"It's So Bland, Irrelevant":
Young People's Impressions of and Lives Amongst Changing Spaces

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Concerned with the growing ubiquity and likely detrimental effects of gentrification, scholars have examined the causes and effects of neighborhood change, pointing out the long term consequences of physical, political, and cultural displacement. For understandable reasons, this research has focused almost exclusively on adults leaving little known about the impacts of gentrification on young people. However, young people's experiences growing up amongst neighborhood change is a unique and important prospective to help illuminate the possible ongoing impacts of neighborhood change on future generations. Using a mixed-method approach including GIS mapping of descriptive quantitative data, photovoice, and semi-structured one-on-one interviews, I address this gap in the literature by examining how young people in Pittsburgh's East Liberty neighborhood interpret neighborhood change and its importance on their lived realities. Findings suggest that, unlike their adult counterparts, young people do not feel the emotional connections to long-established spaces. Their differing interpretations of change are accompanied by a perceived lack of importance the change holds in their daily lives. Including young people in neighborhood change research allows for the young people themselves to feel like their voices are being heard and for policymakers to understand how a unique sector of the population views broad changes to the physical and social landscapes of a place.

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1.0 Introduction

Since 2005 more than 4,500 people have been displaced from their public housing units in Pittsburgh's East Liberty neighborhood (Giammarse 2017). Simultaneously and not coincidentally, this neighborhood has been the hotbed of the city's redevelopment efforts (Duck et al 2020). Like other cities across the country, Pittsburghers are increasingly aware and discuss the impacts of gentrification on both physical and social landscapes (Alvino Young 2017; Davis 2018; Deto 2015; Ivey 2008; Kramer 2018). Gentrification is a process of neighborhood change that often occurs in lower class, historically disinvested city neighborhoods when more affluent people encourage financial and public policy support of redevelopment (Marcuse 1986).

Recognizing the widespread and potentially tremendous influence of gentrification on cities and their residents, scholars have investigated both the causes and effects of these trends. Researchers investigating the causes of gentrification have illuminated how capital has deliberately shaped gentrification in its influence on industry, residential preferences, and available housing (Smith 1979; 1996). Scholars focusing on the effects of gentrification have illuminated how physical, political, and cultural displacement can lead to feelings of alienation as longtime residents are no longer able to be or see themselves in the commercial, social, and economic landscape of their neighborhood (Easton et al. 2020; Elliott-Cooper, Hubbard, and Lees 2019; Freeman 2006; Freeman and Braconi 2004; Glass 1964; Hyra 2015; Marcuse 1986).

Although these insights are critical, existing research has focused almost exclusively on adults—leaving a gap in the literature about the lived experiences of youth. Growing up in the midst of gentrification, youth experiences differ from those of their parents and adult neighbors because their memories of spaces and connections to neighbors are created amidst the changes

rather than before change occurred. As a result, their attachment to place is distinct from adults. Yet, this distinction does not mean they are not equally or more impacted by these changes. Gaining an understanding of these experiences is important because of their uniqueness and because understanding how the youth experience change will provide insight into the long term and broad reaching impact of these changes on current and future generations.

      To fill this gap in the literature, I ask, "how do high schoolers interpret neighborhood change and its importance on their daily life?"[1] To investigate this question I examine East Liberty, a predominately Black neighborhood in Pittsburgh that has been the epicenter of the city's gentrification. I use a mix of quantitative descriptive data and GIS mapping techniques alongside photovoice, descriptive data, and semi-structured one-on-one interviews to understand how Pittsburgh's youth experience the changing neighborhood dynamics in East Liberty.

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[1] Throughout this thesis. "high schooler" will be used interchangeably with "participants", "youth", "students", and "teens" to describe the group of youth ages 15-18 who participated in this project.

2.0 Neighborhood Change: Why It Occurs and Who It Affects

Sociologists have long studied neighborhood change (e.g. Du Bois 1899; Hunter and Robinson 2016; Massey and Denton 1993; Park and Burgess 1925). In particular, scholars have focused on the factors driving neighborhood change *and* how these changes influence residents.

2.1 Factors Driving Neighborhood Change

For most of the 20th century, the majority of sociology employed the Chicago School's theories of neighborhood change to explain the factors driving neighborhood transformations. The Chicago School, a group of almost exclusively White men scholars (Morris 2015), argued neighborhood changes were primarily driven by the aggregation of individual's decisions. In particular, this theory posited that residents preferred to reside with others of similar socioeconomic, racial, and nationality backgrounds (Park and Burgess 1925). Thus, they surmised as a new group of people entered cities because of economically driven waves of migration, they move into the least desirable neighborhoods. The influx of newcomers would then provide an incentive for the existing majority group in these communities to move out and "up" to more desirable neighborhoods. The new group would then become the majority (Ellis et al. 2018). This theory, referred to as the invasion-succession model, gained increased popularity after Schelling (1971) created a mathematical model estimating how quickly White residents would move after Black families begin to move into a neighborhood. Schelling's hypothetical

mathematical model was seen as additional evidence that neighborhood change was driven by individual preferences and decisions.

However, some scholars, primarily scholars of color, continued to question the premise that residents' choices were the primary factor driving neighborhood change. In fact, even before the Chicago School created their theory of neighborhood change, W.E.B. Du Bois argued neighborhood demographic compositions and transformations were driven by racialized policies and practices (Du Bois 1899). Yet, White academics and institutions dismissed his theories and ignored his empirical contributions (Morris 2015).

It wasn't until the mid-1980s that more sociologists began to acknowledge the role that racialized structures were playing in neighborhood change (Jackson 1985; Rothstein 2017). In particular, scholars illuminated how the federal government's racialized development, mortgage, and appraising policies created segregated neighborhoods and cyclical neighborhood change. Most famously, this occurred through the Federal Housing Association's decision to partner with the Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC) to create maps ranking neighborhoods. All neighborhoods were given a score: Grade A neighborhoods (color coded green) were seen as the most desirable and assigned the highest appraised values; Grade B (color coded blue) were slightly less desirable; these were followed by Grade C (color coded yellow) and Grade D (color coded red) which were seen as the least desirable or "riskiest" neighborhoods (Hunter and Robinson 2016; Massey and Denton 1993). Although discussed in economic terms, these classifications were based off the racial and socioeconomic demographics of the neighborhoods (Jackson 1985; Rothstein 2017). This meant communities of color were classified as Grade D or "red" neighborhoods which prevented them from qualifying from federally insured mortgages

and experienced property depreciation (Hunter and Robinson 2016; Massey and Denton 1993; Rothstein 2017).

Simultaneously, the federal government underwrote suburban development through financing infrastructural development (e.g. interstate highways, new sewage systems, and schools), providing tax incentives for developers, and encouraging industries to relocate to suburban areas (Jackson 1985). Yet, the majority of these initial developments were also restricted to Whites, only further institutionalizing racial segregation and perpetuating economic inequality (Rothstein 2017). Over time, this led to an exodus of the White middle class from center cities creating decline and economic disinvestment within these areas (Farley et al. 1978; Kozak 2014; Massey and Denton 1993).

Further compounding the federal government's actions were the real estate industry's practices at the time. One such process, known as blockbusting, consisted of real estate agents targeting predominately White neighborhoods and convincing White families to sell their homes for below market rates. The agent would then sell the property to a Black family for an inflated price (Smith 1979; 1996). This process continued until an entire block was occupied by Black families who had paid much more than the actual price for their property. This practice of inflating home prices left Black families with little money to maintain the homes, which in some cases enabled deteriorating housing stock and large-scale neighborhood disinvestment (Harris 1999; Schelling 1971; Smith 1979).

Scholars who emphasize the role of these structural factors on neighborhood change examine how these historical trends and ongoing policies that evaluate property based on the racial composition of the neighborhood are driving contemporary neighborhood change. Like the rise of American suburbanization, recent gentrification, or neighborhood change in urban areas,

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is the product of explicit policies and the racialization of property values. Smith (1979; 1996) posits capital, and the agencies that reside over it like developers, governments, and real estate agencies create environments that are attractive to people living outside of the city. As industries left the inner city, city economies shifted towards the consumption of goods rather than the production of goods (Smith 1979; 1996). Over time, city industries supported by government agencies and nonprofit organizations transitioned to creating the city as a good in and of itself—something to be consumed by residents and visitors (Smith 1979; 1996).

Thus, much like the historical neighborhood changes of the early or mid-20th century, the most recent changes are driven by a combination of local and federal actors—many of which are motivated by racial capitalism. Unsurprisingly, these driving forces have disproportionate impacts on residents. Given their importance, these impacts have been even more studied than the factors driving neighborhood change (Lees and Ley 2008; Smith 1979; Smith 1987).

2.2 Effects of Neighborhood Change on Residents

Existing research on the consequences of neighborhood change on residents contains a wide variety of perspectives (Brown-Saracino 2017). Generally speaking, qualitative researchers often conduct research at a micro level through ethnography that views gentrification as an inevitable process with lasting consequences while quantitative researchers examine change at the macro level and often view gentrification as not as consequential (Brown-Saracino 2017). Yet, within both approaches scholars examine how physical, political, and cultural displacements effect long term residents (e.g. Elliott-Cooper, Hubbard, and Lees 2019; Freeman 2006; Hyra 2015; Woldoff 2011).

Physical displacement was one of the early focuses of gentrification research because of the drastic visual it presents of residents being forced out of their neighborhoods (Glass 1964; Marcuse 1986). Recognizing the high mobility within cities and particularly among the poor, recent literature has debated the extent to which new populations moving into communities because of gentrification are the cause of displacements, above and beyond other simultaneously occurring factors (Easton et al. 2020; Elliott-Cooper, Hubbard, and Lees 2019; Freeman and Braconi 2004; Hyra 2015). Yet, scholars agree when it does happen, like the instances mentioned above in Pittsburgh's East Liberty neighborhood, the emotional and economic toil can be great and lasting because of an increased inability to see one's self in their neighborhood as well as being unable to patron many of the newer, more expensive businesses.

For those longtime residents who are not physically displaced, displacements can still occur through political and cultural alienation (Tach 2009). Proponents of gentrification point out the potential benefits of change on a neighborhood like bringing mainstream commercial environments that lead to upward mobility for longtime residents, higher income and property values, and a decrease in crime rates (Freeman 2006; Hyra 2015). Yet, the improvements to a neighborhood when newcomers enter are accompanied by feelings of political and cultural displacement by longtime residents. Decades of discriminatory structural practices leading to disinvestment in lower income and Black communities are suddenly addressed when middle income, often White people, move into these neighborhoods.

The newcomers entering low income inner-city neighborhoods have the economic and social capital to advocate for their desires their new neighborhood. This decision-making power results in new amenities in the neighborhood like high-end retailers, restaurants, and entertainment venues that cater to the values of newcomers rather than longtime residents

(Freeman 2006; Freeman and Braconi 2004; Hyra 2015). A changing physical landscape of the neighborhood leads political displacement in the sense that longtime residents do not feel they have the same ability to demand their desires to political officials and other persons of authority that new residents do which creates feelings of resentment towards newcomers that impedes on the ability to create meaningful social relationships across groups (Hyra 2015).

Beyond political displacement, longtime residents do not always view new amenities and social services in their neighborhood as a positive because they do not align with their needs or values. An inability to see oneself in the businesses populating their neighborhood can produce feelings of alienation and subsequent withdrawal from social interactions (Elliott-Cooper, Hubbard, and Lees 2019). This cultural displacement occurs when longtime residents lose a sense of belonging in their neighborhood because they are unable to connect their identity to the changing neighborhood identity (Hyra 2015).

Focusing primarily on the forms of displacement felt by longtime residents as a neighborhood undergoes change is not to suggest other effects are not as impactful or worth acknowledgement. Rather, given the location of this study in a neighborhood that has seen displacement of a variety of levels, addressing this section of existing literature is useful. That being said, there is no single measure for the consequences of neighborhood change. Even so, the lauded benefits of gentrification like increased income and employment opportunities often do not outweigh feelings of resentment and alienation by longtime residents.

3.0 Research Question

Scholars examining neighborhood change and its effects on residents provide important insights for understanding their lived realities, yet this research has not examined how youth growing up in the midst of gentrification experience these changes. To address this gap in the literature, I ask, "How do high schoolers interpret neighborhood change and its importance on their daily life?" in order to understand the distinct experience young people are having as the spaces around them are changing. This research is important as it seeks to explore how the collective stories told to young people about the people, places, and where they belong can influence their own memories and opinions of a neighborhood.

4.0 Research Location: Pittsburgh's East Liberty Neighborhood

The vast majority of literature on U.S. neighborhoods is drawn from a select number of cities—mainly Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia. Tracing all the way back to the Chicago School, these cities have been assumed to be representative of all cities despite ample evidence to the contrary (Morris 2015; Prener 2020; Sharkey and Faber 2014; Small 2015; Small, Manduca, and Johnston 2018; Small and Newman 2001). However, recently scholars have highlighted the importance of examining a wide array of cities, especially midsize cities like Pittsburgh (Small 2009).

Located at the junction of three large rivers, Pittsburgh's location and ample coal and oil deposits were ideal for manufacturing and transporting steel during the industrial revolution (Carter 2012). The booming economy drew hundreds of thousands of new residents and the population peaked in 1950 with 676,806 residents, almost fifteen times the size of the city's population a century prior (46,601 residents in 1850). During this expansion, factories disproportionately hired European immigrant men as they assumed they were more suitable than Black men for work in the steel mills (Trotter and Day 2010). Additionally, Black men were excluded from unions, further restricting their employment options and rights (Trotter and Day 2010). This economic exclusion was paired with residential restrictions, like those nationwide discussed in earlier sections such as exclusionary practices in various housing-related sectors. Similarly to other cities, Pittsburgh's Black population was banned from living in most neighborhoods within the city.

Just as the Black population gained rights to the labor unions and fair housing legislation banned many forms of explicit housing discrimination, the economy started experiencing de-

industrialization. Pittsburgh fell into a particularly steep decline as there were few other employment opportunities in the city beyond steel production (Kozak 2014). From 1979-1987 over 133,000 jobs were lost in the industry sector of Pittsburgh's economy (Carter 2012). As steel mills closed, White workers had the financial means to move outside of the city and flee the economic decline beginning in Pittsburgh. Black workers did not have the same luxury as centuries of structural racism made it difficult to build the wealth necessary to move combined with residential segregation practices upheld by the government (Trotter and Day 2010). Without a robust tax base, many of the city's middle income and working class areas lacked infrastructural upkeep and some homes and businesses fell into disrepair.

