WORKING PAPER

Anti-black prejudice and neighborhood change in the declining city.

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Introduction

Cities in the American Rust Belt[1] have experienced acute population loss since their industrial peaks in the mid-twentieth century. Cities with majorities, pluralities, or large minorities of black residents have been particularly hard hit by depopulation and other forms of urban decline (Table 1). No matter what the overall black population level of the city in questions, African American neighborhoods have experienced disproportionate levels of depopulation since 1970 (Table 2). Urban decline—the exodus of people and capital from urban space—has been more pronounced, sustained, and widespread for black cities and spaces than for white ones. Why would this be the case? Why, in particular, would not the influx of one group (black people) simply cancel out the exodus of another (white people) thus leading to net zero change? This article addresses this question by exploring the role that black pathologization has had on neighborhood change in the Rust Belt. The black neighborhood has long been and remains a highly stigmatized space. That prejudicial stigma serves as a repellant to non-black groups who consistently refuse to reside there. The main outflow of net population actually occurs when black people begin to flee the neighborhood. They generally do so because there is such a stigma to the neighborhood that they are unable to transfer, filter, or sell their house to members of another group. This pattern challenges two common paradigms that insist that newcomers will eventually occupy even the most marginalized spaces.

Race and residential choice

[1] For this paper, "the Rust Belt" includes all central cities of all large (over 500,000 people) metropolitan statistical areas in the Great Lakes states (New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota). New York City and Philadelphia were excluded because of dissimilarity with interior cities in the Rust Belt. Louisville and St. Louis were added because their MSAs spill into Great Lakes states and they are structurally and economically similar to other cities in the region.

Table 1: Population change and current demographic characteristics of the principal cities of large Rust Belt Metropolitan Areas[a] (Sources: American Community Survey, 2012-2016; U.S. Census of Population, 1950).

	Current Demographics[b]			Population Change
Principal City	Black (%)	White (%)	Neither (%)[c]	1950 to 2016 (%)
Detroit	79.7	13.6	6.7	-63.0
Harrisburg	51.3	32.6	16.1	-45.1
Cleveland	50.8	40.3	8.9	-57.5
St. Louis	47.9	45.6	6.5	-63.1
Youngstown	43.7	49.1	7.3	-61.3
Cincinnati	43.1	50.7	6.2	-40.9
Rochester	40.9	46.1	12.9	-36.8
Dayton	39.8	54.9	5.3	-42.1*
Milwaukee	39.2	46.0	14.8	-6.1
Buffalo	37.3	48.1	14.6	-55.4
Chicago	30.9	48.7	20.4	-25.0
Akron	30.5	61.1	8.5	-27.7
Albany	29.9	55.6	14.5	-27.1
Syracuse	29.0	55.3	15.7	-34.6
Indianapolis	28.0	61.6	10.5	+98.2*
Columbus	28.0	61.1	10.9	+122.7*
Toledo	27.2	63.5	9.3	-7.5*
Pittsburgh	24.3	66.3	9.5	-54.9
Louisville	22.9	70.9	6.2	+65.7*
Grand Rapids	19.7	68.3	12.0	+9.8
Minneapolis	18.8	64.8	16.4	-22.4
Lancaster	17.1	58.7	24.2	-7.0
Allentown	14.0	58.8	27.2	+12.1
United States	**12.6**	**73.4**	**14.0**	**+111.4**
Madison	7.0	78.7	14.2	+156.1*
Scranton	6.8	85.0	8.3	-39.2

* Cities that grew by over 100% of their 1950 land area due to annexation.

NOTES

[a] Rust Belt includes all central cities of all large (over 500,000 people) metropolitan statistical areas in the Great Lakes states (New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota). New York City and Philadelphia were excluded because of dissimilarity with interior cities in the Rust Belt. Louisville and St. Louis were added because their MSAs spill into Great Lakes states and they are structurally and economically similar to other cities in the region.

[b] Current figures were derived from the ACS five-year estimates for 2012-2016.

[c] This is the percentage that do not self-identify as either black or white. This can be because they are mixed race, or because they otherwise do not identify with either black or white as a category.

Table 2: Population Loss in Large Rust Belt Central City Neighborhoods[a], 1970-2016 (source: US Census and American Community Survey Estimates, 2012-2016, through the Social Explorer Longitudinal Tract Database).

	Population Change in Census Tracts			
Percent Black in 1970	*Extreme Decline[b]*	*Household Size Adjustment[c]*	*Growth[d]*	*Number of Tracts*
0-11.1% Black[e]	48.1%	20.6%	31.3%	2,317
11.2-49.9% Black	72.0%	11.9%	16.1%	354
50.0-100% Black	95.0%	1.7%	3.3%	639

NOTES

[a] This includes all census tracts in the central cities of all large (over 500,000 people) metropolitan statistical areas in the Great Lakes states (New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota). New York City and Philadelphia were excluded because of dissimilarity with interior cities in the Rust Belt. Louisville and St. Louis were added because their MSAs spill into Great Lakes states and they are structurally and economically similar to other cities in the region. This resulted in 25 cities composed of 3,310 census tracts.

[b] Extreme decline is defined as losses that exceeded the average change in household size (for the US) between 1970 and 2016 (2.53 to 3.14; 19.1% loss). Tracts in this category lost between 19.1% and 100% of their population.

[c] Household size adjustment: these were tracts with population losses within the rate of household size adjustment (0-19.1%).

[d] Tracts that registered population growth between 1970 and 2016.

[e] 11.1% of the American population was counted as African American in 1970.

