**Universities and Urban Social Structure: Gentrification, Studentification, and Youthification in Ten US Rust Belt Cities**

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Urban Affairs Association Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, April 24-27, 2019

*Abstract:*

Many cities in the US rust belt have sought to stabilize or even grow population, jobs, and incomes and to reverse both the narratives and realities of population and economic decline. An oft-celebrated strategy for doing so is to draw on the resources and place-rootedness of local anchor institutions, especially universities. Yet there is also increasing recognition that universities play an important role in shaping the social geographies of their cities. A growing body of scholarship recognizes that the gentrification of near-campus neighborhoods, for instance, may displace the residents that university-led urban revitalization initiatives are meant to benefit. Universities are also associated with other distinct, but overlapping, neighbourhood social transformations, such as “studentification” or “youthification.” Studentification refers to the concentration of university students, either in shared rental housing in the “student ghetto” or in luxury purpose-built accommodations. Youthification, meanwhile, describes the increasing concentration of young adults in higher-density urban areas, partly as a function of housing and job market constraints. To date, studentification and youthification remain sparsely studied in the American urban context, and little is known about these processes in the context of declining/shrinking cities or smaller centres farther down the urban hierarchy. We address this lacuna through a longitudinal analysis of overlapping processes of gentrification, studentification, and youthification and their connections to universities between 1980 and 2010 in the MSAs of 10 rust belt cities, drawing on data from the US Census and American Community Survey. Our results provide detailed insight into the impacts of universities on urban social structure with implications for anchor-led revitalization strategies.