

ECHOES IN A CHANGING URBAN LANDSCAPE: MEMORIES AND PLACE  
IDENTITY IN DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

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## **ABSTRACT**

ASHLEY R. WARD: Echoes in a Changing Changing Urban Landscape: Memories and Place Identity in Durham, North Carolina  
(Under the direction of Dr. Stephen Birdsall)

As former manufacturing cities attempt to participate in a modern economy no longer dependent upon manufacturing, aging infrastructure like factory warehouses become a potential asset. Rather than demolishing historic buildings, some cities are taking advantage of tax incentives and a public shift toward hip urban spaces, and remaking their city to fit a Creative Class culture. The process of remaking place incorporates the historic legacy of the place, the collective identity of its residents, and the contemporary ideal of a creative urban space. Much of the literature discussing place remaking or the rise of the Creative Class city focuses upon the recent transformation of demographics, culture, and economy. Often overlooked is the historic context and the role of the place's collective identity.

Demonstrated here are the benefits of incorporating historic context. Also demonstrated are the important role played by residents' collective identity and how this identity is an intimate contributor to the landscape.

The renovation of the historic landscape is efficient for cities and it is an attraction for the Creative Class, but it is also a critical period for people who are attached to historic sites. Through the use of oral histories, I am able to examine the complex nature of these relationships, discovering intricacies in the process of place remaking that are otherwise difficult to determine. GIS mapping technology is used to further investigate historic trends

and their role in current identity making. Three major points regarding collective identity and place remaking are uncovered. First, the oral histories reveal that the formation of a collective identity connected to a particular place is not dependent upon a shared, identical experience. Second, a collective understanding about the quality of a place can be generated based upon the unique circumstances of one group. The creation of a shared place identity is not only dependent upon the agents involved in the place making, but also the bystanders (or witnesses) to such efforts. Finally, when the integrity of place is honored and sites retain meaning, the function of the place can be fluid. Place is not static.



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
LIST OF IMAGES.....	x
LIST OF MAPS.....	xi
LIST OF GRAPHS.....	xii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
a. Introduction.....	1
b. Historic Context.....	3
c. Conceptual Framework.....	8
d. Methods.....	15
2. THE CITY: THROUGH A COMMUNITY OF VOICES.....	21
a. Introduction.....	21
b. Amos and Margaret Umstead.....	27
c. Jim Waller.....	31
d. Verlie Minnie Sue Mooneyham.....	37
e. Other Voices.....	42
3. DURHAM AS EXCEPTIONAL.....	50
a. Introduction.....	50
b. Minority Mobility and Female Minority Mobility, 1900 - 1970.....	51

c. Employment and Economic Opportunity, 1900-1970.....	82
4. REMAKING PLACE.....	90
a. Introduction.....	90
b. The Destruction of Hayti.....	91
c. Introducing the City of Medicine.....	94
d. Rebuilding Durham.....	101
e. Durham as a Creative Class City.....	109
5. CONCLUSION.....	115
a. Oral Histories and the Evolution of Place.....	116
b. Changing Demographics and Reshaping Place.....	119
APPENDIX I.....	124
APPENDIX II.....	134
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	135

## LIST OF TABLES

### Table

1. Total Percent Change in Minority Population 1900 - 1970..... 78
2. Total Percent Change in Female Minority Population 1900 - 1970..... 79

## LIST OF IMAGES

### Image

1. Durham’s First Illuminated Sign.....	21
2. Amos and Margaret Umstead.....	27
3. Jim Waller.....	31
4. Verlie M. Sue Poole.....	38
5. Clifton White.....	42
6. Mary and Cleo Martin.....	43
7. Robert Maddry.....	48
8. Charles Miller.....	80
9. Rosalee Bynum and Bonnie Hall.....	99
10. Retiree’s Reunion.....	115
11. Claiborne “tip toe” Ellis.....	117
12. George Evans.....	122

## LIST OF MAPS

### Map

1. Change in Minority Population 1900-1910.....	53
2. Change in Female Minority Population 1900-1910.....	53
3. Change in Minority Population 1910-1920.....	57
4. Change in Female Minority Population 1910-1920.....	57
5. Change in Minority Population 1920-1930.....	60
6. Change in Female Minority Population 1920-1930.....	60
7. Change in Minority Population 1930-1940.....	64
8. Change in Female Minority Population 1930-1940.....	64
9. Change in Minority Population 1940-1950.....	68
10. Change in Female Minority Population 1940-1950.....	68
11. Change in Minority Population 1950-1960.....	73
12. Change in Female Minority Population 1950-1960.....	73
13. Change in Minority Population 1960-1970.....	75
14. Change in Female Minority Population 1960-1970.....	75
15. Population Distribution of Durham, NC, by Race, 1970.....	97
16. Population Distribution of Durham, NC, by Race, 2010.....	98
17. Number of Residents by Census Tract in the Tobacco Districts, Downtown Durham, 2000.....	105
18. Number of Residents by Census Tract in the Tobacco Districts, Downtown Durham, 2010.....	105
19. Population Distribution of Durham, NC, by Race, Including Hispanic Population, 2010.....	107

## LIST OF GRAPHS

### Graph

1. Difference in Median Income by Race, 1960..... 83
2. Difference in Male Median Income by Race, 1960..... 83
3. Difference in Female Median Income by Race, 1960..... 84
4. Difference in White and Black Male Employment, 1960..... 86



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Introduction*

In the 1920s, French sociologist, Maurice Halbwachs introduced the concept of the collective memory, and proposed that all memory is bound with group identity. Since this time, collective memory has come to be accepted as a construction of both the past and present that is wholly separate from history.<sup>1</sup> For Halbwachs, history is a collection of facts while collective memory lives within the memories of a group and is based on spatial images. Remembrances, Halwachs writes, are “fastened to those images.”<sup>2</sup> What happens, then, when the components of landscape to which remembrances are fastened are compromised or destroyed?

The destruction and renewal of places has been a long-standing concern in cities where the flow and fluctuation of population necessarily shapes and reshapes the urban environment. This concern has been amplified through recent claims that the city is dying or that it has become irrelevant with the development of new technology that diminishes distance.<sup>3</sup> The melting pot that was the essence of urban spaces is no longer necessary in a

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<sup>1</sup> For a thorough history of this process, see Brundage, W. Fitzhugh. Where These Memories Grow..University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill. 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Halbwachs, Maurice. On Collective Memory The University of Chicago Press: Chicago. 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Mitchell, William J. City of Bits: Space, Place, and the Infobahn. Cambridge: 1995. Also see Hebler, Martina and Zimmerman, Clemens. Creative Urban Milieus: Historical Perspectives on Culture, Economy, and the City. Campus Verlag GmbH: Frankfurt. 2008.

modern economy, according to this theory. Most recently, the trend is to evaluate the benefits of the present urban landscape, and determine its worth in a Creative Class economy.<sup>4</sup> As a result, cities are seen as places where a reorganization of urban space is driven by creativity and culture, not manufacturing. Cities are increasingly made by culture, not the economy.

As cities formerly dependent on manufacturing attempt to participate in a modern economy no longer engaged in their type of manufacturing, aging infrastructure like factory warehouses become a potential asset. Rather than demolishing historic buildings, some cities are using tax incentives and a public shift in attitudes toward hip urban spaces, and remaking their city to fit a Creative Class culture. The process of remaking place is entwined with both the historic legacy of the place, the collective identity of its residents, and the contemporary ideal of a creative urban space. The first two of these have often been overlooked when assessing the impact of place re-making. Much of the literature discussing the process of remaking places or the rise of the Creative Class city focuses upon the recent transformation of demographics, culture, and economy. In this study, I demonstrate the benefits of incorporating historic context into our understanding of the process. Also demonstrated is the important role that the residents' collective identity plays and how this identity is intimately woven into the landscape.

Durham, North Carolina is one city that has been reclaiming its historic landscape in an attempt to conform with modern ideas of urban development. Because of its rich history in manufacturing and Civil Rights, Durham is an ideal place to examine the intersection of

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<sup>4</sup> The term "Creative Class" is from: Florida, Richard. The Rise of the Creative Class and How its Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life. Basic Books: Cambridge. 2002. Florida describes the Creative Class as a group of workers who are engaged in knowledge-intensive industries, or are intellectuals or artists.

historic legacy, place-making, and the Creative Class movement. In cities like Durham, renovating the historic landscape rather than destroying it is efficient and it is an attraction for the Creative Class, but it can also be a critical period for the people who are intimately attached to historic sites. Through the use of oral histories drawn from long-term residents, I am able to examine the complex nature of the relationships between personal memory, place identity, and the structural features of the landscape, discovering intricacies in the process of place remaking that are otherwise difficult to determine. GIS mapping technology is also helpful to further investigate historic trends and their role in current identity making. As a result of this study, I offer three major points regarding collective identity and place remaking. First, the oral histories reveal that the formation of a collective identity connected to a particular place is not dependent upon a shared, identical experience. Second, a collective understanding about the quality of a place can be generated through the unique circumstances of one group. The creation of a shared place identity is dependent upon not only the agents involved in the place making but also the witnesses to such efforts. Finally, when the integrity of place is honored and sites retain meaning, the function of the place can be fluid. Place is not static.

### ***Historic Context***

Durham was founded in the mid-nineteenth century as a railroad depot—a stop along the route between Hillsborough to Raleigh. Significant to Durham’s development was the arrival of the Duke family who established a tobacco factory, W. Duke and Sons Tobacco, in 1874. Eventually, W. Duke and Sons, along with four other national tobacco companies

merged to form American Tobacco in 1890.<sup>5</sup> The marriage between the five largest tobacco firms in the nation brought criticism of a tobacco trust and eventually a 1911 Supreme Court ruling that would require its fragmentation into four separate tobacco companies: American Tobacco, Liggett-Myers, R.J. Reynolds, and P. Lorillard.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the foundation of tobacco in Durham had been thoroughly established. By the World War II era, Durham had become a city whose economy was built upon tobacco factories and cotton mills, its urban landscape dominated by the large brick tobacco warehouses, and the air infused with the sweet smell of tobacco.<sup>7 8</sup>

The citizens of Durham in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were comprised overwhelmingly of rural workers who had migrated to the city center in search of work, autonomy, and hope for a new life. There were distinct patterns of migration toward Durham. Limitations of the agricultural lifestyle made migration toward the city more appealing to females than males. Female labor was the most expendable on farms therefore their move to the city was less of a burden. But also, women's position in agricultural households was as a dependent, socially as well as economically. Among men, those that migrated were most likely over twenty and travelled greater distances to work while women migrated to Durham because their labor was welcome in the factories. This is especially the case for black men and women, who had a

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<sup>5</sup> Tobacco Museum Exhibit, Duke Homestead State Historic Site. 2828 Duke Homestead Road, Durham, NC 27705.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> "Durham History." Historic Preservation Society of Durham. [www.preservationdurham.org](http://www.preservationdurham.org). Retrieved 21 November 2008.

<sup>8</sup> The total population of Durham County in the 1890 Census, the first year it appeared in the U.S. Census, was 18,041. By 1940 the total county-wide population for Durham County was 80,244, and the total urban population for Durham was 60,195. (2004). Historical Census Browser. Retrieved 28 September 2008 from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>

higher migration rate than whites because of greater limitations to their work in agriculture and the opportunity to work in tobacco manufacturing.<sup>9</sup> Between 1890 and 1930, Durham became a city of women, where black women, specifically, outnumbered black men.<sup>10</sup> The success of the original migrants continued to pull more migrants toward Durham, whites being encouraged to migrate to obtain higher pay operating machines once mechanization developed in the industry. Until the 1930s, increased labor demand from World War I, the continued displacement of agricultural workers across the American South, and the concentration of both textiles and tobacco in Durham ensured a continual stream of migrants from the rural North Carolina Piedmont. “These new Durham residents symbolized the transformation of a rural population into an urban workforce.”<sup>11</sup>

Durham’s reliance on the tobacco industry eventually led to the complete abandonment of its city center as large tobacco companies either closed or moved into smaller facilities outside of Durham when the nation-wide tobacco industry began to collapse in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>12</sup> This followed a trend that began in the 1960s as both businesses and residents moved toward the suburbs, mimicking migration out of city centers nationwide.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, in the early 1990s when developers and city officials sought to recover the lost urban space, they were faced with a special challenge. Unlike Raleigh, Durham is not a capital city that attracts people to its city center because of museums or state

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<sup>9</sup> Janiewski, Dolores E. Sisterhood Denied. Temple University Press: Philadelphia, 1985.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>12</sup> American Tobacco closed its plant in 1987 and Liggett-Myers moved its facilities to Mebane, NC in 2000. Source: Wise, Jim. “A Workplace Becomes a Home.” News & Observer. 25 February 2008. A8.

<sup>13</sup> Newton, David. “Going All In, All Downtown.” News & Observer. 3 March 2007.

municipal facilities. Durham also does not have physical features to attract people downtown, like a river or waterfront. However, Durham does have the unique architectural legacy created by blocks of tobacco warehouses, established long ago by Durham's tobacco industry. The warehouses provided more than two million square feet of space upon which developers and city officials could regenerate downtown Durham—an enormous blank canvas that could be transformed into multi-use space.

In addition, Durham has a rich history, combining the historical glory of American manufacturing and capitalist success with a powerful Civil Rights history. In Upbuilding Black Durham, Leslie Brown discusses how the capital gained by the black middle class in Durham was the consequence of struggle both within the black community and between the black and white communities. Durham was recognized as a dynamic place in which free blacks fought to exercise their newfound liberties.<sup>14</sup> Brown states that “black people measured their distance from slavery by their autonomy from whites.”<sup>15</sup> In this context, the ability to earn wages was crucial in two ways. First, there was a hope that in earning wages, the societal roles of black women would change to closer mimic those of white women, and enable black men to provide the protection for black women that white men commonly asserted over white women. Second, earning wages fulfilled the need among black communities to create institutions and spaces that would be self-supporting. In Durham, this requirement became a reality as African Americans owned and operated “several brickyards, a textile mill, a lumber mill, a foundry, a furniture factory, a cigar factory, a library, a

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<sup>14</sup> Brown, Leslie. Upbuilding Black Durham. The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill. 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 7.

hospital, a college, scores of churches, a number of schools, and an astonishing array of retail services, shops and stores, community organizations, and race institutions.”<sup>16</sup> This does not imply that the presence of these institutions and organizations did not result in serious contention between whites and blacks in Durham, but rather that Durham, having been founded after the Civil War became an embodiment of the New South ideal. Durham became a city built upon manufacturing and represented an urban expression of the concepts of free enterprise and hard work.

The people of Durham have long embraced their tobacco legacy. The walls of the tobacco factories echo with many stories—stories of men and women who came from all over rural North Carolina with the hope of a better future and work in the factory. There are also stories of countless African Americans who found real, if limited economic security in the tobacco factories of the Piedmont, stories of labor, of loss, of joy, of created families, and of imagined communities.

For many decades, life in Durham revolved around the tobacco industry. Money from tobacco, and from the Duke family, is responsible for many places in which Durham takes pride, like Duke University, several Methodist churches, and Duke Medical Center, the largest employer in the city.<sup>17</sup> The individual memories of those who worked in the factory and the collective memory of the city is bound to Durham, but more specifically to the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>17</sup> “Durham and Durham County, North Carolina 2008.” Durham Chamber of Commerce. [www.durhamchanger.org](http://www.durhamchanger.org). Retrieved 1 May 2008.

former tobacco factory.<sup>18</sup> For many long-term residents, the presence of the factory on the urban landscape is a testament to personal history and the history of Durham.

The significance of memory and place, and the creation of identity that facilitates the preservation of historic places is acknowledged by policies at the state and federal level. Federal and state tax credits are available for renovation and development that specifically retain structural expressions of a place's past. These landscape changes are made possible through the cooperation of a series of actors—developers, investors, city officials, and public representatives. It is through such a cooperative linkage of local and non-local intention that the re-making of Durham is possible.

### ***Conceptual Framework***

The forces driving current economic activity and landscape change in Durham are part of a deeper, more complex process that revolves around historic, geographic, economic, and social networks. These networks are the result of a process that has been ongoing and continues to shape the meaning and influence of Durham's place-making efforts. Because this project seeks to understand the historic context of a contemporary issue, the theoretical framework necessarily spans several disciplines in the social sciences.

The Southern city and its transformation has been studied by historians as an anomaly with regard to its cultural make-up and its economic development. The peculiar nature of

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<sup>18</sup> There are many references to this identity in newspaper articles from local papers. Some of these are the following: Editorial, "More People Call Downtown Home." The Herald-Sun. 12 February 2008. A6; Baumgartner, Dawn. "Preserving the City's Structure: Tom Miller, a Self-Described 'Building-Hugger' Aims to Save Durham's Architectural Heritage." The Herald-Sun. 8 April 2007. A1; Davis, Kevin. "Durham Transforms, but City Still Bullish on the Bulls." The News & Observer. 12 April 2008. A2; Andrews, Paul. "Amazing Changes in 20 Years." The Herald-Sun. 5 May 2008. A4. In addition, the author's family has lived in Durham for more than 70 years.



Southern cities, as described by Louis Kyriakoudes in his work on Nashville, Tennessee, is in large part derived from their close relationship to rural populations.<sup>19</sup> Durham is similar to its Southern counterparts in that its early population came primarily from the surrounding agricultural counties, creating an urban environment unique from that found in other regions in the United States. The consequence, according to Kyriakoudes, is a less culturally diverse urban environment in the South. However, diversity is a significant component to Durham's legacy, separating it from other Southern cities.

The rural-urban connection is central in David Goldfield's work wherein the close ties with agriculture meant a Southern city that was not only lacking in diversity but also in size.<sup>20</sup> Goldfield asserts that the result of such close ties with agricultural cycles produced a Southern urban landscape dominated by towns and small cities. This is also confirmed in North Carolina throughout the early and mid-twentieth century; Charlotte was the only urban space comparable to those found in other regions of the country. David Carlton and Peter Coclanis go a step further and connect the historic development of Southern urban spaces to their contemporary economic development.<sup>21</sup> In their series of published essays, Carlton and Coclanis examine the impacts of the plantation economy on Southern urban development and continue forward through Southern industrialization and its significance to contemporary

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<sup>19</sup> Kyriakoudes, Louis M. The Social Origins of the Urban South: Race, Gender, and Migration in Nashville and Middle Tennessee, 1890-1930. The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill. 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Goldfield, David. Cotton Fields and Skyscrapers: Southern City and Region. Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge. 1982.

<sup>21</sup> Carlton, David L. and Coclanis, Peter A. The South, The Nation, and the World: Perspectives on Southern Economic Development. University of Virginia Press: Charlottesville. 2003.

Southern urban development. Significant to this project is their conclusion that much of the region's urban development is bound by its historic patterns.

David Harvey's work on the entrepreneurial city lays the groundwork for both the historic and contemporary aspects of this project as well.<sup>22</sup> Taking his approach, a particular historic geography shapes the conditions and circumstances of capital accumulation at later points in time and space. Harvey refers to the "entrepreneurial" condition of a city as one where a city is forced to become more innovative, demonstrating entrepreneurial behavior because of the destruction of its economic and fiscal base. This condition is in opposition to the earlier conception of the "managerial city" of the 1960s where urban governments were responsible for the provision of services to support the urban population. Harvey argues that urbanization is a spatially grounded process that produces a built form, a produced space and a particular resource system that is organized into a distinctive spatial configuration. As a result, the consciousness of urban inhabitants are affected by this configuration of the city. This study of Durham takes the transition from the managerial city to the entrepreneurial city a step further by extending the process, or history, of the place. My intent is to demonstrate that the cycle in Durham began as an entrepreneurial city and progressed to its present condition as the national political environment changed. This approach necessarily emphasizes the need for long-term, historic analysis of place.

In a manner consistent with Harvey's assertion, I view the current reclamation projects in Durham as part of a greater process shaping which development projects are

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<sup>22</sup> Harvey, David. "From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: the Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism." *Geografiska Annaler*. 71 Series B (1), Human Geography. 3-17.

acquired, accomplished, and accepted. Closely tied to the city's economic and political activity are the collective memory and personal identities of its residents. In accordance with Margalit,<sup>23</sup> the collective memory of Durham's residents is a necessary component of their sense of community. This is demonstrated by the failure of earlier redevelopment programs in Durham when the public outcry regarding the demolition of their community was more powerful than the goals of the municipal government.

The relationship between the shared sense of identity and individual remembrances of Durham residents fits specifically within a spatial framework, as is described by Halbwachs.<sup>24</sup> The presence of the tobacco factories on the landscape, regardless of their function, provides the clues to personal identity that Halbwachs asserts are "fastened" to these images. Halbwachs takes this a step further in saying, "we can understand how we recapture the past only by understanding how it is, in effect, preserved in our physical surrounding."<sup>25</sup> Therefore, by preserving the physical features of the past, the reclamation projects in Durham sustain the collective identity of long-term Durham residents.

Relph offers an additional perspective on the particular role that a community plays in shaping the landscape. He argues that a community can transfer its character to the landscape, thereby creating a shared space that is central to the "individuality of place."<sup>26</sup> By viewing Durham's place-making efforts as both a historic, continual process and as a process

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<sup>23</sup> Margalit, Avishai. Ethics of Memory. Harvard University Press: Boston. 2002.

<sup>24</sup> Halbwachs, Maurice. On Collective Memory. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago. 1992. Pg 59.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Relph, Edward. Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography. Rowman and Littlefield 1981. Pgs 168-175.

that creates and is created by city residents, the complex associations between the traditional and modern, and the need for stability as well as for progress, can be understood.

Richard Florida's concept of the "Creative Class" also provides a context for this study. Florida's work offers an approach from which to understand the contemporary, nationwide movement of a particular demographic that favors urban living. The belief that attracting the Creative Class is the key to a city's economic success is adopted by state and municipal governments, civic leaders, and city residents, and impacts the manner in which place-making is achieved at present. According to Florida, members of the Creative Class are those who are involved in the creation of new ideas, like those in the sciences, architecture, engineering, design, education and the arts. The key to successful urban development, Florida says, is to cultivate communities that are attractive to the Creative Class, offering diversity and tolerance, as well as a range of living choices for example, suburbs as well as urban neighborhoods. Places that are able to successfully foster the growth of a Creative Class are those that will inevitably experience long term economic growth.

While not specifically describing a Creative Class, Gunther Barth, and Howard Chudacoff and Judith Smith, discuss a distinct urban population in their works on the development of cities in the United States.<sup>27</sup> Chudacoff and Smith describe cities as a center of economic, social, and cultural activity that is inherent in the institutions and people that

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<sup>27</sup> Barth, Gunther. City People: The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth-Century America. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1980. Chudacoff, Howard P. and Smith, Judith E. The Evolution of American Urban Society, Sixth Edition. Pearson Prentice-Hall: New Jersey, 2005.

inhabit the city, calling them “fonts of creativity.”<sup>28</sup> In his examination of the people of the city in particular, Gunther Barth claims that a diverse group of people emerged from urban spaces. Historically speaking, “city people,” in contrast to “rural people,” were those that are risk-takers. The populations that migrated toward urban centers found independence unlike that which was available to them in European urban centers or in the agricultural heartlands of the United States. Therefore, although diverse in background, the people in urban spaces developed a unique quality. “Sameness had risen out of diversity,” Barth states. City people are creative in that they developed solutions out of cultural diversity that resulted in a distinct organization of the urban landscape, a structural unity in the modern city.<sup>29</sup>

Urban sociologists John Logan and Harvey Molotch predated the ideas of both Harvey and Florida, writing that with respect to urban development, “residents are themselves the engine of development” that attract more of the same.<sup>30</sup> In doing so, a particular place dynamic is created that perpetuates itself. Much of their work in Urban Fortunes revolves around the conflicts between city exchange values and community use values, but throughout is the recognition that places are themselves individual with an arrangement particular to specific place. The inequality of the role of city growth machines versus city residents plays heavily in their work, but the acknowledgement that places recycle based upon a variety of factors is of importance to my work in Durham.

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<sup>28</sup> Chudacoff and Smith. 308.

<sup>29</sup> Barth, Gunther. 34.

<sup>30</sup> Logan, John R. and Molotch, Harvey. Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place. University of California Press: Berkley. 2007. Pg xix

The recycling of place is also the topic of Molotch, Freudenburg, and Paulsen's work in California.<sup>31</sup> In this study, the authors employ a thorough historic analysis of place, discussing two California cities over a 100 year history. Their findings suggest that through a variety of distinctive, local conditions, a place character is developed that is threaded throughout the history of the place and forms a "local tradition."<sup>32</sup> The purpose of Molotch, Freudenburg, and Paulsen's work is to quantify place characteristics for empirical analysis, in which they are successful. For the purposes of this project focused on Durham, NC, the authors' demonstration of the need to historically ground analysis of place is appreciated. By incorporating long-term historic analysis of place, the deep connections between organizations and social groups are revealed. Without such grounding, the authors' claim, the structure of place becomes "vague and opaque."<sup>33</sup>

For Durham, fostering a Creative Class community is crucial to its re-identification in the region. Alongside the Research Triangle Park, Durham's manufacturing past and underserved population was a glaring distinction that perpetuated a negative stereotype of the city. The leadership of Durham's drive to re-make the city, and the lack of public opposition to the development, is in part a desire to change the wider public perception of Durham.<sup>34</sup> However, unlike development in Research Triangle Park and in many commercial research

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<sup>31</sup> Molotch, Harvey, Freudenburg, William, and Paulsen, Krista E. "History Repeats Itself, but How? City Character, Urban Tradition, and the Accomplishment of Place." *American Sociological Review*. 30, (2000).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 794.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 819.

<sup>34</sup> Interview. Bill Kalkhof. 29 September 2008. Interview. Jim Wise. 24 November 2008. Interview. Allen Delisle. 20 November 2008.

parks, the plan in Durham is not based on a “sense of social withdrawal.”<sup>35</sup> In Durham, the plan depends upon the complex social networks of the city’s Creative Class. This should not imply that there is a lack of connection between the historic citizens of Durham and the city. In fact, the opposite is true. There is a very intimate relationship between the long-term residents and the form and character of the city of Durham as is discussed above. In their article on the Research Triangle Park, Havlick and Kirsch associate some landscape change with a process of replacing “historic emptiness” with a more “modern economic and cultural geography.”<sup>36</sup> This may apply in the case of the Research Triangle Park, where an effort was made to separate cultural and historic associations with the specific space of the park and with the broader regional context of the south. Durham’s leadership, on the other hand, has chosen to embrace the historic manufacturing legacy of the city, and avoid the risk of abandoning the city’s past by creating a wholly new, contemporary definition of what it means to be a citizen of Durham. Instead, there has been an effort to incorporate the cultural geography of the city’s heritage into its modern identity.

## ***Methods***

### Oral Histories

Since the late 1970s, historians have increasingly used oral histories to study a large range of topics. The approach differs from social science research in which pre-determined interviews are prepared and participants are asked identical questions with structured follow-

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<sup>35</sup> Havlick, David and Kirsch, Scott. “A Production Utopia? RTP and the North Carolina Research Triangle.” *Southeastern Geographer* 44 (2) 2004.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 265.

up. The purpose of this approach is to obtain standardized data that allow respondents' responses to be compared. Rather than creating research questions that are then imposed on the topic being studied, oral histories allow the collective voices of the people being interviewed to guide the researcher into places best known by those who experienced them. This does not imply that the research methods of oral historians are not structured, but rather that oral history remains open to giving agency to the people being studied.

The use of oral histories as a methodology for geographers has been relatively sparse, although use has grown.<sup>37</sup> One of the most significant challenges to oral histories in geographic research, it has been argued, is that, "data recovered from oral methodologies are not easily shaped into firm quantitative measures of the past, but, instead, reflect current perceptions and memories."<sup>38</sup> This criticism is addressed by Alistair Thomson who asserts that while oral histories do present current perceptions, these can sometimes be considered a resource rather than a problem.<sup>39</sup> Memory, Thomson states, can be used to understand how people make sense of their past and how people interpret their lives. In like manner, geographers can use oral histories to understand how memory shapes ideas of place and how places are often constructed from shared memories and the identification people make with

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<sup>37</sup> For examples see: Lewis, M.W. 1992. Wagering the Land: Ritual, Capital, and Environmental Degradation in the Cordillera of Northern Luzon, 1900-1986. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. Stevens, S.F. 1993. Claiming the High Ground: Sherpas, Subsistence, and Environmental Change in the Highest Himalaya. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. Perramond, Eric. "Oral Histories and Partial Truths in Mexico." *Geographical Review*. Vol. 91, No. 1/2, Doing Fieldwork (Jan. – Apr. 2001). Pp. 151-157. David Harvey and Mark Riley. "Country Stories: The Use of Oral Histories of the Countryside to Challenge the Sciences of the Past and Future." *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 30, no. 1 (2005). David Harvey and Mark Riley. "Narrating Landscape: The Potential of Oral History for Landscape Archaeology." *Public Archaeology* (2005).

<sup>38</sup> Perramond. "Oral Histories and Partial Truths." 151.

<sup>39</sup> Thomson, Alistair. "Fifty Years On: An International Perspective on Oral History." *The Journal of American History*. Vol. 85, No. 2 (Sept. 1998). Pp. 581-595.



place. The use of oral histories can reveal in more specific terms the differing players that construct the multiple identities of place.

David Harvey and Mark Riley have written specifically about the role of oral histories in geography with regard to heritage landscape management and landscape archaeology. They look to oral histories to “animate...landscape narratives of the past, and to challenge and problematise” narratives that inform management policies in Britain’s rural areas.<sup>40</sup> More specifically, Harvey and Riley discuss how heritage landscapes are reconstructions, and the risk of constructing new landscapes whose meaning is removed from the social, economic, and cultural context in which they were created. They suggest that oral histories can be used in what they call landscape archaeology.<sup>41</sup> By placing members of the public in the role of “knowing agents in the construction...of archaeological knowledge,” Harvey and Riley claim that previous knowledge can be “destabilized” in ways not possible through positivist methods.<sup>42</sup>

Andrews et al., reiterate the points made earlier by Perramond, and Harvey and Riley regarding the tendency to impose current perceptions on oral histories, but they assert that the ability of oral histories to represent cultural constructions is of important value.<sup>43</sup> In fact, the authors state, “these narratives provide...recollection about self, about relationships with

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<sup>40</sup> David Harvey and Mark Riley. “Country Stories: The Use of Oral Histories of the Countryside to Challenge the Sciences of the Past and Future.” *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 30, no. 1 (2005).

<sup>41</sup> David Harvey and Mark Riley. “Narrating Landscape: The Potential of Oral History for Landscape Archaeology.” *Public Archaeology* (2005).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>43</sup> Gavin J. Andrews, Robin A. Kearns, Pia Kontos, and Viv Wilson. “Their Finest Hour: Older People, Oral Histories, and the Historical Geography of Social Life.” *Social and Cultural Geography* 7, no 2 (April 2006): 153-177.

others and a place, insights rarely provided in such depth by other methods.” They also point out that oral histories provide a unique perspective on the “geographies of everyday” as well as the “geographies of place,” giving researchers an avenue in which to understand the relationships between identities and place at a variety of scales.<sup>44</sup> As a final point, Andrews et al., identify a quality inherent in oral histories not previously articulated as clearly. Oral histories are taken from the living, who are able to contemplate both the past and present, exposing how the “past is located in their present.”<sup>45</sup> This point has long been appreciated by oral historians, but outside of these few examples, geographers have yet to fully realize the potential in this research approach.

