

# There Votes the Neighborhood: Gentrification, Residential Mobility, and Political Participation in Atlanta

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## Gentrification as a State Practice

- ▶ In recent years, scholars have increasingly noted the role played by the state in both the economic deterioration of American cities in the second half of the 20th century (e.g., Sugrue, 1998) and the inflows of capital and agents of displacement in the 21st (e.g., Stein, 2019).
- ▶ Fights over rezonings in places like New York City (Haag, 2019), and improved public goods in places like Atlanta (Lartey, 2018) have thrown the consequences of the state's (in)action into stark relief.
- ▶ Although gentrification is not possible without participation from the state, scholars have not investigated how the experience of gentrification influences citizen identity formation and political participation (Thorpe 2021; but see Knotts and Haspel 2006).

# Political Threat

- ▶ On the one hand, sociological and political science theory predicts that gentrification would *increase* political participation.
- ▶ Political threat can lead citizens to participate at higher rates (e.g., Zepeda-Millán, 2016).
- ▶ A growing body of qualitative work explores how local communities form networks capable of resisting displacement through engagement with local government (Betancur, 2002; Martin, 2007).

# Social Cohesion

- ▶ On the other hand, political scientists have long noted that individuals who feel strongly connected to their communities participate at higher rates (Riker and Ordeshook, 1968; Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995).
- ▶ Gentrification can lead to lower levels of social cohesion (Zukin et al., 2009; Holmes, 2020).

## Data and Approach

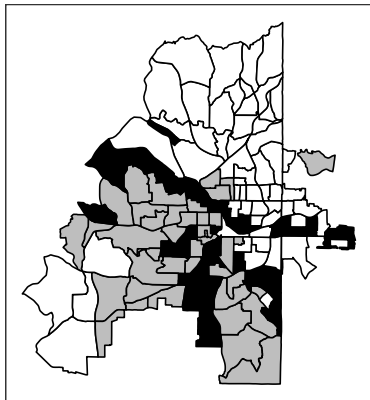
- ▶ I use multiple geocoded snapshots of the registered voter file in Atlanta between 2010 and 2020 to track individuals' mobility and participation patterns. Atlanta has a very high registration rate (Niesse, 2021) and relatively small noncitizen population.
- ▶ I start by identifying *gentrifiable* neighborhoods in 2010. I then look at how neighborhoods change over the subsequent decade, and identify the voters who lived in block groups that did in fact gentrify.
- ▶ I then compare the residential and political outcomes for voters in gentrifiable neighborhoods, relative to those who lived in neighborhoods that did *not* gentrify.

# Methods

- ▶ The residential mobility analysis leverages a multinomial logit model, where residents can have four outcomes: no move between 2010 and 2020; a local move (ie, less than 10 miles); a non-local move within Georgia (ie, more than 10 miles); and they can drop out of the administrative data.
- ▶ For the turnout analysis, “treated voters”—that is, those who lived in neighborhoods that gentrified—are matched to controls, who lived in gentrifiable neighborhoods. The matching is done along a host of individual- and neighborhood-level characteristics.
- ▶ After matching, I run a difference-in-differences model.