Starting in the 1990s, Pittsburgh began to reinvent its economic base as its longstanding universities began to grow and expand. Building on Carnegie Mellon University's technological expertise and the University of Pittsburgh's Medical Center, the city evolved into a hub of education, medicine and technology (Carter 2012). With an influx of new investment, local authorities made explicit decisions to encourage investment from particular companies while demolishing affordable and public housing (Duck et al. 2020). The epicenter of these changes has been East Liberty, a neighborhood on Pittsburgh's East End.

4.1 History of East Liberty

Located five miles Northeast of Pittsburgh's downtown, East Liberty was first developed into a small town with a bustling commercial area in 1843. With the introduction of the railroad and later the Philadelphia-Pittsburgh turnpike, now Penn Avenue, East Liberty became an accessible and booming business district. In fact, at its peak East Liberty was the third largest

business district in the state of Pennsylvania only trailing behind Philadelphia and downtown Pittsburgh (East Liberty Development Inc. 1999). Its convenient shops, entertainment venues, relatively clean air, and ample green space made it an attractive residential neighborhood for many of the city's wealthiest residents.

Over time East Liberty became one of the centers for Black business and life in Pittsburgh. National trends of suburbanization and de-industrialization led to White flight, the depopulation of, and disinvestment in East Liberty. These trends were further exacerbated after the City, in hopes of reversing the declining commerce, built a pedestrian mall, large road loop around the business district, and traffic reducing road patterns which only decreased the number of local businesses and the area's overall commercial retail (East Liberty Development Inc. 1999; Fitzpatrick 2000; Sloper 2018). Along with these changing economic dynamics, several public housing developments were built in the area. Combined, these economic and residential factors transformed the demographics and culture of the community.

As Pittsburgh began to reinvent itself through transforming economic sectors, East Liberty's commercial space, historical homes, and entertainment venues were seen as an ideal place to cultivate new commerce and tourism because of its proximity to other economically and socially robust areas of the city as well as the historical business and entertainment infrastructure. Local officials gave large national companies, like Home Depot and Whole Foods, financial incentives to build new stores in the neighborhood (Duck et al. 2020). Simultaneously, the city began to tear down existing public housing structures, becoming the area of Pittsburgh with the most demolished units (Giammarise 2017).

In fact, in East Liberty many of the commercial developments have been directly related to the displacement of residents. Since 2000, nearly 125 acres of public housing land has been

demolished, displacing roughly 4500 residents, to make room for new development (Duck et al. 2020). One example of this practice is the East Mall public housing building, a high-rise apartment building with a negative reputation in the city. Police officers and councilpersons are quoted as referring to the building as the "crack stacks" or a "warehouse of problems" referencing the perceived increase in crime that public housing units brought into the neighborhood (Davis 2018; Rosenwald 2000; Sloper 2018). The East Mall building was demolished in 2009 to make room for a Target store that opened on the site in 2010. Residents were forced to find housing elsewhere and many had to abandon their place-making efforts in the area in order to find affordable living arrangements.

A similar chain of events occurred a couple of blocks down Penn Avenue in 2017 when the Penn Plaza apartment building was demolished in order to build a mixed-used development. Once again hundreds of residents were displaced from their homes after receiving just 90-day eviction notices. The owners of the property, LG Realty, purchased the building from the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) in 1966 when East Liberty was in one of its most severe declines (Deto 2015). The development project received a $10 million loan from the city but has stalled as East End residents have protested the displacement and resulting community change (Nelson Jones 2017; O' Toole 2010). Documentarian Chris Ivey (2017), originally from Pittsburgh, documented many of the protests that arose as a result of this demolition as chants of "Fight, fight, fight, housing is a human right" can be heard in the footage of these demonstrations. The development plan has still yet to break ground as the protests have forced businesses to reconsider their stances on moving into the space.

The demolition of public housing units in East Liberty has been accompanied by new business construction and the closure of many small, often Black-owned businesses. In addition

to the Home Depot, Whole Foods, and Target already mentioned, additional grocery stores, like Trader Joes, and other retailers have opened (Duck et al. 2020). These grocery stores are higher end and their products cost significantly more than other grocers. A cheaper store, Shop N' Save, closed during this same period forcing East Liberty residents to have to either shop at the more expensive stores or travel large distances, often on public transportation, to buy their groceries (Deparma 2006).

The commercial landscape of the area has shifted over the last two decades and has impacted the residential development of East Liberty. Older houses have been torn down and replaced with newer, more expansive housing catering to people with higher incomes. Likewise, some housing quadrupled in value (Nelson Jones 2008). Longtime residents have voiced their concerns about the changing landscapes of their neighborhood and feel East Liberty is improving, but not for them. The cost of living is steadily increasing as newer houses are built and more high-end retailers enter the business district. Longtime Black residents have articulated how these changes are inaccessible to them as many of their wages remain stagnant (Alvino Young 2017). Over last 20 years White house holds in the area have increased their income by 70 percent, compared to just a 10 percent increase in Black households (Kramer, 2018). East Liberty epitomizes for many this changing social landscape and thus is an ideal place to investigate for my research.

5.0 Data and Methods

To answer how Pittsburgh's neighborhood change is perceived by and influences local teens, I adopt a mixed methodological approach. First, I use quantitative approaches to descriptively examine neighborhood changes over the last 40 years (from 1980 to 2019). I then engage with local teens to better understand their perceptions and experiences of this change. Below I outline my data and methodological approaches for each component of the project.

5.1 Neighborhood Change and Data Analysis

Data on neighborhood change came from two sources: the U.S. Census Bureau and the City of Pittsburgh's Department of Permits, Licenses, and Inspections. Mandated by the constitution, the U.S. Census Bureau collects decennial information about the U.S. population. Historically, these decennial censuses have consisted of both a short and long form survey. The short form survey is sent to the entire U.S. population and collects a limited number of demographic attributions—including the number of individuals within the household, their races, and ages. The long from survey was sent to a representative sample of the U.S. population and collected more extensive information on residents' education, income, housing characteristics, nationality, etc. Starting in 2005, the decennial long form survey was replaced with an annual survey called American Community Survey (ACS). These annual samples are smaller and thus neighborhood level estimates are only released in five-year spans to protect respondents' identity. To estimate decennial change, social scientists now use these five-year spans. For

example, for 2010 estimates, social scientists often use the 2008-2012 ACS summary file. Since I am interested in demographic changes that are only on the long form census and ACS, I use the 1980, 1990, and 2000 decennial long form census and the 2008-2012 and 2013-2017 ACS. This gives me estimates of neighborhood demographics for 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2015.

For each of these years, I examine four demographic characteristics. First, I examine the total number of residents within the neighborhood. This is theoretically important because during the last 40 years Pittsburgh has seen a dramatic decline in population. Thus, understanding individual neighborhood change requires the larger context of how each individual neighborhood and the larger area has fluctuated in size. Second, I examine the number of non-Hispanic Black (hereafter Black) residents within the neighborhood. Much like the broader trends in total population, understanding the total count of Black residents helps to contextualize the experiential changes in the Black population across the city. Third, I consider the proportion of each tract that is Black. Although correlated with both the count of the Black population and the total population, the proportion of the tract that is Black illuminates how much the composition is changing above and beyond population ebbs and flows. Finally, I consider the median household income in real dollars. Together these indicators enable me to examine the movement of people out of and into Pittsburgh neighborhoods based on not only racial identity but socioeconomic indicators like median income.

Following convention in the literature, I define neighborhoods as census tracts. Census tracts are created by the Census Bureau, with the support of local communities, to resemble neighborhoods. In an effort to maintain consistency the Census Bureau attempts to standardize the population size of each tract. Tracts are created to illustrate local understandings of communities through dividing streets, train tracks, natural geographic features, and resident's

perceptions. Pittsburgh has 135 census tracts with an average of approximately 2,300 residents in each tract. Census tracts largely mirror Pittsburgh's 90 neighborhoods though larger neighborhoods may include multiple tracts.

In addition to these residential demographics, I also wanted to examine neighborhood change by exploring the amount of renovation and new construction occurring. This is important because, as seen in East Liberty, gentrification can often be sparked by government-supported private development in both residential and commercial-use properties. The built environment has an impact on residents' lived experiences as it can attract or deter individuals to or from a space and therefore must be taken into account when assessing neighborhood change. To estimate these changes, I use the data from the City of Pittsburgh's Department of Permits, Licenses, and Inspections on the number of permits in each neighborhood. Building permits must be obtained from the City of Pittsburgh when work including demolition, renovation, and new construction of buildings is occurring The data is available for each month from January 2012 to December 2019 and was made available to researchers via the Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center. The data includes every permit issued for renovations or new construction. It also includes information on the estimated cost of the project as well as other information on the owner, contractor, and type of project.

Each permit in the City register is assigned to a particular land parcel. To match these permits to neighborhoods, I used the Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center's cross walk file linking parcels to census tracts. This allowed me to identify both the total number of parcels in each neighborhood and the number that obtained permits. With this information, I calculated the proportion of each census tract's parcels that received permits. For analytical purposes, I

collapsed data into biyearly categories. Meaning I combined all permits in the 2012-2013 period, the 2014-2015 period, the 2016-2017 period, and the 2018-2019 period.

With these demographic and permit data, I then mapped the changing neighborhood demographics using ArcGIS, a geographic information system used to visualize data. To do this, I used the Tiger shapefile downloaded from the Geography Division of the U.S. Census Bureau of Pittsburgh's census tracts. Creating these visual maps provides an analytical tool to evaluate in what ways neighborhoods have changed over time. I use this as a backdrop to both understand Pittsburgh's neighborhood change more generally and the change occurring in the youth's life spans in order to interpret and contextualize the youth's experiences.

5.2 Residents' Perceptions of Change Data and Analysis

To gauge young people's perceptions of their communities and changing circumstances, I conducted a mix of qualitative methods with high schoolers enrolled in an after-school program in Pittsburgh's East Liberty neighborhood. East Liberty, located in Pittsburgh's East End, is a predominately Black neighborhood, though the proportion of Black residents is decreasing, that has been at the forefront of many discussions around gentrification in the region as development in East Liberty has surged in the last two decades. In an effort to protect the privacy of both the program and its attendees it will be referred to by a pseudonym, YAY. In leveraging my own network, I was able to form a relationship with YAY and its staff that allowed me to enter their space and fit the needs of this project into their existing program structure. The program structure at YAY is one focused mainly on college preparation but also provides student-driven mentorship. Many YAY attendees primarily used the resources provided surrounding the college

application process. The empowerment focus of YAY along with its location in a rapidly changing neighborhood made it an excellent site for this project.

Project participants were all attendees of YAY and were recruited from an informational session about the project. In order to limit the disruption of daily operations at YAY the project-related activities were categorized under their internship program for students to learn about photography and their community. The internship program did provide students with financial compensation. A majority of project participants were present at the initial informational session but there were not restrictions on participation and as a result a number of YAY attendees became involved in the project midway through.

A total of four group sessions followed the initial informational session with an average of eight to ten students attending. Participants in the group sessions were predominately Black and women with ages ranging between fifteen and eighteen. Based on the demographics of participants it is important to acknowledge the potential impacts the racial difference between myself as a researcher and the project participants could elicit. As a White woman from an academic institution I entered YAY in a position of power. This power had the potential to impact the trust building I could achieve with the students as well as the bias I held because of my racial identity. The racial differences between the participants and me impacted how discussions of change processes that are rooted in race-related narratives played out among us.

These sessions served to teach participants basic photography skills, safety expectations, and discuss the photographs being taken each week. Following the four group sessions, eight one-on-one interviews were conducted with project participants. These interviews were based off of a series of photographs respondents were tasked with taking around the most important things,

people, and places in their lives. Additional questions were asked regarding their neighborhood, changes to their neighborhood, and comparisons across various neighborhoods in Pittsburgh.

Six respondents had previously attended one of the group sessions and two had not. There were six Black women, one Black man, and one White man who participated. The age range of respondents matched that of the group sessions: fifteen to eighteen. Participants lived in neighborhoods across the city and surrounding areas including Braddock, East Liberty, Elliot, Penn Hills, Perry South, South Hills, South Oakland, and Spring Hill. Half of the respondents attend Barack Obama Academy for International Studies with the other half attending one of the following: Allderdice High School, City High Charter School, Penn Hills High School, and Woodland Hills High School.

To capture students' perspectives of their communities, I employ photovoice methodology.

5.3 History and Utility of Photovoice Methodology

Photovoice first emerged in 1994 when Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris used it to document the lives of women in rural Yunnan, China. Since then, and before under different labels, scholars have employed photovoice as an accessible method of understanding communities through residents' own perspectives. The method aims to allow residents to be change makers in their community by taking an active role in the research process. With that, the three main goals of photovoice are to (1) allow individuals to reflect on their own community's strengths and weaknesses, (2) create a dialogue around the photos taken often critical in nature

and (3) reach policymakers with both the photos and results of the dialogue (Wang and Burris 1994; 1997).

The theoretical foundation for photovoice comes from three schools of thought. First, photovoice follows Freire's (1970) theory of empowerment. Freire questioned traditional teacher-student relationships and argued more effective instruction distributed power between teacher and student through changes to teaching methods and language use. He believed more was gained if the teacher and student were cocreators of knowledge (Carlson, Engebretson, and Chamberlin 2006). Second, photovoice pulls from feminist theory to promote active participation in the research process. Feminist theory critiques how women are often the object but not the subject of research. Wang and Burris (1994) expand on this critique and argue that a large portion of research done on marginalized groups places these individuals in passive rather than active roles. Finally, photovoice builds on documentary photography. Researchers were using photographs as data for research long before the method of photovoice was created. One of the earliest instances of documentary photography came from the 1972 work *Through Navajo Eyes* by Sol Worth in which members of the Navajo tribe were asked to film their lives. The work created out of documentary photography has proved useful is allowing outsiders to see a glimpse of other's lives. Yet, there are issues that arise with this method that photovoice wishes to correct. In traditional documentary photography the researcher decides what is photographed and the narrative that is produced surrounding these photographs (Wang and Burris 1994; 1997). Issues related to the politics of representation arise as the researcher, an outsider, has the power over what story is distributed to the rest of the world rather than community members themselves which can drastically affect the conclusions drawn based on these photographs about the individuals, cultures, and places depicted in them. Photovoice pulls from the basic elements of

documentary photography but places the cameras in the hands of residents of a community and, in turn, shifts power away from the researcher in what story is told.