#### GIS/Spatial Analysis

Three consistent assertions arise about Durham’s history. First, Durham is often labeled as a place in which opportunity was exceptional within its region during the early and middle decades of the twentieth century. Second, because of the opportunity available in Durham, a specific demographic structure developed in the city that was also out of the ordinary with regard to race and gender. Third, during the later decades of the 20th century, Durham became an abandoned city, making possible future renovation projects. Historic data from the U.S. Census and available through The College of William and Mary and the Minnesota Population Center (NHGIS) is used to create maps and evaluate data regarding population mobility and economic opportunity. These data are used to examine the assertions regarding the creation of the city of Durham and its early city character.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 171.

Population data from the U.S. Census for 2000 and 2010 is used to address the claim of the abandonment of Durham that is central to the narrative of Durham's reconstruction efforts.

Incorporating GIS methods addresses the research questions in many capacities. The historic demographic data is incorporated into ArcMap and used to analyze historic and contemporary population trends beginning in 1900 and ending in 2010. Comparisons are made regarding the type and nature of migration throughout the specified time period. Map series depicting mobility were created for the 1900 to 1970 time period that show minority migration and female minority migration for North Carolina counties and cities of like rank. Additionally, a pair of dot density maps of selected Census tracts of the downtown Durham area in 1970 and 2010 were created in ArcMap to demonstrate the impact of initial downtown renovation projects on minority neighborhoods. Maps were also created using ArcMap to demonstrate the nature of the downtown area preceding the urban renovation projects, addressing the description of Durham as the "abandoned city."

Furthermore, an evaluation of demographic and economic data available from the U.S. Census is used as a comparison tool for the oral histories to assess the interviewee's idea of city identity. Historic economic data is used to substantiate claims of Durham as an exceptional place. Contemporary data is used to analyze current demographic trends and the economic transformation of the commercial and residential components of the city, as these are an important factor in the debate regarding Durham as a Creative Class city.

To address the research questions regarding memory, identity, and place in Durham, North Carolina's changing landscape, oral histories were collected from former Liggett-

Myers Tobacco Co. employees as well as city officials and other community members involved in the reconstruction process. Retirees employed during the mid-twentieth century and throughout the Civil Rights period were recruited. Groups of retirees were identified through various community groups, such as the Liggett-Myers retiree organization that hosts an annual reunion of retired Liggett-Myers employees, and through word of mouth. Participants were asked to provide information about their years of employment, place of residence during employment, race, gender, job title, and an explanation of job duties. Questions for the study's oral histories included those regarding the respondents' migration to Durham, NC, their previous employment, circumstances surrounding employment, the work environment at Liggett & Myers Tobacco company, factory politics, and their feelings regarding current reclamation projects underway in Durham. Histories were recorded using a digital voice recorder and converted to MP3 files for storage.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CITY THROUGH A COMMUNITY OF VOICES

#### *Introduction*



*Image 1: Durham's first illuminated sign, 1913. Photo courtesy of North Carolina Collection, Durham County Library. Reference E049.*

It was a cold, crisp evening on December 15, 1913 as the residents of the City of Durham gathered to witness the city's newest spectacle: its first illuminated sign. "Durham Renowned the World Around: Progress, Success, Health, and Wealth," the sign read. Posted proudly on top of the tallest building in town and comprising 1,230

electric bulbs, it was the beacon, the welcome to all incoming trains to Durham. It was also a colorful, blazing statement.<sup>46</sup> "Take notice," it seemed to say. "Durham is the new city of the south." The truth of that assertion was yet to be determined, but the message that Durham was an exception, an unconventional place within the confines of the early 20th century South, made a lasting impression. This impression remains the context of conversation about Durham. The oral histories in this study reveal an economic and social mobility, and a moment of labor solidarity that transcended the constraints of time and place.

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<sup>46</sup> Anderson, Jean Bradley. Durham County: A History of Durham County, North Carolina. 2nd Edition. Duke University Press: 2011. Pg 233.

They suggest a feeling of exceptionalism about Durham that had been cultivated decades ago and still resides in the memory of former Liggett and Myers Tobacco factory employees. For them, this feeling is permanently attached to place.

Most published discussion about Durham's exceptionalism concludes that any remarkable traits can be attributed to Durham's early leadership. For example, James Duke's foresight and imagination in the cigarette making industry. Or Julian Carr's instincts in advertising, demonstrating a deep understanding of how to market a city.<sup>47</sup> This assessment is not new. V.O. Key, in writing generally about North Carolina, pointed to a particular type of progressiveness described as a "community responsibility toward the Negro." Key describes a type of paternalism unlike its obvious predecessor, that gave the appearance of progressivism, but was in truth dependent upon white beneficence. In his chapter entitled, "North Carolina: Progressive Plutocracy," Key describes a state that was out of the norm for its time and place.<sup>48</sup> From its reluctance to go to war or the diminished importance of slavery, to the inclusion of blacks in public education or the presence of two clear political parties dominated by a wealthy class, North Carolina was an outlier.

William Chafe, writing about North Carolina and more specifically Greensboro, NC, later described the progressive image as the "progressive mystique."<sup>49</sup> The word "mystique" seems the perfect label as this word includes a reverence for something or someone but also

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<sup>47</sup> Aside from Jean Bradley Anderson, see: Webb, Mena. Julian Carr: General Without an Army. University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill. 1987. Durden, Robert F. Bold Entrepreneur: A Life of James B. Duke. Carolina Academic Press: Durham. 2003.

<sup>48</sup> Key, V.O. Jr., Southern Politics in State and Nation. The University of Tennessee Press: Knoxville. 1984. Pgs 205-228.

<sup>49</sup> Chafe, William H. Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom. Oxford University Press: New York. 1980. Pgs 3-10.

implies something intangible. Progressivism in North Carolina, according to Chafe, was a series of “implicit assumptions, nuances, and modes of relating that have been all the more powerful precisely because they are so elusive.”<sup>50</sup> However, Jean Bradley Anderson asserts there is more to Durham than progressive mystique. Whether Durham’s exceptionalism is the result of Key’s version of progressivism or not, the consequence in Durham was indeed tangible, especially in the black community. Anderson writes,

“Paradoxical beliefs existed side by side. Whites forced political restrictions and social separation on blacks at the same time that they voted them educational opportunity and winked at their economic advancement. Resentment coexisted with laissez-faire, and civil injustice with altruistic concern. A strong, self-sustaining, and dynamic black culture was thus able to emerge and flourish alongside these contradictory white impulses and unresolved conflicts in a house divided.”<sup>51</sup>

Anderson does not dismiss the notion of white paternalism. In fact, she writes about how the black entrepreneurial elite, in concert with the white elite, shaped the acquiescence of the black labor class.<sup>52</sup> She distinguishes Durham in part due to a combination of attitudes among elites but also asserts that the prominent “characteristic of Durham was...an easygoing tolerance, a live-and-let-live philosophy that may have been the psychological expiation for unrestrained moneymaking.”<sup>53</sup>

The point here is not to argue against the existence of white paternalism or the progressive mystique, but to demonstrate that there is a long-standing idea of Durham (and of

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>51</sup> Anderson, Durham County, 138.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., Pgs 130-139. Anderson writes, “Under the surface ran ambivalence in feeling and attitude that the apparent cooperation concealed. Of first importance was maintaining peace and preventing outbreaks that might erase black progress, however small, or upset the industrial applecart for the large manufacturers, who needed a reliable and constant pool of black labor.” Pg. 137.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 139.

North Carolina) as a progressive place. This idea is further confirmed in oral histories, but with an important distinction. According to the retired employees of Liggett & Myers Tobacco company, Durham was a unique place largely because it permitted and even cultivated generations of personal success. It was the personal successes, economic or social, that are the origin of the feelings of exceptionalism portrayed in the oral histories, not a conclusion based upon a factual study of measurable indicators.

Oral histories collected from former workers of Liggett and Myers Tobacco factory provide a narrative to parallel Anderson's portrayal. This narrative emphasizes the importance of individual interactions with Durham as a place in the development of a collective place identity. It is not offered here as a counter-narrative, but rather as a complement. The interviewees were never part of the economic or political elite in Durham, either black or white. They were laborers and as such were particularly vulnerable to the larger structures that dominated the South and the nation in the later part of the twentieth century. Regardless, their reflections on Durham and their life in Durham demonstrate a consistency with Anderson's depiction. Throughout the oral histories collected for this study is a statement, often implied, but at times direct, that Durham was an exceptional place.

Economic opportunity was cited by every interviewee as an important, and in some cases the most important, benefit that accompanied employment at the tobacco factory and residence in Durham. However universal this may seem, there were important distinctions and none more obvious than race. Employment in the tobacco factory was most advantageous for black workers and the highest gains in economic opportunity were made within the black community of tobacco workers, especially after segregation ended in the late



1960s. This is not surprising and has been cited by numerous authors.<sup>54</sup> While there was an overall environment of economic growth in the black community via “Black Wall Street”<sup>55</sup> and the presence of black entrepreneurship, the interviewees did not talk about these other possibilities. These were black laborers - the “other” black class. They spoke of individual triumph and small-scale success. This does not imply that their success was any less meaningful because it was not far-reaching. In fact, it is the opposite. The personal nature of their successes created a place that was more meaningful. It is the meaning attached to Durham that eventually carries forward to the participants’ view of contemporary changes in the city.

Nineteen oral histories were collected between May 2011 and October 2011. Nineteen additional interviews from the Southern Oral History program, collected earlier and independently, have been incorporated, for a total of 38 interviews. Furthermore, I attended two organized events of retired Liggett & Myers employees where I discussed with various attendees the concepts explored in this dissertation. Interviewees were retired Liggett & Myers Tobacco factory employees as well as public and private officials involved in the current renovation project ongoing in Durham, NC. Retirees were identified through various

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<sup>54</sup> There have been many authors who have written about the rise of the middle class black population in Durham as well as the rise of black labor activism. Most noteworthy are: Brown, Leslie. Upbuilding Black Durham: Gender, Class, and Black Community Development in the Jim Crow South. University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill. 2008.; Greene, Christina. Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina. The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill. 2005.; Korstad, Robert Rogers. Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South. The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill. 2003.; Janiewski, Dolores E. Sisterhood Denied: Race, Gender, and Class in a New South Community. Temple Press University: Philadelphia. 1985.

<sup>55</sup> “Black Wall Street” is a name given to the black-owned financial district that was located on four blocks of Parrish Street in downtown Durham, NC. The history of and scholarship about the neighborhood can be found at: <http://today.duke.edu/2007/01/parrish.html>. In addition, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s “Learn NC” offers a digital history of Parrish Street here: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-newcentury/6001>.

community groups, such as the Liggett & Myers retiree organization and word of mouth.

The duration of interview was approximately 1 1/2 hours. Because of the extensive nature of the oral histories, I have selected a representative group that is diverse with regard to participant background but together embody the spirit of the entire group of 38 oral histories.

Although the particular structure of the narrative varied from participant to participant, each involved a process of constructing a personal history that also contributed to a collective identity.

*Amos and Margaret Umstead* <sup>56</sup>



*Image 2: Amos and Margaret Umstead outside of their home, Durham, NC.*

Seventy-eight year old Amos Umstead and his 76 year old wife, Margaret, have been lifelong residents of Durham. They are high school sweethearts and attendees of Little River High School, the segregated black high school in Durham county. Amos did not complete his high school diploma, but Margaret graduated in 1954. By this time, Amos was serving overseas in the Army and would do so until 1955. Margaret spent this time in domestic work in Durham, carpooling into Durham with other black domestic workers from their home in

Rougemont.<sup>57</sup> Although she regrets her decision, she opted for domestic work rather than seeking employment in teaching or nursing. This, she says, was mostly because she didn't want to work on the weekends.

Upon returning from service, Amos worked briefly in a tire shop in Durham before getting a job in a shipyard in Newport News, VA. Work in the shipyard was tough, for little pay, driving the couple back to Durham; Amos to the tire shop, and Margaret to the Liggett and Myers Tobacco factory. When I asked them why they returned to Durham, Amos replied, "There's always a place for you to work. Somewhere. Black or white." Even though Durham was segregated, both Amos and Margaret claim that this didn't bother them. "Being black...you couldn't go but so far," Amos says. "That's just how it was...," Margaret

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<sup>56</sup> Interview, Amos and Margaret Umstead, 13 October 2011.

<sup>57</sup> Rougemont is a community located approximately 16 miles north of Durham on Hwy 15-501. As of December 1981, it is classified as a "Populated Place" by the United States Geological Survey. USGS ID: 1022403. It is listed as part of Durham County. Rougemont is alternately referred to as Red Mountain.

adds. But still, they claim, Durham was a place of opportunity, in large part due to the presence of the tobacco factories and Duke University. Margaret affirms, “It really was...it really was.”

Margaret’s work in the factory and activities with the union opened the door for Amos. One day, a member of the union asked Margaret if she could recommend an electrician for employment. She replied no, but she knew a plumber. And it was with this that Amos became the second black plumber hired in the craft shops at Liggett and Myers Tobacco factory. The move to the tobacco factory was welcomed enthusiastically by Amos because he and Margaret claim it was the best pay for laborers in the area. For approximately the next 20 years, Amos would work in a shop comprised of 20 white men, and 2 black men. When recalling his early days in the crafts shop, he says, “I was scared to death, man....I thought...I thought I was the dumbest.” Amos was intimidated to work in the pipe shop, for fear that his white colleagues were more experienced and knowledgeable about plumbing than he was. Little did he know at the time, but he was the only person in the entire shop that was a “master plumber,” holding a journeyman’s card. “I couldn’t believe it!” he says of the day when he learned this. There were some in the pipe shop that felt inferior to Amos because of this, and at the same time, resentful that a minority would be more qualified for the job than they were. “It didn’t bother me,” he says. “I just had to prove myself. Something I was already used to...just had to get used to it with another group of people.” But it was through this experience that Amos says he felt for the first time, “mentally...that’s when I became aware of where I was. Of who I was.”

Eventually Margaret left employment at the factory to stay home with their children. Amos continued work, throughout the years of segregation, and through one of the most contentious periods in the factory's history: the labor strike of 1978. Just before the strike, Margaret claims the company hired a consulting firm.

“They had someone come in. What do you call those people? They had them come in, and they said it was the blacks against the whites, and old against the young. But when the strike came, they forgot about this. It was one big family, they worked together. Fought together. Crossed the line together.”

Both Amos and Margaret describe the very strong emotions that permeated the factory during and after the strike. The idea of race, gender, or age disappeared under the collective identity of labor. The only two choices were union or scab. But out of this contention came a defining moment in Amos' life. “My whole shop crossed the picket line...” The craftsmen were not part of the labor dispute but had joined the tobacco workers in solidarity against the company when the company failed to honor their policy with regard to matching the wage rate given at other local tobacco factories. Eventually, the craftsmen left the strike and returned to the shop. All except Amos and one other man. Amos states, it was “one of the better experiences I've had in my life...and it brings tears to my eyes. [long pause] That I had...of standing up for what you believe in. And sticking to it. And I've carried that up to this day...of standing up for what you believe in and sticking to it.” When Amos returned to the shop, his peers viewed him differently. They viewed him with respect. “I get that from my father,” he says. “He was like that.”

When I ask Amos to reflect on what employment at the factory meant to him, he says, “It was a great...I enjoyed it. They allowed me to do what I was qualified to do. Mentally, it did something for me...If I didn't have the opportunity, that Liggett and Myers experience...

[silence] You knew you would never get there. Because of who I was.” In regard to Durham today, Amos says, “Its weird to see now and to see it back then. What happened? Just what happened?” Both Margaret and Amos reflect on the period in Durham when the tobacco factories left, and the city began an early phase of redevelopment as a negative period. The implications of the loss of the employees downtown to businesses located there is prominent in their minds as what led to the collapse of downtown. They express disappointment that Liggett and Myers left downtown, but also pride in the new renovations of the tobacco districts. Margaret summarizes their opinion of the city’s urban policy when she says with a tone of derision, “They didn’t want that (i.e., tobacco factories)...they were the City of Medicine.” When I ask them what they think about the new renovations of the old factory buildings, they become excited. They are anxious to hear about what the city is doing with the buildings and happy to hear that these changes are bringing life back to downtown.

While the initial benefit to employment at the tobacco factory was strictly economic, the Umstead’s story reveals a trend that was repeated throughout the oral histories. Memories associated with the factory and with Durham became less about financial gain and more about feelings of personal success and growth. In many cases, especially the histories offered by black employees, success was attained in spite of tremendous obstacles, both inside and outside the factory.

*Jim Waller*<sup>58</sup>

Jim Waller describes himself as a farm boy from Granville County. Born in 1922, Mr. Waller worked with his brother and father on their tobacco farm until 1941, when a friend of his father, Mr. Lyman Wilkins, convinced Jim's father to allow Jim to accompany him while he followed the tobacco sales. Jim inspected the tobacco while Mr. Wilkins purchased it. Mr. Wilkins was a buyer for Liggett & Myers Tobacco company. This small twist of fate carried Jim from working in "green tobacco" in the tobacco field to working for the company for \$16 per week. At the time, L & M only paid the weekly wages. Jim had to pay his room and board (an expense of \$8) as he and Mr. Wilkins traveled with the tobacco sale to Whiteville, NC. Every afternoon, after the sales ended, he would walk across the street to work on the scales, "just trying to learn about what was going on." It was his curiosity and desire for knowledge about the cigarette industry that would serve Jim well in the decades to come at the tobacco factory.



*Image 3: Jim Waller outside of his home in Durham, NC*

In January 1942, with the tobacco markets closing, Liggett & Myers asked Jim to continue working in the sign department. His job would have been to hang Chesterfield signs around Durham, NC. By this time, his mother and father had moved to Durham, his father working as a carpenter and his mother in an ice cream shop. Their home on Erwin Road was removed from the downtown area and the factory, and in the absence of a car, Jim was forced to travel by bicycle, making impossible a job that required

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<sup>58</sup> Interview, Jim Waller, 16 August 2011.

he hang signs around downtown. For that reason, Jim quit his job in the Liggett & Myers Leaf Department. Immediately, he put in an application for the cigarette factory, but without a response, accepted a job at the “dope” shop at Duke University.<sup>59</sup>

In June 1942, Jim returned home from his job in the soda shop to find out from his mother that someone from Liggett & Myers had called. They wanted him to return to work in the cigarette factory. In a brief interview with the manager of the factory Jim says, “I said...sir, I have a job. And he said ‘work a damn notice.’ So I said, ‘yes, sir.’ ...That’s what you said back then.” Jim’s job at Liggett & Myers began as an hourly employee, working in the stemmery across from the cigarette factory, placing tobacco from large containers into “hoppers” and keeping the floor clean. Jim recalls there was, “no air conditioning...hot as blazes in the summertime. But that was the easiest job I had.” While working in the stemmery, Jim began to learn how to work the machines by watching the operators at the cigarette factory across the street. Jim’s job in the stemmery lasted 90 days before he was moved across the street to the Cutting Department, placed on salary, and made a supervisor, “(he snaps)...Just like that.”

As the summer of 1943 approached, Jim was aware that he would be drafted by the United States Army. After serving in the Army for three years, Jim returned to Durham and to Liggett & Myers. He continued on an upward path with the tobacco company during the next 20 years, moving from one floor to another, learning the cigarette making industry from the bottom-up. Finally, in 1970, Liggett & Myers sent Jim to the University of Virginia to

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<sup>59</sup> Before World War I, a shop was opened in the Union basement of Duke’s West Campus. “Dope” was a slang term used to describe cola drinks. The “Dope Shop” on Duke’s West Campus was a magnet for student activity, and was famous for its milkshakes. For photographs and more information see: [www.dukestores.duke.edu/about/history.php](http://www.dukestores.duke.edu/about/history.php)



take a 12-week course that prepared him for a Superintendent's position. Eventually, he would become Cigarette Manager, then Vice President of Operations at the Durham, NC plant. Reflecting on his rise in the cigarette factory, Jim says, "Its a secret. I read long ago in the newspaper that if you want to get ahead in this world, you hire people smarter than you, and they'll carry you right on to the top." It is clear from Jim's recollections that he respected and admired his fellow workers at the factory, especially his subordinates. If his own testimony was not evidence enough, when I toured the current Liggett & Myers tobacco factory operating in Mebane, NC with Mr. Waller (an event that he arranged so that I could witness the making of cigarettes), the reception given him by laborers on the "floor" was overwhelming. It was a warm homecoming, displayed by the signs of affection given to Mr. Waller, and reminded one more of a family reunion than a former supervisor visiting a factory.

Mr. Waller's five decades of employment at Liggett & Myers coincided with some of the greatest social changes both inside and outside the factory: the era of the Civil Rights Movement as well as the introduction (or attempt) of organized labor to manufacturing in the American South. When asked about these periods, I begin to understand the meaning behind the warmth of his reception in the tobacco factory. "In Durham, the tobacco that was bought on the floor came in and the leaf was stripped by hand. Didn't have machines to take the stem out...You had colored women. All colored women. Working in them assembly lines. That was their position. No white women. White women were over in the factory. The union got involved and raised so much cain with the upper management for the weather conditions. Cause it was hot, ya know. They had to wear uniforms. They [management]

told them, ‘we gon take care of that next year. It’ll be fine.’ They bought stripping machines and replaced every one of them. (long pause) They all lost their jobs....that was before I went to work” There was a sentiment of loss, of regret, echoed in Mr. Waller’s words. The injustice of the company’s activities was clear to Mr. Waller, but simultaneously the mistrust of union activities was also clear. There is a sense of blame that was directed toward the union, not the company, for the loss of livelihood. However, there is also a feeling of compassion and responsibility, although conceivably paternalistic, toward employees.

When asked about how, as a supervisor, Mr. Waller viewed desegregation, he responded, “there was some resentment [among employees]. But what you did as a supervisor...you’d take a person and put them with a person that was compatible. Because you could move them any way you want to. And tell them to train them. And that worked out better than just slapping them in there.” In regard to women taking over manufacturing jobs previously held by men, Mr. Waller felt women were often better employees than men, “they concentrate more on what they’re doing. And they’re not always looking at the men like the men are looking at the women. (he laughs).” But overall, Mr. Waller’s reflection on the transition from a segregated work place to a desegregated work place was somewhat sterile. “Then when we brought the colored in...I don’t think that was much trouble.” Instead of focusing the interview on tensions between employees in the factory, Mr. Waller concentrated on memories of employee and supervisor interactions. He spent considerably more time talking about scenarios where employees were caught stealing cigarettes or breaking company rules, and his response to these behaviors. His response was often

solicitous, demonstrating compassion for employees even when circumstances did not require it.

When asked about the ongoing renovation of the downtown Durham area, Mr. Waller stated his support of the renovation and changes that he considers are positive for Durham. He attributes most of the progress in Durham to “politics.” When asked specifically about the role of the factory downtown, he believes the factory building should be preserved, but has specific ideas about its use. “It should be a parking lot,” he says. “Shouldn’t be a business. That should have been a 6-floor parking lot...but I tell you, they’re talking about spending \$83 million on that building? In my...of course I’m just a farm boy out of Granville County...but that might be the dumbest thing I know to do.”

Mr. Waller’s circumstances are different from the Umstead’s. As a white male, Mr. Waller was immune to the constraints and prejudices imposed on black workers in the South. Therefore, a comparison in direct terms is not possible, but better serves as an alternative indication of the relationship between personal identity and place. The Waller and Umstead stories are on the opposite ends of a spectrum. Their social and economic experiences are vastly different, as is their connection to place. However, what can be demonstrated here is the ability of place to generate a cohesive sense of meaning and community, regardless of individual, emotional responses to place. In other words, the experiences need not be alike or shared for the development of a collective meaning.

The identification of Durham as an exceptional place is not dependent upon a shared experience. Mr. Waller’s testimony about his life in Durham is closely aligned with Anderson’s assertion about Durham’s duality, but also demonstrative of Key’s assertion of an

unusual paternalism that dominated the state, but was dependent upon white acquiescence. Mr. Waller's sense of responsibility toward subordinates, his acknowledgement of subordinate intelligence, and his self-image of a benevolent supervisor are evidence of this paternalism. For Mr. Waller, the self admission that this behavior was different is what makes his experience exceptional. "We did this on our own. It didn't come from corporate," he says when talking about how supervisors at the Durham location made specific efforts to connect with workers. In comparison, the Umstead's conclusion that Durham was an extraordinary place was directly tied to the development of their self-worth. The ability to achieve personally what was originally thought unattainable, for example the confirmation for Amos that he is worthy of admiration from his peers, created the sense that Durham was different. Nevertheless, the outcome is the same.

### *Verlie Minnie Sue Mooneyham*<sup>60</sup>

Sue Mooneyham was raised in a sharecropping family in the small community of Del Rio, Tennessee just over the border from North Carolina. In the early 1900s, Del Rio, in Cocke County, was still not a designated place recognized by the U.S. Census.<sup>61</sup> The town is situated alongside Big Creek and was originally a home to the Cherokee. This place, surrounded by the Appalachian Mountains, is majestic and isolated. It is excluded by its geography from the cultural, economic, and social influences of cities such as Asheville, North Carolina, to the east, and Knoxville, Tennessee, to the west. Sue and her family lived in the section of Del Rio known by locals as Slab Town, in Annie Holler. Aside from train tracks, a small whitewashed post office, and a community store, Slab Town is even now no more than a speck on the landscape. On school days, Sue would come down from the holler and meet her teacher, Mr. Stokley (part of *the* Del Rio Stokleys), who, as she tells it, would walk her across the creek to the one-room school house.<sup>62</sup> Although Sue enjoyed learning, her experience with formal education ended by the age of eight. She was needed to work on the mountain with her sharecropping family, to maintain a most basic existence.

In 1944, Sue was fifteen years old and married. She and her husband's family, the Burgesses, ventured over the great Appalachian Mountains on a journey to South Carolina to

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<sup>60</sup> Interview, Verlie M. Sue Poole, 26 July 2008.

<sup>61</sup> The term "designation" is used for consistency with the terminology of the U.S. Census Bureau for Census Designated Place (CDP). Places, according to the U.S. Census Bureau Geographic Area Description, are composed of CDPs, consolidated cities, and incorporated places. CDPs do not have a population size requirement, but instead are used to identify settled concentrations of populations that are not legally recognized as incorporated by the state in which they are located.

<sup>62</sup> Born in Warren County, North Carolina in 1747, Jehu Stokley was the first Stokley to settle in Tennessee in 1797. He brought with him a wife, Nancy Neal from Charleston, South Carolina, and six children, Royal, John, Thomas, Susan, Nancy, and Polly. Jehu's great grandsons would later found Stokley Van-Camp's, famous for their pork and beans. This information and much more on the Stokley family can be found in "Genealogy of the Stokley's from East Tennessee" by Gordon Stokley Jr. (<http://home.cinci.rr.com/stokley/>)

follow the agricultural season. For unknown reasons, they were waylaid in Durham, North Carolina. Sue found a job at the Erwin Cotton Mill where she worked for about two years until she was able to secure a position at the Liggett-Myers Tobacco Factory. According to Sue, work in the cotton mill was “no good,” and a job in the tobacco factory was considered a step up. When Sue’s husband and the rest of the Burgess family were ready to move on to South Carolina, Sue was not willing to go.<sup>63</sup> The Burgess family moved on and Sue stayed - seventeen years old, alone, and pregnant. She said, “I had never been to the doctor before that job. And I knew that I couldn’t leave such a good job”. In addition to health insurance, Sue identified other issues important to her such as paid sick leave, maternity leave, and vacation. Her choice to stay was unusual and was made possible by the broader changes occurring in the South at the time. However, the choice to stay indicates how important her job was to her and her belief that opportunity such as this would not exist elsewhere - that Durham was somehow special.



*Image 4: Verlie M. Sue Poole on the floor at Liggett & Myers the day she retired, January 31, 1986*

ready for work. Her job at Liggett-Myers Tobacco factory began at 7am. At the time, Durham was filled with young GIs who were stationed at Camp Butner, about fifteen miles outside of Durham. Sue recalls standing at the bus stop at Five Points watching the GIs and other young women in the cafes dancing the

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<sup>63</sup> While Sue is willing to discuss her work in the tobacco factory and some of the circumstances that led her to Durham, North Carolina, she is not willing to discuss her marriage or pregnancy in any detail.

jitter bug and laughing with one another.<sup>64</sup> Once at the factory, Sue ran a “packer” and a “wrapper.” The packer is a machine that collected the cigarettes into packs of ten, and the wrapper is a machine that wrapped the pack in cellophane. Sue remembers that initially, these functions were accomplished with two machines, operated by five women. Finally, new technology brought the “GDs,” a machine imported from Germany that could both pack cigarettes and wrap cigarette packs.<sup>65</sup> After that point only one person was necessary to operate the machine that both packed and wrapped the cigarettes. Initially, workers on these machines were women. Men worked on the “maker” machines, machines that made the cigarettes, or they were “fixers,” who repaired the machines. Male maker operators and fixers were paid more than the female packers and wrappers. Men also held most management positions. Although Sue remembers that there were some women supervisors, or “floor ladies,” that were the subordinates of men. Eventually, in the 1960s, men began working the packers and wrappers, and women were allowed to work the makers. Sue remembers this as an important change for the women in the factory as it gave them the potential to earn more income.

While the tobacco factory did employ both black and white women in the 1940s, Sue recalls that black and white women did not work together. She claims that after integration and the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, black women and men were trained to run the machines. Until this time, blacks were given the “dirty jobs,” as Sue labeled them. They swept the floor, cleaned the bathrooms, worked across the street from the factory unloading

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<sup>64</sup> Five Points is a neighborhood and business district at the intersection of Cleveland, Mangum, and Corporation Streets in the downtown area of Durham, NC.

<sup>65</sup> “GDs” refer to the G.D. AUTOMATISCHE VERPACKUNGSMASCHINEN GmbH, manufactured in Langenfeld, Germany. The machines were initially brought to the U.S. in the 1970s. For more information, see the corporate website: [http://www.gidi.it/gd/english/company/gd\\_world/germany.jsp](http://www.gidi.it/gd/english/company/gd_world/germany.jsp).

the tobacco, and worked on the fifth and sixth floors cutting the tobacco and mixing the blends that would be put into the cigarettes. Sue does not recall animosity among workers at the factory once integration occurred. “When they brought someone to you to train them on a machine, you just did it. And you were nice to them...if you wanted to keep your job.”

Sue often thinks about “the good old days.” Her thoughts frequently return to times when Liggett-Myers hired entertainers, such as Perry Como, the Andrews Sisters, or Jimmy Dean to perform for the workers on the street outside of the factory. When I asked her what changed, she could not articulate any specific change. Her response was “progress changes. You felt freer back then than you do now, you know? You had...the company wasn’t pushy like it is now. You did your job and they didn’t bother you. But before I retired, the company would have to come behind everybody due to the new crowd. They didn’t carry their weight and do their jobs right. One day I asked a supervisor why. The supervisor said this is a new generation. We worked - we didn’t stand around and talk like they do now.”

