

Whiteness & urban planning



Edward G. Goetz

Center for Urban and
Regional Affairs (CURA)

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to DiscoverSM

Whiteness & urban planning

- Race is a central concern of urban planning but whiteness has not been
- ‘race’ has meant conditions related to BIPOC populations and communities

The ‘negro problem’

The urban ghetto of mid-20th century

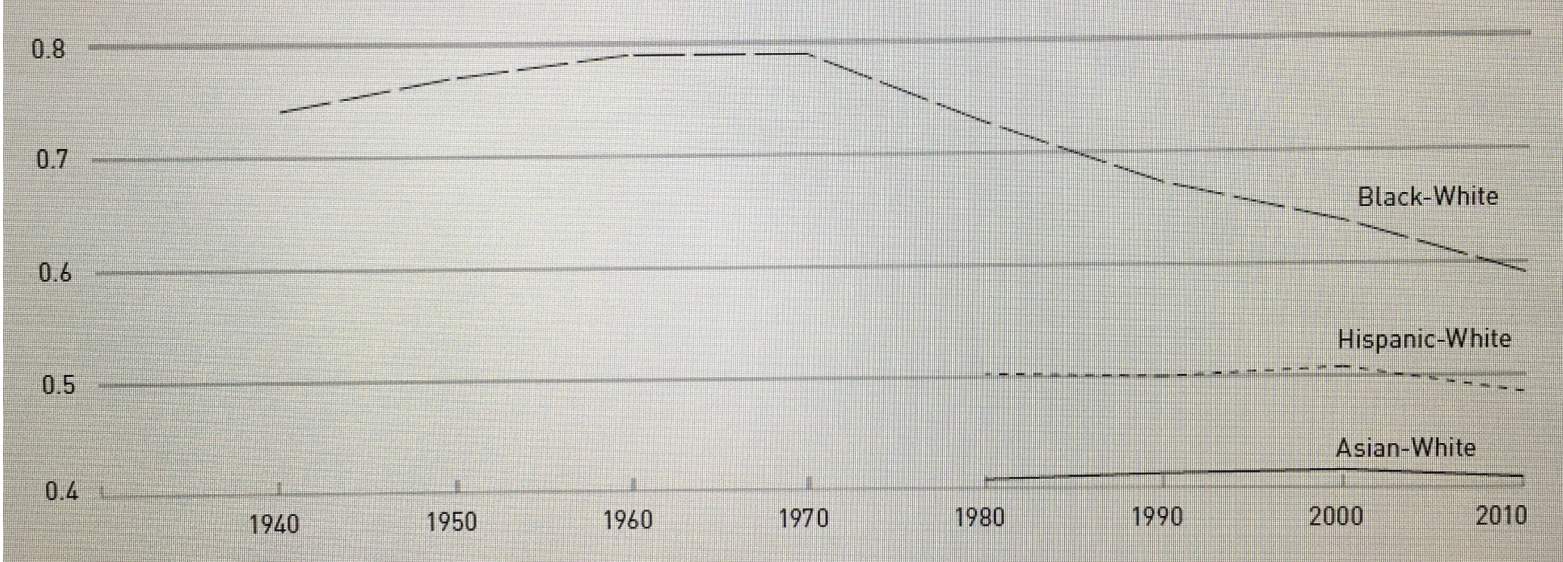
Racially concentrated areas of poverty



Whiteness & urban planning

e.g., residential segregation & white normativity

Exhibit 1: Changes in Residential Segregation by Race/Ethnicity, 1940–2010 (Dissimilarity Index).



Note: The national average values of the dissimilarity index are the weighted average of all metropolitan areas with weights defined to reflect the number of minority group members in the metro.

Source: Logan and Stults (2011).

Whiteness & urban planning

- Racial problems as a defect of our liberal democratic tradition – system failures



Minneapolis,
May 2020



Whiteness & urban planning

- White supremacy as a sociopolitical system with same relevance and force as capitalism and patriarchy



- not merely the thoughts & attitudes of white nationalists and extremists
- not existing outside the political and social mainstream

Whiteness & urban planning

130 years of *planning* history

- Housing
- Land use
- Economic development / redevelopment
- Transportation
- Environment
- Urban design
- Education
- Criminal justice

Whiteness

Essential elements

1. Invisibility of whiteness
2. Whiteness as exclusion
3. The value of whiteness
4. The durability / resilience of whiteness

Whiteness

1. Invisibility of whiteness

- white advantage normalized, legitimized
 - “the segregation tax” / not a segregation dividend
 - “opportunity neighborhoods” / not areas of concentrated white affluence
- whites not ‘raced’ in ways that BIPOC are
 - “racially concentrated areas of poverty”
- unexamined, normative baseline
- historically contingent?

‘whiteness is everywhere
but simultaneously hard
to see...’

Whiteness

2. Whiteness as exclusion

- segregation as opportunity hoarding
- exclusion of others from policy benefits
 - GI Bill of Rights
 - New Deal labor rights
 - FHA mortgage insurance
- zoning (racial, exclusionary, expulsive)
- redlining
- “sundown towns”

whiteness ‘derives its meanings and value from various forms of nonwhiteness...’

Whiteness

3. Value of whiteness

- Advantages of whiteness routinely capitalized
- mortgage lending gap, homeownership gap, education gap, incarceration gap...
- racial wealth gap
- intergenerational
- status and psychological value as well

whiteness as 'an efficiently functioning racial cartel that monopolizes social and economic advantages...'

Whiteness

4. Durability of whiteness

- “post-racial” society yet persistent inequality
- unbroken history of innovations in racial subjugation
 - Slavery to Jim Crow to mass incarceration
 - *de jure* to *de facto*
- “Legacy” effects of discrimination: shaping built environment and physical landscape
- The subsequent application of ‘rational’ planning to this biased landscape reproduces & reinforces the original impact
 - e.g., FTA’s Cost-Effectiveness Index

Racism without racists

Whiteness & urban planning

Reparative Approaches

- Recognition
 - Acceptance of difference
 - Naming
 - Symbols
- Distributive
 - Aimed at material inequity
 - Redistribution
 - Repair
- Capabilities
 - Institutional constraints
 - Inclusion
 - Political power



Thank you.

Prof. E. Goetz
egoetz@umn.edu

Whiteness & urban planning

- RCAAs
- Disparity analysis
- Value capture
- Single family zoning
- Racial impact analysis
- “reparative planning”
- “anti-subordination planning”
- “abolitionist planning”

