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The back-to-the-city movement: Neighbourhood redevelopment and processes of political and cultural displacement

Derek Hyra
Virginia Tech, USA

Abstract

While certain US cities are still depopulating, others have experienced a reversal of aggregate out-migration patterns. Some scholars, politicians and real estate boosters celebrate this urban population influx, as it will likely increase property values and municipal tax bases; however, we know little about the social costs associated with the back-to-the-city movement. This study investigates the consequences of the back-to-the-city movement through a four-year (2009–2012) ethnographic case study of the revitalisation of Washington, DC's Shaw/U Street neighbourhood. The redevelopment of this African-American neighbourhood is associated with the city's 5.2 percent population increase, which occurred between 2000 and 2010. While affordable housing efforts help to keep a portion of long-term, low-income residents in place, political and cultural displacement is occurring as upper-income newcomers flock into this neighbourhood. This article contributes to the urban literature by highlighting that population influx, and associated neighbourhood revitalisation, can have important social implications.

Keywords

back-to-the-city movement, gentrification, mixed-income neighbourhoods, political and cultural displacement

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Introduction

The pattern of urban flight and disinvestment witnessed in several US cities between 1960 and 1990 reversed itself in the last two decades as population and capital investments arrived in certain urban cores at unprecedented rates (Birch, 2005, 2009). This trend has been called the back-to-the-city movement (Sturtevant and Jung, 2011), the urban turnaround (Simmons and Lang, 2003), the fifth migration (Fishman, 2005), the great inversion (Ehrenhalt, 2012) and the new urban renewal (Hyra, 2012). Some urban scholars, political figures and real estate boosters celebrate this phenomenon, as it will likely increase property values and

Corresponding author:
Derek Hyra, Virginia Tech, Urban Affairs and Planning, 1021 Prince Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA 22314, USA.
Email: dhyra@vt.edu

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broaden municipal tax bases (Logan and Molotch, 2007; Peterson, 1981); however, one unresolved puzzle of the back-to-the-city movement is the primary consequences of population influx to cities and their neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhood revitalisation and gentrification has been widely documented in several cities that have experienced this turnaround (e.g. Bennett et al., 2006; Freeman, 2006; Gibson, 2007; Grogan and Proscio, 2000; Modan, 2007; Podagrosi and Vojnovic, 2008; Sassen, 2012; von Hoffman, 2003). A controversial topic has been whether the back-to-the-city movement and associated neighbourhood redevelopment is related to forced residential displacement (Davidson, 2008; Freeman, 2005; Freeman and Braconi, 2004; Newman and Wyly, 2006; Slater, 2009; Vigdor, 2002). Rather than focusing on longtime resident displacement, this study addresses a gap in the literature by understanding some social consequences for low-income residents able to remain in place as more affluent populations enter their community.

The back-to-the-city movement literature has given residential displacement much greater attention than political and cultural displacement (Fraser, 2004; Knotts and Haspel, 2006). Political displacement refers to when a long-standing racial or ethnic group 'become(s) outvoted or outnumbered by new residents' leading to the loss of decision-making power by the former group' (Martin, 2007: 605). Political displacement might occur in redeveloping areas when low-income people remain but become overpowered by upper-income newcomers (Hyra, 2008).

There are at least four reasons why scholars should be concerned with political displacement. First, evidence suggests that long-standing residents withdraw from public participation in gentrifying neighbourhoods (Knotts and Haspel, 2006), and little is known about why this occurs. Second, decreased civic engagement among long-term residents may make it more difficult for them to form bridging relationships with newcomers which might benefit them economically (Chaskin and Joseph, 2011; Granovetter, 1983; Putnam, 2000; Tach, 2009). Third, prior studies suggest that long-standing residents sometimes resent new neighbourhood amenities (Curley, 2010), and an investigation of political displacement might explain the onset of resentment for amenities that, on the surface, seem to be community improvements.

Fourth, political displacement might relate to cultural displacement. Cultural displacement occurs when the norms, behaviours and values of the new resident cohort dominate and prevail over the tastes and preferences of long-term residents (Zukin, 2010). While there can be points of common ground between old and new residents in redeveloping neighbourhoods, often newcomers seek to establish new norms, behaviours and amenities that align with their desires (Brown-Saracino, 2009). If this occurs long-term residents may find their community does not resemble the place they once knew and may no longer identify with their neighbourhood (Abramson et al., 2006). With decreased attachment to place, low- and moderate-income residents might opt to leave economically transitioning neighbourhoods, converting them rapidly into homogenous enclaves, instead of integrated, mixed-income neighbourhoods (Maly, 2005).

This investigation deploys an ethnographic approach to detail and explain the processes, and some consequences, of political and cultural displacement. Through a case study of Washington, DC's Shaw/U Street neighbourhood, I argue that community revitalisation, linked with the back-to-the-city movement, is connected with decreased political power among long-term

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residents.[1] This process of political displacement relates to cultural displacement, engendering feelings of alienation among some long-term residents.

Research background

Defining the back-to-the-city movement

The back-to-the-city concept became popular in the academic literature in the late 1970s; however, there has never been consensus on the phrase's definition. Some scholars have defined it as the movement of upper-income suburban populations to the city center (Laska and Spain, 1980). Another camp of scholars defines the back-to-the-city movement as the relative net migration flows (in-migration minus out-migration) among metropolitan sub-regions (Kasarda et al., 1997; Sturtevant and Jung, 2011). Others link the term with population increases in cities (Glaeser and Shapiro, 2003a, 2003b; Simmons and Lang, 2003) and their downtowns (Birch, 2005, 2009; Simmons and Lang, 2003), regardless of where the inhabitants previously lived.[2] Still others see the term as merely 'optimism about the possible residential resurgence of America's older cities' (Zavarella, 1987: 376). In this article, the back-to-the-city movement refers to population influx to the city, regardless its origination, that is associated with neighbourhood revitalisation.