Sue’s best memories are those of the people and of her work. She enjoyed her work, and she often thinks about her time in the tobacco factory. She’d love to be there now, working and spending time with her co-workers. She has not yet visited the newly renovated Liggett-Myers factories that have been converted into high-rent apartments and commercial spaces. She hears that Durham is doing a good job with the reclamation and feels that the project is important, “its history.” She compares the factory reclamation with the city’s failure to preserve the old train station. “Many a GI went through that train station on their way from Camp Butner - and that’s now gone. They should have never torn that down. That was a mistake. Hopefully they’ve learned their lesson.” Even though the former factory and



warehouses are being used for high-rent apartments and commercial space instead of being preserved in its original state, Sue believes the project to be worthwhile.

Like many elderly people, at 83 years old, Sue rarely leaves her home in Durham. She reads about the changes in downtown Durham in her daily newspaper and saves the clippings that pertain to the factory. “Tobacco built this town...if it weren’t for tobacco factories and us workers, there’d be no Durham” she says. While driving her around town one afternoon, Sue points out where the old train station was located. “There,” she says, “I can’t believe its gone...I came in on that train.” I ask her, “you came in (to Durham) at that train station? You didn’t know anyone? Then you stayed not knowing anyone?” “No,” she says. “That was brave,” I say. “It weren’t brave,” she says, “sometimes you just have to start a new life....but they shouldn’t have torn that train station down.”

Sue’s decision to stay in Durham once her family moved on, and her belief that she would not find opportunity elsewhere implies that, to her, Durham was a special place. Sue claims she had never received actual money for a job done until she began work in Durham. Her life as a sharecropper was one reason for her lack of earnings, another that she was a young female, and not given the opportunity to assert an independence that individual pay would bring. Similar with the Umstead’s view, Sue views Durham as a place that was unusual in its opportunity for people who were otherwise disenfranchised, and Liggett & Myers specifically as a place where compensation for labor was higher than could otherwise be expected. Therefore it was a combination of economic independence and social mobility that distinguished the City of Durham from other places.

## *Other Voices*

Throughout the oral histories, there are stories of hope, independence, and personal triumph. On a broad scale, these successes were attributed to Durham, but a closer review of the oral histories reveals the extent to which employees credited the tobacco company, if not specifically Liggett & Myers, then the tobacco industry, in Durham. This is an important distinction because it relates to their relationship with a particular place upon the landscape, in this case the tobacco factory building. Clifton White, the second electrician to be hired by Liggett & Myers Tobacco company, summarizes the role of the tobacco industry clearly:

“The cigarette factories probably made a lot of people in Durham...you know, prominent. It made them prominent because of what the opportunity that the people had. Good jobs. They made good money. If you got a job at the cigarette factory, you kept your nose clean, you could stay there until you retired. You made good money. They made the black people - a



*Image 5: Clifton White at his home in Durham, NC*

lot of them - they made them prominent. It was like when I was coming up, you thought the school teachers and the principals, and stuff like that...they made the good money. They were the people you looked up to because they made good money. But people that worked in the cigarette factories made the same money that they made. So they were able to get up. And get homes and become prominent.”<sup>66</sup> This echoes earlier testimonies. Sue’s belief that work in the cotton mill was “no good” in comparison to work in the tobacco factory, the

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<sup>66</sup> Interview, Clifton White, 10 October 2011.

Umstead's enthusiasm to leave other employment for work in the factory, and Mr. Waller's testimony about his own efforts to secure a job in the cigarette factory are evidence of workers' belief that Liggett & Myers Tobacco company was the preferred place to be. To the community of workers at Liggett & Myers Tobacco company, Durham lived up to its 1913 claim as a place for "progress, wealth, success, and health," and did so because of the tobacco industry.

At eighteen years old, Mary Martin began a 37 year career at Liggett & Myers on the recommendation of a neighbor.<sup>67</sup> "The lady across the street from us worked at Liggett & Myers. She came and asked me if I would be interested in going to work there because the salary was so much better than what I was making." At the time, Mary was earning \$22 per week working at the notions counter at Kress' Department Store in downtown Durham. Her



*Image 6: Mary and Cleo Martin at their home in Timberlake, NC*

job at the factory increased her pay to \$44 per week. "Oh what an experience it was! Getting used to smelling the tobacco and everything, you know... going in and seeing all those machines, I thought, 'wow...what have I gotten into.' Looking back the job was absolutely amazing." Mary goes on to talk about being able to complete a degree from Durham Technical Community College after she began work at Liggett & Myers, and then

meeting her husband, Cleo, at the factory. "It seemed to be common for people to meet their spouse at the factory...and there was some break up of marriages. That was sad. There were affairs. We used to tease

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<sup>67</sup> Interview, Mary Martin, 18 April 2011.

about it being a sort of Peyton Place,” she laughs. “It wasn’t a lot, but there was some.”

Mary and Cleo live in Person County in the home in which they raised their two sons. Cleo still has the truck he drove when he and Mary were dating. There is nostalgia wrapped up in Mary’s memories of the factory and an appreciation that her life has been a product of her employment at Liggett & Myers. “I was very lucky with that job, all in all.” When asked about the renovation of the factory buildings in downtown Durham, Mary says, “I think it’s wonderful...there’s going to be like communities and towns...it’s convenient...people get to walk more. It’s better for their health. I really think it’s a good idea.”

Not all tobacco workers viewed the tobacco factory as a positive environment within which to work. Annie Mack Barbee began work in the tobacco factory in 1928 after her family moved to Durham.<sup>68</sup> Annie was hired as a sweeper to work in the non-air conditioned, segregated factory and recalls the working environment. “On that side where we were working, black women did all the hard and nasty work, that’s what I say. On the cigarette side, where they wore those white uniforms and made sure no blacks worked over there.” When asked to elaborate on how difficult and dirty the work was, Annie says, “Sweat would be - you’d see the women coming out there, you couldn’t find a dry place on ‘em. For water. I’m telling you ‘cause I was up there.” Annie goes on in her interview to address issues of racism in the work place and how it impacted the working environment. Dora Scott Miller, who also worked in the factory during the 1920s and 1930s supports Barbee’s descriptions of racial segregation and difficult factory work.<sup>69</sup> But, in spite of difficult

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<sup>68</sup> Barbee, Annie Mack. Interview H-0190. Southern Oral History Program Collection. Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>69</sup> Miller, Dora Scott. Interview H-0211. Southern Oral History Program Collection. Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

working conditions and racial discrimination, Miller claims, “You didn’t hear nobody complain. People were so much stronger than they are now.” Throughout Miller’s interview, she describes the differences in the work environment for white women and black women, sharing the difficulties of pay-by-the-pound work, and the limitations of black female workers to address labor concerns. Nevertheless, even with these difficulties, Miller reflects on the tobacco factory as a positive force in her life. “You had to make a living somewhere. It was a decent, honest job, and as I forestated, you made more there than you’d make anywhere else.” When asked if Liggett & Myers was a source of financial stability for black people during the 1920s and 1930s, Miller replies, “Yes, it really was.”

Like Annie Mack Barbie and Dora Scott Miller, Blanch Scott was employed in the segregated stemming factory of Liggett & Myers throughout the 1930s. Scott began her work in the factory in 1921 at thirteen years old, having lied about her age and needing work to support her family. She worked at the tobacco factory for twenty-four years before taking a job as a beautician. During her time at the factory, Scott fostered relationships with other women with whom she worked alongside. “We would have a lot of fun together....we formed a little club. Just like your birthday’s in one month, maybe in December, when your birthday come, all of us that worked there together, we’d go in and give so much money to you....I got a glass basket here now they give me, and I’ve been out from up there thirty-three years. I got it now; it’s a glass basket with a handle.” Scott acknowledged the difficulties of tobacco factory work and the overwhelming hurdles constructed because of segregation, but more frequently she focused on the advantages the factory job provided for her and her family. “Sometimes mama would go to work and then she’d come back sick. She had some

kind of palpitation at the heart. It made me want to when I grow up, I wanted to have something. I was going to work one morning, and I saw a schoolmate of mine. She was bringing her daddy to work in a car, beautiful car. He was a colored foreman at Liggett & Myers. I looked at her and I thought about myself. I wanted to have something one day, so I just didn't stop. I just kept on till I did get a chance."

Mary Sykes did not suffer the disadvantages of racial segregation, but her reflections on the factory are bittersweet.<sup>70</sup> Mary was a 21 year old, self-described "Durhamite" when she began work at Liggett & Myers in 1952. "The first ten years of my married life I worked night time. I went to work when I was 21 and got married at 22." Mary recalls being frustrated with her work schedule, hoping to work more daytime hours so she could spend more time with her husband, who was self-employed. "My ambition was to improve my lifestyle," she says. However there is a tone of regret about Mary's hours spent at work. Mary's husband, James, passed away leaving her a young widow with no children. Because of this, Mary wishes she had spent more time with her husband than at work. When asked about work place tension with regard to segregation, Mary makes a distinction between racial segregation and the environment of the factory after the labor strike. "When they had that strike...that's when the hatred was there. That was when...I mean we...it was hard to take and work with people because we felt like we were defeated. We went out there and walked that picket line although we were not all for it, we honored the union. I lost pounds walking that picket line." Like Mary Umstead, Mary Sykes talks about the greater importance of labor solidarity than racial tension, "I think they felt...black and white were nice to each other. But

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<sup>70</sup> Interview. Mary Sykes. 27 September 2011

when we went back to work, people that we knew broke the picket line, I didn't speak to them unless I had to...In fact, it was so bad for some of them that they retired not long after that. They literally retired because people would not speak to them.” But in the end, when asked to reflect on the impact the factory had on her life, Mary states, “I feel like in a way it was a miracle that I got to go there...and some of the people that I met...I guess some of my best friends were people from up there. A whole lot of them.”

Labor solidarity and friendship were also the topic most prominent in Joan Ellis' memory as she recalled her days working at Liggett & Myers.<sup>71</sup> Joan began work at the tobacco factory in 1957 as a “catcher,” and she remained employed for 36 years, working her way up to “machine operator.” She talked often of the family atmosphere of the factory, “people looked after one another...and enjoyed one another's company during the long work days - sometimes seven days a week, eleven hours per day.” Much of Joan's reflections surrounded union activity in the factory. “There was a white union and a black union. The black union took care of their employees better than the white union.” Joan expressed some distrust of white union leaders with regard to how funds were handled stating that the black worker's union dispersed extra funds among their members while the white worker's union chose to invest union funds in failing projects. However, regardless of her unease about leadership, and the difficulties of going on strike, she believed the union was important, “it was a good thing,” she said. When asked to reflect on the role of the tobacco factory in her life, Joan talked about company benefits that allow her to live as she currently does. There is a fondness for the company because of her recognition that the retirement paycheck from the

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<sup>71</sup> Interview. Joan Ellis. 10 April 2011.

factory affords retired employees the lifestyle that she now enjoys, something she cites social security alone could not accomplish.

But there were times, especially as the 20th century came to a close that work in the factory lost its stability. As the tobacco industry began to fail, the factory necessarily responded with layoffs. Robert Maddry, a truck driver from 1969 to 1999 talked about these difficult years in the factory.<sup>72</sup> “I retired when the factory announced it was going to move out of Durham into Mebane. Through the years Liggett had gotten smaller and smaller.



*Image 7: Robert Maddry at his home in Hillsborough, NC*

They had sold out several times. Everybody thought the factory was going to close. Most of the time that I worked there that was something that was always hanging over our heads.” As the factory began to reduce output due to a nationwide decrease in tobacco product demand, the need for large, oversized factory buildings and warehouses diminished. In Mebane, the operation is housed in one building, on one

level. But the move to Mebane meant more to factory workers than layoffs. According to Maddry, it was a break down of the family atmosphere that employees recall so fondly. “When I worked in Durham all of the retirees would come by once a week. They’d come along and visit. But when they moved to Mebane, everything was in one building. Nobody can go in. You have to push a button and say who you are and what your business is. You can’t just go visit. When I was in Durham you could do that. A retiree could come by and go anywhere in the factory.

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<sup>72</sup> Interview. Robert Maddry. 8 August 2011.



People who you'd worked with years and years and years. I'd like to go back, but like I said, you can't get in. They don't want you there if you're not working." Still, Robert remembers his life in the factory as one family. In the early morning, the truck drivers would arrive to work early. "We'd put a pot of coffee on and drink coffee until it was time to go to work....it was just a family. A big, huge family....We knew their wives. We socialized with them away from the factory. I still got some good friends and I know their kids. Some of them's wives have died.....It was just a good place to work."

This sample of oral histories, taken from diverse participants who worked over a nine decade span, reveals that the formulation of a collective identity connected to a particular place is not dependent upon a shared, identical experience. Individuals can experience place separately from other members of their community but still share a sense of solidarity about the meaningfulness of the place. In the succeeding chapters, I will determine if Durham was exceptional by measurable standards, and I will explore episodes when workers felt particularly disconnected from place. Using this information, I will discuss how these events impact views of the current renovation project ongoing in downtown Durham and explore the connection between personal identities and the process of re-making place.

## CHAPTER 3

### DURHAM AS EXCEPTIONAL

#### *Introduction*

Urban places have long represented opportunity. The transformation of the United States economy from one dependent upon agriculture to one in which manufacturing played a more prominent role was felt toward the end of the 19th century and into the early decades of the 20th century, even in North Carolina. The opportunity to participate in this transformation led many individuals and families to abandon rural lives for urban living during this period. This shift is apparent in the oral histories collected from Durham's Liggett and Myers tobacco workers.

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, there was a pervasive belief that Durham was an exceptional place among those from whom oral histories were collected. Certainly, belief plays an important role in the formation of place identity, but the belief in this case leads to two questions: Was Durham out of the ordinary in a measurable way? And to what extent is the collective identity formed about Durham based on fact, belief, or a combination of the two?

To address these questions, data from the United States Census for population, characteristics, employment, and income were compiled for each Census between 1900 and 1970. These decades coincide with the period discussed by the workers from whom the oral

histories were collected. With these data, a series of maps was created to show the relocation of minority populations.

Given the time period and the constraints on minority populations during that period, it was assumed that minority mobility was especially reflective of opportunity. Attention was also focused on minority mobility to amplify the social and economic opportunities of places. For this particular population these opportunities may not be possible to determine from general mobility patterns. And the historic record of Durham also suggests that the city was unusual in the opportunities it offered minorities.

### ***Minority Mobility and Female Minority Mobility 1900-1970***

County-level data from the U.S. Census was retrieved from the Minnesota Population Center, National Historical Geographic Information System.<sup>73</sup> The University of Minnesota maintains a national registry of historic GIS data. These county data consist of total population and population by race and sex for each decade across the period of interest. Data for cities were obtained from U.S. Census published volumes and compiled into a spreadsheet.<sup>74</sup> Percent change in minority population is best used to determine minority movement. If absolute difference in minority population is used to calculate minority mobility, counties with a large population will most likely have the largest change, simply demonstrating the location of minority populations rather than its growth or decline. One disadvantage to using percent change as an indication of minority mobility is the issue of

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<sup>73</sup> Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 2011. The College of William and Mary and the Minnesota Population Center. School Attendance Boundary Information System (SABINS): Version 1.0. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 2011.

<sup>74</sup> U.S. Census volumes are available at Davis Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

small numbers. In counties where there are very few minorities, a small migration into or out of the county can result in large values of percent change when in fact the actual number of minorities migrating are very small. Minority Mobility was calculated as a percent change in the minority population from each decade using the following formula:

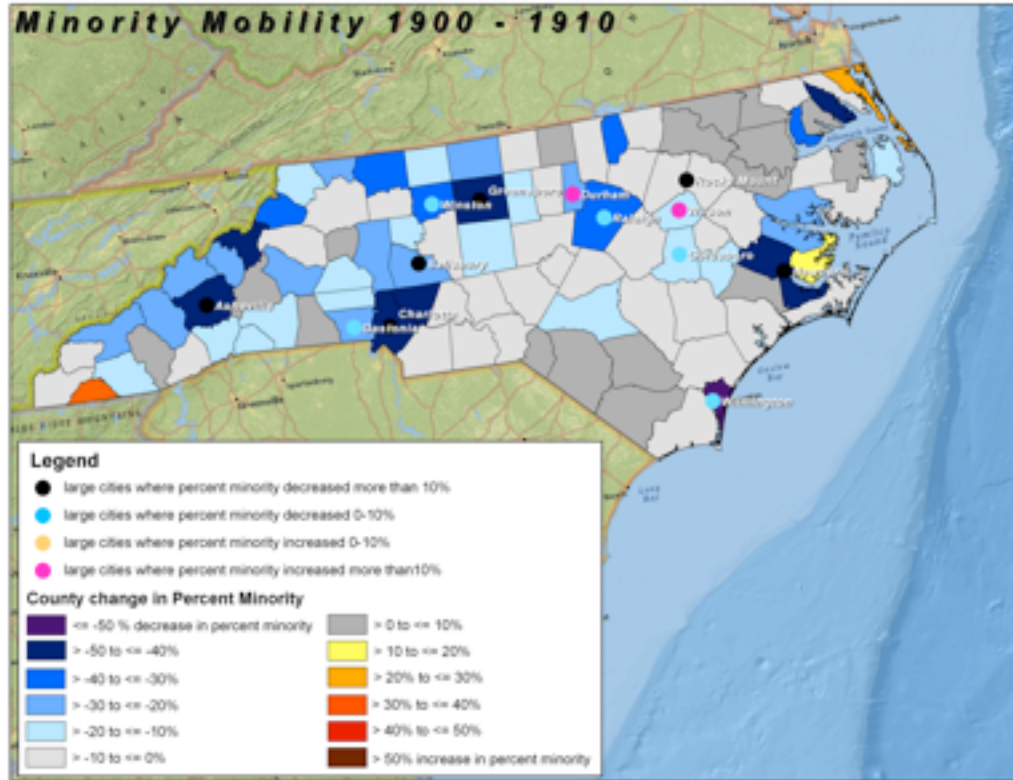
$$\text{Percent Change} = \frac{Y_2 - Y_1}{Y_1} * 100$$

For each decade, all “non-white” are considered “minority.” In earlier decades, the Census simply gives two categories, “white” and “negro,” or “white” and “non-white.” Beginning with the 1970 Census, the “non-white” category is divided into sub-categories. For this decade all sub-categories are added together to create one “minority” category. Using the same definition of “minority” and the same formula, Female Minority Mobility was calculated as the percent of minority females from the total female population.

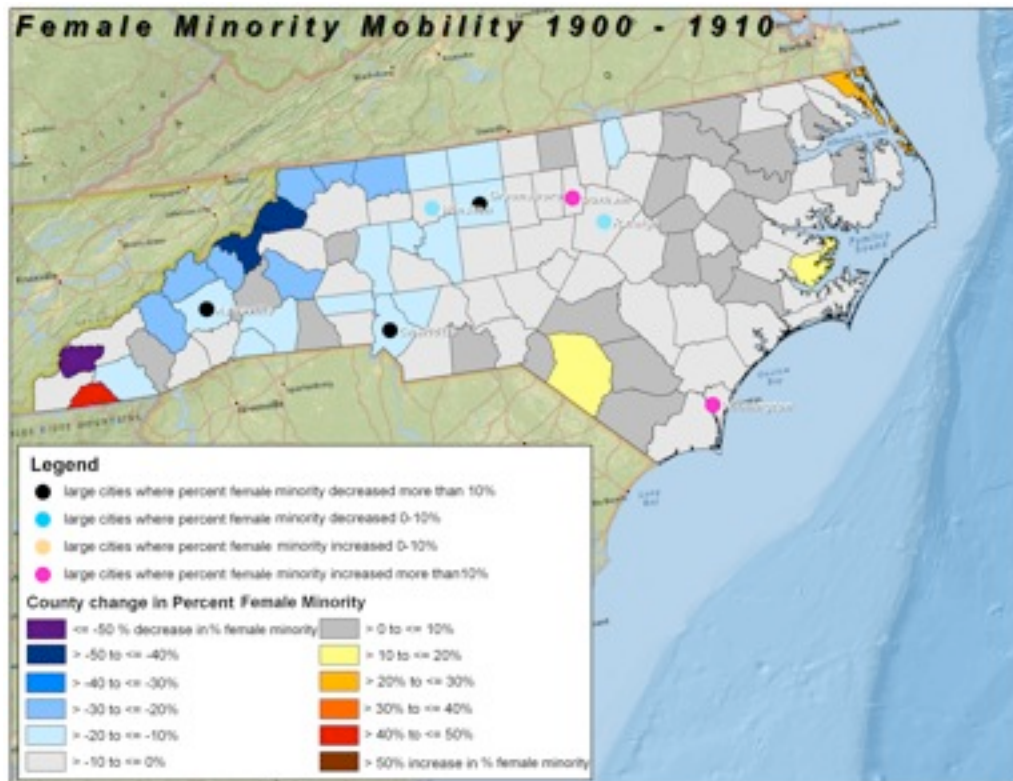
The resulting percentages were mapped using ArcMap 9.3. The cities represented in the following maps were selected based upon two criteria: population size according to the U.S. Census and the consistent availability of data throughout the chosen decades.<sup>75</sup> For each decade, the Census groups cities according to those of similar population size. Those fitting consistently in the largest category were selected. See Appendix II for map of North Carolina Counties.

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<sup>75</sup> The data for individual cities can be located at the following: U.S. Census 1900, *Statistics of Population - Sex, General Nativity, and Color*, “Population by Sex, General Nativity, and Color for Places having 2500 Inhabitants or More: 1900,” Table 23, Pgs 632-633; U.S. Census 1910, *Population - North Carolina*, Table III, Pg 313; U.S. Census 1920 *Population - North Carolina*, “Composition and Characteristics of the Population for Cities of 10,000 or More, 1920,” Table 10, Pgs. 745-746; U.S. Census 1930, *Population - North Carolina, Composition and Characteristics*. “Composition of the Population for Cities and Towns of 10,000 or More: 1930,” Table 15, Pg 367; U.S. Census 1940, *North Carolina Characteristics of the Population*. “Composition of the Population for Cities of 10,000 to 100,000: 1940,” Table 31, Pg 392; U.S. Census 1950, *North Carolina Characteristics of the Population*. “Age by Color and Sex for Standard Metropolitan Areas, Urbanized Areas, and Urban Places of 10,000 or more: 1950,” Table 33, Pgs. 55-61; U.S. Census 1960, *North Carolina Characteristics of the Population*. “Age by Color and Sex for Standard Metropolitan Areas, Urbanized Areas, and Urban Places of 10,000 or more: 1960,” Table 20, Pgs. 35-48; U.S. Census 1970, *North Carolina General Population Characteristics*. “Age by Race and Sex for Areas and Places: 1970,” Table 24, Pgs. 35-80.



Map 1: Change in Minority Population 1900-1910



Map 2: Change in Female Minority Population 1900-1910

Between 1900 and 1910, nearly every county in North Carolina lost minority population. However, only two cities gained minority population during this time, Durham and Wilson. Wilson's gain was significantly greater than Durham's at 39% and 12% respectively. In both cases there were losses to the county population, which implies movement from rural to urban areas. This state-wide trend of minorities leaving rural areas, and in many cases leaving the state, was noted by Rupert Vance in his study of Southern population mobility from 1790 to 1920.<sup>76</sup> According to Vance, the movement of minorities out of rural counties occurred at a greater rate than white out-migration in rural counties, and was fairly consistent among all southern states leading into and in the early decades of the twentieth century. In agreement with Vance, James Gregory notes that Southern populations were migrating out of the Southeast as early as the nineteenth century.<sup>77</sup> Though white out-migration was significant, it occurred at a lesser rate and for differing reasons than black out-migration. Additionally, Gregory states the black exodus from the South had significantly greater impact on both the South and the regions to which they migrated.<sup>78</sup>

The larger incoming population in Wilson, NC is likely due to the merger of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad (ACL). Beginning on 23 April 1900, 1,500 miles of railroad were merged to create a rail system from Virginia to Florida.<sup>79</sup> More importantly to this circumstance, the north-south main line of the ACL traveled through Rocky Mount, Wilson,

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<sup>76</sup> Vance, Rupert. Human Geography of the South. The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, NC 1932. Pg. 57.

<sup>77</sup> Gregory, James N. The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America. The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, NC. 2005.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 17.

<sup>79</sup> Powell, William S. (Ed.). (2006) "Atlantic Coast Line Railroad," Encyclopedia of North Carolina Pg 72

and Fayetteville. Comparatively the North Carolina Railroad (NCR) that created the Piedmont Crescent and along with it, the development of cities like Durham and Burlington, had been completed since 1856. The larger change noted in the decade from 1900 to 1910 in Wilson is likely the result of this new railroad, and the opening of opportunity to the eastern part of the state.

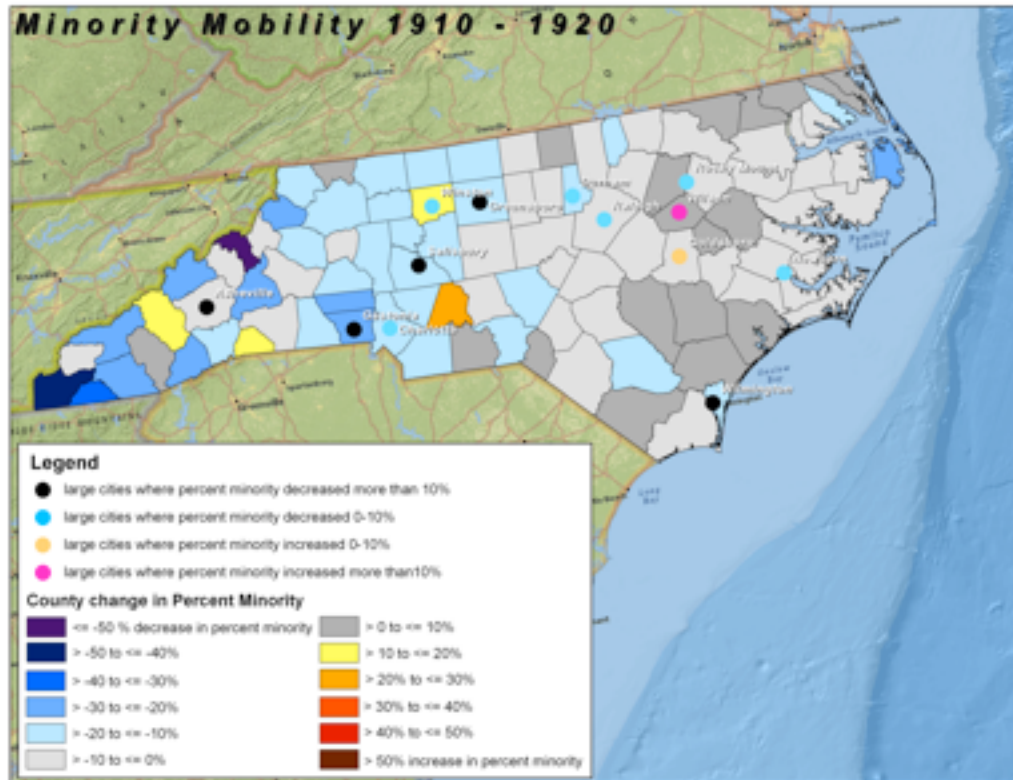
Note that Rocky Mount, Wilson, Goldsboro, and Gastonia do not appear in the Change in Female Minority Population map. The U.S. Census does not show population by race and sex for 1900 in these cities because they are listed in a smaller category based upon urban population size. Race is the only population category for these cities in 1900. However, the general pattern of Change in Female Minority Population is similar to that of Change in Minority Population with few exceptions. It shows a loss of female minorities in counties across the state with only two cities showing gains in their female minority populations: Durham and Wilmington at 10.8% and 43%, respectively. The change in female minority population is at a lower rate than overall minority change in population, indicating that initially out-migration occurred primarily among minority males. It is noteworthy that the difference in gains in female minorities between Durham and Wilmington is significant. The better observation is that while there was a gain in the female minority population, there was a decrease in overall minority population in Wilmington. One possible explanation for this is the impact of the Wilmington Race Riots that occurred at the close of the nineteenth century. The consequence of the riots was the further imposition of Jim Crow laws upon the African American citizens of the city, and the end of African American participation in city politics. The state of North Carolina quickly followed

Wilmington's example with amendments to the state's constitution that further disenfranchised its African American citizens.<sup>80</sup> A decrease in African American males immediately following this period is possibly due to the declining opportunities and increasing prejudice against African Americans in Wilmington.

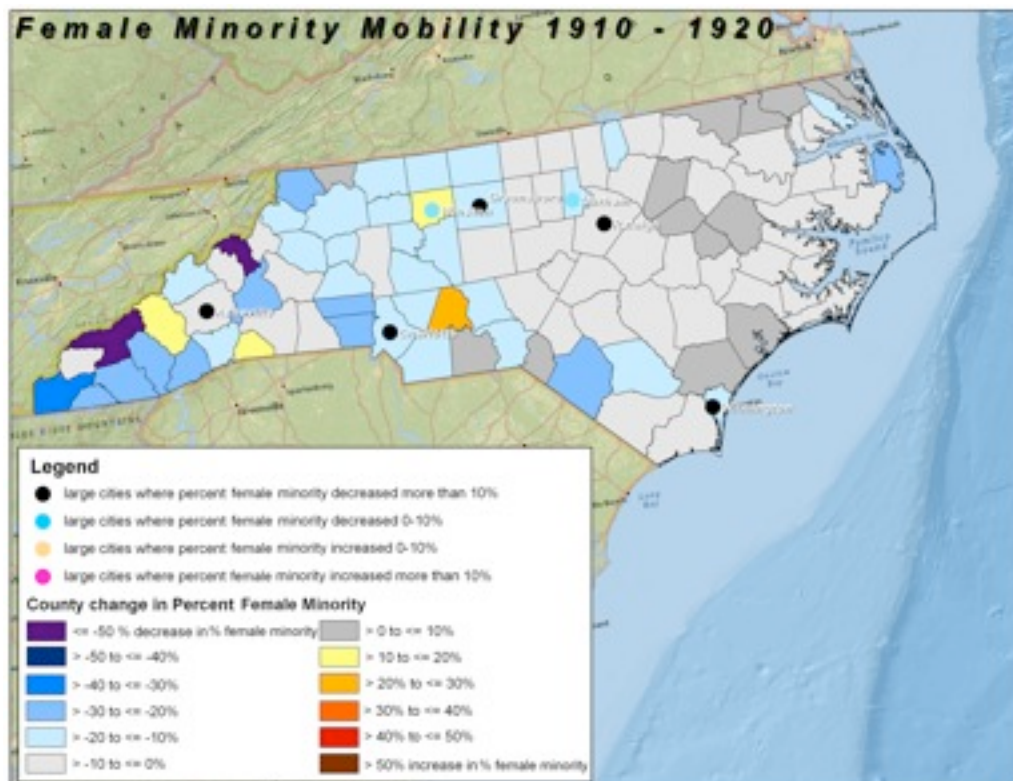
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<sup>80</sup> For more information on the Wilmington Race Riots, please see: Cecelski, David S. and Tyson, Timothy B. Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy. The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, NC. 1998.





Map 3: Change in Minority Population 1910-1920



Map 4: Change in Female Minority Population 1910-1920

The pattern of county minority population loss continues during the 1910 to 1920 decade. The loss is particularly apparent in the western part of the state for all minorities as well as female minorities. One explanation for the greater loss in the western part of the state is the problem of small numbers. For example, the minority population of Haywood County (the farthest western county that gained population) in 1910 is 2.7% of the total population. In 1920, the minority population in Haywood County is 3.0% of the total population, for a total 12% gain in minority population. In contrast, Wilson County in the eastern part of the state shows a minority population of 43.6% in 1910, and in 1920 a 44.1% minority population, for a total percent change of 1.1%. The point here is that the absence of minority populations in the western part of the state make any small change in the actual numbers of minorities appear substantial. However, if percent change were not used for minority population change, the larger populations of minorities in the eastern part of the state would dominate the map.