It is important to note that the researcher employing photovoice still has a role in the research process that must be carefully examined to ensure power remains in the hands of participants. Researchers must take on the role of facilitator in the sense of guiding participants on the ethics of photography and other basic guidelines from which to photograph. It is reiterated time and again in photovoice literature that researchers enter into spaces with participants as learners rather than teachers with the end goal of facilitating rather than dictating discussion (Wang and Burris 1997). There must be a balance between the facilitator offering assistance on how and what to photograph and controlling the narrative produced.

Photovoice has traditionally been employed in community needs assessments, with adults acting as the primary participants. As previously discussed photovoice has been used with women in rural China in addition to various homeless and low income populations in both urban and rural areas in the U.S (Downey, Ireson, and Scutchfield 2009; Killion and Wang 2000; Wang and Burris 1994; Wang, Cash, and Powers 2000; Wang and Redwood-Jones 2001;). There is a significant amount of studies tasking youth with serving as photographers of their communities, with most of this work occurring in and around school settings (Cardarelli et al. 2009; Goodhard et al. 2006; Harley and Hunn 2015; Rose et al. 2008; Strack, Magill, and McDonagh 2003).

Having youth serve as research participants presents myriad challenges that do not exist when working with adults. Youth often have an added layer of powerlessness on top of other elements of their identity related to marginalized groups that make their voices unheard (Delgado 2015). Photovoice provides a unique opportunity to gain insight into the perspectives of youth while also benefitting their own growth and improved self-identity. As Strack, Magill, and

McDonagh (2003) highlight in their work with youth in Baltimore, allowing teenage participants to drive what is being researched can have a large impact on their psychological growth as their view of themselves is improved. Aligning with Freire's theory of empowerment youth who have participated in photovoice projects report feeling more empowered when their voices are given room to be heard.

Though, working with youth is not without its challenges, especially in the context of using photovoice. In multiple photovoice projects involving youth researchers spoke to the difficulties in motivating participants to take photographs. As photovoice is a participatory method driven by community residents it is key that participants have a significant role in deciding which topics and photographs to place value on. Balancing these two facts and ensuring youth participants are motivated while also ensuring they are driving the research rather than the facilitator is difficult but important.

Populations of youth, especially members of marginalized communities, often are not given a platform from which to voice their perspectives. Engaging youth in photovoice can have benefits to both parties as researchers are able to gain insight from the unique positions youth inhabit and the youth themselves are able to improve their own self-image as the work they produce is valued by a variety of people.

Employing photovoice methodology will allow youth in Pittsburgh to voice their opinions regarding neighborhood change. This method empowers participants to provide their perspectives through an array of channels including photography, group, and individual discussions which can illuminate the intricacies of their interpretations on neighborhood change in ways that other methods may overlook.

6.0 Results

6.1 East Liberty: The Epicenter of Pittsburgh's Gentrification

East Liberty has been at the center of Pittsburgh's conversations on gentrification.[2] Since 2000, East Liberty's Black population has decreased by 1,834 residents, going from 5,076 to 3,242 (see Table 1). Likewise, the Black proportion of the neighborhood has decreased 15 percentage points while the annual median income of residents has decreased nearly 6,953 dollars. At the same time, in recent years the construction in the neighborhood has seen unprecedented increases.

Table 1 East Liberty Demographics, 2000-2015.

	2000	**2010**	**2015**
Number of Black Residents	5,076	4,075	3,242
Black Proportion	0.73	0.69	0.58
Median Income of All Residents	$35,052	$24,814	$28,099

Note—East Liberty is comprised of two census tracts, 1113 and 1115. I summed these tracts total population and calculated a weighted average of median income which was also normalized across years using the 2015 value of the USD.

[2] Local news outlets like the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Public Source, Pittsburgh City Paper, and Trib Live have continuously covered changes to East Liberty over the last two decades highlighting them as the city's example of gentrification. Additionally, East Liberty's gentrification has also received national attention from sources like The New York Times (O'Toole 2010), a documentary *East of Liberty: In Unlivable Times* (Ivey 2008), and the WNYC podcast episode "Gentrification in Pittsburgh: A Tale of Two Cities" (Alvino Young 2017).

As mentioned above, beginning in 2000 several national corporations opened stores in East Liberty including Home Depot, Whole Foods, Target, and Trader Joe's (Duck et al. 2020). These larger stores have been accompanied by many smaller, high-end businesses and restaurants opening in East Liberty. In fact, the proportion of parcels within the neighborhood receiving building permits increased from 7 percent in the 2012 to 2013 time period to 36 percent by the 2018 to 2019 period. In the last few years nearly a half of all parcels in the neighborhood have applied for at least one construction permit.

Table 2 Percentage of Parcels Receiving Building Permits in East Liberty, 2012-2019.

	2013-2014	**2015-2016**	**2016-2017**	**2018-2019**
East Liberty Permits	7%	19%	32%	36%

Given these notable changes to the demographic makeup and built environment, I wanted to investigate how youth who attend an after-school program in East Liberty were interpreting and experiencing these changes.

6.2 Youth Interpretations of the Neighborhood Change

The prominence of East Liberty in broad discussions of gentrification as well as clear changes occurring to the physical landscape of the neighborhood create an environment where young people are exposed to conversations about gentrification. Through group discussions related to the photographs they took of East Liberty it became clear that the students had an awareness of the discussion surrounding the neighborhood but they also simultaneously held seemingly contradicting views about the changes.

When asked to describe what the picture in Figure 1 represents many students were quick to discuss the changes in the neighborhood.

"The old East Liberty before the started adding stuff." (Black woman, age 16)

"It's one of the only streets in East Liberty that isn't really changed…" (Black woman, age 16)

"It just shows how it's changing. Like the gentrification and the historical value. They're adding a lot of stuff now and getting rid of what they had here." (Black woman, age 17)

"New stuff basically. The whole street is being revamped." (Black woman, age 17)

"Sam's Shoes is one of the few stores that has not been pushed out." (White man, age 17)

Figure 1 Businesses on Penn Avenue.

Photographer: Black woman age 17, taken February 2020

The photograph, taken by one of the Black women 17 years olds, shows businesses along Penn Avenue. The students were quick to label these businesses as 'old' or 'unchanged' businesses. Although this was a contemporary picture, students responses show the centrality of the gentrification conversation when asked about the neighborhood—even when neighborhood change is not explicitly referenced. Participants also suggested these businesses had historical and cultural value as opposed to the newer businesses. Yet, they shared dismissive views of these old businesses.

"They gotta fix their stuff like Sam's Shoes it looks so bland. It's just a brick wall." (Black woman age 17)

"It's kind of dry. It just looks… I guess compared to the other buildings there it looks unappealing." (Black woman age 16)

"They're just blank. Irrelevant." (Black woman age 15)

"Bland because of the colors… they're just dry." (Black man age 16)

"I don't know I just think it's interesting to see how run-down things are." (White man age 17)

Likewise, students often contrasted buildings they called "run-down", "dry", "bland", "irrelevant", and "unappealing" (for example see Figure 2 panel A) to new stores like Target, the Macaron Bar, or a new apartment building (pictured in Figure 2 panels B-D) which they described as "colorful" and "appealing".

Figure 2 Contrasting Images of Neighborhood Change.

Panel A—Vacant building (Photographer: White man age 17, February 2020)
Panel B—Target on Penn Ave (Photographer: White man age 17, February 2020)
Panel C—Macaron Bar (Photographer: Black woman age 17, February 2020)
Panel D—Apartments (Photographer: Black woman age 16, February 2020)

Group discussions began with characterizing change in East Liberty as negative

reflecting general antagonism towards gentrification but often shifted into conversations

characterizing the older buildings and establishments in a negative light. This demonstrates the

complexity of young peoples' conceptions of and experiences with neighborhood change, a

complexity not reflected in the literature. Likewise, unlike often discussed in the literature, the

students did not have strong memories or attachments to previous businesses or spaces.

Students were unable to provide specifics or delve deeper on the issues they pointed out related to businesses being pushed out or a general loss of historical and cultural value within East Liberty. Mary, a pseudonym for a Black woman age 17, highlights this inconsistency when discussing neighborhood change with me.

> Mary: Yeah a couple stores that are here now weren't here before.
>
> Interviewer: What is your favorite store that's not here anymore?
>
> Mary: That's not here anymore?... Hmm I don't know I just feel like… Wait are you asking me about the places that were here that aren't here anymore? I'm not really sure about that but I know that in those places they have new ones. I don't know what was in Subway before it was Subway. Or what was in the Milkshake Factory before it was the Milkshake Factory I just know that there's new stuff I don't really remember specifically what place was there before now.

This small interaction holds a great deal of meaning when examining the interpretations young people have of changing spaces. The changes East Liberty, and other neighborhoods, have undergone began before many of these young people were old enough to comprehend them. Their understanding of change is greatly impacted by the narratives told to them compared to personal experience with it. A collective memory of what used to be is passed through generations so that these teenagers are aware of change, but they do not have the associated negative emotions of loss. This lack of grief for a changing physical landscape of the places they frequent most is illustrated in the language they use to reference these places. The word choice associated with older and newer buildings depicts a contrast that does not fall in line with a feeling of loss as they often characterized old spaces as boring and irrelevant. Though, they still have an awareness that these spaces are important because they hold historical value.

It is important to note that the data collected from group discussions on the photographs is fairly messy. Much like the lives of people, and especially young people, obstacles came up

during this phase of the project that resulted in data that is informative but informative of a variety of life experiences for individual students that is difficult to generalize.

Young people's conceptions of changing space have been discussed in the literature but the conclusions drawn from these student's discussions illuminate a different understanding than that of existing literature. They have an awareness of change even from before they were born because of the collective memory of old spaces, especially among the Black community, yet when pushed to provide specifics or develop their own opinions about the changes these spaces are undergoing, they are not affected in ways initially thought. As a result, after the group discussions and initial photography tasks the methods and focus of the project shifted to understand the role neighborhood change actually played in these student's lives.

6.3 Putting East Liberty in Context

In an effort to understand more about neighborhood change and why the students may have differing views than existing literature, I now turn to examining a broader context of neighborhood change in Pittsburgh. First, still considering East Liberty but considering change from 1980 to 2015, I find the total population has continued to decline each time period. In fact, as visualized in Figure 3, the total population declined from 8,813 people in 1980 to only 5,537 in 2015. Thus, while changes have been taking place and new residents have moved into the neighborhood these incoming residents are still not enough people to replace those leaving.
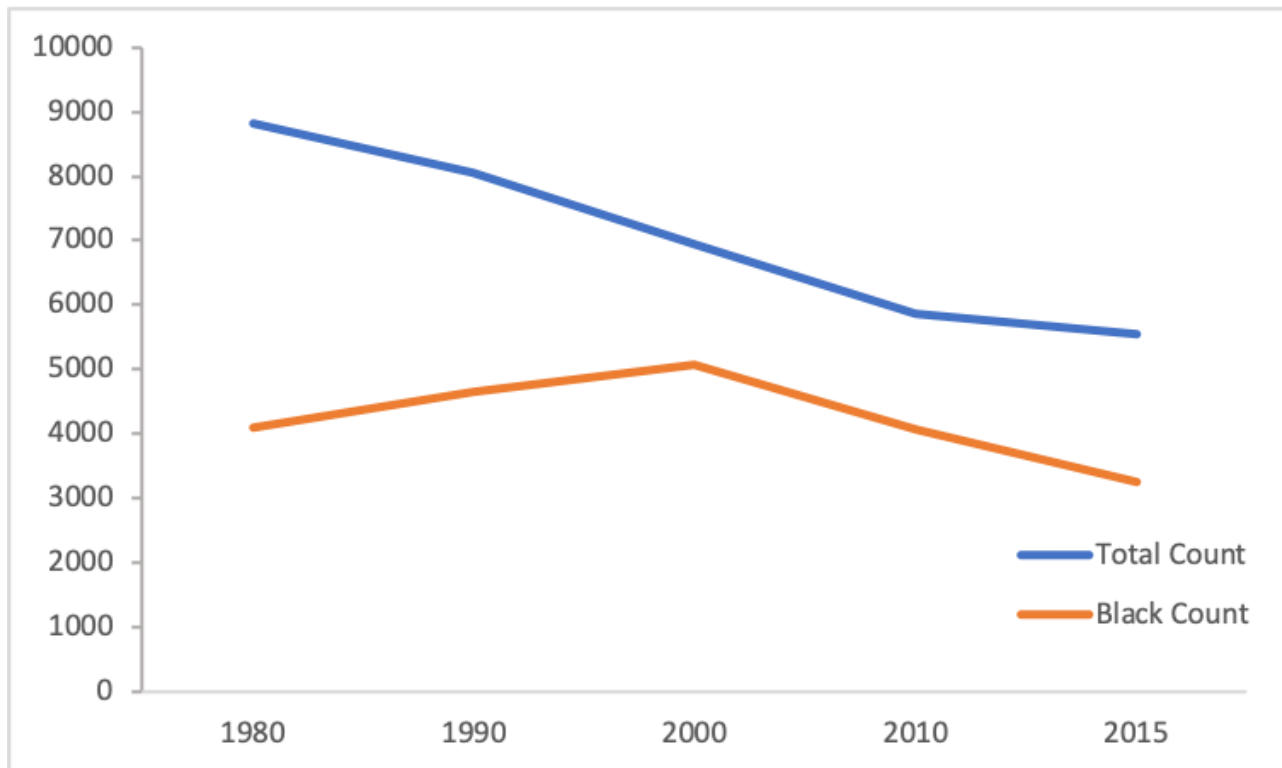
Figure 3 Total and Black Population Count, East Liberty 1980-2015.

