control of all the means of communal self-definition" [Thiong'o 1986: 4]. If the original sense of *colonising* is a seizure of not only land and concrete resources, but also the means of self-determination and self-definition, and modes of education and thought, then *decolonising* can include reclaiming not only the concrete, but also the abstract, and it is not only land that can be decolonised, but also society, culture, and the mind. This syntagmatic combination is well represented in recent mainstream online news texts, as in example (23):

> (23) It's true that I am, in bursts and spurts, angry. Angry, that our minds were colonized. Angry that education systems uphold the colonization of the mind. (*Vice*, 20 December, 2019, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/88493g/british-period-dramas-colonial-propaganda)

54 The syntagmatic combination *decolonising the mind* highlights the abstract entailments and consequences of decolonial processes. Thiong'o's use is sufficiently linked to the concrete and abstract entailments and long-term consequences of historical colonial processes that – I would argue – *decolonising the mind* does not indicate a transfer of domain, and does not constitute metaphorisation.

55 From the mid-20th century, there has been discourse around *decolonising* universities and curricula (cf. Nkrumah [1964]), and this discourse is strongly represented in online news in 2018 and 2019, as in example (24):

> (24) These drivers have led the Open University to identify decolonising the curriculum as one of the top trends likely to influence teaching over the next 10 years. (*The Guardian*, 30 January, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/jan/30/students-want-their-curriculums-decolonised-are-universities-listening)

56 The co-text of example (24) explicitly defines 'decolonising the curriculum' as the inclusion of writers of colour and postcolonial thought in university reading, but explains that the movement has been misunderstood to mean the forcible removal of white writers from curricula. Either way, these meanings emerge from historical decolonial processes but extend beyond the site of colonisation, and beyond the formal conclusion of those legal, political, and material processes. Also, like *appropriation* and *gentrification*, these meanings involve fraught notions of race. These definitions in the co-text highlight differences between concrete features of *decolonising*, and abstract features. Concrete *decolonising* has been defined primarily as removing colonial forces from colonised space; some language users therefore understand *decolonising the curriculum* as forcibly removing white writers from curricula. However, abstract *decolonising* has for decades been defined primarily as the reclaiming, by colonised people, of the means of self-determination and self-definition; some language users therefore define *decolonising the curriculum* as the inclusion of the voices of writers of colour in curricula, allowing for those voices' self-definition and self-determination. The "cross purposes and confusion" [The Keywords Project 2011-2016] that can result from these disparate and contentious meanings render *decolonising* a keyword in Williams's [1983] sense. The laxness of application of *decolonising* among language users, as described explicitly in the co-text of example (22), affirms that *decolonising* is vague (cf. Cruse [2011: 200]), allowing inclusion or exclusion of abstract or concrete semantic features.

57 Abstract *decolonisation* can also apply to biographical narrative (example (25)) or fictional narrative (example (26)):

> (25) "This is part of decolonizing the story that's been told regarding Indigenous women not only in Ontario, but in Canada and round the world," said McGuire-Cyrette. (*The Chronicle Journal*, 19 October, 2019, https://www.chroniclejournal.com/news/local/ontario-native-women-s-association-unveils-new-magazine/article_02b14ab2-f21c-11e9-b6bb-bf71a2dc8439.html)

> (26) […] perhaps no authorial choice better captures the much-needed de-colonization of the character than the naming of his African-American father Jefferson Davis. (*Los Angeles Review of Books*, 4 January, 2020, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/de-colonization-miles-morales/)

58 In example (25), the quoted speaker is communicating her lived experience of reclaiming self-determination and self-definition as a member of a colonised group, vis-à-vis telling her own biographical narrative. In example (26), the writer critiques a fictional narrative and its authors for giving an African-American character the name of one of the most powerful pro-slavery politicians in American history, indicating that this fictional narrative of an African-American character (defined here as representing a colonised group) is dominated by its authors' white identities (the colonising group), and that the narrative requires *decolonisation*, whereby members of colonised groups define and determine (fictional or non-fictional) narratives about group members. In both examples, *decolonisation* is the undoing or rectifying of the abstract consequences of histories of *colonisation*.

59 The syntagmatic combination *ideological colonisation* in example (27) connects *colonisation* to cultural values:

> (27) Pope Francis has previously used the term "ideological colonization" to describe international efforts to pressure developing countries to conform to liberal Western laws and values on family issues, including the acceptance of so-called gender theory, support for same-sex marriage and the admission of abortion. (*Angelus*, 26 September, 2019, https://angelusnews.com/news/world/cardinal-parolin-warns-against-ideological-colonization-at-un/)

60 Example (27) illustrates established, abstract features of *colonisation* as the imposition on colonised people of a coloniser's worldview, but the connection to historical colonial processes is more tenuous than the examples above. The article focuses on recent 'international efforts' that do not entail colonisation of land, but are nonetheless enacted by 'liberal Western' forces whose power derives from colonial histories. The article is written by the official church news agency (a historical colonising force), and quotes the Pope and his secretary of state, speaking on behalf of colonised people. Like *gentrification* in examples (10) and (11), which de-emphasise the lived experience of displacement, loss, and racism, discussions employing *colonisation* can de-emphasise the self-defined lived experience of colonised people; this denial of self-definition might be seen as further abstract *colonisation* of the discourse. Example (23) is unique here in that *colonisation* is premodified by an attributive adjective, *ideological* (rather than postmodified by a prepositional phrase). This results in an ambiguity in its compositional semantics, such that we can interpret *ideological colonisation* as 'colonisation by an ideology' (liberal Western ideology) or 'colonisation of an ideology' (developing countries' ideologies), or both.

61 *Decolonisation* is largely used in mainstream online news in 2018 and 2019 in ways that focus on abstract entailments and consequences; I have asserted that if these senses are sufficiently linked to historical colonial processes, then this does not constitute a transfer of domain, and is therefore not metaphorisation. In the data for the present study is an event announcement that asserts – or perhaps demands: "Decolonisation is not a metaphor" (https://www.artrabbit.com/events/state-of-integration-decolonizing-appearance), reminiscent of Tuck & Yang's [2012] academic paper of the same name. Tuck & Yang [2012: 1] observe and decry a change in semantics and use that has moved *decolonisation* from a specific, restricted definition as "repatriation of indigenous life and

land" to "a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools". Tuck & Yang [2012: 2] define *decolonisation* as both concrete and abstract, but insist that its use should be restricted to historical processes of colonialism and their multi-generational consequences, and not extended to other issues of justice, civil rights, and human rights. Example (28) illustrates the use that Tuck & Yang [2012] are critiquing.