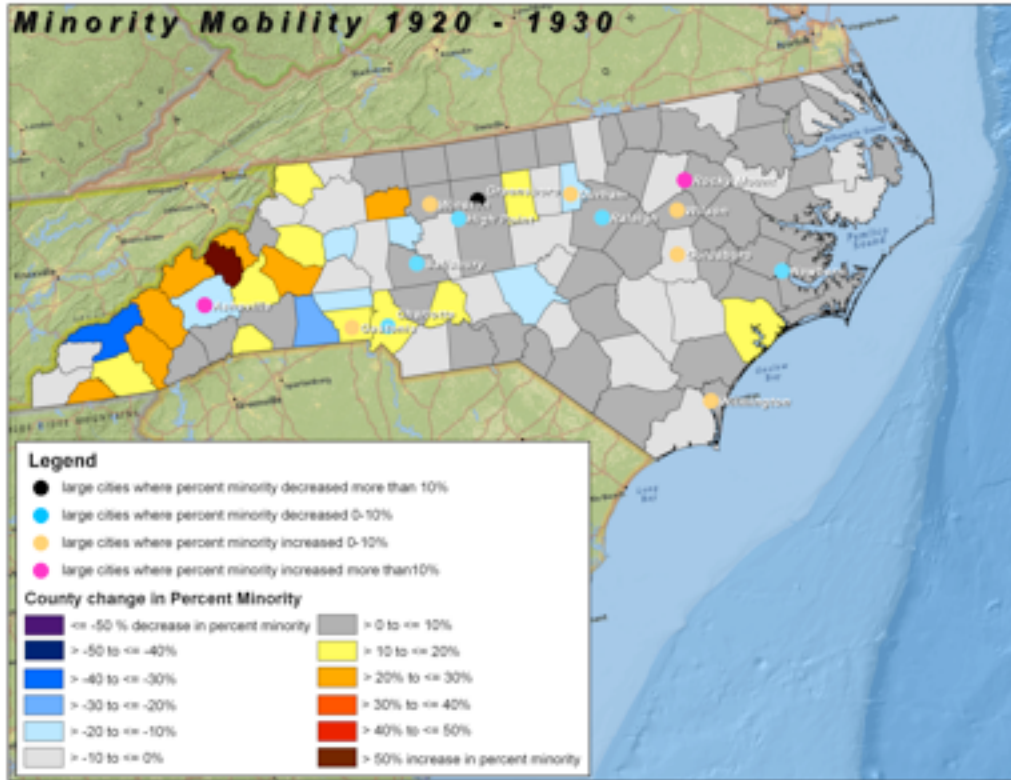
With this in mind, there are still some interesting patterns to the change in minority populations. During the 1910 to 1920 period, every city lost minority population, as did a majority of the counties. Durham lost nearly all of its previously gained minority female population with a loss of -9.9%. Wilmington lost -14.7% of its previously gained population. The cities along the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad continue to grow during this decade with Wilson reporting a 10% growth in minority population and Goldsboro at 4.6% growth.

Along with the general trend of out-migration of minorities in the South as discussed earlier, another factor potentially leading to out-migration during the period from 1910 to

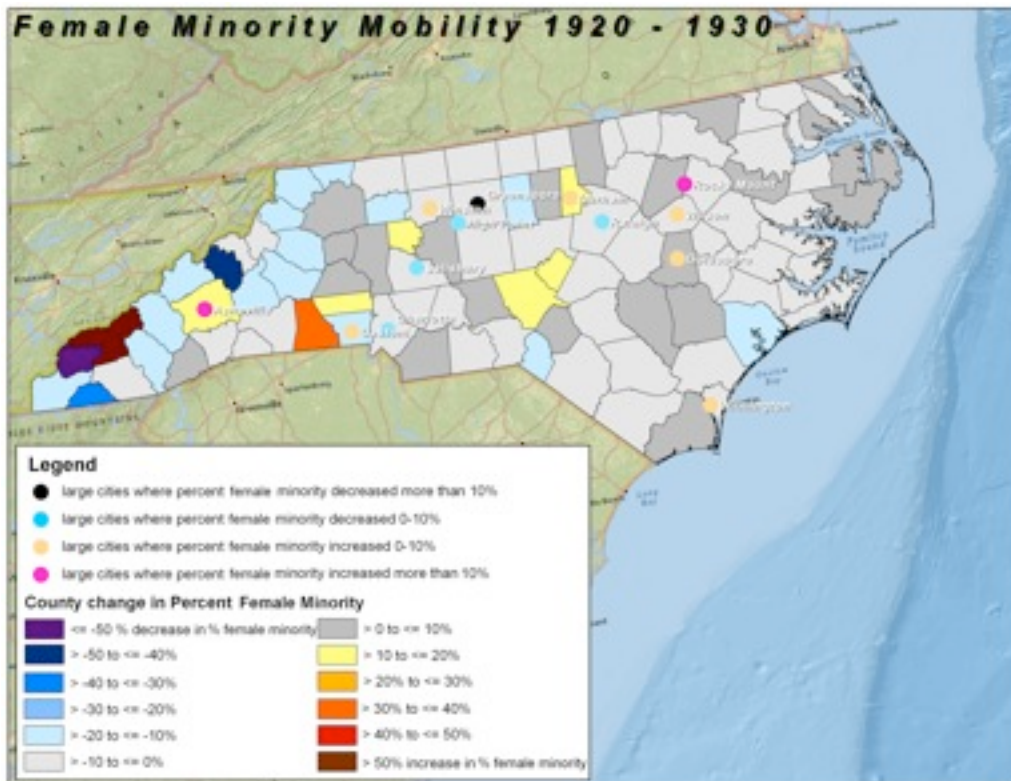
1920 was World War I. More than 86,000 North Carolinians served in the first World War, and of these more than 20,000 were African American.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Lemmon, Sarah McCulloh. North Carolina's Role in the First World War. North Carolina State Department of Archives. 1966.



Map 5: Change in Minority Population 1920-1930



Map 6: Change in Female Minority Population 1920-1930

There are several possible explanations for the county distribution of minorities shown in Maps 5 and 6. Note that the western counties had substantial gains in general minority populations, but losses in female minority populations implying an incoming male minority population. There are acknowledged discrepancies in the Native American count for the U.S. Census until 1940.<sup>82</sup> This inconsistency is due to U.S. Census policies that did not count Native Americans who were also not tax payers. If a Native American did not pay taxes, he or she was considered affiliated with a particular tribe, and therefore not counted in the U.S. Census. However, after service in WWI, Native Americans who had served in the armed services were granted citizenship by a 1919 Congressional Act.<sup>83</sup> It wasn't until the Native American Citizenship Act in 1925 that all Native Americans were made citizens regardless of their tribal affiliation or tax status. It is possible that increases in male minorities are the result of Native American males gaining citizenship, and therefore accounting in the U.S. Census. These relatively small numbers would have a notable impact in these western counties where the actual number of minorities is small.

Railroad mergers and new construction are also factors in population movement and growth in the western part of the state during this time period. The Southern Railway System completed its merger with smaller railways by 1925 creating a system of transportation to support the booming logging and coal industries that emerged in the western region at the

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<sup>82</sup> Lujan, Carol. "As Simple as One, Two, Three: Census Underenumeration Among the American Indians and Alaska Natives." U.S. Census: Undercount Behavioral Research Group Staff Working Paper #2. May 1990.

<sup>83</sup> Powell, William S. (Ed.) Pg 211.

turn of the twentieth century.<sup>84</sup> With the piedmont region as support for production of natural resources, the western part of the state prospered on the extraction of its resources. These industries, especially during this time period, were magnets for a male labor force.

In contrast, female minority populations migrated out of the western counties, with the exception of Buncombe County in which the city of Asheville is located. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Asheville became a known retreat for those seeking cures for various health ailments. This generated a distinct tourism industry for Asheville, and the development of both an artistic and wealthy class of citizenry. It is likely that this also generated a need for domestic workers, most of whom would have been minority females.

Female minority migration was also very pronounced in Cleveland County, located in the textile region and bordering South Carolina. Cleveland County is the home of Shelby, NC, and played an important role in the textile industry during the first half of the twentieth century. Cotton production made up a sizable portion of the Cleveland County economy, and by 1940, Cleveland County was the leader in the nation for cotton yield per acre.<sup>85</sup> While minorities were largely excluded from work in textile mills or residency in textile villages, minority women, especially, were employed for various peripheral jobs such as dying fabric.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Badger, Anthony J. "North Carolina and the New Deal." North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History. 1981.

<sup>85</sup> Cleveland Chamber of Commerce. 22 May 2012 <http://www.clevelandchamber.org/about/history.asp>.

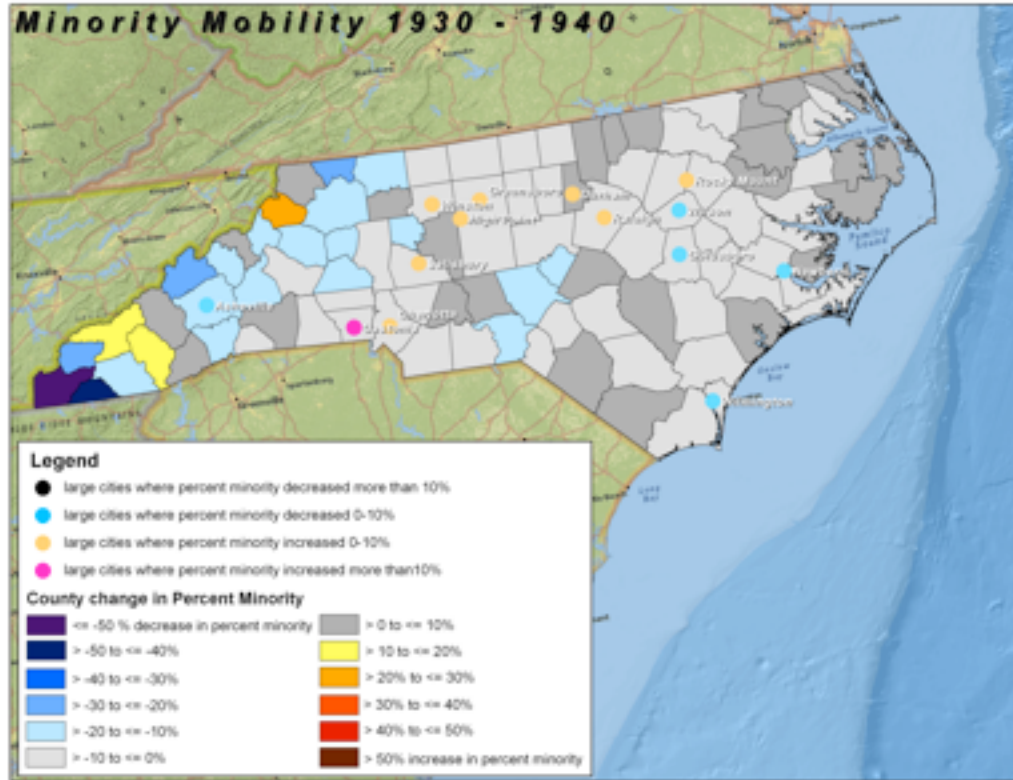
<sup>86</sup> Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd, Leloudis, James, Korstad, Robert, Murphy, Mary, Jones, Lu Ann, Daly, Christopher B. Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World. University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, NC. 1987.

The percent change in minority population during the 1920-1930 period shows the largest gains in urban minority populations in Asheville (13%) and Rocky Mount (12%). Wilson, Goldsboro, Wilmington, Durham, Winston, and Gastonia also show gains, although modest. These small gains in urban minority populations are consistent with earlier patterns that align with the development of transportation and industry. The Rocky Mount, Wilson, Goldsboro cluster appears along the Atlantic Coastline System. Although the city of Greensboro lost minority population, Alamance County, Durham, and Winston gained minority population - all along the North Carolina Railway. This is also the region for tobacco manufacturing. Gastonia, where minority population gains are also shown, was home to the largest textile mill in the state.<sup>87</sup> By the close of the decade, Gastonia became the center of national attention when the 1929 Gastonia Strike marked the defeat of union activity in the textile industry in the state.

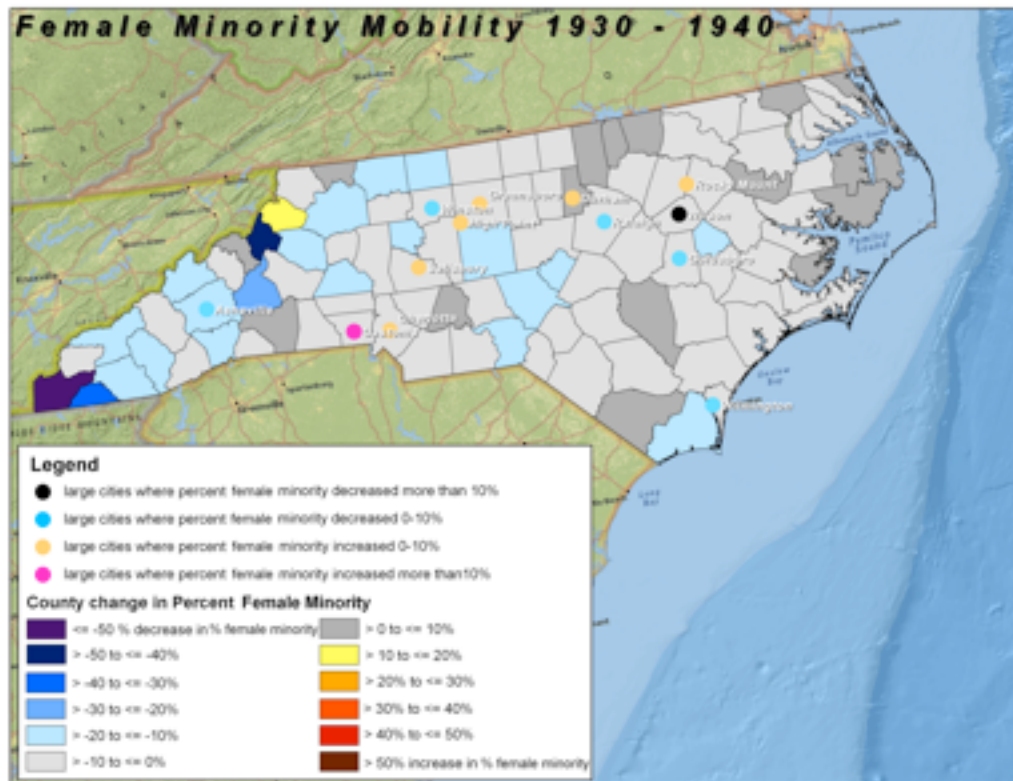
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<sup>87</sup> Glass, Brent D. The Textile Industry in North Carolina: A History. North Carolina Division of Archives and History. 1st Ed., 1992. Also see Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd, Leloudis, James, Korstad, Robert, Murphy, Mary, Jones, Lu Ann, Daly, Christopher B. Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World. University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, NC. 1987.





Map 7: Change in Minority Population 1930-1940



Map 8: Change in Female Minority Population 1930-1940



The decade of the Great Depression saw enormous changes in North Carolina as in the rest of the nation. Although previous maps have demonstrated a trend toward a few urban spaces in North Carolina, leading up to the collapse of the U.S. economy, North Carolina was largely an agricultural state. The failing agricultural economy would have been particularly devastating to minority agricultural workers who were relegated to sharecropping. Without land ownership, minorities were vulnerable to misplacement. It isn't surprising, then that minorities would migrate toward urban centers where manufacturing jobs were a possibility.

The migration toward urban centers is clearly demonstrated in both Maps 8 and 9. Gastonia stands out again as receiving the largest gains in minority population, 24% in overall minority population and 35.8% of female minority population. These are significantly larger than any other city, none of which showed a growth larger than 9%. Considering that the agricultural economy was most impacted by the Great Depression, the influx of minorities to Gastonia is not surprising. Recall that Cleveland County, bordering Gaston County boasted the largest cotton production in the nation. In fact, the counties surrounding Gastonia were primarily agricultural (Lincoln, Cleveland, and Gaston Counties). Therefore, as African American agricultural laborers were displaced, they headed to the nearest urban center with the hopes of work in manufacturing. Along these same lines, the eastern part of the state which is also largely agricultural, was hard-hit by the Great Depression. This likely explains the apparent shift toward the piedmont and the tobacco manufacturing centers.

The shift toward the Piedmont and the tobacco manufacturing centers during this period is also not a surprise. Unlike the furniture and the textile industries, the cigarette making industry continued to prosper regardless of the economic depression, even declining the assistance of federal programs like the National Recovery Act.<sup>88</sup> Additionally, unlike the textile industry, cigarette manufacturers hired African Americans.

County minority migration is fairly stable during this decade, showing very small gains or losses in most counties, due in large part to the Great Depression. James Gregory writes about this interlude in national migration.<sup>89</sup> According to Gregory, migration was still occurring, but with an important difference, “the Depression kept most Americans close to home.”<sup>90</sup> In addition, there was a return migration toward the South, Gregory says. A majority of the return migration was from whites who returned to home farms to help their families, but African Americans were also returning south. For those that remained in the state, they migrated to the closest areas where opportunities were available. Eventually, the out-migration from the South returned in the later part of the decade, but with an important difference:

“There were particular dimensions to this late-1930s sequence that marked a change from the previous era. Both black and white migrants now tended to be more urban and better educated than the general southern populations. For African Americans in particular, much of this era’s migration from the eastern South seems to have involved a circulation between cities.”<sup>91</sup>

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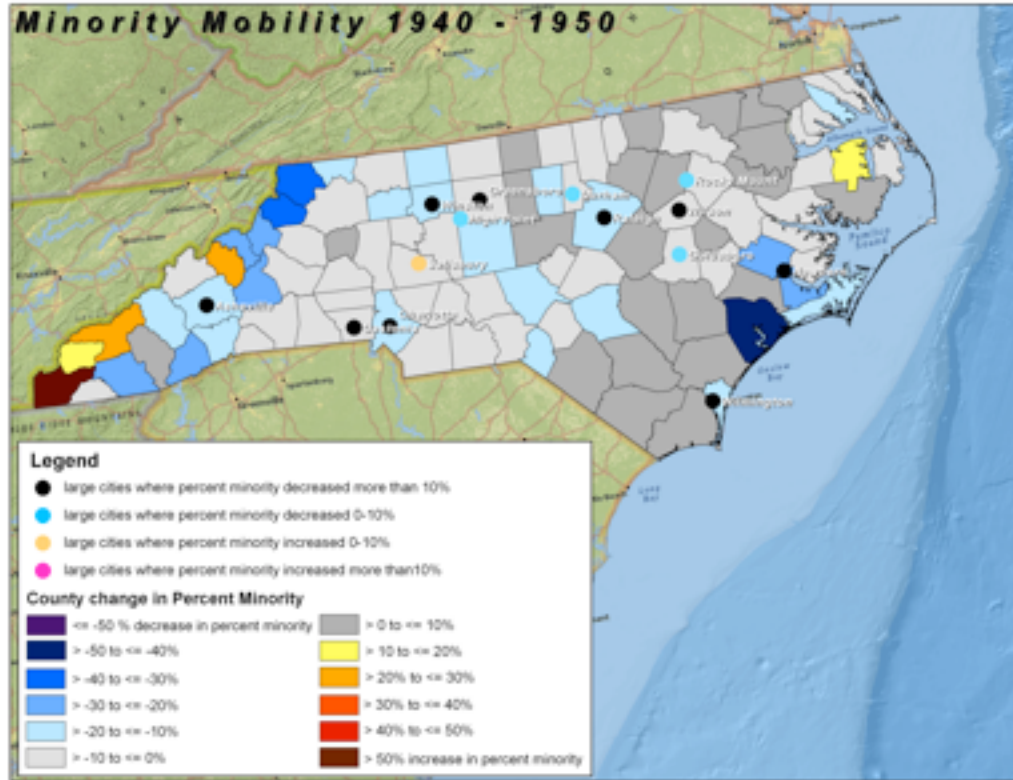
<sup>88</sup> Badger, Anthony J. “North Carolina and the New Deal.” North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History. 1981. Also see Anderson, Jean Bradley. Durham County: A History of Durham County, North Carolina. 2nd Edition. Duke University Press: 2011. Pg 233.

<sup>89</sup> Gregory, James N. The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America. The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, NC. 2005. Pgs 28-32.

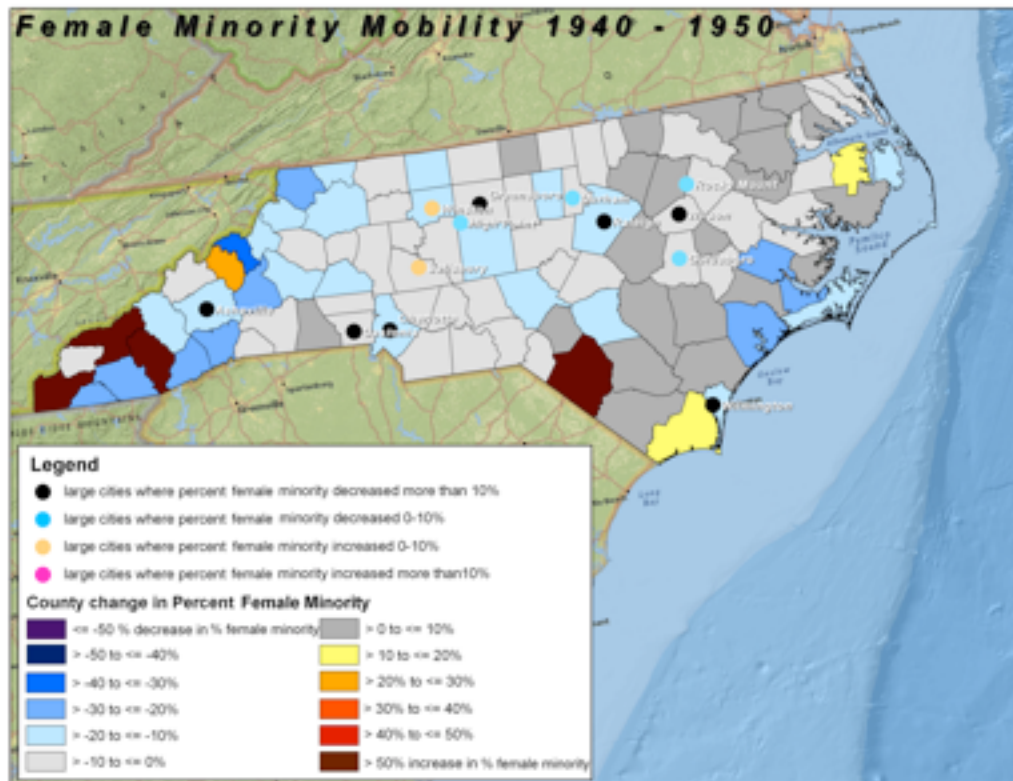
<sup>90</sup> Ibid 28.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid 30.

This nation-wide migration toward cities is duplicated in North Carolina where the urbanizing, industrializing population of the state laid the foundation for the period of the Second World War.



Map 9: Change in Minority Population 1940-1950



Map 10: Change in Female Minority Population 1940-1950

During the 1940 to 1950 decade, many counties lost minority population and nearly every city shows a loss. The gain shown in Salisbury is very minimal (.04%). Of the tobacco manufacturing cities that gained in the previous decade, Durham's loss was the smallest (6%), while Raleigh (22%), Winston (10%), and Greensboro (12%) show much greater losses. Asheville, Wilson and Rocky Mount continue to lose the minority population gained earlier in the century. For minority females, the trend established in the previous two decades reversed as minority females began moving away from the piedmont region. The only cities to gain minority female population did so very minimally: Winston at 1.3% and Salisbury at 0.05%. North Carolina was clearly susceptible to the enormous social, economic, and political shifts taking place across the nation as a result of World War II and the global upheaval that followed.

To a certain extent, the out-migration was due to participation in World War II by minorities. Nineteen percent of the North Carolinians that participated in World War II were minorities.<sup>92</sup> This percentage is substantial given the overall percentage of minorities in North Carolina. According to the U.S. Census, African Americans comprised 27% of the total population of North Carolina in 1940. Taking into consideration women, children, and those too old for military service, 19% is a substantial figure. While the deployment of minorities is one explanation for the minority movement seen in the map, the war also impacted minority placement through the presence of military bases and wartime industries. The eastern counties of Onslow, Craven, and Carteret that lost minorities were also locations for military operations such as Camp Lejeune, Camp Battle, Fort Macon, and Cherry Point.

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<sup>92</sup> Lemmon, Sarah McCulloh. North Carolina's Role in World War II. Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2nd Edition. 1969.

However, the eastern counties of Brunswick and Tyrrell showed gains in minority populations. In Brunswick County, the total minority population increased 7.9% while the total female minority population increased 11.9% . Also in Brunswick County were Southport Naval Station, the Ethyl-Dow Corporation, and the North Carolina Shipbuilding Company.<sup>93</sup> It is possible that opportunities created by these industries were responsible for the increase in the minority population of Brunswick County.

In Tyrrell County, the increase in total minority population was 14.1% while the increase in female minority population was 10.6% . An explanation for the increase in Tyrrell County may not be as straight forward as seen in Brunswick County. The Manteo Naval Air Station was located in bordering Dare County, but may not explain the increase in minorities in Tyrrell County. Tyrrell County is known as a sparsely populated county primarily engaged in the fishing industry.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, a better explanation is white out-migration. In 1940 the total population of Tyrrell County was 5,556. In 1950 the total population of Tyrrell County was 5,048, for an overall decrease in total population of 9.1%. During this same period of time, minority population increased. Therefore, it is likely that the increase in minority population as seen in the maps was due to white out-migration.

The western counties of North Carolina gained minority populations during the 1940 to 1950 decade. Unlike areas in east, the western part of the state was not home to military installations. There were a few industries in the region related to the war effort, such as the Dayton Rubber Company (Haywood County), the Ecusta Paper Company (Transylvania

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<sup>93</sup> Lemmon, Sarah McCulloh. North Carolina's Role in World War II. State Department Archives of History: Raleigh, NC. 1964.

<sup>94</sup> Gade, Ole, Rex, Arthur B., Young, James E. North Carolina: People and Environments. 2nd Edition. Parkway Publishers, Inc: Boone, NC. 2002. Pgs 325-336.

County) and the Aluminum Company of America (Jackson County). Otherwise, an increase in minority populations in the west can likely be attributed to the lumber industry. Between 1941 and 1945, North Carolina was fourth in the nation in the production of lumber supplied to the military.<sup>95</sup> Also noteworthy is the pattern of loss and increase. In many cases in the western region of the state, counties that gained population are located alongside counties that lost population, indicating an inter-regional movement of population. It is reasonable to conclude that small movements for work opportunities precipitated at least some of this migration. Finally, inconsistencies with Census reporting also led to a misrepresentation of minority population increases.

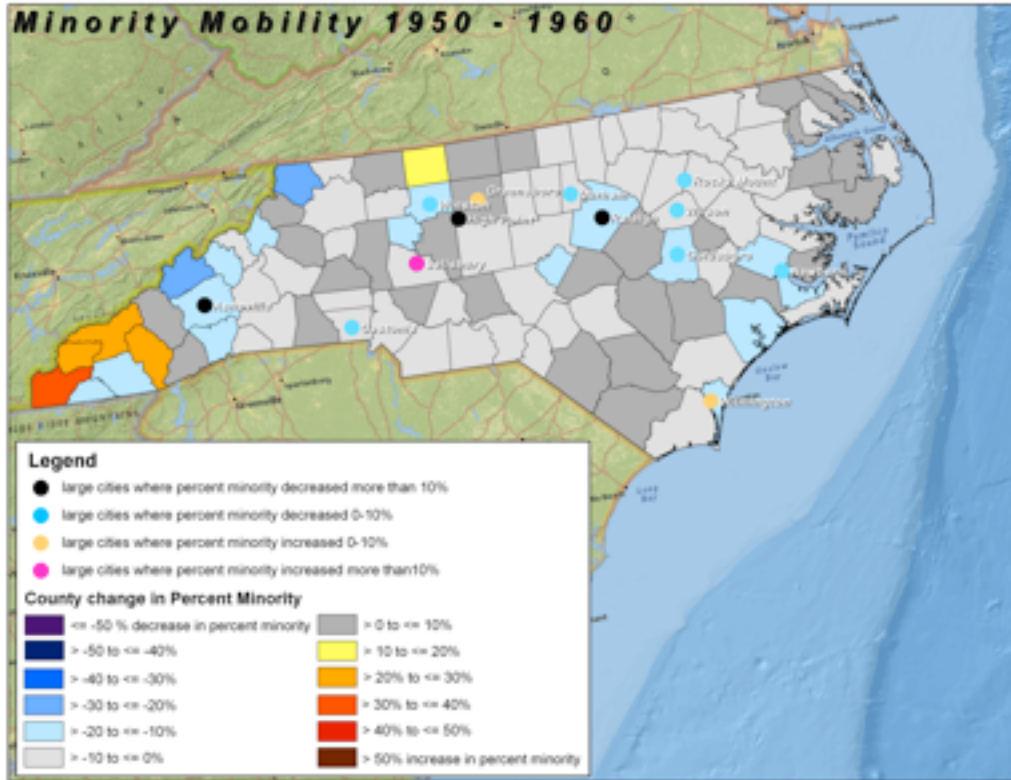
In counties that had a high Native American population, there are significant inconsistencies in Census population counts for 1930 and 1940. In some measure this was due to the failure to count Native Americans who were affiliated with a tribe, as discussed earlier. However, 1930 and 1940 Census data is also unreliable because in some cases, minorities were counted in both the “black” category and the “other” category, artificially inflating the number of minorities. These inconsistencies have been accounted for in the maps. However, an important shift in Census reporting in 1950 alleviated these earlier inconsistencies. In 1950 and 1960, the Census reported race in two categories, “white” and “other.” One consequence of this change is a possible undercount of Native Americans in earlier decades, skewing the percent change in counties with high Native American populations for later decades. Robeson, Cherokee, Graham, Jackson, and Swain counties are

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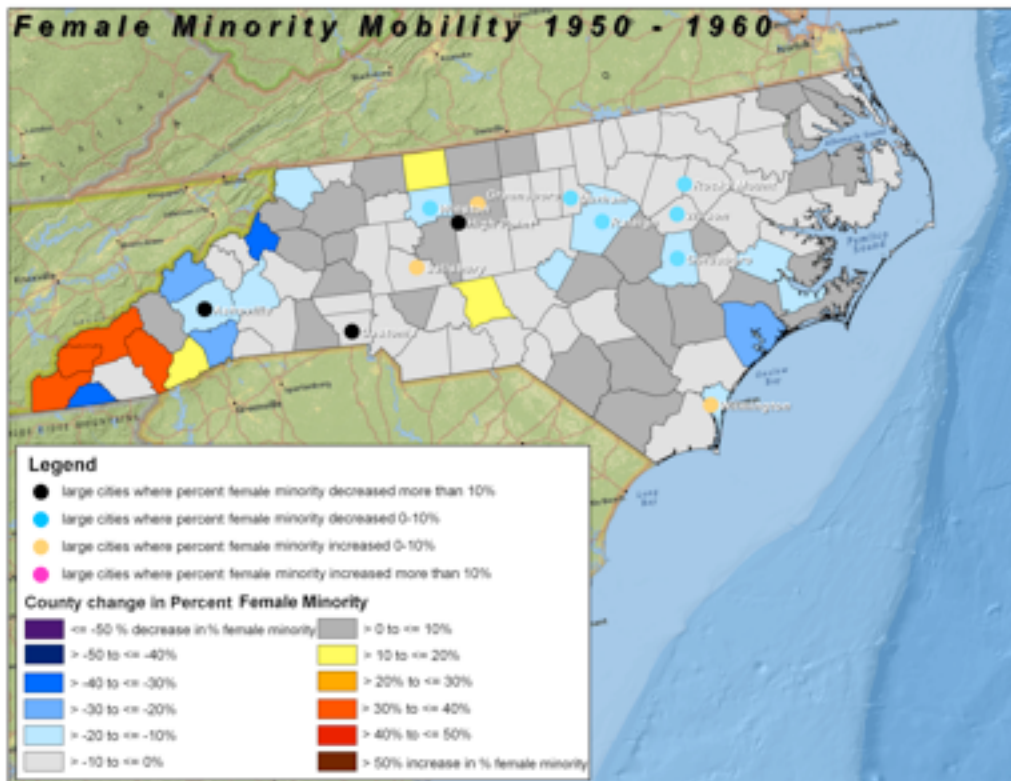
<sup>95</sup> Lemmon, Sarah McCulloh. North Carolina's Role in World War II.

especially affected. This complication with Census data remained an issue until the 1970 Census when Native Americans are officially counted in their own race category.