# Neighborhood Classification

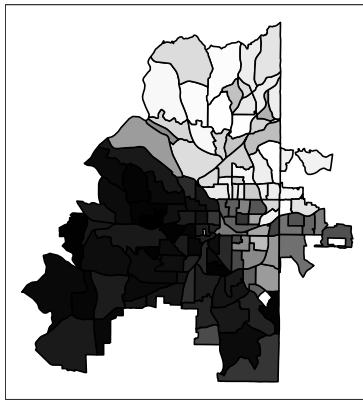
(a) Neighborhood Classification



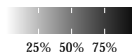
Group



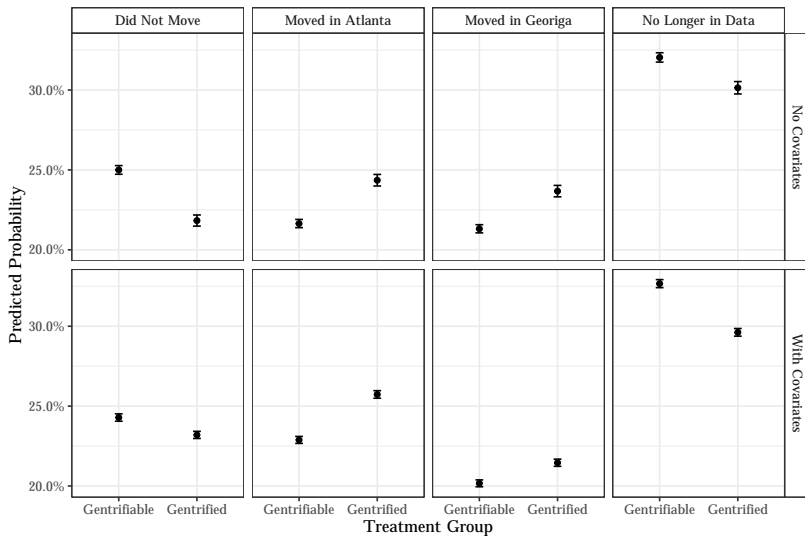
(b) Share Black in 2010



Share Black, 2010

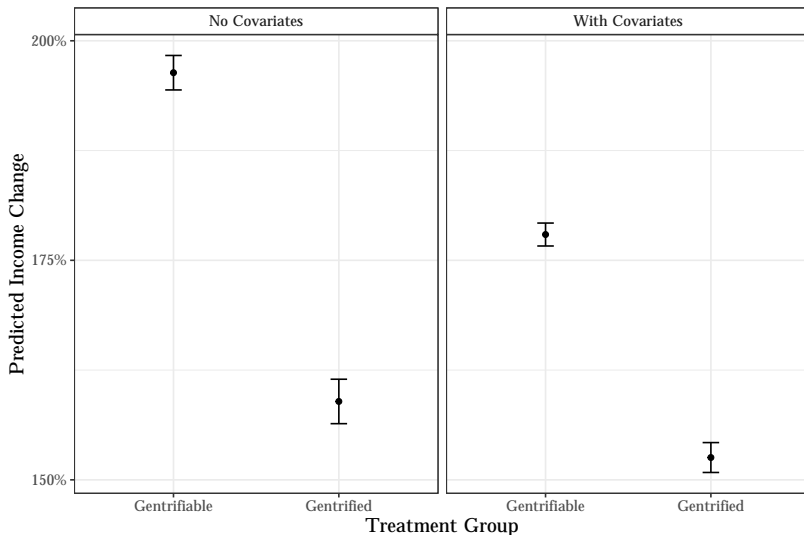


# Residential Moves

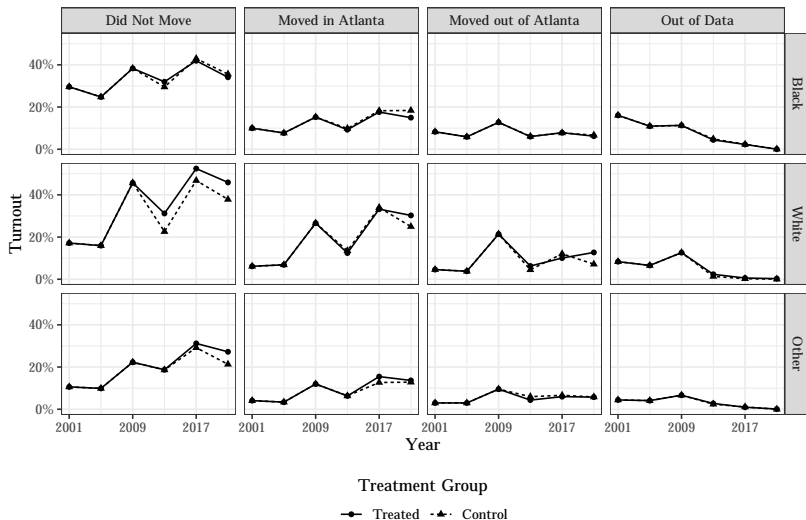




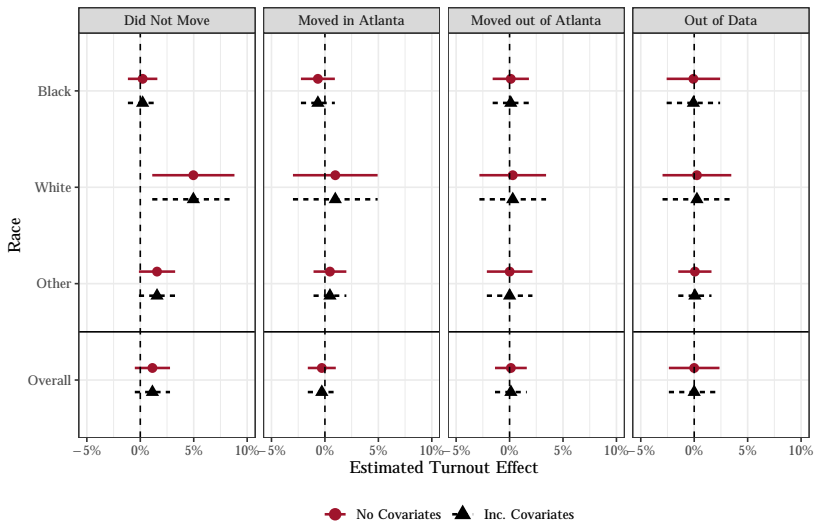
# Nighborhood Income Outcomes (Conditional on In-State Move)



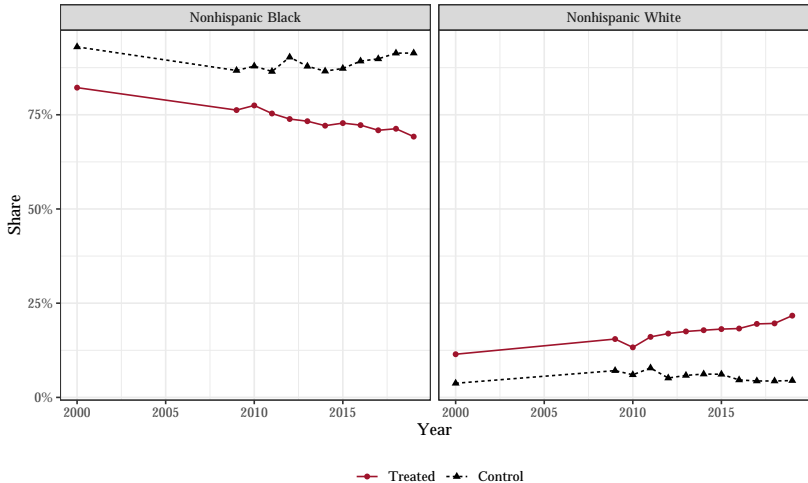
# Turnout in Local Elections by Race, Move Status



# Turnout in Local Elections by Race, Move Status



# Racial Trends



2000 estimates come from decennial census; others come from 5-year ACS estimates.  
Tract characteristics weighted by output of matching exercise.

# Discussion

- ▶ Despite change and gentrification, treated neighborhoods are still largely Black, white voters making up less than 25% of the population by decade's end.
- ▶ Surprisingly, it is the behavior of white voters—who make up a small share of the population—that seems influenced the most by gentrification.
- ▶ Future work should investigate whether this is because smaller populations are more aware of changes (that is, is gentrification more salient for the gentrifiers) or is this a question of political efficacy?

# Thank you!

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