> (28) Decolonizing in the fitness world means creating spaces where trainers and clients are intentionally accepting of everyone, no matter their gender, sexual orientation, race, or any other identity. (*Yes!*, 9 January, 2019, https://www.yesmagazine.org/health-happiness/2019/01/09/the-instagram-community-thats-decolonizing-fitness/)

62 In example (28), *decolonising* applies to general issues of equality and rights. The co-text of the example focuses exclusively on sexual orientation and gender identity, which might be seen as outside the domain of historical processes of colonialism. I concur with Tuck & Yang [2012] that *decolonisation* applied to domains beyond historical processes of colonialism is evidence of semantic change. Example (28) illustrates such change: it is the transfer to a new domain around LGBT inclusion in the fitness industry, and the old domain of formal, historical colonial processes is not apparent. This change is metaphorisation.

63 In addition, Tuck & Yang [2012: 2] argue that *decolonisation* is not "a swappable term" because it "doesn't have a synonym" and, in particular, it is not synonymous with other terms related to rights and justice (such as, presumably, *appropriation* or *gentrification*); my analysis in the next section describes such potential for substitutability and synonymy in use, which Tuck & Yang [2012] have also observed, if disapprovingly.

4. Explicit negotiation of synonymy and hyponymy

64 *Appropriation*, *gentrification*, and *colonisation* are sometimes used alongside and in comparison with each other, as language users negotiate their meanings and the relations between their meanings. The examples presented here are discussed one by one, to assess potential for semantic relations between these terms. No individual example can suffice to affirm semantic relations in general use; I ask whether these examples can collectively constitute factual evidence of these semantic relations in mainstream online news, as in lexicographical use of individual attestations (discussed in Section 1).

65 Example (29) re-presents example (1):

> (29) Penn said that he felt like this was colonization, rather than gentrification, but to me they mean the same thing in 2018. (*Complex*, 20 April, 2018, https://www.complex.com/sneakers/2018/04/the-gentrification-of-sneakers-is-killing-the-culture)

66 Example (29) appears in a discussion of sneaker culture (like example (17), from a different publication) and neatly summarises these words' potential for alternation. Co-text defines both *colonisation* and *gentrification* as processes whereby original members or participants in a culture face an influx of new arrivals. Race is central – new arrivals are white, and the displaced are black. The consequences are a loss of culture, particularly acute for original participants. This can be seen as metaphorical use of both words.

67 The quoted speaker in example (29) clearly distinguishes *colonisation* from *gentrification*, while the writer contests the distinction and insists on their semantic identity. That is, even within one illustration of language users actively negotiating meaning, there is no consensus on these terms' synonymy. The fact that this example appears on a mainstream pop culture site, *Complex*, allows the inference that this

contestation of meaning is comprehensible and resonant for a broad popular readership. Moreover, it is clearly not ad hoc usage of either term, or a figure of speech: it is an explicitly stated definition, via partial synonymy (between a single metaphorical sense of each word), based on the writer's understanding that these two words in these specific senses are interchangeable. For the quoted speaker, *colonisation* is the preference over *gentrification* in this context, and is the selected alternate for communicative needs; for the writer, *gentrification* and *colonisation* are equivalent alternates. Selecting one over the other, according to the author of this example, has no consequences, in expression or reception. If they are substitutable without changing the meaning of the utterance, then these two words are, in their abstract, metaphorised senses, for this writer, synonyms (cf. Murphy [2010: 110]; Geeraerts [2010: 84]).

68 I analysed example (17) – *gentrification of the shoe game* – as a metaphorised sense of *gentrification*, applied to culture rather than neighbourhoods, but nonetheless maintaining entailments of displacement, loss of culture, profits, race, and power. The quoted speaker in example (29) prefers to label the same scenario *colonisation*, with a focus on histories of race and power, as well as loss of culture and a drive for profit, which are central to histories of colonisation. This can be seen as a metaphorical use of *colonisation*, disconnected from specific, formal historical processes of colonisation – but this is contestable, because this use spotlights the element of race, and race is a social system that emerges from (or is at least entrenched by) historical colonial processes. One key difference between *colonisation* and *gentrification* here would seem to be that displacement is often seen as the central semantic feature of *gentrification* (as in example (7)), while *colonisation* has not tended to emphasise or even entail concrete displacement. Nonetheless, we have seen established uses of *gentrification* that do not emphasise or even acknowledge displacement (examples (10) and (11)). This lack of specificity in relation to displacement results in a list of clearly overlapping semantic features which allows the understanding, for the author of example (29), that the two terms are interchangeable. For the author of example (29), both terms indicate power over culture, exacerbated by race, resulting in profit and loss.

69 *Gentrification* as *colonisation* is again linked to race categories in example (30):

> (30) Gentrification also plays a massive role in neighbourhood disinvestment… Black neighborhoods are not valued as sites of culture, community, and resistance on their own. Rather, they become sites of colonization, making them unrecognizable and often unsafe for the people who have always been living there. You might be saying to yourself, "Colonization? Come on. Gentrification doesn't sound too bad…" (*The Good Men Project*, 22 October, 2019, https://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/10-things-you-need-to-understand-about-how-poor-black-neighborhoods-were-created/)

70 Example (30) describes *gentrification* at length, in its concrete sense, including neighbourhood change, displacement, and race. *Gentrification* is defined as a process whereby neighbourhoods become sites of *colonisation*; then, in the rhetorical question at the end of the example, *colonisation* is presented as an alternative term for *gentrification*. Once again, this practical alternation, for this author, is evidence of synonymy. As in example (29), *colonisation* is used in a metaphorical sense, disconnected from established, formal histories of colonialism. And, as in example (29), one key semantic difference between the terms is the entailment of displacement in *gentrification*. That element is specifically removed here, via the phrase 'the people who have always been living there'. Again, the lack of specificity regarding this semantic feature results in a list of overlapping semantic features, with race and power over space foregrounded, such that the author of example (30) considers the terms interchangeable in this context.