Map 11: Change in Minority Population 1950-1960



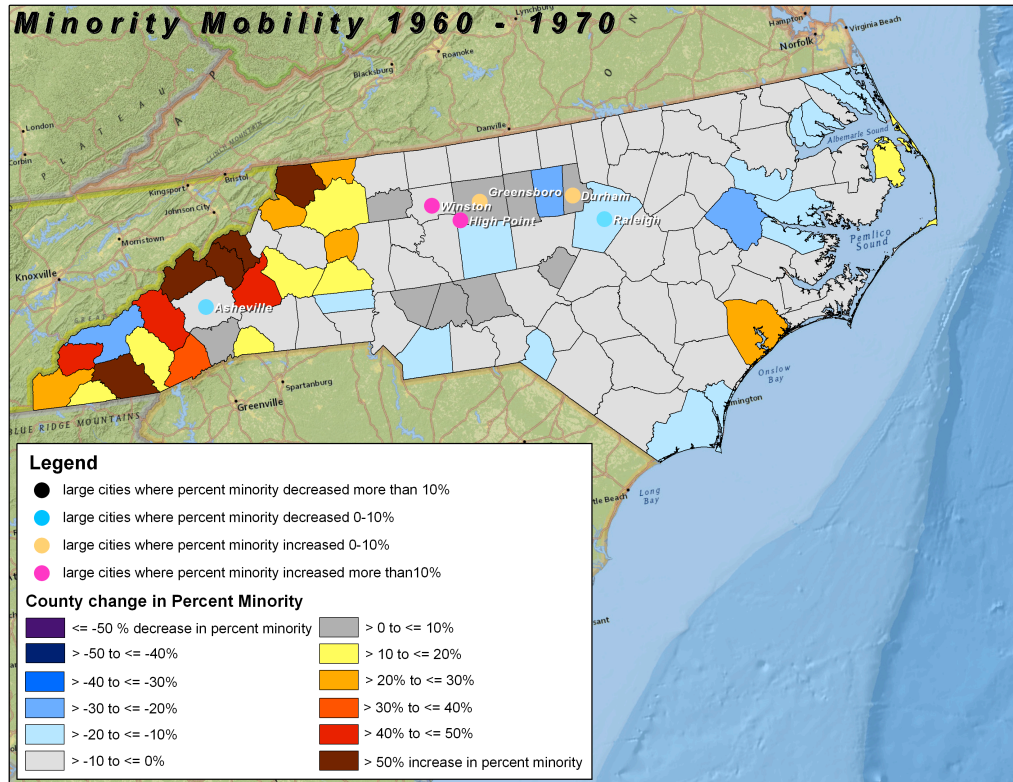
Map 12: Change in Female Minority Population 1950-1960

The decade of the 1950s shows virtually no loss of minority population in Durham with a -0.3% decrease. Asheville, Wilson and Rocky Mount continue to lose at greater rates than Durham, while the piedmont manufacturing districts in Greensboro and Salisbury make some gains. Greensboro's increase of 7.5% is the largest in the state. Salisbury also continues its positive trend with a minority population gain of 13% while Wilmington shows its first real gain in the century at 5.4%.

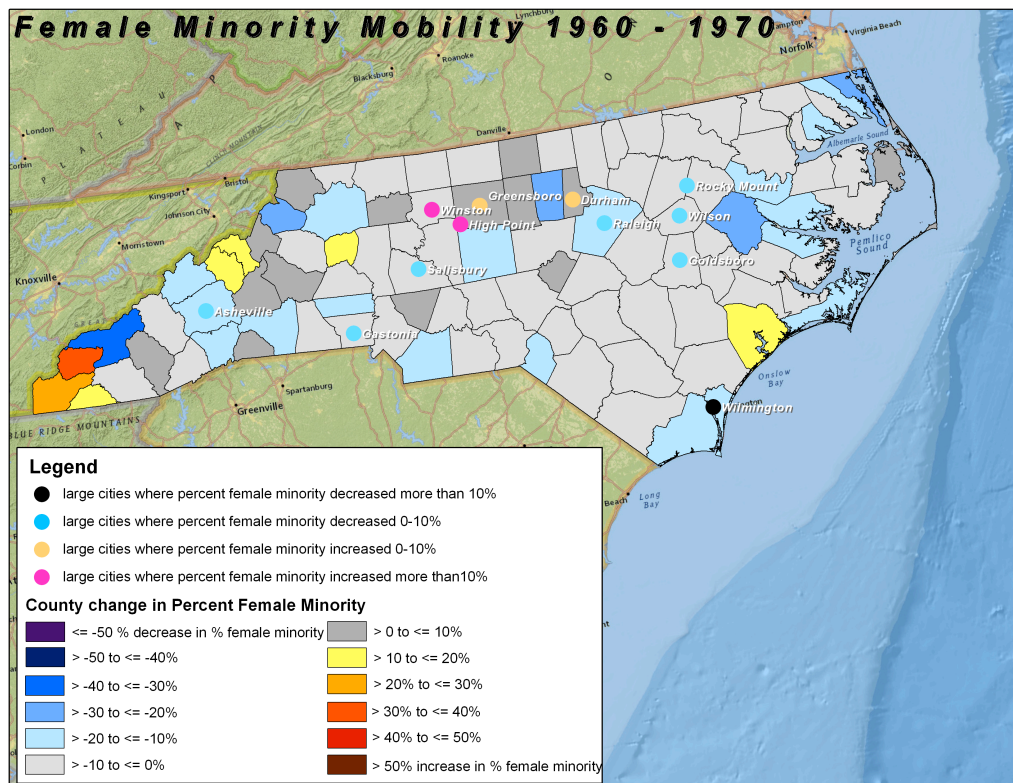
In the far western counties of the state, the Census issue with Native American population counts continue to distort population change. According to Thomas Ross, one of the premier issues with Native American Census data is the factor of self-identification.<sup>96</sup> Many Native Americans were reluctant to self-identify for fear of removal to further western territories. As the twentieth century progressed, economic, political, and social restrictions were lifted, encouraging more Native Americans to identify themselves as such. The issue of self-identification along with the issue of Census categorization as discussed earlier create a particular spatial arrangement that may be misleading. From 1950 to 1960, it is likely that more Native Americans in the western counties self-identified, creating the false perception that minority populations in these counties significantly increased in size.

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<sup>96</sup> Ross, Thomas. American Indians in North Carolina: Geographic Interpretations. Karo Hollow Press: Southern Pines, NC. 1999.



Map 13: Change in Minority Population 1960-1970



Map 14: Change in Female Minority Population 1960-1970

In 1960 to 1970, minority population movement is regional within the state. The eastern part of the state shows consistent losses in nearly every county and city while the western mountain region shows the largest overall gains. There is a concentration of minority population gains in the tobacco manufacturing piedmont cities of Durham, Greensboro, High Point, and Winston. Winston Salem gains minorities at 13%, Greensboro at 7.7%, and Durham at 6.9%. High Point shows the highest gains at 21%.

The large growth of minorities in High Point is likely associated with the furniture industry. Because High Point and its surrounding area was close to the hardwood forests, it was ideal for the development of the world's largest manufacturing center for home furnishings.<sup>97</sup> The furniture industry has a long history in the High Point area, beginning in the nineteenth century. However, according to labor statistics from North Carolina's Civilian Labor Force Estimates, employment in the furniture industry experienced a boom from the late 1950s to the 1980s.<sup>98</sup>

It is difficult to determine a precise explanation for the increase of minority populations in the western region of the state during the 1960 to 1970 time period. As in earlier decades, an issue with small numbers continues to mislead interpretations of the region's minority population growth. For example, Madison County located in the Asheville Basin Region shows a 1960 minority population of 0.7%. In 1970, the minority population in Madison County grows to 1.9%. This is not a large movement of minority population, but the result of so few minorities that any change seems very large. In the Southwest Mountain

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<sup>97</sup> Powell, William S. (Ed.) Pg 486.

<sup>98</sup> Hopkins, S.M. "Why Can't We Move This Stuff?" Charlotte Observer. 17 August 1997.

Region containing Cherokee, Graham, Swain, Jackson, Macon, and Clay counties, movement appears to be between counties. While Swain County shows a significant loss in minority population, Graham, Macon, and Haywood counties bordering Swain County show significant gains. It is possible that Native American movement during this decade is responsible for the changes shown.

Before moving forward from the minority mobility maps, it should be noted that changes in the birth and death rates were considered. Birth and death rates by race per county are available beginning with 1914 from the North Carolina Department of Vital Statistics. In keeping with the decades that coincide with the U.S. Census, birth and death rates by race per county were compiled for each decade from 1920 through 1970. The percent change in birth and death rates for whites and non-whites was calculated for each North Carolina county. Additionally, the difference between white and non-white birth and death rates were examined for any potential patterns or relationship. The counties showing the greatest percent change in minority populations in the previous series of maps did not appear to be influenced by the birth or death rate of that county.

While the previous maps suggest interesting, small scale trends in minority population mobility, when taken across the full seven decades, a compelling story emerges.

City	Total Percent Change
Asheville	-43.33%
Charlotte	-29.22%
Durham	15.55%
Gastonia	-14.15%
Goldsboro	-3.89%
Greensboro	-31.14%
New Bern	-36.24
Raleigh	-49.20%
Rocky Mount	-31.42%
Salisbury	-26.93%
Wilmington	-23.99%
Winston Salem	-16.55%

*Table 1: Total Percent Change in Minority Population 1900-1970*

Among North Carolina’s major cities, Durham experienced the greatest overall growth in minority population across the seven decades at 15.55%, and is the only city showing overall positive minority population growth.<sup>99</sup> In looking at Maps 1-14, Durham’s growth did not appear pronounced when compared to the rest of the state, but in truth, Durham exhibited a slow, stable growth of minority population over the decades. In this manner, Durham is exceptional. One explanation for Durham’s minority population growth and stability is the existence of its black middle class, made possible by the city’s majority

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<sup>99</sup> Note: High Point and Wilson are not included in the table because data for these cities is not consistently available from the U.S. Census, making an accurate comparison across decades impossible.

leadership and its industry that either encouraged or did not discourage black entrepreneurship and economic success. It is feasible that once minorities migrated to Durham, they chose to remain because of an atmosphere that seemed more tolerant and offered more opportunities than other places.

As with the change in minority population maps shown previously, change in female minority population shows interesting patterns across the spectrum of seven decades.

<b>City</b>	<b>Total Percent Change</b>
Asheville	-46.41%
Charlotte	-33.52%
Durham	14.57%
Gastonia	-19.38%
Goldsboro	-9.16%
Greensboro	-34.61%
New Bern	-36.02%
Raleigh	-47.38%
Rocky Mount	-33.23%
Salisbury	-29.71%
Wilmington	-14.40%
Winston Salem	-6.26%

*Table 2: Total Percent Change in Female Minority Population 1900-1970*

As with general minority movement, Durham is the only city that shows an overall percent gain in minority female population. These gains, in both total minority and female minority



populations are consistent with what the literature has shown about Durham.<sup>100</sup> The gains also confirm at least one assertion that arose consistently in the oral histories collected: minorities believed Durham to be a place of opportunity that was atypical within North Carolina.

In comparing Durham with other communities in which he'd lived, Charles Miller says he enjoyed returning to Durham.<sup>101</sup> In part, Charles' positive experience in Durham was due to his participation in the United States Army, "When I was in service I think that's when they [whites] came to realize I was a man just like they was. So I carried that into my experience at Liggett & Myers." But also, as Charles recounts his experience in the tobacco

factory, his surprise at the progression of racial relations demonstrates how unusual he believed his situation to be:

"You wouldn't believe it, but there were some white people who welcomed blacks. And they were right there with us as we made the transition. We began to work as a unit. Our goals were the same." In talking further about integration in the factory, Charles reflects upon the importance of racial acceptance. "It was like a family because they opened the cafeteria to us...the bathroom to us. I learned this in the Army -



*Image 8: Charles Miller outside of his home in Durham, NC*

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<sup>100</sup> Brown, Leslie. Upbuilding Black Durham: Gender, Class, and Black Community Development in the Jim Crow South. University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill. 2008.; Greene, Christina. Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina. The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill. 2005.; Korstad, Robert Rogers. Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South. The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill. 2003.; Janiewski, Dolores E. Sisterhood Denied: Race, Gender, and Class in a New South Community. Temple Press University: Philadelphia. 1985.

<sup>101</sup> Interview. Charles Miller. 27 September 2011.



when people are separated they separate themselves from something they don't know anything about but when you put them together and they learn that 'I ain't too much different from that kind of person...' They found out that we had a mind. We had a mind and we could do these jobs. You became brotherly associated in that respect. We shared our lives. That's how life opens up. You have the same goals, traits, desires. It blends right in. We really didn't even look at them [whites] as a different race once you get on the floor."

Charles Miller's history is largely focused upon work at the tobacco factory, but other oral histories previously collected through the Southern Oral Histories Program and the Center for the Study of the American South at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill reveal more generally other motivations for the movement toward Durham. In 1921, Roxie McCullough and her family moved to Durham from Robeson County to take advantage of better schools, a rare opportunity for African Americans in the South at the time.<sup>102</sup> About this same time, Margaret Turner migrated to Durham from Lee County. A widow with young children, Margaret claims, "I had children I wanted to educate and I didn't want them to come through what I had been through."<sup>103</sup> Also migrating to Durham for her education, Lucille Norris moved from Fuquay Springs, North Carolina to attend Hillside High School in the 1920s.<sup>104</sup> Each of these women ultimately worked for the tobacco industry in Durham, but their incentive for moving to Durham was an opportunity for a better education, and therefore a better life.

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<sup>102</sup> Jones, Beverly and Egelhoff, Claudia. Working in Tobacco: An Oral History of Durham's Tobacco Factory Workers. History Department, North Carolina Central University. Desktop Publishing, Inc: Carrboro, NC. 1988. Pg 27.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid 32.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid 35.

However, simply demonstrating a preference for place does not equate to real opportunity. The participants in the oral histories are clear in stating that Durham's opportunities were largely economic. While some migrated for other opportunities like education, the goal even in these cases was an improvement in the quality of life that did not seem, to them, available in the rural counties from which they migrated. The examination of minority population change demonstrates a preference for Durham by minorities, but does not determine a measurable economic difference between Durham and other places in North Carolina. Did Durham offer more economic and employment opportunities than other places?

### ***Employment and Economic Opportunity, 1900-1970***

Employment and income data from the U.S. Census is not available for each decade, and is often reported by means of a variety of measures. In 1910 and 1920, the average wage per wage earner is reported at both the county level and for cities with a population of 10,000 to 25,000 in 1910, and cities with a population of 10,000 to 50,000 in 1920<sup>105</sup>. According to these data, Durham did not offer higher wages than its counterparts, and in many cases, significantly lower wages per wage earner.<sup>106</sup> Income was not reported again until 1960, when median income statistics were reported by both race and sex.<sup>107</sup> When in total, Durham does not appear to show higher median income in any category; white, non-white, male, or

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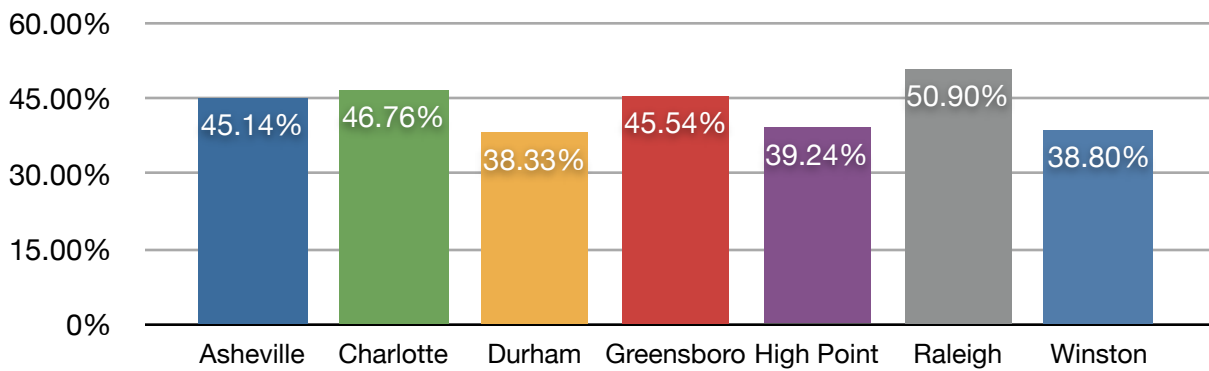
<sup>105</sup> U.S. Census 1920 *Manufactures - North Carolina*, "Comparative Summary for Cities Having 10,000 inhabitants or more, by States: 1919, 1914, and 1909." Table 50, Pg. 233.

<sup>106</sup> See tables in Appendix I.

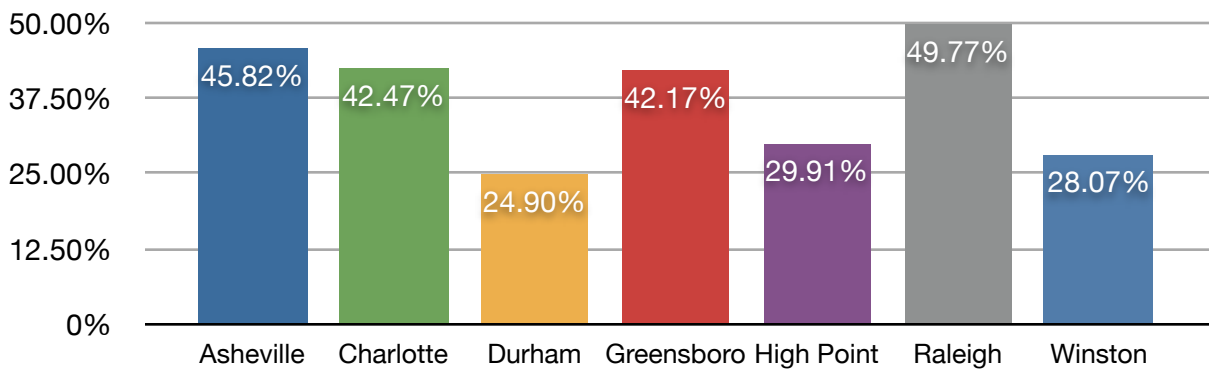
<sup>107</sup> U.S. Census 1960, *North Carolina General Social and Economic Characteristics*. "Income in 1959 of Families and Persons, and Weeks Worked in 1959, for Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, Urbanized Areas, and Urban Places of 10,000 or More: 1960" Table 76, Pgs. 216-220. U.S. Census 1960, *North Carolina General Social and Economic Characteristics*. "Nonwhite Population - Occupation Group, Industry Group, and Income in 1959, for Selected Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, Urbanized Areas, and Urban Places of 10,000 or More: 1960" Table 78, Pgs. 225-230.

female (Graph 1).<sup>108</sup> However, when the difference between white and black male median income is calculated, Durham stands out as unusual (Graph 2). With respect to the difference between white and black female median income, Durham is fairly consistent with other North Carolina cities (Graph 3).

**Graph 1: Difference in Median Income by Race, 1960**

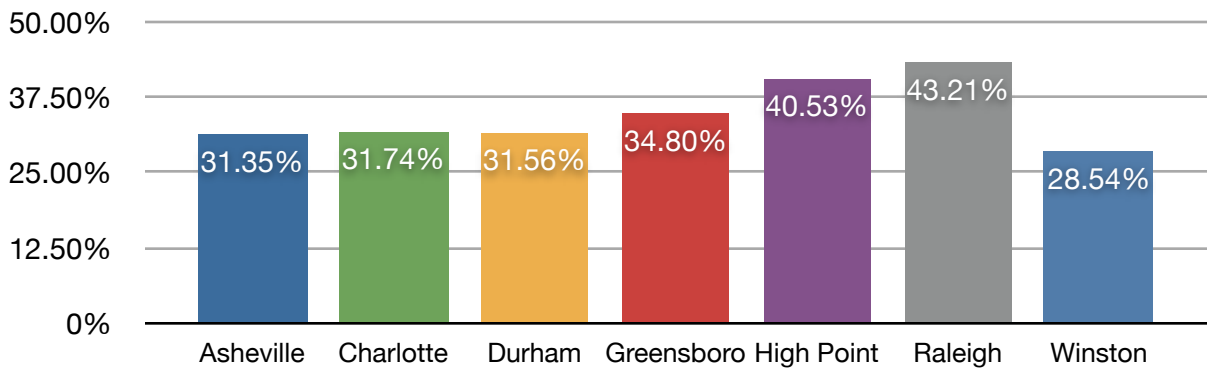


**Graph 2: Difference in Male Median Income by Race, 1960**



<sup>108</sup> For individual tables, see Appendix I.

**Graph 3: Difference in Female Median Income by Race, 1960**



While Durham was not remarkable with regard to individual median income in 1960, there was more equality than other major Carolina cities. Both white and black workers earned less in Durham, but the earnings difference between the two was smaller. The income gap between blacks and whites is an important hallmark of the racial environment. This gap would be smaller where minorities were given greater freedom and more opportunities to excel, especially given the time frame before the Civil Rights Act passed later in the decade.

A second measurement of opportunity that arose in the oral histories is employment. Employment data are available through the U.S. Census in 1940, 1950, and 1960. As a surrogate for opportunity, the percent of the labor force employed was calculated for each decade. Because the data available are given by both race and sex, four employment rates were calculated for each decade: white male employment, black male employment, white female employment, and black female employment. As with median income, Durham does not stand out as a city offering higher employment but the differences in employment rates between white and black males, and white and black females, show a pattern.

In 1940, the difference between white male and black male employment in Durham was the highest among the four measured cities: Asheville (9.28%), Durham (14.39%), Greensboro (5.38%), and Winston Salem (9.67%).<sup>109</sup> It was significantly easier for white men to find work than black men. The difference between black and white female employment rates in 1940 was also the highest in Durham.<sup>110</sup> By 1950, the difference between white and black male employment rates diminished while continuing to favor white workers in Asheville by 1.9%, in Charlotte by 2.83%, in Durham by 4.34%, in Greensboro by 0.62%, in Raleigh by 1.34%, and in Winston by 3.02%.<sup>111</sup> Female employment rate differences again followed a similar pattern with Durham having the greatest employment gap between white and black females.

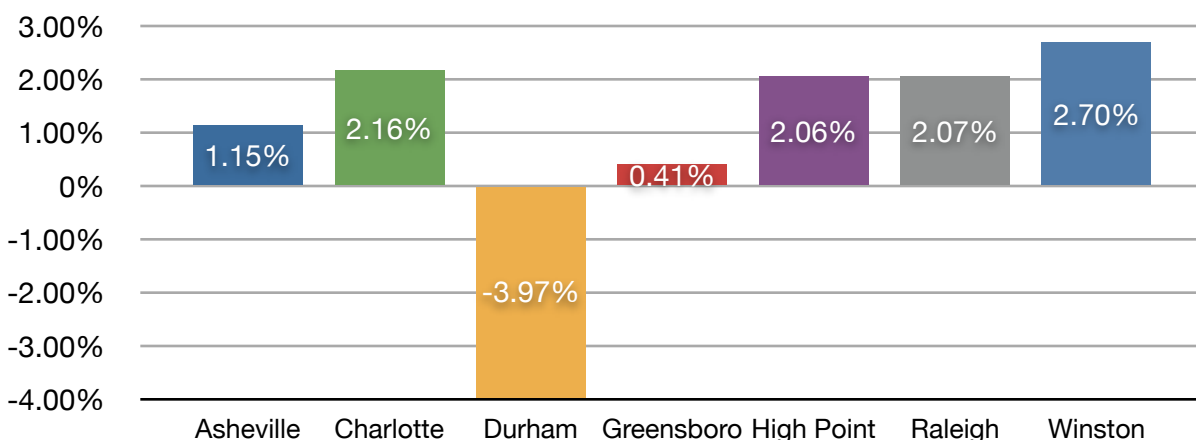
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<sup>109</sup> The completed graphs can be seen in Appendix I.

<sup>110</sup> U.S. Census 1940, *North Carolina Characteristics of the Population*. "Persons 14 Years Old and Over, by Employment Status, Class of Worker, Major Occupation Group, Industry Group, and Sex, for Cities of 10,000 to 100,000: 1940," Table 33, Pgs. 399-401

<sup>111</sup> U.S. Census 1950, *North Carolina General Characteristics*. "Economic Characteristics of the Population by Sex, for Standard Metropolitan Areas, Urbanized Areas, and Urban Places of 10,000 or More: 1950," Table 35, Pgs. 65-70. U.S. Census 1950, *North Carolina General Characteristics*. "Characteristics of the Nonwhite Population for Standard Metropolitan Areas, Urbanized Areas, and Urban Places of 10,000 or More: 1950," Table 36, Pgs. 71-73.

**Graph 4: Difference in Black and White Male Employment, 1960**



By 1960, however, there was a significant change (Graph 4). The difference between white male employment and black male employment was significantly altered in Durham by 1960 with black males experiencing a near complete employment rate (99.6%). With this rate exceeding the white male employment rate, Durham was placed in the unique position of being the only city in its group where black male employment was greater than white male employment. The gap in female employment in 1960 remains much the same as in previous decades.<sup>112</sup>

The trends for income and employment presented here suggest two tentative conclusions. First, minorities favored Durham as a migration destination over other North Carolina cities because they believed that opportunity in Durham was greater than the other cities in the state. Second, by 1960 black male incomes were somewhat less unfavorable when compared to white male incomes in Durham than in other North Carolina cities, and employment opportunities favored black males significantly. These data demonstrate an

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<sup>112</sup> Other indicators of opportunity, such as literacy, were considered. However, the data available from the U.S. Census is either unavailable or inconsistent in these categories, making comparisons difficult.

equality between races that is unusual for the time and region. Therefore, Durham would be selected as a place of opportunity at least in part because of a belief in less disadvantage due to race not only because of a measurable difference in economic opportunity.

There are several possible explanations to this pattern, not the least of which is a sense of community generated by the black middle class that was present and growing in Durham during this period. The manner in which the city was marketed should also not be discounted. Durham was promoted by its leaders as a place of progress, wealth, success, and health. Such promotion in helping form the city's collective identity is substantial. Because income data for the decades preceding 1960 is unavailable, it is difficult to determine if the relative equality demonstrated in 1960 was stable throughout the preceding decades, or if it emerged as a consequence of other conditions. However, based upon employment rates, it might be considered a fair assumption that previous decades showed little progress in closing the gap between white and black incomes. It would not have been until the second decade after World War Two that Durham, following a national trend, experienced greater equality between races in these measures.

Nevertheless, the belief that Durham was exceptional grew in the memories and identities of all oral history participants in this study, black or white, male or female. This belief was based upon the reality of economic opportunity in Durham in comparison to other cities in North Carolina. While opportunity for white workers was fairly consistent throughout the tobacco manufacturing districts, the data presented here show opportunity primarily for minorities. Therefore, a collective understanding about Durham's uniqueness was generated based upon the rare opportunities for one group. An examination of the oral

histories revealed that participants need not have the same experience for a cohesive collective identity of place to form. Likewise, the experience of exceptionalism need not be universal for a common or shared belief in Durham's distinction to emerge. Those that are witness to the events or circumstances that create a place narrative are also participants in the creation of that identity through the perpetuation of a particular narrative. The creation of place identity then is dependent upon not only the agents but also the bystander.

The popular perception of Durham created a partnership among Durham's citizens, a sense of belonging that is often the case when people share experiences. The partnership was a type of agreement among the people who lived in Durham, and the political and economic representatives of the city that celebrated Durham's manufacturing legacy along with the success of the common laborer. As Durham's economy developed like the rest of the nation, the emphasis became less on manufacturing, and more dependent upon other resources, like health care services. This created a separation between the image of Durham celebrated by its citizens, and the image of Durham developed by its political and economic leadership. This moment in Durham's history provides another entryway into understanding the fluidity of place identity. How did the citizens of Durham absorb the changes promoted by the political and economic leadership?

Additionally, how did earlier attempts at generating the alternative image of Durham based on health sciences impact its citizens? How does the previous experience of Durham's place-making inform the current changes underway in Durham? Does the historic narrative created and perpetuated in Durham's earlier years inform today's development in Durham as the city moves toward a modern urban economy? The changes occurring in former



manufacturing cities that attempt the transition to more modern economic structures occur within a context that is both time and place specific. Understanding these processes requires a consideration of historic context and the synthesis of social interpretations of place.

## CHAPTER 4

### REMAKING PLACE

#### *Introduction*

In 1977, Edward Relph wrote that placelessness is the eradication of distinctive places and landscapes. He complained that it is the result of an insensitivity to the significance of place by those involved in remaking the places in which we live.<sup>113</sup> This sentiment was echoed in the oral histories as participants spoke of the deep frustration and sadness they experienced as the tobacco industry moved away from Durham, and the city promoted their new identity as the “City of Medicine.” In most cases, participants said they felt a loss of connection with the city and a sense of betrayal by city officials as Durham’s landscape was altered to fit a new, modern urban model. Places that had held importance became victims of urban renewal, and the people that were attached to these places felt an acute loss.

More so than any social upheaval, even racial integration, the loss of significant portions of Durham’s landscape generated passion and emotion from the oral history participants 50 years later. The sense of loss expressed by participants occurred from two sources: the destruction of places important to the individual, and the destruction of places meaningful to the community. In many cases, these two were one in the same. Furthermore, Durham’s urban renewal stood out as a period of change that was reflected in the only racial

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<sup>113</sup> Relph, Edward. Place and Placelessness (Research in Planning and Design). Piod Ltd. 1977.

divide between participants' feeling of loss. For the most part, Black participants cited the destruction of Hayti and other distinctive places in Durham's black history as a point of disconnect from the city. White participants, on the other hand, cited the loss of the factory and the change in city identity from a tobacco center to the "City of Medicine." Both groups talked about each issue, but the emotional reaction to these events were the distinctive factor between races. Understanding these differences requires historic context.