The back-to-the-city movement, neighbourhood revitalisation and social consequences

It is still controversial to claim the existence of a robust US back-to-the-city movement; however, in the last two decades many urban areas irrefutably experienced an influx of people coinciding with widespread neighbourhood revitalisation. In the 1990s and 2000s citywide or downtown population increases were associated with the revitalisation of low-income, mainly minority communities in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Washington DC, Durham, Charlotte, Atlanta, Minneapolis, Houston, Los Angeles and Portland (Bennett et al., 2006; Boyd, 2008; Ehrenhalt, 2012; Freeman, 2006; Fullilove and Wallace, 2011; Gibson, 2007; Goetz, 2003; Grogan and Proscio, 2000; Hackworth, 2007; Hyra, 2008, 2012; Moore, 2009; Pattillo, 2007; Podagrosi and Vojnovic, 2008; Ruble, 2010; Vale, 2002, 2013; von Hoffman, 2003).[3]

Whether the back-to-the-city movement and associated neighbourhood redevelopment is linked with forced residential displacement is debated. Several quantitative studies claim that low-income residents in redeveloping neighbourhoods have an exit rate similar to those in non-redeveloping neighbourhoods (e.g. Freeman, 2005; Freeman and Braconi, 2004; McKinnish et al., 2010); however, other qualitative investigations have documented forced residential displacement in revitalising neighbourhoods of repopulating cities (e.g. Hyra, 2008; Podagrosi and Vojnovic, 2008; Taylor, 2002). While residential displacement is an extremely important topic, much less attention has been placed on understanding the social consequences to long-term, low-income residents who remain amongst an influx of upper-income people to their neighbourhood.

Neighbourhood research suggests that when upper-income people move into a low-income community, poor people may ultimately benefit through a variety of mechanisms. First, more affluent newcomers, through their cultural consumption patterns, will likely demand different types of neighbourhood businesses and services compared to the existing lower income population (Lloyd, 2010). With more aggregate income in the community, local grocery stores are expected to upgrade and diversify their

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products and provide more purchasing options. Second, newcomers will likely bolster the political infrastructure and demand greater levels of city funding for improved services and amenities, such as greater police presence (Joseph, 2006). Third, more middle-income people may facilitate increased informal social interactions across race and class, helping low-income people tap into the social capital within upper-income networks. By forming weak social ties with upper-income residents, low-income individuals might make employment contacts (Granovetter, 1983). Lastly, newcomers might help establish new neighbourhood norms, such as the expectation of stable work (Wilson, 1996).

However, whether middle-income residents actually facilitate mechanisms of benefit for the poor is a debated topic. Several recent studies indicate that in mixed-income developments meaningful interactions among middle- and low-income residents occur less frequently than expected (Curley, 2009, 2010; Davidson, 2010). Further, when they happen, they rarely seem to lead to greater economic opportunities for low-income people (Chaskin and Joesph, 2011; Tach, 2009). In terms of the political infrastructure, several studies demonstrate that the arrival of the middle class can bolster a community's political infrastructure (Hyra, 2008; Martin, 2007; Pattillo, 2007); however, evidence also suggests that upper- and middle-income people often have different priorities than their low-income neighbours and advocate for amenities which are not a priority for many existing residents (Maly, 2005; Modan, 2007). Lastly, when new amenities and services, such as upscale restaurants, organic grocery stores and increased police presence, appear, resentment among long-term residents can sometimes occur (Freeman, 2006). This article unpacks a potential set of related processes explaining resentment among some longstanding residents.

Table 1. DC population change, 1950–2010.

Year	DC population	Percent change
1950	802,178	21.0
1960	763,956	–4.8
1970	756,510	–1.0
1980	638,333	–15.6
1990	606,900	–4.9
2000	572,059	–5.7
2010	601,723	5.2

Source: US Census.

Methods

Washington, DC resurgence

Washington, DC is a strategic site to investigate the larger national pattern of the back-to-the-city movement, neighbourhood redevelopment and its associated social consequences. In 1950, Washington, DC reached its population peak with just over 800,000 residents and from that time until 2000 it continually lost population (see Table 1). This depopulation trend reversed itself in the 2000s. Between 2000 and 2010, the city's population increased by 5.2 percent, going from 572,059 to 601,723. While the population of many US cities during the 2000s saw an influx of Asians and Hispanics, DC was one of the few cities that experienced an increased population primarily due to whites (Morello and Keating, 2011a). Between 2000 and 2010, whites in DC increased nearly 50,000. The Hispanic and Asian populations also increased, but by a much smaller amount, to almost 10,000 and 6000 respectively (Center for Regional Analysis, 2011).

By 2010, this once solid majority black city had a black population barely over 50 percent (see Table 2).[4] Between 2000 and 2010, the city lost more than 39,000 African-American residents (Center for Regional Analysis, 2011). The influx of whites and exodus of African Americans made DC younger, more racially diverse, educated and

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Table 2. Percent of select DC racial and ethnic groups over time, 1950–2010.

Year	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic
1950	65	35	0.4	-
1960	45	54	0.6	-
1970	28	71	0.7	-
1980	27	70	1.0	2.8
1990	30	66	1.8	5.4
2000	31	60	2.7	7.9
2010	39	51	3.5	9.1

Source: US Census.

affluent. These demographic changes coincide with the gentrification of some of the city's low-income African-American neighbourhoods including Shaw/U Street (Galster and Tatian, 2005; Ruble, 2010).[5]

The Shaw/U Street neighbourhood

No community symbolises Washington, DC's pattern of demographic shift better than Shaw/U Street (see Table 3 for demographic shift and Figure 1 for community boundaries).[6] Shaw/U Street was once the 'Harlem of DC' and in the early part of the 20th century the community was the centre of black business, entertainment, education and religion in DC (Crew, 1996; Holloway, 2002; Moore, 1999; Williams, 2002). Shaw/U Street experienced a period of self-reliance during the era of legalised segregation, followed by a monumental decline between the 1960s and 1980s. Community sections were devastated by the 1968 riots following Martin Luther King Jr's assassination. As subsidised housing was built in this neighbourhood, the black middle class fled to emerging black suburbs in Maryland's Prince George's County (Cashin, 2004; Lacy, 2007). By the late 1960s, the once vibrant community was known as 'Shameful Shaw' as drugs, crime and poverty took over sections of the neighbourhood (Hannerz, 1969; Liebow, 1967). In the 1980s Shaw/U Street had some of the highest concentrations of poverty, subsidised housing and crime in DC (Dash, 1997; Robinson, 2010). However, in the 1990s the neighbourhood began to experience a revival.