71 Example (31), from a major online American news magazine, asserts that *gentrification* is a euphemism for a type of colonialism:[5]

> (31) Now that microcolonialism has been given the innocuous euphemism "gentrification," it is no longer seen as threatening. (*The Root*, 12 September, 2017, https://www.theroot.com/the-white-people-are-coming-6-signs-your-neighborhood-1803819806)

72 Co-text clarifies that *microcolonialism* differs from *colonisation* in scale and locality: it is a subordinate category to *colonialism* in its metaphorical sense; *microcolonialism* is thus a hyponym of *colonialism*. *Gentrification* is an alternative term to *microcolonialism*: it is a euphemism, i.e. a term with "more or less the same denotational meaning" but more positive connotation [Geeraerts 2010: 29]. The notion that *gentrification* is 'innocuous' in comparison to *colonisation* is not born out by the other examples here; nonetheless, the writer of example (31) is disparagingly observing that for some language users, *gentrification* is perceived as the less 'threatening' term. *Gentrification* is thus a euphemistic hyponym of *colonisation*. While authors of examples (29) and (30) asserted rough semantic equivalency between *gentrification* and *colonisation* by emphasising selected semantic features, the author of example (31) presents the terms with more semantic specificity intact, defining them as not interchangeable (i.e. synonymous), but rather as hyponymous.

73 Example (32) (re-presenting example (2)) is from the newspaper of an American university:

> (32) Gentrification is modern colonialism and is the physical manifestation of appropriation. (*University News*, 18 April, 2018, https://info.umkc.edu/unews/what-appropriation-and-gentrification-have-in-common/)

74 The co-text around example (32) explicitly defines *appropriation* and *gentrification*, but not *colonialism*. *Appropriation* is defined in the established abstract sense of *cultural appropriation*, with an emphasis on inappropriate adoption of the traditions of others, defined by race. *Gentrification* is defined in its concrete sense, including change to neighbourhoods, with a focus on race. The concrete sense of *gentrification* is framed as a 'physical' (i.e. concrete) instantiation of the abstract sense of *cultural appropriation*. For the author of example (30), *appropriation* occurs when a more powerful racially defined group wrongfully adopts abstract elements of the culture of a less powerful racially defined group; and *gentrification* occurs when a more powerful racially defined group wrongfully moves in to the concrete space of a less powerful racially defined group. The author has identified overlapping entailments of race and power over abstract and concrete objects, and has in turn highlighted those overlapping entailments to define *gentrification* as a manifestation (i.e. instantiation, exemplification, presentation) of *appropriation*. As demonstrated in the previous section, each term can be abstract or concrete, but the author selects the concrete sense of *gentrification* and the abstract sense of *appropriation* to argue that *gentrification* is concrete *appropriation*. This semantic relationship depends upon the selection of particular semantic elements of each word, to the exclusion of others, with particular de-emphasis, again, of displacement in *gentrification*.

75 While *colonialism* is not defined in the co-text around example (32), the text in the example itself explicitly frames *colonialism* as superordinate to *gentrification*, i.e. *gentrification* is a sub-category of *colonialism*, rendering them hyponymous (cf. Lyons [1977: 291]; Geeraerts [2010: 82]; Murphy [2010: 113]). Based on example (32), we could ask what type of colonialism is occurring, and answer 'gentrification'. In this instance, there is no apparent link to established, formal colonial processes, so this is metaphorised *colonialism*. We have already seen the potential semantic relations between *gentrification* and *colonialism*: they are synonymous for the authors of example (29) and example (30), and hyponymous for the author of example (31).

76 Example (33), from a major British tabloid, presents *appropriation* as a form of *colonialism*:

> (33) Cultural appropriation, which is not exclusive to Halloween costumes, is not about fragile feelings. But it is an exploitative form of colonialism. The impact is the continued dehumanization of Indigenous people rooted in colonial ideologies… (*The Star*, 18 October, 2019, https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2019/10/18/why-cultural-appropriation-isnt-about-fragile-feelings-its-an-exploitative-form-of-colonialism.html)

77 *Appropriation* is used here in its established abstract sense of *cultural appropriation*. *Colonialism* is also used in its established abstract sense, and is linked to established, formal colonial processes and indigenous people, and impediments to colonised people's self-definition and self-determination. For the author of example (33) – as well as for the tabloid's editors and at least some portion of its wide readership – abstract *appropriation* is a sub-type of *colonialism*. Again, overlapping semantic features are selected, to the exclusion of other features, allowing these language users to perceive semantic similarity.

78 Example (34) is from a student-led American magazine, and mirrors example (33), in a discussion of American yoga practice:

> (34) Appropriation (or misappropriation) occurs when one culture adopts the customs of another. This is not simply a cultural "exchange" (which is mutual and equitable) however, but rather, is performed by a dominant group against a marginalized one, effectively detaching the latter from their own culture. Essentially, it's a form of colonization. (*Study Breaks*, 14 January, 2020, https://studybreaks.com/thoughts/goat-yoga-cultural-appropriation/)

79 *Appropriation* is defined explicitly here in its established abstract sense of *cultural appropriation*, while *colonisation* is presented in multiple ways. The co-text situates yoga's place within established colonial histories between Britain and India. *Colonisation* in co-text is applied to yoga, indicating an erasure of yoga's spiritual elements; and entailing capitalist commodification of yoga practice and its accroutements, such that previous practitioners are priced out (or displaced, which evokes *gentrification*, even if this author does not use that term). *Colonisation* is also described in the example as a process whereby a dominant group 'detaches' a marginalised group from its own culture. This combination of features encompasses concrete and abstract senses of *colonisation*, while adding a third element of displacement, typical of *gentrification*. In turn, *appropriation* is 'a form of' *colonisation*; that is, abstract *appropriation* is a hyponym of *colonisation*. However, unlike example (33), there is no qualifier or modifier for *a form of*, such as 'exploitative'. As a result, we might reasonably interpret the phrase *a form of colonisation* as pragmatic impoverishment (cf. Cruse [2000: 122-123]), which – rather than specifying a hyponymic relationship and a sub-category – actually underspecifies *colonisation* further, rendering *colonisation* vague, i.e. ill-defined (cf. Cruse [2011: 199-200]). In this case, abstract *appropriation* is equivalent to an ill-defined *colonisation*.