What factors determine residential choice? Geographers, planners, economists and sociologists have pondered this general question for decades. Obviously choice is not equally distributed. Higher income people with greater access to credit have the greatest choices, while lower income people with poor access to credit have fewer options. Access can, moreover, be "artificially" impeded through racist and other exclusionary practices. Researchers have shown how real estate investors, the federal government, and other professionals have, for example, steered black families away from residence in white neighborhoods and toward majority African American locations (Massey and Denton, 1993; Korver-Glenn, 2018). With those caveats in mind, most models of residential choice privilege self-interest. All families and people are searching for housing that has the highest amenity value—distance to work, and the best schools, services, safety, stability—at the lowest cost. More abstractly, residential choice is an assessment of current conditions, and an estimate of future conditions. A variety of literatures suggest that race is used frequently to make such assessments. These short-hand prejudicial methods damage the stability and future appeal of black neighborhoods. Because they eventually provoke the out-migration of all people, some of them (such as the stereotype that black neighborhoods will decline) become self-fulfilling. Scholars have pointed to two particularly influential ways that potential residents make quick judgments about potential places to live: judgments about current residents, and judgements about the physical condition of the neighborhood.

At the most basic level, white people continue to report discomfort with the idea of living in neighborhoods that are even marginally integrated. According to the Survey of Detroit Area Residents, large majorities of black people would prefer to live in evenly-mixed (black and white) neighborhoods. By contrast, most white people revealed as recently as the 1990s, that they would not feel comfortable visiting such a neighborhood, much less residing there (Massey

and Denton, 1998: 93; Thomas, 2013: 207-8). This occurs despite the fact that scholars have found considerable social desirability bias in surveys—namely that white people report being *more* willing to hire and live near black people than they actually are (Pager and Quillian, 2005; Krysan et. al, 2008). The actual white aversion to living in integrated spaces is likely higher. Racial proxy theorists insist that this aversion is rooted in the notion that black people are considered signals or proxies for eventual decline (Ellen, 2000), but compelling research continues to find white aversion to residence near significant concentrations of black people crosses the class spectrum (Krysan et al, 2008; Kye, 2018). Kye (2018) for example, found that significant influxes (500+) of black people still provoke an exodus of whites. Contra racial proxy theory, he found this reaction to be even more pronounced when the in-migrating black people were of higher incomes. At the very impoverished end of the spectrum, Desmond (2016; 322) documented extreme aversion of poor white people living on the south side of Milwaukee from living in, or even visiting, the more African American north side of the city. Social desirability bias provokes most white people to hide their prejudice about living near non-white people, but in careful anonymous experiments and surveys, white people reveal or report a durable aversion to living in highly African American neighborhoods.

Potential residents also use the physical environment as a method to assess current and future conditions (and about the inferred presence or not, of non-white people). By visiting a neighborhood, one can form judgments about its stability based on the quality and upkeep of the housing, and the presence of factors like vacant lots. These judgments are also often extensions of the racial judgments made about the neighborhood's residents both in the sense that racial assumptions about people and space are intertwined but also in the sense that ostensibly non-racial factors like vacant lots are deeply influenced by race in different ways (Lipsitz, 2011;

Bonam et al., 2017). First, social psychologists have found that white respondents make snap judgments about physical space based on the presence or not of black people (Krysan et al., 2008; Bonam et. al, 2017). Bonam et. al (2016), for example, showed respondents different versions of an image of a house. In one of the images, a black family was posing in front of it, while in another of the same house a white family was posing in front. Respondents were significantly more likely to assume, when asked that the neighborhood of the "black" house was more dangerous than the "white" house. They also assumed that the "black" house was worth considerably less. Sampson and Raudenbush (2004), moreover, have found that the presence of black people in imagery of Chicago street scenes provoked white respondents[2] to assume that the neighborhood was "blighted" and that social disorder prevailed there.

Second, the ability of a population to adequately upkeep property depends on a variety of factors including income, whether they own the property (or are renting the property from landlords who are not doing basic upkeep) and access to capital for housing repairs. Researchers continue to show that income is disproportionately impacted by ongoing discrimination in the job market that influences income and wealth of black people. In blind audits and experiments, researchers continue to find resistance amongst employers for hiring equally (and sometimes more) qualified black people over whites (Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2004; Pager and Quillian, 2005; Pager, Bonikowski and Western, 2009). In some areas, this basic discrimination is amplified by targeted policing methods that ensnare a highly disproportionate number of black people (compared to white people), who after incarceration are unable to find mainstream employment, buy a house, or obtain mainstream credit. In one famous audit study, Pager (2003) found that white men with a criminal record were more likely to get a call-back for a job

[2] This was true for other groups too, but the effect was greatest with white respondents.

interview than black men *without* a criminal record. Given the highly segregated nature of many American cities (particularly in the Rust Belt), such forms of discrimination, by definition, have more of an impact on the most African American neighborhoods. These forces act to destabilize black inner city neighborhoods that have been pathologized as danger zones.

Third, scholars continue to find ongoing evidence of redlining—the denial or overpricing of mortgage capital in black neighborhoods. Home Mortgage Disclosure Act studies have revealed systemic differences in loan denials between black and white applicants. The most comprehensive of these studies found that non-white applicants experienced loan denials 82% more often than similarly qualified white people after controlling for a variety of variables (Munnell et al., 1996; Pager and Shepherd, 2008). Among other outcomes, this leads to an uneven housing deterioration, particularly in areas that are heavily African American and thus affected by all of these disproportionate forces. In part for these reasons vacant lots (housing demolition) are significantly associated with the presence of black populations (Hackworth, 2018). Using abandoned or weathered urban space as a method for assessing neighborhood quality is not an act devoid of racial content or context.