In the 1990s Shaw/U Street became a mixed-income, mixed-race community with an influx of a diverse set of upper- and middle-income newcomers. According to the US Census, between 1990 and 2000 the percent of households earning over $75,000 increased 55 percent, 71 percent and 233 percent for whites, Hispanics and blacks respectively. During the same period, the community gained 330 black, 477 Hispanic, and 1208 white, middle-income households (those earning between $25,000 and $74,999). While the community received more affluent residents, it still had a sizable amount of low-income households; in 2000, 37 percent of the community's African-American households earned below $15,000. In the 2000s, as the community gained population and property values skyrocketed the neighbourhood's racial demographics shifted. Between 2000 and 2010, Shaw/U Street experienced a 17 percent population increase, outpacing the city's 5.2 percent gain. With this population increase, whites became the dominant racial group at 55 percent of the community's population, while blacks and Hispanics stood at 30 percent and 15 percent respectively.

The ethnographic approach and data collection

This study sheds light on the social consequences of the back-to-the-city movement through an ethnographic case study of neighbourhood change (Yin, 2013). I spent four years, between 2009 and 2012, studying Shaw/U Street's redevelopment. I deployed a variety of qualitative data collection techniques, including participant observation, interviews and archival records. Many

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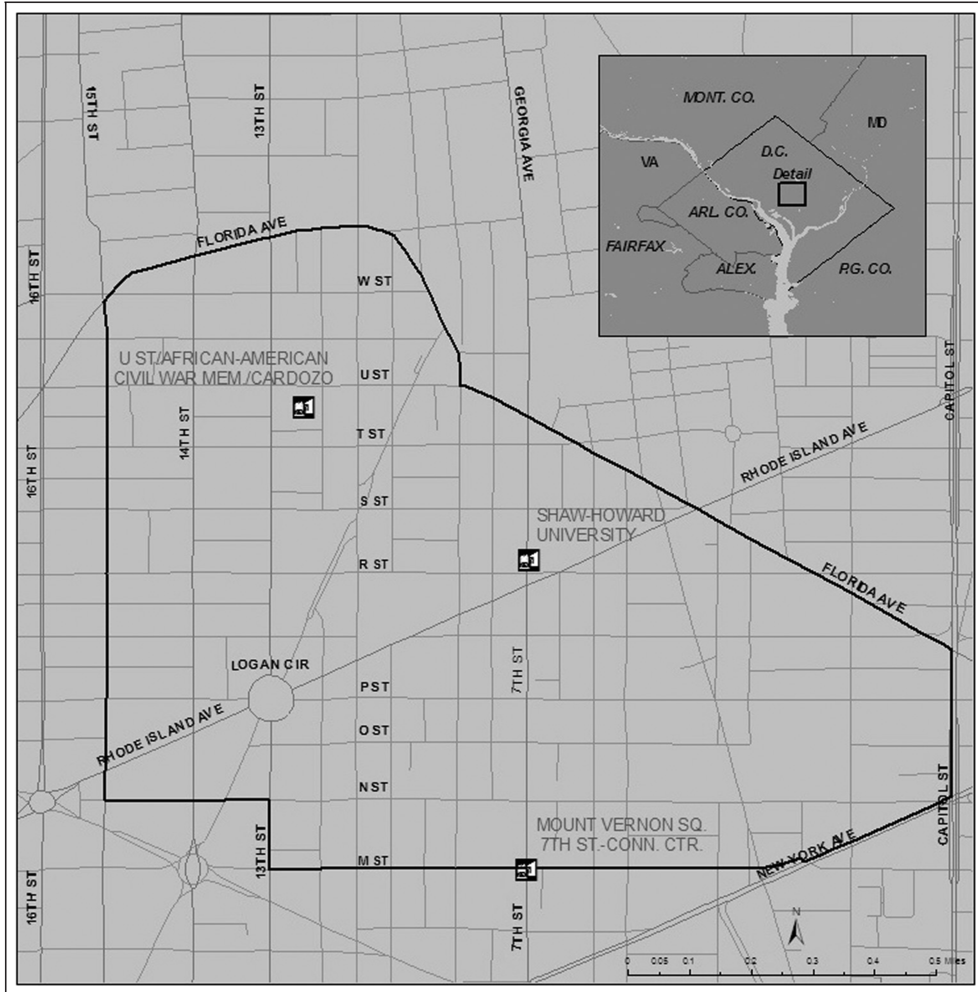

Figure 1. The Shaw/U Street neighbourhood.

Table 3. Percent black, 1970–2010.

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
DC	71	70	66	60	51
Shaw/U St.	87	81	67	53	30

Source: US Census.

observations were made while I served as a community organiser with a local advocacy organisation, Organizing for Neighbourhood Equity (ONE DC). Additionally, I attended civic association and Advisory Neighbourhood Commission (ANC) meetings. I also engaged in community life by regularly observing and participating in social interactions in parks, recreation centers, restaurants, bars and nightclubs. This information was supplemented with data from 60 interviews with key community stakeholders, including old and new residents, civic association leaders,

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political officials and city planners.[7] Participants were asked about their perceptions of redevelopment dynamics and their consequences. Lastly, an array of archival records (US Census data on DC population and income patterns, civic association meeting minutes, newspaper articles and Internet blogs) complemented direct observations and interviews.