80 Example (35) is from a major Hollywood industry website report of a panel discussion:

> (35) She continued, "The focus of where appropriation has been is that the intention of borrowing from other cultures has not been done with the same integrity and heartfelt respect." Taymor chimed in, "It's another form of colonization." Washington added that she was glad that Taymor associated appropriation with colonization. (*Deadline*, 25 January, 2020, https://deadline.com/2020/01/lin-manuel-miranda-ai-wei-wei-kerry-washington-julie-taymor-carrie-mae-weems-sundance-film-festival-power-of-story-diversity-inclusion-representation-1202841185/)

81 Like examples (33) and (34), the quoted speaker in example (35) sees *appropriation* as semantically associated with *colonisation*. In co-text, another panellist explains both as arising when a powerful group tells the stories of a marginalised group. That point insightfully identifies the heart of the semantic similarity: abstract *appropriation* occurs when a powerful group adopts elements of the culture of a marginalised group, while abstract *colonisation* occurs when a powerful group imposes its own worldview and modes of thought on a marginalised group – both scenarios entail that the voices of the

marginalised group are impeded or unheard in telling their own stories. As in other examples, this interpretation depends on language users selecting specific elements of the semantics of each term, to the exclusion of others, such that the resulting list of features overlaps. This newly summarised abstract meaning is less specific than the established senses described in the previous section, but tidily represents the overlapping semantic features that facilitate perceptions of semantic relations between the terms. Also, the phrase 'another form of colonisation' differs from 'a form of colonisation' in example (33). That it is 'another form' rather than 'a form' indicates fuller substitutability between *colonisation* and *appropriation*, which is in turn plausible because both are being used with less specific senses.

82 In summary, evidence in Section 3 illustrates language users' explicit negotiation of converging meanings in the abstract and concrete senses of these three terms. I have argued that for the language users cited here:

- *gentrification* is a partial synonym of *colonisation* (examples (29) and (30)),
- *gentrification* is a hyponym of *colonisation* (examples (31) and (32)),
- *appropriation* is a hyponym of *colonisation* (examples (33), (34), and (35)),
- *gentrification* is a concrete manifestation of abstract *appropriation* (example (32)).

83 I have shown that language users emphasise some semantic features of each term, while de-emphasising or entirely excluding other semantic features, resulting in a focus on overlapping semantic features, and thus synonymy or hyponymy for these terms. We can see this as vagueness or laxness of application in use for these terms, as their semantic features are applied (or not) in loose ways (cf. Cruse [2011: 200]). In turn, as semantic features are excluded, each of these words is coming to be used in broader contexts, with less semantic specificity and fewer semantic restrictions. Crucially, it is not just that the writers and speakers cited here are explicitly negotiating these meanings and arguing for rough semantic equivalency: these examples are drawn from mainstream sources whose authors and editors expect their wide readership to recognise semantic relatedness as well.

5. Exploring synonymy: Common syntagmatic combinations as potential sites for substitutability

84 We have seen, in Section 3, that some users see substitutability in various ways among these three terms. In this section, I explore common syntagmatic combinations as potential sites for substitutability. For example, since *appropriation*, *gentrification*, and *colonisation of culture* are all well attested, might they be interchangeable in that syntagmatic combination? I begin by examining syntagmatic combinations with *culture*, followed by *history*, *food*, and *mathematics*.

5.1. Culture

85 *Cultural appropriation* is well-established (see examples (3) and (4)). *Cultural gentrification* and *cultural colonisation* are less established. *Cultural gentrification* is not present in the COCA or COHA corpora, but it appears 18 times in the enTenTen15 corpus,[6] and is therefore likely a relatively new development. Example (36) is from a topical, specialised online news site:

(36) The event has evolved over the last three iterations, coming to add the concept of cultural gentrification to the common understanding of economic gentrification. (*Curbed*, 8 October, 2019, https://www.curbed.com/2019/10/8/20905240/history-indianapolis-neighborhood-gentrification-preenactindy)

86 Narrative co-text explains *cultural gentrification* as a scenario in which residents are not displaced, but lose power over their neighbourhood's culture. The explicit exclusion of physical displacement from the semantics of *gentrification* has already been discussed (see examples (10) and (11)). The author of example (36), in co-text, describes an experience of psychological (metaphorical) 'displacement' as a loss of culture. This is contrasted with *economic gentrification*, which emphasises the semantic elements of profit and increasing property prices.

87 Similarly, example (37), from a local American newspaper, emphasises the experience of unfamiliarity in neighbourhood change:

(37) Then there is a *cultural gentrification*. That is much harder to measure. If people are not forced to move but are feeling dislocated in their own neighbourhood… Your neighborhood doesn't feel like your neighborhood anymore. (*New Haven Independent*, 25 October, 2019, https://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/anika_singh_lemar_zoning/)

88 Example (37), in its co-text, describes responses to neighbourhood change imposed by newly arrived, wealthy and powerful outsiders. Example (37) explicitly excludes the established sense of displacement, because 'people are not forced to move', but describes an experience of psychological or mental 'dislocation' – corresponding to displacement, and similar to the psychological 'displacement' of example (36) – among long-time residents, as an experience of loss of culture. This entailment of psychological or mental displacement due to changes imposed by powerful outsiders is emphasised in both instances of *cultural gentrification*; this syntagmatic combination foregrounds abstract elements of *gentrification*.

89 *Cultural colonisation* is a recent addition to popular discourse, though it is found earlier in non-mainstream, academic contexts: rarely in academic books from the early 20th century in the Google Books corpora; and in academic journals since the 1990s in COCA.[7] In the enTenTen15 corpus, *cultural colonisation* occurs 132 times,[8] including mainstream sources (such as news) and non-mainstream sources (such as academic papers).

(38) Catholic missionaries worked mostly in European languages, contributing to the continent's linguistic and cultural colonization. (*The Conversation*, 10 September, 2019, http://theconversation.com/africas-catholic-churches-face-competition-and-a-troubled-legacy-as-they-grow-122611)

(39) Not to be left behind, China has sped up the cultural colonization of the Muslims in Eastern Turkistan (Xinjiang) where they have put some two million minority Uyghur Muslims in 're-education' camps. (*History News Network*, 26 January, 2020, https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/174141)

90 Examples (38) and (39), drawn from news sites that present accessible accounts of academic research, directly echo Thiong'o's [1986] *colonisation of the mind* in their reference to self-definition via language and education. *Cultural colonisation* thus highlights the abstract elements of *colonisation*, already discussed here, while emphasising their origins in material colonial political histories. This syntagmatic combination begs the question whether Thiong'o would have modified *colonisation* with *cultural* – in his 1986 book, he does not. Indeed, Thiong'o argued that *colonisation* was a process that affected both the concrete (land, resources) and the abstract (modes of thought, language, culture). It is conceivable that writers today have adopted *cultural colonisation* to counter what they might perceive as a default interpretation of *colonisation* as necessarily concrete. Given the many examples of abstract *colonisation* already presented here, however, that seems unlikely. These two examples present

abstract *colonisation* within the material setting of concrete *colonisation*, so it is more likely that this syntagmatic combination is used to distinguish the abstract from the concrete and to focus on the abstract, in very much the way that *cultural gentrification* is used in examples (36) and (37) to distinguish abstract elements of *gentrification* in contrast to concrete *gentrification*.