In contrast, the total count and proportion of Black residents in East Liberty followed a much different trend prior to 2000 than it did after (see Figures 3 and 4). Until the turn of the century, both the total count and proportion of Black people in East Liberty had been increasing, peaking at 73 percent (5,076 residents) in 2000 and subsequently declining from there. This broader time period helps illuminate the trends discussed in previous sections of White flight and recent resurgence as the total population decline is larger than the decline in Black population. The proportion of East Liberty that is Black was still 13 percentage points higher in 2015 (59 percent) than it was in 1980 (46 percent).
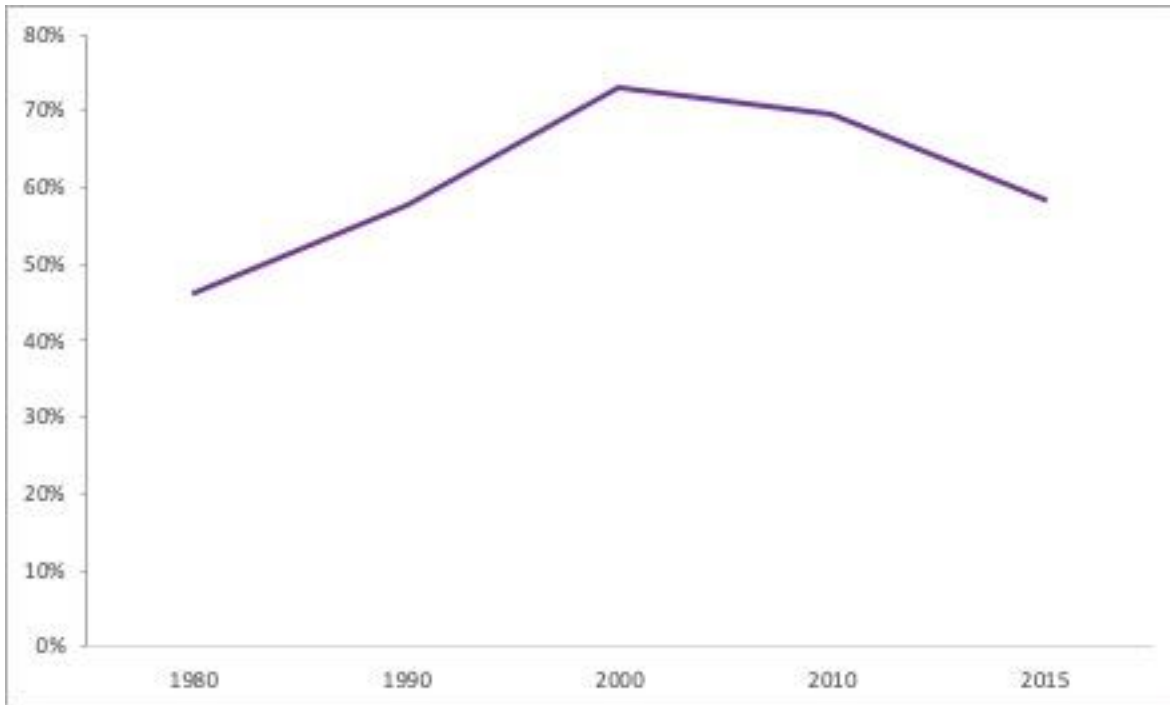
Figure 4 Proportion of Black Residents, East Liberty 1980-2015.

To further situate these trends, I now compare East Liberty to other areas in the city. Across Pittsburgh, nearly every neighborhood has seen declines in their total population (see Figure 5). Areas in the South side of the city had some of the most drastic declines because they housed many of the city's steel mills. Likewise, the total number of Black residents also decreased across the city (see Figure 6). Yet, what is also evident by these maps is the continual concentration of the Black population into particular areas of the city.
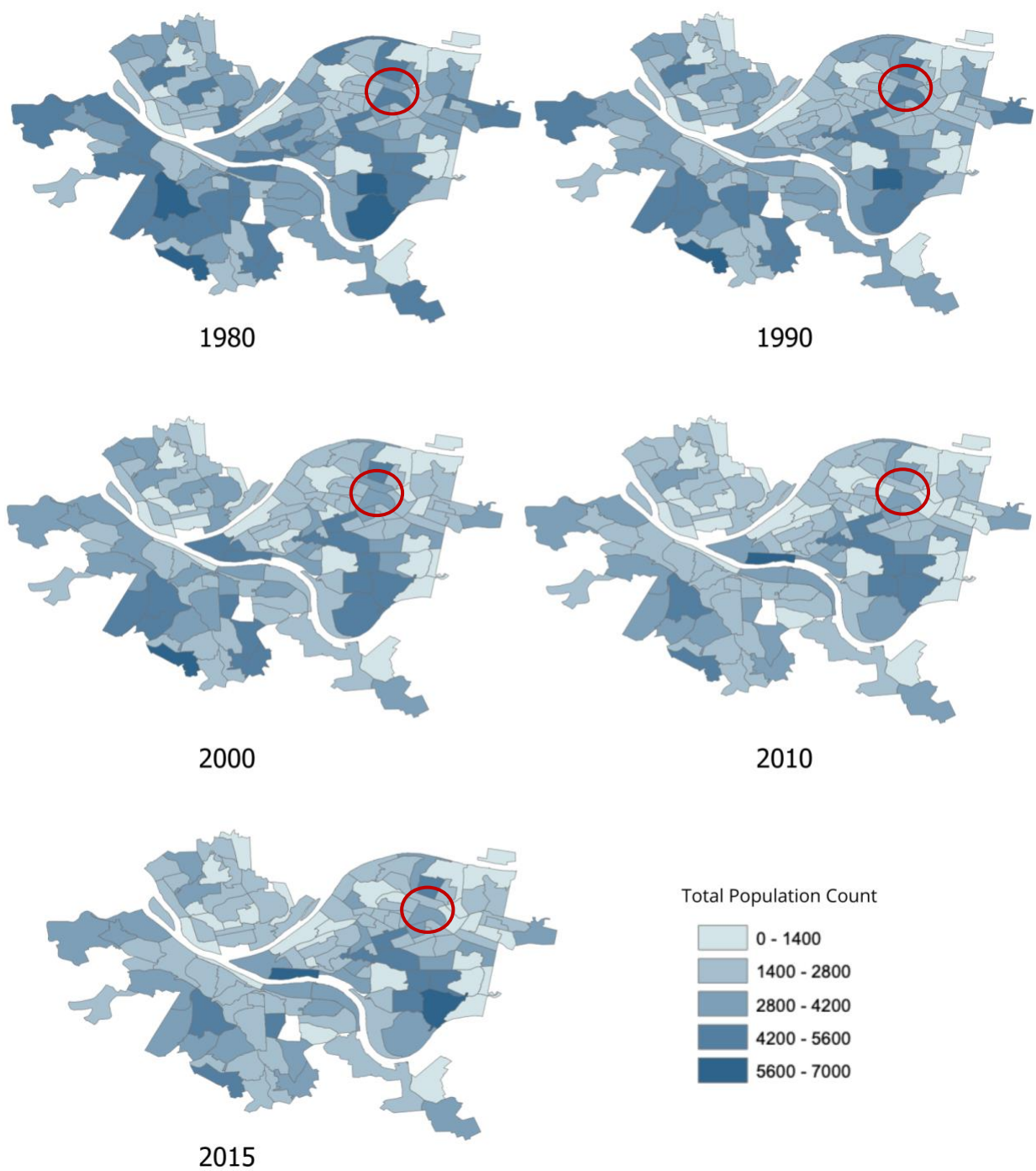
Figure 5 Total Population by Census Tract.

Note—The census tracts that make up East Liberty, 1113 and 1115, are circled in red on all of the maps to highlight

where the neighborhood is located in relation to the rest of the city.

1980   1990

2000   2010

2015

Total Black Population Count

- 0 - 1000
- 1000 - 2000
- 2000 - 3000
- 3000 - 4000
- 4000 - 5000
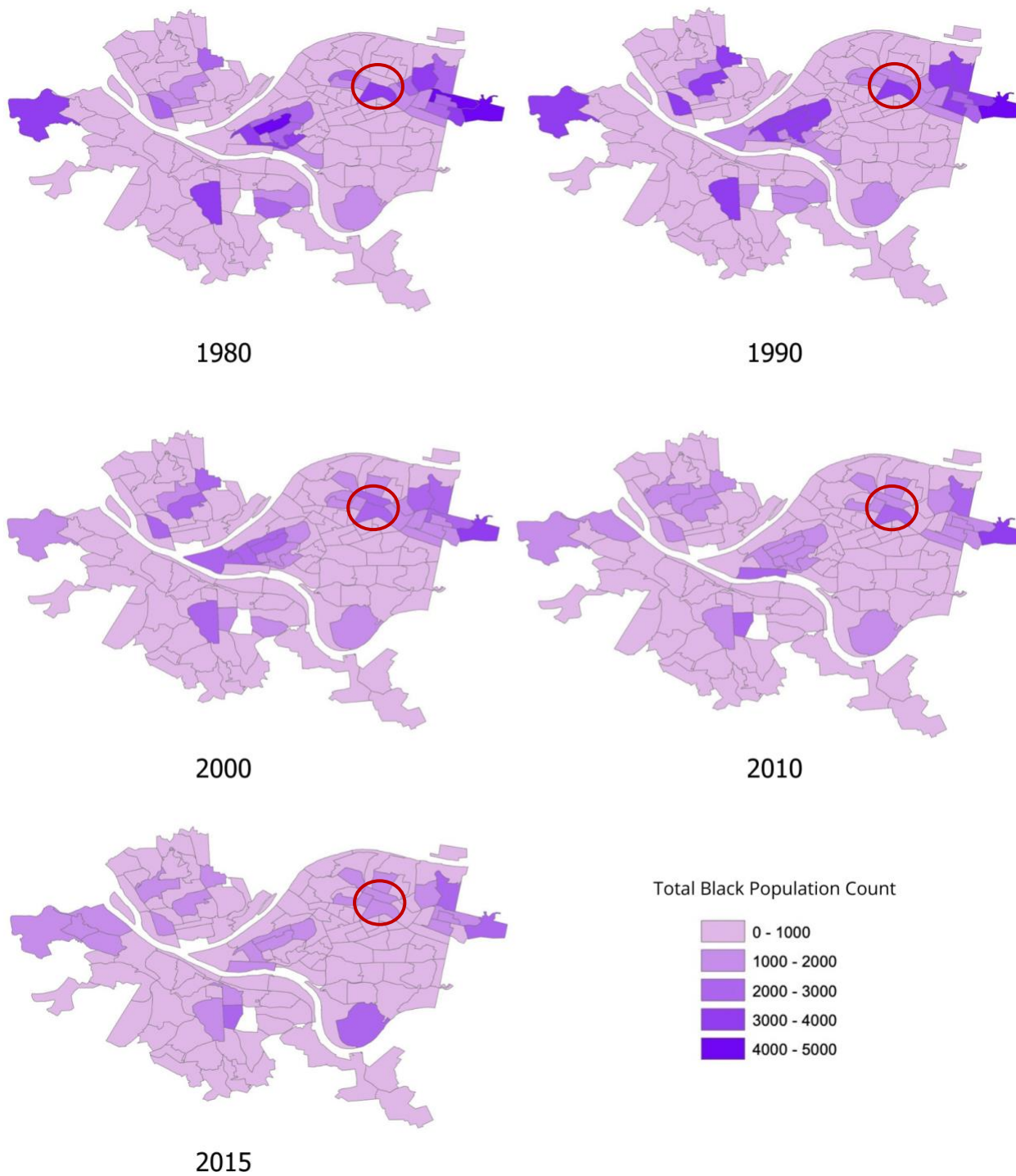
Figure 6 Total Black Population by Census Tract.

Dating back to the Great Migration, Pittsburgh's Black population was only able to live in specific, concentrated areas of the city, including the Hill District and Homewood. What is powerfully visualized in Figure 7, is despite declining populations across the city these historical patterns of segregation have remained. In fact, in the majority of Pittsburgh's neighborhoods the Black proportion has remained consistent over the last forty years (see Figure 7). In contrast to East Liberty, many of these areas have not witnessed a shift at the turn of the century in the racial makeup of the area.