### ***The Destruction of Hayti***

The origins of Durham's Hayti district remain unclear. Some attribute the name of this portion of the city as one given by local whites to any concentrated settlement of blacks. Others claim it to be a name given by blacks in honor of the independent island nation of Haiti.<sup>114</sup> Regardless, the reality of Hayti in Durham was more in line with the latter. The racially segregated area at one time located just outside of the city, was at first merely another way to separate the races. But in Durham, it quickly became a place of opportunity and pride for the city's black residents. For many blacks, this place offered the freedom given to whites in everyday society. "In the days of segregation, Hayti was a place where African Americans could eat in restaurants, practice their trades, and call each other 'Mr.' and 'Mrs.' - where they could stop being 'colored,' and simply be people."<sup>115</sup>

Charles Miller grew up in Hayti.<sup>116</sup> He categorizes himself as a "normal child in Durham." In 1936, Charles was one of six boys, all of whom grew up in Hayti and attended

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<sup>114</sup> Anderson. Durham County. 132.

<sup>115</sup> Hayti District <http://www.ibiblio.org/hayti/demise.html> ibiblio.org is a collaboration of the School of Information and Library Science and the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>116</sup> Interview. Charles Miller. 27 September 2011

school in Durham. “Durham was good...we had a great black community. Businesses. All of Fayetteville and Pettigrew street, this side of the rail road tracks, was good. Entrepreneurs. N.C. Central. Movies. It was a good time for blacks. It was a good time for whites also, but black people were really booming out....You just had so many things you could do.” After serving in the Army, Charles spent time living in Newport News, Philadelphia, and New York. But he eventually returned to Durham, and like his mother, worked at Liggett and Myers Tobacco company. When asked about what it was that made Hayti and Durham special, he says, “you had a sense of belonging.”

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, Hayti remained an important place to the black community in Durham. Not only did it provide a place where people felt they belonged, but the businesses and entrepreneurship that flourished in Hayti were the foundation for the economic mobility of blacks in the city - it was where Durham’s black elite were launched. However, as beneficial as Hayti was to blacks economically, there was a reality to living in Hayti that replicated experiences in many segregated neighborhoods. Because Hayti was located outside of the city, many of its residents were often cut off from municipal services. Roads remained unpaved and many houses lacked plumbing. Much of the housing was cheaply made with inadequate heating and ventilation.<sup>117</sup> Poor living conditions and a lack of services made the residents of Hayti particularly vulnerable to wider social and economic shifts. The Depression in the 1930s was particularly hard-felt in Hayti. The prolonged neglect by city officials led to a zone of poverty that ultimately contributed to Hayti’s demise in the 1960s when it became a target for urban renewal.

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<sup>117</sup> See the Annie Barbee Mack Interview in: Brown, Leslie. Upbuilding Black Durham. Also see: Korstad, Robert R. and Leloudis, James L. To Right These Wrongs: The North Carolina Fund and the Battle to End Poverty and Inequality in 1960s America. The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill. 2010.

In the 1960s Durham embraced the new movement for urban renewal that was sweeping the nation. The country's mood was expansive and for the most part positive. In cities, this meant that some old areas must be demolished in order to make way for the new. Much of the demolition was concentrated in poor neighborhoods, and the social impact could sometimes be far worse than the benefits anticipated. In Durham, 200 acres of property in Hayti was razed in order to build a cross-town freeway.

Bob Ashley, editor of the Herald-Sun newspaper and director of Preservation Durham, reflected on the destruction of this tightly-bonded community. "It was a misguided, ill-conceived, ill-considered urban renewal ... African American leaders were supportive of the development. They were sold a false set of promises by the white leadership...it's complex, but we wiped out a community to put in a freeway."<sup>118</sup> The promises that Ashley referred to were to fully compensate those who lost their homes and businesses, and to rebuild the historic Hayti district while addressing many of the problems that had been at the root of public discontent over the condition of housing and lack of services.<sup>119</sup> The city's failure to keep these promises had long-lasting impact to both the Hayti community and to other Durham citizens. "Twenty-five years later, the land that had bustled with life was still a wasteland overgrown with weeds," writes Jean Anderson.<sup>120</sup> The lack of action from the city government and the blatant failure to uphold its promises bred cynicism and a deep sense of

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<sup>118</sup> Interview. Bob Ashley. 7 September 2011.

<sup>119</sup> Anderson, Durham County, 342.

<sup>120</sup> Anderson Durham County, 343.

mistrust between city officials and citizens. “The pain of losing one’s built environment was greater than anyone had anticipated.”<sup>121</sup>

### ***Introducing the City of Medicine***

In addition to the impacts from urban renewal, the period of the 1960s marked another big change in Durham - the transition from an identity based on tobacco manufacturing to one based on the “City of Medicine.” Mimicking the nationwide trend, Durham’s economy was shifting and manufacturing sectors began to decrease significantly in the 1960s. After decades of huge success in part created by the demands of war, the tobacco industry began to decline as connections between the use of tobacco products and injury to health were made public. A report published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 1964 outlining the link between tobacco use and lung cancer raised greater suspicion about the tobacco industry, and eventually played a large role in the decline of tobacco manufacturers.<sup>122</sup> For Liggett and Myers Tobacco, the company responded by diversifying, taking ownership of other companies that sold products ranging from Alpo dog food to liquor to weight lifting equipment.

John Schmelzer, Director of Engineering for Liggett and Myers Tobacco during this period, viewed these changes up close and from the inside the company.<sup>123</sup> At this time, Liggett and Myers’ life-line was the international market as Russians and Japanese, specifically, became heavy smokers. The demand for Lark cigarettes, the premier imported cigarette in Japan and manufactured by Liggett and Myers, rose sharply. The company’s

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<sup>121</sup> Anderson Durham County, 344.

<sup>122</sup> Herald Sun 12 January 1964 - Also Anderson Durham County, 351.

<sup>123</sup> Interview. John Schmelzer. 1 September 2011.

subsequent decisions still baffle Liggett and Myers retirees. In a step often cited by retirees, Liggett and Myers sold the Lark international brand to Phillip Morris, a rival tobacco manufacturing firm. Lark was Liggett and Myers most profitable cigarette, and its only product increasing in sales at the time.<sup>124</sup> Following this decision, Liggett and Myers announced its intention to move all tobacco manufacturing overseas. Schmelzer described the impact as devastating. “The factory [had been] getting rejuvenated from all of this production ... When all that happened, everybody’s heart just...the whole factory just became...we’d just come through the union strike and all these people on both sides hate each other ... in 1978 ... it was not a nice place.” The family atmosphere that had defined factory life for many retirees disappeared, and the period that followed was often described by retirees as “heart-breaking.” Continued employment was uncertain at best. Schmelzer described the morale among workers within the factory as up and down as the view of the company’s future fluctuated frequently.

During this same period, the concept of a research park located in Durham County between Durham and Raleigh began to take shape as a reality. Anchored by local universities in Durham, Chapel Hill, and Raleigh, the research park provided the avenue through which Durham could make the transition from a manufacturing economy toward a research, service oriented economy. As it made this transition, Durham’s focus was permanently shifted from tobacco manufacturing toward research, especially medical research. The festival-like atmosphere that permeated Durham during tobacco’s heyday vanished, leaving the downtown largely vacant. Investment was redirected out of the city as wealthier whites and

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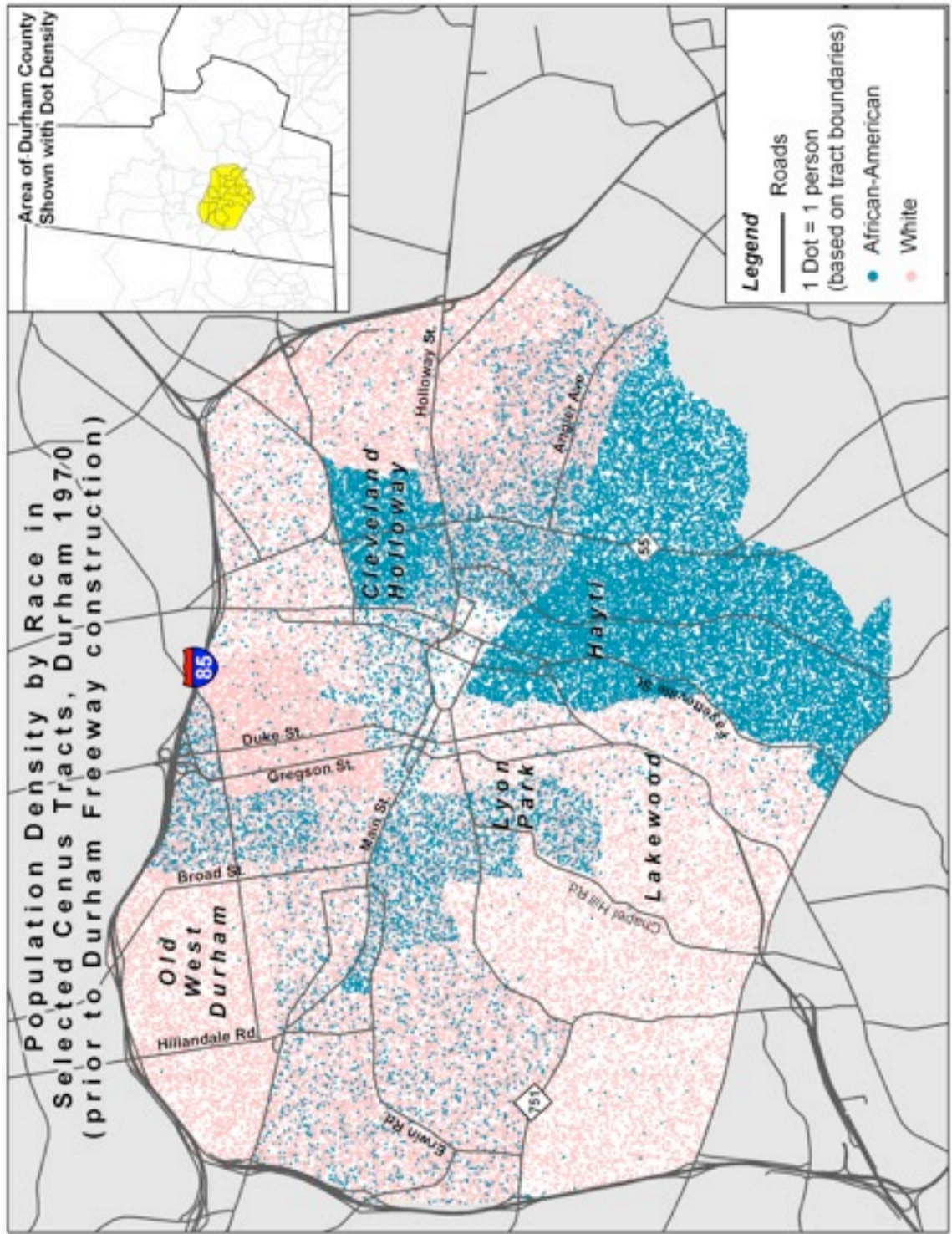
<sup>124</sup> Schmelzer, John.

blacks began to move toward the suburbs. The removal of whites from the city in larger numbers meant that there was an opportunity for blacks in Durham to gain important political power. The city that had been heralded for its racial diversity and tolerance throughout much of the twentieth century, and often cited as an example of the New South, was losing that diversity.

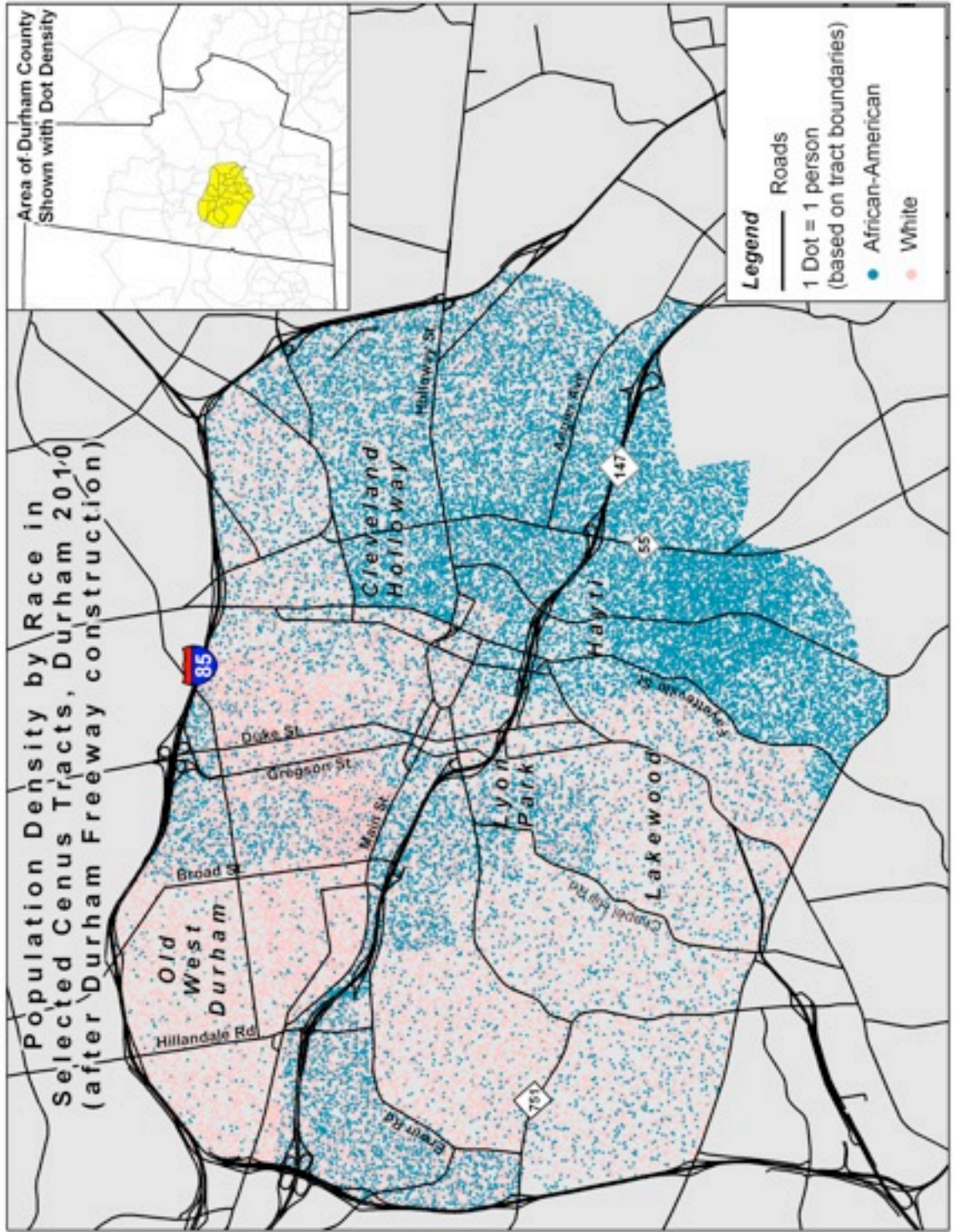
It is not surprising, then, that white participants rarely cite the destruction of the city landscape as a point of disconnect from place. The destruction of Hayti had relatively little impact in the lives of white workers, and the places of meaning that were targeted for ruin were not significant in their own life story (Map 15 and 16). Maps 15 and 16 demonstrate the impact of the city's renewal plans to the African American community of Hayti. The use of dot-density maps reveals an important facet to the construction of the Durham Freeway not visible with other types of maps. A choropleth map can show the percent minority for each Census Tract depicted in Maps 15 and 16, but the density of the African American population prior to the construction of the Durham Freeway and the disbursement of the population into other areas of Durham are not as easily recognized as in the density maps.



Map 15: Population Distribution of Durham, NC, by Race, 1970



Map 16: Population Distribution of Durham, NC, by Race, 2010





More significant for Durham's white workers than any destruction of the physical landscape was the demise of the tobacco industry. Accompanied by a growing public outcry against tobacco, supported by research, and eventually with the legal weight of the U.S. government, white workers felt betrayed by these larger forces. Job security was threatened and for perhaps the first time, the common worker (i.e., the tobacco factory employee) was not seen as the foundation of the local economy, but as a player in a growing public health crisis. The threat to personal identity was serious. The thread between personal identity and place was also weakened as Liggett and Myers sold off its buildings in downtown Durham and moved manufacturing to Mebane, N.C. Bonnie Hall described how life in Durham and



*Image 9: Rosalee Bynum and Bonnie Hall outside of Bynum's residence in Durham, NC*

in the factory had been different from her life before working at the factory: "It was fun to me because I was a little country bumpkin (laughs). I looked forward to going where so many people were. Because where I lived...in the country we had neighbors, but of course they were far apart."<sup>125</sup> As the city's population shifted toward the suburbs, this isolation was restored in some ways. In addition, when the factory closed the community bonds that had played a significant role in the lives of factory workers were severed.

The period of 1960 to 1980 reflected in the oral histories demonstrates a division based upon race. It is understandable that place separation be experienced differently for black and white workers because the city was segregated by race and urban renewal targeted

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<sup>125</sup> Hall, Bonnie. Interview by Ashley Ward. 29 April 2011.

black neighborhoods. However, a puzzle remains. As discussed in Chapter 2, a collective historic narrative about place (about Durham's exceptionalism) was formed regardless of individual experiences. The experiences of an individual need not be the same as those experienced collectively for a cohesive narrative about place to form. However, in the case of Durham, how is it that black and white workers' feelings and experiences about the decline of Durham can be so dramatically different, yet collectively their views on remaking Durham be indistinguishable?

According to J.B. Jackson, at least part of the answer lies in the abandonment of Durham. Jackson says there must be a period of neglect so that a rebirth of place can occur.<sup>126</sup> "Ruins," as described by Jackson, differentiate from monuments. The purpose of monuments is to evoke images of or about something specific. Ruins, however, enable us to rediscover and correct history. The periods of neglect provide a motivation for restoring neglected places and declaring sites of heritage. The process of rebuilding place is also a process of reclaiming the meaning of the place. Jackson states this period of neglect as necessary because it follows a period when the past is disregarded. In redeeming its origins, a community, or group, or nation create an opportunity for the re-emergence of a consistent collective identity. The period of ruin in Durham created the opportunity to revisit and correct those previous periods of placelessness. It was through this process of ruin and rebuild that former factory employees create a cohesive narrative once again.

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<sup>126</sup> Jackson, J.B. Necessity of Ruins. University of Massachusetts Press: Massachusetts. 1980. Pages 89 - 102.

## ***Rebuilding Durham***

As urban renewal fervor gained momentum in Durham, sections of the landscape were obliterated in compliance with the city-approved Tarrant Plan in the 1960s.<sup>127</sup> Julian Tarrant was a consultant hired to advise the city on renewal. The Tarrant Plan proposed a downtown loop surrounding a green pedestrian space and an expanded government complex. The long-term result was a prolonged period of construction for the downtown loop during which businesses were driven away from downtown, a government complex that was never fully realized, and destruction of the historic Union Station train station in 1968.<sup>128</sup> Thinking about the removal of Union Station, Bob Ashley says, “it baffles me to this day...[it was] an iconic old railroad station.”<sup>129</sup> Mayor of Durham, Bill Bell, says, “the fact that it was demolished and nothing to replace it of substance...” created a “sour taste” to residents.<sup>130</sup> In the 1980s, the city attempted to stimulate the downtown area by renovating the Carolina Theater and reclaiming the old city hall building for the Durham Arts Council. According to Jim Wise, staff writer for the News & Observer, local historian, author, and longtime witness to Durham’s efforts at revitalization, the city’s philosophy was to “build it and they will come.”<sup>131</sup> This philosophy failed miserably as the city leadership attempted to impose an urban way of life when public tastes were still in favor of suburban living.

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<sup>127</sup> Anderson. Durham County. 336.

<sup>128</sup> “Union Station.” Endangered Durham. <http://endangereddurham.blogspot.com/2007/04/union-station.html>. 2 April 2007. Retrieved 21 November 2008.

<sup>129</sup> Interview. Bob Ashley. 7 September 2011.

<sup>130</sup> Interview. Mayor Bill Bell. 7 September 2011.

<sup>131</sup> Interview. Jim Wise. 24 November 2008.

“Somewhere along the line, something happened going into the 1990s,” says Bob Ashley. “It was cool to take these things [tobacco warehouses] and redevelop them instead of tearing them down, which was a significant difference from urban renewal and urban renovation up to that point. Here and every place else.”<sup>132</sup> There was a nation-wide trend underway in which groups of young professionals moved back toward city centers. This made living and working in the city more attractive, generally. With the exception of the largest metropolitan areas, net in-migration toward cities was positive by the mid-1990s.<sup>133</sup> Places receiving the largest in-migration have been mid-sized metropolitan areas, with a net in-migration rate of 21.7 percent. In short, between 1995 and 2000, more people moved into metropolitan areas than moved out to the suburbs, the only exception being in the largest metropolitan areas where there is still a trend of out-migration.

For downtown Durham, the migration toward the city center has been especially attractive to young professionals. In 2007, the median age of downtown residents was 38 years and the average salary \$56,430 annually.<sup>134</sup> This gave the city a dramatically different structure from that generated by the historic early twentieth-century migration that brought tobacco workers to the city. The populations moving into Durham in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are not displaced agricultural laborers, but a new generation of educated professionals.

Durham’s previous Director of Economic Development, Allen Delisle, also attributes the reclamation’s success to wider market forces in addition to federal and state tax

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<sup>132</sup> Interview. Bob Ashley. 7 September 2011.

<sup>133</sup> Schacter, Jason P., Franklin, Rachel S., Perry, Marc J. “Migration and Geographic Mobility in Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan America: 1995 to 2000.” Census 2000 Special Reports. August 2003.

<sup>134</sup> “Downtown Durham: Find Your Cool” Master Plan for Development: 2008. Downtown Durham, Inc.

incentives.<sup>135</sup> City officials, recognized a need to re-establish a tax base in Durham and were open to investing in streetscape improvements, like sidewalk renovation and the installation of historic lighting, to create a desirable aesthetic. Blue Devil Ventures, Inc., an organization founded by former Duke basketball players, seized upon the opportunity given by shifting public opinion. West Village I was Blue Devil Ventures initial project, completed in 2000 and contained 36,000 square feet of office space and 241 luxury apartments. In total, the project represented \$36 million in investment.<sup>136</sup> The second phase of the project, West Village II is currently underway and includes the renovation of the former Liggett and Myers Tobacco Factory buildings. When complete, West Village II will offer more than 900,000 square feet of space, accommodating 340 loft apartments, 100,000 square feet of office space, 53,000 square feet of retail space, and 52,000 square feet of research lab space.<sup>137</sup> Investment from private funds plays an important role in the current renovation and departs from earlier attempts to re-make Durham’s downtown, such as the Tarrant Plan, when investment was driven by public funds and officials. The success of Blue Devil Ventures, Inc. in attracting large amounts of private funds has accomplished what the earlier “grand plan” imposed by city officials failed to accomplish; it has fostered a belief that downtown Durham is a marketable place for residents, businesses, and outside consumers.

For countless urban renewal projects, surrounding property values rise with improvements and the cost of living downtown increases. This frequently has had the effect

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<sup>135</sup> Durham’s historic tax deferral allows developers to cut in half the tax burden on properties declared to be historic sites. For example, if a property were valued at \$30 million, the tax obligation would be based on \$15 million, or fifty percent of its stated value. In addition, federal and state tax credits allow developers to deduct up to twenty percent of their investment from both their state and federal taxes.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

of forcing out existing residents, many of whom are lower income and lack the resources to re-establish their households elsewhere. Gentrification, the process of investing in urban spaces, is generally not welcomed by established residents who can no longer afford to live in the area. In Durham, however, there was a lack of a downtown population. Durham's city center was abandoned. According to Bill Kalkhof, Director of Downtown Durham, Inc., "downtown Durham was full of empty buildings and rats running in the streets ... no one was investing in it."<sup>138</sup> According to 2000 U.S. Census Bureau data, the areas surrounding the reclamation projects of the Liggett-Myers tobacco factory and the American Tobacco district are largely void of population, confirming Kalkoff's assertions (Map 17). The largest area of residence is the Durham County Jail, housing approximately 340 inmates. By 2010, as seen in Map 18, the downtown population pattern had changed most notably with a new concentration around the areas of the tobacco factory redevelopment. It remains to be seen whether this trend will continue, but the redevelopment of the factories have definitely brought population downtown. One of the renewal goals of city developers was met.

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<sup>138</sup> Interview. Bill Kalkhof. 29 September 2008.



Map 18: Number of Residents by Census Tract in the Tobacco Districts, Downtown Durham, 2010



Map 17: Number of Residents by Census Tract in the Tobacco Districts, Downtown Durham, 2000

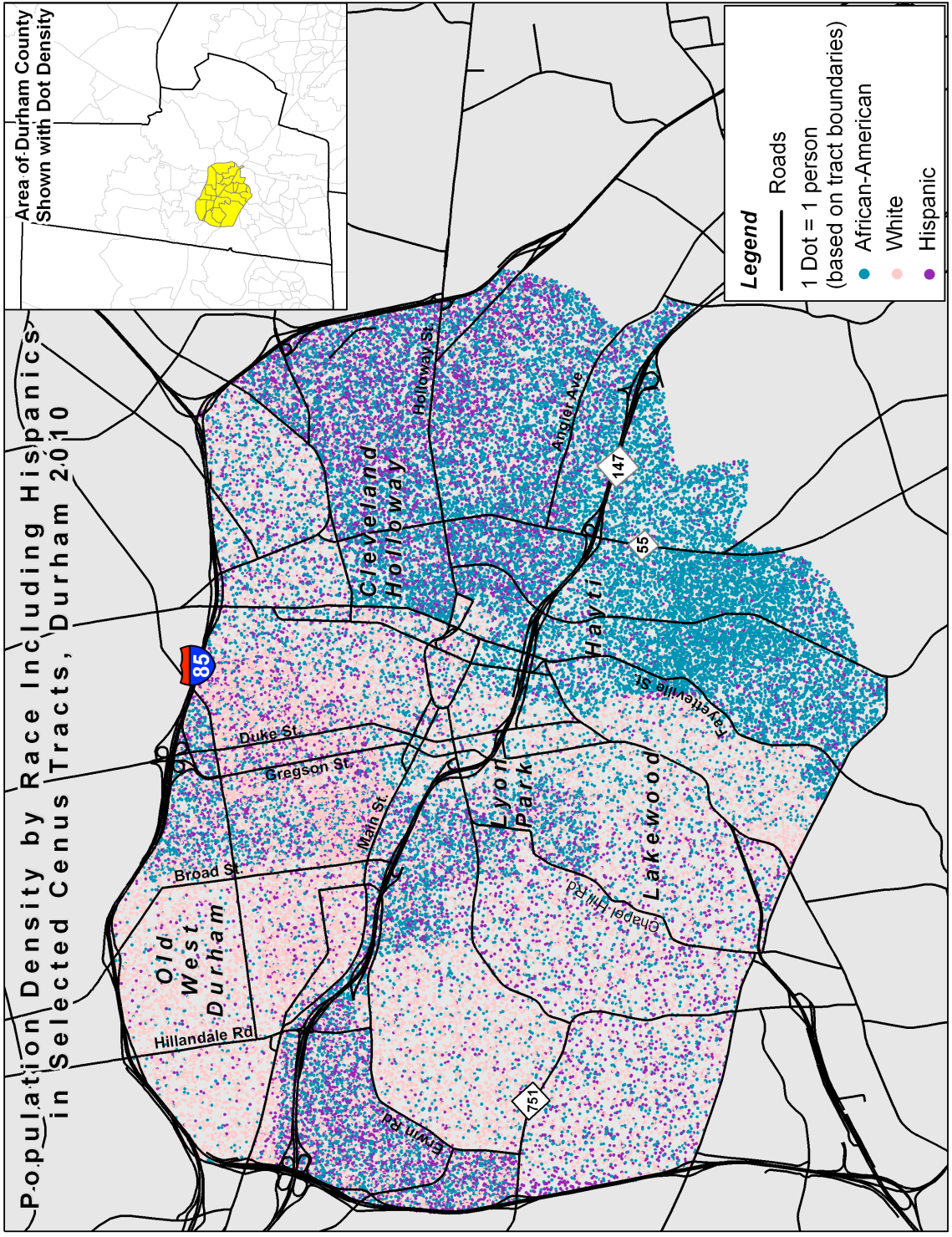


In addition to the funding issues discussed above, Mayor Bell credits the role of the universities in Durham as important in ensuring the success of downtown development. Durham is home to both Duke University and North Carolina Central University. As a private institution, Duke has been able to assist financially in greater capacity than North Carolina Central. For example, Duke has played a critical role with regard to tenancy in newly revitalized buildings. Without committed tenants like Duke University raising developer's confidence, the success of the renovation would have been less certain. Duke also played a vital role in the construction of the Durham Performing Arts Center, according to Mayor Bell. As host of the American Dance Festival, Duke needed space for stage performances and contributed \$7.5 million of the \$44 million of the costs for the construction of the arts center. North Carolina Central University is not a large financial contributor, but Mayor Bell stresses its role as an important "booster and supporter of what is happening in Durham, in general, but specifically downtown."

As he reflects upon the changes that have occurred in Durham, Mayor Bell says, "Tobacco built this town, but it's no longer here. Textiles are not here. Very little farming. Now it's the City of Medicine and research." However, this shift is not limited to a change in the city's economic base. Durham is also experiencing a dramatic reshaping of its demographics as Durham's first ever international population is moving into the city in significant numbers. The number of Hispanic residents in Durham has grown exponentially over the last decade (See Map 19).



Map 19: Population Distribution of Durham, NC, by Race, including Hispanic Population 2010



The 2000 United States Census reports the hispanic population in the Census Tracts shown in Map19 to be 9 percent (5,815 hispanics) of the total population of these Census Tracts. By 2010, the hispanic population in these Census Tracts had grown to 19.3 percent (12,392 hispanics). In the same designated areas, the African American population in 2000 constituted 53.9 percent of the total population, but by 2010 the African American population had fallen to 45.3 percent of the total population.<sup>139</sup> As the population growth of hispanic residents outpaces that of other minority groups, the question about whether or not there will be an impact is replaced by questions about how significant the impact will be.

Mayor Bell adds,

“Durham is a city that prides itself on diversity. It doesn’t have an ethnic majority....[With] institutions like the universities and RTP...its more representative of a global community. But, in spite of all this richness that we have, we still have too much poverty, in some segments 17-20 percent. So while downtown Durham is a priority, an equal priority is the revitalization of our inner city neighborhoods. That’s why you’ll see a focus also on trying to revitalize our neighborhoods. I believe that if we have strong communities we’ll have strong city.”

Though not always existing in reality, the idea expressed in Mayor Bell’s concluding remark is a version of the mantra that has existed in Durham since its inception.<sup>140</sup>

One example of neighborhood revitalization in keeping with the city’s historic renovation effort is offered by Bob Ashley. Project Red is a program sponsored by NC Preservation and is dedicated to renovating housing while maintaining affordability in East

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<sup>139</sup> Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 2011. <http://www.nhgis.org>.

<sup>140</sup> To Right These Wrongs by Kalkoff and Leloudis offers a thorough history of the debate surrounding neighborhood development in Durham that was a centerpiece to the public protest against the Durham Housing Authority in the 1960s. The goal of neighborhood revitalization in Durham became an important component in Durham’s NCFund program.