Replacement paradigms

A long line of thought in geography and sociology holds that conditions of stigmatization and aversion are not permanent to one group or place. Neighborhoods are fluid and change frequently. Two paradigms, in particular, suggest that marginalized spaces will be reoccupied, albeit by very different users and investors.

a. The succession paradigm

The succession paradigm emerged with the Chicago School of Sociology in the 1930s but has evolved into a broader effort to measure neighborhood "ecologies" and how they might change over time (Betancur and Smith, 2016). This perspective recognizes various levels of social and economic marginalization. Simply put, some groups are more powerful than others, and this hierarchy etches itself onto the urban landscape with powerful groups occupying the most prestigious neighborhoods, and the most marginalized groups occupying the most unstable, dangerous, over-crowded, and low cost locations. This paradigm emphasizes a common aspirational tendency amongst all groups. The most marginalized groups may enter the city's lowest tier neighborhoods but they will collectively seek to move to the next best neighborhood and in so doing eventually be accepted as mainstream. Within this paradigm, even the most marginalized people will eventually become assimilated into the "mainstream" (i.e. be coded as white) and even the most marginalized neighborhoods will become reoccupied by different groups. Housing will "filter down" to a more marginalized group, and the process will continue. Chicago School theorists were originally most interested in immigrant marginality, but some in the school eventually adapted these insights to American born inter-racial differences. Robert Park, for example, (1950, 150) wrote that, "interracial adjustments […] involve racial competition, conflict, accommodation, and eventually assimilation, but all of these diverse processes are to be regarded as merely the efforts of a new social and cultural organism to achieve a new biotic and social equilibrium." So, while "the great influx of southern Negroes into northern cities" initially caused "disturbances to the metabolism" (Park, Burgess, and McKenzie 1925, 54), they will eventually become part of the system (i.e. coded a "white" like other initially-marginalized groups before them). The empirical record for such assimilative assumptions is however not strong. White animus toward African Americans was acute in the

1930s, when Park wrote those words, and remains strong today. There has been no meaningful assimilation, or succession of once-black neighborhoods in a way that was akin to say Italian-American immigrant neighborhoods near the loop in downtown Chicago (Reed, 1988). Unlike their initially-marginalized white-European counter-parts, African Americans remain heavily concentrated in the same neighborhoods today (Shabazz, 2015). White people of all classes avoid residence near black people in Chicago and elsewhere. There is no discernable assimilation or succession occurring in this context—or if there is, it is occurring at a manifestly slower pace than it did for other marginalized groups.

The succession paradigm is useful for understanding the movement and complex ecologies of cities that are experiencing major immigration by a multitude of groups. It is less effective in declining environments where there are fewer immigrants and where the primary axis of difference is black-white. Black neighborhoods have long been stigmatized, and there is little evidence that any group is reoccupying those spaces in meaningful numbers. This paradigm also fails to account for the severity and reproduction of anti-black prejudice. The pathologization of African Americans has been unusually acute, durable, and widespread.

b. The gentrification paradigm

The gentrification paradigm understands neighborhood change differently than succession approaches. Though there are normative and conceptual differences between competing theories of gentrification, the one underlying thread is the assumption that poor, distressed inner city neighborhoods will eventually begin to attract a wealthier clientele who will displace (or replace) the previous residents to other locations in the city. For historical materialists (and even some neoclassical economists), the primary attraction of such spaces is

value. After years of dereliction and disinvestment, the economic potential of a weathered housing unit in a city can become suppressed to the point where a "rent gap" emerges. A rent gap is the distance between what a property is currently able to garner in rent or sales price, and what it could attract if positive investment took place (Smith, 1996). Other gentrification theorists emphasize the importance of changing cultural tastes that have made the inner city an attractive locale for disaffected suburbanites seeking an urban "convivial" existence (Ley, 1996). This paradigm is an intriguing one to be sure, but its explanatory power varies considerably depending on the type of city. For cities like New York, Toronto, and Philadelphia which had built up cores with durable multi-family housing that could be profitably converted, this paradigm is a powerful explanation of a process that has converted inner city landscapes into playgrounds of the upper middle class and above. But for cities like Detroit and Cleveland, such explanations are less robust. A larger proportion of the housing stock in interior industrial cities of the Rust Belt is composed of wood-framed single family housing built quickly in the early twentieth century to house workers (Ryan, 2012). Such housing is more likely to deteriorate to the point of inhabitability if vacated, and is often demolished as a result. Thus while the Lower East Side of New York was filled with multi-story, very durably constructed brick apartment buildings with high vacancy rates in the 1970s, the landscape of the east side of Detroit in 2010 is characterized by vacant lots. It is considerably more expensive to build a new house to code than it is to renovate an existing one—thus the potential value capture intrinsic to the rent gap is nullified (or at least reduced considerably). Moreover, the single family bungalow on the east side of Detroit does not capture the cultural imagination of the gentrifier as much as say a brownstone in Brooklyn. Thus while the gentrification paradigm has been a powerful explanation of landscape change in places like New York, the actual number of neighborhoods

and spaces in the Rust Belt that are experiencing what might be deemed gentrification is comparatively small.

The second dimension the gentrification paradigm struggles to explain is the role of race in the attractiveness of neighborhoods to potential investors. Though there are high profile examples of black communities being displaced by white gentrifiers (Schaffer and Smith, 1986) and an even smaller number of high profile instances of black gentrifiers displacing low income African Americans (Hyra, 2017), the prevailing pattern is that gentrification most often occurs in majority-white low income neighborhoods close to the central city. Hwang and Sampson (2014), for example assembled a detailed model to associate the prevalence of gentrification with a range of social and built form factors. They found that that there was a considerable and significant avoidance of the most African American neighborhoods by gentrifiers in Chicago. In less wealthy cities like Detroit and Cleveland, there are even fewer instances of black majority neighborhoods being gentrified. More often than not, as will be demonstrated later, the pattern for black majority neighborhoods is to remain black majority and marginalized. The stigma of this marginalization is sufficient to repel potential gentrifiers and other newcomers.

