

Redevelopment and Integration in the Rust Belt

Michael Bader\*

\* University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Population Studies Center and Department of Sociology, 426  
Thompson St., Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1248, phone: 734-763-4098, fax: 734-763-1428,  
[mbader@umich.edu](mailto:mbader@umich.edu)

## Redevelopment and Integration in the Rust Belt

One of the debates underlying urban redevelopment projects in American cities is that racial integration increases as a result of these projects because whites are enticed to move to redeveloping neighborhoods. Studies on the issue, however, have focused on institutional actors and residents displaced by redevelopment projects or have only looked at mobility between cities and suburbs without accounting for the effect of redevelopment projects in this mobility. Using data from two surveys conducted in the Detroit and Chicago metropolitan areas, I investigate the racial and class differences between people who would and would not consider moving to a redeveloped neighborhood as well as the racial and class differences in the ways such communities are perceived. In these analyses, I control for other respondent characteristics as well as test whether racial attitudes and beliefs have an effect on the willingness to move to redeveloped neighborhoods.

## **EXTENDED ABSTRACT: Redevelopment and Integration in the Rust Belt**

### **Introduction:**

One of the debates underlying urban redevelopment projects in American cities is that racial integration will increase as a result of these projects because whites will be enticed to move to redeveloping neighborhoods. Programs have included the development of quasi-public business improvement districts, tax-abatement zones and the construction of cultural or entertainment corridors. Often, such programs have devastating effects on the current residents of neighborhoods where this development happens. The debate by proponents, however, is often cast in terms of the “overall benefit” to the residents of the city, including those who are often forced from their neighborhoods. They point to the increase in racial and ethnic diversity, increased business development and as a way to refocus the metropolitan area around the central city to prevent sprawl.

Previous research regarding the redevelopment of central cities has focused in three different areas. The first is literature studying the political economic factors behind urban redevelopment and focuses on institutional actors such as developers, politicians and speculators (Smith 1996; Weber 2002; Logan and Molotch 1987). The second area has studied the costs (Siegfried and Zimbalist 2000) and resistance to such developments by specific communities, often around racial/ethnic and class-based movements (Jackson 2001; Rinaldo 2002), and tends to focus on the impact of local communities reacting to larger institutional forces. The final area focuses on the migration of people between cities and suburbs (South and Crowder 1997; Frey 1978; Frey and Kobrin 1982).

The research in these three areas is not geared towards answering one of the most important claims made by proponents of redevelopment projects; namely, that redeveloping neighborhoods is a way to entice diverse, middle-class residents “back” to the city. The first area has the problem that the literature tends to concentrate on specific actors within the metropolitan setting. The second reveals that the process of sudden, rapid investment can often fuel racial and class tensions

rather than create a more diverse environment. This has the dual consequence that racial and class tensions are aggravated in the immediate neighborhood where this process is occurring and it potentially fuels racial and class mistrust that can hinder future attempts at integration, particularly through the redevelopment process.

The final area has, to date, only focused on observable characteristics of individuals and mobility decisions, not on their perceptions of central city areas or why they chose to move to city or suburban locations. While these studies have revealed that life-course factors such as age, marriage and having children (Frey and Kobrin 1982) and demographic factors such as socioeconomic status (Nelson and Edwards 1993) and race (South and Crowder 1997) are important for determining actual moves, little can be said about the perceptions of metropolitan housing options that shaped those moves or about the racial attitudes and beliefs of those who would consider making those moves. Furthermore, these studies have only looked at the characteristics of the entire city and have not focused specifically on redevelopment projects within cities.

**Objective and Research Questions:**

The objective of this study is to understand the perceptions of redeveloped neighborhoods by residents from the entire metropolitan area. Because many of the claims by proponents of these developments are predicated on reshaping the urban image of a city within the metropolitan area, knowing the perceptions of residents in the entire metropolitan area is important. The two primary research questions that we are interested in are: 1) What are the racial and class differences between people who would and would not consider moving to a redeveloped neighborhood and why, and 2) What are the racial and class differences in the way that people perceive redevelopment projects?

**Data:**

The analysis for this paper is based on the 2004 Detroit Area Study (DAS) and Chicago Area Study (CAS) which are representative samples of the Detroit and Chicago metropolitan areas

of 734 and 789 adults, respectively. The DAS and CAS are focused on residential mobility of respondents and collected information regarding racial attitudes, demographic characteristics and experiences in the housing search process. One module of these studies asked respondents questions regarding their perceptions of redeveloped neighborhoods, whether they would consider moving to a redeveloped neighborhood and, subsequently, selecting all of the reasons why they would or would not consider moving to a redeveloped neighborhood.