Durham.<sup>141</sup> The program's goal is to purchase houses and rehabilitate them while keeping the budget low so that the housing costs for residents are maintained at no more than 80 percent of median income. "It's a struggle," Bob says, but the program is supported by the city which often donates the houses or sells them to NC Preservation at low cost. "This is not gentrification as it was in the 4th Ward in Charlotte, where it was clearly made a white, hippy neighborhood from a historic African American neighborhood." Ashley maintains that Durham's development patterns have manifested differently than in other places, primarily because of the role African Americans play in city politics. "There is a longstanding tradition of the sharing of power. It's not as post-racial as I would like to believe, but still..."<sup>142</sup> This view echoes sentiments expressed earlier by historians and authors such as Jean Bradley Anderson and Leslie Brown.<sup>143</sup>

### ***Durham as a Creative Class City***

The vision outlined by city officials and community leaders is demonstrative of a new trend to market urban spaces as attractive to businesses because those spaces have particular population characteristics. This population has been defined as the "creative class" by Richard Florida.<sup>144</sup> According to Florida, the driving force behind the modern economy is the Creative Class (comprising of 30% of the current U.S. workforce), who exhibit individuality and favor hard work, challenge, and stimulation, and who desire environments

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<sup>141</sup> To see more about Project Red, refer to the NC Preservation website: <http://www.presnc.org/Property/East-Durham-Revitalization/>

<sup>142</sup> Interview. Bob Ashley.

<sup>143</sup> Anderson. Durham County. Brown. Upbuilding Black Durham.

<sup>144</sup> Florida, Richard. The Rise of the Creative Class...and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life. Basic Books: New York. 2002.

that are open to diversity.<sup>145</sup> Members of the creative class are involved in the creation of new ideas, such as those in the sciences, architecture, engineering, design, education and the arts. However, according to Florida, high levels of education are not synonymous with the Creative Class. Hairdressers, artists, and musicians are also members of this class.

The Creative Class has more economic power than the other two classes outlined by Florida, the Working Class and the Service Class. Although the Working Class has been declining as a share of the total population, the Service Class has increased its share because it is dependent on the growth of the Creative Class. The key to successful urban development, Florida says, is to cultivate communities that are attractive to the Creative Class, offering diversity and tolerance as well as a range of living choices. Such communities can be found in suburbs as well as urban neighborhoods. The areas that are able to successfully foster the growth of the Creative Class are those that will inevitably experience long term growth.

The early migrants to Durham were for the most part agricultural workers in search of manufacturing jobs that offered stability and acceptable wages and could not be classified as part of Florida's creative class. According to Florida, such people place less emphasis on Creative Class virtues and more on flexibility, diversity, and individuality. Durham's growing creative class today is new for the city. However, there are components to Durham's marketing and growth that are not new.

The earlier migrants to Durham were part of an environment where hard work, individual responsibility, and commercial work ethics were valued. Durham is a city that

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 77-81.

was developed for the expressed purpose of commercial success. From its inception, governance in Durham has been closely allied to these concepts. Managerialism, as described by Harvey, was not Durham's founding model.<sup>146</sup> Harvey describes Managerialism as the pre-1980s behavior of government intervention in the urban process. As city's faced the disintegration of their economic and fiscal base after the economic crisis of the 1970s, it was determined by many urban leaders that urban governments needed to adapt to entrepreneurial models for success. This meant the active recruitment of private industry by urban governments, or "Entrepreneurialism" as defined by Harvey. Entrepreneurialism was Durham's model from the beginning. Long before the urban practice of courting large sports arenas or military bases became the norm in the Sunbelt, Durham's government and business leaders followed an entrepreneurial model for city development. Additionally, the comparatively egalitarian nature of opportunity in Durham attracted a diverse population and established a unique demographic for the city. Durham's legacy is more than the tobacco industry. Durham's legacy is also the creation of a particular kind of place - one where diversity and growth are celebrated in ways shared by only a handful of other cities in its region.

Durham is not post-racial and there are challenging issues with diversity. The city is still segregated (Maps 16 and 19). Current debates about the incoming Hispanic population indicates how race continues to be a struggle in this southern city. A recent example is the contention over the Old North Durham Park. The park, located in a largely low-income migrant community, is a central location for recreation for the community and the only full-

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<sup>146</sup> Harvey. "From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: the Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism."

size athletic field in the city. Members of the community use the field regularly for soccer. Also adjacent to the park is Central Park School for Children, a charter school. Beginning in 2005, Durham Parks and Recreation entertained proposals to lease the park to the charter school. The lease would allow the charter school full control over the park space, and its use. The charter school plans included converting the park space to a butterfly garden, making it no longer usable for athletic events. The Durham Coalition for Urban Justice, along with El Kilombo and eleven other community organizations, opposed the plan to lease the park. El Kilombo is a community organization that serves the needs of the migrant community in Durham. The primary concern for El Kilombo and its partners is the systematic removal of recreational space that has a disproportionate impact on low-income black and Latino communities.<sup>147</sup> The debate about Old North Durham Park revealed opposing views about the inclusiveness of Durham's urban renewal in regard to its migrant community.

Although the Old North Durham Park is an example of Durham's continuing need to confront the issue of race, the economic model under which Durham operates is one with a historic foundation in the city. As so clearly outlined by Harvey, "capitalists, like everyone else, may struggle to make their own historical geography but, also like everyone else, they do not do so under historical and geographical circumstances of their own individual choosing even when they have played an important and even determinant collective role in shaping those circumstances."<sup>148</sup> In short, Durham's current circumstance is a consequence

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<sup>147</sup> "What's at Stake in Old North Durham Park." <http://www.elkilombo.org/whats-at-stake-in-old-north-durham-park-2/>. December 8, 2011. Also see: Gronberg, Ray. "Council Settles Old North Durham Park Dispute." Herald-Sun. January 18, 2012.

<sup>148</sup> Harvey. "From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: the Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism." Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography. Vol. 71, No. 1, The Roots of Geographical Change: 1973 to the Present (1989), pp 3-17.



of its earlier conditions and experience. It is part of a larger, historical process that has dictated the evolution of this place.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

The evolution of place identity follows the evolution of personal identity in much the same way. The two are intimately entwined. While the renovation of a city is an urban process, it is not disconnected from the social process of identity formation, nor is it disconnected from its historic foundation. It may be easy to assume that contemporary urban restoration is only an attempt to raise the urban tax base and real estate values. Even so, there is more value to these places than this assumption implies. The places themselves have the power to remind citizens of something specific in their lives. The community is always reminded of its original identity, in this case, one that focused upon the common man and the success of an oppressed people. Unlike cities that celebrate the life of a famous leader or group, the renovation of the former tobacco factory in Durham is a celebration of the ordinary. It celebrates labor as well as industry, and in doing so helps reconnect citizens with their past.

Additionally, the necessary period of neglecting a place described by Lowenthal plays a significant role in the development of a modern collective identity among its citizens. The period of neglect and rebirth serves as a reminder that cities are not only historically grounded but also spatially grounded. It is a reminder that places are developed within a particular context, much like individual identity, and through the process of development, neglect, and rebirth have created a network of variables that are attached to the place.

Additionally, places are organized by a complex series of actors that foster a pattern of development that is often repeated, as described by Harvey. “Like the diverse workplace, a diverse community is a sign of a place open to outsiders.”<sup>149</sup> Therefore, Durham’s participation and quick success with the Creative Class model represents a continuation of the place characteristics established from its inception.

This does not imply a determinist quality to place formation, or an inevitability to the way a particular place develops. Instead, I suggest that the place-making process currently underway in many cities - and Durham is but one example - is thoroughly entwined with several variables: the history of the place, the spatial structure of the place, and the collective identity fostered by its citizens. When these variables do not function as part of the place-making process, disruption occurs. Individuals become disengaged from the place because for them the meaning of the place’s identity is altered. The role of governance, then, is to foster economic growth while adhering to the historic, social, and spatial character of the place. This should not be misinterpreted as an argument against change. It is the opposite.



*Image 10: Retirees Reunion, Bahama, NC*

When the complex meaning attached to place by its residents is honored, the physical, social, and spatial structure of a place need not be static.

Once a year, the retirees from Liggett & Myers Tobacco company gather in an old Ruritan Club north of town. They eat BBQ and laugh about their days working together at the factory, sometimes remembering those who have passed on.

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<sup>149</sup> Florida. *The Rise of the Creative Class*. 227.

“Tobacco built this town,” is a phrase that is often repeated among workers and is agreed upon by those present. Preserving the factory buildings is a way of commemorating life, all of those who worked in the buildings as well as those who lived in the community. But preserving the factory buildings is also a means through which their lives are given significance. Their personal identity is “fastened” to the site of the factory building. The oral histories demonstrate a continual relationship between personal identity and place, but also suggest subtle distinctions regarding the relationship between the two.

First they demonstrate that a shared experience is not required for the formation of a collective identity about place. Second, the narrative constructed about places is not dependent upon a universal understanding, but is generated from both the participants and the witnesses to community events. Together, these create a cohesive place identity that is perpetuated further through city marketing and promotion. Third, people do not view places as stagnant. They are open to the fluidity of place as long as the meaningfulness of the place is honored. This is an important concept with regard to the necessarily changing nature of places as they seek to participate in a modern economy. Together, these concepts aid in the understanding of urban renewal projects, specifically those tied to historic sites. It is with this knowledge that urban developers and administrators can create compassionate plans that embrace the historic and social significance of place while allowing for growth.

### ***Oral Histories and the Evolution of Place***

A critical element to the oral histories was the conclusion by the participants that the functional purpose of the place in which they lived was insignificant as long as the integrity of the place, how well it fits with the place’s collective identity, is honored. Participants did

not make a distinction between the historic use of the factory buildings and the stated purpose for their renovation. Much of the renovated space of the Liggett and Myers Tobacco factory will be reserved for mid to high income housing, research facilities, and retail spaces, uses embraced by the retired factory workers. Every one of the oral histories used in this study endorse of the city's new use of the buildings.

Claiborne "Tiptoe" Ellis and his wife expressed genuine excitement about the changes downtown.<sup>150</sup> They enjoy the new ball park, the farmer's market, and the renovated King's Hot Dogs. "Me and her ride down there. I said it looks a lot better now that it did back when we were kids, I mean teenagers. Durham used to be wide open, you know...at night." There is nostalgia present in much of the interviewees' reflections on the current downtown renovation. It is clear that as many of them drive downtown, they are recalling events in their personal lives, but they are not resistant to whatever purpose is newly assigned to the buildings. "I think people don't want to see them tear those factories down. It's a landmark," Claiborne says.



*Image 11: Claiborne "tip toe" Ellis in his home in Durham, NC*

The oral histories reflect a range of opinions about the best use of the newly renovated buildings. Mr. Waller<sup>151</sup> suggested the city should convert the tobacco factory into a parking facility. The Umsteads and Sue Poole were pleased with the proposed mixed use

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<sup>150</sup> Interview. Claiborne Ellis. 16 August 2011.

<sup>151</sup> Interview, Jim Waller, 16 August 2011.

nature of the buildings.<sup>152</sup> Ultimately, the only concern among interviewees is that the buildings are preserved. The important point with regard to the remaking of place is that there is no expectation that the places' function remain the same. The purpose of a place can be fluid as long as the place retains enough existential presence to remain meaningful. Retirees understand that the former factory will not be a manufacturing facility. They are also aware that the salaries they earned while working at the factory would never support them were they to live in the newly renovated factory condominiums. These are not concerns for them. Their concern is the preservation of the place and the retention of meaning. Retirees can recall the disappointment and sense of loss when they witnessed the earlier urban revitalization activities in Durham that destroyed places that defined their own cumulative identities. It is for this reason that they appreciate the necessity of preservation.

The use of oral histories in this project has emphasized the character and meaning of place. This method can also be used with spatial analysis wherein the location and distribution of phenomena are enhanced by the oral histories collected. In both cases, oral histories allow community members to create and present definitions of places of importance. Sites of remembrance and their meanings are self-selected by participants, offering another portrayal of meaning outside that available through data alone. The portrayals are individualized but when considered in combination offer a collective geography of place. Viewing memory as a process that constructs meaning is one of oral history's great, potential contributions to geographers who already view place in like fashion.

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<sup>152</sup> Interview, Amos and Margaret Umstead, 13 October 2011. Interview, Verlie M. Sue Poole, 26 July 2008

The use of personal narrative can either coincide or challenge traditional narratives about place in unexpected ways.

### ***Changing Demographics and Reshaping Place***

The Summer 2011 issue of Southeastern Geographer, entitled “Carolina del Norte: Geographies of Latinization in the South,” is dedicated to the growing population of Hispanics in North Carolina. For the first time in their history, many North Carolina cities are experiencing the in-migration of an international population. The cultural and social implications of this movement should not be underestimated as places are continually reshaped. Places are also becoming sites of contention as groups are struggling for space within both the cities and rural areas of the state. Durham is not immune to this enormous and important change. As Hispanic populations migrate into the city, Durham will be faced with a challenge unlike any before. The city and its residents will have to reconcile the strong Civil Rights heritage of the city with the current politics of immigration. Will the city remain a place of opportunity and exception for those who are otherwise marginalized? To date, Hispanics hold very little political or economic power in the city. The current Chief of Police, Jose Lopez, Sr., is the only Hispanic holding an administrative political position. The impact of the immigrant community in Durham is a point of further study that can not be incorporated within the parameters of this project, but is certainly a worthwhile pursuit.

Additionally, the long-term impacts of the Creative Class in Durham are also an important point of further study. One of the most significant criticisms of Richard Florida’s theories is the ever increasing income gap that some argue is a symptom of urban policies that seek to embrace the Creative Class. Mayor Bell’s work with neighborhood revitalization

along with other city revitalization efforts continue to work toward closing this gap, but the results are not yet clear. Thomas Campanella, associate professor in UNC Chapel Hill's Department of City and Regional Planning, was the keynote speaker for the annual conference of Preservation North Carolina in September 2010.<sup>153</sup> Speaking on the Creative Class in Durham, Campanella suggested that the trend of affluent suburbs and working class urban center may be reversing. According to Campanella, the result of this reverse trend would be a relegation of the city's urban poor outside of the city center, a place where only the affluent can then afford to live. This would cut off the poor from services that they depend upon in the city, like public transportation. Although not mentioned by Campanella, an additional consequence is the further destruction of African American communities that have historically played a vital role in Durham.

When retired employees from Liggett & Myers Tobacco factory gathered for their annual reunion in September 2011, talk of immigration and the Creative Class was absent. Instead, in the dated and simply decorated hall with wood paneled walls circa 1960s and paper-covered banquet tables the talk was much more personal. After everyone gathered their lunch and found their seats, Virginia Scoggins stood to welcome those in attendance. Virginia has organized the reunion for the past several years. However, due to growing and more complicated health problems, this was to be her final year with this responsibility. Her first order of business, then, was to petition those present in the hopes that someone would step forward to fulfill her role. She noted with some humor and a bit of melancholy that the number of people able to fulfill her role grew smaller and smaller each year. There was an

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<sup>153</sup> Vaugh, Dawn Bumgartner "Urban Living and Creative Class." [Herald-Sun](#). Sept 23, 2010.



acceptance in her tone and also in the mood surrounding her that the annual reunions would soon be at an end.

Among the retirees present were old friends, husbands and wives, retirees and their grown children, and the children of those already deceased. One woman brought her wheelchair-bound mother and claimed that even when her mother can no longer attend, she would come anyway. The generational attendance of the reunion is testament to the valuable role the tobacco factory played in the individual lives of retirees as well as their families. But also, it is one avenue through which the legacy of the factory is preserved and the narrative continues. Listening in on conversations happening simultaneously around the room, I could hear funny stories that were surely revived annually among friends. Also, debates about the future of the company now located in Mebane, NC and inquiries about missing retirees floated about the room. And of course, there were discussions about the downtown renovation of the factory. While many retirees hadn't been downtown in several years, they'd heard about the renovations from others and watched the downtown progress in the local newspaper.

Dot Rogers, the first female to work in the HVAC department at Liggett & Myers, says she'd like to "just go down there and walk around." But obligations to her aging, disabled sister keep her busy.<sup>154</sup> William Pittman, retired from the Electrical Department, also doesn't venture downtown though he lives just a few blocks away.<sup>155</sup> Ruth Ashley lives too far away, as does Shelton Spell, both of whom live in northern Orange County.<sup>156</sup> The

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<sup>154</sup> Rogers, Dot. Interview by Ashley Ward. 17 October 2011.

<sup>155</sup> Pittman, William. Interview by Ashley Ward. 11 October 2011.

<sup>156</sup> Ashley, Ruth. Interview by Ashley Ward. 30 September 2011. Spell, Shelton. Interview by Ashley Ward. 13 October 2011.

reality is that many of the retirees are unable to follow the changing landscape of downtown Durham. Because of this, their feelings about downtown Durham are in part nostalgia, but no less powerful than if they experienced the changes in downtown Durham on a daily basis.

George Evans, who was born into a sharecropping family in 1931, moved to Durham from Fuquay Springs to live with his grandmother in 1949.<sup>157</sup> George was 18 years old. “At that time, being a colored person, things were sure enough shaky for job concerns,” he says. “But I was able to get a job at Liggett and Myers. And from that I was able to advance.” Mr. Evans worked at Liggett and Myers through the period of integration and labor unrest,



*Image 12: George Evans outside of his home in Durham, NC*

holding various positions inside the factory. Like other African American retirees, he can recall situations at work that were challenging due to the forced collaboration among white and black workers after integration. Even so, Mr. Evans is quick to clarify his feelings about the company stating, “Liggett and Myers meant a lot to me.” Like many retirees, it was not easy to put into words the magnitude of the impact the factory had in their lives. He asserts that without his job at the factory, he would not have been able to purchase his first home or his first car. He would also not be able to indulge in his hobby, traveling. Also like other retirees, Mr. Evans alludes to something more significant than material possessions when asked to reflect on the factory’s meaning in his life. From his home located several blocks from the newly renovated downtown, he speaks not only about financial success, but personal

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<sup>157</sup> Evans, George. Interview by Ashley Ward. 5 May 2011.

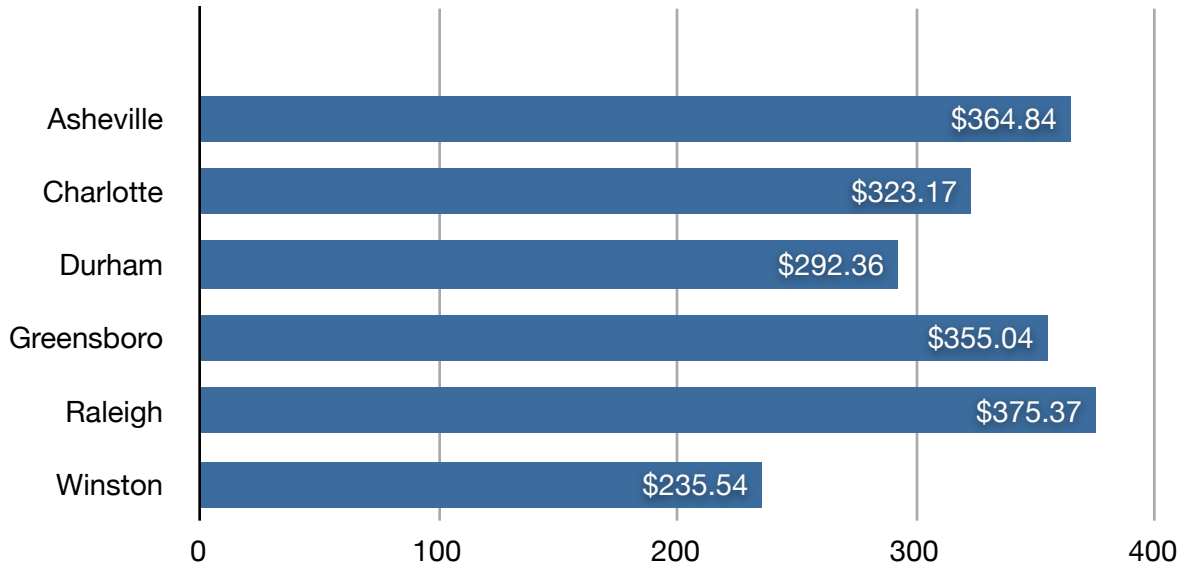
triumph. “I went through the mill...some people said things I didn’t like. But I made it...

(long pause)...I made it.”

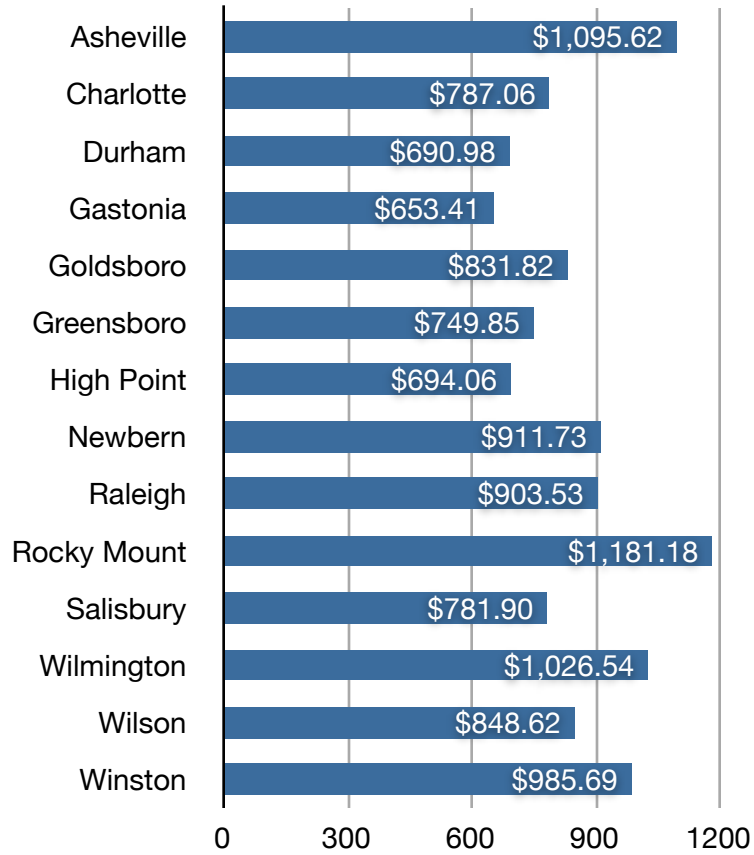
## APPENDIX I

### CHARTS AND TABLES

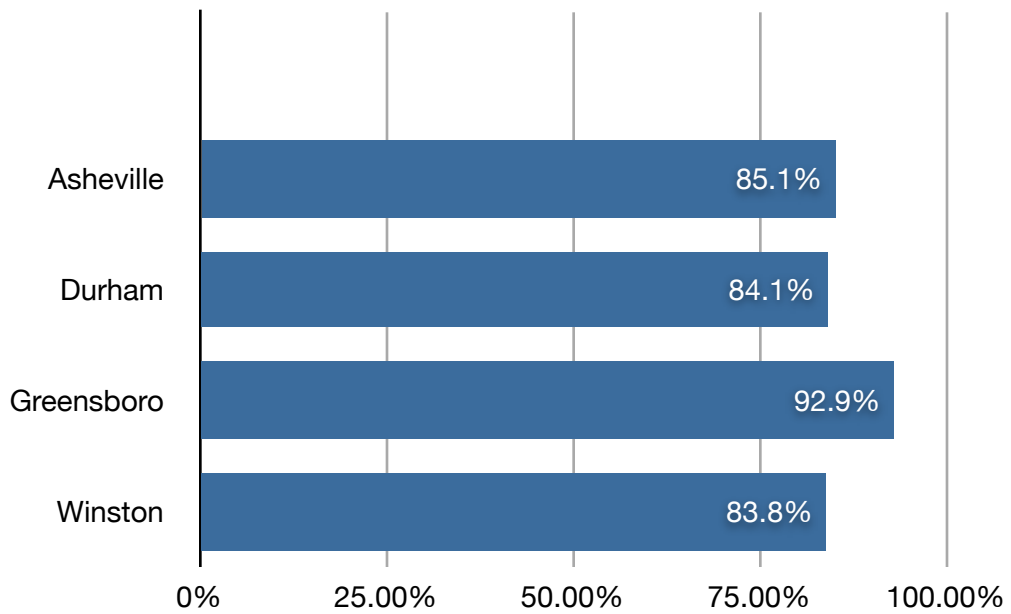
**Average Wage per Wage Earner 1910: Cities with Population 10,000 to 25,000**



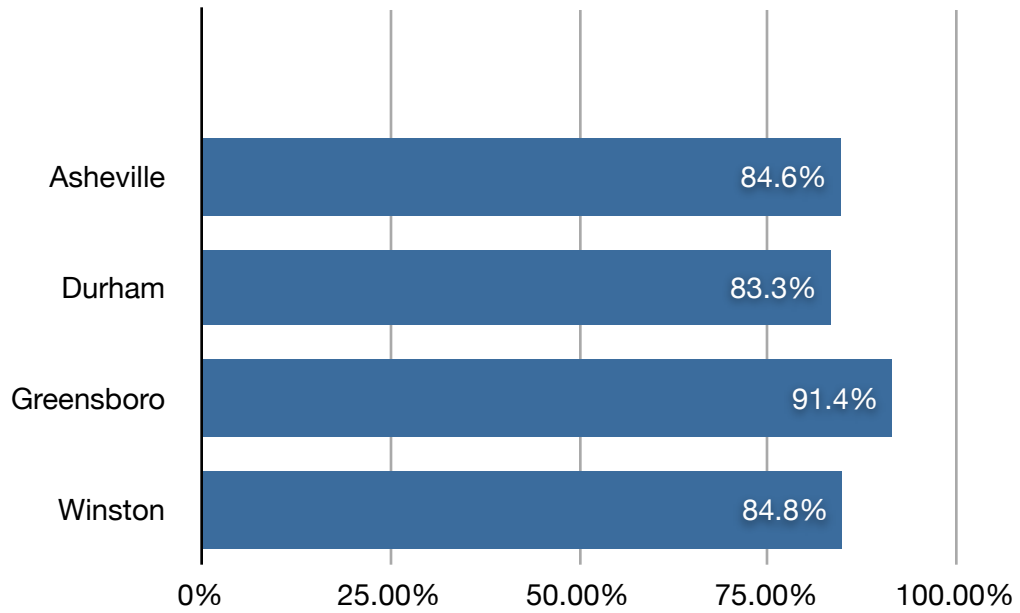
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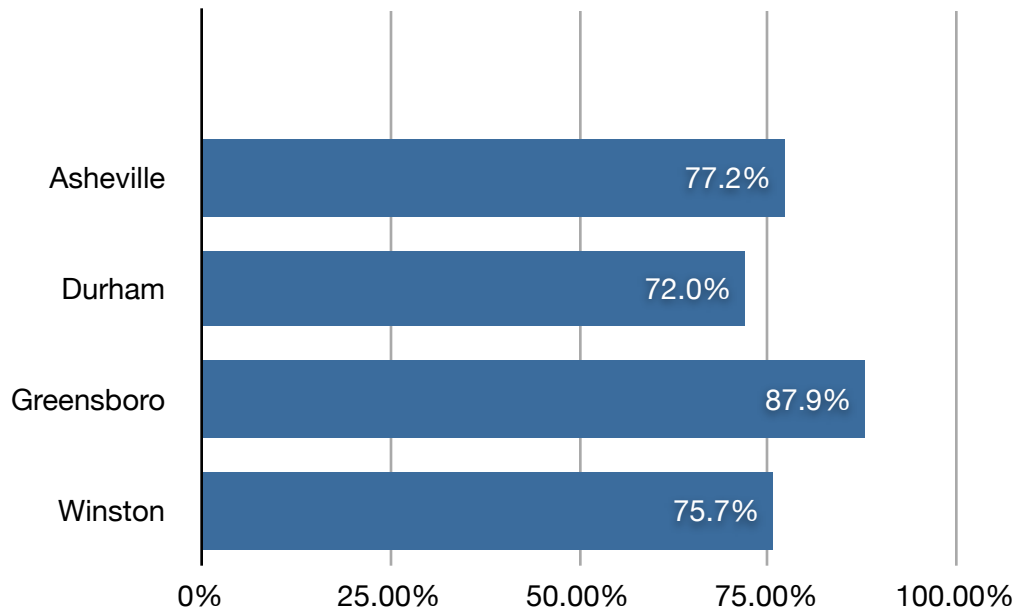
**White Male Employment Rate 1940: Cities Population 50,000 to 100,000**



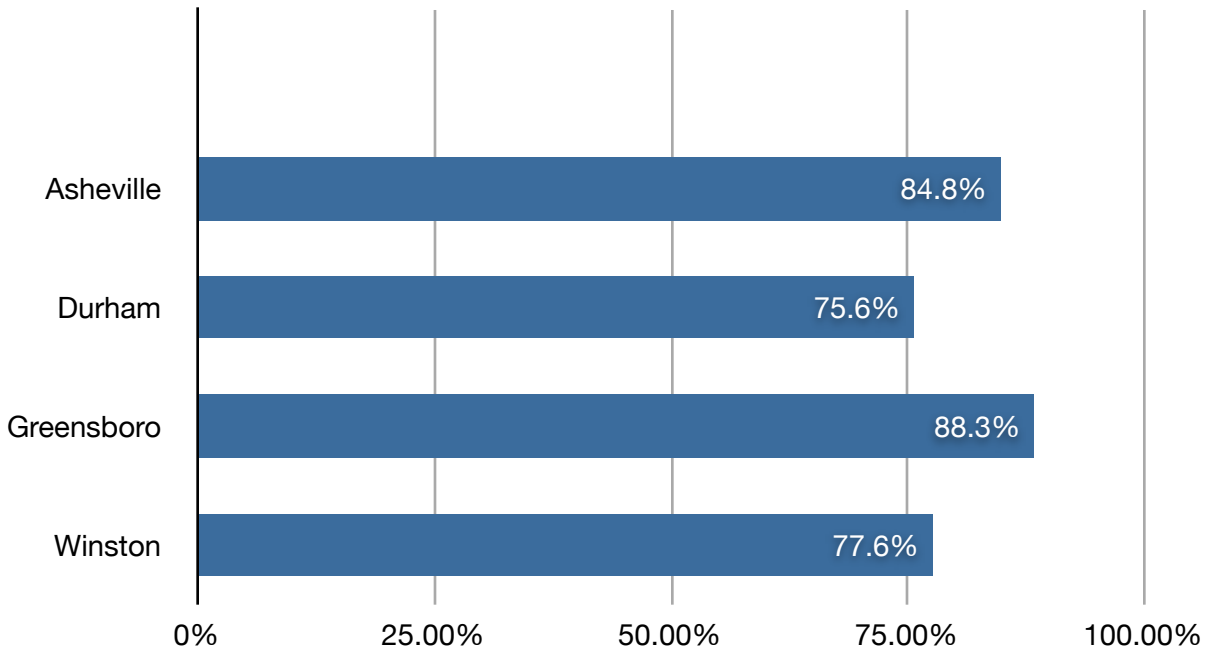
**White Female Employment Rate 1940: Cities Population 50,000 to 100,000**