The gentrification paradigm is rooted almost exclusively in class and price, but race is a crucial determinant of value under racial capitalism. The simple presence of black people provokes many white people to assume a neighborhood is more dangerous and likely to look elsewhere for residence.

Argument

The most common paradigms of neighborhood change struggle to explain key components of neighborhood change (and the lack thereof) in struggling Rust Belt cities. The

connection between the concentration of black populations and overall population decline does not make intuitive sense in the context of white flight, succession or gentrification paradigms. If it is just white flight, why would not black populations simply be replacing white ones? Why would there *overall* population loss? If it is because those spaces are marginalized and no newcomers are willing to live there, why would that be the case? Why would not, as the succession paradigm suggests, a newer, more marginalized group move there? Given the proximity to city centers and very low prices, why would not investment and new middle class occupy this housing *en masse* as gentrification paradigm would suggest?

This paper emphasizes the ongoing and durable stigma of anti-black prejudice. Blackness (people and spaces) has been constructed as a danger to white property, political power, and safety. This has been both an organic construction (a la group threat theory[3]), something that is carelessly reproduced in the media and education, and something that is consciously deployed by conservative forces in the post-civil rights period (Lopez, 2014; Hackworth, 2019). Among other outcomes, this has hardened the stigma of the black neighborhood—made it more durable. The main source of major population loss in black spaces is not because of the initial white exodus. It is because of the eventual outmigration of black families unable to sell or rent their highly stigmatized property. This paper illustrates this process in the study of uneven racial composition in three rapidly declining Rust Belt cities: Cleveland, Detroit, and Pittsburgh.

Findings

[3] Group threat theory holds that racism is a collective group response to a perceived threat by a competing "outgroup". Most studies of this sort use the size of the outgroup as a proxy for the threat level, but threats can be activated via other conflicts as well (see Blumer, 1956; Quillian, 1996; Brown, 2014 among many others).

Detroit, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh all lost considerable population between 1970 and 2016. Detroit's population fell by 54.8% while Cleveland and Pittsburgh lost 48.2% and 41.3% respectively. Like other cities in the region, this population loss was far more acute in African American majority neighborhoods than in whiter spaces. Using the Social Explorer Longitudinal Tract Database, we can trace the change over time at the neighborhood level using fixed boundaries to assess the relationship between racial composition and population loss. Table 3 illustrates these changes by dividing each city into five categories of varying percent black. The table specifies more intense population loss in 1970 black supermajority (80-100% black) neighborhoods, and lower relative population loss in 1970 white supermajority (0-20% black) neighborhoods. In Detroit, neighborhoods with an initial black supermajority (over 80% black in 1970) experienced population decline that was 1.29 times the overall city rate (-52.4%), while white supermajority neighborhoods experienced a population decline that was 0.71 of the overall city rate. In Cleveland, black supermajority neighborhoods lost population at a rate of 1.3 times the overall city rate, while white supermajority neighborhoods lost population at a rate of 0.74 of the overall city. In Pittsburgh, black supermajority neighborhoods experienced 1.5 times the city rate of population loss, while white supermajority neighborhoods experienced population loss of 0.74 the city rate.

While these cities share similar rates of population loss intensity in highly black and highly white neighborhoods, the cities were and remain very different in terms of the extent of the city that is composed of such neighborhoods. All cities were fairly segregated places in 1970, with large majorities of the population living in either a black or white supermajority neighborhood, but the ratios in these different categories varies. In Detroit, a plurality of city residents (43.3%) lived in white supermajority neighborhoods in 1970, while 31.7% lived in

Table 3: Population change between 1970 and 2016 in neighborhoods of different racial composition in Detroit, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh (source: US Census and American Community Survey Estimates, 2012-2016, through the Social Explorer Longitudinal Tract Database).

	Detroit				Cleveland				Pittsburgh			
% Black Category	# of Tracts[a]	% of City Pop[b]	Pop chng[c]	House unit chng[d]	# of Tracts	% of City Pop	Pop chng	House unit chng	# of Tracts	% of City Pop	Pop chng	House unit chng
0-20%	146	43.3%	-39.1%	-15.9%	101	53.6%	-35.8%	-7.5%	90	70.2%	-30.6%	-7.5%
20.1-40%	25	8.4%	-53.6%	-35.4%	7	4.0%	-39.7%	-14.4%	11	9.6%	-52.2%	-31.5%
40.1-60%	21	6.1%	-50.7%	-32.6%	9	5.8%	-65.1%	-41.6%	6	4.7%	-68.3%	-54.0%
60.1-80%	26	10.5%	-57.7%	-33.4%	10	6.3%	-58.1%	-37.3%	8	6.3%	-56.6%	-35.8%
80.1-100%	74	31.7%	-70.6%	-47.2%	47	30.3%	-62.7%	-38.4%	11	9.2%	-64.0%	-53.1%
Totals	292	100.0%	-54.8%	-30.9%	174	100%	-48.2%	-20.0%	126	100%	-41.3%	-19.0%

NOTES

[a] Only includes tracts that had at least 100 people in each census/ ACS datapoint between 1970 and 2016.

[b] This is the calculation of total population in 1970 in the tracts within a given % black threshold divided by the total 1970 population for usable tracts.

[c] The city level "total" figure is derived from place level data comparison between 1970 and 2016 (so it may include data that is missing with the use of usable tracts only).