Moreover, not only has the physical concentration of the Black population remained relatively constant, but its correlations with income segregation have increased. Comparing the map of Pittsburgh's neighborhood Black proportions to a map of neighborhood median income (see Figure 8), in both 1980 and 2015 there is a strong correlation between the neighborhood's Black proportion and the median income of the neighborhood as neighborhoods with higher Black proportions have lower median incomes. Yet, what is also evident in Figure 8 is that median incomes across the city have decreased over time. To be clear, these incomes are all in 2015 dollars. This means I am not comparing the actual income but the relative purchasing power of residents' income. In other words, Pittsburghers today have less ability to afford housing and consumer goods compared to their counterparts in 1980. But this increased poverty in the city is not shared equally. In fact, the inequality between predominately Black and predominately White neighborhoods is greater today than it was in 1980. In 2015, the richest parts of Pittsburgh, located in Squirrel Hill, possess nearly ten times the median income of predominately Black areas like the Hill District.
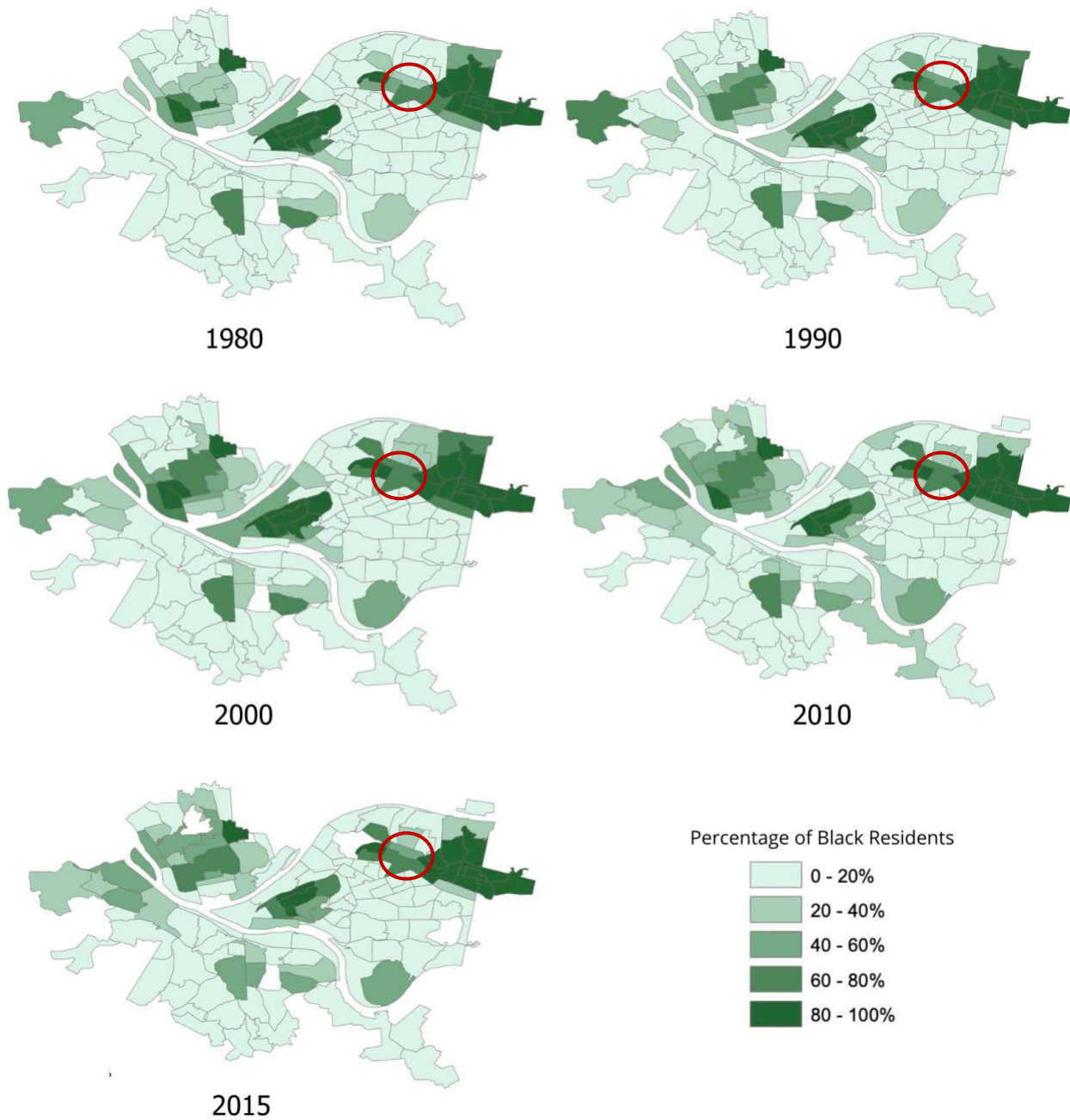
Figure 7 Proportion of Black Residents by Census Tract.
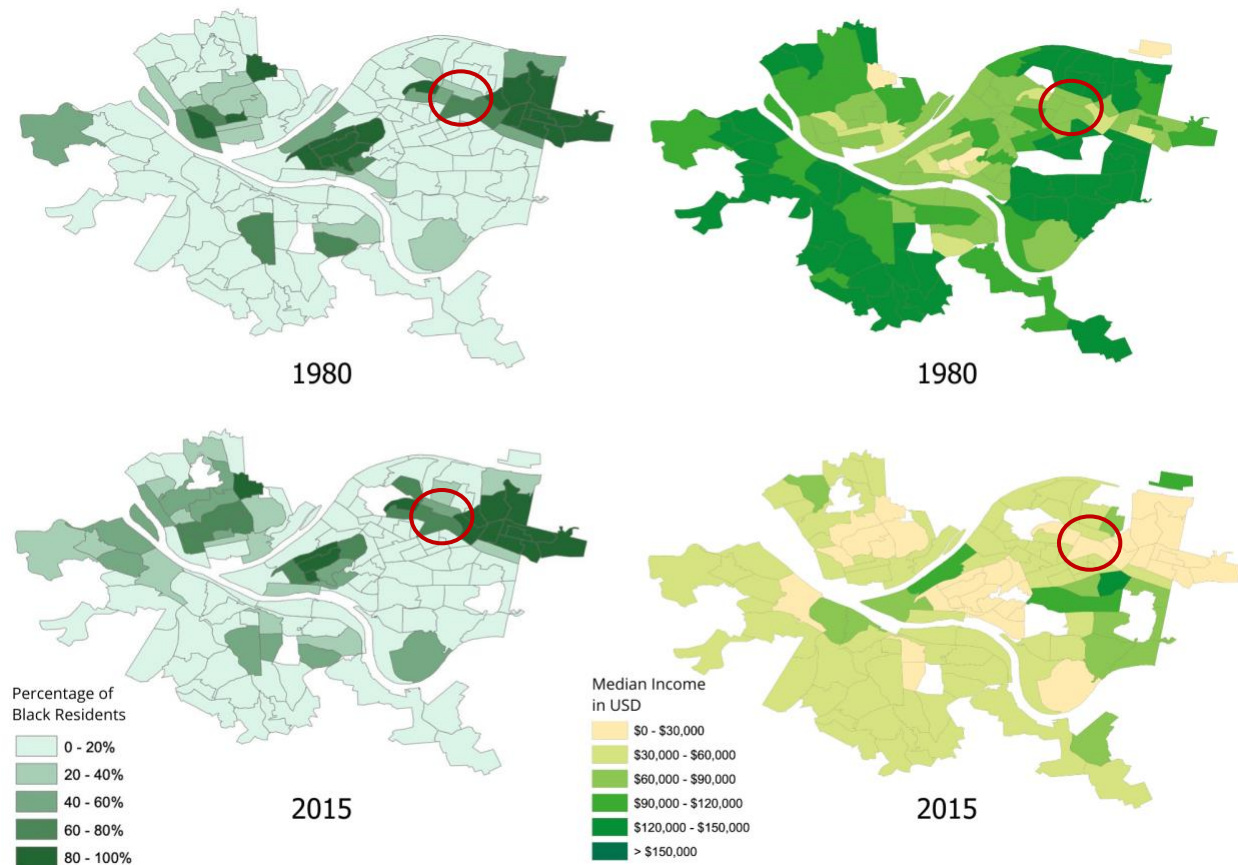
Figure 8 Black Proportion Compared to Median Income by Census Tract.

Note--Median income was normalized across years using the 2015 value of the USD.

In addition to income disparities that fall along racial lines, there are disparities in the amount of investment attention given to certain areas of Pittsburgh. As previously established, East Liberty has been one of the most popular areas for investment, as illustrated in building permits received, yet many other historically Black neighborhoods do not see the same levels of interest (see Figure 9). Rather, White, middle-class neighborhoods receive a disproportionate amount of the new construction and renovations.
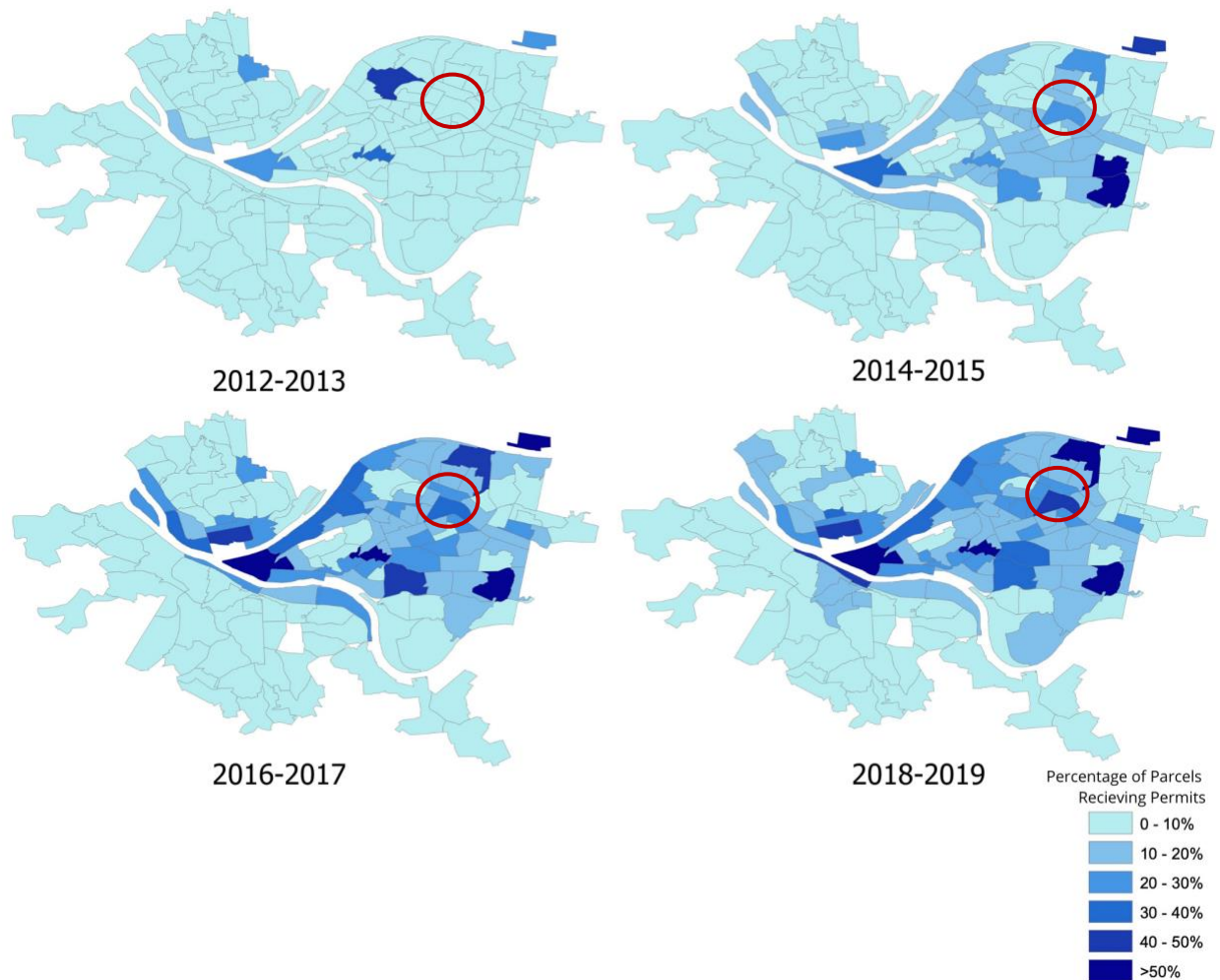
Figure 9 Proportion of Census Tract Parcels Receiving Permits.

This broader picture helps illuminate three key findings. First, there have been more dramatic changes to the built environment than to the demographic makeup of the communities across Pittsburgh. Second, Pittsburgh's racial inequality across income and residential locations is increasing over time, heightening concerns for the Black community about development and the unequal 'revitalization' of the economy. Third, East Liberty is unique in that it is the only predominately Black neighborhood in Pittsburgh that has seen sustained, dramatic increases in development and a growing number of displacements. Thus, while not necessarily replicated yet

in other places, it has come to symbolize what the broader changes could mean for Black Pittsburgh, in particular Black businesses and entertainment venues as they have been displaced at even higher rates than residents.

The forms of neighborhood change illustrated in the quantitative results of this project align with the conclusions drawn from group discussions with the students. Changes to the physical environment were referenced much more than changes to the people living within East Liberty. The physical changes that were acknowledged were also characterized by an inability to go beyond surface-level identifications of changings spaces and often took a negative tone towards older spaces. There was little reference to neighborhood changes that had a significant impact on them, as existing literature may believe. The physical landscape of Pittsburgh has changed much more than the relational landscape and as a result, in early stages of data collection students were expressing different impacts of neighborhood change than initially expected.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the ways Pittsburgh-specific neighborhood changes have impacted the students, I shifted my approach from group discussions to one-on-one interviews. In this way, I was better able to capture how their specific life experiences were shaped by neighborhood change.

6.4 The Importance (or lack thereof) of Change in Student's Daily Lives

The eight students interviewed live in areas across Pittsburgh and its periphery (see Figure 10). Many of the students live in areas that have historically been predominately Black and continue to serve as key areas for Pittsburgh's Black community. All of the participants are

connected by the fact that they travel to East Liberty as a hub of activity and socializing. This trend is a reflection of a larger pattern in which East Liberty has served as a concentration of Black businesses and activity for the last three to four decades.

Each student was asked to bring a series of photographs to the interview that captured the most important things, people, and places in their lives. I used their photographs as a starting place in our conversations about their experiences with neighborhood changes. The interviews along with the photographs of the most important elements of the students' lives illuminate neighborhood change is not having the impact expected when examining existing literature. The assets in their lives are closely tied to the relationships they form with friends, family and neighbors, their passions, and the places they frequent most.
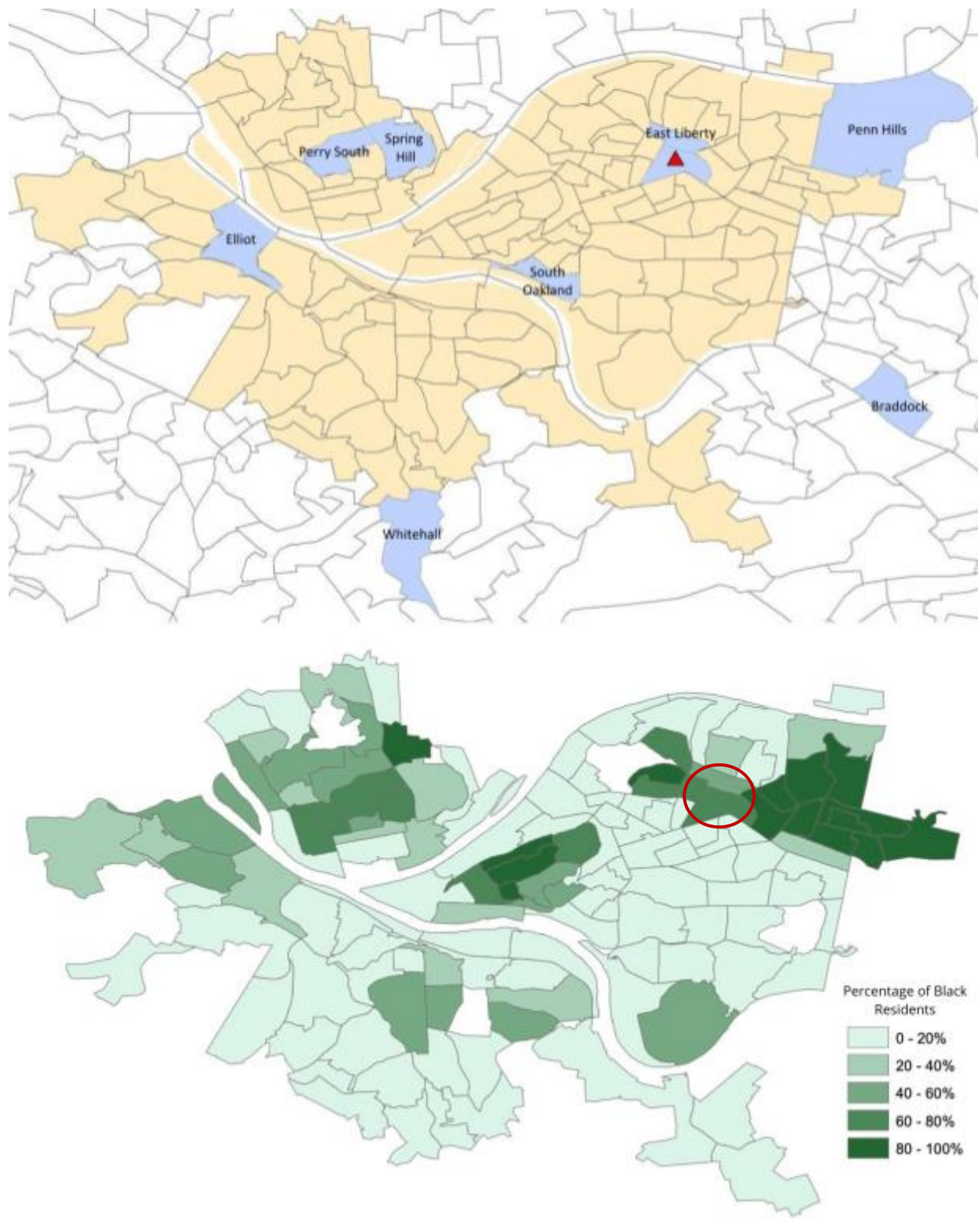
Figure 10 Participant Neighborhoods Compared to Black Proportion by Census Tract.