91 For some language users, as illustrated in Section 3, abstract and concrete senses of *colonisation* and *gentrification*, respectively, are already semantically related or substitutable – and the syntagmatic combination *cultural colonisation* might thus be particularly prone to alternation with *cultural gentrification*. For such language users, *colonisation* might conceivably replace *gentrification* in examples (36) and (37). However, the authors of examples (36) and (37) are both explicitly contrasting abstract *cultural gentrification* with concrete, economic elements of *gentrification* – specifically, rising property values, which are not a semantic feature of *colonisation* (even if they are also not necessarily absent from *colonisation*). It is this act of defining abstract *gentrification* in contrast to concrete *gentrification* that seems – at least in part – to prompt the syntagmatic combination *cultural gentrification*. In examples (38) and (39), *cultural colonisation* is similarly situated in a setting of concrete *colonisation*. Considering the topical context of political geography and expansionism, the replacement of *colonisation* with *gentrification* is even less apt there. Moreover, because examples (38) and (39) appear in news sites accessibly presenting academic research, genre norms might dictate expectations of technical semantic precision. Premodification by *cultural*, and the contexts of examples (36) through (39), which seem to prompt that premodification, emphasise disparate elements of the two terms' concrete and abstract semantics, and prevent substitutability.

92 Given the interchangeability demonstrated in Section 3, would it be acceptable – at least for some speakers – to replace *cultural colonisation* or *cultural gentrification* with the much more ubiquitous *cultural appropriation*? There is a need here to resist prescriptivism. Readers with a clear sense of each word's established technical sense might find such alternation intuitively jarring. Indeed, knowledge of each word's history might suggest that *cultural appropriation* ought to highlight an act of theft, whereas *cultural colonisation* and *cultural gentrification* ought to highlight elements of occupation and displacement, respectively. But – of course – the boundary between them is not neat, and the shared general semantic space in relation to power, culture, and race has already been shown. However, to re-iterate, in examples (36) and (37), *cultural gentrification*, while abstract, is explicitly causally linked to concrete *gentrification*; and in examples (38) and (39), abstract *cultural colonisation* is likewise linked to material histories of *colonisation*, again inhibiting alternation.

5.2. History

93 *Appropriation of history* does not occur in COHA or COCA, but does appear in Google Books (USA and UK) in academic books since the 1990s. There are 26 examples of *appropriation of history* in enTenTen15. Example (39), from an independent Indian news site, describes a process whereby political leaders create and enforce a historical narrative, to maintain national(ist) identity, and to maintain power:

> (39) Conceptions of territory play a key role in encouraging unity (and developing a common other) and form a part of the questions on the appropriation of history. (*EPW*, 31 October, 2019, https://www.epw.in/engage/article/unity-diversity-tensions-and-contradictions-rashtriya-ekta-diwas)

94 *Appropriation* does not here indicate a more powerful group inappropriately adopting some facet of culture – such as history – of a less powerful group; nor does it indicate an inappropriate claim of identity. Instead, *appropriation of history* is framed in the co-text

of this example as the imposition, by those in political power, of a perspective or interpretation on a knowledge base. This meaning of *appropriation* is also a core meaning of *colonisation of the mind*, and it also conveys the sense of power over narrative that is conveyed by *appropriation* in example (35), and *decolonising* in examples (25) and (26). This example pertains to India, but it is not colonial powers who are described as controlling the historical narrative – it is 20th century Hindu nationalists. *Colonisation* in this use, decoupled from material, formal histories of colonisation, is metaphorised. Nonetheless, given the topical context of modern India, *colonisation of history* might have been too jarring an alternate. Nonetheless, the denotational meaning of *appropriation* in *appropriation of history* is effectively the same as metaphorised *colonisation*, and the substitutability should thus be acceptable in at least some topic areas. In this case, if *appropriation* can reasonably be expected to alternate with *colonisation* but is limited by topic vis-à-vis material colonial histories, then these terms are partial near-synonyms (cf. Murphy [2010: 111]).

95 Example (41), from a popular mainstream news site, addresses the ways that political factions interpret the fall of the Roman empire to serve their own political agendas:

> (41) Sadly, for each of us, the appropriation of history and its "lessons" is not limited only to those with whom we agree… (*The Daily Beast*, 16 June, 2019, https://www.thedailybeast.com/do-these-skeletons-hold-the-secret-to-the-fall-of-the-roman-empire)

96 Like example (40), there is no sense of the adoption of the cultural practices, customs, aesthetics, or identity of another. Example (41) indicates power over historical narrative, and thus *appropriation* in *appropriation of history* once again conveys the core abstract, metaphorised meaning of abstract *colonisation*. *Colonisation* is a ready alternate for *appropriation* here.

97 *Gentrification of history* is a much newer innovation: it does not occur in COHA, COCA, the British or American Google Books corpora, or enTenTen15. Like examples (36) and (37), example (42) –from a local American newspaper – explicitly compares the abstract *gentrification of history* to an older concrete sense of *gentrification*:

> (42) Gentrification of the Charleston's history accompanied the physical and demographic transformation. (https://www.charlestonchronicle.net/2018/02/23/charlestons-landscape-of-memory-the-gentrification-of-history/)

98 The article defines concrete and abstract *gentrification* separately. Concrete 'physical and demographic' *gentrification* is defined primarily in terms of displacement and race: new white residents arrive in the neighbourhood and black residents are forced out. Abstract *gentrification*, as *gentrification of history*, is presented in co-text as the creation of 'a fabricated landscape of memory', of an 'idyllic, genteel town', in which black perspectives on slavery and oppression are erased.[9] *Gentrification of history* occurs when powerful actors re-interpret a historical narrative to serve a political agenda of the powerful. This is precisely the meaning of *appropriation of history* in examples (40) and (41), and of abstract, metaphorised *colonisation*. Alternation between the three terms in this context seems particularly plausible.