**Method:**

First, I will estimate a logistic regression model that predicts a respondent’s willingness to consider a redeveloped neighborhood for both Detroit and Chicago. I estimate two separate models for each city: Model 1 includes demographic variables including race, presence of children, currently married, age and income—all shown to be important in existing literature—in addition to whether the respondent is a resident of Detroit or Chicago, respectively. Model 2 then includes variables measuring racial attitudes, experiences and beliefs to test whether racial animus could explain differential results in considering moving to a redeveloped neighborhood and will be predicted separately for blacks and whites.

Second, conditioning on respondents who would consider moving to a redeveloped neighborhood, I estimate a series of logistic regression models predicting each of the 10 response categories that the respondent could give for considering a redeveloped neighborhood (e.g. “Close to work”, “Close to shopping”, “Racial and ethnic mix”, etc.). Again, I control for demographic and racial attitudes, beliefs and experiences in these models to see how those factors can help shape what is important about redeveloped neighborhoods. Finally, I repeat this analysis for those respondents who said that they would never consider a redeveloped neighborhood and the 12 response categories that the respondent could give for never considering a redeveloped

neighborhood (e.g. “Too much crime”, “Taxes too high”, “Poor quality of city services”, etc.) controlling for the same variables I do for those who would consider a redeveloped neighborhood.

### **Results:**

Initial results for Detroit are reported in Table 1. The combined Model 1 shows that, overall, being non-Hispanic black, younger, having an income less than \$20,000 and being a resident of Detroit predict an increase in willingness to consider a redeveloped neighborhood. However, after running Model 1 individually by race, we see that being female, married and having three or more years of college become significant while income is no longer significant. For whites, the results look similar to the overall model except that the effect of being a Detroit resident is extraordinarily high in predicting willingness to move to a redeveloped neighborhood.

After controlling for different racial attitudes and beliefs, we see similar results from Model 1, except that income becomes less important for whites. Blacks who endorse the position that “white people in Detroit want to keep people down” are less willing to consider a redeveloped neighborhood than those who think that whites “don’t care.” An interesting result that will be explored further in this paper is the that the feeling thermometer of other race to own race is significant for both blacks and whites; however, this result is in opposite directions such that whites who feel more comfortable with blacks are less likely to be willing to consider a redeveloped neighborhood and blacks who feel more comfortable with whites are more willing to consider these neighborhoods.

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**Table 1. Odds ratios predicting willingness to consider moving to a redeveloped neighborhood in Detroit by demographic and racial attitudes, Detroit Area Study 2004**

	Model 1			Model 2	
	Combined	Black	White	Black	White
Non-Hispanic White	0.271 (0.101)**	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Age	0.973 (0.011)*	0.966 (0.013)*	0.974 (0.012)*	0.963 (0.012)**	0.974 (0.015)
Female	0.898 (0.326)	0.380 (0.141)*	1.079 (0.494)	0.352 (0.132)**	0.972 (0.451)
Currently Married	0.824 (0.204)	0.339 (0.136)**	1.224 (0.444)	0.295 (0.117)**	1.431 (0.625)
Child under 18 present	0.886 (0.319)	0.771 (0.432)	0.997 (0.436)	0.712 (0.312)	1.120 (0.572)
Income (<\$20,000 omitted)					
\$20,000-\$39,999	0.318 (0.139)*	0.540 (0.177)	0.217 (0.145)*	0.510 (0.179)	0.408 (0.324)
\$40,000-\$79,999	0.275 (0.110)**	0.516 (0.250)	0.167 (0.092)**	0.415 (0.197)	0.249 (0.160)*
\$80,000+	0.306 (0.181)*	1.286 (0.817)	0.153 (0.122)*	0.889 (0.543)	0.208 (0.179)
Education (H.S. degree or G.E.D. omitted)					
Less than H.S. degree	1.479 (0.682)	0.617 (0.247)	2.527 (1.764)	0.538 (0.263)	3.269 (2.147)
One or two years of college	1.357 (0.519)	0.532 (0.249)	2.192 (1.229)	0.465 (0.257)	2.083 (1.211)
Three or more years of college	0.757 (0.276)	0.309 (0.135)**	1.319 (0.697)	0.316 (0.141)*	1.295 (0.747)
Detroit Resident	3.430 (1.266)**	2.619 (0.763)**	25.798 (29.835)**	2.434 (0.799)**	27.051 (27.463)**
Blacks tend to be involved in street crime/gangs more than whites				0.891 (0.089)	0.888 (0.097)
White people in Detroit want to see:					
"Black people get a better break"				0.637 (0.281)	1.671 (0.760)
"Keep blacks down"				0.278 (0.096)**	1.382 (0.785)
"Don't care one way or the other" (omitted)					
Perceived racial conflict with other race				1.141 (0.215)	1.186 (0.407)
Feeling thermometer of other race to own's race (all respondents)				1.017 (0.006)**	0.958 (0.011)**
Observations	643	331	312	331	312

Standard errors in parentheses

\* significant at 5%; \*\* significant at 1%