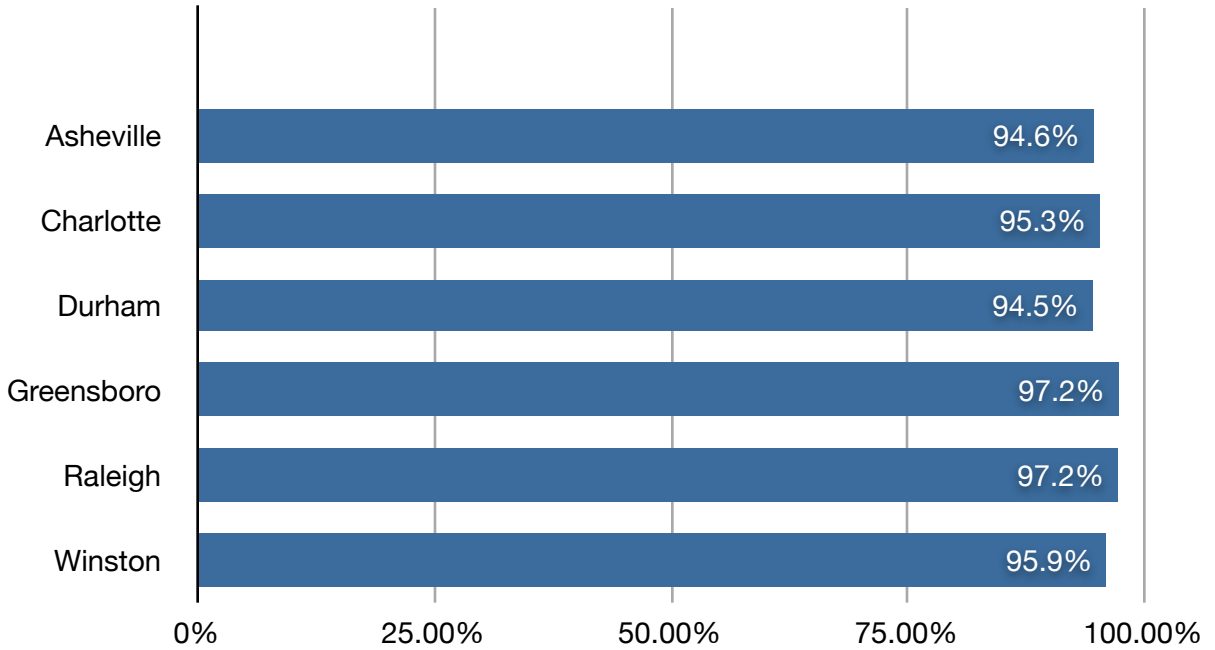
**Black Male Employment Rate 1940: Cities Population 50,000 to 100,000**



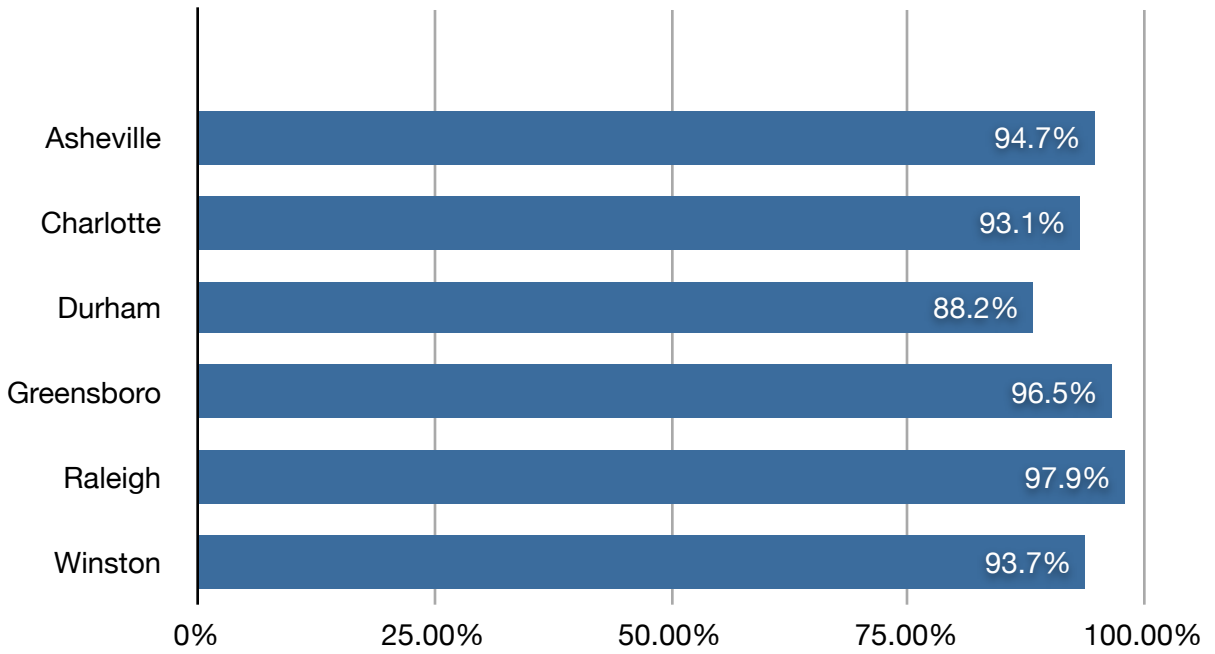
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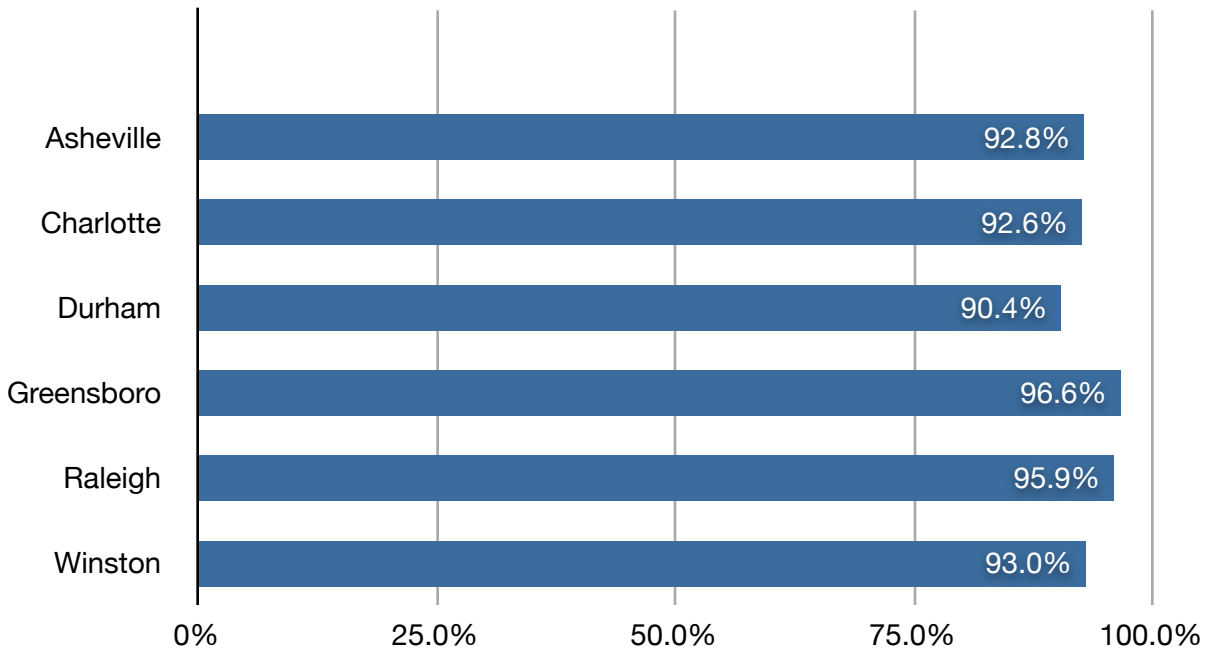
**White Male Employment Rate 1950: Cities Population 50,000 or greater**



**White Female Employment Rate 1950: Cities Population 50,000 or greater**

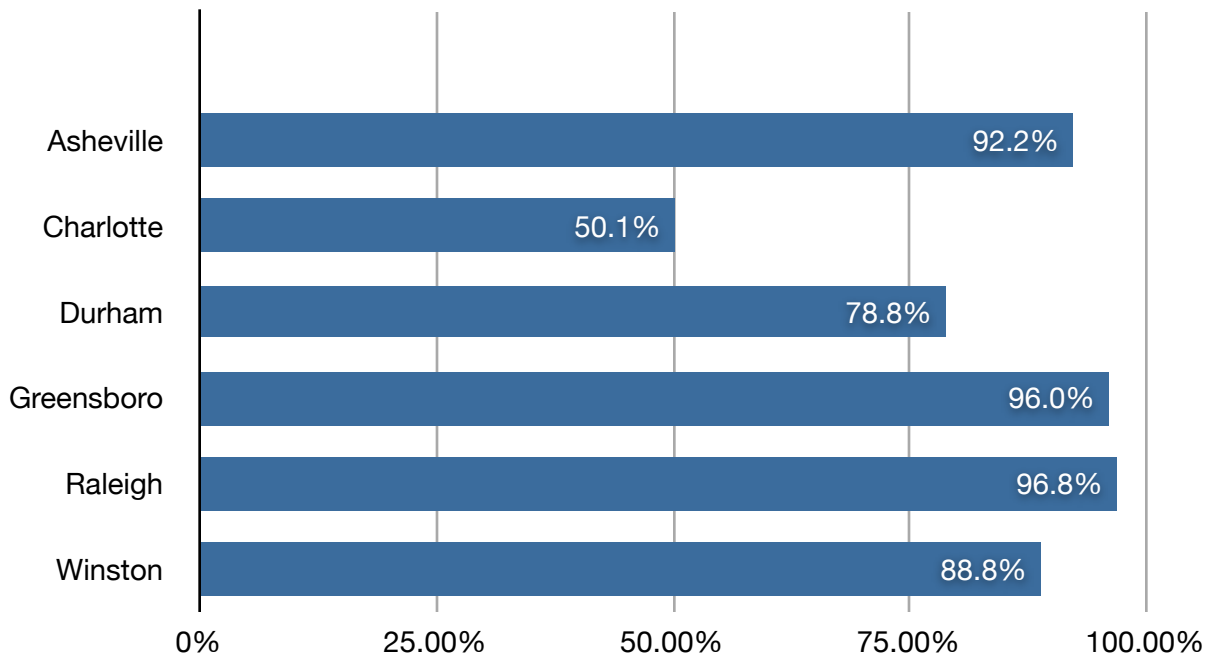


**Black Male Employment Rate 1950: Cities Population 50,000 or greater**

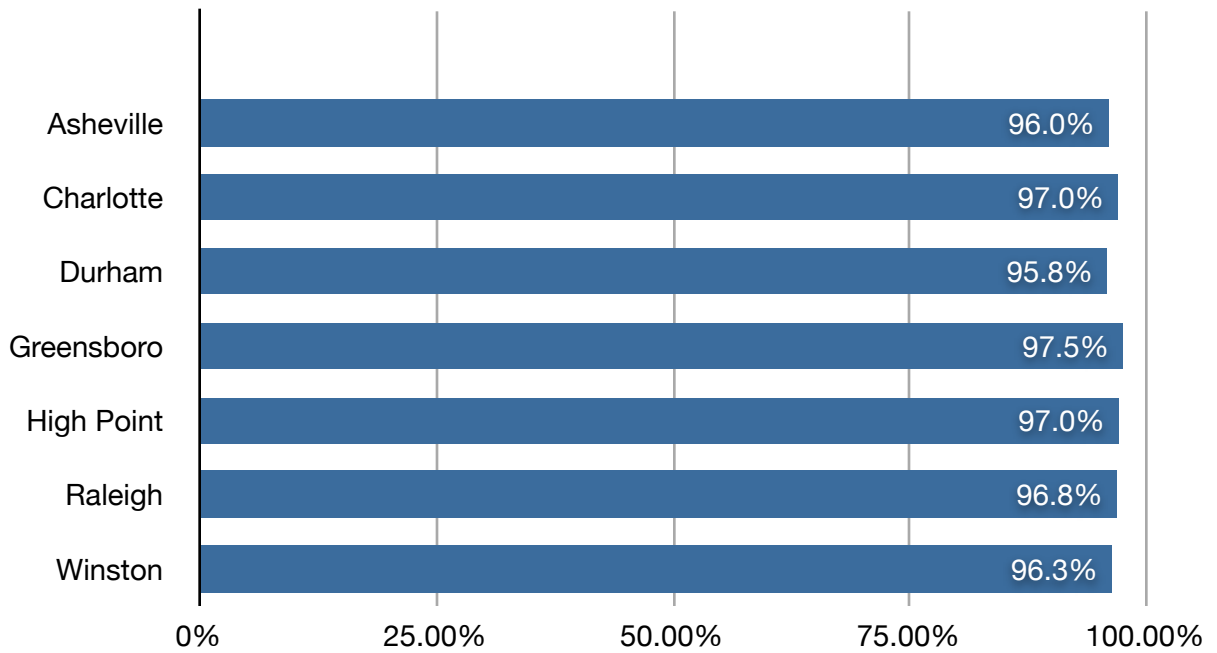




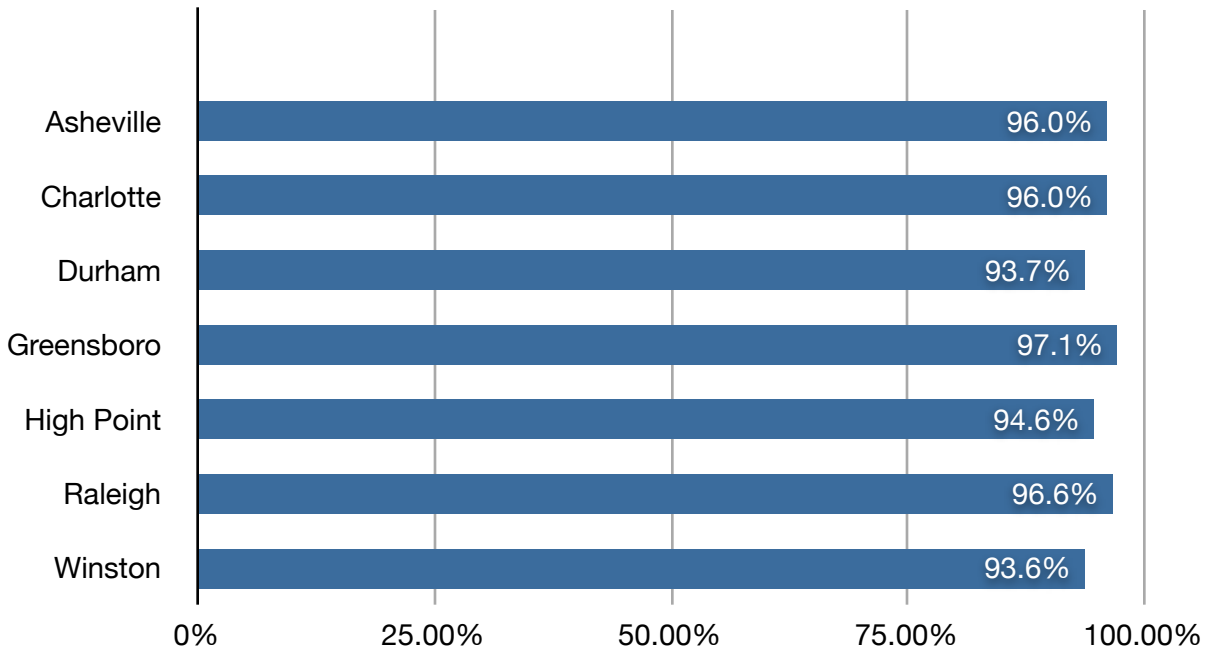
**Black Female Employment Rate 1950: Cities Population 50,000 or greater**



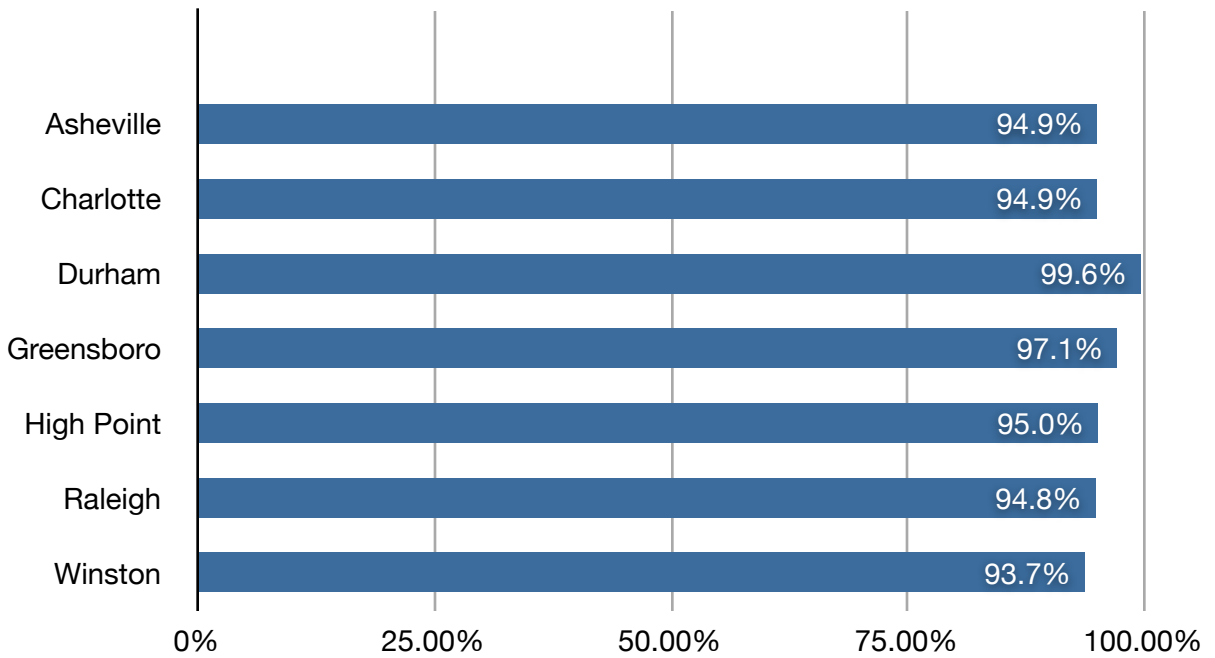
**White Male Employment Rate 1960: Cities Population 50,000 or greater**



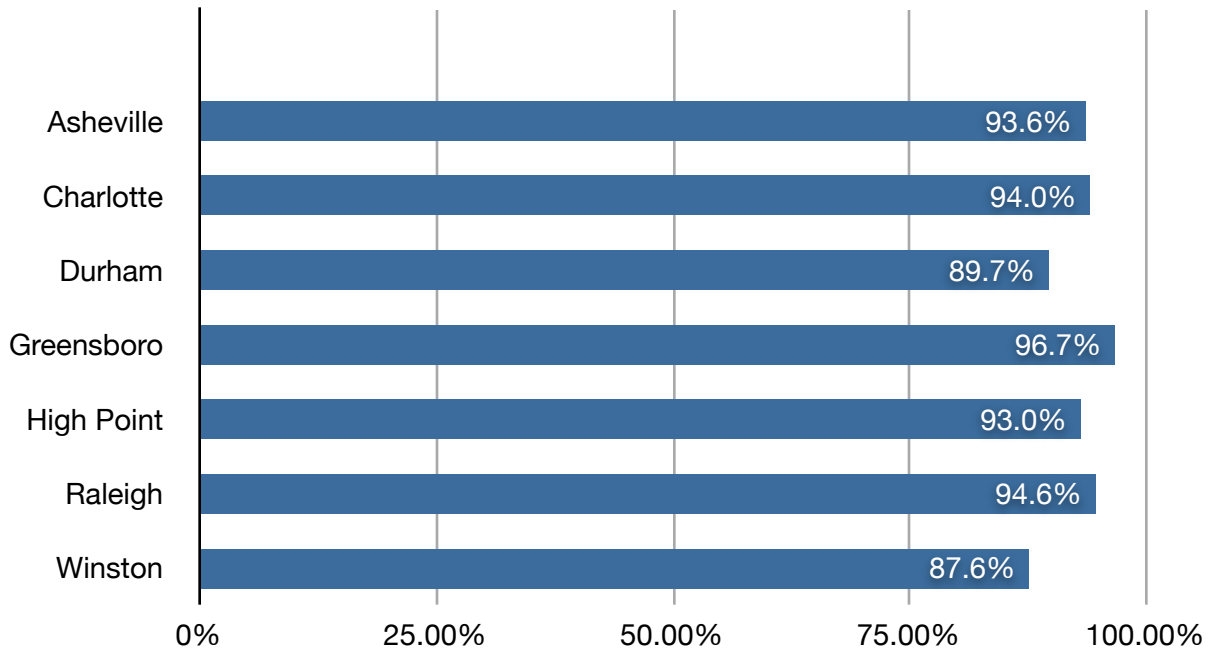
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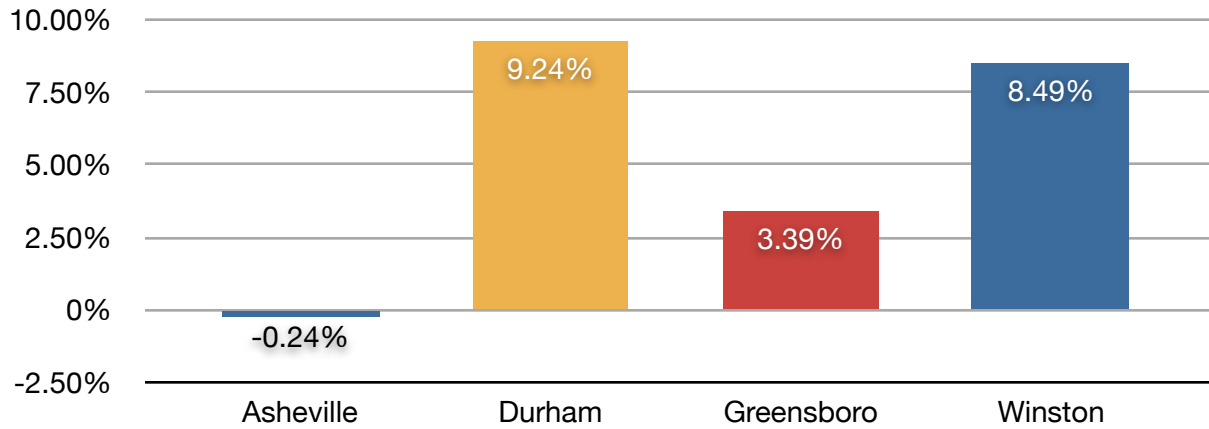
**Black Male Employment Rate 1960: Cities Population 50,000 or greater**



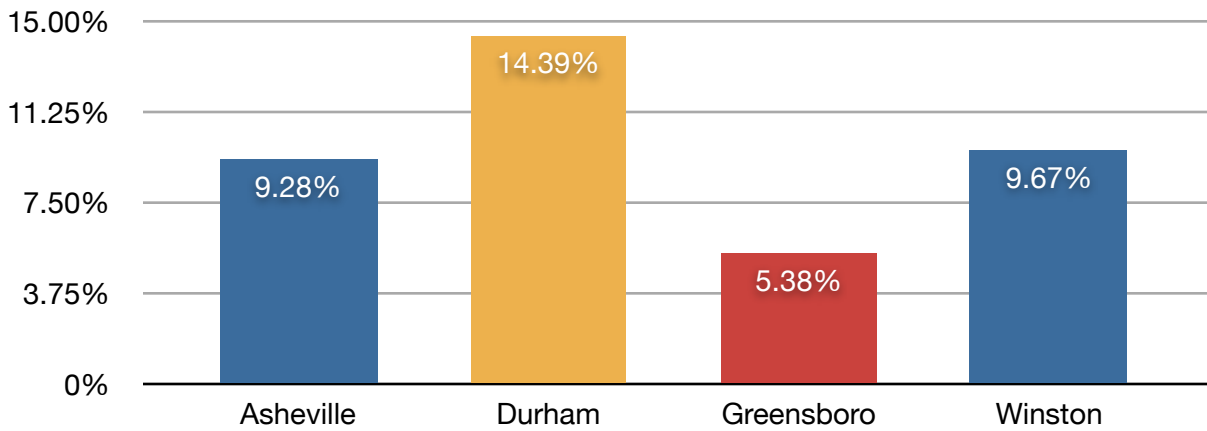
**Black Female Employment Rate 1960: Cities Population 50,000 or greater**



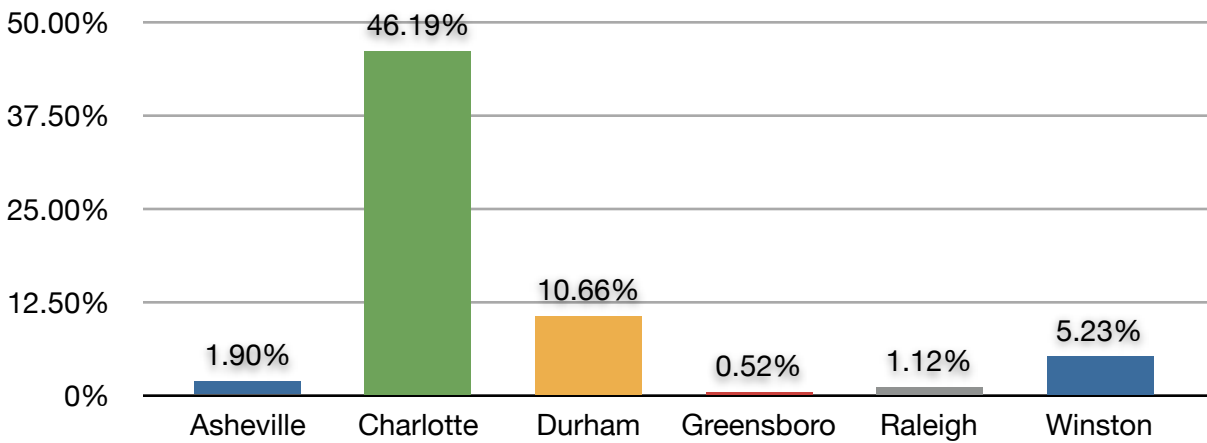
**Difference in Black and White Female Employment, 1940**



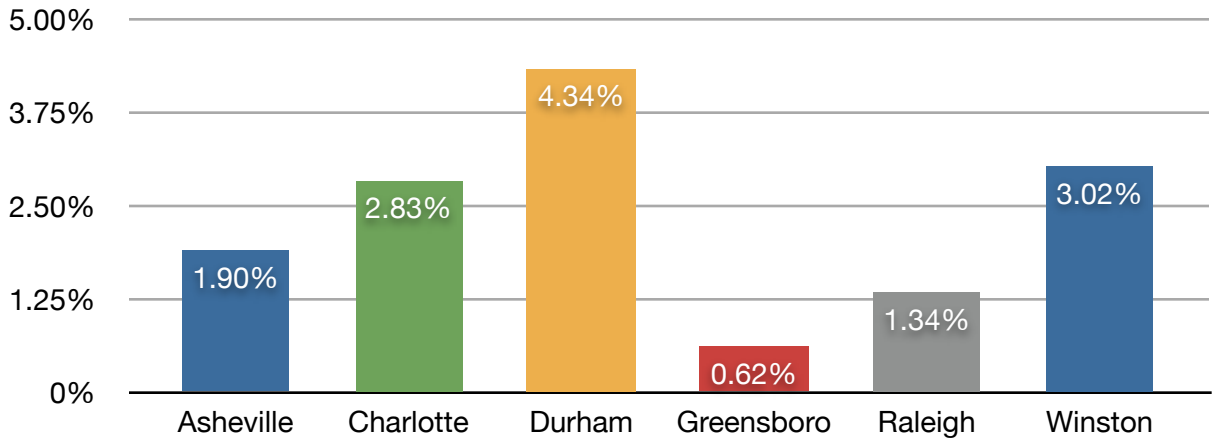
**Difference in Black and White Male Employment Rate, 1940**



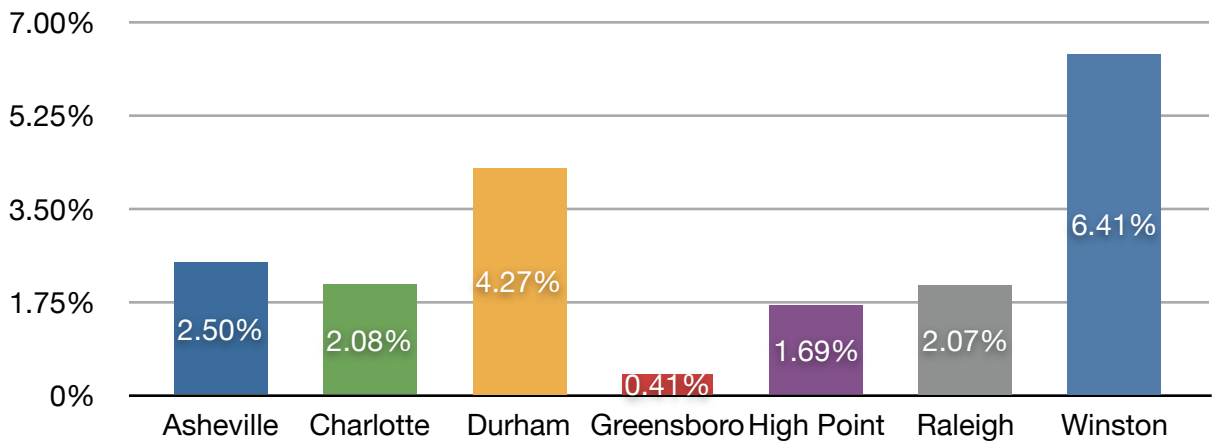
**Difference in Black and White Female Employment, 1950**



**Difference in Black and White Male Employment, 1950**



**Difference in Black and White Female Employment, 1960**



## APPENDIX II

### MAP OF NORTH CAROLINA COUNTIES



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- U.S. Census 1910. *Population - North Carolina*. Table III.
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- U.S. Census 1920. *Manufactures - North Carolina*. "Comparative Summary for Cities Having 10,000 Inhabitants or more, by States: 1919, 1914, and 1909." Table 50.
- U.S. Census 1930. *Population - North Carolina, Composition and Characteristics*. ""Composition of the Population for Cities and Towns of 10,000 or More: 1930." Table 15.
- U.S. Census 1940. *North Carolina Characteristics of the Population*. "Composition for the Population for Cities 10,000 to 100,000: 1940." Table 31.
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- U.S. Census 1950. *North Carolina Characteristics of the Population*. “Economic Characteristics of the Population by Sex, for Standard Metropolitan Areas, Urbanized Areas, and Urban Places of 10,000 or More: 1950.” Table 35.
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- U.S. Census 1960. *North Carolina Characteristics of the Population*. “Age by Color and Sex for Standard Metropolitan Areas, Urbanized Areas, and Urban Places of 10,000 or More: 1960.” Table 20.
- U.S. Census 1960. *North Carolina General Social and Economic Characteristics*. “Income in 1959 of Families and Persons, and Weeks Worked in 1959, for Standard Metropolitan Areas, Urbanized Areas, and Urban Places for 10,000 or more: 1960.” Table 76.
- U.S. Census 1960. *North Carolina General Social and Economic Characteristics*. “Nonwhite Population - Occupation Group, Industry Group, and Income in 1959, for Selected Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, Urbanized Areas, and Urban Places of 10,000 or More: 1960.” Table 78.
- U.S. Census 1970. *North Carolina General Population Characteristics*. “Age by Race and Sex for Areas and Places: 1970.” Table 24.