99 In example (43), *gentrification of history* indicates power over historical narrative, and could thus readily be replaced by the abstract *appropriation of history* of examples (41) and (42):

> (43) My tablemate, Professor Brands, and I discussed the Gentrification of History, where the winner of the battle often writes the history. Pulitzer Prize author Atkinson later profoundly commented "History is often something that never happened, written by someone who was not there". (*Desert Sun*, 16 February, 2019, https://eu.desertsun.com/story/life/2019/02/16/rancho-mirage-writers-festival-woodstock-mind/2867952002/)

100 Example (43) is a brief comment nestled within a report on a panel discussion addressing many topics. With no accompanying discussion of established concrete senses of *gentrification*, in a local mainstream American newspaper, it is particularly striking that the author and editor expect readers to understand this abstract *gentrification* as power over historical narrative.

101 *Colonising history* and *colonisation of history* do not occur in mainstream online news texts in 2018 and 2019, nor in COHA, COCA, or Google Books corpora; there are two instances in enTenTen15, in academic papers. *Decolonisation of history* occurs online in 2019 in the publication announcements for a non-academic book entitled *The Five Hundred Year Rebellion: Indigenous Movements and the Decolonization of History in Bolivia* (Dangl 2019), and once in a local American newspaper:

> (44) This is all part of a larger process of decolonizing environmental history and climate change, which, among other goals, includes understanding that Western ways of environmental thinking and teaching often overshadow perspectives of Indigenous people. (*Michigan Daily*, 16 October, 2019, https://www.michigandaily.com/section/arts/decolonizing-climate-change-stories-indigenous-peoples)

102 Example (44) illustrates the established abstract sense of *decolonising*, which entails working against the domination and control of thinking and teaching – and narrative – represented by colonising forces. In examples (40) through (43), *appropriation of history* and *gentrification of history* indicate the domination and control of *history*, as narrative, teaching, and thinking, by a powerful group; in example (44), *decolonising history* is the reverse process. Abstract *decolonising* is thus a contradictory antonym (cf. Murphy [2010: 120]) of both abstract *appropriation* and abstract *gentrification* in these examples.

5.3. Food

103 *Appropriation* of food made headlines in 2018 and 2019, with high-profile debates over Jamie Oliver's 'jerk rice',[10]Gourmet Burger Kitchen's 'authentic' Indian food,[11] and a Sainsbury's 'Persian' dish[12] as the prime UK examples, such that *The Guardian* devoted a piece to stating its official editorial stance on food appropriation.[13] In example (45), *appropriation* appears as *cultural appropriation* and indicates the established sense whereby a powerful group, in this case a major corporation, is seen to inappropriately adopt the traditions (specifically, cuisine) of a less powerful group, in this case Bengali people in the UK:

> (45) Marks & Spencer, for instance, caused a social media outrage last year when it introduced Bengali Turmeric Curry, with customers and critics crying foul about supermarkets' peddling "fake foreign food" and cultural appropriation. (*The Economic Times*, 30 June, 2019, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/london-opening-up-to-indias-diverse-cuisines/articleshow/70004980.cms)

104 In example (46), *appropriation of food* is a result of *colonisation*, and in example (47) it is a result of the related *imperialism*:

> (46) More than a culinary celebration, the evening's conversations will focus on how the dishes being consumed are tied to themes of colonization, appropriation, and resistance. (*Hyperallergic*, 4 September, 2019, https://hyperallergic.com/515831/sofra-daymeh-navel-los-angeles/)

> (47) He says as a result of globalisation, imperialism and international travel, food traditions and cuisines have been appropriated for centuries. (*SBS*, 26 August, 2019, https://www.sbs.com.au/food/article/2019/08/26/how-tell-if-restaurant-really-serves-it-authentic)

105 *Colonisation* and *imperialism* are seen as facilitators of *appropriation* of food, again reflecting the shared discursive space of even the established senses of these words. Although the modifier *cultural* is not always present, these examples convey established senses of *cultural appropriation*, entailing inappropriate adoption of (culinary) traditions of a disempowered other.

106 *Food gentrification* is now common, with many writers citing columnist Soleil Ho [2014] as inventing the term. In Ho's original use, *food gentrification* has multiple entailments, parallel to neighbourhood gentrification: the price of specific foods or ingredients rises for a range of reasons, and in turn early users of those foods are priced out or displaced, losing access to and thus threatening maintenance of their food heritage, while profits increase for producers. With all of these semantic features intact, *food gentrification* is not substitutable with *appropriation of food*. More recent usage of *food gentrification* shows semantic breadth parallel to *gentrification* more generally.

> (48) Chai Master is one of the cafes that ushered in the era of chai gentrification. (*Eater*, 5 November, 2018, https://www.eater.com/2018/11/5/17937472/karachi-chai-wala-dhaba-parathas-gentrification)

107 Example (48), in its co-text, emphasises *gentrification* as entailing increasing prices and aesthetic change, as well as race, class, and power: customers at older chai stands tended to be Pashtun day labourers, 'who suffer from widespread discrimination, often disproportionately targeted by the police', but customers at gentrified chai stands are 'rich people'. Displacement is notably absent: the new chai stands are described as being opened adjacent to the old ones, but serving different customers, such that both remain open and busy, side by side. The author of example (48) asks the owner of a gentrified chai stand if he has committed 'cultural appropriation'; the owner affirms that he has, if inadvertently. The comparison between *cultural appropriation* and *food gentrification* by the author highlights the common semantic element of the adoption of a facet of culture (cuisine) of a disempowered other. However, in this syntagmatic combination, *gentrification* seems likely to be the strong preference over *appropriation*, because the specific semantic features of changing aesthetics and increasing prices are maintained and highlighted, and these are not shared with *appropriation*. That the two terms share semantic features is explicitly acknowledged by the author of example (48), but the semantic features that are not shared are nonetheless maintained, and the terms are not used interchangeably.