[d] The city level "total" figure is derived from place level data comparison between 1970 and 2016 (so it may include data that is missing with the use of usable tracts only).

black supermajority neighborhoods. In Cleveland, a bare majority of residents (52.3%) lived in white supermajority neighborhoods in 1970s, while 30.3% lived in black supermajority neighborhoods. In Pittsburgh, the most of the city (70.2%) lived in white supermajority neighborhoods, while 9.2% lived in black supermajority neighborhoods. The shifts in racial composition between and within neighborhoods after 1970 and 2016 suggests that while the ratios have changed, all cities remain fairly segregated places (see Table 4). By 2016, fully 73.1% of Detroit's residents lived in black supermajority neighborhoods, while only 9.9% lived in white supermajority neighborhoods. In Cleveland, the population living in black supermajority neighborhoods had grown slightly to 36.6% while those living in white supermajority neighborhoods had fallen to 29.0%. In Pittsburgh, residents in black supermajority neighborhoods had actually fallen somewhat to 6.8%, as had those living in white supermajority neighborhoods (62.7%).

Based on these numbers alone, it would be tempting to conclude that all cities are becoming more integrated as larger percentages of the population now compose the middle categories of 20-40%, 40.1-60%, and 60-80% black today than in 1970. But there are two very important qualifications to this. First, "integration" in these cities has been unidirectional involving black residents moving to formerly white sections of the city. There is no parallel white movement to formerly black sections of the city. In Detroit, 244 out of 292 became more African American by an average of 55.0 points. The remaining 48 tracts that became whiter did so at a more modest average of 8.6 points. In Cleveland, 143 out of 172 tracts became more African American at an average increase of 29.2 points. The 29 remaining tracts that became whiter did so at a more modest 4.4 points. In Pittsburgh, 101 out of 126 tracts became more African American at an average rate of 14.5 points, while 25 tracts became whiter at an average

rate of 10.5 points. In all cities, there were examples of white supermajority neighborhoods transitioning to black supermajority neighborhoods, but no such examples of the reverse—i.e. the massive influx of formerly black neighborhoods by white residents (Table 4). Integration, in short, has consisted almost entirely of black people moving to formerly white neighborhoods, not the other way around. The question however remains: how would this process (black in-migration to formerly white neighborhoods) generate overall population loss?

The first component of the answer lies in the unwillingness of non-black groups to reside in black neighborhoods *after* the shift. Table 5 traces the racial composition and population change of neighborhoods that experienced a 500 African-American person (or more) increase at some point between 1970 and 2016. A few general patterns emerge from this analysis. First, there are a diminishing number of neighborhoods experiencing such an influx in all three cities. Given the declining numbers of black people over this time span, such a finding is not terribly surprising. Second, the most common destination neighborhood for large influxes of African American people in these three cities has been overwhelmingly white neighborhoods. In many cases, the target was a white supermajority neighborhood. This tendency did not change meaningfully over time—neighborhoods that experienced large influxes in the 1970s were overwhelmingly white, as where neighborhoods that experienced an influx later. Also common, was the subsequent tendency for such neighborhoods to become overwhelmingly black in racial composition within one to two decades. In many cases, neighborhoods shifted from being white supermajorities to black supermajorities within a decade. Third, and final, the apparent effect on population decline was delayed. During the decade of the initial influx, and often a decade following that, the neighborhoods in question either gained in population or lost population at a lower rate than the rest of the city. This is likely because the initial black influx had a net neutral

Table 4A-C: Change in tract level racial composition between 1970 and 2016 in Detroit, Cleveland and Pittsburgh (Source: US Decennial Census and American Community Survey, via the Social Explorer Longitudinal Tract Database).

A. Detroit

% Black in 1970	% Black in 2016: 0-20%	20.1-40%	40.1-60%	60.1-80%	80.1-100%	
0-20%	19	5	3	18	101	146 (43.3%)[a]
20.1-40%	1	2	0	6	16	25 (8.4%)
40.1-60%	2	0	3	3	13	21 (6.1%)
60.1-80%	0	1	1	2	22	26 (10.5%)
80.1-100%	0	0	1	6	67	74 (31.7%)
	22 (9.9%)[b]	8 (2.7%)	8 (3.2%)	35 (11.1%)	219 (73.1%)	292 (100.0%)

B. Cleveland

1970	2016: 0-20%	20.1-40%	40.1-60%	60.1-80%	80.1-100%	
0-20%	40	30	12	9	10	101 (53.6%)
20.1-40%	0	2	0	1	4	7 (4.0%)
40.1-60%	0	1	0	2	6	9 (5.8%)
60.1-80%	0	0	0	0	10	10 (6.3%)
80.1-100%	0	0	0	0	47	47 (30.3%)
	40 (29.0%)	33 (21.9%)	12 (6.8%)	12 (5.7%)	77 (36.6%)	174 (100.0%)

C. Pittsburgh

		2016					
		0-20%	20.1-40%	40.1-60%	60.1-80%	80.1-100%	
1970	0-20%	68	15	6	1	0	90 (70.2%)
	20.1-40%	1	4	3	3	0	11 (9.6%)
	40.1-60%	1	0	3	2	0	6 (4.7%)
	60.1-80%	0	0	1	1	6	8 (6.3%)
	80.1-100%	0	0	1	2	8	11 (9.2%)
		70 (62.7%)	19 (15.0%)	14 (10.2%)	9 (5.3%)	14 (6.8%)	126 (100.0%)

NOTES

[a] Population figures in parentheses are the percent of 1970 city population for each tract racial category.
[b] Population figures in parentheses are the percent of 1970 city population for each tract racial category.

Table 5A-C: Racial composition and neighborhood change for census tracts that experienced a 500 black person (or more) increase between 1970 and 2016 in Detroit, Cleveland and Pittsburgh (Source: US Decennial Census and American Community Survey, via the Social Explorer Longitudinal Tract Database).