Findings

This section is organised in the following manner. I first describe how some low-income people are able to remain in Shaw/U Street despite gentrification pressures. I then illustrate certain differences in the tastes and preferences among newcomers and long-term residents, and show that newcomer desires relate to the community's changing political structure. Finally, I outline the relationship between political and cultural displacement, which culminates in feelings of resentment, alienation and civic withdrawal among some long-standing residents.

Staying in place

While some forced residential displacement occurred in Shaw/U Street, a number of low-income residents were able to remain amidst mounting gentrification pressures. Many low- and moderate-income families live in the community's church-owned affordable housing projects. During the 1968 riots, storefronts along 14th Street, U Street and especially along 7th Street were burned. In the years that followed, African-American area churches, such as New Bethel Baptist Church, United House of Prayer and Lincoln Temple United Church of Christ, built affordable housing to replace these burntout structures.[8] This affordable housing stock has allowed thousands of low-income people to remain despite the community's escalating property values.[9]

Theresa Sule, an affordable housing leader, explained:

> I think that people want a certain level of [upper] income in this community, but it's not gonna happen. And one of the reasons it's not gonna happen is that fortunately the staple low-income buildings in this community, they're not owned by private owners. They're owned by institutions. Lincoln Westmoreland is owned by a church. Gibson Plaza is owned by a church. I mean this building, we're owned by the tenants association and non-profits. So, I mean, to maintain affordability, more than likely we'll renew our contracts because I know the church has no interest in market finances. And our building, we have at least 20 more years on our HUD [US Department of Housing and Urban Development] contract.

Jim Graham, one of Shaw/U Street's City Council representatives, stated, 'By and large the gentrification impact was there, [but] not on the big apartment buildings.' He noted Shaw/U Street's affordable housing kept 'thousands of people who would have been put out.' Both Sule and Graham's statements underscore the importance of affordable housing as a mechanism that ensured the community remained mixed-income as it redeveloped.

Distinct tastes and preferences

In Shaw/U Street, like many revitalising communities, newcomers and long-term residents often have different tastes and preferences. Geovani Bonilla, a newly elected civic association president and newcomer, explained how economic and age differences relate to distinct desires between newcomers and longtime residents:

> You had a lot of old neighbors that bought here years ago and lived here for 30 years who bought homes for $80,000 and now you've got the new neighbors that are coming in buying homes for $500,000 [and] $600,000 .... The

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> older residents, and I guess primarily because much of them are mostly retired, they are looking more towards senior centers. They want arts and crafts …. The newer folks want more of the retail … the sit down restaurants. Uh, you know more of the local nightlife, which is some of the things that older residents … don't necessarily want.

Many newcomers, like Geovani, advocate for different amenities than their long-term neighbours, a fact clearly recognised by Shaw/U Street's black civic leaders. Reverend Hicks, a local black church leader for over 30 years, bluntly noted:

> While the influx of well-off, mostly white urban pioneers and carpetbaggers into inner-city communities might improve their socioeconomic status and raise property values, there is a danger in the notion that these new residents share the values, interests and concerns of their older, mostly African American neighbors. (quote from Gaines, 1999; see also Gore, 2005)

Geovani and Rev. Hicks' comments illustrate a perception that newcomers' tastes, values and interests do not always align with long-term residents. In redeveloping communities it is not uncommon for gentrifiers and long-terms residents to have different preferences and values (Brown-Saracino, 2009; Maly 2005), but in Shaw/U Street newcomers express their community preferences through political displacement.

Political displacement

From the mid-1970s through most of the 1980s and 1990s, African Americans held almost all of Shaw/U Street's formal and informal political positions. As more upper- and middle-income whites, blacks and Hispanics, both straight and gay, moved into the neighbourhood, the long-standing black population began to lose political power at multiple levels. A sketch of the city's political structure helps to contextualise this community-level political transition.

Since the enactment of Home Rule in 1973, Washington, DC residents have elected a mayor, eight city council ward representatives, four citywide council members and a city council chair, for four-year terms (Fauntroy, 2003). Two city council seats (Wards 1 and 2) represent most of Shaw/U Street.[10] The home rule legislation, and a subsequent referendum, also set up 37 sub-district political areas, known as Advisory Neighbourhood Commissions (ANCs). These Commissions are supposed to promote public participation in decisions affecting neighbourhood areas. For instance, ANCs make recommendations to the city council and city agencies on matters such as zoning, liquor licensing and small grant making in their sub-district area. The residents of each sub-district elect ANC Commissioners for two-year terms. Shaw/U Street has five ANCs.

Shaw/U Street's shifting political structure is exemplified by the changing representation in Ward 1 and ANC 2C. David Clarke, who was white, was the first Ward 1 council member and Frank Smith, an African American, followed him when Clarke was elected city council chair (Ruble, 2003). Smith held the Ward 1 seat for 16 years until Jim Graham, a white challenger, defeated him in 1998.

Smith and Graham represent the community's old guard and newcomers, respectively. Smith was born in Georgia in 1942, attended Morehouse College and was a founding member of Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). He came to DC in 1968 to work at the Institute for Policy Studies, a 1960s leading antiwar and civil rights think tank (Jaffe and Sherwood, 1994). Throughout his career Smith was committed to black political empowerment. In contrast, Jim Graham spent most of his childhood in the DC suburbs. He received a

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college degree from Michigan State and a law degree from the University of Michigan. He came back to the DC area to work in the federal government. In 1979 he became a board member, and in 1984 the executive director of Shaw/U Street's Whitman-Walker Clinic. Under Graham's 14 years of leadership, the clinic became one of the country's leading HIV/AIDS medical facilities. Graham, who is openly gay, has been a prominent gay rights and HIV/AIDS activist. Demographic shifts contributed to Graham's defeat of Smith. Shaw/U Street's early gentrification involved gay men who rehabilitated beautiful Victorian homes near the Whitman-Walker Clinic. This constituency supported Graham in his takeover of Ward 1.