108 Example (49), from a high-circulation UK newspaper, suggests that *food gentrification* entails *food appropriation*:

> (49) And you can tell how gentrified your food is when it's been appropriated by the masses with their own take on it (PSA, leave hummus alone). (*Metro*, 19 August, 2019, https://metro.co.uk/2019/08/19/people-think-these-bacon-and-cheese-and-punjabi-samosas-are-gentrified-10595357/)

109 The co-text around example (49) lists attributes of *food gentrification*: rising prices of the food product; an influx of new customers who have no prior familiarity with the food or its culture; white ownership of the means of production replacing, in this case, Asian ownership; and 'appropriation' of the food by 'the masses'. *Appropriation* is not explained, but it is clearly only one feature of the semantics of *gentrification* here, and *gentrification* in this case includes semantic features that are not included in *appropriation*. Although this author is highlighting overlapping semantic elements between *appropriation* and *gentrification*, like the author of example (48), the terms are not used synonymously.

110 *Colonising food* does not occur in mainstream online news texts in 2018 and 2019, nor does *colonising cuisine* or other expressions in the semantic domain of food. *De-colonising food* occurs, although it has achieved much less notoriety:

> (50) Sherman's commitment to decolonizing food means that many of today's staples —including wheat flour, dairy, pork, and processed cane sugar—are literally off the table. (*Food and Wine*, 14 October, 2019, https://www.foodandwine.com/travel/restaurants/sean-sherman-sioux-chef-indigenous-food-labs)

111 Example (50), from a mainstream specialised news source, describes in its co-text a process of 'revitalising' indigenous ingredients and recipes as a means of 'healing after centuries of trauma'. The goal to educate the public about indigenous, pre-colonial lifestyle – via cuisine – is a clear example of the established abstract sense of *decolonising* as reclaiming control of narrative and education, self-definition and self-determination.

112 Example (51) is from a general mainstream news site:

> (51) Meet the woman decolonizing bone broth. (*Newsbreak*, 23 October, 2018, https://www.newsbreak.com/news/0Gz1J0Tw/meet-the-woman-decolonizing-bone-broth)

113 In the co-text of example (51), *decolonising* is a process of renewing understanding of traditional thought via education about traditional food. As the co-text explains, a cook views this as 'her way to reclaim agency of her own culture, a culture that she feels she's watched first-hand be appropriated for decades'. *Appropriation* here indicates the established sense of wrongful adoption of culinary culture of a disempowered other. Similar to the syntagmatic combination with *history*, above, *decolonising food* is a contradictory antonym (Murphy [2010: 120]) to *food appropriation* and *food gentrification*.

5.4. Mathematics

114 Perhaps most indicative of ingenuity in use with these terms is the *appropriation* and *decolonisation* of *mathematics*.

> (52) The Seattle school district is putting into place a K-12 curriculum that encourages students "to explore how math has been 'appropriated' by Western culture and used in systems of power and oppression." (*Breitbart*, 25 October, 2019, https://www.breitbart.com/politics/2019/10/25/seattle-schools-plan-curriculum-to-explore-cultural-appropriation-of-math/)

115 Example (52) does not indicate the inappropriate adoption of the traditions of a disempowered other. The co-text around example (52) describes this new curriculum as 'ethnic studies', underlining that ideas of race and power are key to *appropriating mathematics*. A speaker is quoted in the article elaborating that the curriculum will explore not only 'history of math and who contributes to that', but also 'students' connection with identity and agency'. In example (52), *appropriation* explicitly indicates systems of race, oppression, and power over (historical) narratives, as well as agency and self-determination. *Appropriation* here conveys the same sense as in *appropriation of history*. *Appropriation* here represents power to control an element of culture – specifically, a narrative and its associated field of knowledge – rather than adoption of an element of culture. With this very general meaning, *appropriation* can readily be replaced with *gentrification* or *colonisation*.

116 In example (53), entailments of *decolonising math* are listed, which clearly overlap with entailments of *decolonising the mind*: exposure to contributions to knowledge beyond those of colonial powers:

> (53) Exactly what decolonizing math would entail isn't entirely clear: Curriculum revisions that promote non-Western contributions to the field, new teaching methods rooted in indigenous cultures, and greater openness to ideas outside the academic mainstream are all under discussion. (https://undark.org/2018/12/31/in-south-africa-decolonizing-mathematics/)

117 *Decolonising* is the preferred term for this process; there is no evidence for other terms, such as *re-appropriating* or *de-gentrifying*, in this abstract sense. As in the context of food, *decolonising* here is the undoing not only of *colonisation* but also of *appropriation* described in example (52). *Decolonising*, then, is once again a contradictory antonym (Murphy [2010: 120]) of *appropriation* and *gentrification*.

5.5. Summary

118 To summarise observations in this section:

- Syntagmatic combination with *cultural* is used to emphasise established abstract elements of each term in contrast to established concrete elements, while also situating those abstract elements alongside the concrete ones, and alternation between the terms in this syntagmatic combination is inhibited.
- Syntagmatic combination with *history* indicates general control over narrative and knowledge, while de-emphasising or excluding other non-shared specific features of the semantics of the three terms. The reduced specificity, increasing laxness of application of semantic features in use, and subsequent expanding contexts of use constitute semantic generalisation. The three terms tend to be interchangeable in this combination. *Decolonising history* is a contradictory antonym to the *appropriation of history* and *gentrification of history*.
- In syntagmatic combination with *food*, *appropriation* and *gentrification* retain established, non-shared semantic features, and are not interchangeable. However, *decolonisation of food* is a contradictory antonym of both, as it is used in a more general sense of rectifying abuses of power over culture.
- In syntagmatic combination with *mathematics*, *appropriation* presents semantic features of abstract senses of *gentrification* and *colonisation*, indicating racialized power over narrative and other elements of culture. *Decolonising mathematics* is a contradictory alternate to *appropriation of mathematics*.

119 There are, as shown above, further contextual restrictions to interchangeability, related to genre and topic. As in examples (42) and (43), it may be that genre expectations of technical precision – as in academic-inspired journalism – may disallow broadened semantics and interchangeability. Also as in examples (42) and (43), it may be that the topical context of geopolitical expansion would favour *colonisation* and disprefer *appropriation* or *gentrification* to describe the exercise of power over culture and identity.

6. Mechanisms of change

120 Language users are employing these three terms in lax or loose ways, emphasising some semantic features to the exclusion of others; the three terms do not necessarily specify the semantic features that they once did, in established senses. This decreasing specificity and increasing vagueness, as laxness of application (Cruse [2011: 200]), constitutes semantic generalisation (Kay & Allan [2015: 75]; Geeraerts [2010: 26-27]).