A. Detroit

Decade of 500 + Influx[a]	N	% Black 1970	% Pop. Change 70-80	% Black 1980	% Pop. Change 80-90	% Black 1990	% Pop. Change 90-00	% Black 2000	% Pop. Change 00-10	% Black 2010	% Pop. Change 10-16	% Black 2016
1970s	131	19.6%	-4.3%	65.0%	-8.4%	85.8%	**-8.5%***	91.4%	**-26.5%***	93.1%	**-4.7%***	91.9%
1980s	28	-	-	12.8%	-1.5%	44.2%	+4.8%	77.7%	-24.7%	86.3%	**-5.6%***	85.1%
1990s	12	-	-	-	-	7.5%	+11.4%	45.5%	-8.9%	71.6%	-1.8%	69.7%
2000s	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	8.4%	+2.4%	48.1%	+6.1%	60.4%
2010s	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

B. Cleveland

Decade of 500 + Influx	N	% Black 1970	% Pop. Change 70-80	% Black 1980	% Pop. Change 80-90	% Black 1990	% Pop. Change 90-00	% Black 2000	% Pop. Change 00-10	% Black 2010	% Pop. Change 10-16	% Black 2016
1970s	25	28.8%	-11.1%	65.1%	-11.6%	78.9%	**-8.9%***	83.6%	**-20.5%***	83.8%	**-5.2%***	81.4%
1980s	4	-	-	51.7%	+28.3%	69.7%	+2.6%	84.7%	**-26.2%***	86.7%	**-6.8%***	85.6%
1990s	16	-	-	-	-	7.8%	+3.8%	42.5%	**-23.4%***	61.9%	**-3.6%***	61.9%
2000s	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	31.7%	+3.1%	57.3%	**-10.0%***	56.9%
2010s	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25.5%	+9.4%	37.0%

C. Pittsburgh

Decade of 500 + Influx	N	% Black 1970	% Pop. Change 70-80	% Black 1980	% Pop. Change 80-90	% Black 1990	% Pop. Change 90-00	% Black 2000	% Pop. Change 00-10	% Black 2010	% Pop. Change 10-16	% Black 2016
1970s	9	26.6%	-4.7%	48.9%	**-18.1%***	58.8%	**-14.8%***	64.7%	**-14.8%***	61.2%	**-5.9%***	58.9%
1980s	2	-	-	55.5%	+14.4%	64.2%	**-10.2%***	66.0%	**-11.5%***	33.5%	+11.2%	26.0%
1990s	3	-	-	-	-	10.0%	-6.2%	24.7%	**-12.8%***	39.5%	**-1.4%***	39.2%
2000s	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	13.5%	+65.7%	31.2%	**-1.7%***	24.2%
2010s	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

* Rate of population loss is more severe than the rest of the city for the time period in question

NOTES:

[a] Census tracts were only counted for the first decade that they experienced a 500 or more black person increase.

effect as black people were simply replacing white people. After a period of time however, the rate of population loss begins to exceed that of the rest of the city, sometimes by significant margins.

Why would a black exodus be occurring? The main component of this trajectory appears to be the damage done to the physical housing stock and housing market by the durable resistance of non-black people to living in black majority neighborhoods. This study employed a location quotient approach to explore how likely different "newcomers" (immigrants, in-migrants from other parts of the country, and gentrifiers) were to locate in neighborhoods of different racial compositions over time. I use an adapted location quotient formula that allowed me to group neighborhood types into varying categories of racial composition and measure the intensity of newcomer location in those aggregated spaces. Using the foreign born population as an example, the formula is as follows:

$$Foreign\ Born\ LQi = \frac{fb^i/p}{FB^i/P}$$

Where: Foreign Born LQi = location quotient for the spatial clustering of foreign born people in a neighborhood of a given % black range vis-à-vis the rest of the city.
fb_i = count of foreign born population in all tracts of a given % black range (e.g. 0-20%, 20.1-40%, etc.)
p = total population in the census tracts of given % black range
FB_i = count of foreign born population in the entire city
P = population for the entire city

The resulting answers provide calculations of how much more or less likely a certain group was to locate in various neighborhood types between 1970 and 2016. Scores of greater than one indicate that a group was more likely to locate in such neighborhoods, while scores of less than one indicate that a group was less likely to do so. This formula was completed for the following

variables: foreign born population, and outside of county residents[4] (to assess the plausibility of succession theories); and college educated[5] and high income[6] populations to assess the plausibility of gentrification approaches.

Table 6 illustrates the relative spatial intensity of foreign born populations over time in (white and black) supermajority neighborhoods in the three cities. The succession paradigm holds that even the most marginalized neighborhoods will eventually become occupied by a more marginal group. But this model does not seem to apply to black supermajority neighborhoods in these three cities. First, it should be noted that these cities have lower than average rates of immigrants than coastal cities in the United States. In all three cities however, foreign born populations were more likely to locate in the majority white sections than in the most African American neighborhoods. Foreign born ratios in black supermajority neighborhoods were considerably below the citywide averages. Foreign born persons were more likely to occupy housing in white supermajority neighborhoods. In Detroit, the 2016 rate had grown to almost seven times the citywide rate of foreign born. We can also expand the notion of "newcomer" to include people that may not be actual immigrants but simply lived elsewhere and moved to the city. Again, all of these cities, being depopulating places, have relatively low rates of in-migration, but Table 6 illustrates that the most persistently black spaces are less attractive

[4] The Census provides counts of people who resided outside of the county and recently moved. For 1970, 1980, and 2000, the count is of people (over the age of five) who lived outside of the county five years earlier. For 2010 and 2016, which were derived from the American Community Survey, the measure is of people over the age of five who lived outside of the county one year prior to the census taking. The Longitudinal Data Base did not contain any "outside of county" figures for the year 1990 so they were omitted.

[5] "College educated" was measured here as the percentage of people over the age of 25 who had some college or more education.