6.4.1 Relationships

In the one-on-one interviews the importance of relationships was emphasized by nearly every respondent and was concentrated around how these relationships were often tied to the best parts of their neighborhoods and lives. Many of the photographs the students took for the interviews symbolized the meaningful relationships they have with the people in their lives. For example, one student photographed East Liberty Presbyterian Church (see Figure 11) to symbolize the entire community because,

> "East Liberty makes me happy because a lot of my friends are down there, and the YAY program is down there, and I get to meet new people." (Black woman, age 15)

Figure 11 East Liberty Presbyterian Church.

Photographer: Black woman age 15, taken March 2020

Other students expressed an esteem for neighborhoods in which they were closer to their friends:

"I honestly miss it here [East Liberty] because it's more convenient and I had a lot more friends here." (Black woman, age 17)

"Well most of my friends don't live here [Braddock] anymore so I'd rather be anywhere but my neighborhood is not a bad place to be at all." (Black woman, age 18)

An emphasis on interpersonal relationships was also emphasized when students discussed their neighbors and the sense of community they felt in their neighborhoods. When asked what all of his photographs represented (see Figure 12) one student responded,

"I guess relationships… All of the pictures have some sort of value with people… It's a community. It's really nice." (White man, age 17)

Figure 12 Northside Community Pool.

Photographer: White man age 17, taken May 2019

Other students echoed the appreciation for community, defining this appreciation through safety, knowing people in the neighborhood, and community days in which people come together. Additionally, multiple students expressed a longing for the sense of community that existed when they either lived in a different area or were growing up in the same neighborhood. For example one student had moved from South Oakland to Penn Hills and viewed living in South Oakland as,

"…the first time I really noticed I had neighbors that I could really converse with. When I came out here to Penn Hills I didn't really have neighbors I could talk to." (Black woman, age 15)

The feelings surrounding the importance of people within the students' immediate circles like friends and family as well as the value they place on feeling a sense of community relate to Pittsburgh's changing landscape. The built environment of the city is changing more quickly than the demographic makeup of areas and as a result neighborhood identities, particularly those that are predominantly Black, have continued to be closely tied to those that reside within them. Yet, this does not mean they are unaware of broader conversations around Black spaces and people in the city. One student when asked her favorite part of her neighborhood responded,

"Probably that it's a community like even though a lot of people just see it as like a hood or the ghetto, whatever you want to call it, it has a lot of people in it that know each other. There's just so many connections, even if it's not with you directly. You can see so many different cultures and people." (Black woman, age 15)

The awareness that her neighborhood is labelled "a hood or the ghetto" indicates the students do have an understanding of the discussions taking place not just in Pittsburgh but in urban areas around the country regarding societal attitudes towards predominantly Black spaces. This awareness adds to the understanding that changing physical and social landscapes of cities may not impact young people in the ways laid out in existing literature, but they are still affected by categorizations of the places they live.

6.4.2 Hobbies

Students also photographed things or places that related to their hobbies and passions. Though not all students went into detail on the activities they take part in outside of school, those that did were eager to explain how much they valued these parts of their lives. The excitement with which they discussed these activities emphasized the value these young people place on them, especially when comparing these discussions to those of neighborhood change. The students expressed being impacted by their hobbies in ways they did not when discussing how changes to their neighborhood have effected them.

One student spent a good deal of time detailing her love of art and drawing. One of the most important places in her life was the art classroom at her school (See Figure 13). She says,

> "This one is in the art room at my school. I have a lot of good memories there…
> It's just one of my happy places" (Black woman, age 17)

Another student discussed her love of "reading and collecting information" as one of her most important things, depicted in Figure 14. Finally, one student photographed the baseball field his team plays on to show the importance of the sport and the team in his life (see Figure 15).

> "Yeah I like the fact that it allows me to be with people and build relationships
> with people. I also enjoy playing the sport but the big thing is just the team itself.
> I just have so much fun with my baseball team…" (White man, age 17)

Figure 13 Art Classroom at Barack Obama Academy for International Studies.

Photographer: Black woman age 17, taken March 2020

Figure 14 Reading a Book on the Front Porch of Home.

Photographer: Black woman age 15, taken March 2020

Figure 15 Baseball Field.

Photographer: White man age 17, taken March 2020

Through individual discussions with the students other hobbies became apparent such as collecting shoes, obsessing over favorite bands, and photographing food. The excitement associated with discussing these hobbies illustrates the value they hold in the students' lives and show how their daily lives are dictated more by what they are interested in than broader shifts in their neighborhoods.

6.4.3 Important Places

Lived realities of young people are often dictated by the places they spend the most time. These spaces were highlighted in discussions with them as they discussed their schools and public libraries as the places they frequent most.

During the one-on-one interviews participants where asked what aspect of their lives they had the most pride in. Overwhelmingly participants identified their schools as the place they had the most pride in, particularly the participants who attend Barack Obama School for International Studies. This pride comes from a variety of factors including the amount of time spent at school and their relationships with teachers and friends.

One student described why she values her school by the following, "I spend more time at school than at home and I've had a lot of experiences there that were nice with friends and classmates and teachers" (Black woman, age 17). She photographed her math classroom to symbolize the school as one of the most important places in her life (see Figure 16). Other students expressed how much they appreciated the friends they have at school, connecting these friends to their happiness.
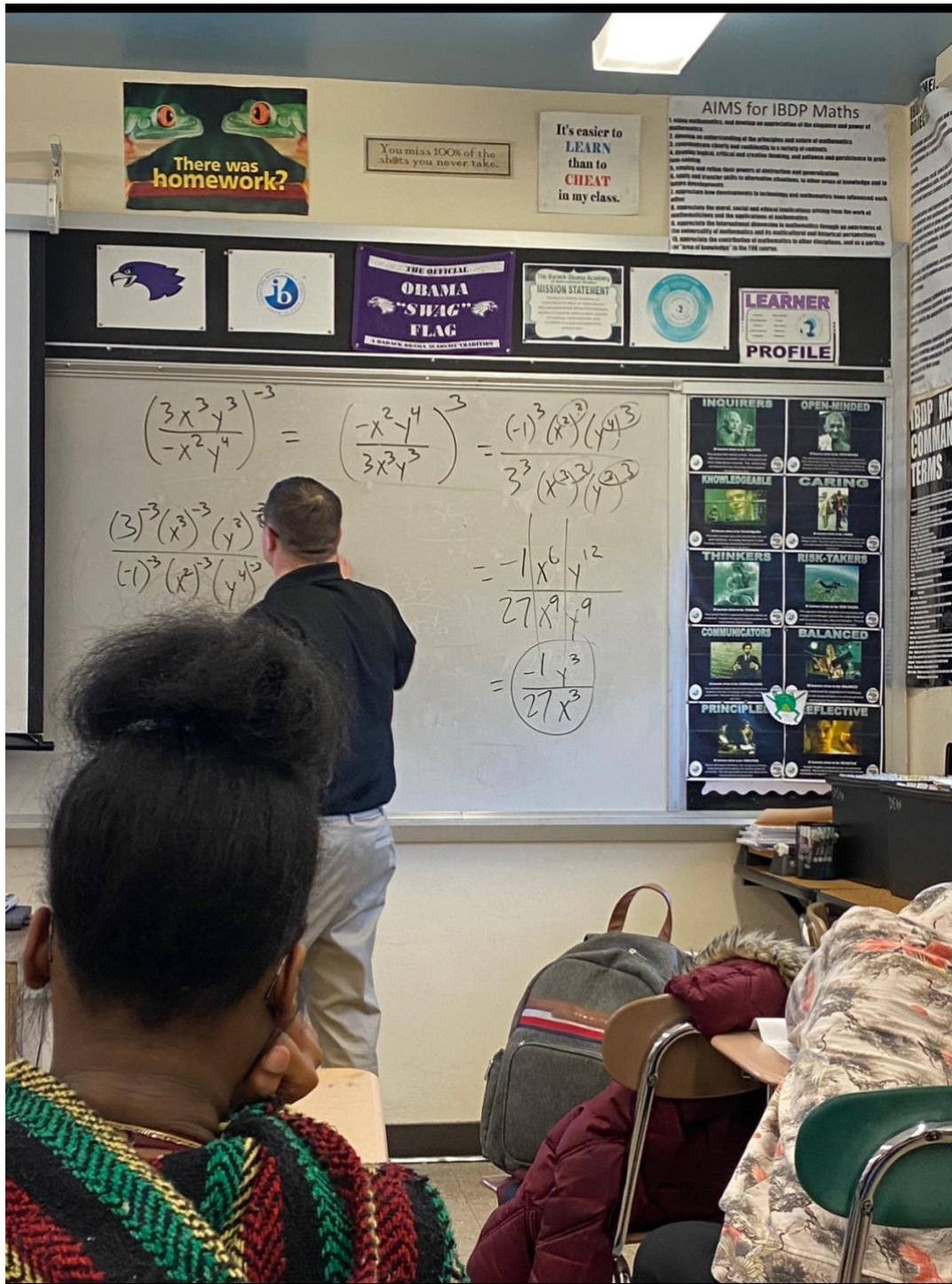
Figure 16 Math Classroom at Barack Obama Academy for International Studies.

Photographer: Black woman age 17, taken March 2020

As seen in some student's awareness of the ways their neighborhoods are discussed more broadly, one student discussed the pride he had in his school given that it is viewed as being a "bad" school because of the neighborhood it is in. He says,

> "I guess for Obama the school itself is unexpectedly great like it's an extremely good education… I'm just extremely proud that my school is able to break through a stereotype. Everyone at my school is an unbelievable genius… It's just amazing to me." (White man age 17)

In a conversation on the pride he feels for his school this student first acknowledged the stereotype his school has because it is located in East Liberty. His comment refers to the ways Black teenagers, particularly men, are viewed in Pittsburgh. Given that he is a White man there is an awareness of broader feelings surrounding space and the Black community these young people possess. His admiration for his peers reinforces the notion that people and relationships are an integral part of these students' lives.

Public libraries are another space participants often brought up in group and individual conversations. Libraries were described as places they spent a lot of time, both growing up and in currently, as well as neighborhood assets. One participant included her local library as a neighborhood asset when discussing why she favored her old neighborhood to her current one:

> "The library was right around the corner so we went there every day and got to know the kids and librarians there." (Black woman age 17)

This same participant explained the amount of time she spends at the library, "I would get out of school at three and wouldn't go home until seven so like three hours". More students echoed this as they characterized their local public libraries as positive parts of their neighborhoods and places they frequented often. The prominence of libraries in my individual

conversations with the students is made more interesting by the fact that no photographs were taken of libraries. Libraries are a relatively unchanged and constant element of neighborhood spaces and hold symbolic value as place where the community can come together. The symbolic value libraries hold in the broader community impacts the interpretations the students have of the importance of libraries. Even though many of the students said they spend time at the libraries, the value they place on them is related more to their role in broad discussions of place rather than their own lives, as shown in the lack of photographs of libraries.

The symbolic value of change referenced in early group discussions with participants was not mirrored in individual discussions of what they value in their day-to-day lives. Rather, the assets present in the students' daily lives were highlighted in what they value most. Broad discussions of neighborhood change do influence their lived realities but the tone with which they discussed their relationships with others, hobbies, and spaces they inhabit in their daily lives indicate an importance to the students that neighborhood transformations does not possess for them. The changes occurring in Pittsburgh have been centered much more around changing spaces rather than demographics of neighborhoods, therefore it makes sense that students would view their relationships with others and feeling a sense of community as an important part of their lives. Participants were able to identify and discuss neighborhood change but when asked what aspects of their lives they value most a different image was illuminated in which interpersonal, extracurricular activities and other spaces were identified as key assets.

7.0 Conclusion

East Liberty has undergone significant changes to its physical and social landscape over the last twenty years. It is the only predominantly Black neighborhood in Pittsburgh that has undergone this level of development and has become central in Pittsburgh's discussions of gentrification. The young people in this study are aware of this broader conversation and the cultural and symbolic importance of East Liberty in Pittsburgh's Black community. Like the broader public, these youth share concerns about what gentrification means for residents and businesses displaced by development. They pull from collective memories and stories they have heard from their parents, teachers, and neighbors to discuss gentrification and its implications. Yet, unlike existing literature that focuses on adults who express emotional and relational loss from physical, political, and cultural displacement (Freeman 2006; Freeman and Braconi 2004; Hyra 2015), the youth in this study did not express emotional or relational loss. In fact, they held negative views of several of the older buildings and businesses finding them outdated or out of touch. Moreover, it became clear these changes had little impact on the aspects of their lives that matter most to them: their relationships, hobbies, and daily spaces (e.g. classrooms, libraries, and parks).