121 There is a generally observed tendency for semantic generalisation when a word moves from specialised to more general usage, observed since the early 20th century (cf. Nerlich [1992: 106]; Ullmann [1963: 192, 204]; Sperber [1938]), and that is affirmed in the terms studied here. However, the three terms here underwent semantic generalisation not just after moving from technical academic use into general use in mainstream online news, but also after being employed ever more extensively in fraught public debates involving contentious notions of power, culture, identity, and race. It may be that broadening here is further motivated by these highly charged debates. As illustrated in Section 3, users not

only tolerate but even embrace the broadening semantics of these words in such fraught debates, extending usage and applying them in ever wider contexts. The resulting contestation of meaning renders the debates even more fraught, and affirm that these three terms are keywords (Williams 1983).

122 There is some literature on affective charge as a motivator for semantic generalisation. Blank [1999: 76] argues that a word that originally refers strictly to a narrow, prototypical meaning within a larger category undergoes semantic generalisation to refer to the entire category, due to the affective charge of the meaning in use. Similarly, Ullmann [1963: 188] asserts that the influence of affective charge alongside fluidity of semantic boundaries – 'vagueness of sense' (including potential for semantic generalisation) – are the most powerful semantic motivations for change. Sperber [1923] (cited in Nerlich [1992: 105]) hypothesised that affective charge can motivate semantic change such that (among other processes) for a given term, new, more highly charged meanings may tend to become more common than older, less charged meanings in use; this includes examples of broadening (cf. Sperber [1938]).[14]

123 Synthesising the findings here with the theoretical traditions just outlined, I would hypothesise a process of semantic change whereby narrow, precise, technical vocabulary is pulled into a highly charged public debate and hence undergoes semantic broadening, motivated by the fraught, contentious, or affectively charged nature of the social or cultural debate. As multiple words within a given semantic field undergo this change simultaneously, they may converge semantically, as exemplified here, or not.

124 To test this hypothesis, it will be necessary to conduct similar studies on comparable terms. Potential examples include terms related to economic systems, such as *capitalism* and *socialism*, which have likely broadened from their original, precise specialised meanings and come to represent a broad range of social and cultural values within highly contentious public debates. The question in each case will be to examine whether there is a consistent trend of semantic change, particularly generalisation, in these words as they move from specialised language to highly charged public debate. It will be necessary to analyse comparators as well – terms that have migrated from specialised usage into less fraught public discourse – to affirm whether such broadening is more likely in contentious debates.

Conclusion

125 *Appropriation*, *gentrification*, and *colonisation* have all undergone recent semantic change. In addition to the new semantic features described in Section 3, the terms are being employed in increasingly lax ways, with increasing vagueness, as language users emphasise the overlapping elements of their semantics, while ignoring the disparate features. The terms are now often presented in use as close semantic relations of each other and, as illustrated in Section 4, are for some language users interchangeable. *Decolonising*, in its broadest sense, is repeatedly used as a contradictory antonym of all three terms.

126 I have proposed a generalizable process of semantic change whereby specialised terms undergo semantic broadening as they are increasingly used in contentious or fraught public debates, motivated by affectively charge and the contentious nature of the debate.

127 The examples here, from online news including mainstream and massively popular websites, are not just factual evidence or attestations that these terms can be used with these broadened semantics. The nature of the sources allows the conclusion that a critical mass of public readership can be expected to understand and accept these terms' semantic broadening, relatedness, and interchangeability. Given this popular usage, it may be that the *OED*, cited throughout this paper – as well as other dictionaries – ought to consider listing these newly broadened senses, particularly for language learners.

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Notes

1 With only a few clearly marked exceptions, all examples were published within the given date range.

2 Corpora include the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA), containing 400 million words of written American English from the 1810s to the 2000s (Davies [2010]); the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), which includes over 1 billion words of written American English from the 1990s through the 2010s balanced across eight genres (Davies [2008]); the Google Books corpora containing 155 billion words of American English and 34 billion words of British English printed from the 16th through the 20th century (Davies [2011]); and enTenTen15, which contains around 15 billion words from 37 million webpages, collected in 2015 (Lexical Computing [2020]).

3 Examples (18) and (19) are from 2014 and 2017, respectively, but I think they are important enough to be included here.

4 This *gentrification of politics* is also defined in the article as ‘sanitised thinking’, and the article includes the term *gentrified thinking*. The author of example (20) cites Schulman’s [2013] mainstream book *Gentrification of the mind*, which also defines *gentrification* in its abstract, metaphorised sense as ‘sanitised thinking’. There are numerous other citations of Schulman’s book in online news texts in 2018 and 2019.

5 Example (31) is from 2017, but I have included it because it is an important illustration of these words’ semantics.

6 The enTenTen15 corpus contains around 15 billion words from 37 million webpages, collected in 2015 (Lexical Computing [2020]; see footnote 1). COHA and the Google Books corpora contain a total of nearly 200 billion words from the 16th through the 20th century; COCA is much smaller, containing 1 billion words from the 1990s through the 2010s. That *cultural gentrification* occurs 18 times in the 15 billion words of enTenTen15, but not in the other corpora, suggests that it is a new expression.

7 Curiously, *cultural colonisation* appeared twice, in unrelated articles, in *Time* magazine in early 1977 – and never again afterwards (Davies [2007]).

8 That *cultural colonisation* occurs 132 times in the 15 billion words and 37 million webpages of enTenTen15 in 2015, and occasionally in academic contexts prior to that, affirms that this expression has only recently been introduced to mainstream online use.

9 This example thus also conveys some of the meaning of *gentrification* already seen in *gentrification of language* in examples (18) and (19), in its suggestion that a ‘fabricated’ narrative is replacing a more authentic one.

10 https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/food-drink/article/2160537/chefs-and-cultural-appropriation-jamie-oliver-not-only-one.

11 https://metro.co.uk/2018/10/18/gourmet-burger-kitchens-claims-they-sell-proper-indian-food-arent-going-down-well-8052215/.

12 https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/nov/03/sainsburys-apology-to-readers-over-stew-recipe.

13 https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/aug/10/the-guardian-view-on-food-cultures-sharing-not-snatching.

14 Ullmann [1963: 198] notes that Sperber's [1923] 'emotive force' may be understood as 'ordinary interest'.

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About the author

Seth W. Mehl
University of Sheffield (UK)
s.mehl@sheffield.ac.uk

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