[6] Income measures were calculated somewhat differently than the LQ model above but with the same basic mathematical approach. A simple tract (in a given racial category) over the city average was derived and expressed in Table #. In 1970, the calculation was based on the Average Family Income. In all other years, it was derived from the Median Household Income measure.

Table 6 A-D: Location quotients for concentration of new immigrants, other newcomers, high income, and high education in neighborhoods of different racial composition, 1970-2016 in Detroit, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh. (Source: US Decennial Census and American Community Survey, via the Social Explorer Longitudinal Tract Database).

A. Foreign Born[a]

Category	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2016
White Supermajority[b]						
Detroit	1.61	2.30	3.49	6.28	6.34	5.58
Cleveland	1.23	1.47	1.48	1.55	1.42	1.31
Pittsburgh	1.30	1.34	1.44	1.46	1.33	1.29
Black Supermajority[c]						
Detroit	0.26	0.26	0.20	0.17	0.20	0.21
Cleveland	0.14	0.17	0.10	0.15	0.25	0.21
Pittsburgh	0.14	0.10	0.08	0.12	0.40	0.43

B. Other newcomers[d]

Category	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2016
White Supermajority[e]						
Detroit	0.81	0.83		2.53	1.28	0.77
Cleveland	0.87	0.92		1.18	0.99	0.90
Pittsburgh	1.21	1.21		1.28	1.16	1.13
Black Supermajority[f]						
Detroit	0.99	0.65		0.58	0.69	0.69
Cleveland	0.76	0.56		0.50	0.50	0.55
Pittsburgh	0.50	0.37		0.30	0.16	0.38

C. Income[g]

Category	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2016
White Supermajority						
Detroit	0.90	0.98	0.72	0.84	0.98	1.01
Cleveland	1.17	1.14	1.30	1.28	1.41	1.46
Pittsburgh	1.15	1.00	1.09	1.14	1.24	1.22
Black Supermajority						
Detroit	0.81	0.89	0.79	0.83	0.82	0.81
Cleveland	0.86	0.87	0.80	0.85	0.88	0.81
Pittsburgh	0.62	0.61	0.54	0.50	0.45	0.48

D. Education[h]

Category	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2016
White Supermajority						
Detroit	0.42	0.45	0.51	0.44	0.41	0.43
Cleveland	1.16	1.09	1.19	1.14	1.07	1.07
Pittsburgh	1.32	1.24	1.17	1.14	1.11	1.09
Black Supermajority						
Detroit	0.75	0.81	0.81	0.90	0.95	0.96
Cleveland	0.95	0.95	0.90	0.94	0.93	0.95
Pittsburgh	0.39	0.54	0.67	0.66	0.70	0.77

NOTES

[a] Percent of population that was born outside of the United States in census tract category divided by percent of population born outside of the US for the entire city.
[b] White supermajority neighborhoods were over 80% white during the entire period, 1970-2016.
[c] Black supermajority neighborhoods were over 80% black during the entire period, 1970-2016.
[d] The Census and ACS gather various statistics on the number of residents who lived outside of the county in question previously. The time "before" is not always consistent. For the 1970, 1980, and 2000 Censuses, residence 5 years prior was the standard. For the 2010 Census and 2016 ACS, 1 year prior was the standard. Previous residence was not recorded during the 1990 Census.
[e] White supermajority neighborhoods were over 80% white during the entire period, 1970-2016.
[f] Black supermajority neighborhoods were over 80% black during the entire period, 1970-2016.
[g] Average income in census tracts within a category divided by the average income of the entire city.
[h] This figure calculates the percentage of a tract category with college or more education divided by the percentage of the entire city with college or more education.

to in-migrants than white spaces. The US Census counts the numbers of people over the age of 5 that previously lived outside of the county in question. The differences between white supermajority and black supermajority neighborhoods is less stark than foreign born population, but it remains the case that in-migrants are more commonly located in white spaces than in black spaces. The difference between these spaces is particularly stark in Pittsburgh.

In contrast to the succession paradigm, the gentrification paradigm holds that marginalized (disinvested) neighborhoods will become home to investors and wealthier residents over time as the investment opportunity of very inexpensive real estate and changing cultural tastes present new opportunities. But as Table 6 illustrates, this does not appear to be happening on a large scale in any of the three cities. Both income and education are frequently used as proxies for gentrification (Hackworth, 2001). In all three cities, the intensity of higher than average incomes is associated with white supermajority neighborhoods, and this is becoming more, not less, pronounced. The gap in LQs was particularly expansive in Cleveland. The locational intensity of residents with some or more college education also reveals differences between white and black supermajority neighborhoods. White supermajority neighborhoods in Cleveland and Pittsburgh had higher than average intensities of highly educated people than black supermajority neighborhoods, but it should be noted that the rates were converging over time. Detroit's remaining white neighborhoods are actually less frequently the residence of highly-educated than its highly black neighborhoods, but both rates are below one indicating that the focus of highly-educated people appears to be in more racially-mixed neighborhoods.

Whatever differences are revealed within and between cities, one thing remains clear. Black supermajority neighborhoods are less likely to attract in-migrants than white supermajority neighborhoods. The resistance of non-black groups to living in black majority neighborhoods is

acute and persistent. This makes it very difficult for black homeowners to sell their house in the absence of a major influx of other black people. The prevailing pattern since the 1970s however has been one of a reverse Great Migration and considerable black middle class movement to the suburbs.