Growing up amongst a transforming physical environment, these youth associate with the appeal of newer buildings and establishments while holding in tension their understanding that these establishments represent the displacement of a community that was. The distinctions between youth and adult interpretations and experiences of neighborhood change illuminate three key findings. First, the teen's interpretations of change are shaped by broad narratives of gentrification. That is, despite having little sense of personal loss or displacement, they still

interpret these changes as exclusionary in that they represent a broader displacement and economic disadvantage of the Black community. These collective memories will likely have long lasting influences on how they perceive the broader Pittsburgh community and their White neighbors' value of Black culture, space, and people. Second, the teens see the benefits of new businesses while being profoundly aware of growing socioeconomic inequality. Unlike some of their adult counterparts the youth are excited about and even prefer to frequent the newer buildings and businesses. Yet, they also are aware of the entrenched racial disparities and wrestle with the implicit exclusion felt by development that is targeted at affluent, predominately White residents. Third, the relatively small role changing neighborhood demographics played in the teens lives compared to their relationships, hobbies, schools, and libraries illuminate the importance of highlighting the ample assets in these youth's lives and the resources they need to thrive. Of course, neighborhood change has lots of implications on teen's lives but what these teens remind us is the simultaneous importance of their own interests and relationships.

7.1 Limitations

These insights provide important innovations and inspire new questions to be investigated. However, it is important to note the project is limited by its small number of participants and their varying relationships to East Liberty. In qualitative research, data saturation is required to build confidence in observed patterns. In this study, saturation was limited. This was in part because of the small number of students, which caused the research to shift into taking more of a case study approach to collecting data, but also because of their diverse life experiences. All students were connected through their attendance at YAY but they

lived in a variety of neighborhoods, attended different schools, and had different levels of

engagement with the East Liberty neighborhood. Thus, it is not surprising they experienced life

and neighborhood change in a variety of ways. Yet, it does mean we should be cautious about

how reproducible these findings are across Pittsburgh teens.

Another notable difference among students was their schooling experience. Half of the

interview participants attended Barack Obama Academy for International Studies (Obama), an

International Baccalaureate school located in East Liberty. The remainder of students attended

various charter and local high schools. The Obama students were more aware of and equipped

with academic language to explain the neighborhood changes from their schooling experiences.

This presents new and interesting questions about the role of education in students'

interpretations and experiences with neighborhood change. Yet, fully investigating educational

mechanisms on students' understandings would of required additional participants and

methodological approaches that were beyond the bounds of this study.

In addition to the limitations of the study participants, the neighborhood—East Liberty—

is also only one place. Although the changes occurring in East Liberty mirror change occurring

in other parts of the country, it is still a specific context with unique characteristics, geography,

economy, history, and cultural heritages. Thus, these unique factors could be playing a large role

in how teens are experiencing the changes in their community.

Given these limitations, it is critical that additional work in other cities investigates how

youth understand and experience neighborhood change. Even if the findings in this study are

limited to these youth or this particular community, they illuminate that youth's interpretations

and experiences with gentrification are not the same as adults. Thus, it is important for

researchers to further unpack these differences and further investigate the implications of these differences on the broader community and long term adaptations to neighborhood change.

7.2 Neighborhood Change with All in Mind

Despite this need for further research, important place-specific insights were gained from this work. Though their perspectives are impacted by collective memory and broad narratives, young people in Pittsburgh hold valuable opinions on neighborhood change. In line with empowerment theorists, young people benefit from feeling their opinions are valued and policymakers can gain useful narratives around the use of space from them. Their perceived value and actual use of spaces within transforming communities illustrate that places change but humans also adapt. Change is not inherently problematic but when collective memory and empirical evidence continues to illuminate the marginalization and devaluing of the same populations the consequences are deep and lasting. As new places are built on existing spaces with long-established social landscapes the possibility of various forms of erasure within neighborhood frameworks becomes increasingly at the forefront of longtime residents' minds. New buildings can be built and communities can change but stories stay and what the stories say about who we are and who cities value continue to have immense influence on successive generations. With this and study findings in mind, as East Liberty continues to transform there is a need for the perspectives of historically marginalized groups to be placed at the forefront of future conversations around neighborhood change.

Appendix A Methodological Changes and Reflections

At the start of the project the intention was to work with about fifty young people across the city within four to five existing after school programs in order to obtain a wide array of life experiences as well as physical and social landscapes from participants. The initial desire was to work the needs of the project into the structure of both the after-school program structure and the daily lives of participants. There was an awareness from the start that this desire would likely come at the expense of some elements of the project design but it was an important enough factor to keep in mind. Some sacrifices included length of data collection, number of participants at a given site, and the forms of communication between the project facilitator and participants.

The goal of having four to five sites did not come to fruition as scheduling difficulties became a large factor in many of the relationships formed with programs. After spending significantly more time in the IRB approval process than initially expected, the amount of time allotted to scheduling and logistics for working the project goals into the program curriculum was fairly small. As a result, the number of sites dwindled quickly. When the time came to begin data collection only one site was still able to meet the needs of the project within the allotted time frame.

These shifts in the number of programs and participants led to a shift in the both the focus and methodology of the project. One site with a small group of participants would not be able to produce a comparative approach across communities as initially desire. Instead, new methods were introduced to produce the amount of data required. This mixed-methods approach included quantitative analysis of maps depicting demographic and physical changes to Pittsburgh over the

past forty years as well as including one-on-one interviews with project participants in order to obtain more verbal content on their feelings of neighborhood changes.

This shift in methodology was also needed because of some struggles in attempts to obtain data using photovoice while adhering to the standards for the method. Photovoice literature lays out ideals related to how this form of research should be carried out. As a method, photovoice is supposed to be almost entirely participant driven, especially pertaining to what is photographed and discussed, with the facilitator providing basic knowledge on photography and reflection skills. These ideals are formed around a participant group made up of adults; when working with teenagers issue arise in attempting to maintain this emphasis on participant agency over the project.

Attempting to balance the young people's need for motivation related to the project goals with allowing them the agency to decide what is emphasized proved to be difficult. In reality teenagers do not have a strong understanding of their own agency or their role in a community and as a result presenting them with the task of photographing their neighborhoods without providing a detailed set of instructions led to disinterest rather than participant driven topics.

As an undergraduate student I faced challenges when facilitating group discussions. My knowledge base on education pedagogy was formed around the topic and method-related literature. As a result, when group discussions strayed off topic or there were periods of silence I struggled to refocus the group. That being said, my experience working with youth in past experiences enabled me to have interactions with students that created some degree of comfort in the group. Beyond my own challenges in acting as a group facilitator, YAY attendees had few relationships among them which limited the about of intimate feelings they were willing to share about the topics discussed.

The lack of time and space to build relationships was made more apparent by obvious racial differences between myself and program staff and attendees. I, a White woman from a university, was entering into a majority-Black space. I wanted to be cognizant of this fact and make sure I was not disrupting the existing power structure while also having the ability to garner some level of authority in order to obtain meaningful data. The small time period I had to collect data also meant I was unable to form relationships with participants that were able to go much beyond the visible racial differences we had.

Finally, the initial intention was to have the project culminate in a gallery presentation in which the participants would be able to show their photographs to a variety of people in positions of power in Pittsburgh. Unfortunately, this plan was altered as the global COVID-19 pandemic became an increasing risk for the Pittsburgh area. Though the final gallery may not have occurred, the students ended their time participating in the project having had the chance to learn basic photography skills, view their neighborhoods in new ways through their photography tasks, and feel empowered by the space given to them to voice their perspectives on neighborhood change in their lives.

Appendix B Additional Photographs

Figure B 1 Apartments and Businesses Along Penn Avenue.

Photographer: Black woman age 15, taken Febraury 2020

Figure B 2 For Lease Sign.

Photographer: Black woman age 15, taken February 2020

Figure B 3 Constrasting Shoe Stores.

Photographer: Black woman age 15, taken February 2020

Figure B 4 Sign Seen on Apartment Building.

Photographer: Black woman age 17, takne February 2020

Figure B 5 Unappealing Building.

Photographer: Black woman age 17, taken March 2020

Figure B 6 Vacant Lot on Penn Avenue.

Photographer: Black female age 16, taken Febraury 2020

Figure B 7 Construction in East Liberty.

Photographer: Black woman age 18, taken March 2020

Appendix C Additional Maps

In addition to the maps discussed in above sections, other maps were made to visualize additional demographic and developmental change in Pittsburgh. These maps are critical to understanding the broad narrative of change in Pittsburgh from 1980 to 2015 but not as relevant as those already discussed so they have been included below for reference. These maps include the median income of census tracts in real dollars, the educational level of the neighborhood by examining the proportion of the tract that has at least a Bachelor's degree, the median rent for all rented units in the neighborhood in real dollars, and the proportion of renters who spend 35 percent or more of their household income on rent. Finally, the average estimated cost of building permits by census tract.
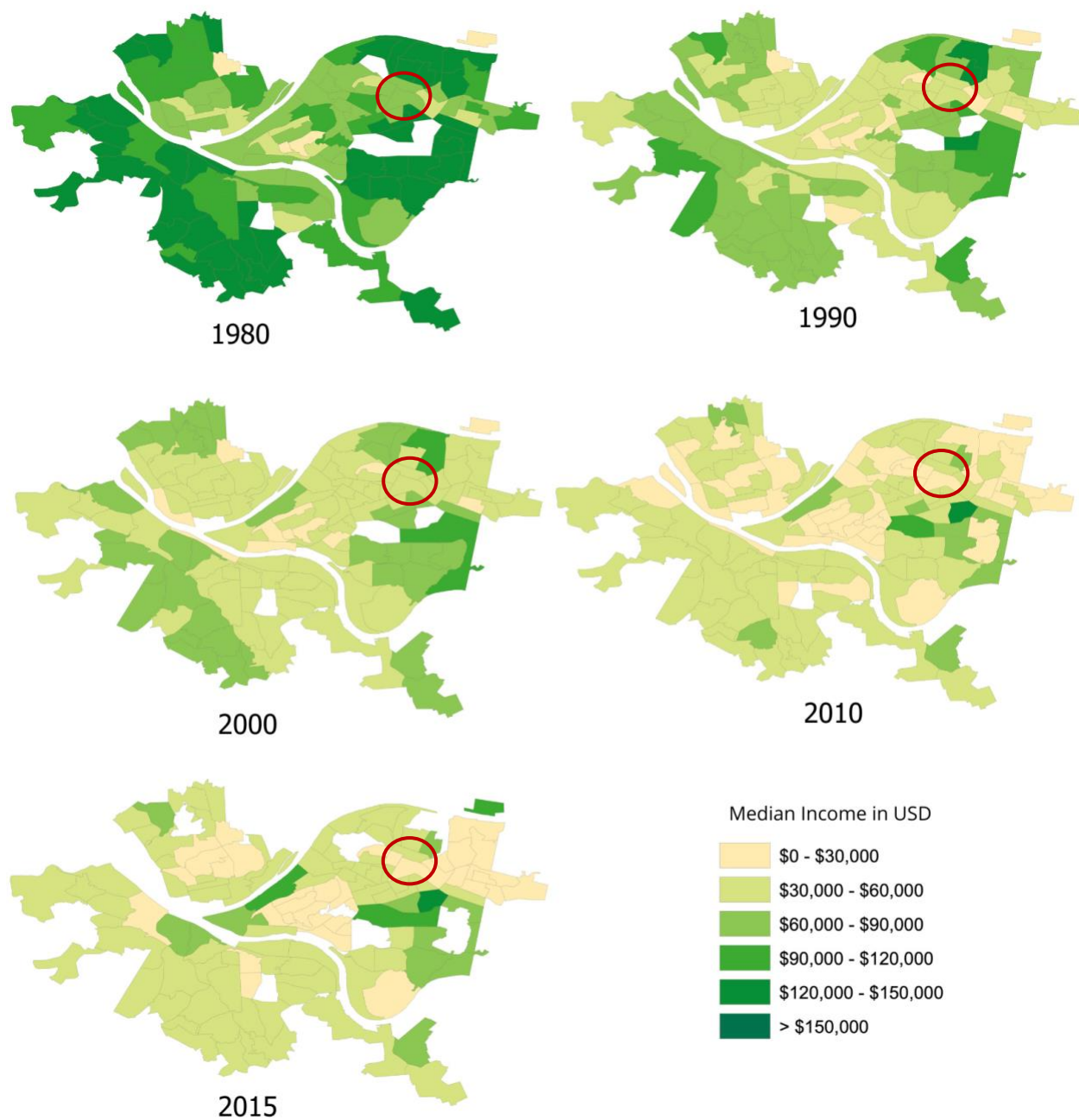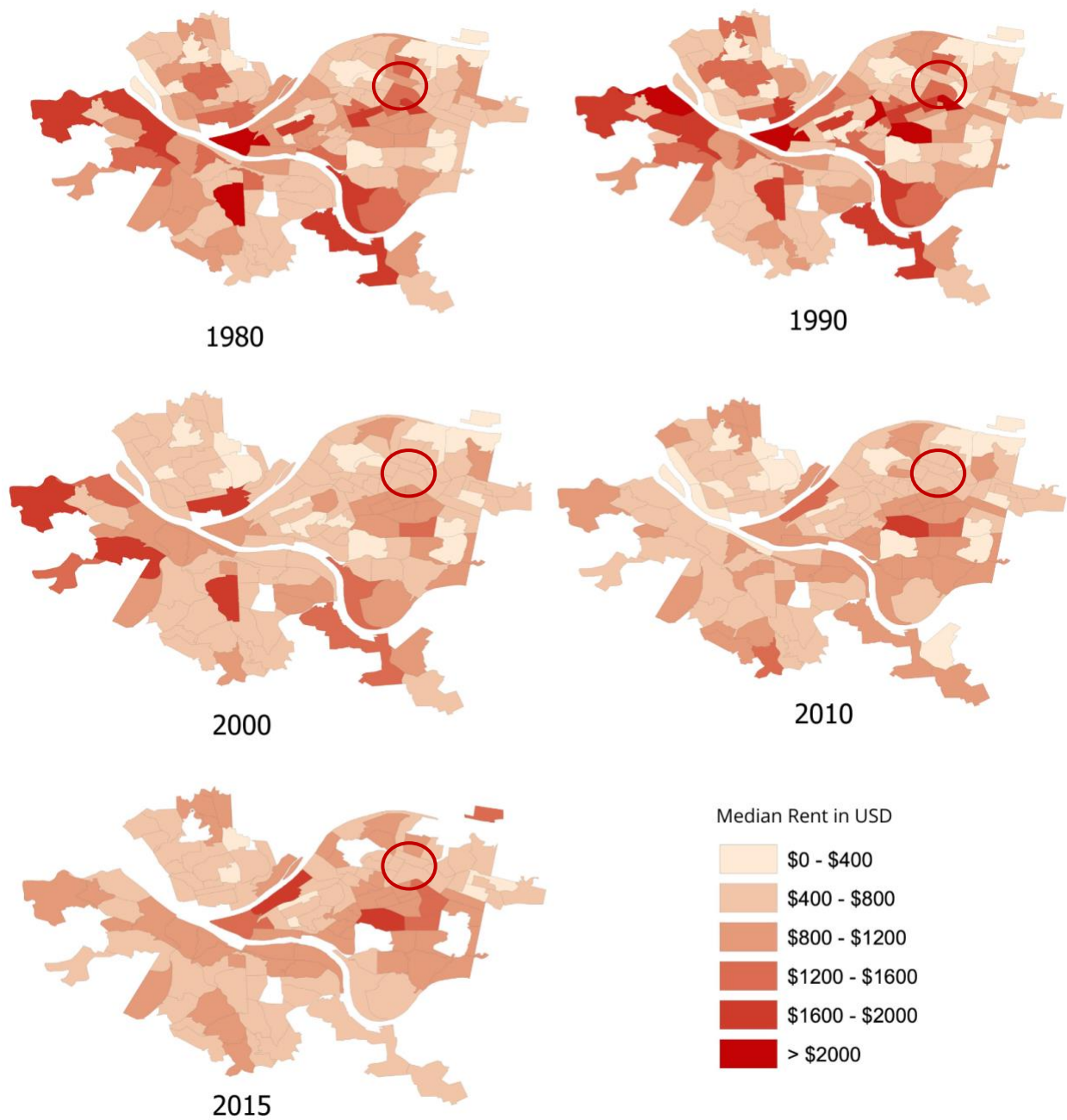
Figure C 1 Median Income by Census Tract.