With the 2000s back-to-the-city movement, Shaw/U Street's ANC commissions transitioned from being dominated by long-time African Americans to newcomer control. One of the most contentious political transformations occurred in ANC 2C. Since the 1980s this ANC has been controlled by a controversial figure, 'Mahdi' Leroy Joseph Thorpe, Jr. For over 20 years, Thorpe has attempted to keep the community's streets safe by trying to stop the gang drug trade (Fekeiki, 2007 and Wemple, 2007). Thorpe is an incredibly outspoken African-American leader who occasionally uses inflammatory language. For instance, he called the city's former interim police chief, 'a house Negro'; openly gay city council member David Catania, a 'faggot'; and Jack Evans, the white Ward 2 city council member, 'a pale-skinned, blond-haired cracker' (Silverman, 2001). While some people disagree with Thorpe's views and governing tactics, he does, to a certain extent, represent the community's low-income African American population and their redevelopment concerns.

Alex Padro, a Hispanic gay man, moved to the community in 1994 and is one of Thorpe's biggest critics. Since moving to the community, Padro has been very engaged in local politics and in 2001 he was elected to ANC 2C. Padro also directs Shaw Main Streets, an initiative to stimulate Shaw business development, and many residents see him as a pro-growth proponent. Padro explained:

> For decades our ANC unfortunately has been one of the most dysfunctional ones in the city and we really just had folks that didn't have good qualifications, good backgrounds, weren't reasonable and as a result … the neighborhood has lost out on a lot of [development] opportunities … that would definitely have benefited the community at large and those of low- and moderate-income who some of these past elected officials claimed to be the focus of their interests.

Once elected to the ANC, Padro, along with other pro-development newcomers, began plotting Thorpe's ousting from the ANC. In 2006, Padro, and other recent community arrivals, encouraged Kevin Chapple, an African-American newcomer, to the run against Thorpe. In this fiercely contested election, Chapple defeated Thorpe by five votes.

Thorpe, an 18-year veteran of the ANC system did not easily give up his power and control (Jones, 2006). First, as a lame duck ANC chair in December 2006, he resigned as chair and appointed Doris Brooks and Barbara Curtis, both representatives of the long-term, African-American faction, to the ANC chair and vice chair positions respectively. This move was very strategic. Thorpe understood that without him the four-person ANC was split: two newcomers (Padro and Chapple) and two long-standing residents (Brooks and Curtis). According to the ANC rules, if the ANC cannot elect a new chair, the former chair serves. Thorpe's move helped ensure that Brooks would remain chair in 2007, since there would likely be a split vote for the new chair. Brooks, as ANC

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chair, then named Thorpe her executive assistant and parliamentarian. Those who wanted to do business with the ANC had to continue to contact Thorpe to get on the ANC agenda. One community blogger noted, 'Laugh or cry about it, you gotta admit the man [Thorpe] has a pair' (*Fifth and Oh*, 2006).

Despite these efforts, as more upper-income residents moved into the area, Thorpe's reign, and the low-income faction's political power, began slipping away. In the 2008 ANC 2C election, Theresa Sule, a long-term resident, ran against Curtis. Sule had Padro's and the other newcomers' backing because they thought she would support pro-growth development issues. Sule defeated Curtis by 50 votes and Padro and his supporters believed they had broken the ANC 2-2 voting tie. However, during the first ANC meeting of 2009, when the Commissioners vote on the new chair, Sule, an African American resident of subsidised housing, nominated Brooks, the long-term resident and previous ANC chair, instead of Padro. Padro was furious and claimed what Sule did was 'a complete reversal and a stab in the back' (DeBonis, 2009). Padro and the newcomer faction waited patiently for the next election to retaliate. In the 2010 ANC 2C, Sule lost convincingly to newcomer, Rachelle Nigro. With three of the four commissioners being newcomers, the political takeover was complete, and Padro was finally appointed as the ANC 2C chair.

Sociologist William Julius Wilson (1996) predicted that the influx of upper-and middle-income residents would strengthen a low-income neighbourhood's political infrastructure. He hypothesised that newcomers would bolster the social structure of low-income communities, increasing the opportunity structure for disadvantaged residents. However, he did not predict that newcomers would take over critical political positions and advocate for new amenities, entirely transforming the cultural settings of urban African-American communities.

Cultural displacement: Catering to newcomers' tastes and preferences

Shaw/U Street's changing political circumstances relate to the community's altering cultural landscape. In the late 1990s and 2000s, some newcomer-dominated ANCs and civic associations engaged in political actions to push out black institutions symbolising the old neighbourhood, while advocating for new neighbourhood amenities, such as bike lanes and dog parks, perceived by some long-time residents as signs of gentrification and the manifestations of newcomer dominance.

Displacing a black church? Both Shaw/U Street's changing resident population and the altering political landscape impacted some neighbourhood black institutions, including Metropolitan Baptist Church. Metropolitan Baptist Church, an African American institution, was founded in the Shaw/U Street area during the Civil War. During black suburbanisation of the 1970s and 1980s, many of Metropolitan's members moved to Maryland and commuted each Sunday into the community to attend services. This pilgrimage by African-Americans from the suburbs to historic black churches in low-income inner city communities is common in other metropolitan regions (Hyra, 2008; McRoberts, 2003), but in Shaw/U Street this situation led to a controversy. The Metropolitan situation highlights how the neighbourhood's changing preferences and political structure relate to the departure of one of the community's iconic African-American institutions.

In 1999, a mainly white faction of new residents had concerns with Metropolitan's use of a nearby school playground as a

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parking lot. Rev. Hicks of Metropolitan explained:

> Our particular conflict came about because of the community's interest in what they call preserving the school and its schoolyard. For years before I got there, for years, the church had been using that schoolyard for parking on Sunday …. Not only had we been using it, we had been maintaining it and we had been paying for the privilege …. But our new neighbors saw the parking in the area as somehow anti-whatever purposes they may have had. So we were even taken to court to prevent us from using it.