This sequence of events contributes to, and is eventually accelerated by an attendant issue: the destruction of the housing stock in majority black locations. Detroit lost 30.3% of its housing units between 1970 and 2016. In white supermajority neighborhoods 22.1% of the housing units were demolished, while in black supermajority neighborhoods the loss was 46.8%. In Cleveland and Pittsburgh black super majority neighborhoods are an even more intense focus of housing demolition than population flight. Cleveland lost 20.1% of its housing units between 1970 and 2016. But in black supermajority neighborhoods, 38.1% of the housing units were destroyed (1.89 times the city wide rate). Only 1.1% of the housing in white supermajority neighborhoods was lost during the same period. Pittsburgh lost 18.2% of its housing stock overall but less than 1% in white supermajority neighborhoods. A staggering 54.3% of the housing stock was lost in black supermajority neighborhoods, nearly 3 times the citywide average.

The overrepresentation of housing unit loss in such locations fuels a self-perpetuating loop that is difficult for neighborhoods to escape. The ongoing stigmatization of black neighborhoods lowers overall demand which leads to housing vacancies. The main policy that cities have executed in response has been to demolish vacant housing as quickly as possible. But by itself, this only exacerbates the problem (Hackworth, 2016). Vacant houses are replaced with vacant lots where future investment is unlikely because of the configuration of parcels and the prevailing house costs. The average cost to build a house to code in the United States is over

$125,000 (Hackworth, 2014). And this average is derived from the costs associated with tract housing construction where costs can be spread amongst many housing units at one time. In highly distressed, neighborhoods in the Rust Belt, there are few such opportunities for large scale development. The vacant lots in most cases resemble an archipelago of single parcels. It would cost much more than $125,000 to build a house to code in a one-off small parcel situation, and with surrounding house costs often below $20,000 it is difficult to see how any developer or CDC could sell such a housing unit without tremendous subsidy. During the 1950s and 1960s, urban renewal agencies cleared thousands of acres of downtown real estate in hopes that commercial development would be attracted to the large centrally-located assembled parcels. That development in many cities never came, and those lots sat vacant (often converted into parking lots) for decades. Many are still parking lots. The current wave of demolition that disproportionately hits black supermajority neighborhoods is even more expansive than Urban Renewal in size, but none of the cleared parcels have even the limited development potential of the initial mass demolition. Thus neighborhoods that are targeted by demolition-as-policy are currently, and likely to remain, easily visible forms of stigma. Such neighborhoods are easily spotted upon arrival often having as many has half of their housing units missing. They serve as a very visible repellant to future newcomers and investors. With time, the only investors interested are cash-only predators who rent and milk the properties as they continue to deteriorate thus accelerating the cycle of stigma that repels potential newcomers.

Conclusion

No single factor explains the flow of people and capital from urban space (urban decline) in the American Rust Belt—or any place for that matter. Urban decline is provoked and

sustained by a variety of forces emanating from a variety of scales. But by the same token, the intensity of urban decline in the American Rust Belt has been particularly associated with the presence and concentration of black people. Many cities in the region lost population but heavily African American ones lost the most. Many neighborhoods throughout the region lost population, but depopulation in black neighborhoods was more consistently severe than in whiter sections of the same cities.

The argument here is that the stigma of blackness needs to be taken more seriously in studies of urban decline, and theories of neighborhood change. The stigma of blackness fuels perceptions that become hardened prejudices, which in turn influence actions and policy. The perception that black people living in a neighborhood or house diminish the value of that real estate provokes white people to flee when African Americans move to their neighborhood. When the majority group—or a large component of the majority population makes such a calculation the consequences for demand (and eventually real estate value) are catastrophic. In a sense this prejudice becomes self-fulfilling outcome. Whites flee a neighborhood after a black influx, then the black homeowners struggle to sell their houses to other groups, and the market eventually collapses because they cannot. The perception that black neighborhoods are inherently dangerous provokes a zero tolerance law enforcement approach that has disproportionately targeted African Americans and African American neighborhoods. Families, income opportunities, and the ability to financially keep up with the burdens of homeownership are undermined in disproportionate ways. With formerly incarcerated persons unable to find formal employment or rental options outside of where they once resided, recidivism and instability are high in such neighborhoods, and the desire to live in such places by newcomers is further undermined. Perhaps even more durable is the resistance of all (non-black) groups to move to black majority neighborhoods. The

reason that an influx of black residents leads to overall population decline is not because of the initial white flight. It is largely because black middle class families in those neighborhoods eventually struggle to find buyers and renters for their holdings, and abandon them. The stigma of black neighborhoods is severe. They are the most pathologized places in the Rust Belt—a region that already struggling with demand for housing.

The sustained presence of black populations and associated stigma often leads to government efforts to remove the physical housing stock—in a vain effort to keep up with the hemorrhage of population. But such efforts serve more to advertise the stigma of such neighborhoods than to reverse it. A random assortment of vacant houses, occupied dwellings, and vacant lots serves as a sign to mainstream potential home buyers and banks that the neighborhood is either in decline or about to head in that direction, thus perpetuating, and often accelerating the cycle. Existing models of neighborhood change fail to fully capture this cycle. Classic models emphasize that highly distressed neighborhood will eventually be redeveloped by the state, or occupied by immigrants, or overwhelmed by gentrifies. To be sure, this fits certain very limited cases, but such ideas do not capture the vast majority of instances. Most black supermajority neighborhoods are not the target of immigrants or gentrifiers or state redevelopment—white supermajority neighborhoods are. This geographical tendency has not changed since the early 1970s—in the limited instances where it has, the change has been one of further polarization between supermajority neighborhoods rather than convergence.

The stigma of blackness is durable, tangible, and ongoing. Small reductions in snapshot regional dissimilarity indices do not change that fact. To be sure, policy has a role in reducing racial uneven development of this sort, but policy is often merely a codified expression of dominant group interests. The numerically, politically, and culturally dominant group (white

people) have constructed black people and neighborhoods as dangerous, money-losing threats to their political and economic stability. That prejudicial construction, more than any single policy is the root of why blackness is so associated with urban decline in the American Rust Belt.

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