Median income was normalized across years using the 2015 value of the USD.
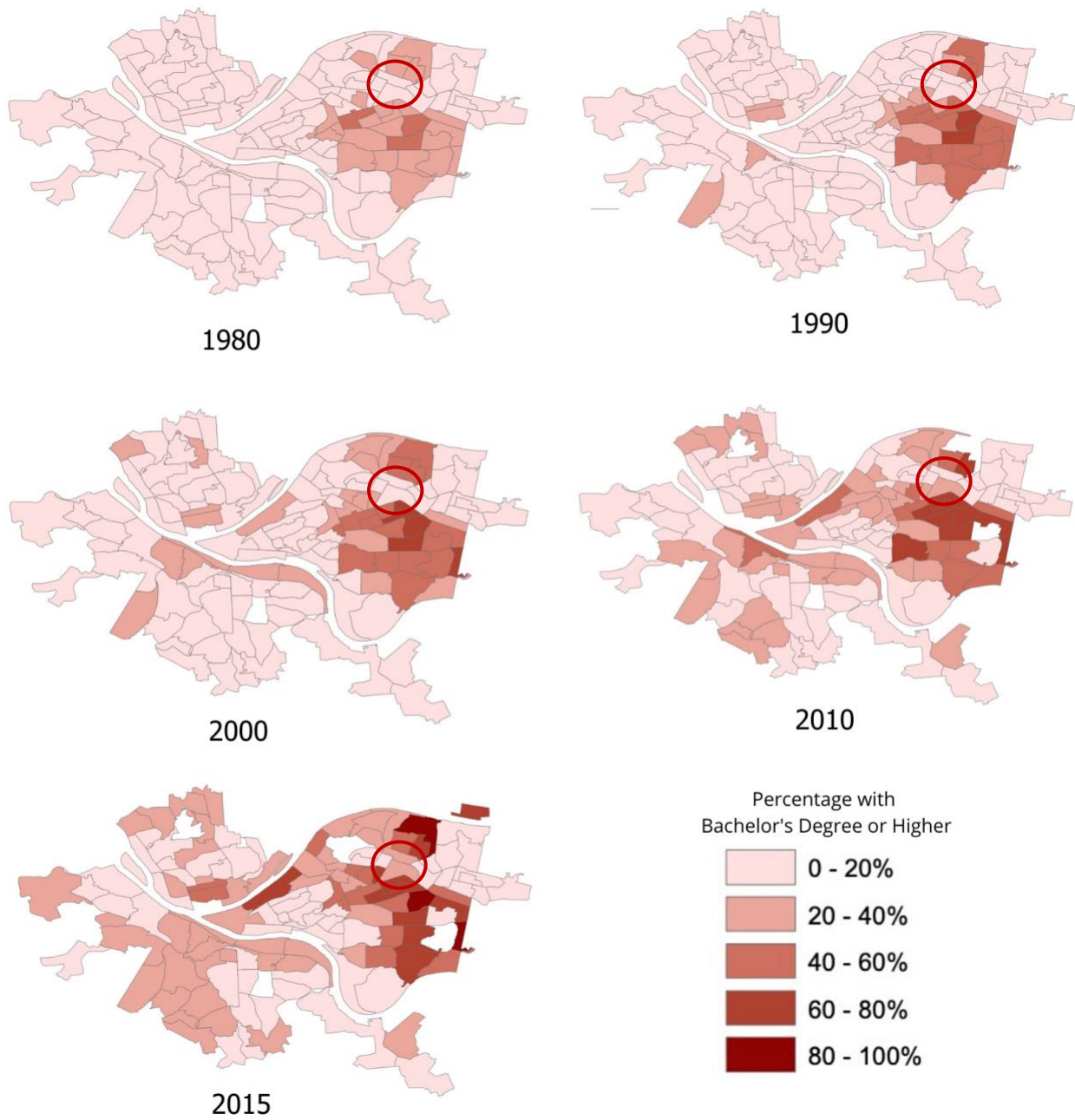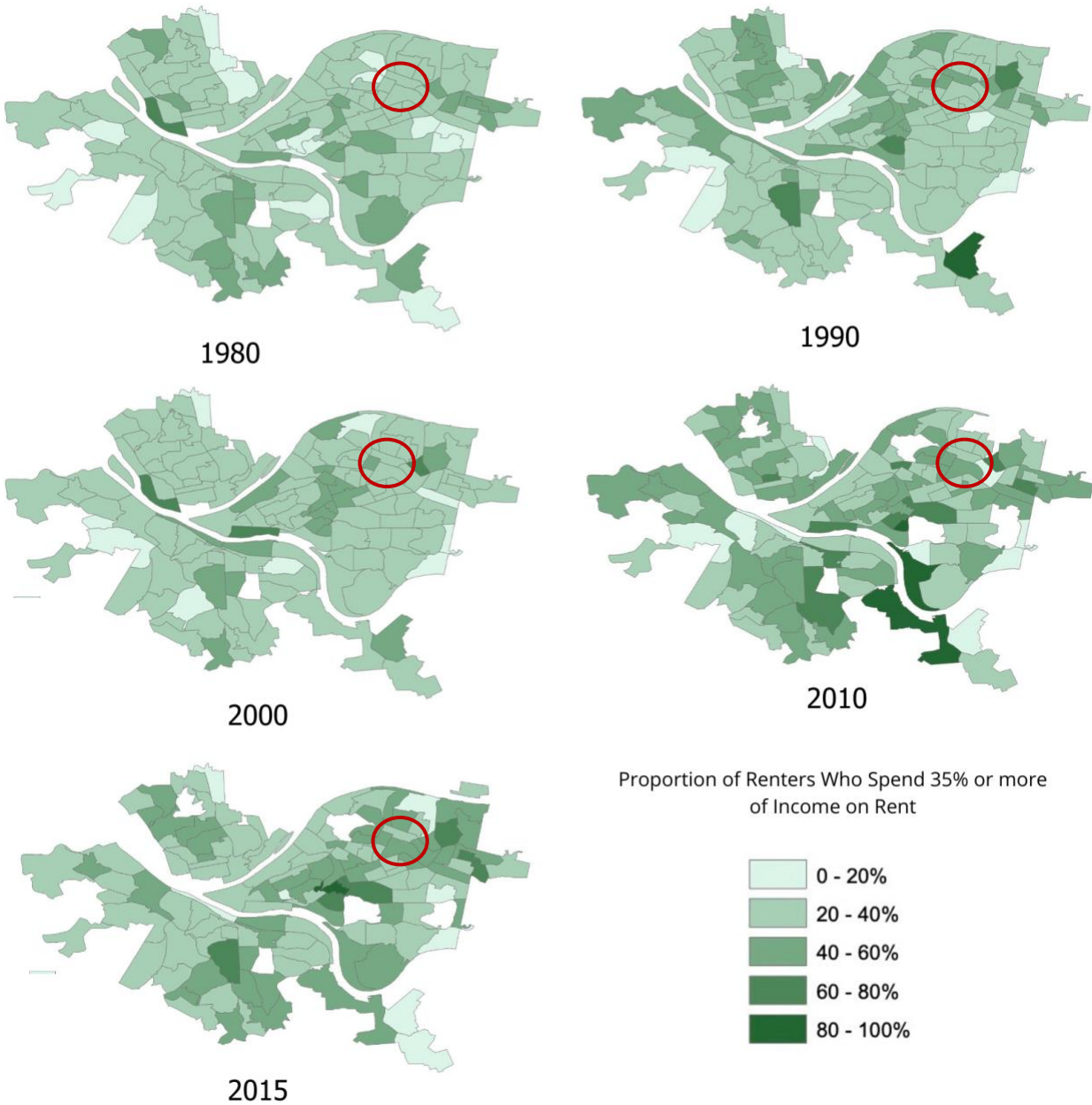
Figure C 2 Proportion of Residents with Bachelor's Degree or Higher by Census Tract.

Figure C 3 Median Rent for All Rented Units by Census Tracts.

Median rent was normalized across years using the 2015 value of the USD.

Figure C 4 Proportion of Renters Who Spend 35 Percent or More of Their Income on Rent by Census Tract.

2012-2013

2014-2015

2016-2017

2018-2019

Average
Estimated
Cost of Permit

$0 - $20,000
$20,000 - $40,000
$40,000 - $60,000
$60,000 - $80,000
$80,000 - $150,0000
$150,000 - $250,000
$250,000 - $350,000
$350,000 - $700,000
$700,000 - $1,200,000
>$1,200,000
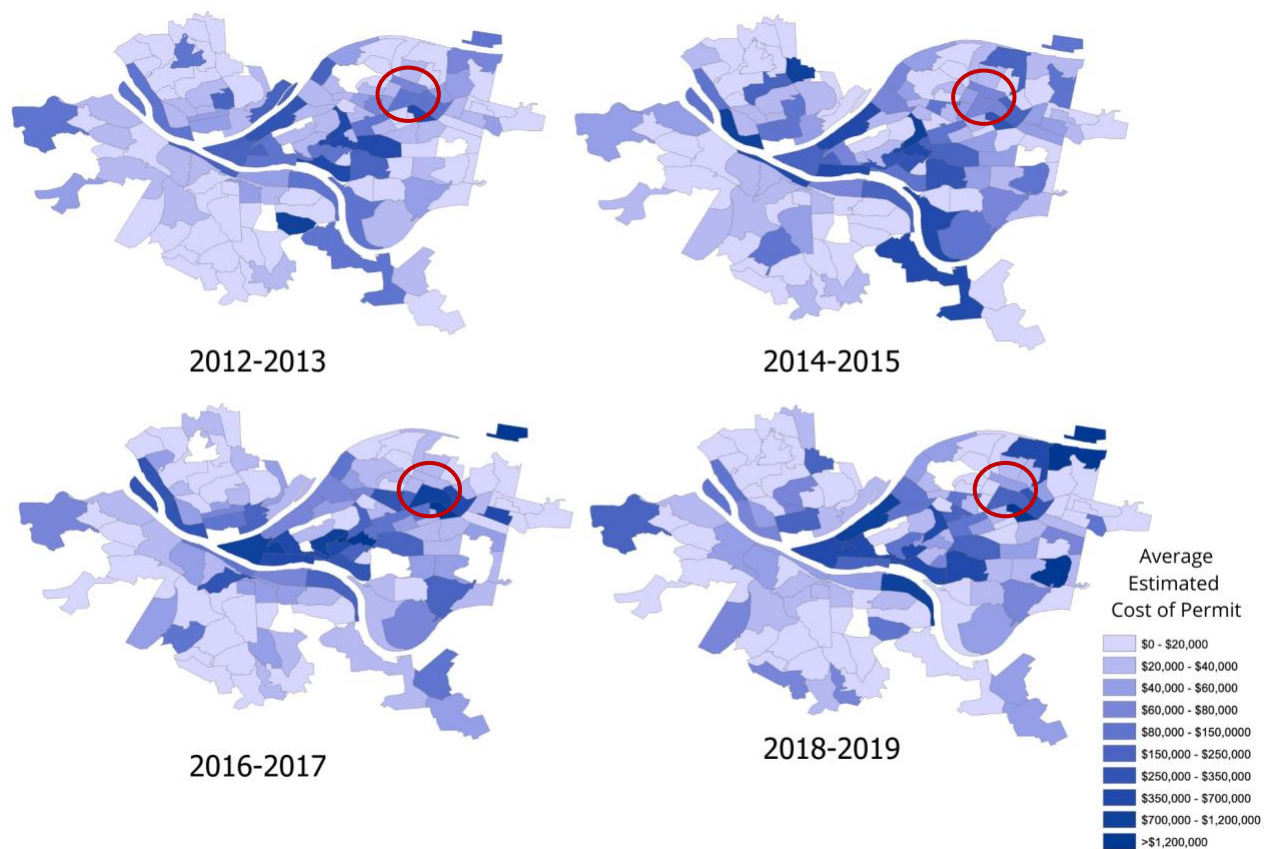
Figure C 5 Average Estimated Cost of Pemit by Census Tract.

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