He continued:

> Before Mr. Graham came to the Council, Frank Smith and I had several meetings along with Walter Fauntroy [former Rev. of Shaw/U Street's New Bethel Baptist Church and DC Congressional Representative] … about ways to develop the Garrison Schoolyard …. We were offering to the city and the School Board to actually take that schoolyard and put a two- or three-story parking garage on it and included in it would have been a playground that would have been incorporated into the parking structure itself along with some opportunities, retail opportunities, along that corner. That's what Frank Smith and I were working on.

I asked what happened to the plan. He replied:

> Oh it died! I mean you know Jim Graham came in and nobody wanted to hear that because that would have solidified Metropolitan's place in the community. We submitted to the District plans to expand Metropolitan in its location, adding another story onto it and then going around 13th Street which was property we already owned. And of course it was killed.

The church was prevented from using the schoolyard to park and some members started to double park on Sundays, blocking in other cars (Ruble, 2010). Newcomers were furious and, working through one of the area's ANCs, demanded police ticket the double parked cars.

Rev. Hicks recalled that the majority of the church members would have preferred that the church remained in Shaw but that the lack of political support by the community's new political representation catalysed their decision to move elsewhere (Hicks, 2004). 'With the changing of hands of property and others moving in, there was not the appreciation for the church, its mission, its values …. And so it set up a kind of, I don't how I'm supposed to say,' Hicks paused and then continued, 'an unnatural kind of tug of war between the church and these new neighbors, and that was unfortunate.' A black institution that was founded during the Civil War by former slaves was now absent, in part due to political pressures stemming from the community's new population.

As Metropolitan left, the ANC 2F debated a new function for the Garrison playground. New, mainly white, residents were advocating for a dog park. At the January 2008 ANC 2F meeting, the Dog Owners of Logan Circle reported that they were working with the city staff to identify an appropriate field to be converted into a dog park. Four community sites were discussed, including the Garrison Elementary school playground. Apparently, even though the city had not decided on the location of the dog park, some residents were using the Garrison playground as an unofficial dog park. At the April 2008 ANC 2F meeting, the police reported receiving complaints from parents of school children, almost all African-American and Hispanic, that sections of the field were covered with dog excrement.

Go-go, gone. Black Washingtonians founded go-go music in the 1970s (Hopkinson, 2012;

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Lornell and Stephenson, 2009). Go-go combines jazz, funk, R&B, hip-hop and Caribbean sounds and is recognisable by its repetitive beat and improvisation. Go-go music used to be quite popular on U Street as late as the 1990s; however, with the community's redevelopment and political shifts, many of U Street's go-go clubs were shut down.

Jim Graham, supported mainly by Shaw/U Street's new resident population, led the effort to close local go-go clubs. The political crusade to rid the community of go-go clubs was controversial. Jim Graham recalled:

> There were people who said I was anti-go-go and you know, actually I know nothing about go-go .... It's not about the music, it's about the people who are attracted and then acted out from being there, it was about people. So we worked very hard … to close … a good half dozen really bad businesses.

Christine, a white newcomer and President of the U Street Civic Association, said:

> I remember one day getting off the metro and walking down the street and I saw a flier hanging out that had a white man hanging by a noose and I was like, 'Oh my gosh, where am I living?' Until I saw it was about Jim Graham and the go-go [controversy].

Christine, who has been extremely active in local politics, understood that long-term residents were resentful of their diminished political power. She stated:

> I can understand why people are upset. That you take an area that even though it had been completely depressed, but has a history of being African American, and then all of a sudden all these outsiders are running it.

Ironically, several middle-income newcomers claim that they chose Shaw/U Street over other DC neighbourhoods because of its racial diversity and black history. Ralph, an openly gay white male lawyer in his 30s, who blogs about Shaw/U Street states, 'There are a lot of great things about the neighbourhood … that drew me to Shaw. I love our diversity and rich history'.[11] However, many engage in local politics to gain political power and advocate for changes that make it more difficult for African-American institutions to remain. Dominic Moulden, a longtime community organiser, expresses feelings several longtime residents have when newcomers describe how their attraction to Shaw/U Street was based on its racial diversity and black history: 'Don't tell me that you moved to this neighbourhood because you wanted diversity. No, you moved here because you realised you got the numbers to change the culture.'

With go-go gone, part of Shaw/U Street and DC's black history and culture has been erased from its streets. Author Natalie Hopkinson, a DC go-go historian, wrote, 'Go-go may be invisible to much of white Washington, but it's as much a part of the city as pillars and monument of its federal face .... Go-go is Washington' (Hopkinson, 2010; see also Lornell and Stephenson, Jr., 2009 and Hopkinson, 2012). With councilmember Graham and his supporters' efforts to rid Shaw/U Street of go-go, listeners of this musical genre must head to the DC suburbs to attend live performances of this African-American form of cultural expression that originated in the District.

Biking for whom? In the 2000s DC's Mayors Anthony Williams and Adrian Fenty, both African American, significantly improved DC's bike infrastructure. In 2000 the District only had three miles of street bikes lanes; by 2009 that number increased to 60 miles (Buehler et al., 2012). This type of supplemental transport system has been greatly supported by DC's mayors, newcomers, real estate developers and the urban planning field as both a sustainable mode of

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transportation and as an economic development tool. It has been quite controversial in DC, however, since DC's bike infrastructure was disproportionately located in redeveloping low-income African-American neighbourhoods, primarily Shaw/U Street and Capitol Hill East.

The implementation of the biking infrastructure has been a contentious issue in DC. Ralph Buehler and colleagues (2012: 14) noted, 'The construction of the bike lanes was not uncontroversial. In some neighbourhoods bike lanes have become associated with redevelopment, rising property values, and resulting economic pressure on poorer households.' Chris, a white DC transportation planner for the Shaw/U Street area, said, 'There seems to be this idea that … promoting biking is just one more form of gentrification.' He mentioned that he receives pushback from some long-term African-American residents because they perceive that bike lanes will limit the amount of available parking.

However, the bike infrastructure issue goes beyond parking availability. Some African Americans perceive the bike infrastructure as an amenity being used to attract white gentrifiers and promote gentrification. In DC, whites bike much more than African Americans. The Capital Bikeshare (CaBi) is the system of bikes accessed for a fee by DC residents and tourists (see Figure 2). The CaBi system has been contracted by the DC Department of Transportation since 2010. While DC's black population was 51 percent only 5 percent of CaBi riders were African American (Buehler, 2011).[12] Yet the city government spent ample resources to put this amenity and other bike-related infrastructure into economically and racially transitioning African-American neighbourhoods.

Some newcomers have moved to the area because of its robust bike infrastructure.

Figure 2. One of Shaw/U Street's new bike share stations.
Source: Author.

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Paul, a recent arrival, stated, 'A large part of the reason I moved to Shaw and pay D.C.'s higher taxes was because of the ability to bike or walk to work' (Halsey, 2009). A *Washington Post* article stated, 'Growth of cycling culture in the D.C. area and other cities has awakened the real estate industry to its potential as a fresh sales tool' (Dietsch, 2010). DC area real estate developers are designing luxury condominium buildings with bike racks. While the city and real estate developers construct bike infrastructure to attract new city residents, some long-term African-American residents resent the bike infrastructure because they view it as an amenity they did not request. In fact some view this amenity as a symbolic message they are no longer wanted in the neighbourhoods where bike infrastructure is being placed.

Yappy hour. Bike lanes are not the only recent Shaw/U Street amenity that has sparked debate. In November 2008 the community became the first DC area to have an official off-leash dog park (Wilson, 2008). The dog park is a 15,000 square feet fenced enclosure with pea gravel and small stone surfaces floor where dogs can roam off their leashes. It likely cost the city well over a half a million dollars to construct.[13]

Shaw/U Street's dog park resulted from an extensive advocacy effort by newcomers, mainly white middle- and upper-income residents. With political pressures from ANCs and civic associations that were once dominated by African Americans, the city agreed to build the dog park, an amenity that has become part of the changing landscape in gentrifying areas (Tissot, 2011). The Midcity Dog Park Committee helps provide funding for the park's upkeep and sets the park's rules, even though it is a publicly-owned city space (see www.shawdogs.org). On any given evening, the dog park is filled with newcomers. The dog park construction has been associated with other subsequent community changes such as nearby bars and hotels hosting yappy hours, where individuals show off their dogs while enjoying a drink.[14]

Very few long-time African-American dog owners use the park and there is a perception that this newcomer amenity has been preferred over other local recreational spaces.[15] The school playground, where the new dog park is located, also contains basketball courts and a soccer field. At the time of the dog park's construction, no resources were dedicated to other playground amenities, which were in need of desperate upgrading. The soccer goals were askew and the field was mainly dirt. The basketball courts had not been renovated since at least 1995 when DC's professional basketball team changed their name from the Bullets, as indicated by the faded 'Bullets' on the court's worn surface.[16] While soccer fields and basketball courts, which are often used by Hispanics and African Americans, are neglected, newcomer amenities are developed and upgraded. The physical juxtaposition of these amenities symbolises political power and cultural shifts occurring in the neighbourhood.

Alienation, resentment and withdrawal

Some long-term DC residents resent new infrastructure, such as bike lanes, bikeshares and dog parks. Marshall Brown, a political strategist and father of former DC City Council Chair, Kwame Brown, stated, 'They [the new white residents] want doggie parks and bike lanes. The result is a lot of tension. The new people believe more in their dogs than they do in people .... This is not the District I knew. There's no relationship with the black community. They don't connect at the church, they don't go to the same cafes, they don't volunteer in the neighbourhood school, and a lot of longtime black residents feel threatened.'[17]

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The feeling of being threatened is compounded by a sense of detachment and disillusionment that sets in when people do not feel comfortable in neighbourhood spaces. For instance, Gloria Robinson, an African-American affordable housing community organiser who used to live in the Shaw/U Street area, stated, 'I just feel like, and this could be my own paranoia, … when I'm walking through there, especially when the street sidewalks are bustling, it's like folks are looking at me as if I don't belong there. I'm serious! It may be my paranoia, but … that's the feeling I get.' This feeling of not belonging anymore can lead to greater civic participation, such as in Gloria's case, but it can also lead to withdrawal. Walter Fauntroy, lifelong community resident and former Rev. of New Bethel Baptist Church, noted, 'I can't be caught up fighting where the cards are stacked against you. [Shaw/U Street] should be a place where … people can all live together, but I gave up, quite frankly' (Abrams and Lightman, 2008: 33). This pattern of neighbourhood change, associated with the back-to-the-city movement, represents the demise of black political power, which relates to the onset of resentment and political withdrawal among some long-term African-American residents.

Discussion

This investigation reveals important political and cultural consequences associated with the back-to-the-city movement in Washington, DC, through an ethnographic case study focused on the redevelopment of the historic, African-American Shaw/U Street neighbourhood. The new, mainly white, population moving into DC has helped to stimulate the redevelopment of this low-income black neighbourhood. For scholars, such as Wilson (1996) and others (Freeman, 2006; Joseph, 2006), the movement of the middle class to disadvantaged black neighbourhoods had the promise of improving the life chances and circumstances of low-income people. In fact, Shaw/U Street's redevelopment has been associated with less crime, greater aggregate community income, higher property values and increased social diversity.

However, there appears to be social costs for low-income residents: political and cultural displacement and feelings of community loss. As new upper- and middle-income residents have come into the community, some have joined civic associations, seized political power and have advocated for policies, including limited parking, the removal of go-go clubs, bikes lanes and dog parks, which cater to their tastes and preferences. The combination of the political takeover and development of new amenities is associated with fear, resentment and civic withdrawal among some long-term, African-American residents. These findings coincide with and extend the works of Knotts and Haspel (2006) who demonstrate that gentrification can lead to political destabilisation through lower longstanding resident voter turnout, and Freeman (2006) who highlights that long-term residents often resent new amenities in redeveloping communities. This research elaborates on these studies' findings by detailing and linking the political destabilisation process and cultural change brought on, in part, by newcomer political action, to certain feelings of resentment among some longstanding residents.

For urban scholars and policy makers concerned with producing inclusive, equitable and sustainable mixed-income communities, this study has two important implications. First, this investigation suggests that political and cultural displacements are important interrelated community processes associated with the back-to-the-city movement. Second, it highlights that maintaining political equity and power balances between longstanding and new

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residents in transitioning neighbourhoods might be important to ensuring that long-term residents benefit and thrive as their neighbourhood revitalises around them.

While this study uncovers important relationships among population movement, neighbourhood revitalisation and social consequences, the results might not generalise to other cities and neighbourhoods for at least two reasons. First, DC experienced a back-to-the-city movement comprised of a large number of new white residents, nearly 50,000 between 2000 and 2010, which might relate to a particular type of neighbourhood redevelopment and resulting social consequences. For instance, both New York City and Chicago experienced the back-to-the-city movement in the 1990s but some of these cities' redeveloping neighbourhoods, such as Harlem and Bronzeville, experienced black gentrification (Hyra, 2008). While some political displacement occurred at the informal civic association level in these neighbourhoods, it rarely affected the formally elected city council positions. Furthermore, the resulting cultural displacement did not take place to the same extent. For example, many iconic black churches remain in Harlem and Bronzeville and these institutions did not face as much newcomer opposition as those in Shaw/U Street.

Second, DC is unique as the home to the federal government. This function might be related to the lack of political representation that DC residents, compared to other US cities, face. After almost a century without elected city representation, DC residents finally attained the privilege to vote locally after the enactment of Home Rule in 1973 (Harris, 1995). Since that time many locally elected officials have been African American. This unique DC political context might relate to why the movement of middle-income whites to low-income African-American communities and the ensuing political shifts are so contentious. For these reasons, the political and cultural displacement uncovered in Washington, DC might not generalise to the same extent in other cities experiencing the back-to-the-city movement and resulting neighbourhood development.

Conclusion

The back-to-the-city movement is occurring in urban America. The past 20 years have seen a surge of people to longtime, depopulating cities. This recentralisation is associated with the redevelopment of low-income, primarily African-American neighbourhoods. While some celebrate the back-to-the-city movement and its associated neighbourhood revitalisation, urban planners and federal and local policy makers have often overlooked important social consequences related to this population growth. Some low-income people in redeveloping neighbourhoods are losing their political power and feelings of community attachment. This, in some circumstances, leads to resentment and alienation among long-standing residents, who feel powerless, as their community improves economically. Understanding the processes of political and cultural displacement, and attempting to minimise their effects, is critical to ensuring the sustainability of inclusive, diverse, mixed-income communities.

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Notes

1. This article is part of a book on the redevelopment of the Washington, DC Shaw/U Street neighbourhood.
2. Others associate the back-to-the-city movement with increased urban capital investments and not with increased population inflows (e.g. Smith, 1979; Wyly et al., 2004).
3. While this study does not focus on what lured individuals to urban areas, other

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studies suggest that suburban saturation and traffic congestion, high-wage central city jobs, lower urban crime rates, urban entertainment amenities, and city and federal investments relate to the back-to-the-city movement and associated gentrification (e.g. Birch, 2009; Clark, 2011; Ehrenhalt, 2012; Grogan and Proscio, 2000; Hyra, 2008, 2012; Simmons and Lang, 2003; von Hoffman, 2003).

4. See Morello and Keating (2011b, 2011c). In 1970, 70 percent of DC's population was African American. The decrease in the city's proportion of black residents was due to the influx of whites in the 2000s but also the exodus of African Americans, a trend that had been occurring in DC since the 1970s (Gale, 1987; Lacy, 2007).
5. Morello et al. (2011). The gentrification of DC's low-income black neighbourhoods has a long history and includes Georgetown, Foggy Bottom and Southwest in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s (Gale, 1987; Gillette, 1995), sections of Capitol Hill, Dupont Circle and Logan Circle in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (Gale, 1987; Lee et al., 1985) and parts of downtown, Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant in the 1980s and 1990s (Gale, 1987; McGovern, 1998; Modan, 2007; Williams, 1988).
6. Shaw/U Street is bounded by 15th Street, NW to the West, Florida Avenue to the North, North Capitol Street to the East and M Street to the South. This is the designated area in the 1966 DC Shaw urban renewal plan.
7. My interview sample was not randomly selected; I developed a snowball sample by asking people I interacted with to recommend others.
8. Unlike several inner city communities that have high-rise public housing managed by local public housing authorities, a large proportion of Shaw/U Street's affordable housing is owned and managed by area churches (Gillette, 1995).
9. Boorstein (2007) and Clabaugh (2011). There are also several affordable housing cooperatives including the Capital Manor Cooperative, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Latino Cooperative, the Second Northwest Cooperative Homes and the Northwest Cooperative, which provide moderate-income people housing in Shaw.
10. The very eastern part of the community is in Ward 5 but it is a very small slice of the community.
11. Ralph, from his blog *Renew Shaw*, 6 February 2007.
12. Another 2008 survey commissioned by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments showed that in the DC region whites account for 88 percent of all bike trips (see Buehler et al., 2012).
13. The cost of the Shaw dog park was estimated based on that fact that a similar but smaller 10,000 square feet dog park cost the city $400,000 to build (see Wiener, 2010).
14. See http://washingtondc.citysearch.com/list/196451 and http://diningindc.net/2011/06/29/dog-friendly-happy-hours-for-the-dog-days-of-summer-in-washington-dc/ (accessed 9 September 2013).
15. Alcindor (2009); Ricard (2009); and http://friendsofbundy.wordpress.com (accessed 5 March 2012).
16. The name change from the Bullets to the Wizards occurred in 1995.
17. Fisher (2011). Other scholars have noted how dogs can become a controversial issue in gentrifying neighbourhoods (e.g. see Drew, 2011).

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